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# Faujja Singh - Lord of War

**We all saw that poster with Nicholas Cage standing in front of a vast array of weapons, every one of them dealing its own particular brand of agonising demise. Well, just in case you didn't know, Mr Cage is only a thesp. This morning I find myself talking to the genuine article – Faujja Singh really is the true Lord of War. The weapons in that movie poster I just mentioned? They were fake – except maybe the helicopter (and Hollywood being Hollywood it wouldn't be a surprise if that was only a mock up). The weapons Faujja is dishing out to the actors at the Factory shot today are real.**

Faujja makes sure none of us is packing any old heat, he carefully chooses accoutrements of death that seem to suit their carriers: Jamie Bamber has Ruger Mini .223, an appropriate contrast to the blaster he uses in Battlestar. I've got a Browning Over and Under Shotgun: maybe that's because I said to him I was considering laser eye surgery and he didn't want me having to worry about being exactly on target. Kate Maberly's carrying a rather swish looking Glock 9mm pistol. It's svelte and curiously goes with the red dress she is wearing, designed by 9 year old Harris Reed – the son of Hollywood agent, Nick Reed. Harris wants to be a fashion designer and Howard (Factory's editor) told him on a recent visit to London that if he designed a dress he would get it made and put it in a photo shoot. Howard hadn't actually counted on Harris remembering any of this and was somewhat surprised to receive a Fed Ex parcel from ICM in LA containing two crayon drawings of Harris Reed couture and fabric samples. But a promise was a promise and one trip to obtain the necessary fabric at Peter Jones in Sloane Square later followed by a visit to a dress maker and Harris Reed's crayon couture was born. All it now needed was an actress (in this case Kate Maberly), about a million dollars of de Grisogno black diamond accessories, a pair of snazzy Vivienne Westwood shoes and the star of one of the biggest shows on US television. The Glock was a perfect match.

Unfortunately Harris' teacher didn't seem to think so when he proudly marched into school with a picture of his first creation brought startlingly to life as the shocking red centre piece of Factory's gangster shoot out. Apologies from Factory to Harris's teacher on this one: but the dress really worked in the pictures and his dress was preferred by everyone to the red Vivienne Westwood number option we also had at the shoot. Now how many professional dress designers can claim that – let alone ones who work in crayon?

Anyone who has worked with guns on set will know how relevant it is to have the right weapon and to know how to use it. Most actors have never fired a real gun, let alone an assault rifle. They wouldn't know why different weapons would be particularly cherished in certain situations, contemporary and historical, whilst others shunned. One of the reasons Faujja is so sought after is because he has the knowledge and experience to address both these areas. That and his constant, amicable state of readiness – the consummate professional. Take this morning: he left Wales at 4am (where he provides all the guns for the BBC's highly successful Dr Who spin off series Torchwood) to get to Charlie Allen's in Islington by 9am but, showbusiness being showbusiness, it's already 12 and no one's been shot. I mean photographed, photographed. God, relax Howard.

Let's rewind a bit. Faujja was born in Malawai, Southern Africa. When he was three years old his parents emigrated to the UK and he grew up in Ashford, Middlesex near London. He served for a number of years in the British Army, honing his knowledge of weapons and weapons training. In film speak Faujja is known as an Armourer or, in the US, as a Weapons Master. These days though he tends to be Chief Armourer. Pre-70s the term 'Armourer' didn't really exist in movie production. The propmaster would hire weapons and take them out on set. This changed in the 80's when the gun laws became much stricter.

'Before then', explains Faujja, 'you could own a lot of weapons on what was called a Section 1 licence. When this changed to a Section 5 licence most things became prohibited under the new Firearms Act. Propmasters didn't want to go through the rigmarole of getting the new license'.

This was when Bapty, named after Major Bapty of the British Army, came into being as the organisation responsible for training armourers. Most armourers do an informal apprenticeship with Bapty before going out on their own. Faujja completed seven years. Since then he's worked with numerous famous actors and directors. He provided Pierce Brosnan with his P99 on Die Another Day (as Bond aficionados will know this gun finally replaced the Walther PPK, long sacred emblem of double 'O' status). He provided Colin Salmon with his epic G36 on Alien vs Predator (I'll tell you why it's epic – just trust me on this for a moment).

'Paul Anderson was a dream to work, as was Bharat Nalluri', Faujja muses with nostalgia. When he was working on The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen he was instructed to provide Sean Connery's character with a 4" elephant gun – a Matilda. 'I turned up in the director Stephen Norrington's hotel room in Prague and he decided he wanted something bigger. Well, his exact words were more like 'What the fuck is that? I want something bigger! Get me a bigger fucking gun'.

It's not in Faujja's nature to turn round and say 'Well, we're practically shooting and this is what you asked for' and it's this that sets him apart from his fellows.

'I went out, found a Czech Republic gunsmith and had a Matilda adapted to a 6" barrel and ready to use in a few days'.

This gives you some impression of the scope of the job. You want something for a period flic? Faujja will give you every option: sword, longbow, crossbow, musket, martial arts stuff (namchukkas, throwing stars, etc) – you name it. Let's say you choose a sword. He'll advise you on whether it should be a broadsword, claymore, sabre, Samurai, dagger, dirk, officer's sword, fencing sword, basically helping you choose, procure and train up your talent in the use of any blade invented from ancient times to the modern day. Even a kitchen knife has to go out with an armourer because of the context in which it's used. All this stuff is important – unless you're not the sort of person who's viewing pleasure is adversely affected by Sinbad or Robin Hood carrying an SAS combat knife....

And we're not just talking guns and weapons, we're talking all the equipment of death including, for example, shields and armour. It could be a 16th Century shield or it could be a 21st Century riot shield along with matching, bullet proof, kevlar police armour.

'Everything has to be correct. Webbing (the system of pouches in which soldiers carry ammunition and personal kit) might be the old type that goes with an SLR (self-loading rifle) but if the soldier's using the more modern IPW (Individual Personal Weapon) then he has to have the PLC (Personal Load Carrying) webbing that goes with that'.

I ask him what he'd like to take into battle in the past, recent past and tomorrow. His initial response is both interesting and reassuring.

'I never liked glorifying violence as I've never been in any doubt that in the real world it's something to be avoided. So hypothetically for me right?'

'Hypothetically', I assure him. When exactly?'

'Ok, shall we say, '15th Century, Vietnam and tomorrow?'' I offer.

'15th Century it'd have to be a longbow. It was the ancient equivalent of a sniper rifle, even to the extent of being potentially armour piercing – look at what happened to the French at Agincourt. Vietnam you'd see me with an M1 Grand – self-loading rifle, bullets over 3cm in calibre, effective up to 750 metres and also a Colt 1911 – that's .45 calibre - good stopping power. If it was tomorrow it's got to be a G36 with pop-up Eotech sights and underslung 203 grenade launcher...'

'That'd be the weapon you gave to Colin Salmon to fight aliens with in Alien vs Predator then?'

'Correct.'

I ask him what his best times on the job have been.

'Alien vs Predator was best in terms of fun. The best end result was the 10minute opening WWII flashback scene I did for Ron Pearlman's Hell Boy. I think the funniest moment though was when I was working on Johnny English with Rowan Atkinson. I had to make a gag gun so that when he squeezed the trigger the slide would shoot forward and fall on the floor. It wasn't just that gag but rather being on the set with him around – the whole thing was a laugh.

When I ask Faujja which he wishes he'd worked on his response is instant and without hesitation: 'Heat'. Anyone in particular he'd like to work with?

'John Woo, Ridley Scott, Spielberg, Paul WS Anderson again. To be honest though I don't really mind who I'm working with as long as I'm working. This is a job you have to live and breathe – remember we're talking night shoots, bad weather, early starts, etc. If they need you to do something at short notice it more often than not demands a complex solution. I really enjoy it – even if I'm just going out on set with a flick knife it's nice because I'm meeting new people'.

Well since Faujja has just become Chief Armourer for the next series of the BBC's tremendously successful Doctor Who you can be assured he's going to be going out and meeting new people rather a lot. With lots of different weapons. And telling them how to kill each other. Hey – you want routine? Go work in an office....

