

Cabbie's snooker story is right on cue

BY JOCAIRD

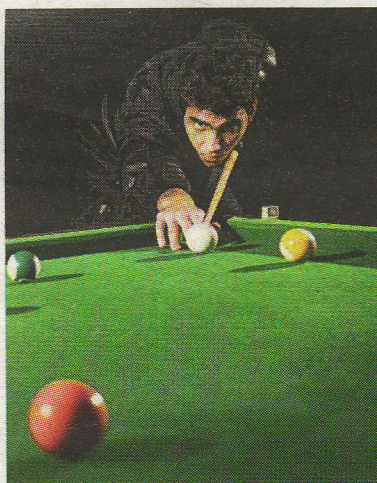
On an unremarkable night in 2004, Middlesbrough taxi driver Ishy Din was listening to Radio 5 Live in his cab, when the station announced a competition to find short stories with a sporting theme. Having just bought his first computer, Din thought he'd give it a go and sent something in. To his amazement, that story, his first attempt at creative writing since his school days, was produced and aired.

Now, the 43-year-old is about to see his first stage play, *Snookered*, tour the UK, including a four-week run at London's Bush Theatre. It would be fair to say that he's pretty chuffed with how things have gone: "You think, 'Bloody hell, what if they find me out and realise I've just been blagging my way through all this?' But I'm told by many people that that feeling never goes away."

Snookered, which Din wrote with support from new writing theatre company, Tamasha, is set over the course of an evening during which four young British-Pakistani men come together for a game of pool to commemorate the death of their friend. It's the first in a trilogy of plays planned with the company and has been highly praised by the likes of playwright Simon Stephens and director Richard Eyre.

Important to Din is the fact that although the drama is set within the British-Pakistani community, "first and foremost it's about young men" and will therefore appeal to a broad audience. "I want to tell stories about real people from that community," he says, "because our lives aren't about fundamentalism or honour. We're just regular people who worry about how to pay our mortgages and bring our kids up."

Before entering the 5 Live competition, Din "always felt that writing was what others did". Now however, this self-defined "writer who drives a taxi" has grand plans that include writing a film, a sitcom - "*Steptoe & Son in a halal butchers*" - and a musical - "I've got a great idea about this Pakistani guy who wants to be a soul singer." Twenty years of driving a cab have certainly given him plenty of material to draw on. "I've been a cabbie a long time.



I sat and worked out one night that I'd had 160,000 conversations with people... The minute they step out of my cab I pick up my pad and start scribbling things down." *'Snookered'* tours the UK from 2 February until 5 April, opening at the Bush Theatre, London W12 (020 8743 5050) on 28 February. For more information: www.tamasha.org.uk

A tune with a view

BY JESSICA DUCHEN

Bring the Lake District into the concert hall! The challenge - issued by the BBC Philharmonic's general manager Richard Wigley to the composer Maurizio Malagnini - sounds startling at the very least. Its result, though, is a new concert suite, *Running in the Clouds*, commissioned by BBC Radio 3, and receiving its world premiere tomorrow.

The suite's basis is the race known as the Bob Graham Round, and especially the achievements of Joss Naylor, shepherd and record-breaking fell-runner. The Bob Graham Round entails scaling 42 peaks in 24 hours, with an ascent of about 28,500 feet and a total distance of approximately 74 miles.

"Meeting Joss Naylor was inspiring," says Malagnini, who hails from Bergamo in Italy and had never previously visited the Lake District. "Talking to him, I understood the wisdom that nature can give to people who are able to listen to its voice, and the dialogue they experience with the landscape. The rocks welcome you when you're running."

As the music is the last element to be added to any film, the work can be desperately