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Cannes 2023: Jude Law wore 'smelly perfume' to play King Henry VIII in Firebrand

By Gautaman Bhaskaran

May 24, 2023 08:12 AM IST

Actor Jude Law wore a special 'perfume' made of "nuss, blood, faecal matter

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Jude Law is seen as King Henry VIII in Firebrand.

As much as cinema enjoys the privilege of artistic licence, Indian movies often take this too seriously and go overboard, dishing out the most outrageously unbelievable stuff. On the other hand, Western works usually have the tendency to stay within the confines of realism. A classic example of this we saw at the ongoing 76th edition of the Cannes Film Festival. British actor Jude Law, who plays King Henry VIII, in Karim Ainouz's Firebrand wore a special 'perfume' made of "puss, blood, faecal matter and sweat". Wow! (Also Read | Cannes favourite The Zone of Interest director says it is not a museum piece)

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He told a press conference after the screening, "I heard stories that you could smell Henry VIII rooms away because his leg was rotting. They used rose oil to cover the smell. I thought it would have a great impact if I smelt awful."

In the beginning, he used very little of the 'perfume', but as the shoot progressed, the whole thing became a "spray fest".

Ainouz, testified to the success of Law's immersive approach. "When he walked in on set," he said, "it was just horrible."

In Firebrand, Law stars opposite Alicia Vikander, who is Katherine Parr, Henry VIII's sixth and final wife. As Henry's health deteriorates, she is suspected of having a relationship with heretic Anne Askew.

Continuing his chat with journalists at the conference, Law said that he did not really understand the present British monarchy. "I see it like theatre although I'm slightly more obsessed with theatre. I don't really follow it. I'm not one for gossip, I don't really enjoy it, I find no interest in it. But it's remarkable looking at the photos and how it relates today. This chapter in history is very intriguing."

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Ainouz described the obsession with the modern monarchy as "puzzling".

Law's way into the monstrous Henry was to remove the trappings of royalty. Two of his wives were beheaded. "I started with him as a man", he averred. "The physical frailties he was carrying and how he dealt with those - he became not a recognisable, but an empathetic person."

Actress Vikander, who was also present at the conference, drew a parallel between Firebrand's plot and the women in the MeToo era. "It really hit us while we were making some of these scenes, those very sensitive moments. I could get a sense of what it could be like for a person," the Swedish actress said. "I don't think there's any difference between being there 500 years ago and today."

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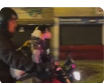
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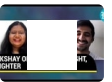
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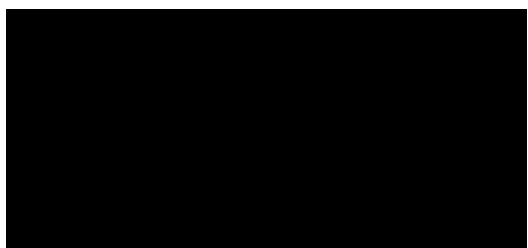
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