

Man behind the many faces

BY LANELLE HILLS-PERERA

The year was 1993 and our beloved Mirror Magazine was in need of a face to launch its tabloid format.

For ex- Kuwait Airways air hostess Ronda De Lay, her slender youthful figure, immortalized in printer's ink of that February issue would go down in the history of the Sunday Times, as one of our first Mirror cover girls. And for Ronda while it was the first time she would be photographed for a cover of a magazine, from there would stem many other opportunities.



Mettasena

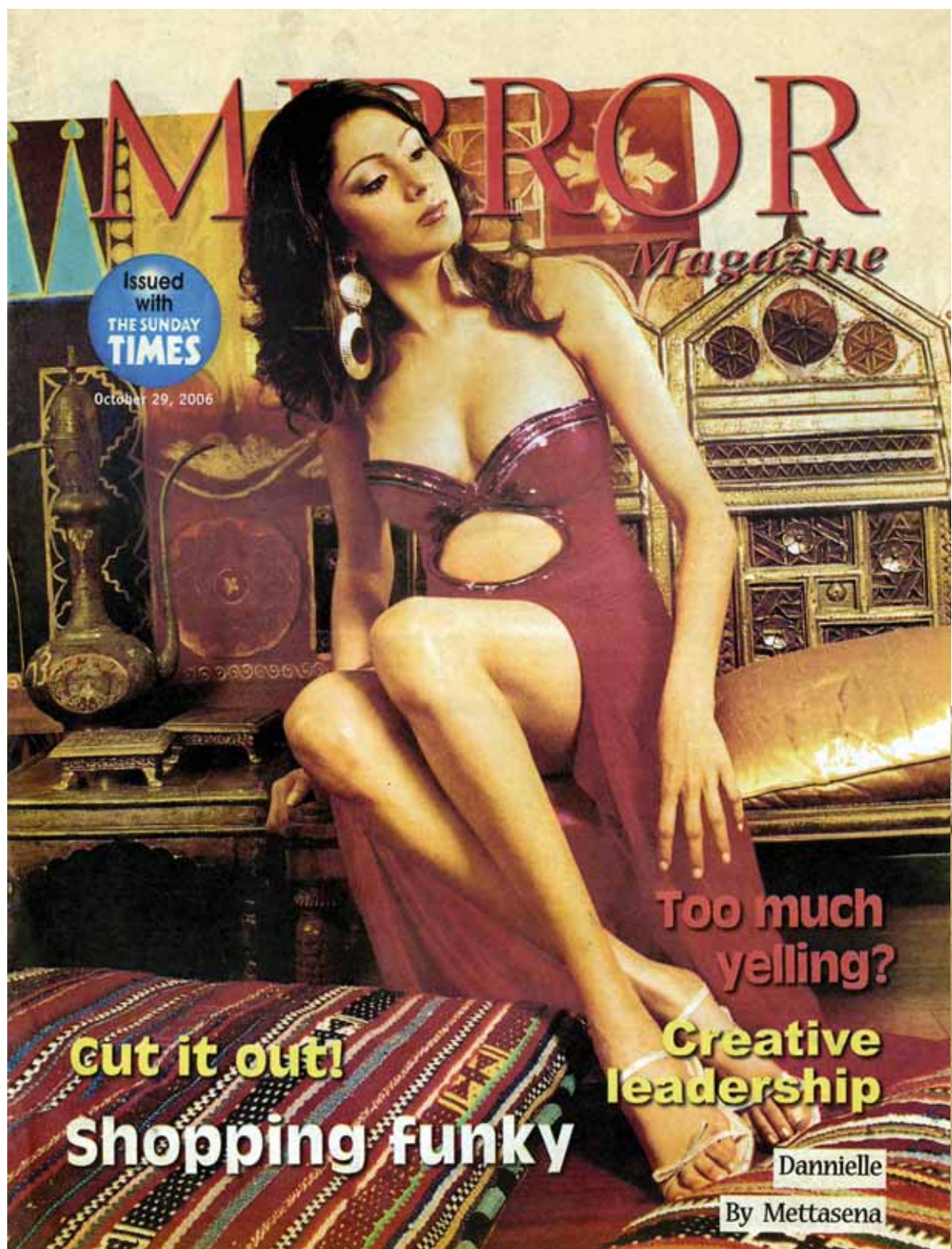
The magazine which up until then was published as a broadsheet page was reverting to its earlier tabloid layout. However, this time around the focus on cementing its popularity would lie in the faces which would grace its cover page.

From charismatic Miss World contestants, Indian models, to Bollywood stars, popular personalities, film stars to starry-eyed youngsters who dared to forge a future in the celluloid and fashion industry, each of their faces would act as a catalyst in gradually captivating a young readership - one cover at a time.

Indeed, the Mirror did have many faces and Padmakumara Mettasena would be the man behind the lens to capture most of them.

While a photographer's byline is arguably less memorable than a writer's, Padmakumara discovered earlier on, that his had even less staying power owing to another photographer having a similar name. Even though being teased for years that his decision to drop his first name was because of astrological leanings, he would henceforth be referred to as simply - 'Mettasena'.

Whether that name or his decision was written in the stars - we will never know. However, the stars did literally line up thereafter and the Mettasena brand took off, with the cover pages of the Mirror Magazine for years to come.



At one time or another, the Mirror Magazine covers would serve as pin-ups in many a youngster's bedroom

In terms of modern photographic possibilities the options that were open to a young photographer in the 1990s could be viewed in today's context as limiting. Especially when the intricacies of such technology left little room for refining of minor triviali-

ties.

There were no re-takes and the outcome of a photo shoot would remain for the most part - unknown till the negatives of the film were processed in its various baths. On one occasion, Mettasena recalls a fly -

unbeknownst to him settling on a model's leg during a shoot and with no way to edit the insect out, both model and fly together would be acknowledged in a caption and be the talking point of that issue. As for Mettasena, he would earn the ire of