

Fun is Key

Vindu Dara Singh on his new gaming avatar for a TV commercial

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THE next time you see a foot-tall robot teasing Ranbir Kapoor on TV, stay put and watch. The second level of the Pepsi commercial, shortly to go on air with Vindu Dara Singh in a new suit for his gaming avatar, is trickier than the first. "I am Funk-Key, a one-foot tall gaming character of the new Pepsi commercial," says Singh, as he watches the preview, pointing at the hundreds of Funk-Key clones holding Kapoor to ransom.

By the look of it, Singh's costume is the drama in the commercial that also stars Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt. With two exhaust fans, a mohawk spiked hair, a big key hanging around his neck, bike lights blinking on his feet, an orange, silver and green metal costume, he looks much like *Jingle All The Way's* Turbo Man.

"When Pepsi approached me with the concept and the look, the first thing I asked was whether they were making a commercial or an Indian version of *Star Wars*?" laughs Singh. The suit itself is heavy and wearing it is like being in a sauna. "I'm sure losing half a kilo every hour I spend wearing it," jokes the *Bigg Boss* win-

ner. Singh had found the costume quite 'funky', and the name stuck, evolving into 'Funk-Key'. "In the commercial, he's called Chhotu and holds the answer to Level 3," he adds.

"The commercial is a big-budget production with loads of special effects to make me look smaller and create hundreds of clones. It's like a Bollywood blockbuster, with magical sets and edgy action-sequences," Singh says. "The toughest feat was flying while wearing the costume. It felt like 180 kilos in air."

Interestingly, the look of all the characters in the commercial, including Singh's masculine Robocop-like costume, has been designed by Anshu, a young girl. "I hate stereotypes. I treated it just as a job," she says.

Known for her funky designs for the *Jalwa* music video series and the big butterfly wings on VJ Sarah for Channel V's *Get Gorgeous*, Anshu's brief for Funk-Key was a pop-ish, gaming character. "They wanted the look to be bright, young, graphic and robotic," she says. She went on to sew special composite material, rubber sheet, PVC, patent leather, fans, and yes, bike reflectors. "The costume had to look animated and light, compared to Dutt's, which was much heavier."



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