

Document Citation

Title	Entering into the spirit of 'Gandhi'
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Source	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>
Date	1981 Jun 04
Type	article
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	Sheen, Martin (1940), Dayton, Ohio, United States
Film Subjects	Gandhi, Attenborough, Richard, 1982

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Los Angeles Times June 4th 1981

ENTERING INTO THE SPIRIT OF 'GANDHI'

SOUTH OF FRANCE—"It would have been unthinkable to take money for playing that role," said Martin Sheen, "so I gave my whole salary to charity, and I felt good about it."

Sheen, the actor best known for his work in Francis Coppola's "Apocalypse Now," recently finished working on Richard Attenborough's \$22-million epic, "Gandhi."

In the film, which was shot in India with—literally—a cast of thousands, Sheen plays a journalist who becomes a follower of Gandhi and files regular reports for his newspaper in the United States.

In fact, there were several such journalists, but in the film Sheen's character represents them all.

He didn't want to go to India at all.

"I'd heard all the stories about the poverty and misery and I didn't think I'd be able to handle it," he said. "But when I got there the spirit of the people just floored me. So much so that I decided to give my salary for the film to one of the Indian charities. You don't want to make money out of Gandhi."

Many people have questioned whether this film can succeed in the United States, where Gandhi and his works are not that well known among younger audiences.

Sheen disagrees.

"As a matter of fact, I think it will work best in America," he said. "All they've got to do is let Gandhi himself sell the film. The actors in the film count for nothing."

"I've even told Richard (Attenborough) he shouldn't have credits on the film. He should just give away a souvenir program. That said, I should add that Ben Kingsley, who plays Gandhi, is quite extraordinary. To see him leading a crowd of 15,000 Indians in some of those scenes is terribly moving. Young Americans will love it."

"I'm so impressed by this film that I'll do absolutely everything I can to help promote it. That's one of the reasons I'm in the South of France now. I'm in the middle of shooting a film in Paris at the moment ("Enigma"), but I knew Richard would be here so I caught a train last night to join him."

"It's quite simple. Gandhi was one of the most important men who ever lived and this is a very important picture. And playing that role in it—and it's quite small, just a few scenes—is possibly the most important work I've yet done."

One of the reasons Sheen was so taken with the film and its restating of Gandhi's message of peace is that, after "Apocalypse Now," he vowed he would never again make a film which featured violence. Because of that he has turned down several films and even managed to get some scenes in "Enigma" changed.

"I really do feel strongly about it," he said. "What a lot of people don't know is that there was a tremendous amount of violence in "Apocalypse Now" which was cut out. I had some really horrendous scenes in that film; scenes where I killed lots of people with my own hands."

"There was one scene right at the end where I go to kill a man with a spear and he holds up a child to protect himself. My spear goes through both of them. I thought that was a bit much, but Francis said, 'We killed many innocent children to attain our objectives in Vietnam.' However, the scene was later cut."

Sheen took his 19-year-old son, Emilio, to India with him to work as his stand-in. Emilio has now begun act-



Martin Sheen portrays a journalist in "Gandhi."

ing in his first film—"Tex," being made by Disney.

"He's acting as Emilio Estevez, which is my real name," Sheen said. "He asked my advice. Should he adopt the name Sheen, too? I told him no. If you use Sheen and you are a success you will always wonder if part of that success wasn't due to my name, I told him. Use Estevez and the credit can be all yours. So that's what he's doing . . ."