

MAHARAJA OF MEDIA

Russell Smith represents Hollywood's elite—from Mysore, India.

RUSSELL SMITH IS only rarely in the New York headquarters of Smith Dornan Dehn, the firm that bears his name. He spends most days working from his Mysore, India, office, where he first went to study yoga. Before that, he was stationed at his beach house in Montauk, Long Island.

But in March he was in the ten-lawyer media and intellectual property firm's generic-looking New York conference room. Among the lawyers seated there were British and Irish transplants. A poster on the wall behind them read "Who be dis Ali G?" Ali G, aka Sacha Baron Cohen, the star of *Da Ali G Show* and the lawsuit-laden film *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*, is one of Smith's clients.

But it's not Borat business that brings Smith, 51, to New York. It's India. The team has spent the past eight days meeting with movie studios and publishers to market its new idea: outsourcing legal work to India. Smith has opened a 40-lawyer Indian outsourcing subsidiary, SDD Global Solutions Pvt. Ltd.. The lawyers do legal research, draft pleadings, and

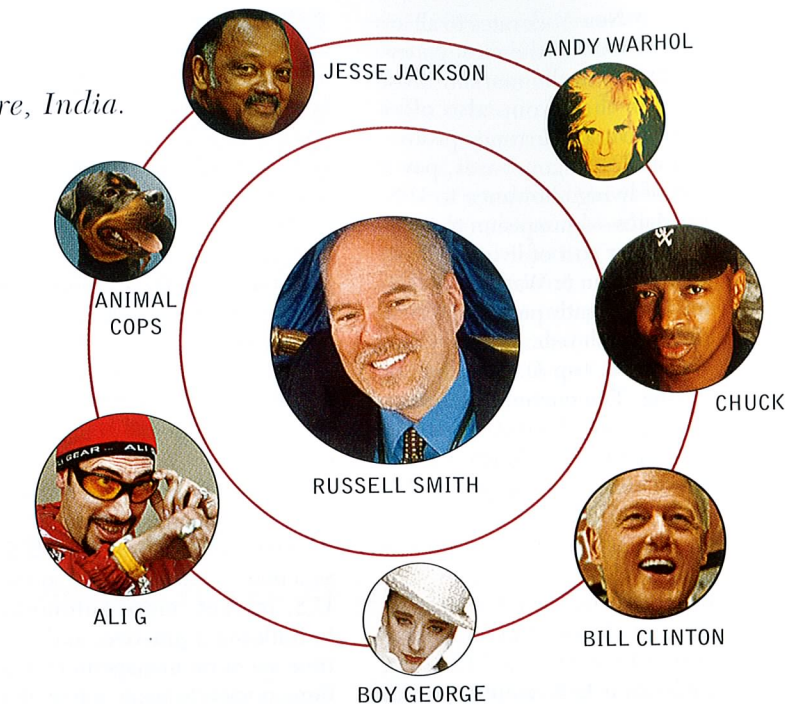
memoranda, and process U.S. visas and health insurance claims, all for \$30–\$90 an hour.

Smith Dornan, founded in 1996, is not a traditional law firm. That's probably because its founder, Smith, isn't a traditional lawyer. "He just sort of refuses to conform to the rigid legal stereotype," says Aaron Georghades, executive vice president of SDD Global.

He made partner at Frankfurt, Garbus, Klein & Selz (now Frankfurt Kurnit Klein & Selz) in 1994, but quickly felt the need to move on. "I began to think I didn't want to be a lawyer anymore," says Smith. His solution: a yearlong sabbatical on the northwest coast of Ireland.

Smith intended to spend his time in Ireland, a country he had been visiting for years, engaged in quiet contemplation. It didn't work out that way. "People would just be knocking on my door bringing a bottle of whisky." He did manage to write a novel, but the book was never published—mostly, says Smith, because he wasn't a good writer.

He came back to the states in 1996 and started his own firm. His first case involved *Rent*, the musical. Smith represented Lynn Thomson, who claimed she was



denied royalties and credit for her work on the Broadway show. Smith won. Next he tackled a libel case for Roberts Reinhart Publishers of Boulder. He hired Eamonn Dornan, the head of the legal department at the Emerald Isle Immigration Center, a non-profit organization for Irish immigrants, and the firm was born.

But Smith was restless. He'd been practicing yoga for many years and in 2004 he went to Mysore to study "at the feet" of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois. After many visits to the city he began to no-

tice both the many talented lawyers and the low cost of doing business. In April 2006 Smith launched SDD Global.

Smith Dornan now represents 12 television series, as well as Home Box Office, Inc., Sony Pictures Television, and The William J. Clinton Foundation. Since he works on Indian time, Smith gets woken up most nights. The price of not conforming. —JESSICA JONES

LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS (CHUCK D); NANCY KASZERMAN/CORBIS (CLINTON); TERRY O'NEILL/GETTY IMAGES (BOY GEORGE); STEVEN SENNE/AP PHOTO (ALI G); MIKE WATSON/CORBIS (DOG); AARON M. SPRECHER/CORBIS (JACKSON)

CITATIONS

"Nothing more than politics."

—Jerry Clements, the current managing partner at Locke Liddell & Sapp, on the controversy about the firing of U.S. attorneys surrounding Harriet Miers, the former White House counsel. Miers has rejoined the firm. As quoted by United Press International on April 20, 2007.

"There are few lawyers who deserve the title of superstar, and one of them is Mr. Gary. He's pretty much in a category all his own."

—Fort Lauderdale judge Leroy Moe,

awarding a \$22.9 million fee to Willie Gary for his work in *SPS Technologies v. Motorola*. As quoted in the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* on April 21, 2007.

"Typically, large numbers of associates go off and write memos that get tucked into the lower right-hand side of someone's drawer."

—Gordon Davidson, chairman of Fenwick & West. Davidson says hourly billing causes inefficiencies, and that the firm is increasingly using monthly fixed-fee arrangements. As quoted in *The Wall Street Journal* on May 2, 2007.

"This shows that we are reaching a crisis point when it comes to the retention and advancement of women in the legal profession."

—Lauren Stiller Rikleen, partner at Bowditch & Dewey, on a study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that found that women leave the partnership track in far greater numbers than men, and most often do so because of the difficulty of combining work and child care. As quoted in *The Boston Globe* on May 2, 2007.