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Canadian TV is cool now, and Jasmeet Raina is thrilled about it

Late Bloomer creator says that the success of Heated Rivalry has put eyes on the whole industry

[Chris Dart](#) · CBC Arts · Posted: Apr 24, 2026 10:36 AM MST | Last Updated: 1 hour ago



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Jasmeet Raina (right), Ahamed Weinberg and Amit Aujila as Jasmeet Dutta, Neal Soori and Navi in *Late Bloomer* (Crave/Bell Media)

A lot of things are different for the third season going into the third season of *Late Bloomer* according to the show's creator, Jasmeet Raina. For one thing, it's coming out at a time when English Canadian TV and film is suddenly cool.

Heated Rivalry — a Crave production like *Late Bloomer* — was arguably the biggest show in the world last year. But it's not just that. *The Office Movers*, another Crave show, made by Jae and Trey Richards — a duo of comedic brothers who, like Raina, got their start on [YouTube in the 2010s — had a viral moment thanks to a Drake cameo](#). Meanwhile on the big screen, [Nirvana: The Band – The Show – The Movie](#), *Undertone* and *Mile End Kicks* are putting up solid numbers at the box office while also getting critical acclaim.

- [Heated Rivalry is a 'joyfully smutty' gay hockey romance — but it's also about love](#)

Raina says that he's thrilled that *Heated Rivalry* blew up like it did, since it puts more eyes on Crave, and that *Nirvana: The Band – The Show – The Movie* was “one of the funniest things I've seen in my life ... I went to go watch it with a bunch of friends and we were all just dying in the theatre” but also that it made Toronto seem “cool and funny and interesting. I walked out of the theatre being like ‘Oh I feel cool that I'm from Toronto.’”

In *Late Bloomer*, Raina plays a character loosely modeled on himself, an actor and online content creator called Jasmeet Dutta. The show has always been, to some extent, a commentary on the nature of online fame, but in the third season, that part of the story feels even more front and centre. After the struggles of the first two seasons, you get the sense that Dutta has really “made it:” he's getting brand deals, he has a manager, he's living in a nice condo. Unfortunately, he's also wracked with self-doubt, his manager is a bit sketchy, and he's heartbroken. He's also dealing with an increasingly demanding audience. In the first episode, a fan suggests he's “fallen off” because he hasn't posted in two weeks. And to top it all off, he's being haunted by Prem, a younger, hungrier, even more chronically online vertical video star, played by real-life TikTok star Prayag Mishra.

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Raina says that, even though he came up in a very different era of the internet, he still felt pressure to produce more, faster in his YouTube days, a path that he ultimately decided wasn't for him. “YouTube rewarded people that would upload like three times a week and just... make something fast,” he says. “Like, do like a cinnamon challenge, or just talk to the camera and do like “10 things that you like about such and such...” I kind of went against that and I was like, “No, I want to create more of a production, I want to have people acting in it, location, scenes ... And it's fine if I'm not rewarded by the YouTube algorithm.”

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That pressure is infinitely higher now, and Raina says the combination of the need for constant posting and platforms that are more and more algorithm driven means that content “we're not exposed to as much originality because we can get caught up in these trend-y algorithm loops.”

Fortunately for him, he doesn't have to worry about creating viral moments like he used to.

“I personally feel so lucky and grateful that I have something like the show, because I can just put so much time and energy into it and ... try to craft it in the best way that I can. And social media for me is just like, fun.”

Another thing that's changed for the third season is Raina's willingness to experiment while making the show.



Jasmeet Raina and Sugenja Sri as Jasmeet Dutta and Chippy Ananthan in *Late Bloomer*. (Crave/Bell Media)

Raina says that when he was making the first season he “had no idea how to make a TV show ... And so I felt like a lot of my time and energy was also put into learning how to make a show.”

In the second season, he made his directorial debut, which meant he was “learning the ropes” of life on that side of the camera. But for the third season, the show has really hit its stride. “It just felt like a much better, cohesive machine the way we operated this time around,” he says. “I feel that really comes off on the screen as well. The cast has a better chemistry, the writing feels more elevated, it’s stronger ... Every episode just feels so different and in its own world, and that’s kind of like the way I operated on YouTube as well.”

He adds that he and the rest of the cast felt more free to improvise this season than in the previous two, which he says led to some of his favourite scenes in the series. “That’s also how I used to do YouTube,” he says. “There would be like a rough scene written, some things would be fully written, we’d be like, “Cool, this is the loose premise,” and then we’d just improv a lot, just throw lines back at each other, and sometimes a lot of good magic comes out of that.”

He particularly singles out co-star Ahamed Weinberg for praise. The Los Angeles-based comedian plays Neal, Dutta’s half-white stoner slacker cousin, struggling with his identity. It’s a character that’s loosely based on one of Raina’s own cousins, and Raina says Weinberg’s own identity — raised Muslim by two converts to the faith, one

originally Jewish, the other Catholic — allows him to bring something unique to the role.

“We immediately became really good friends,” he says. “Ahamed grew up with a lot of brown people and brown Muslims, he has that unique interesting perspective on life. And I grew up in a [primarily] white city. I feel like that's why I have an interesting perspective. People that grow up in, like, outside pockets always have this interesting perspective.”

Season 3 of Late Bloomer premieres on Crave on April 24.


