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Rear Window

The indestructible Devesh Chetty

Personal redemption is a core film industry concept: no matter how much fraud, dishonesty and plain hokiness you may have in your past, tomorrow is a fresh new page.

There's an indestructible quality to film financier **Devesh Chetty**. Four years ago he was sentenced to 22 weeks' jail in Singapore for forgery, but really it's a tribute to the film industry's

unflagging ability to look on the bright side that Chetty was ever in a position to handle the missing \$17 million in question.

He's always been well connected. For years, Chetty helped run **Robyn Gardner's** talent management group, RGM, which was behind famous faces such as **Cate Blanchett, Rose Byrne** and **Anthony LaPaglia**.

And always misunderstood. In the 1990s when he was general manager of filmmaker Scanbox Asia, Chetty was accused of taking a secret commission to promote a film script.

He denied it, and in a release deed Chetty stated he received no other payments, and Scanbox directors agreed not to inform the Victorian Police of the matter.

Scanbox's 1999 film *The Shrink Is In*, starring **Courteney Cox** and **David Arquette**, was financed by a \$US7.4 million loan from Comerica Bank, on the basis that Chetty had already secured distribution deals worth \$US3.2 million.

But the distribution deals, including one with Becker Group in Australia, had side deals where Scanbox secretly promised to refund most of the distribution payments.

Chetty later partnered with Gardner to run RGM Entertainment in Singapore. He convinced Singapore's Media Development Authority to invest \$27.5 million to foster local film production.

In 2010, Chetty and Gardner backed the business into the listed RGM Media, which lasted only two years before collapsing.

Meanwhile, Singapore's MDA was getting restive about where its money had gone. It had been swallowed by

losses, but Chetty forged two bank statements to show his company still held the funds (there was no suggestion of improper behaviour by Gardner).

Chetty was charged over the forgeries and was out on bail when another investor, **Garett Lim**, asked about \$2 million he had lent Chetty. No problem – Chetty provided another forged bank record to show he still had the money.

Chetty was sentenced to 22 weeks' prison for the three forgeries. He's had a low profile since then, until last March, when Melbourne law firm QR Lawyers obtained a bankruptcy ruling against him.

For anyone else, bankruptcy is an end note. For Chetty, it just means he's *back*. Hey, it's the film business.



Courteney Cox, who starred in *The Shrink Is In*, is unaware of the secret side deals used to fund the movie.