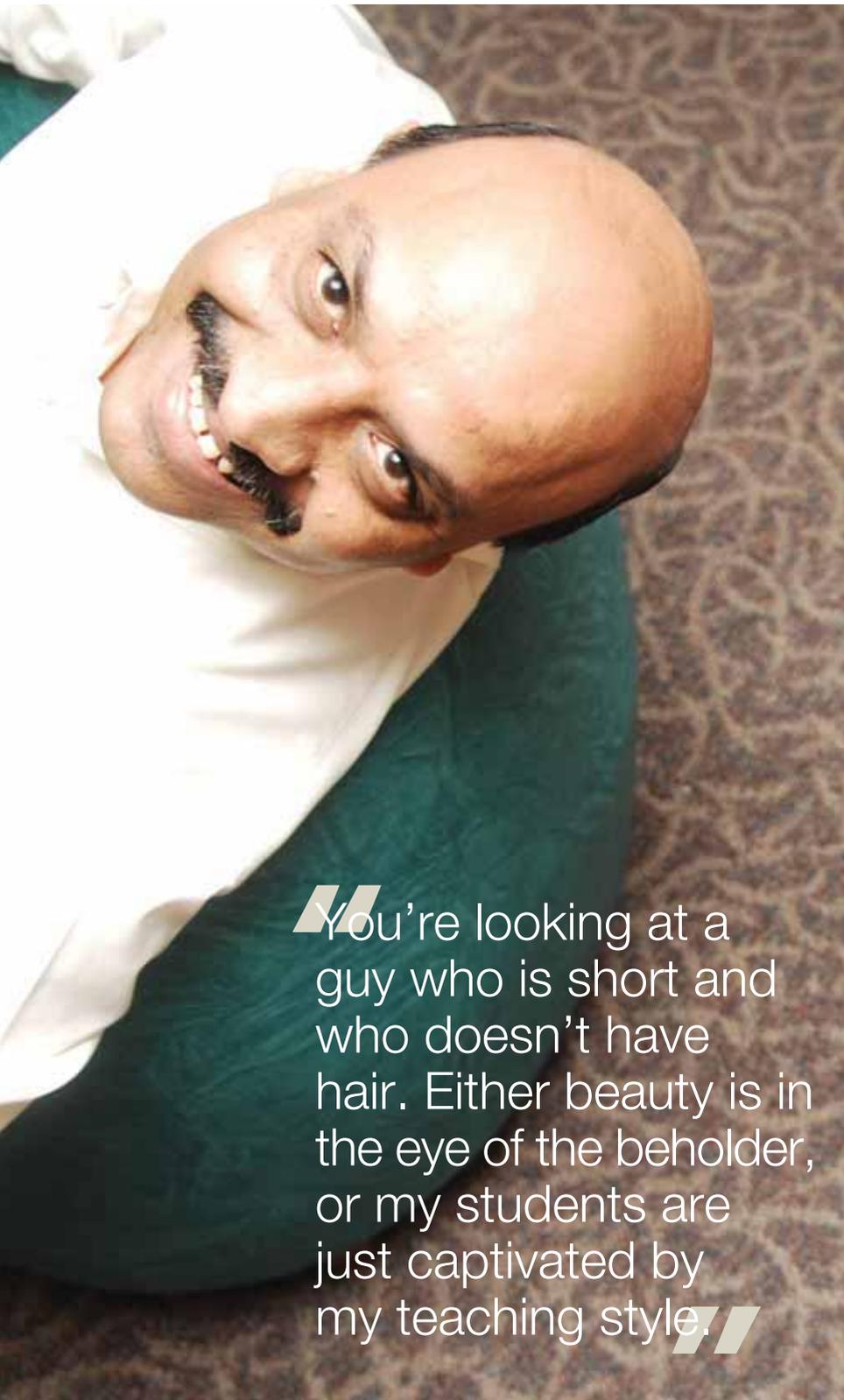


# The You Tube idol

Surely a star is born as award-winning professor **Lalit Goel**'s video lecture scores about 375,000 YouTube hits.

By **HO PEK YEE**  
PHOTOS: **NIK KIONG**





“You’re looking at a guy who is short and who doesn’t have hair. Either beauty is in the eye of the beholder, or my students are just captivated by my teaching style.”

**G**o ahead, tell Prof Lalit Goel that he’s a hit. Everyone else has.

“I have received so many email messages from former students, some who graduated in as far back as 1997,” says the genial 46-year-old Head of the Power Engineering division at the School of Electrical & Electronic Engineering (EEE). “And they are all very happy to see me, um, Making It Big.”

That’s not exactly an overstatement on his part. Ever since a video of one of his lectures in which he showed a series of overhead transparency slides containing funny feedback from students past was posted on video-sharing website YouTube last October, the Circuit Analysis lecturer has become a virtual celebrity. The last time we checked, the five-minute clip has received about 375,000 views from five different uploads.

The anonymous feedback submitted via forms at the end of an academic module was collected over the years, and includes comments that described him as “sexy” and “handsome”. One pert pupil declared that the father of two – or “baby”, as she called him – was making her, well, all hot and bothered.

#### STYLE & SUBSTANCE

Lalit suspects the YouTube video was copied from the one he had uploaded himself onto the university’s e-learning website during NTU’s e-learning week last year, when students attended classes from home via the Internet. He knows with certainty, however, that the amorous notes from his former charges were all in jest. “You’re looking at a guy who is short and who doesn’t have hair,” he says with a twinkle in his eye. “Either beauty is in the eye of the beholder, or they are just captivated by my teaching style.”

And it’s a style that’s not without substance. Since he arrived in Singapore to teach at NTU in 1991, Lalit has garnered 15 Teacher of the Year awards – two from the university, six from his school, and seven from the EEE Club.

“Perhaps it’s my enthusiasm, and the fact that I’m loud and clear,” he says as he tries to pin down his appeal. “I’m somebody who is willing not just to teach, but to be a friend. I make it a point to respond to all email from students within 24 hours. And, despite my strict attitude in class, the majority of my students really, really enjoy my lessons.”



We'll excuse him if he sounds a little protective when it comes to his rep as the Teach to watch. This may be because this is an accolade he never dreamt he would be earning when he accepted a job from NTU after obtaining his PhD from Canada's University of Saskatchewan in 1991.

"I was a reluctant teacher," he admits. "I wanted to take a job with power company BC Hydro in Vancouver, but my wife did not want to stay in Canada because of the cold. So I started to apply for jobs in places closer to India which would also offer me world-class facilities and opportunities to grow. NTU was a good place."

Although "apprehensive" at first that students would give him a "tough time", Lalit soon discovered what a knack he had for this profession. "I adjusted very quickly," he recalls. "And teaching is what I enjoy most about my job now."

### A DREAM COME TRUE

In July 2005, he was appointed Head of the Power Engineering division. And October last year was memorable not only because of his star appearance on YouTube, but also because it was the month he was conferred full professorship, earning tenure to the age of 65.

"This is a dream come true," he says. "EEE has 210 academic staff, and the number of full professors is about 18, so this is a very big deal. Knowingly or unknowingly, this is something I had been working towards all along. My motto has always been to be sincere and try to do my best. Sometimes when you do that, you wish to be recognised and rewarded. And NTU has rewarded me well."

A New Delhi native, Lalit doesn't need a blue IC to show where his heart lies. "If it is entirely up to me, I would love to stay here and work as long as I can," he says.

Lalit and his family call an apartment on campus home. Like a true-blue Singaporean, he has toyed with the idea of investing in a condominium, but, for now, it seems he has other priorities.

"My elder son wants to go to the UK to study. That may cost me an arm and a leg, but, between you and me, if that is where he wants to go, I'll pay for it."

To this dedicated teacher and father, perhaps there's nothing more important than helping those around him get a good education. **n**



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