

COMMUNITY NEWS IN BRIEF

The festival's mandate is to showcase independent films: **AROON SHIVDASANI**

In a conversation with hi INDIA, Aroon Shivedasani, Festival Founder and Executive Director of Indo-American Arts Council touched a wide array of topics – their mission, vision, achievements, and dreams.

BY BIDISHA ROY

What's special about this year's festival?

NYIFF 2013 kicks off the worldwide celebration of 100 years of Indian cinema at the anniversary of this event. We have 3 newly restored landmark films from the history of Indian cinema and two world premiere films that speak about that history – one is a documentary that takes us thru the various stages of our film industry, and the second tells the story of music that is so intrinsically a part of the fabric of Indian cinema. In addition, NYU TISCH is partnering with us for the post-screening discussions – taking them to a new level of understanding this crucial history thru a global lens.

One of the goals of organizing a film festival is to create a bond with the audience. How successful are you in doing that?

This is a fabulous success story. Our audiences are growing on an annual basis and we regularly have lines of waitlists for our films. We have repeat audiences who love our programming and new audiences who have heard of the amazing films that are very rarely screened outside our festival. The quality of our programming, the efficiency of the organization and the happy friendly ambience all contribute to a fantastic bond between us and our audiences.

In India regional films are often ignored in festivals/awards. Don't you think that should be changed since regional cinema contributes a lot?

NYIFF regularly screens fabulous regional cinema with English subtitles. Our audiences react positively to them and we continually scout good regional cinema. I do believe these films are gaining ground in India as they are more frequently grabbing national awards. Yes, they need more visibility.....we are working towards that goal.

For many Americans, Indian films mean only 'Bollywood' with its typical songs and dance items. Has that perception changed?

Yes and no. Bollywood will remain the dominant Indian film medium for a long time. However, Indian independent cinema was alive and well in India, but unrecognized by all but a few film aficionados and academics in the west. Our festival, and the maturity of younger, socially conscious filmmakers who have been aggressive in sticking with their passion rather than

falling into the traditional safe route, has greatly contributed to a host of good independent, alternate and diaspora films that are appreciated, and therefore recognized as valid Indian cinema. In addition, non-Indian filmmakers have found a new interest in India and all things Indian – especially documentary filmmakers who are curious and fascinated by our diverse, culturally distinct world.

Keeping the non-Indian audience in mind, how do you select the films for screening? For example, if you show Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge and Meghe Dhaka Tara or Pather Panchali in the same festival, won't that create a confusion about real India?

We program quality films on their merit and on several other factors in our selection criteria. Audience reaction is not the top of the list. Of course it is important but not to such an overriding degree that we will choose a film because we aren't sure about it but think the audience will love it. Our festival mandate is to showcase independent/alternate/art-house/diaspora films.....Bollywood is only featured in a retrospective or for a specific industry panel theme.

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The 13th Annual New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF) hosted an exclusive kickoff screening of 'Midnight's Children' followed by a special Q&A on April 10, 2013 at the Academy Theatre, New York. The Indo-American Arts Council (IAAC) is presenting the 13th Annual New York Indian Film Festival, the oldest and most prestigious film festival for Indian cinema in North America, from Tuesday, April 30 to Saturday, May 4, 2013 in New York City.

The star-studded event was a special kickoff screening held in conjunction with the New York Indian Film Festival. Attending the premiere and participating in a post-screening Q&A with the audience were director Deepa Mehta, author Salman Rushdie who also adapted the screenplay, producer David Hamilton, actor Samrat Chakrabarti, and actress Sarita Choudhury.

Deepa Mehta returned to NYIFF after her Oscar-nominated film Water opened the film festival in 2005. "We have had a very long and creatively fruitful relationship with NYIFF. FIRE,

to unemployment to education. Considered by many to be second only to the Nobel Prize in prestige, the medal is awarded annually by the American Economic Association (AEA) to an American economist under the age of 40 who is judged to have made the most significant contribution to economic thought and knowledge. At 33 years old, Chetty is

the second-youngest ever to receive the award.

"Raj Chetty is a remarkably productive economist whose contributions assimilate evidence using a variety of methodological perspectives to shed new light on important public policy questions," the AEA wrote, in presenting Chetty with the medal.



Harvard economist Raj Chetty awarded John Bates Clark medal

BY A STAFF WRITER

Raj Chetty, an Indian American economist who is a professor at Harvard, has been awarded the 2013 John Bates Clark Medal in recognition of his work, which combines empirical evidence and theory to inform the design of more effective government policies on everything from taxation



Raj Chetty



BY BIDISHA ROY

'MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN' KICKS OFF NEW YORK INDIAN FILM

festival

the very first film in the elemental Trilogy was shown there and almost every film I have made since," said Mehta.

Aroon Shivedasani, Festival Founder and Executive Director of Indo-American Arts Council, was in fact the driving force for the creation of 'Midnight's Children'. She brought Salman Rushdie to the premiere screening of 'Water' in New York and that began a close relationship with Salman, which culminated in the very first film adaptation of any of his novels. "It is enormously pleasing for me to be once again collaborating with NYIFF and bringing to their extremely discerning audience 'Midnight's Children', a film that I have been dreaming of doing since I first read the book over 30 years ago."

Long-time supporter of NYIFF, Salman Rushdie also narrates the film. "I'm delighted the film of 'Midnight's Children' is to be given this preview screening in New York by my old friends at NYIFF," said Rushdie before the screening.

This year incredible India will present 100 years of Indian cinema at NYIFF 2013. It includes US Premiere Screenings of the Newly Restored Classics Uday Shanker's KALPANA, M.S. Sathyu's GARAM HAWA, and Kundan Shah's JAANE BHI DO YAARO

about the state of old Indian films."

However, he notes that recently, "There have been some valiant people who have stepped forward to restore some of the films. NYIFF has the honor of presenting the first US screenings of all three films since their majestic new restoration in this incredible series that is fittingly sponsored by Incredible India!"

The New York Indian Film Festival will kick off its week-long festivities with a star-studded Opening Night red carpet premiere of Feroz Abbas Khan's DEKH TAMASHA DEKH on April 30, 2013, which will take place at the Skirball Center for Performing Arts.

Festival screenings will take place throughout the week at Tribeca Cinemas, with Nitin Kakkar's FILMISTAAAN on May 4, 2013, the Closing Night selection to be followed by the annual awards ceremony and after-party at the Skirball Center for Performing Arts.

"We are proud to be among the first supporters of immensely talented directors like Feroz Abbas Khan and Nitin Kakkar, says Assem Chhabra. "It is in keeping with our mission to bring a diverse group of voices to the forefront. The themes of communal harmony and antagonism are shared in our opening and closing films and sheds light to important issues."

In conjunction with their stellar cinematic line-up, NYIFF also presents excellent, informative networking events in the form of industry panels. These panels explore in depth such topics as financing, distribution, and production in an increasingly global market, and are helmed by esteemed experts in the film industry.



(L-R) Samrat Chakrabarti, David Hamilton, Deepa Mehta, and Salman Rushdie at the Academy Theatre (Photo credit: NEW YORK DREAMS)

FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU
High: 63 Low: 44	High: 63 Low: 48	High: 62 Low: 50	High: 58 Low: 49	High: 58 Low: 50	High: 59 Low: 49	High: 59 Low: 51



Nizam's pink diamond sells for \$40 million at Christie's auction

BY A STAFF WRITER

An amazing 34-carat pink diamond from the mines of Golconda in South India, once owned by the world's richest man - the last Nizam of Hyderabad, was sold at Christie's auction house in New York for nearly \$40 million, setting a new record for the auction house.

An anonymous telephone bidder paid \$39,323,750, more than \$1 million per carat, for the diamond, the auction house said in a statement Tuesday April 16.

The Princie Diamond, an extraordinary 34.65-carat Fancy Intense Pink cushion-cut faceted diamond was once owned by the Royal family of Hyderabad, rulers of one of the wealthiest provinces of the Mughal Empire, Christie's said in a statement.



The Princie Diamond, an extraordinary 34.65-carat Fancy Intense Pink cushion-cut faceted diamond was once owned by the Royal family of Hyderabad. 46,000 pounds for it, equivalent to \$1.3 million. Previously, the most paid at Christie's for a diamond was \$24.3 million, for the 31-carat Wittelsbach diamond in 2008.

The exclusive jewelry firm originally paid

AAPI patron member Dr. VK Raju receives AMA Dr. Nathan Davis International Award

BY A STAFF WRITER

VK Raju, MD, FRCS, FACS is founding patron member of AAPI and Chair, Prevention of Blindness committee, was honored recently at the American Medical Association (AMA) Foundation's 2013 Excellence in Medicine Award. He is a recipient of the Dr. Nathan Davis International Award in Medicine, which recognizes physicians whose influence reach the international patient population and change the future of their medical care.

In the award letter sent to Dr. Raju, the AMA Foundation said, "the caliber of our nominees was awe-inspiring, and your selection from such an impressive group speaks volumes in recognizing your dedication to the profession of medicine."

Dr. Raju is the Founder and Medical Director of the Eye Foundation of America (EFA), a charitable organization that provides eye care in 21 developing countries to combat avoidable childhood blindness since 1979.

Dr. Raju is also a Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at West Virginia University and has lectureships in various universities across the United States. American Academy of Ophthalmology awards him Achievement Award, Senior Achievement Award, Best Film Award and Outstanding Humanitarian award. He is also recipient of Martin Luther King Jr award from West Virginia University. He is a Fellow of the



Dr. VK Raju