

'Lipstick Under My Burkha' Opens 17th New York Indian Film Festival



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By JIM GALLETINE

Director Alankrita Shrivastava's controversial new film "Lipstick Under My Burkha", which had earlier been refused a certification by India's Central Board of Film Certification, opened the 17th Annual New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF) to much anticipation and fanfare. The gala premiere was held on the evening of April 30th at Village East Cinema in Downtown Manhattan.

Produced by Prakash Jha and starring Konkona Sen Sharma, Ratna Pathak, Aahana Kumra and Plabita Borthakur, the film tells overlapping stories of four women as they try to break out of their repressive lives in a conservative society.

The title comes from a Muslim college student who secrets lipstick under burkha, as she aspires to audition for a pop music competition at her school. The other char-

acters include a young, married beautician having an affair; a photographer; an oppressed, entrepreneurial mother and homemaker selling household items door-to-door and a middle-aged widow who conducts a romance by phone.

Although "Lipstick Under My Burkha" was censored by the Central Board back in January, as being among other things "lady-oriented", director Shrivastava said that



Salman Rushdie and Kiran Desai

their decision was successfully appealed to the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal.

"They have found that the decision of the Central board was wrong and have overturned it," she confirmed.

Shrivastava also anticipates that the release date of film will be announced in the next few weeks, which might mean the film could be in theaters over this summer.

After the screening, NYIFF director Assem Chhabra MCed a Q&A with Shrivastava and actress Aahana Kumra, who appeared in the film.

Shrivastava reiterated that even though there are constitutional guarantees of women's rights, the status of many women is still very repressed. Kumra commented, regarding how there are so few good roles for female actors, that "You don't get these types of scripts every day!"

Much-talked about "Lipstick Under My Burkha" did receive somewhat mixed reviews from the premiere's attendees.

Noted cookbook author Madhur Jaffrey thought the film showcased women's issues and was "wonderfully directed". On the other hand, filmmaker Kawa Hatef, show-

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Q&A with "Lipstick Under My Burkha" actress Aahana Kumra, "Lipstick Under My Burkha" director Alankrita Shrivastava, NYIFF director Assem Chhabra



Rahul Bose and Aahana Kumra