

By ELA DUTT

— NEW YORK

The 16th annual New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF) held its inaugural gala May 7, at the Skirball Center for Performing Arts. Billed as the oldest, most prestigious Indian film festival in the U.S., this year's smorgasbord of independent, art house, alternate, and diaspora films, screened over the period May 7-14, includes 40 screenings (35 narrative, 5 documentary), all seen for the first time in New York City. In addition, the festival also features five programs of short films.

Numerous film-makers with their cast appeared on the red carpet speaking about their films. Celebrities spotted at the gala included author Salman Rushdie, filmmaker Mira Nair, author and actress Madhur Jaffrey, India's Consul General in New York Riva Ganguly Das, and author Suketu Mehta.

The dance troupe, Manhattan Andaaz performed. The master of ceremonies was Sree Srinivasan, chief digital officer of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Aroon Shivdasani, executive and artistic director of the Indo-American Arts Council, which puts the show together, welcomed the guests.

Nair, who is "Face of the Festival" according to Shivdasani, spoke about the growing influence of the festival and dwelt on her new film about Uganda, her second home.

Indian Film Festival Features Film World's Elite And Newbies



The 16th Annual New York Indian Film Festival opened May 7 at the Skirball Center for Performing Arts, showcasing new filmmakers. Seen in photo, from left, Aroon Shivdasani, executive and artistic director of the Indo American Arts Council which organizes the festival; Bardroy Baretto, director of Nachom-ia-Kumpasar (Let's Dance to the Music); a Konkani film celebrating Goan music and culture of a forgotten era, which was screened at the gala; Aseem Chhabra, NYIFF director; and Palomi Ghosh, lead actress of the film.

The film, Nachom-ia-Kumpasar (Let's Dance to the Rhythm) was screened, followed by a discussion with director Bardroy Baretto, producer Angelo Braganza, and actress Palomi Ghosh, moderated by NYIFF Director Aseem Chhabra. The Konkani feature film is a tribute to Goan music and musicians of the 1960s and 1970s, narrated through the emotional roller-coaster of a love story, telling the nostalgic tale of musicians who lived and died unrecognized, unappreciated and unsung.

A high-priced ticket gala benefit dinner attended by some 250 invitees rubbing shoulders with

filmmakers and celebrities, concluded the evening. Ghosh, the lead character in the Konkani film, upon request, sang a few songs impromptu at the gala, bringing people to their feet to dance.

"It was a very exciting night," Shivdasani told *Desi Talk*. "We never actually had a language film for opening night. This was a complete departure and what that means is we are getting bolder," she laughed. Baretto is an emerging filmmaker and neither the director or the cast are well known. "Still we had a lovely opening," Shivdasani said.

The 7-day festival highlights

various cinemas of India's different regions, all subtitled in English. Among the languages this year were Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu, Assamese, Haryanvi and Urdu.

"Each of these language films have been gems," Shivdasani said. "And another thing different in this year's festival is we've never had so many panels before," Shivdasani noted. Panels where representatives of each of the language films discussed their experiences; an LGBT panel, among others.

The festival also features the National Film Development

Corporation of India-restored first films of filmmakers, and a three-generations sidebar, films of Bimal Roy, Basu Bhattacharya and Aditya Bhattacharya. Two National Award winners, Famous in Ahmedabad and Daarvatha, are among the 40 or so shorts being screened. The lineup also includes 2016 National Award winners, A Far Afternoon, Birds With Large Wings, and The River of Fables, an Assamese language feature film.

Among diaspora films is Good Ol' Boy, a feel-good, coming-of-age story of Smith, a 10-year old growing up in small-town America in 1979, featuring some well-known actors in Samrat Chakrabarti (Midnight's Children, The Waiting City) and Poorna Jagannathan (Delhi Belly, Nirbhaya).

Soumitra Chatterjee Bengali starrer, Peace Haven, is the story of three septuagenarian friends who embark on a journey to build their very own mortuary. Multiple award winner and fresh from the international film festival circuit, Parched, is about four ordinary women in rural Gujarat who talk unapologetically about men, sex and life as they struggle with their individual boundaries.

The highlight is the world premiere of Kagaz Ki Kashti (Paperboat), which tracks the life of a down-to-earth, small-town boy, who made it big in the Ghazal world breaking through the norms and mixing western instrumentation, to make this classical genre simple and humble.



From left, Inder Shivdasani and India's Consul General in New York Riva Ganguly Das at the inaugural gala benefit dinner of the New York Indian Film Festival May 7, at the Skirball Center for Performing Arts.



From left, an unidentified guest, author Salman Rushdie, film-maker Mira Nair, and author and actress Madhur Jaffrey at the inaugural gala benefit dinner May 7.



Actress Shilpa Sinha, producer of 'Kagaz Ki Kashti' Bhramanand Singh, writer Tarvi Jain, actresses Deepa Mishra and Sunita Dubey.



People behind the film "Misaligned," from left, actor Kabir Chopra, producer Sheetal Vyas, film maker Paul Moon, an unidentified guest and producer Sammy Gallo.

ASTROLOGY

This week for you



By DR. PREM KUMAR SHARMA

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ARIES: A long pending decision gets finalized at professional front. Enjoying a picnic with family will not only bring joy but also help in clearing misunderstandings. Investment in antiques & jewelry brings monetary gains and improvement in financial position. Romantic imagination would keep you in a jovial & cheerful mood. Good time to divert attention to spirituality to enhance mental toughness.

TAURUS: Plans for new ventures get streamlined with the help of seniors. Charming nature and pleasant personality would make you the attraction of family function this week. Long pending arrears and dues will finally be recovered. The company of love partner makes you forget about the work. A pleasure trip gives the much-needed tonic to health. You can make your vacation extra special by planning it with your family and friends.

GEMINI: Female colleagues lend a helping hand in completing important assignments. Family members appreciate the changes made in & around the house. This week investment concerning residence will be profitable. Sudden romantic encounter will lift your spirits. If you wish to achieve a good deal in property then try at commercial basis. You use latent talent to fight adverse conditions with courage and conviction.

CANCER: At work you will be a part of something big, bringing appreciation & rewards. Friends and family members would encourage to work harder. Financial hassles seem to get over as someone lends a timely helping hand. Attending a social event/family function brings a romantic encounter. A beneficial week to work on things that will improve your health. Vacation full of beauty and history as well as exciting is waiting for you.

LEO: You are likely to establish yourself a good manager on managing people and situation without any problem. You are likely to hear a good news from close relatives. Promising week to invest surplus money in real estate. Your physical charm would catch the attraction of opposite sex. Traveling on your own, with a friend or with the whole family will be exciting and comfortable too.

VIRGO: You will be successful in realising your targets at professional front. An old friend makes a pleasant visit later in the week. A sound financial health would enable to invest on lucrative schemes. Love life blossoms paving the way for lovely times ahead. A week when smile will perpetually be on your face and strangers will seem familiar. Travel in comfort with kids to an adventurous place might be possible. Looking to buy property, then go for commercial one.

LIBRA: With your high confidence you will be able to cross all hurdles at professional front. Evening enjoyed with family and close relatives brings immense pleasure. Your brilliant ideas would help in bringing financial gains. A romantic encounter is likely to add spice to life. Your energy level will be high. Better to channelise it in a positive direction. A trip that stimulates and gives opportunity for work is coming ahead.

SCORPIO: Timely help of associates will not only pass difficult times at work but also help in regaining professional edge. You are likely to plan a short trip with family. A promising week to earn profits in real estate and financial transactions. Romantic partner would try innovative methods to catch your attention. A luxurious getaway type vacation with your spouse waiting for you. A good deal for your new property is ready to be made.

SAGITTARIUS: A promising week to start a new venture in partnership. All are likely to be benefited. Unexpected visit by old friend could give you a pleasant surprise. An improvement in monetary position makes it convenient to purchase essential items. Thrilling experience is on your way, as your trip is full of excitement. Buying overseas property will be beneficiary for you. You strive to mould orthodox thinking to benefit you.

CAPRICORN: Your technical expertise gives a decisive edge over competitors at work. Good advice from family members will help in reducing mental tension/pressure. This week long-term investment would enable to make substantial gains. Your generous attitude would contribute much in your love life this week. Meditation and self-realization prove beneficial. Pack your bags as a happy, fun-filled holiday is looking forward.

AQUARIUS: Hard work of the past brings rich dividends. However continue enhancing your skills/adapt techniques for further development. Sudden good news in the evening will bring cheers for the entire family. Financial hassles will be eased out with the help of your friends. Extremely supportive & loving partner would help in withering away your troubles.

PISCES: Dedication & loyalty at work would bring desired results. Your efforts bring success & happiness at family front. Certain important plans will be executed, bringing fresh financial gains. Romantic vibrations from someone unknown would lift your spirits taking imaginations to scaling heights. Sound physical health will enable to participate in outdoor activities. Turning thoughts towards love and fun would immensely benefit.

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