

VIEWS



I used to believe that true mango lovers could sue American groceries for false advertising—the tasteless, fibrous, tart and flavour-challenged fruit they sold did not deserve the name of mango — WRITER AND DIPLOMAT SHASHI THAROOR ON THE ARRIVAL OF ALPHONSO MANGOES IN THE US

Discover India Now

India Now festival in New York showcases hard-to-find, good, offbeat cinema from India

On any given day of the week, New York's South Asian population has a chance to catch the latest Bollywood movie playing in a run-down theatre. But for the more discerning audience, it is relatively harder to find the good, but not-so-popular cinema from India.

Last week's India Now festival at New York's Museum of Modern Art was a unique opportunity for *desi* New Yorkers and other film aficionados to experience new Indian cinema. As Anjan Dutt, whose feature, *The Bong Connection*, closed the event, suggested India Now was a true representation of the most unique Indian films made in the last year.

Too bad that *The Bong Connection* turned out to be the only disappointment of the festival. It was a poorly scripted and unevenly directed and acted film, which did not justice to Bengalis in India and the US. But the rest of the festival, curated by Uma Da Cunha and MOMA's Joshua Siegel, was a treat for those who miss the film scene in India. And the festival would not have been possible without the backing of Marguerite and Kent Charugundla—owners of the Tamarind Art Gallery in midtown Manhattan.

Also sponsoring India Now was the Indo American Arts Council—a premiere organisation that



A still from the animated short film *Printed Rainbow* which was showcased at the India Now festival in New York

brings all facets of Indian and South Asian culture to New York City. Da Cunha's programming was eclectic—a few popular films—Vishal Bhardwaj's *Omkaara*, Nagesh Kukunoor's *Dor* and Dibakar Banerjee's *Khosla Ka Ghosla*; and then new films including Rahul Dholakia's *Parzania*, Arindam Mitra's *Shoonya*, Buddhadeb Dasgupta's *Kaalpurush* and Chitra Palekar's *Maati Maay*.

Parzania opened the festival and Dholakia was present to introduce the film to a sold out audience in MOMA's 400-seat Titus Theater 1. Before the screening, Dholakia mingled with invited guests at a reception at Il Gattopardo—an Italian restaurant located across the street from MOMA. Among the celebrities were Salman Rushdie, Mira Nair, her husband Mahmood Mamdani, Dev Benegal and Nandita Das—who plays the lead in *Maati Maay*. Das spent the whole week in New York and was also present at the

festival's closing night reception at the Tamarind gallery.

To coincide with the festival, the Tamarind gallery opened a special exhibition of Indian film posters from the Charugudlas' private collection. The first ever exhibition of Indian movie posters in New York, the collection included original framed announcements of *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Mother India*, *Shaan* and a blast from the past—the campy *Victoria No. 203*, showing images of Pran and Ashok Kumar in tacky wigs and moustaches.

But the real treat of the festival were the two shorts films that Da Cunha brought to New York—Santana Issar's documentary *Bare* and Gitanjali Rao's masterful work of animation—*Printed Rainbow*. Both films have been showcased in India and abroad, but the talents of the two young filmmakers are worth noting.

In her 11 minute short funded by the Public Service Broadcasting Trust, Issar

takes old home movies with herself, her sister and parents, and overlaps them with recordings of family's phone conversations, as she attempts to reach out to her alcoholic father. A handsome looking man in his youth, Issar's father is now reduced to a broken voice, coping with his life alone. His wife has left him and his one daughter has not talked to him for over two years. It is harrowing to watch a dark family secret revealed in public. And the home movies are a constant reminder of the good days that are long gone.

Rao's *Printed Rainbow* has won many awards, including the Kodak Discovery, Young Critics Award and Petite Rail D'Or—all three at the Critics Week at last year's Cannes Film Festival.

An original story, inspired by Rao's mother and her love for cats, the film talks about an old lady and her feline companion. Their dull life is depicted in black, white and shades of grey. But often, the old lady opens up her collection of match boxes. Then looking at the colourful landscapes painted on the boxes, she steps into magical worlds. Like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* and *Mary Poppins*, the lady experiences the colourful worlds—a much happier place for her and her cat. One filmgoer who watched the entire festival declared that *Printed Rainbow* was the best work shown at India Now and he was probably right.

letters to the editor

Not done, A-I

This refers to 'Scair-India' (*MM*, May 5). It made for a disappointing reading to see passengers of Air-India being treated to such unhygienic conditions. I'd say even a second-class sleeper coach in long-distance trains is better. Passengers cough up high fares so that they can reach their destinations quickly and comfortably. Instead, they have to face such pathetic sights during the course of their journey.

Vichin Puri is a real vigilante and deserves a pat on the back for making these pictures public. Kudos to *Mumbai Mirror* too, for highlighting the plight of passengers. Hope A-I learns from their mistakes and pulls up their socks to provide better value for money for its passengers.

Deepika Shah

Trash it

This is with reference to 'Lawyers slam 'I own Mumbai' claim' (*MM*, May 5). Rajaram Srivastava deserves the feedback he has received from the lawyer fraternity. With the city courts already over-burdened with long-pending cases, this man actually has the gumption to approach the police and the courts.

What is even more surprising is that even the court admitted such a redundant plea! If the courts keep accepting such flippant petitions, where will the common man go for justice?

Nikhil Pandey

Doggoned!

This refers to 'BMC courier scared of dogs, don't want to work' (*MM*, May 5). Mumbaikars have been facing the problem of stray dogs for many years now. But the authorities have not been addressing this issue in a satisfactory manner. It's only now that the civic employees are fearing a stray-bite themselves that the matter has come out in the open.

I hope that the civic body wakes up to this problem that has been hounding us for ages and takes some concrete steps towards solution.

Sharda Padhye

Want to be heard? Write in to us at mirrorfeedback@gmail.com

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bloggers' park

Our daily column on what the world wide web is talking about

PARIS HILTON GETS 45 DAYS IMPRISONMENT

■ I hope the production of the *Simple Life* is over for the season because the star of the show, Miss Paris Hilton, suddenly has her calendar booked this summer. The heiress is going to jail!

Paris has just been sentenced to 45 days in jail. I predict that her enemies are all having a big laugh.

http://tvcocktail.ivillage.com/entertainment/2007/05/paris_gets_jail_time.html

■ Do the crime, do the time. We are glad that the judge gave that prima-donna Paris Hilton 45 days in jail. No one is beyond the law. What does Paris actually do? What has Paris done for the society?

She grew up with the platinum spoon with people taking care of her every whim. Driving and drinking is a problem? No headlights at

night? No license? I am Paris Hilton, why would these be a problem for me?

And Paris' mom calling the judge names for placing her daughter in jail? What a proud mom she must be seeing her daughter drunk and doing, well, nothing.

We as a society must wake up. We need to realise that our real heroes are not Paris or Britney Spears or Lindsay Lohan.

http://www.what-a-world.com/2007/05/paris_hilton_go.html

■ Paris Hilton hasn't spent an uncomfortable day in her pampered life. That's all going to change. Hilton, whose relentless partying won her world-wide notoriety, will go to jail by June 5 and she will not be allowed any work release and furloughs.

Paris doesn't care about the law, because in her world—where money can buy you into or out of anything—the law doesn't matter. She's been singled out for special treatment her en-

tire life. It's about time she got treated like she deserves.

Paris will be segregated from the general population for her own safety, living in a one or two-person cell.

A year ago, former *Lost* actress Michelle Rodriguez showed up to serve a 60-day jail sentence for violating probation terms after her drunk driving arrest in Hawaii. She was released in hours because of overcrowding. I wouldn't be surprised at all if Paris is released very quickly for similar "overcrowding" reasons.

<http://urbangrounds.com/2007/05/04/paris-going-to-jail/>

■ Her mother laughed when the verdict was read and blurted "May I have your autograph?" to the judge. Such arrogance makes me think that 45 days is not enough. I fear another media frenzy from now until she is released.

http://www.what-a-world.com/2007/05/paris_hilton_go.html



Paris Hilton, 26, was already on probation after admitting to alcohol-related reckless driving and driving licence officials in California had suspended her licence