



'Films impact minds at large'

Actor Pawan Malhotra believes films have a responsibility towards society. That is also how they keep everyone connected

BORIS GOMES

The film *Road to Sangam* has been accepted very well. How was it working on this project?

This film has been different from the rest since I had to practice playing the role of a *maulana*. I would practice the UP *maulvi* accent and to make it better, I watched Q channel to learn the movements of a *maulvi*. Observing Pravin Togadia was also one of my accent exercises for the movie. I encourage cinema that communicates a valid point and message to people at large. The film got a standing ovation...

Indeed, it felt wonderful since this film conveys a very socially appropriate message. It is very difficult to change mindsets and this film is exactly about trying to change a person's opinion. There are plenty of rallies and forums to save water and petrol, but nobody seems to notice that there are bombs exploding just about anywhere. We need to stop wasting money on warfare, instead, spend it constructively. A woman from the audience came sobbing to you after watching the film. People do get touched by the visual medium.

I feel proud the film touched her heart. It's true films can make one think and feel. However, while everyone is entitled to have an opinion on a film, intellectual stimulation is healthy. Which means dealing with

issues pertaining to the country do make an impact?

Of course, cinema makes a strong impact. If you have noticed, all the winners in the elections this year have been people who worked hard. A huge population voted this year, even Kashmir had 62 per cent people voting. Somewhere I would like to believe that films play a role in impacting the minds of people at large.

Is working in films more like a social responsibility?

Every person has some responsibility towards society. Be it an athlete, a singer or an actor, somewhere each one performs well to make others happy. And thus everyone is connected.

How did your journey as an actor begin?

Long ago, I was taken to watch a play. I loved it so much I began doing theatre. Gradually, I felt the urge to act in films. My father was a well established businessman; I informed him I wanted to leave for Mumbai. Thereon, I've done some good roles in films like *Salim Langle Par Mat Ro*, *Bagh Bahadur*, *Black Friday* and *Delhi 6*.

Did you enjoy participation in the AIFF?

I was amazed to see the response this very first international film festival in this city has received. Reaching out to people and showing them good, offbeat cinema is amazing. What this festival has also done is given lots of filmmakers and likeminded people a chance to meet and discuss a wide range of subjects.

“My film *68 pages* deals with HIV and how it's not the end of the road for the HIV infected. This can be well communicated at a film fest like this one.

—Sridhar Rangayan, Filmmaker



'Mumbai should learn from Ahmedabad'

Road to Sangam had its World Premiere at the AIFF on Sunday. Director Amit Rai was thrilled with the housefull response

RAMNEEK MADAAN

Your film *Road to Sangam* depicts Gandhian values.

I watched a news clip about a vehicle from the Gandhian era that was restored for a similar purpose. It was so interesting I started writing the script! As this film touches upon the Muslim community's issues and Gandhian principles, how did you manage to steer clear of controversies?

It was like walking on a blade. Lot of research has gone to ensure no one's emotions are hurt as the message of

communal harmony is conveyed. When there is clarity of thought and indepth research, the product is good. How has it been at AIFF?

When you see 280 viewers seated in a 155-seater theatre, it feels awesome! I saw people sitting all over the stairs and on the ground just to watch my film and I'm short of words to express that feeling. It's great to see youngsters organise such a big event. To arrange something so big in times of recession is a lesson for the Mumbai industry. Your film has also been screened at the Cannes Film Festival this year...

This film received a standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival this year.

It was there that we realised how aware Europeans are of Gandhiji and our Indian culture.

Your future projects...

I'm working on two feature films. One is about the Mumbai police and another about environmental issues.

When will this film be released in theatres?

On October 2, isn't it an apt date?



This engineer is now a cinematographer

Tapan Vyas's *Ocean of an Old Man* surprises critics

AHMEDABAD MIRROR BUREAU

When Tapan Vyas completed his chemical engineering from the Nirma University nine years ago, he could have easily chosen a well-paying job. He, however, decided to make a living by working in a more glamorous — and gruelling — field: film-making. Today, Vyas is one of the few budding cinematographers from Gujarat who are making their mark in Mumbai.

A critically acclaimed film, Vyas's cinematography for *Ocean of an Old Man* was shown at the AIFF on Sunday. The film is about a teacher who loses his family and a few students in the 2004 tsunami. It has been directed by Rajesh Shera. The character of the teacher is played by theatre artist Tom Alter.

Vyas's work in the movie, which was shot on Andaman and Nicobar Islands, was acknowledged, if not marvelled at, by many people at AIFF and at other movie festivals in the country. The 32-year-old cinematographer, who grew up in Dariapur, said that many film artistes in Mumbai were surprised when they learnt that

he was an Amdavadi.

“Many people outside Gujarat know us only for our business acumen. They were a bit shocked when they learnt that I was a cinematographer,” Vyas, who is in talks for two new film projects, said. “Even in Ahmedabad, several people found it hard to believe that *Ocean of an Old Man's* cinematography was done by a local,” he added.

While films never failed to appeal to Vyas, he knew little about their technical aspects. “I was always into films. However, until I joined the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune in 2001, I only knew about still photography,” he said.

Vyas said that he was the only one in his class at FTII who had no prior experience in film-making. “I lagged behind other students when I joined the institute, but I learnt the art of cinematography really quickly,” he said. On the number of Gujaratis in Bollywood, Vyas said that many youngsters were turning to film-making. “At AIFF, I met quite a few people from Ahmedabad who are studying movie-making. It's a healthy trend,” he said.



“My film *Children Of Mirage* revolves around the painful journey of the children of Agarya community. I wish to convey a message that helps in bettering the lives of children from this community. Finally, Ahmedabad knows there is good cinema Bollywood apart!



—Kamlesh Udasi, Filmmaker

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“Two of my films have been screened at this fest. One of them is about the variations of light. I made this video installation with the help of Annick Pelle, Director, Alliance Francaise. I hope the next time this fest is even bigger and many more students use this platform effectively.



—Akhila Krishnan, NID Graduate

'To understand audience is important'

Cyrus Dastur of Shamiana Short Films Club enjoys going through over 250 films at AIFF

DIVYA MUDGIL

Cyrus Dastur is considered a pioneer of the short films industry. Talking about his experience at the AIFF, he says, “I have been to various national and international film festivals. This one has been a first attempt in Ahmedabad which is truly amazing.”

Cyrus is quite used to selecting films for his film club, Shamiana, that screens short films from across the world. However, the beauty of such festivals is that they expose the audience to a wider range of films dealing with



issues that may be relevant and closer to their lives. “I have already gone through the synopsis of almost 250 films here and would surely pick some for Shamiana. There are only three aspects I check on when viewing and then selecting a film: It must be interesting, enter-

taining and intelligent. This makes a film a complete package,” he says.

So, does he advocate documentaries? “I do not want people to see documentaries that are not crisp and intelligent. The audience must relate to films and their subjects. That is how we can bridge the gap between people and

films in India,” he points out. And that's not all. “To make short films more popular it is important to understand the audience. What is also important is that one understands the kind of audience one is making the film for considering this is what primarily differs in different states and countries.”

Cyrus enjoyed acting along with Tom Alter in *When God Said Cheers!* on Saturday at IIMA. “I couldn't think of a better reception and a venue to hold this play,” says Cyrus who feels theatre is a fountainhead of talent and insists that theatre must coexist with cinema and should “at no point be treated as a poor cousin of cinema”.