IFFLA Showcases Film as A Powerful Creative Force

4/23/2015

The 13th annual Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA) not only honored gifted, daring film makers but was a unique blend of narrative, social commentary, humor, and unusual perspectives on life. Chaired by visionary, Christin Marouda the Festival is inarguably the most influential, non profit organization devoted to recognizing cinematic perspectives from India and the Indian diaspora.

This year Marouda collaborated with Artistic Director Jasmine Jaisinghani and Producer Rukmani Bachal. The films represented 10 different languages from six countries ranging from Hindi and Tamil to English, Spanish and German. They were enthralling, funny, moving and chronicled the masters of film art bridging the gap between the two largest entertainment industries in the world Hollywood and India. One hopes that these films with no star power or big budgets will be taken up by distributors who will recognize the creativity, talent, skill, ambition and commitment of the filmmakers who shoot in a backyard, in a lonely field, a slum, a crowded road, or a cramped studio.

The Festival was five Days of pure film pleasure with packed auditoriums and appearances by film makers and actors. Here are a few films worth mentioning.

‘Labor Of Love’
An eloquent and extraordinary film with nuanced performances (Ritwick Chakrborty, Basabdutta Chatterjee) and directed by the brilliant Aditya Vikram Sengupta. He is also the screenwriter, editor and cinematography credits go to him and Mahendra Shetty. There is no dialogue. With swaggering self confidence, the Director demands us to listen to merely the sounds of their lives. From the first shot we slip into the rhythmic patterns of the lives of a young married couple in Calcutta. It is a grim, despairing, claustrophobic apartment. Monotonous cycle of life, the daily chores, the washing of clothes, the filling of a lunch box, the sluggish drip of a water tap, the whirr of a creaky fan, the clank of a printing press machinery, the snatch of a high pitched song, the sharp snip of a thread sewed on a button, the screech of a tram brake, a lonely cry of a vendor.

Outside, oppressed, the cacophony of laid off workers hurling protest slogans into the empty air. It appears to be a microcosm of desolate lives, cramped and fettered by fate as the woman works by day and the husband is a nighttime operator in a printing shop. And then the extraordinary happens. The Director has thrust us into the vortex of their repetitive acts and suddenly we come into the light when we discover each act of theirs is truly a labor of love. Sengupta melds poignant visuals, the perfect pitch of sounds into an amazing collage of duty, routine and quiet passion.

‘The Crow’s Egg’
The Crow’s Egg stands out for its authenticity. A rare gem. Gifted Director and Screenwriter M Manikandan tells us that there is no underestimating the intense cravings of the young and in this case it is Pizza. A brilliant provocative film where every scene, composition, sequence of events makes you laugh and sometimes weep. Superbly acted by Ramesh Tilaganathan, Vignesh, Aishwarya Rajesh, the film is a personal triumph for D M Manikandan. A totally offbeat film that will resonate.

‘Jai Ho’
AR Rahman, popularly known as the ‘Mozart of Chennai,’ one of the most revered names in Indian and World music shares his life story onscreen. Humility, faith and discipline shine through his story
telling. Speaking directly to us in his home, the studio, the school which teaches student who cannot afford to learn music, he reveals humbly his fascinating life story as he introduces us to his family, takes us to the Durgah, the concert stages, the international collaborators, the ‘Jai Ho’ tour and the quiet garden in his home. Director Umesh Aggarwal concentrates on crisp editing and makes it an engrossing film of a musician who won two Oscars, two Grammys and numerous other international awards. Satyajit Ray’s ‘Two’ is a marvelous cameo of two children watching each other as they show off their respective toys. Shorn of dialogue the film preserved by the Academy Film Archive once again reminds us of the powerful spell a Ray film casts on us. ‘Iss India America’

A sparkling, joyful, comedic, irresistible film, impeccably directed by Los Angeles based Ravi Kapoor. He teams up with the talented actor/screen writer Meera Simhan. High school graduate Tiya Sircar unable to let go of her first love, is determined to win him back by entering a beauty pageant. And then the film runs amok with snappy on the mark dialogues, hilarious and unpredictable twists in the plot, lavish costumes, and a peppy score. A roller coaster ride with exciting new talent aboard and a whip smart look at beauty pageants and self deception. ‘Amma And Appa’

Directed by Franziska and Jayakrishnan Subramaniam, it is an astonishing film that tells the story of Franziska a Bavarian German woman working as a journalist in India and Jayakrishnan a young Tamil artist who met in Mumbai and fell in love. The film documents the challenges the two sets of parents have to face. The locale moves from Munich to Cuddalore a quiet town in South India, which the Bavarian parents visit. Stunning in its honesty the film moves with a quiet grace and is a definitive chronicle of the myriad differences in cultures. Hilarious, tender, and thought provoking. Unadorned photography and simplicity make this a film to talk about. ‘Safar’

Another short film made by director Pratyusha Gupta demands attention. It is an engaging story of a girl who leaves prostitution and becomes a caregiver to an elderly woman. The cast is pitch perfect, a touching, impeccably controlled drama. Also featured at the Festival were ‘One Crazy Thing’(Amit Gupta) ’Titli’(Khanu Behl) ’Elizabeth Ekadashi’(Paresh Mokashi) ‘Four Colors’ (Bikas Mishra) ‘Tigers ‘(Danis Tanovic) ’Tomorrow We Disappear’(Jim Goldblum, Adam Weber) and ‘Taal’(Subash Ghai). Comments are closed.