The 14th Annual Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles echoes a familiar ring of glamour and excitement featuring a glitzy red carpet opening at the ArcLight Cinemas in Hollywood. This year as in the past 13 years filmmakers, actors and guests will glaze the carpet in anticipation of an evening of fun that will transport them to another place and time in the rich culture and heritage of Bollywood.

In an era of political revolutions and transformation in the USA, where immigration and women’s issues have more than ever before taken a tone that make many ponder their place and value in society in a nation that has is recognized as leader of the free world, where immigrants have been the cornerstone of its greatness and where women’s rights have been pivotal in setting the tone for many other nations and many seek refuge from decadent regimes and cultures that leave them hopeless, the IFFLA 2016 will be addressing the complexity of these issues through art and entertainment. Bollywood is no stranger to the complex cultures that affect India and many other developing and developed economies in the world. Worth noting therefore that its filmmakers and actors have been known to tackle these somewhat delicate issues in the hopes of triggering mindset changes or simply bringing awareness to them.
Whether by coincidence or fate FFILA 2016 is showcasing the most female directors the festival has ever had and a couple of political films that really focus on the changing landscape of India exposing the strong arm of the Censor Board of India. ANGRY INDIAN GODDESSES, ALIGARH, and CRD are some of the films that though freely released here in the USA have been subject to incredible scrutiny and censorship from ratings that limit the marketing outreach and growth potential of the film to demands on cuts that literally leave bare bones in the story. Regardless of the challenges faced by Bollywood filmmakers one thing is certain, the stories are full intrigue and the entertainment factor is at its peak. As always audiences are sure to be mesmerized by the culture and yet be transfixed by the compelling stories that are harnessed by the filmmakers. See summaries below.

**ANGRY INDIAN GODDESSES**

India/2015/115min/DCP/Hindi and English

U.S. Premiere

Director: Pan Nalin

Logline: When an eclectic group of women gathers to celebrate the impending nuptials of a close mutual friend, sparks fly as they each discover the power – and the fury – of the angry goddesses that lie within.

Note:

When a successful but frustrated photographer, a wannabe Bollywood actress, a high-flying workaholic executive and mother, a struggling musician, a prudish princess and a housekeeper with a dark secret all gather together in a quaint Portuguese villa in Goa on the eve of the host’s wedding, no subject is off limits for this spirited group of women. Love, sex, careers, marriage, friendship, sexism and the benefits of a super hot next-door neighbor are all up for debate. But it is ultimately tragedy and the power of unity in the face of institutional misogyny that binds these women together forever in this joyful yet powerful dramedy from 2014 FFILA Audience Award winning director Pan Nalin (FAITH CONNECTIONS).

Screened in the Special Presentations section of the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival, ANGRY INDIAN GODDESSES takes a refreshingly uncensored look at the issues facing women in contemporary Indian society while celebrating the uniqueness, talents and flaws of each of its female characters.
ALIGARH
India/2016/120min/DCP/Hindi

Los Angeles Premiere

Director: Hansal Mehta

Logline: The true story of Dr. Shrinivas Ramchandra Siras, a linguistics professor at Aligarh Muslim University whose outing and threatened termination caused an uproar.

As any person paying attention to world news knows, the subject of gay rights in India has provoked heated debate in recent years. In 2009, the Delhi High Court struck down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalized homosexual acts, only to see the law reinstated four years later by a Supreme Court decision. As protests over that unjust ruling rage on, Hansal Mehta’s timely new film arrives as a heartfelt but firm demand for the right to love.

Mehta and screenwriter Apurva Asrani find inspiration in the true story of Dr. Shrinivas Ramchandra Siras, a linguistics professor at Aligarh Muslim University who faced suspension and possible termination due to his sexual orientation. Though many supporters rally to Siras’ cause, including a dedicated journalist played with great panache by Rajkummar Rao, Mehta and lead actor Manoj Bajpayee paint a portrait of the doctor as a gentle man more concerned with the beauty life and love have to offer rather than tooth-and-nail fighting over rights that no courts should be able to deny. Siras’ story is a heartbreaking reminder of the human cost of injustice, and inspires one of the most vital films to come out of India in recent years.
CRD
India/2016/108min/DCP/Hindi and English

World Premiere

Director: Kranti Kanade

Logline: As aspiring writer Chetan prepares to compete in a prestigious college theater festival, he explores his creative impulses in radical, hilarious and destructive ways.

The Purushottam Karandak — a real-life inter-college festival in which theater students compete head-to-head — becomes an ideological battleground in this bold,brilliant exploration of the creative impulse. IFFLA alum Kranti Kanade leaves no radical idea or experimental flourish behind as he tells the story of Chetan, an aspiring young writer who dreams of winning the competition but struggles to find his own artistic voice. After Chetan clashes with his tyrannical acting professor, he enlists his own group of misfits to perform a play against his college’s official team. If only he could come up with a great story and keep his own temper and libido in check. And should true art even be placed in a competition, where one vision is declared the best?

As Chetan wrestles with these problems, Kanade flexes his own creative muscle with filmmaking choices as unpredictable as they are hilarious, thrilling and absolutely bonkers. The director’s blissful disregard for convention and his embrace of experimentation bring to mind the masters of the French New Wave. His fearless cast matches his daring in every scene, none more so than first-time actor Saurabh Saraswat as Chetan, who anchors the film with the charisma and confidence of a future star.

IFFLA 2016 takes place April 6-10, 2016 at the ArcLight Hollywood. Tickets are now on sale.

Learn more at http://www.indianfilmfestival.org/