18th Annual Indian Film of Los Angeles To Open With Imtiaz Ali’s ‘Highway’

5-day festival closes with Prarthana Mohan’s ‘The MisEducation of Bindu’

By a Staff Writer

The Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA) will open with a tête-à-tête with ace filmmaker Imtiaz Ali at ArcLight Hollywood, April 1. Ali will be in conversation with filmmaker Anurag Kashyap in a discussion on the scope and influence of Ali’s career. The conversation will be followed by the screening of Ali’s 2014 film “Highway,” starring Alia Bhatt and Randeep Hooda.

IFFLA says “Ali has captivated global audiences with his distinctive love stories that are relatable and original.” He made his directorial debut in 2005 with “Socha Na Tha,” quickly followed by “Jib We Met,” which brought him instant acclaim. His 2009 film “Love Aaj Kal” was a massive critical success and box office hit, which he followed up with the stylistically rich “Rockstar” in 2011. His latest film “Love Aaj Kal 2,” stars Sara Ali Khan and Kartik Aaryan.

“We are thrilled to open this year’s festival with an insightful and unfiltered conversation with Imtiaz Ali, moderated by longtime friend of IFFLA Anurag Kashyap,” said Christina Maroufa, IFFLA executive director.

“Imtiaz’s intuitive work with actors and independent spirit are a natural fit for IFFLA.”

The 18th edition of IFFLA will include five World, one North American, four U.S. and 16 Los Angeles premieres, spanning 12 languages, with 50 percent of all films premiering directed by women, according to an IFFLA press release. Films will be screened at Regal L.A. LIVE: A Barco Innovation Center in Los Angeles.

The festival will close on April 5 with the Los Angeles premiere of “The MisEducation of Bindu,” a coming-of-age tale set in the American suburbs about a bright young Indian girl who resolves to test out of her high school, but must turn to the students who constantly torment her to raise the money for the test fee.

Directed by Prarthana Mohan and starring Megan Suri, Priyanka Bose and David Arquette, the film was produced by Mark Dand Jay Duplass. IFFLA’s feature lineup includes IFFLA alum Bhaskar Hazarika’s Tribeca 2019 selection “Aamis” (Riveting; SXSW 2020 sci-fi fantasy title “Cargo,” starring Vikrant Massey and Shweta Tripathi as irrevocably astranauts charged with processing the recently deceased into reincarnation; “Dolly Kitty and Those Twinkling Stars” starring Konkana Sen Sharma and directed by Alankrita Shrivastava whose controversial previous film “Lipstick Under My Burkha” opened IFFLA 2017; Gitanjali Rao’s animated opus “Bommai Rose,” which had its debut at the Venice International Film Festival and Geetu Mohandas’ Malayalam film “Mo’onthu (The Elders One), a Toronto 2019 premiere which blends high-paced action with beautifully rendered qee themes.

This year’s selection highlights both filmmakers working in India and in the diaspora community, the latter notable especially in the festival’s diverse and exciting short film selection, whose highlights include the comedy “Coffee Shop Names” starring Danny Pudi, Karan Soni and Kausar Mohammed; the world premiere of “Uncle,” starring Ajay Naidu, Omar Maskati and Bevan Manj; and the U.S. premiere of “The Loyalty Man,” a riveting thriller set in France among the Tamil-speaking community. The festival will also include back-to-back master classes with Ali and Kashyap on April 4. While Ali will discuss how he works with actors to create the vast world his characters inhabit within his films; Kashyap will talk about the arc of his career aided by various clips of his work to demonstrate how directing skills can develop over time, and lessons he’s learned on set over the course of his filmography.

Boston Singer Wins Radio Mirchi Award

Indian-American singer Aaradhna Palakothi, center, with artistes Ustad Nisrat Khan, left, and Jyoti Singh Yadav at the Radio Mirchi Awards in Mumbai, Feb. 19. The Boston-based Palakothi won the award in the best Independent Artist category for the title track of her album, “Jaan Men.” Released in March 2018 at MIT’s Townsend Auditorium in Cambridge, Mass. composed by United Nations Khan with lyrics by Manoj Yadav, the song managed to win thousands of hearts in both India and U.S. The album was produced under the banner of the Jaju Productions.