

India in New York October 3, 2008

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Events

A film festival to focus on Sikh life

For several years, Paul S Johar, a dentist with a flourishing private practice, has been wondering how to make the annual Sikh film festival in New York more appealing. He was deeply involved with the festival called *Spinning Wheel*, whose New York edition was run by Sikh Arts founded by his uncle Tejinder Pal Singh Bindra. Bindra asked Johar last year if he would run a Sikh film festival independent of *Spinning Wheel*.

"There were many things we wanted to do that the other festival was not ready to do it," Johar said as he discussed the *Sikh Film Festival* to be held at the Asia Society all through the day on October 4. "For one thing, we are giving away cash prizes totaling \$15,000 for the films in various genres." He added that, in the coming years, the cash prizes could be increased and given in many categories.

"Our idea is to get people at large to know about the Sikh community through the events like this film festival," Johar said. "We are advertising the festival not only in the Indian media but also in mainstream publications."

"We are very also keen on the second- and third-generation Sikhs [knowing] about their faith, traditions and history," he added, "not only in India but also in other countries. The films we are showing also focus on Sikh life and issues in America."

The festival, which will screen a feature film, is also offering the following documentaries: *Sikhs in America*, an Emmy Award winner; *A Dream in Doubt*, featured on PBS Independent Lens; and *Pahelwani - History, Tradition and Art of Punjabi Wrestling*.

"The documentary on wrestling is something very unusual," he said. "It pays homage to a fast-dying tradition. Now, at least on the film, we could say we have preserved the tradition."

Also showing at the festival is *Kabaddi Cops*, in which director Gregory Cote unfolds the story of a group of police officers from the Toronto, Canada, area who take up *Kabaddi*

appeal is universal. "It speaks to the universal challenge of how so many people [not just Sikhs] have to balance romance, family, ethics and spirituality in today's complex world," he explained.

"These films ask pertinent questions about what it means to be a Sikh in modern day America," Johar says. "But we will be glad to show films which also celebrate the larger Punjabi culture. And we are not shying away from showing films that question things that are happening in the Sikh community."

For instance, the festival had scheduled a documentary on the gang fights between Sikh youth in Vancouver, British Columbia. But the film was dropped from the schedule as the Canadian National Film Board, which produced it, decided to send it to another film festival which wanted an exclusive showing. The festival will follow a Sikh Heritage Gala at Cipriani at which a number of people will be honored. The honorees

include Stuart Rabinowitz, president of Hofstra University, which set up a Sikh studies chair established by the Bindra family six years ago. From the United Kingdom, Susan Stronge, senior curator at the Asian Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum, will also be honored for her commitment to Sikh art and heritage.

Sikh Film Festival 2008
October 4
Asia Society & Museum
725 Park Avenue at 70th Street, New York
www.sikharts.com

— Arthur J Pais



Dr Paul Johar



A scene from Ocean of Pearls.

to bond with the South Asian community.

The feature film, *Ocean of Pearls*, directed by Sarab S Neelam, focuses on a Sikh man with a turban and beard in Toronto who takes up a well-paying job in Detroit at a state-of-the-art transplant center. A number of personal and professional events lead him to question his tradition.

Neelam's film has an autobiographical touch. He has said the film seeks to break down barriers just as African-American leaders sought to do for their community.

He describes *Ocean of Pearls* as the story of a young Sikh doctor struggling with the inequities of the American health system and ultimately his own identity. The film goes beyond the issue of Sikh identity, he said, adding that it

MOVIES

Drona (Hindi): starring Abhishek Bachchan, Priyanka Chopra, Kay Kay Menon, Jaya Bachchan and Akhilendra Mishra; **Maveli Twin Cinemas**, 57 Kennedy Drive, Spring Valley, New York, (845) 578-4000; **Multiplex Cinemas at Town Center Plaza**, 319 Route 130 North, East Windsor, New Jersey, (609) 371-8472; **Regal Commerce Center 18**, 2399 Rt 1 South, North Brunswick, NJ, (732) 940-0300; **Regal 20-Burlington**, 250 Bromley Blvd, Burlington, NJ, (609) 239-3500; **The ImaginAsian Theater**, 239 East 59th Street, Manhattan, (212) 505-2463; **Bombay Theater** 6825 Fresh Meadow Lane, Fresh Meadows, New York, (718) 358-2929, (718)-463-0335

Shoot On Sight (Hindi): starring Naseeruddin Shah, Greta Scacchi, Om Puri; **Regal Commerce Center 18**, 2399 Rt 1 South, North Brunswick, New Jersey, (732) 940-0300

Thirakkatha (Malayalam): starring Prithviraj, Priyamani, Samvritha Sunil, Nishant Sagar. **Maveli Twin Cinemas**, 57 Kennedy Drive, Spring Valley, New York, (845) 578-4000; **www.mavelimovies.com**



A scene from Drona

Art for Obama reception

Bose Pacia Gallery will host a reception on October 6, Art for Obama, with Bruce McBarrette, founder of the Art for Obama series.

This is a series of fundraising art receptions that McBarrette, an attorney and real estate investor from Sterling, Virginia, has been hosting around the country to benefit the Obama campaign.

The reception will be open to the public. Admittance will be based on a \$10 contribution to the Obama Victory Fund. A portion of all art sales during the event will also be donated directly to the fund.

Date: October 6, 6:30 pm.
Place: Bose Pacia, at 508 West 26th Street, on the 11th Floor, Manhattan.

To RSVP e-mail to: mail@bosepacia.com or call (212) 989-7074.

For more details, check www.mcbarrette.com/charity

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