



Sikh International Film Festival promotes the Sikh and Punjabi culture and heritage.

September 24, 2009

A tribute to the immigrant experience, the Sikh International Film Festival on September 18-19, 2009 promoted the Sikh and Punjabi culture and heritage. While the two-day festival encapsulated Sikh history, art and politics in films by independent filmmakers, the closing night gala at the opulent Ciprani on Wall Street was a heady mix, shimmering in stardom with presence of renowned personalities from media, film and art fraternity, including special appearance by M. F. Husain, India's best-known painter, who arrived at Asia Society on September 19th.

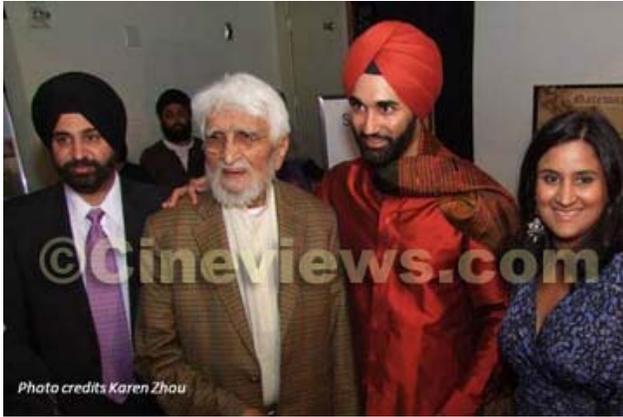
In its 6th year, the festival had diverse documentaries, short and feature films by independent filmmakers on issues affecting the Sikh community. Amongst the 14 films screened during the festival, the US Premiere of 'Turbanology', which essayed the West's reaction to the Sikh turban after the 9/11-terror attack, drew wide attention from the audience.

The Indian envoy to the UN, Hardeep Singh Puri praised the Sikh community's efforts to promote the customs, traditions, culture, and identity. During the Sikh Heritage Awards, after the film festival, he said, "The Sikh community, both here and in India, is recognized for its hard work and commitment."

The Sikh Twins, who directed '1984 and the Via Dolorosa Project' was screened on September 18th. Their poignant documentary marks 25 years of genocide in India when thousands of innocent Sikhs were killed in the aftermath of assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. On an upbeat note, the world premiere of 'Flying Sikhs: A History of Sikh Fighter Pilots' provided an intimate portrait of the valiant Sikh pilot's contribution towards the Allies victories in WWI and WWII.

Guest of Honor, Consular General Prabhu Dayal announced the film award winners selected by the distinguished panel of judges including Dr. Sarab Singh Neelam whose film Ocean of Pearls debuted at the Sikh Film Festival last year, Tibetan filmmaker Ngawang Choephel, and Vicki Mabrey – correspondent for ABC News Nightline. 'A Warrior's Religion', directed by Mani Amar which explored urban youth gang violence in the South Asian community, won the Best Documentary Award. Kuldip Powar's winning Short Film 'Unravelling' explored the complex themes of war & remembrance, loss & exclusion and colonial legacy in contemporary Britain through poetic motifs.





An instant success of the evening was the silent and live auction of exquisite Sikh & Punjabi Art featuring Arpana Caur's art, jewelry and bronze artwork. Actor Samrat Chakrabarti whose film *The Waiting City* debuted at the Toronto Film Festival with resounding success was also part of the red carpet gala event. In addition, Pooja Kapoor, a Bollywood actress, for *Bollywood Hero*, lighted up the evening with her shimmering dress while tapping her feet on infectious rhythms of Bangra pioneers RDB (Rhythm Dhol Bass) from UK and Nindy Kaur had everybody grooving to popular hits from Bollywood movies.