



**SIKH ART &
FILM FOUNDATION**
preserving Sikh heritage

1410 Broadway, Suite 301
New York, NY 10018
Tel (877) SIKH-ARTS
Fax (212) 768-1858
www.sikharts.com

MEDIA CONTACT

Brandon Rohwer, brandonrohwer@gmail.com, 716-904-2459

**Sikh Art & Film Foundation Presents
Sikh International Film Festival, Leadership Summit
and Heritage Gala as part of Sikh Heritage Week**

October 13-15, 2011 in New York City

(New York, NY) -- The Sikh Art & Film Foundation will present its eighth annual **Sikh International Film Festival** and inaugural **Leadership Summit**, October 13-15, 2011 at the Asia Society and Museum, 725 Park Avenue (at 70th St) in New York, with the **Sikh Heritage Gala** and awards ceremony closing the festival the evening of October 15 at Cipriani, 55 Wall Street.

Filmmaker **Gurinder Chadha** (*Bend it like Beckham, It's a Wonderful Afterlife*) will be a featured guest during Sikh Heritage Week, including Leadership Summit on October 13, and the Heritage Gala on October 15, where she will receive one of the three awards given by the Foundation.

The festival will present 11 documentary and short films featuring Sikh stories from across the globe, from both established and emerging filmmakers. The opening night festivities on Friday, October 14, include two U.S Premieres with an after party to follow at the Asia Society. U.S. Premiere films opening Oct. 14 are Harpeet Kaur's feature-length documentary *A Little Revolution*, a gripping story of hope, empowerment, and dreams in the rural village of Punjab where orphans of farmers have committed suicide; and *The Ulysses*, by directors Alberto Garcia Ortiz and, Agatha Maciaszek, which centers on Punjabi Indian immigrants in Ceuta, a Spanish enclave on the Moroccan coast, living in shanty community they've built to avoid deportation.

On Saturday, October 15 the two competitive categories of documentaries and shorts will screen at the Asia Society, and be judged by the festival jury. The shorts program runs on Saturday from 11:30am-1:30pm, and documentaries will screen from 2-5pm. *Canadian Soldiers Sikhs* will make its world premiere during the documentary session. The film, by director David Gray, chronicles ten Sikh men in the Canadian army struggling through enlistment, training, and the battlefield. The short film program includes the world premiere of *Let It Out*, a music video addressing bullying in schools from a Sikh point of view, and New York premiere of *The Reunion*, about two Sikh friends and their different way of assimilating into American society.

Preceding the film festival, the Leadership Summit on October 13 from 7-9pm will bring together leaders and mentors in the Sikh community and beyond to discuss the next generation of leaders and provide an opportunity to network. Participants include Gurinder Chadha, Dr. Mohanbir S. Sawhney (professor, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University), and Gurvendra S. Suri (founder and CEO, Optimal Solutions Integration, Inc.) with moderator Matthew Breitfelder (chief talent officer, BlackRock).

The Sikh International Film Festival was founded in 2003 to create awareness and pride in the diversity, culture and history of the Sikhs, a people rooted in the Punjab region of South Asia who practice the world's fifth largest religion. Announcing the 2011 festival and Sikh Heritage Gala, Mr. Tejinder S. Bindra, President of the Foundation, said, "we're proud to celebrate Sikh culture through the wonderful medium of film." He continued, "the lineup we've acquired for this year's festival will excite and move audiences while shining a light on our often underexposed and sometimes misunderstood culture."

The two-day event of film screenings at Asia Society conclude with the Sikh Heritage Gala, held at Cipriani Wall Street

The Sikh Art & Film Foundation is a tax exempt non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

October 15 at 7pm. The evening will celebrate the rich heritage, traditions and culture of the Sikhs with a star-studded evening of dance, art exhibition and auction. Sikh Heritage Awardees include Gurinder Chadha (director, *Bend It Like Beckham*), Jaspal Bindra (CEO, Standard Chartered Bank Asia), and Navtej Sarna (author, *The Exile*; India's Ambassador to Israel). Performing at the event will be **Sukhbir** ("The Prince of Bhangra"). This year's Chief Guest will be Her Excellency Preet Kaur (Minister of State for External Affairs, India). At the Sikh Heritage Gala, winning films in the category of Best Short Film and Best Documentary will be recognized with cash prizes. The Sikh Art & Film Foundation supports the work of filmmakers and rewards festival award-winners with cash prizes and screening fees totaling \$15,000.

Complete Schedule, Film Details, Trailers and Tickets at www.sikharts.com.

Films at the Sikh International Film Festival 2011:

NOTE: All films are presented either with English subtitles, or in English.

OPENING NIGHT FEATURE SESSION (Friday, October 14 from 7-9:30pm with an after party from 10pm-1am at Asia Society, 725 Park Avenue)

A Little Revolution (US Premiere, dir. Harpeet Kaur, 50m) - *A Little Revolution - A Story of Suicides and Dreams* follows the remarkable journey of filmmaker Harpreet Kaur, who travels from the rural villages of Punjab to the capital of India with children of farmers who've committed suicide. She confronts government's highest officials with the hope that they will understand the effects of their policies and avail the opportunity to help these children. This is a story of hope, empowerment and simple dreams which shows the power of the human spirit and its will to stand up and fight back against injustice.

The Ulysses (US Premiere, dir. Alberto Garcia Ortiz, Agatha Maciaszek, 82m) - In the densely forested hills above Ceuta, a Spanish enclave on the Moroccan coast, 57 Punjabi Indian immigrants await their fate in a shanty community they've built to avoid deportation. With lush visual style, the film accompanies them in their daily trials as they scramble to survive, waiting to cross the last 14 km that separate them from Europe. In spite of the hardships and conflicts, they stand united as a big family. Thousands of miles away, their real families in small Punjabi villages receive the messages from their sons, filmed by the directors. An intimate and profound look at the current Sikh diaspora.

DOCUMENTARY SESSION (Saturday, October 15 from 2-5pm at Asia Society, 725 Park Avenue)

Canadian Soldiers Sikhs (World Premiere, dir. David Grey, 50m) - This film follows the process that ten Sikh men in the Canadian army experienced, through enlistment, training, and transport to France by troopship. It features the struggles these Sikh soldiers faced and the battles they fought, including those during which two of the men were killed. The film follows one injured soldier back to Canada on a hospital ship and to Kitchener's TB hospital. Images of his war grave and the story of how his war medal has survived bring a personal touch to the film. It chronicles the soldiers' return to civilian life, their descendants, and a visit to the two European graves of the Canadian Sikh soldiers.

GLUT: The Untold Story of Punjab (dir. Samran Sahu, 30m) - 73.5% of Punjab's youth is addicted to drugs. A multi-million drug nexus operating under the noses of the Border Security Force, The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, The Narcotics Control Bureau and the Intelligence Bureau, leaving them as mere bystanders to Punjab's erosion. The yearly consumption of alcohol in Punjab is touching 29 Crore bottles making it one of the highest per capita consumers of alcohol in the world. The scenario is worsening at such a rapid rate, experts have already begun to put an expiry date to the State.

Hew McLeod: A Kiwi Sikh Historian (dir. Jasmine Puji, 30m) - The unlikely story of one New Zealander, the son of a sheep farmer from Fielding, who has spent a lifetime researching the Sikh people of India. He conducted groundbreaking research into Punjabi immigration to New Zealand, preserving the early history of this sizable group for generations to come. The soft-spoken emeritus professor, who has inflamed controversy and blazed a trail for

The Sikh Art & Film Foundation is a tax exempt non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

other scholars to follow over four decades, speaks for the first time. "Living in Punjab, as a Christian missionary with his wife and Child in the 1950's had a really profound effect on him," says Jasmine Pujji. Leaving the church, McLeod went in pursuit of what became a lifelong passion for understanding the colorful but little known group - the Sikhs.

Sikhligar (Dir. Mandeep Sethi) - Sikhligar is a documentary portraying the lives of the Sikligar Sikhs: the blacksmith/ironsmiths and weapons-makers of the Khalsa Army of the Sikhs. Very little is known about the Sikligars in and outside of India, as they have been displaced through years of colonization and government oppression. Originally named Sikligar by the 10th Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, they now live in the slums of Rajasthan, Delhi, Agra, and beyond. Illiterate for the last 300 years, the Sikligars are beginning to empower themselves through different means. Learn about their history, their current state, and what is being done to assist in the growth and development of this community.

SHORT FILMS SESSION (Saturday, October 15 from 11:30am-1:30pm at Asia Society, 725 Park Avenue)

(Ex) Changed (dir. Angad Singh, 19m) - Sikh-American teenager Angad takes the message of friendship and building bridges to an international level. He and his American classmates host 32 French teens for two weeks as part of an exchange program. They get to know French lifestyle and culture on an individual level, breaking the common stereotypes that they had of the French, while showing their guests the true face of America. While exploring two other connections Angad has to France, and building his third one, he comes to a devastating realization. At the end of the program the students are almost culturally (Ex) Changed.

Jagjeet (dir. Kanwaljit Singh, 19m) - Kuldeep Singh and Jagjeet Singh, Sikh by religion, are two best childhood friends living as neighbors in New Delhi, India. Kuldeep has always looked upon Jagjeet as his younger brother and cares deeply for him. The film is set amidst the backdrop of the 1984 Delhi riots and examines the toll this tumultuous event takes on their friendship.

Jeevika (US Premiere, dir. Anureet Caur, 21m) - With the development of the Punjabi region, several new professions have come into existence such as call centers, IT, media, etc. These have helped towards uplifting the living standards of the people. There is a segment of the population in Punjab that does not have access to these opportunities and is still dependent on traditional occupations inherited from their ancestors. This documentary is a compilation of five different traditional professions like shepherding, goatherding, popcorn, jaggery and the making of the Punjabi Jutti.

Let It Out (World Premiere, dir. Gulshan Singh, 5m) - *Let It Out* is a music video addressing the topic of bullying and harassment in schools. The film concerns a young Sikh boy who remains faithful to his religion but is bullied because he looks different. The music video describes how he is bullied and how this treatment makes him feel. The boy eventually learns how to deal with bullying. He learns that bullies aren't as tough as they act, and he is fully capable of handling the situation without resorting to violence. By sticking with a friend when confronting a bully and acting with confidence, the conflict can be peacefully resolved. However, the most important thing to remember is to not bottle up your emotions, and instead talk to someone and "Let It Out."

The Reunion (NY Premiere, dir. Angad Bhai, 19m) - Two friends who share a common background reunite after several years of being apart. One is a Sikh who has cut his hair after being brutalized during a hate crime, and the other has kept his hair since birth. Their dialogue deals with issues Sikhs face when trying to assimilate into modern American society, while maintaining their cultural and religious heritage.

About the Sikh Arts and Film Foundation

The Sikh Art and Film Foundation is a non-profit cultural organization dedicated to creating awareness of and pride in the diversity, culture and history of the Sikhs, as well as the contributions of Sikhs in American society.

OBJECTIVES

- To organize community programs that promotes better understanding of Sikh heritage, arts, and culture
- To encourage independent film directors, producers, and writers to create innovative works that touch on Sikh themes and issues

The Sikh Art & Film Foundation is a tax exempt non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

- To cultivate a greater and more accurate understanding of the Sikh way of life within the American community at large
- To provide a forum for ongoing dialogue between the Sikhs and other communities
- To present positive images of Sikhs through our policies of collection; development and curatorship
- To promote respect for the inalienable human rights and dignity of all people

###

MEDIA CONTACTS

For photos, clips, press materials, and more information please email or call

Jenny Lawhorn, jlawhorn@scottcircle.com. 202.821.8898

Brandon Rohwer , brandonrohwer@gmail.com, 716-904-2459