

Melbourne calling for Indian cinema

•Written by amit bachchan•

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The program for the 2014 edition of the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM) was launched in Melbourne on Sunday. The southern hemisphere's greatest annual celebration of Indian cinema will take place from 1-11 May and will feature, among many luminaries from Bollywood, Amitabh Bachchan, the true godfather of Indian cinema. Masterclasses, an awards show, over 45 film screenings and some of the biggest stars... it will be 11 days of unadulterated desi entertainment.



This year, IFFM will explore the richness of contemporary Indian cinema across four program streams, with films spanning Bollywood to art house and the subcontinent, as well as establishing an international competition, the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne Awards. Amitabh Bachchan will be honoured as the IFFM International Screen Icon for 2014. To celebrate this visit, La Trobe University is creating the 'Shri Amitabh Bachchan' scholarship and Mr Bachchan will personally present the inaugural scholarship to a student during his visit.

Other guests during the festival will include National Award-winning arthouse star Konkona Sen Sharma, iconic filmmakers Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra and Raj Kumar Hirani, Bollywood siren Malaika Arora Khan, popular actress, director, producer and writer, Suhasini Maniratnam; writer and director of the record-breaking Dhoom 3, Vijay Krishna Acharya, and from Lollywood, Pakistani producer Hassan Wagas Rana (Waar) and acclaimed Pakistani actor, writer and

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director Shaan Shahid.

The IFFM Awards will be judged by a panel of Australian and Indian film legends including Phillip Noyce, Jill Bilcock, Raju Hirani, Simi Garewal, Rajeev Masand and Suhasini Maniratnam. In the first Indian cinema awards of its kind in Australia, winners in the categories of Best Film, Best Performance, Best Director, Best Independent Film and the People's Choice Award will be announced at a red carpet gala event on May 2 at the Princess Theatre with a dazzling entertainment program presented by local Melbourne talents.

IFFM kicks off on May 1 with the Australian premiere of the newly-restored Sholay 3D, followed by a Q&A with the film's star Amitabh Bachchan. Since its release in 1975, the spaghetti western-style action adventure film has established itself as a beloved classic of Indian cinema and is critically regarded as one of the best Indian films of all time. "We are really delighted to open the festival with a screening of this most cherished film," said festival director Mitu Bhowmick Lange. Turning its focus to contemporary India, IFFM presents four dynamic program streams of new films from India and the subcontinent. "The program reflects the films coming out of India today - questioning the social injustices, our relationship with our neighbours, gender inequality, while we also celebrate the wonderful Bollywood musicals that we all so love", said Bhowmick-Lange.

'Hurrah Bollywood!' features the best mainstream Hindi cinema from the last 12 months, featuring Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, the incredible true story of track legend Milkha Singh; romantic smash-hit Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram Leela, a Bollywood adaptation of Romeo and Juliet; and the highest-grossing Bollywood film of all time, Dhoom 3, starring Aamir Khan.

'Beyond Bollywood' presents art house and cinema in regional Indian languages, with program highlights such as the critically-acclaimed Anumati, the story of an old man's attempt to save his dying wife; the wonderfully original Filmistan, about a friendship that bonds over Bollywood across Borders; the Marathi film, Fandry, exploring the caste system of India; B A Pass; and Apur Panchali, for which Kaushik Ganguli won Best Director at the International Film Festival of India Awards.

'New Voices' celebrates exciting emerging talents, presenting Ship of Theseus, directed by Sydney Film Festival jury member Anand Gandhi; and Ritesh Batra's The Lunch Box, following screenings at the Cannes, Sundance and Toronto International film festivals. 'Films from the Subcontinent' features eight films from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. Closing the

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festival is Goynar Baksho, directed by Aparna Sen which will be introduced by leading actor, Konkona Sen Sharma.

IFFM offers a window into the future of filmmaking with screenings of winners and finalists in the Western Union short film competition open to filmmakers from India and Australia. The annual competition supports and encourages the careers of young filmmakers from India and Australia and fosters industry ties between the two countries. The 2014 winners will be announced at the IFFM Awards night and the winning films screened.

The colour and rhythm of Bollywood is expressed most joyously in its dancing. At Federation Square on May 4, audiences can emulate their screen heroes and join in the Telstra Bollywood Dance Competition to be judged by the incredible Malaika Arora Khan, a judge on TV show India's Got Talent.

The Indian Film Festival of Melbourne was established in 2012 as an initiative of the Victorian Coalition Government.