



Press release n. 4
River to River. Florence Indian Film Festival
8-12 December, 2004, Florence, Italy

The **8th-12th of December** marks the commencement of the 4th annual **River to River. Florence Indian Film Festival**, directed by Luca Marziali and Selvaggia Velo.

The festival will take place at the Spazio Uno Cinema in Via del Sole, 10, Florence - Italy.

The only festival in Europe, and first in the world that is totally dedicated to films from and about India, the FIFF has become through its four year course a reference point for Indian film in Italy and Europe and an open opportunity for independent and off-Bollywood Indian directors to debut and look for a diverse stage and occasion to meet their audience of tomorrow.

Features, short films, and documentaries: like every year **River to River. Florence Indian Film Festival** will present the best of the recent independent productions of Indian cinematography, an occasion to learn about the directors of the most interesting and innovative films, and pieces of historical recognition.

Among the features will stand out the hip Tarantino-like *Waisa bhi hota hai (Shit Happens)* by Shashanka Ghosh, the image of Tennessee Williams in *The Glass Menagerie* by Shyamaprasad of Akale (At a distance), the outrageous portrait of a woman in *White Noise* by Vinta Nanda and *Hava aney dey (Let the Wind Blow)* by Partho Sen Gupta, showing a contemporary India on the brink of nuclear disaster.

The 120-minute shorts package speak of the mixed language of the dissonant soul of contemporary India divided between literature and the metropolis, while the **Docu Zone** speaks of the face and voice of Sonia Ghandi's India and the excruciating social conflicts.

Not to miss is the section **Calcutta Chromosome**, an image-filled ride to the root of Bengalese presence in Indian film. Visions and traces of Indian DNA in celluloid ranging from the first world-wide pioneering films from the 30's and 40's (*Alibaba* and *Abatar*), produced by the studios of Shree Bharat Lakshmi Pictures and digitally reprinted, to the **Apu's Trilogy** by the founding father Satyajit Ray, and to the digital portrait of the Dalai Lama signed by **Goutam Ghose**.

Goutam Ghose will be one of the numerous guests of the festival, that will participate to many Q&As with the festival audience; the bengalese director will present *Impermanace* on Thursday December 9th at 9.00 pm, and will conduct a conversation on the modernity in Ray's cinema on Sunday December 12th at midday.

The other appointments with the Q&As will be with **Herbert Krill** (*Bollywood Remixed*) on Wednesday 8th, **Vinta Nanda** and **Koël Purie** (*White Noise*) on Friday 10th, **Rupinder Nagra** (*Amal*), **Dishad Husain** (*Holly Bolly*) and **Partho Sen Gupta** (*Hava aney dey-Let the Wind Blow*) on Saturday 11th, **Laurence Castle** (*The Heart of Modern India*), **Dimitri Chimenti** (*My own Bizarre Experience*), **Jean Sharida** and **Louis Spoeltra** (*Breaking the Future*) on Monday December 13th.

From **10th to 12th of December**, in collaboration with Rai Teche, the **Mompracem Lounge** of Cinema Spazio Uno, will host the special event of FIFF 2004 featuring the amazing comeback of the famous TV serial **Sandokan**, starring Kabir Bedi and directed by **Sergio Sollima**, programmed with 2 screenings daily. With Sandokan, Florence will witness the exotic glamour of the long-time-dreamt India created almost 30 years back for the TV screen by the Italian National TV Network.

On Friday 10th at 11am, the Festival will host the documentary *Forest Medicine*, a video review of a European project on Ayurvedic Medicine, the holistic system of healing which evolved among the Brahmin sages of ancient India some 3000-5000 years ago. After the screening, the coordinators of the project will meet the audience.



The extended times of the festival will be on **Monday, December 13th** with the outside program of **Eyes on India**, all-day round overview of documentaries and short films of western authors concerning the most burning issues of Indian society. With a technical quality and choice of subject that distinguish themselves from the usual reporting and news clips, many of these works reveal a sensitivity to, and a passionate interest in, a country of infinite topics for research and dialogue. From the age-old exclusion of the casteless (*Untouchables vs. Aryans*) to the allure of the great mother Ganges (*Ganges: River to Heaven*); from the burgeoning role of the DJs to the secluded world of tribal rituals (*Sun and Moon and the God of Rain*); finally the title that seems all-encompassing: *The Heart of Modern India*.

The most voted film of the festival's audience will win the **FIFF Digimovies Audience Award**: a showing of 15 minutes of high-definition film will be visible in streaming for all of 2005 on the site www.digimovies.net. An extra-screening of the award-winner film will close the **Eyes on India** day on December 13th.

The Florentine programming of **River to River. Florence Indian Film Festival 2004** will take place at the Cinema Lumière of Bologna, where 3 films of the Satyajit Ray retrospective will be shown.

An extract of the festival will be also shown at the Institute of Oriental Studies at the University of Rome.

During the films and other times, Bombay beat, Kamastura beer, and delectable Tandoori and Mughlai cuisine will be prepared by chefs from Maharaja restaurant in Fiesole, Bologna and Pisa.

River to River. Florence Indian Film Festival 2004 is supported by: Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Cultural Councillorship of the City of Florence, Regione Toscana, Banca Toscana, APT, the Residenza d'Epoca Antica Torre di Via Tornabuoni n.1, Alitalia and the India Tourism Office of Milan, with the Patronage of the Indian Embassy.



Features and short films

Of the **feature films**, five European premières, *Akale (At a distance)*, *Chameli*, *Paap (Sin)*, *Waisa bhi hota hai (Shit Happens)*, *White Noise*, and one Italian preview, with *Hava aney dey (Let the Wind Blow)*.

Social, noir and bittersweet comedy topics are the defining marks of the new Indian authors: the existential conflicts of Indian metropolitan youths, the reckless life of a TV actress, a thriller that finds its beat through text messages, and the peaks of the Himalayan mountains revealing a fascinating soft and feminine side of Bollywood.

Different by length, varying from 1 to 28 minutes, the **short films** reflect the negative tempers of independent cinema trying to escape the struggle of mainstream productions by venturing through digital pixels and the absence of a script, and with an homage to the neurosis of large cities.

Of these shorts, the actuality of a denied infancy (*Little Terrorist*), the Rimbaudian image of the obscene Bengalese poet Falguni Roy (*Ebang Falguni*), a sharp-tongued haiku concerning the treatment of newborns of the feminine sex (*Y Not?*) and a trip into the metropolis of New York revealing the memory of a sacred river to Gods and men (*Sangam*) will be screened.

Docu Zone

Not only Michael Moore: post electoral India is passing from Hindu fundamentalism to Sonia Gandhi's conducted government party, generating not only a flow of denunciation and civil passion, but also of irony and desire to astonish. The spectacle of Bollywood responds to the anxiety of a glacial future (*System of Units*) and the preoccupation with environmental resources (*Still, the Children are Here* and *One Water*), while the events of an honest rickshaw driver (*Amal*) clash with the parodistic world of an aspiring film star (the mockumentary *Fillum Star*).

Calcutta Chromosome

Intellectual and visionary, the films produced in Calcutta are since the past seven decades the privileged workshop of Indian cinema, the motherland of extraordinary visual wonders divided between literature and experimentation. The FIFF brings to light the sagacious and melodramatic fables of the biggest production house of the city from the years during the two World Wars; the motto from the studios of Shree Bharatlakshmi Pictures were tremendously simple and appropriate: "enter with the script and exit with the print". From these seasons of restless activity have come forth generations of authors and directors that have made up the history of Indian cinema, from the acclaimed Satyajit Ray to the often neglected Ritwik Ghatak, from the stars of the seventies to the classic and incisive films of Goutam Ghose.

On **Sunday, December 12th** the FIFF will present the "**Ray Marathon**", a full projection in 16mm. of Ray's **Trilogy of Apu**; this work is the true guide of the neorealism of Ray and the very beginning of the recognition of Indian cinema in Europe. Many recent works of Ghose depend on these lyric impositions of reality, as stated by the documentary *Ray* and by the digital truth of *Impermanence*, last film of the director, both programmed in Florence. Of both followers and opponents, no other author of contemporary India is able to escape this confrontation with history.

On **Sunday 12th**, the "Ray Marathon" will feature a tea break called Chai Time, with the traditional Indian spice milk tea served on stage for an unusual relaxing experience.

Special Event: Sergio Sollima's Sandokan

Twenty-eight years later, Kabir Bedi's most famous TV film will land in Florence on the big screen, with six original format episodes of the Rai series of 1976, a flow of collective memories that will transform the video room of cinema Spazio Uno in the Indian-like **Mompracem Lounge**.

December 13: Eyes on India

How does India view the West? The answer is from the eyes of the directors who have chosen India as a special observatory of the contrasts and the similarities of the new millennium, with more than a billion personal stories and just as many proposals of life.

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