



London Indian Film Festival: Ten highlights to check out

THE London Indian Film Festival returns again this month with another action-packed programme, which includes premieres in three different cities. The annual festival, which runs across London, Birmingham and Manchester from June 21 to July 1, has a wide array of interesting movie screenings, talks and a short film competition. *Eastern Eye* went through the 2018 programme to select 10 highlights...

Love Sonia: There will be a world premiere of this hard-hitting film on the opening night of the festival. Set across three continents, the story, inspired by true events, revolves around a simple Indian village girl who finds herself trapped in the global sex trade. The interesting cast includes Mrunal Thakur, Freida Pinto, Demi Moore, Manoj Bajpayee, Rajkumar Rao, Richa Chadda and Anupam Kher.

Uma: Based on a true story, this emotional tale revolves around a little girl living in Switzerland diagnosed with a potentially-terminal disease, whose greatest desire is to participate in Kolkata's annual Durga Puja festival in October. But she may not make it till then so the entire city tries to recreate the festival in the summer as a special treat.

My Son is Gay: The multi-layered story focuses on a mother-son relationship which is put to the test when he comes out as a gay. The poignant tale sensitively tackles themes of tolerance and acceptance.

Village Rockstars:

The award-winning heart-warming tale is based on a single mother and her 10-year-old daughter living in a remote flood-prone Assamese village. The vibrant youngster wants to set up her own rock band and has to make do with imaginary guitars until she goes on a quest to get a real one.



Bhasmasur: A former thief in debt returns to his Rajasthani village from the big city to hide from a moneylender and decides to sell the prized family donkey, with whom his son shares a special bond. The trio set off across the desert and encounter various events along the way which brings the father and son closer.

Cycle: A well-known astrologer sees his world slowly fall apart when the cherished yellow cycle inherited from his grandfather is stolen. The life-affirming tale of hope and happiness revolves around villagers getting together in an attempt to reunite him with his beloved bike.



Hva vil folk si: The multi-award-winning film revolves around a Pakistani teenager living a happy life in Norway, whose world is torn apart when her father discovers she has a white Norwegian boyfriend. She is sent to live in Pakistan, where she has to adapt to a hostile environment and makes some hard choices.

Teen Aur Aadh: The interesting film narrates the story of a house in three different eras. A young boy struggles with the pressures of pre-pubescent school life and then 20 years later the same house is now a brothel, where a young virgin sex-worker has to deal with her first client. Then 30 years later, the place is now the home of an elderly couple that love, laugh and dance together.

Halkaa: The feel-good family film focuses on a slum boy who fights back against having to defecate in the open. After failing to convince anyone to build a toilet, he teams up with his friends and goes on a mission to make one. The charming and heart-warming film was the winner of the Grand Prix at the Montreal Film Festival.



Mr India: There will be a screening of the classic 1987 Bollywood classic as a tribute to actress Sridevi, who sadly passed away earlier this year. She plays a journalist in love with a heroic invisible man known as Mr India, who is taking on the evil megalomaniac Mogambo.

■ The London Indian Film Festival takes place from June 21 until July 1 across three cities. Visit www.londonindianfilmfestival.co.uk for more.

'Women know ho

KAREENA KAPOOR ON

by MOHNISH SINGH

FOR an actress to keep herself relevant for two decades in a male-dominated industry is not easy. But Kareena Kapoor Khan has defiantly made that possible for herself.

From making her debut with JP Dutta's *Refugee* in 2000 to starring in some of the biggest blockbusters such as *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*, *Jab We Met* and *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, Bebo, as she is affectionately known, has come a long way in Bollywood.

Her latest film *Veere Di Wedding*, which rolled into cinemas earlier this month, has done phenomenal business and is on its way to becoming another hit for the popular actress.

Eastern Eye met the diva at iconic Mehboob Studio in Mumbai to talk about her new release, son Taimur Ali Khan, changing dynamics of women-centric films in Bollywood and more...

In *Veere Di Wedding*, you play a girl called Kalindi who is in dilemma over getting married. She is sort of commitment-phobic. Do you even relate to this kind of a character?

No, I don't think so. Everyone knows I am not like that. Kalindi is commitment-phobic while I am not. I have always been very clear, so I have never really been that kind of a person.

Of late, a lot of women-centric films have found audiences' acceptance. What, according to you, has clicked with cinema-goers when it comes to such films?

I think there have always been a lot of women-oriented films. From *The Dirty Picture* (2011) to *Queen* (2014) and now *Raazi*, there have always been good women-centric films that have done well. See, if your script is good and your film is good, it will work no matter whether it's women-centric or not. That is something that I have always believed in, the audience will always back it.

'Veere Di Wedding is different'

How did you manage to devote time to *Veere Di Wedding*, considering the fact that you have a new born at home?

I started shooting for the film after Taimur was born. I want to spend a lot more time with him rather than on sets. That is why I have decided to do maybe one film a year.

We heard from your co-star Swara Bhasker that you are a very good storyteller...

(Laughs) I just entertain them on sets. I am always pulling her leg, not telling any story or anything.

Has your life changed again after motherhood?

Only in terms of time! Like I said, I want to spend my whole time with Taimur. But women know how to multi-task. I am happy I have got good support and that is the reason I can work and at the same time spend time with my family as well.

At this point in your life, what gives Kareena Kapoor Khan the ul-



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GIRL POWER: Kareena Kapoor Khan; and (above) with *Veere Di Wedding* co-stars Shikha Talsania, Sonam Kapoor and Swara Bhasker at a promotional event