

Source URL: <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/indias-film-sector-embraces-change-439085>

India's Film Sector Embraces Change at IFFLA Panel

11:02 PM PDT 4/13/2013 by David Chute

- 4
- 41
- 0

Filmmakers, including Nitin Kakkar and Hansal Mehta, see indie fare as sustainable alternative to Bollywood.

"This is a moment," says, Indian writer-director **Nitin Kakkar**, whose debut movie, the indie drama *Filmistan* was shown on Thursday at the 13th India Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA).

Kakkar and his colleagues at the Saturday afternoon IFFLA panel discussion "Today's Pioneer Voices: Changing the Landscape of Indian Cinema," moderated by *The Hollywood Reporter* film critic **Lisa Tsering**, were surprisingly optimistic about the future of "independent spirited" cinema in India, a market generally seen as dominated by the commercial musical melodramas of Bollywood. "There's big acceptance now of different kinds of stories," Kakkar said.

Many of the filmmakers attributed the change to new technologies that have created a new audience, accustomed to consuming culture globally rather than locally, from the standard Bollywood sources, while at the same time making that audience easier to reach than ever before.

PHOTOS: 10 Hollywood Films Tweaked for International Release ^[1]

"This moment is a culmination," said panelist **Vasan Bala** (whose IFFLA film was the well-received crime drama *Peddlers*). "The fulfillment of a lot of things that have been happening over the past ten years that we didn't realize were happening until now."

Director **Hansal Mehta** (*Shahid*), who has been making both independent and mainstream films in India for almost twenty years, was in the best position on this generally young panel to say how strikingly things have changed, and just over the past few years. Getting the movies financed and shot is no longer the most daunting challenge. "There has been a big change," he said an increase in the number of passionate people who are committed to getting the films made."

When the filmmakers on the panel, which also included **Anand Gandhi** (*Ship of Theseus*), were asked who had funded their films, none of which cost more than few hundred thousand dollars,

they spoke not of film production companies or distributors making investments but of private citizens in India's flourishing economy who have a passion for cinema and the cash to back it up.

"My star knew some rich guys," one of the directors said. Another allowed that his film won financing after his producer posted a plea on Facebook.

The real roadblock up to now, Mehta said, has been getting the films before a large enough audience. The price of the film prints needed for a wide release was prohibitive for smaller films. Digital distribution is changing that, he said. "The wide and easy availability of films is a liberating, a utopian thought, that I'm not going to have to worry about the market. I can make films fearlessly."

Kakkar was the one panelist who balked at the aesthetic limitations of the small digital devices that are increasingly the screens of choice for younger viewers. "To me, a movie on a phone is not a movie," he said. Kakkar says he was inspired to make movies by the "romance" of seeing them on a huge screen – and his movie was the most nostalgic about the unifying power of shared Bollywood dreams.

Gandhi noted, however, that both the directors on the panel, and their audience, are already tuned in the new realities of global distribution, which hold up the possibility of a new golden age of independent movie making in India

"The kind of films we make is shaped by the way we consume culture," Anand said. "We developed in digital age. We have benefited enormously from the global availability of culture. It is no longer possible to draw the boundaries of geography. My culture is no longer an Indian culture. It includes **Bela Tarr**, **Paul Thomas Anderson**. It is no longer possible to draw the boundaries of geography."

Links:

[1] <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/gallery/cut-censored-changed-10-hollywood-414099>