

Toronto film fest showcases Sikh movies

The Film Festival has fostered tremendous Sikh talent in the field of cinema

At this Smorgasbord of world cinema, Punjabi cinephiles were delighted at the line up of 26 movies as part of the Spinning Wheel Film Festival at the Isabel Bader Theatre in Toronto.

This is the fourth festival in a row and will go from Toronto to Beverley Hills from November 14 to 16.

This film festival along with the Sikhnet Online Film Festival has fostered tremendous Sikh talent in the field of cinema and multimedia across the world.

The festival also featured the launch of the Sikhpoint Art Calendar, "A walk through History."

Nandita Das's directorial debut "Firaag" which has been premiered at this festival and which depicted the politics of violence and aftermath in post-Godhra Gujarat was a keenly seen and debated movie.

The film menu includes many of the following outstanding films.

American Made

In their American made car, the Singh family is on the road taking the great American family trip - the Grand Canyon. Their SUV breaks down on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere. Anant, a Sikh-American wearing a turban, sees this as just another challenge - an opportunity to save the family and tell great stories about their escape from danger.

Turban Pride

Every Sikh's turban is different, but in a turban-tying competition, attention to detail really counts.

Roots & Wings

This is the second documentary by the award-winning, 14-year old Angad Singh. He poses the question: does one have to cut off one's roots in order to spread one's wings and soar high.

Kabhu Na Chhadon Khet

The film describes how the then nascent Sikh faith infused a new voice, determination, self-esteem and self-confidence in a populace which had hitherto accepted every tyranny and privation as mere products of fate and destiny.

The Rise of Khalsa

The film surveys the lifestyle of the Nihangs - a small group of warrior-saints in the Khalsa tradition who, however, continue to cling to the traditions that hark back to their heyday in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Impresario: An Ordinary Man

Sarabjit Singh of the weekly TV-show, Chardi Kala (OMNI-TV, Canada) interviews Iqbal Singh Mahal and explores his love for the Punjabi language and the art and culture of the Sikh diaspora.

Right to Turban

This film gives a personal account of the problems faced by French and Belgian Sikhs fighting for their right to wear a Turban, which is an integral article of faith.

Thirty-Five - "Paintee"

The Gurmukhi/Punjabi alphabet is popularly known as the "Paintee" - the "Thirty-Five" - because of the 35 letters in it. The film "35" studies the power of language on a culture, and the man-



ner in which it influences a community's growth and development.

My Sikh Wedding

The documentary follows a young couple through a whirlwind 24 hours: from preparations the night before their wedding to the ceremony at the Gurdwara, and on to the grand reception afterward.

Nanak Nam Jahaz Hai

This film created a nationwide sensation when it was released in 1969. It broke all existing box office records as millions lined up to see this drama of a Sikh family as it deals with its trials and tribulations by dipping into the well-springs of Sikhi.

Luthiers of Punjab

Traditional Sikh musical instruments are seeing a revival in modern Punjab and around the world.

Sobha Singh: My Footprints

This film explores the life and work of artist Sobha Singh whose iconic images of the Sikh Gurus, and depictions of the legends and folklore of Punjab.

Sikh-Canadian Heroes of the First World War

Who knows that a handful of Sikhs also fought in WW1 as part of the Canadian Army? At a time when Sikhs were actively prevented from immigrating to Canada and were denied Canadian citi-

zenship, these men joined with other Canadians to fight in Europe.

The Battle of Chillianwala

Less than a decade after the death of Ranjit Singh, the great Emperor of Punjab, on January 13, 1848, the Khalsa army engaged in a crucial battle with the British at Chillianwala, Punjab.

The Bhangra Generation

An innovative "sociological-musical" documentary by Raj Paul Singh Dhillon, this film examines the lives of four, second generation Canadians who are fast-tracking their way to success via the growing phenomenon called "Bhangra", based on the age-old folk dance of the Sikhs and Punjabis.

The Making of 'Fana'a: Ranjha Revisted'

The film surveys an internationally acclaimed dance-music production, collaboratively made by dancer/choreographer Navtej Singh Johar, Sufi singer/composer/lyricist Madan Gopal Singh and Carnatic vocalist and composer G. Elangovan.

Born to Sing

This film profiles the lives of a community of women singers in Punjab - the Mirasans. With songs that mark celebrations of birth, marriage and even death, they take part in their patrons' life cycles of joys and sorrow. They have been known to carry the

darkest secrets of royalty, from one generation to another.

Saka Sirhind

This animation film for young children tells the story of the two youngest sons - sahibzadeh - of Guru Gobind Singh, and their ultimate sacrifice at a tender age when they were bricked alive by the tyrant of Sirhind for having refused to abjure their faith.

Cultural Safari

Come along and join Alex, Mathew and Josh as they explore Sikh culture. This ground breaking film, produced by the Kaur Foundation, is made especially for educators, administrators and the peers of Sikh students at school. The film helps children and adults of all ages learn about the Sikhs.

Maharaja

This animation film deftly recreates the life of young Ranjit, from his ancestry and birth, through his eventful childhood, the tragic loss of his father at an early age and Ranjit's being named Chief of the Sukerchakia clan, his rise as a soldier and statesman, and his ascendancy to the throne as Maharaja of all Punjab - at the age of twenty-one!

Sundri

This is an animated adaptation of the famous Punjabi novel by Bhai Vir Singh set in the 17th century, when the nascent Sikh community was forced to live in the wilderness because of the oppres-

sion and forced conversions of the populace by the invading Afghans and Mughals.

The Making of Liverpool

This animation was inspired by a painting created by the internationally renowned British Sikh artists' duo, The Singh Twins. It explores both the history of and the artists' personal connection with their home city of Liverpool, England.

Khuda Ke Liye

A powerful drama that criss-crosses continents, it grapples with the clash of cultures that an immigrant Pakistani family finds itself in - trying to balance traditions of the home country with the mores of the new.

Bhowani Junction

George Cukor turns John Masters' novel into a monumental MGM epic. The film is renowned as one of the earliest to have a major Sikh character, and for a seminal scene in which Ava Gardner prepares to participate in an Amrit Sanchaar ceremony.

Rex versus Singh

Early in the 20th century, racist Canadian immigration authorities, in conjunction with the Vancouver police and the Justice System, conspired to use false and trumped-up charges to harass Sikh-Canadian immigrants.

Film details courtesy official website of Spinning Wheel Film Festival