

Onir Talks Of Challenges Facing Small Budget Movies

MUMBAI: National Award winning filmmaker Onir, known for helming independent films, says the nature of struggle has changed for small budget movies, but the challenges haven't vanished altogether.

"Earlier, the merit of the film used to speak for itself, along with the word of mouth. But now the fate of a film depends on its first weekend performance.

"We are competing with big studio films, star-driven films at the multiplexes. We are fighting with publicity, marketing and the new practice of media net.

"Earlier, making a film was expensive, and now releasing it is. So our struggle has changed, not stopped," Onir told IANS in an interview.

The filmmaker made his debut

as a director in 2005 with "My Brother... Nikhil", and went on to make "Bas Ek Pal" and an anthology like "I Am" that captured a range of social issues.

"He has a knack for telling tales on issues of concern, and has delved into subjects like AIDS, single motherhood, displacement, child abuse and same-sex relationships through his many movies.

Around 13 years and seven films later, asked about what keeps him motivated to deal with the constant struggle, he said: "For me, a good story comes first, and good actors. I am not saying stars are not good actors. I have worked with some of the great female stars who are willing to experiment with their craft.

"But producers are interested to



invest in a star, not on the script. So the struggle. But I will keep telling stories."

Onir has worked with some popular actresses Juhi Chawla, Urmila Matondkar, Manisha Koi-

rala and Radhika Apte.

On whether he ever foresees himself making a film with a superstar like Shah Rukh Khan, Onir said: "I think they do not want to work with me... (laughing).

"Jokes apart, I can see myself working with Shah Rukh Khan in future. I have admired him in all kind of films, whether it is 'Yes Boss', 'Chak De! India' or 'Swades'. No one can romance the way Shah Rukh does.

"Of course now things have changed. Now I cannot make a love story with Shah Rukh, but if the right script comes my way, we will hopefully work together."

Most of Onir's films are critically acclaimed and have received good reviews, and according to him, such things really

work for smaller films.

"For films like ours, which are neither star-driven, nor big budget, what brings people in the theatre are good reviews.

"If people are talking about the film, and it is getting positive reviews and praise from influential people of the fraternity, people get interested to watch them. So, reviews matter to us."

He feels happy that there are universities and film museums in the US that have archived his films.

"In fact, the Museum of Houston will host a week-long programme where they will screen my films 'Shab', 'I Am', 'My Brother... Nikhil' and will have a discussion in the month of May. I am happy and feel content about such things."

'Omerta' Dazzles At Hong Kong Fest

HONG KONG: Filmmaker Hansal Mehta says he was overwhelmed by the number of questions the audience had for him after the screening of his film "Omerta" at the Hong Kong International Film Festival.

The film, which is based on terrorist Omar Saeed Sheikh's life, was screened in the Global Vision category at the fest on Friday.

"I was asked a lot of questions that threw up several new interpretations of how the audience perceived the film. It's definitely got me thinking. As a director, it's fascinating to hear people speak of how they interpreted your vision," Mehta said in a statement.

"The festival always attracts the best of global talent, and for 'Omerta' to represent India was a proud moment for everyone associated with the film. I am very happy that the audience appreciated the hard push against terrorism in the film and how it inspires



to open dialogue into the matter," he added.

"Omerta" was shot in real locations across London and India. It is woven around some of the most bloody terror attacks, including the 9/11 attack and the beheading of journalist Daniel Pearl.

It had received rave reviews

at the Toronto International Film Festival and the Busan International Film Festival.

Presented by Swiss Entertainment and Karma Media, produced by Nahid Khan and directed by Mehta, "Omerta" stars Rajkumar Rao. It will release on April 20.

Tiger Shroff Launches His 'Prowl' Lifestyle Brand

BENGALURU, March 26 (IANS) Actor Tiger Shroff's newly launched active lifestyle brand Prowl has partnered with Cure.fit, a health and wellness startup to co-create an exclusive workout format.

The workout, which comprises a unique mix of combat, dance, and functional fitness done to foot-tapping music, will be available for all members of cult.fit, the fitness vertical of Cure.fit.

Tiger had recently launched his active lifestyle brand Prowl, which is a result of his association with Mojostar, a celebrity-driven house of brands.

"I have co-created and co-own Prowl. As part of this collaboration with Cure.fit, along with the master trainers at Cult, I have co-curated a unique and fresh workout. I am extremely delighted to

partner with Cure.fit," Tiger told IANS in an email interview.

The Prowl workout will be led by Tiger, a well-regarded fitness enthusiast, athlete, and ace dancer.

The workout, a dance fitness routine, has been exclusively devised by Cult.fit's master trainer Shwetambari Shetty and Tiger.

Mukesh Bansal, Co-founder, Cure.fit, said: "Cult's ethos has always been to break free from the monotony of dull workouts and keep yourself motivated to stay fit, the fun way."

Earlier this month, Prowl's range of functional yet highly-stylish clothing and accessories, which allow today's always-active individuals to smoothly transition from one activity to another without compromising on the style, was launched.

Rajkumar Rao Likes To Have Attention Of Female Fans

NEW DELHI: Rajkumar Rao loves all the attention he is getting, and says he is overwhelmed with his increasing number of female fans.

"I like attention. I like female attention as well. It is very overwhelming. I have seen that there is growth in the amount of people who used to like me and it has gone up thanks to the whole of last year," Rajkumar told IANS in an interview.

"It is very encouraging also in a way... People like me, they are appreciating my work and the kind of films that I am doing," he added. He entered filmdom

with an interesting role in 2010 with "Love Sex Aur Dhokha" and went on to cement his position in the industry with back-to-back powerful performances in films like "Kai Po Che!", "Shahid", "Aligarh", "CityLights", "Bareilly Ki Barfi" and "Newton".

For Rajkumar, it is very important to reinvent with each project. "Otherwise it gets boring. Once you find your comfort zone and you keep working in that comfort zone, after a while it gets very boring. You have to keep evolving and keep growing. And growth only happens when you push yourself," he said.



Last year in particular was good for Rajkumar as his film "Newton" became India's official entry for the Oscars -- though it could not make it to the final list.

So, does this validation add any pressure while picking projects?

"The offers are more or else same what it was earlier. My process hasn't changed. I was being very selective even when I just started out with 'LSD' and 'Ragini MMS'. I always tend to choose some unconventional things in life," he said.

The unconventional aspect stands true for his forthcoming project "Omerta" too. He will be seen bringing the life of a dreaded terrorist alive on the big screen with the Hansal Mehta directorial. It is based on British-Pakistani terrorist Omar Saeed

Sheikh's life. Presented by Swiss Entertainment and Karma Media, and produced by Nahid Khan, the film is releasing on April 20.

"I love taking risks. That is what I do as an actor. I love challenges. I want to push myself as an actor with every film and whenever it is possible I try to do that with all my characters. 'Omerta' offered me something very unique, something which I have never done earlier in my life. "It is a story of an evil mind and I wanted to explore that evil genre," he said. Getting into the psyche of a terrorist was, however, not easy, says Rajkumar.

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