

Hansal Mehta Has Found His Storytelling Space

MUMBAI: Whether it is "Shahid", "Aligarh", "Simran", "Bose: Dead/Alive" or the upcoming "Omerta", National Award-winning filmmaker Hansal Mehta seems to have found his space in telling stories that are based on real life characters or incidents. He attempts to express his "individual voice" through these narratives.

"I am glad if people also find such stories interesting, as I do. But it is not conscious. I have my individual voice and that reflects in my films. Not necessarily everything translates into acceptance, but I try to maintain my voice in the stories that I tell," Mehta told IANS in an interview.

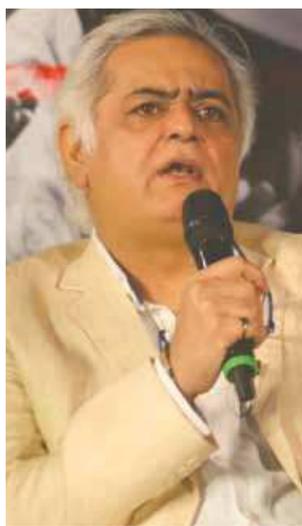
His forthcoming film, the intense drama "Omerta" that releases on May 4, traces the life of British-Pakistani terrorist Omar Saeed Sheikh. Is it a biopic?

"Yes, it is an unauthorised biopic. You can say that," the filmmaker said with a smile.

Given that "Omerta" tells the tale of a man who was involved in terror attacks in recent history, including the Mumbai terror strike and the brutal beheading of American journalist Daniel Pearl - and possibly the 9/11 attacks -- it is understood that the character will be dark. Nobody is a born terrorist. And so, the question arises: Has Mehta tried to humanise Omar Saeed Sheikh?

"Being evil and negative is (a) human characteristic that we all have somewhere or the other. But we are not brainwashed like Omar. What Omar is doing is something that he strongly believes in and his ideology has its own logic.

"The reason why the story of Omar scares us is because he is so real. He is a murderer, he is evil; and (if) such a man... comes in front of you, it would be spine-chilling. So we kept it that real... He doesn't dance or eat like a don... things that we get to see



in regular Hindi films. All his actions are coming from a certain conviction," Mehta explained.

The film premiered at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival and received a good response. Asked if the theatrical release and box office numbers worry him,

Mehta said: "Yes, we have been travelling with the film since last September and everywhere people are talking about the impact that the story is creating in the minds of the audience.

"I just hope that the way the international audience has engaged with the story, our Indian audience feels the same."

"Honestly, when people talk to me about box office numbers, my first and most important concern is to recover the money. Once that is done, the film will live its own life in the theatre. The audience will do that for us. But I want the cost of the film, marketing, everything that is invested should be recovered from the theatrical release," said Mehta.

Starting his career in television, Mehta made his debut as a film director with "Dil Pe Mat Le Yaar!". His movie "Shahid" bagged him a National Award for Best Direction. It is interesting to observe how actor Rajkumar

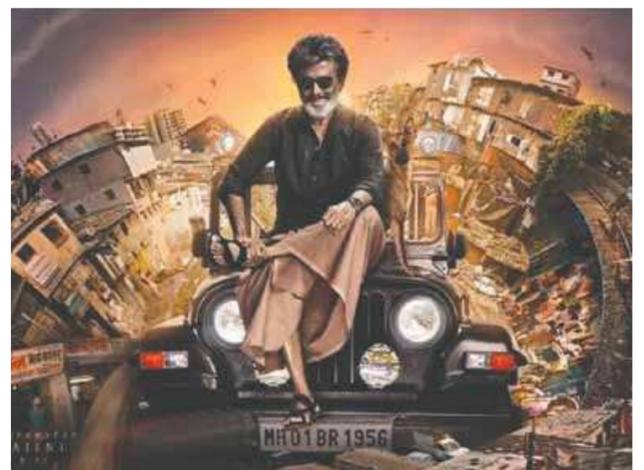
Rao, who played the protagonist in "Shahid" and now features as the terrorist in "Omerta", has found a new dimension in his career after collaborating with Mehta.

"Raj is evolving with each film and we can all see that. But I noticed how involved he is with each of the characters he plays. I remember how he was trying to pick up the Malayalam accent to play Deepu Sebastian (for the film 'Aligarh')." "There was a certain aggression that I noticed in him even when the camera was not rolling. That's Raj for you," said the director of his actor.

The filmmaker, however, said that when he developed the script of "Omerta", Rajkumar was not on his mind.

"I wanted to make the film in 2007. So, the story has lived with me for the last so many years. Raj came into my life during 'Shahid'" said Mehta, who is all set to do another film with the actor.

Rajinikanth's 'Kaala' Gets Realistic Digital Upgrade



NEW DELHI: He calls working on superstar Rajinikanth's "Kaala" as one of his biggest projects, and was amazed at the magnitude of the Tamil film. Pete Draper, who is looking after the VFX of the movie, hopes the audience will not be able to tell the difference between the real world and computer generated imagery (CGI).

Makuta co-founder and CEO Draper has worked in big blockbusters "Eega", "Ghajini", "Magadheera", "Endhiran" and "Baahubali".

"The experience of working on the film has been very good. The set work which we have to do... It is one of the biggest that we have worked on," Draper told IANS.

The trilingual movie also features Nana Patekar, Huma Qureshi, actor-director Samudrakani and Eswari Rao among others. The film is slated for release in June.

"They have built a 1 or 1.5 km set... We went out there for work. I hope you won't be able to tell

CGI in it," he said, adding that some of the best CGI is the one that people don't spot.

Draper spoke to IANS on behalf of AXN India for their show "Zoo", which is replete with CGI.

Creating a world with the use of technology is not easy. Draper says it is tough to create imperfections in the perfect digital world. "The problem with CGI is that it is perfect and the real world is not perfect. If you look around yourself, every single thing that you notice has some imperfection... Every single thing have small imperfections. We are not used to seeing perfection.

"As soon we see something which is literally perfect, we think that something is not right because you are not used to seeing that. We have to make things to convince the audience. So, creating a structure or an animation or creating a realistic thing is just the first stage.

"It is adding those inaccuracies, imperfection which is challenging."

Varun 'Protective' Of Natasha Dalal

MUMBAI: Actor Varun Dhawan doesn't talk about his romantic relationship with Natasha Dalal often, but he has not made any effort to hide the fact that he is in one. He says it takes away from his personal life and he feels it is his job to protect her.

"Why is it so hard to talk about your relationship?" Varun was asked in an interview for CNN-News18's "Now Showing".

The actor, who has just turned 31, said: "I feel like it takes away my personal life and that is the only reason I don't talk about it. Because then (whether) you are in or not in (a relationship), they are going write something."

Is she uncomfortable with the attention?

"Yeah, she is a normal girl. She is a normal kid and she wants to just live a normal life and its my job to protect her," added Varun, who is currently riding high on the praise coming his way for "October".

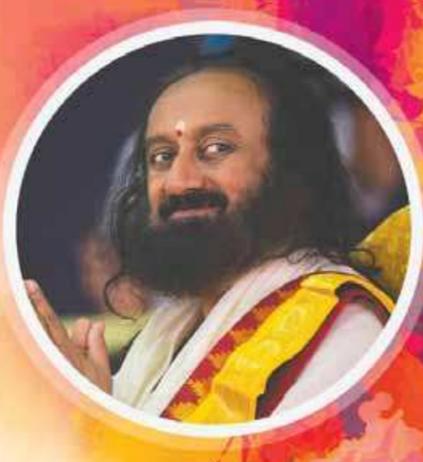
"The main thing in life is that you're happy and you don't have to prove anything to anybody."



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