



News

Bollywood embraces the sex factor

Critically acclaimed: Love Sex Aur Dhokha was censored in its home country



Louise Jury
Chief Arts Correspondent

A **BOLLYWOOD** movie is to mark a cultural shift in Indian film-making when it has its full premiere in London tomorrow night.

Love Sex Aur Dhokha contains the first explicit sex scene in a mainstream Indian movie.

Despite critical acclaim, it was censored heavily when it was released in India this year and has so far failed to

Indian film first as explicit scene is screened at festival in London

find an international distributor – but it will be screened uncut at the first London Indian Film Festival, which starts at the Cineworld Haymarket tomorrow.

The film is a dystopian romance set in urban India and shows – via a security camera – a couple having sex. The

woman appears naked and the man is seen with his jeans at his ankles. Dibakar Banerjee, the film's director, said he had wanted to explore how "the glorious myth of the all-conquering power of love" seen in Bollywood contrasts with the reality of India's caste-driven and sexist society.

There has been fleeting nudity in arthouse films such as Ketan Mehta's *Maya Memsaab* and *Bandit Queen* had a sex scene but was British-made. Mainstream films are traditionally very coy and even kissing on the lips is taboo.

The festival organisers claim its films reflect a "new India" and its middle-class. The subjects tackled include

sexuality, infidelity, the emancipation of women and establishment corruption. Festival director Cary Rajinder Sawhney said: "These low-budget films aren't about singing and dancing around trees, but fresh, controversial and thought-provoking cinema which is gaining new audiences in the mega cities amongst India's young multiplex generation."

Other films in the programme include *City of Gold* about a family of mill workers in Mumbai. The festival will also show films at the Barbican, Genesis, Watermans and the Nefesh Centre.

■ The London Indian Film Festival runs from July 15-20. Log on to www.londonindianfilmfestival.co.uk to find out more

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Stars of CCTV: two characters get close in the movie, filmed using a spy-cam

Voyeuristic genre-buster gets exposure it deserves

REVIEW

LOVE SEX AUR DHOKHA

★★★★☆

ASJAD NAZIR

ONCE in a while a film comes along that changes everything and adds an extra dimension to an entire genre. While some, like the Hitchcock classics, are embraced and used as a beacon to light the way for a new direction, Bollywood movie *Love Sex Aur Dhokha* was seen as too dark and shunned by the industry.

Despite being showered with critical acclaim, the drama was censored heavily when it was released in India this year. It caused outrage among right-wing conservatives and failed to find a distributor brave enough to take it to an international audience.

That is because the movie – which opens the inaugural London Indian Film Festival – breaks every rule in the book. It tackles taboo subjects head on, and has one of the most explicit sex scenes ever done in commercial Bollywood. Shot

entirely on CCTV, hand-held camera and spy-cam, the episodic drama explores the themes of love, sex and betrayal in three stories that run parallel to each other.

Director Dibakar Banerjee plays cleverly on the voyeurism that has become so popular with audiences addicted to reality TV.

Doubling a technique used in Hollywood monster movie *Cloverfield*, the stories are told from three cameras, and are so realistic that after a while you forget you're actually watching a movie.

While some will find the shaky and often grainy shots distracting, others will see it as a genuine attempt to build a bridge between Bollywood and Western contemporary cinema.

Although it has flaws, the uncut version will inspire more debate when it premieres in London tomorrow and perhaps give the kind of inspiration to Western filmmakers that India chose to ignore.

The director will be at Cineworld Haymarket to take questions after the movie finishes.

■ Asjad Nazir is showbusiness editor of *Eastern Eye*



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