

# THE WEEK

OCTOBER 3, 2010

Search the web:

Search

- STOCK MARKET
- LAST WORD
- SPORTS
- BUSINESS
- CURRENT EVENTS
- ENTERTAINMENT**
- LIFESTYLE
- DETOUR
- COLUMNS
- STATESCAN
- PERSPECTIVE
- HEALTH

Home > Entertainment > Full Story

## Venetian charm



Class act: MeeK's Cutoff was one of the well-received films at the festival

The Venice Film Festival, all of 67 years, is striving to bring back its youth. The first cosmetic change that will infuse a liberal dash of nectar will be the new Palazzo del Cinema. To be ready for the 2012 edition of the festival, the venue will be a grand edifice that will rise on the island of Lido on the Adriatic Sea. Off Venice's celebrated San Marco Square, Lido has charmed fest-goers for six decades with some brilliant cinema.

As the present, ageing Palazzo gives way to the glistening brand new structure, this year's 11-day cinematic event largely flaunted a flock of young directors. India's Anurag Kashyap was one, his second consecutive year at Venice. Last year, he was on the main jury and also had two of his movies, Dev D and Gulaab, there.

Sadly, Kashyap's latest work did not attract enough attention. I have no idea why That Girl in Yellow Boots was touted as a thriller. The film follows a 20-year-old British girl, Ruth, as she flies into Mumbai looking for a father who deserted her, her English mother and step-sister 15 years ago. Armed with a letter (without an address) from her father in which he says he is keen to meet her and with no recent photograph of his—the girl's search in a metropolis of 14 million people seems ridiculously futile. Scripted by Kashyap and his live-in girlfriend Kalki Koechlin, who also plays Ruth, the movie frequently distracts us from the main goal.

Mani Ratnam was another Indian helmer at Venice. The festival honoured him with the Jaeger-LeCoultre 'Glory to the Filmmaker Award'. The ceremony was followed by a screening of his Raavanan in Tamil. Happily so, for, of the two versions—the other being in Hindi—the one in Tamil is by far the best. Vikram, who plays the role that Abhishek essays in the Hindi Raavan, was also present at the ceremony. Curiously, Aishwarya Rai, who appears in both the Hindi and Tamil editions, was not to be seen. Raavan was also screened at the festival.

These Indian movies did not figure in the main competition, which, for the fourth time in five years was entirely made up of world premieres, helmed by young men and women. Their average age was 47, far lower than that of the earlier 66 versions of the festival. The unusually large contingent of Italian films drew a blank on the awards night. Asian movies, despite earning critical appreciation, could garner only minor kudos.

One of the well received films at the festival was Kelly Reichardt's MeeK's Cutoff. Set in 1845, the movie follows three pioneering families as they head towards the Pacific Northwest to begin life afresh. Persuaded by a smooth talking guide called MeeK, the families leave the main group convinced that the man would take them to a fertile region. Lost midway in an absolute barren land with very little food and water, the men, women and children capture a native American, who seems to be their last hope of survival.

Polish director Jerzy Skolimowski's political thriller Essential Killing took us back to the Iraq war. It had Vicente Gallo essaying a Taliban terrorist captured by American soldiers and transported to an unknown location in Europe. He escapes when his vehicle crashes on snow-bound terrain. The movie is a hard look at man's instinct to survive.

Another chilling movie was Chilean director Pablo Larrain's Post Mortem which is set in the Santiago of 1973—during the days of a military coup to overthrow Salvador Allende, who reportedly committed suicide. Alfredo Castro's Mario types autopsy reports in a morgue, and he faces the horror of the upheaval outside when he and his colleagues are asked to perform a post mortem on Allende. The film crackles with a sense of dismal oppressiveness.

But nothing could have been as distressing as Wang Bing's 112-minute drama The Ditch, on the life of Chinese outcasts in the Gobi Desert in the 1960s, when hundreds of educated citizens were sent by Mao and his men for what they termed "re-education". In a climax that jolts us, we see a young widow at the Gobi camp searching for the body of her husband: distraught, she finally sees his body, parts of which have been eaten up by men-turned-cannibals.

### FILM FESTIVAL

Young directors dominated the Venice Film Festival

By Gautaman Bhaskaran/Venice

ADVERTISEMENTS



Press Releases >>

THE WEEK

GLOBE TROTTER

Musings of The Week's roving reporters >>



THE WEEK

JOURNALISM WITH A HUMAN TOUCH

BIG GAIN OFFER WINNERS

Click here >

The Taj hotel gives 26/11 victims a new lease of life, in this issue.



THE WEEK

JOURNALISM WITH A HUMAN TOUCH

Click here to know more >

THE WEEK  
My Wishlist Offer  
WINNERS

THE WEEK  
AYODHYA VERDICT  
PEACE BY PIECE  
NOW ON THE STANDS

ASK EXPERT  
Send your query to our experts  
Click here >

THE WEEK  
Want to buy your copy of THE WEEK online?  
CLICK HERE >

| query | guest book | home | to the editor |

All copyrights reserved with Malayala Manorama Group. Articles and contents can be used as per our terms & conditions. Standard disclaimers applicable. Malayala Manorama Publications Kochi, Kerala.