

For Immediate Release

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Chicago South Asian Film Festival Announces 2013 Film Selection

The Chicago South Asian Film Festival reveals the film lineup for its fourth annual event to be held between September 20 and 22nd. The festival, to be hosted at the Showplace Icon Theaters and Film Row Cinema at Columbia College will present over 24 films.

The festival will open with the US premiere of *Oass*, a portrayal of the injustices faced by the many victims of child trafficking. Directed by Abhinav Shiv Tiwari, the film follows Kiku, a girl of great determination, as she endeavors to return home from the dingy brothels of Delhi.

The centerpiece film is *Shahid*, by director Hansal Mehta and producer Anurag Kashyap. The biographical piece recounts the inspiring journey of Shahid Azmi, a human rights activist and lawyer who was killed in 2010. The festival will close with the presentation of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, starring Riz Ahmed and Kate Hudson. The film, directed by Mira Nair and winner of the IFFI Century Award, tells the story of a Pakistani man whose American Dream is threatened by post 9/11 reactions to al-Qaida attacks.

Also included in the lineup is *Club 60*, Sanjay Tripathy's directorial debut in Bollywood. Featuring acclaimed actors Farooq Sheikh, Sarika, Satish Shah, and Tinnu Anand, the film offers a glimpse into the lives of young at heart 60-year-olds. "We all are still young at heart. It's all about how you live your life," said Sheikh during a photo shoot for the film. *Farah Goes Bang*, *Touring Talkies*, *Pied Piper*, *Chor Chor Super Chor*, *Bengali film Tasher Desh*, and the *Sri Lankan film Thanha Rathi Ranga* round off the features.

Among the short-length films, *Bansuli (The Flute)* presents a narrative that takes place in the remote west of Kamali, *3 Puffs of Gold* explores the subject of sexual assault, and *Breakdown* introduces the story of an American caught in the darkest shadows of urban India. Other shorts included in the lineup are *Free Kaa Refill*, *The Queen of My Dreams*, *...Or Die*, *Shameless*, and *Khuli Khidki*.

The festival will also present *Much Ado About Knotting*, a documentary based on the practice of marital matchmaking in contemporary India. "We've looked at a pan-cultural phenomenon through an Indian prism. What was earlier negotiated at closed family events has now snow-balled into a multi-million dollar industry. It's a startling scenario and the film presents the multiple facets without being judgmental," said director Geetika Narang Abbasi in a previous statement. *The Other Army*, directed by Sana Attiq Haq, focuses on the stories of three Pakistanis who sacrificed their lives in the fight against terrorism.

Major sponsors include Comcast, Columbia College Chicago and Saavn.

For more information on the full list of film selections, please visit <http://csaff.org/film-guide/>.

About CSAFF

[Chicago South Asian Film Festival](http://www.csaaff.org/) is dedicated to fostering a diverse cinematic experience through South Asian films. The Festival was founded in 2010 and is organized by the Chicago South Asian Arts Council Inc. The Festival is held in late September in conjunction with Columbia College Chicago and includes a stellar selection of films and guests, panel discussions, opportunities for filmmakers and film lovers to connect, musical performances, tributes to major artists, and galas. The Festival is committed to providing a groundbreaking cinematic experience for filmmakers and moviegoers alike with the warmth and personal touch that is unique to Chicago. For more information, visit <http://www.csaaff.org/>.

Full List of Feature Films

Oass (Director: Abhinav Shiv Tiwari) – Oass follows the journey of Kiku, an 11-year-old girl whose dreams are shattered when she is sold to a brothel in Delhi where she is drugged, raped, kicked, and punched. Everyday a little more of her soul is crushed but she perseveres in her fight for freedom so that she may help rescue other victims like her.

Shahid (Director: Hansal Mehta) – *Shahid* traces the true story of slain human rights activist and lawyer Shahid Azmi. In the backdrop of communal violence that was unleashed on the city of Mumbai since 1993 we see a remarkable tale unfold. From attempting to become a terrorist to being wrongly imprisoned under a draconian anti-terrorism law to becoming a corporate lawyer, *Shahid* traces the inspiring personal journey of a boy who became an unlikely messiah for human rights while following the rise of communal violence in India.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist (Director: Mira Nair) – At a café a Pakistani man, Changez tells Bobby, an American journalist, about his experiences in the United States. The American Dream seems well within his grasp, complete with a smart and gorgeous girlfriend, Erica. But when the Twin Towers are attacked, a cultural divide slowly begins to crack open between Changez and Erica. Changez's dream soon begins to slip into nightmare: he is transformed from a well-educated, upwardly mobile businessman to a scapegoat and perceived enemy.

Farah Goes Bang (Director: Meera Menon) – A road-trip comedy centered on Farah Mahtab, a woman in her twenties who tries to lose her virginity while campaigning across America for presidential candidate John Kerry in 2004. Farah and her friends K.J. and Roopa follow the campaign trail across historic Route 66 on their way to Ohio, the central battleground state of 2004, seizing control of this charged moment in their lives and the life of their country.

Tasher Desh (Director: Qaushiq Mukherjee) – The story of a prince who escapes his destiny, the prison of his mind. He lands on a fascist island and incites women to revolt. A psychedelic fantasy about destiny and humanity, social control and Utopian revolution.

Club 60 (Director: Sanjay Tripathy) – Five impressionable and naughty club members whose lives revolve around a tennis court of CLUB 60 inspire a couple under depression to come out of it and fall back in love with life again.

Pied Piper (Director: Vivek Budakoti) – *Pied Piper* is a satirical folklore of a simple laundryman, Chunnilal, who is rumored to have acquired his beloved donkey's brain in a freak accident. Charming millions with his asinine traits, Chunnilal soon rises to become the most popular and most feared hero of his time. The film traces the dynamics of his unprecedented rise and his inevitable fall along the trajectory of politics, religion, power, and ideologies.

Thanha Rathi Ranga (Director: Nilendra Deshapriya) – At the end of a 30-year-old ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, three friends embark on an adventurous journey to a land that was once forbidden but a sudden encounter forces them to return to yet another land of turmoil and terror. A journey in search of soul mates in a soulless world, this film explores the stark reality of the human condition in a post war country.

Touring Talkies (Director: Gajendra Ahire) – The story of a lone woman Chandi's struggle to save her Chandi Touring Talkies from going out of business in the male chauvinistic world of traveling cinema. Chandi's archrival Subhnya tricks her wayward father to pledge her tent in a fixed gambling session and gives her six months to recover her tent. He also steals the screening rights to the latest blockbuster movie right under her nose, leaving her stranded for options. As she mulls over her predicament enters Avinash, an art film maker from a different world of cinema. As Subhnya denies him a screen to play the blockbuster, Chandi and Avinash end up helping each other out. Whether Chandi is able to save her tent or not forms the story.

Much Ado About Knotting (Director: Geetika Narang) – Born into a society obsessed with marriages, a young girl, a not-so-young man, and a Non-Resident Indian couple are compelled by tradition to look for matches via classifieds, matchmaking bureaus and websites. Confronted with innumerable criteria that determine who is acceptable and who isn't, they question themselves and their choices. As they introspect, the melee of the matchmaking industry continues. At every turn, there are service providers who are ready to snoop, style and solicit potentials on their behalf. People are searching for the ideal one endlessly and the oft-heard question is – When are you getting married?

Horn Please (Director: Shantanu Suman, Istling Mirche) – *Horn Please* is a documentary that encapsulates various aspects of an age-old folk art form of India, the Truck Art, an art form that makes journeys through the dusty highways of India. With a kaleidoscope of bright paints, motifs, typography, and unique couplets, these Indian trucks take you on a rather colorful journey of diverse cultures and beliefs of the country. The documentary investigates whether the once-accepted art form will survive the test of time in this era of capitalism.

The Other Army (Director: Sana Haq) – *The Other Army* is a documentary that seeks to understand the issues faced by Pakistan in its struggle against terrorism. It tributes the people who have sacrificed their lives in counter-terrorism efforts and provides a glimpse into the lives of their survivors. The film brings to light the Pakistanis who believe in the need to root out fanaticism, extremism, and to restore peace and stability to the world. The film counters the popular narrative in the American media that Pakistan is complicit in supporting terrorists.

Full List of Short Length Films

Shamless (Director: Geeta Malik) – A woman on trial for prostitution turns the tables on her accusers.

Bansuli (Director: Min Bahadur Bham) – Set in a village in the remote west of Karnali, this stunning film takes place during the first elections in Nepal after the Maoist conflict period. Soulful flute melodies and the constantly flowing waters of Karnali intertwine to tell a poignant story of young Bijuli, and of love, migration, separation, and longing.

The Queen of My Dreams (Director: Ryan Logan, Fawzia Mirza) – As a young girl, Fawzia Mirza fell under the spell of Bollywood heroines and their promise of love and feminine perfection. As an adult, she looks back and re-imagines the epic romance in the classic film *Aradhana*, in a queer light.

... Or Die (Director: Gregory Bonsignore, John Petaja) – Three actors are excited to make an internet video, until they learn just what that video entails.

Free Kaa Refill (Director: Harsshil R. Patel) – A cell phone finds a new owner for a day. He makes free calls while someone else is left to answer.

Breakdown (Director: Brayden Yoder) – After fleeing the scene of a fatal accident, a desperate American falls into a fateful night amidst the darkest shadows of urban India, where a small-time hustler and mysterious tamasha dancer force him to confront the karmic currents of his own conscience.

3 Puffs of Gold (Director: Reena Dutt) – A young woman is keeping a painful secret. Her silence is about to take on a magical voice of its own.

Khuli Khidki (Director: Ravi Alok) – An interesting story of an insurance agent and his ability to sell insurance policies. One night, his frustration lands him in the red light area of the city and under extreme awkwardness he ends up pitching an insurance policy to a prostitute in a brothel. What happens next?

Chor Chor Super Chor (Director: Rajesh K.) – In the crowded by lanes of old Delhi, Shukla ji runs a small photo studio as a front for small time crime. Over the years he has groomed a bunch of youngsters in the art of pick pocketing and petty crime. Then one day a girl comes into their midst and then everything collapses.

Nightlife (Director: Harune Massey) – Two kids on a road side clinking oil bottles offering massage services, spend the night waiting for clients. *Nightlife* is a glimpse into the life of male child sex-workers in Lahore, Pakistan. A subtle observation of a grave circumstance in their lives, and a self-critique, questioning exploitation and artistic work.

Indian Summer (Director: Mridu Chandra) – *Indian Summer* follows Indian American kids aged 9 to 16 at the Hindu Heritage Summer Camp near Rochester, New York as they pursue a course that offers exposure to meditation, yoga, and the opportunity to learn how to practice Hinduism in a largely Christian country. Campers come from all over the country and many are the only Indian person in their school. They long to make other “brown” friends, to express their religious identity, and to learn from older counselors who are “just like them.”

There She Is (Director: Veena Rao, Emily Sheskin) – *There She Is* follows Allison Kopach and Jenny Flores as they prepare for and compete in the American Beauties Plus Pageant. The two women discuss their lives as plus size women, including how they feel when others’ perceptions of their appearances clash with their own.

Dui Duharnir Golpo (Director: Sankhajit Biswas) – This is a story of Chiranjit and Bubal- two young transgender friends from Kolkata, India. They had to drop out from school because of their feminine disposition. Like many other transgender boys, Chiranjit and Bubal got exposed to sexual acts at a premature age. Advised by their elder community members, they started taking money for sex. In 2009, they joined Manas Bangla, a non-profit organization working in LGBT advocacy and HIV awareness. As ‘Peer Educator,’ their job is to generate consciousness amongst high-risk youth and bring them in for blood tests. But success comes with a price.