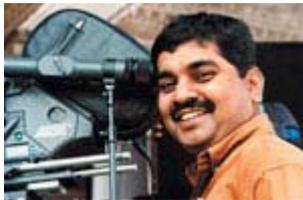


Sunday, November 25, 2007

The eye of the director

*A film need not always be about great sunsets... a poor sunset is perfectly fine if that is what the film requires, cinematographer-turned-director **Mazhar Kamran** shares with Priyanka Haldipur*



Mazhar Kamran knew his destiny from the very beginning— that he was here to be a filmmaker. The path of cinematography (in *Satya*, *Kaun*, *Jhankaar Beats*, and *Masti*) was a small step that would help him make the giant leap to film direction someday. The day has arrived, as Kamran is ready to showcase his directorial skills with *Mohandas* which will release in the next couple of months. The film stars Sonali Kulkarni, Nakul Vaid, Sushant Singh, Sharbani Mukherjee, Sameer Dharmadhikari, Uttam Haldar, Aditya Shrivastav, Akhilendra Mishra and Govind Namdeo.

*Excerpts from an interview with the newborn director:
Tell us more about Mohandas.*

The film is based on a character called 'Mohandas'. It is an allegory through which we have reflected Gandhi's ideals, but the film has nothing to do with Gandhi himself. It looks at the issue of India as a nation and does a social and political examination of it, apart from jabs at the notion of democracy and the concept of justice for the common man.

Sonali Kulkarni plays a journalist who comes across a mysterious videotape from a remote place, and she decides to investigate it. The film is set in the coal mines of Uttar Pradesh.

Is the film catering to a niche audience?

I have been a student of cinema for long and have taken care to reach out to people in general and not cater to a niche audience.

How did you decide on the star cast?

There is a rich variety of faces in the film. I decided to go in for 'actors' instead of just pretty faces, and that is how I came up with this cast.

The screenplay of the film is by Uday Prakash and the music by Vivek Priyadarshan, both unfamiliar names in the film industry...

It is a low-budget film, but I haven't compromised in terms of quality. Both individuals are from a non-film background, but are very good at their work. Uday is my close friend of ten years and a well-known short story writer. I knew I could work with him. Vivek's music went well with my film. We were shooting a scene with Sonali where she enters a guest house in the village. Everyone but her was aware that we were shooting. This was so that I could capture her real reaction to the place on camera.

The support that you received for this project.

I received a lot of support from my star cast and technicians. They were co-operative and worked with all their heart inspite of the film's light budget.

Your life as a cinematographer...

Very simple. I would just go by what story the director had in mind and decide on the look that the film should have based on that, instead of having an agenda of my own. I tried to do things differently in all my films and saw to it that the styles would not overlap.

Where Bollywood needs to improve in terms of cinematography...

A cinematographer should remember that he doesn't have to make every movie look fabulous. A film need not always be about great sunsets... a poor sunset is perfectly fine if that is what the film requires.

What other yet-to-be released films have you provided cinematography for? What next in terms of direction?

(Laughs) I have made a conscious decision not to continue with cinematography anymore. I want to immerse myself fully in film direction.

I have a couple of scripts ready, each one in a different genre. I can tell you with confidence that each one of these will be unusual.