



GOING beyond regional boundaries World Cinema is reaching homes through TV, online rentals and service providers

Movie Mania

THERE was a time when we waited for Sundays to watch award-winning regional Indian films telecast on Doordarshan in the afternoon. There was also a time we looked towards the 9 o'clock show of a Japanese teleserial where the protagonist was a girl named Oshin. Similarly, we checked the film festivals for the world cinema.

Today, however, things are different. World cinema, though still in its infancy, is now available in theatres, multiplexes, television channels, videos and online CDs and DVDs.

In fact, world cinema has always been there, but thanks to the information boom it has now gained wider recognition and is fast catching up as the common man's high end entertainment and is gaining a footing in the Indian homes.

The boundaries of cinema are wider than just the films. Though bereft of superstars and glamour quotients, many of these movies have a realistic story to

tell and reflect the society and culture of their times. Going beyond countries, along with the various regional language films of India, Japanese, Iranian and Chinese films are now popular fare.

These films, best known for the various awards they win at international film festivals, do not really see a mainstream release. But their storylines have a universal appeal and reach out to audiences who may not be familiar with the cultural setting or language they are made in.

"Indian cinema and the audience both have matured a lot in last couple of years. This change has coincided with the multiplex boom in India," said Philippe Martinet, Cultural Counsellor at the French Embassy in India after the stupendous success of the French Film Festival in Mumbai earlier this month.

In fact a trip to some multiplexes on Sunday means a satisfying date with master filmmakers like Francis Ford Coppola, Satyajit Ray and Akira

Kurosawa. Indeed, these exhibitors - Cinemax, PVR, Metro Adlabs and Inox - by bringing world cinema to film buffs are venturing where others feared to tread in the past. These new age exhibitors know that the experience of watching the films in the company of other lovers of cinema is a wonderful way to enjoy the genius of the stalwarts of filmmaking.

When short-film makers Jimmy Mistry and Pranav Ashar founded 'Enlighten Society', an NGO dedicated to the cause of spreading good cinema, by screening national and international films, there was nothing exactly like world cinema in theatres. "We have tie-ups with almost all embassies in India and we get films from them. Also through our cultural exchange programmes, we have cinema from great filmmakers," says 20-year-old Pranav, the president and co-founder of Enlighten. The society screens some of the good films like *Casablanca* and

Seven Samurai in the multiplexes on a regular basis.

“India requires good content. Unfortunately, the beauty and exposure to cultures apart from ours and the West has not swayed Indian audiences at large primarily for lack of access, and the stray, pirated DVD or niche festival notwithstanding,” says Mohan Polamar, Joint MD of Palador Picture whose titles - *Them* and *Science Of Sleep* - were screened at the Fun Republic multiplex during the recent French Film Festival.

Die-hard film lovers Gautam Shiknis and Mohan Polamar joined hands to form Palador with the idea of making world cinema titles more accessible to the public. DVDs of world cinemas are made available online (www.mypalador.com)

as Tata Sky are not far behind in the race either.

Even television channels have jumped on the world cinema bandwagon. While last year Zee Studio introduced a unique initiative on world cinema and premiered over 40 movies, 2008 saw the launch of UTV's exclusive 24-hour channel - World Movies, and NDTV Lumiere is also in the pipeline.



Bed And Board

international films that are box office hits and not less than five years old.

“Due to globalisation the Indian consumers are undergoing a steady change in terms of lifestyle, food habits, etc. This change is further percolating down to what they would like to watch on television. With interest in general entertainment channels already slipping from 60 per cent to 30 per cent, Indian viewing habits are undergoing a radical change,” Shantonu Aditya, chief executive officer, UTV Entertainment Television revealed in an interview.

In fact Pranav of Enlighten makes an interesting observation. “Professionals, especially doctors and engineers, are ready to shell out a few bucks, as they want something that is different as well as high end, and are



Infernal Affairs II

WORLD cinema is driven by marketing mavens and has become commercially viable



In The Mood For Love

and this has also led to their ‘Collector’s Boxsets’ like the Akira Kurosawa Box Set, Wong Kar Wai Box Set and World Cinema Collector’s Box Set that fans can cherish.

That is not all. Digital media manufacturer MoserBaer and online rental service catchflix.com in partnership with Palador are also acquainting their audiences with world cinema. Others like Shemaroo are also offering DVDs of world cinema for home viewing. Also, Direct-to-Home service providers such

“During my tenure as jury at the various international film festivals over the last 12 years I have observed that world cinema in India has been sadly restricted to films from Hollywood and a few scattered film festivals. We have never really offered the best of contemporary world cinema to our audience here,” said Sunil Doshi, director of NDTV Lumiere. That is probably why World Movies is targeting upmarket viewers between 18-35 years to present them with contemporary

getting more drawn to world cinema.”

There is no doubt that world cinema is an industry driven by marketing mavens. There is also little doubt that cinema is becoming commercially viable with the entertainment biggies wooing their audiences through television channels or charging a minimal membership to join their group by offering discounts at various International film festivals and discussion forums that provide viewers an opportunity to meet with the who’s who of the industry. ◀