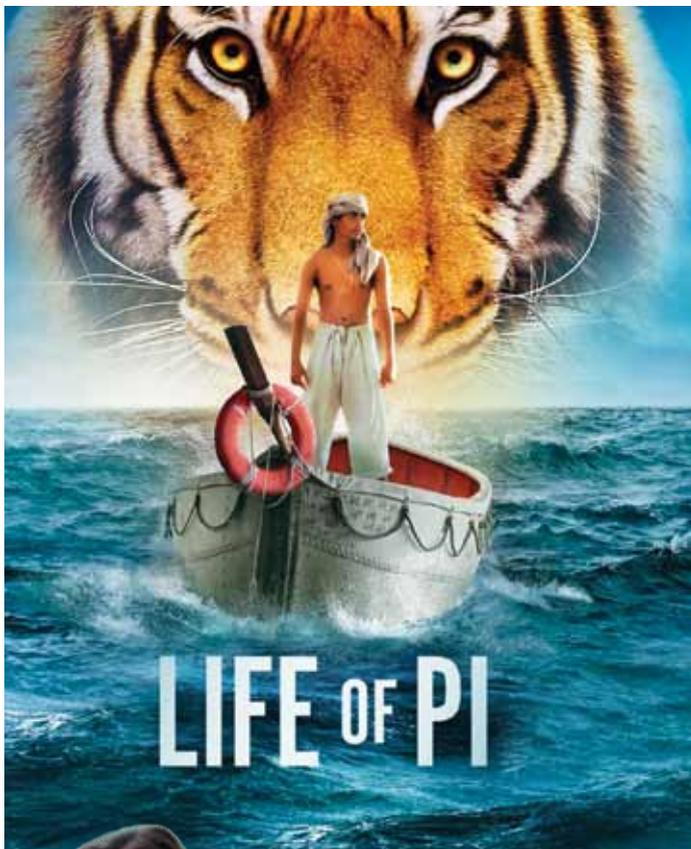


HOLLYWOOD'S DATE WITH BOLLYWOOD

A quick look at the recent trend of many more Bollywood actors acting in Hollywood films.

WORDS | BHAKTI BAPAT MATHEW



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Bollywood stars have never had it better. Not only is the Hindi film industry thriving with many more offbeat and diverse films being produced, but Hollywood has never been more accessible either. Where Shashi Kapoor and Om Puri took on the odd international project decades ago, now there's a veritable crowd of Bollywood stars on the American movie arena. From Aishwarya Rai, Amitabh Bachchan and Anil Kapoor to Anupam Kher and Irfan Khan, the name of the game seems to be 'the more (Indians), the merrier!'

*Freida Pinto and Anupam Kher are among the latest Indian actors to be welcomed with open arms in Hollywood. While Pinto is now an experienced Hollywood hand, having followed up the success of her debut film *Slumdog Millionaire* with *Rise of the Planet of Apes*, Kher starred in the award-winning movie *Silver Linings Playbook**

But before Freida Pinto, there was ex-Miss World and Bollywood superstar Aishwarya Rai, who played a major role in the Steve Martin-starrer *The Pink Panther 2*. And then there was Anil Kapoor, a Bollywood thespian whose star seemed to be fading until he was cast as the manipulative anchorman in *Slumdog Millionaire* (and later also starred in *Mission Impossible-Ghost Protocol*). Today, Kapoor is back in demand and stars in and produces the Indian version of the popular American TV series *24*. Then, of course there are the myriad, smaller roles done by big and small Bollywood actors. Irfan Khan



EX-MISS WORLD AND BOLLYWOOD SUPERSTAR AISHWARYA RAI PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN THE STEVE MARTIN STARRER THE PINK PANTHER 2



(The Namesake) starred as Dr Rajit Ratha in The Amazing Spider-man. The trend is continued by Bipasha Basu (Singularity, to be released sometime this year), Mallika Sherawat (Hiss), Om Puri (Charlie Wilson's War), and Naseeruddin Shah (The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen).

HOLLYWOOD CALLING

So, what attracts Hollywood film-makers to Bollywood actors? On the one hand, the roles definitely don't seem to be specially written for Bollywood actors (not counting Slumdog Millionaire, for obvious reasons). On the other hand, the number (if not the quality) of roles being enacted by Bollywood actors is certainly on the rise. Seen in this light, it seems more like a business decision by the money-savvy movie

behemoth than a sudden love affair with India. After all, India is increasingly an extremely lucrative territory for Hollywood movies (The Amazing Spider-man made around 5 million USD in its opening weekend in India, noted Indian trade analyst

India is increasingly an extremely lucrative territory for Hollywood movies

Taran Adarsh has been quoted saying. The opening is among the highest for any Hollywood movie in India, even beating blockbusters like Avatar.). So, why not sweeten the deal for Indian audiences by casting some of the popular local actors?

Says noted Indian actor Arif

Zakaria, who has toured the globe for the 'Merchants of Bollywood' production, "Film distribution patterns have evolved and changed since the decades. The Asian sub-continent along with China and Japan are the new cinema hubs, as revenue generated here is substantial. Hence, it pays to have a 'local flavour' added to the potpourri. It creates a local interest and there's an instant connect."

For the Bollywood actor, even the established ones like Amitabh Bachchan (who has a bit-part in The Great Gatsby, although he has been quoted as saying that he did it as a favour for his friend and the movie's director Baz Luhrmann), a Hollywood role not only looks good on the acting resume, it also means good pay for a relatively shorter time investment.

HOLLYWOOD HIGHEST GROSSERS IN INDIA

Avatar
Titanic
The Avengers
Life of Pie
Iron Man 3



Fast & Furious 6
Gravity
Man of Steel
The Wolverine
The Amazing Spider-man



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BOLLYWOOD STARS IN HOLLYWOOD

Freida Pinto in *Trishna*

Anupam Kher in *Silver Linings Playbook*



Anil Kapoor in *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Mission Impossible-Ghost Protocol*

Irfan Khan in *The Namesake* and *The Amazing Spider-man*

Aishwarya Rai in *The Pink Panther 2*



Bipasha Basu in *Singularity*

Mallika Sherawat in *Hiss*

INTERNATIONAL STARS IN BOLLYWOOD

Sylvester Stallone in *Kambakkht Ishq*

Denise Richards in *Kambakkht Ishq*

Tania Zaetta in *Salaam Namaste*

Kylie Minogue in *Blue*



Kambakkht Ishq had not one but four international actors

Zakaria is cautious as he adds, "Modern cultural homogeneity has made cinema a universal phenomenon for us actors and we can work in the same business in any cultural sphere. And, actors can and should look for platforms all over. Hollywood has been accepting different skin and accent actors, such as Antonio Banderas, Javier Bardem and Jackie Chan. So I see no reason why an Indian shouldn't be a part of the mainstream there. The problem lies in seeking blind validation of anything Western."

HOLLYWOOD TO BOLLYWOOD

The reverse trend, of Hollywood actors gracing Indian productions,

seems to be still at a nascent stage. While every self-respecting media-savvy international actor interviewed here claims to be well-aware of Bollywood movies and really eager to star in one, the actual presence of Hollywood actors in Bollywood productions is too low to count. Akshay Kumar has been among the more successful ones to pave in the way for a Western star through cameos in Hindi films. The action (now comedy) star brought in Australian singer Kylie Minogue for a teeny-tiny cameo and an 'item-number' in the treasure-hunt movie *Blue*. Another Akshay Kumar starrer, *Kambakkht Ishq*, had not one but four international actors: ageing action star Sylvester Stallone, Denise Richards (of *Wild Things* fame, and the ex-Mrs. Charlie Sheen), Brandon Routh (*Superman* in *Superman Returns*) and Holly Valance (part of the hit Australian series *Neighbours*). Tania Zaetta, former ESPN anchor and an Australian, was seen in a couple of ditzy cameos in *Salaam Namaste* and *Bunty aur Babli*.

Whatever the reasons for bringing in more Indian actors in Hollywood, the trend shows no signs of abating yet. Something that is sure to be welcomed by Indian fans. ■