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NEW THIS YEAR – THE BEST OF SOUTH ASIAN CINEMA

Toronto, October 8, 2013 – The Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival, presented by National Bank, celebrates its 17th annual edition from November 5 to 16, 2013, with an exciting expansion to include films from across South Asia. In response to the overwhelming demand from the local community for more South Asian films, Reel Asian is proud to officially expand to include feature films from India, Pakistan and the South Asian continent. This expansion to include South Asian work in the festival marks the beginning of a new and exciting era for Reel Asian – one that will recognize the breadth of talent within the South Asian film industry and enhance cultural understanding and appreciation of this community.

“Reel Asian has a history of creating a sense of community for Asian film fans and giving voice to an underrepresented segment of the media arts landscape. As the Asian population in Canada continues to grow and as Asian arts are injected into mainstream culture, there is no better time to expand our festival mandate to represent new voices from the Asian community” – Sonia Sakamoto-Jog, Executive Director of Reel Asian

Reel Asian has received an overwhelming show of support from the local South Asian community with partnerships underway with Anokhi Media, The Weekly Voice, MyBindi, Asian Television Network, South Asian Visual Arts Centre, MOSAIC South Asian Heritage Festival of Mississauga, Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, InDance, Punjabi International Film Festival and International Film Festival of South Asia, South Asian Women’s Centre, Panorama India, the Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention, BollyStar. The festival has been guided by an Advisory Committee of 21 influential community leaders, artists and filmmakers, chaired by award-winning filmmaker Richie Mehta (*Amal, Siddarth, I’ll Follow You Down*), to provide their professional expertise on Reel Asian’s new programming direction.

TORONTO OPENING NIGHT GALA: BOMBAY TALKIES (directors Karan Johar, Dibakar Banerjee, Zoya Akhtar, Anurag Kashyap, India 2013, Canadian Premiere)

Celebrating 100 years of Indian cinema, this Cannes Film Festival Gala film showcases the power of storytelling by four of Mumbai’s hottest independent filmmakers, and features Bollywood stars Rani Mukerji and Nawazuddin Siddiqui. Around the world, 2013 has been a year to celebrate a hundred years of Indian cinema, and it’s never been a better time to do so in Toronto as this year, Reel Asian is proud to add South Asian films to its programming mandate. *Bombay Talkies* celebrates the history of Bollywood cinema while offering a glimpse into its future. For those who hold Bollywood close to their hearts, *Bombay Talkies* will resonate with its references to the cinema’s culture of larger-than-life movie stars, catchy songs and memorable dances, while offering exciting insight to those new to Bollywood.

FARAH GOES BANG (director Meera Menon, producer Liz Singh in attendance, actress Nikohl Boosheri in attendance, USA 2013, International Premiere)

Farah is a 20-year-old, fun-loving, Bush-hating, Iranian American virgin. With her two besties, she sets off to campaign for US presidential candidate John Kerry and get laid in this fresh take on young American feminism. Winner of the inaugural Nora Ephron Prize for Best Female Film at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival.

WITHOUT SHEPHERDS (director Cary McClelland in attendance, co-director Imran Babur, USA/Pakistan 2013)

“What is the meaning of Pakistan?” cricket star-turned-opposition leader Imran Khan asks the crowd at a political rally. This sprawling documentary follows six very different Pakistanis trying to define their dynamic but misunderstood country. Winner of the Best Documentary and Grand Chameleon (Best Overall Film) wards at the Brooklyn Film Festival 2013.

PAGE 1 of 2

THE SILK ROAD OF POP (director Sameer Farooq in attendance, Canada/China/Holland/Belgium 2012, Canadian Premiere)

A documentary about young Uyghur Muslims living in China who express their cultural identity through traditional, hip-hop, and hard rock punk music. Sameer Farooq is a Pakistani-Canadian born in Nova Scotia. Originally trained as a cultural anthropologist, he has lived and worked in China on and off for the last thirteen years, and is now based in Toronto and Rhode Island, where he is completing his MFA.

Short works are an essential part of Reel Asian and can be seen in programs throughout the festival. This year we present new short films by South Asian directors:

GIVE INTO THE NIGHT (USA 2013), Sonejuhi Sinha (director in attendance)

THE LAST MINUTE GROOM (India 2013), Neha Junagade (director in attendance)

BANSULLI (The Flute) (Nepal 2012), Min Bahadur Bham (director in attendance)

DAFEENA (Canada 2012), Natasha Bakht (choreographer), Atri Nundy (performer), Angela Joseph (performer)

ITEM NUMBER (Canada/India 2012), Oliver Husain (director)

DOSA HUNT (USA 2012), Amrit Singh (filmmaker)

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Visit www.reelasian.com for further press information, including digital images, press releases, and accreditation.

- 30 -