

Tanuja's 'Hope...', Pakistani film 'Salaakhein' hit screens Friday

Three weeks after the first Pakistani film 'Khuda Kay Liye' wowed the Indian audiences, another hit film from the country 'Salaakhein' releases Friday. Tanuja Chandra's award winning English movie 'Hope a Little Sugar' is another film to hit the screens this week.

The common factor is that both target a niche audience.

'Response to English movies varies from film to film. When we released 'Loins of Punjab Presents', it did very well. We released it with 45 prints and the distributors earned about Rs.10 million. We are having a very limited release of 'Hope and a Little Sugar' in select multiplexes. We are expecting that word of mouth will help the film,' said Ashish Saxena of PVR Cinemas.

Tanuja's film is set in New York in the weeks before and after 9/11. It is a poignant love story set against the forces of hate and intolerance between an aspiring Muslim photographer and a young Sikh widow. Anupam Kher, Mahima Chaudhry, Amit Sial, Suhasini Mulay, Vikram Chatwal and Ranjit Chowdhry form the cast.

'It is a medium budget film. I have been told that it cost around Rs.60 million. It's a global film. It might not have audiences in B or C centres but it will be compensated by the local audience in the US,' said Tanuja.

Shot in 25 days with a half Indian and half American crew, 'Hope and a Little Sugar' was completed after a lot of financial hiccups. When released at the various film festivals, like Milan and London, it earned much critical acclaim and also bagged the best film award at the South Asian Film Festival in New York.

After a gap of 40 years, Pakistani films are now releasing in India, so there isn't any defined market for Urdu films in this country.

Indrajit Singh, a Mumbai-based distributor, said: 'It is very difficult to define the market for Pakistani film because it's a new trend. The film is in Urdu and we are targeting Urdu speaking audiences.'

Made at a budget of Pakistani Rs.25 million, 'Salaakhein' grossed about Rs.70 million when released in 2004. It ran for more than 73 weeks in Lahore.

'It is an out and out commercial film and the focus is on the faulty education system. It is about the cheating in exams. It is about ambitious students who become victim of people running these rackets. The film is a message for students,' Rafique, who is in India to promote his film, told IANS on phone from Mumbai.

'We did the post production of the film in India. For processing and printing work, we went to Thailand,' said the director who will also release another film called 'Mohabattan Sachiyan' May 2.

'It is a Punjabi film so we are releasing it in Punjab,' said Singh.

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