

Director Acharya thrilled with Los Angeles audience award

Director Manish Acharya is thrilled that his 'Loins Of Punjab Presents' walked away with the audience award at the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA) and says winning a 'popular' award is always great.

He received the prize at the festival last week, a year after his wacky and spunky comedy was released. Back in Mumbai, Acharya hasn't yet gotten over the experience.

'It was shown at the prestigious Arclight Theatre on Sunset Boulevard. That in itself was a dream come true. The award was gratifying because the audience award is not selected by a handpicked jury. It's a fully popular award given to the most popular film of the festival,' Acharya told IANS.

'Loins of Punjab Presents' was about an NRI millionaire living in New Jersey who holds a singing contest for the local residents. It starred Shabana Azmi, Ayesha Dharker, Jameel Khan and Darshan Jariwala.

The thought of a film about a desi music contest being watched by a predominantly American audience tickles the director.

'I'd rather have the most popular than the best film for 'Loins Of Punjab' ... There was just one show. And I had an inkling that my film would get it because the theatre was full and there were hordes who stood up and watched the film. And there was laughter all across,' he said.

What gratified the director was that the Americans connected with the theme.

'If you look at it, 'Loins Of Punjab Presents' is a very Indian subject. There're dozens of characters singing 40 Bollywood songs. But the songs are not used in the traditional Bollywood formula. The Americans are watching my film as they'd watch any film about a flamboyant, demonstrative, passionate community like 'My Big Fat Greek Wedding'.'

Acharya, however, laments that there has been no 'Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon' or 'No Man's Land' from India. 'Yes, 'Lagaan' did create a stir. But only at the Oscars. Unfortunately, by the time 'Lagaan' released in the US, DVDs were already out.'

And now the director is looking at 'Loins Of Punjab Presents', his debut film, as the breakthrough Indian film in the US.

'After the screening, there have been many offers to acquire the film for the US. I'm hoping the film will be accepted as more than a celebration of Bollywood songs and traditions.'

Subhash K. Jha (© IANS / India eNews)