

Hindi films boom in US, 7 break \$2 mn barrier

A record number of Indian films reached blockbuster status in the United States in 2006 with half of the 14 foreign language films that grossed over \$2 million being in Hindi. No other language came close to contributing so many box office hits to the list.

Spanish, despite being spoken by millions of more Americans, trailed far behind as the next most popular foreign language at the US box office with only two films above the \$2 million benchmark last year.

More Hindi films surpassed this box office level in 2006 than in all previous years combined, showing immense growth for Bollywood films in America, according to boxofficeguru.com.

Hollywood also seems to be now ready for Bollywood. Superstars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie recently produced their new feature film 'A Mighty Heart' in India and both George Clooney and Will Smith have expressed interest in collaborating with the Bollywood film industry on future projects.

Wes Anderson is shooting his next film 'The Darjeeling Limited' in India. And Mira Nair brings the best of Hollywood and Bollywood together in 'Shantaram' that stars Johnny Depp and Amitabh Bachchan.

Until now, Bollywood films have mostly been available in Indian theatres and small video shops far outside of Los Angeles. Time Warner Cable of Los Angeles is changing that with the launch of its International Movies on Demand service allowing fans to watch them at their convenience. For this the cable company has teamed up with BODVOD, a company that holds exclusive rights to popular Indian movies from top Bollywood studios such as UTV and Adlabs.

Many new Bollywood films have now made their on-demand premieres including one of the highest-grossing films in India last year, the Adlabs sci-fi action thriller 'Krrish'. Shot in Singapore, the groundbreaking special effects in the Hrithik Roshan smash have made it Bollywood's first super hero blockbuster.

The hits keep coming later this season with the much-anticipated premieres of Shah Rukh Khan's action blockbuster 'Don', the New York-set comedy 'Jaan-E-Mann', and the epic Moghul-era romance 'Umrao Jaan' starring the newly-engaged Bollywood power couple Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan.

Time Warner Cable of Los Angeles is also showing its support for Bollywood and South Asian cinema by sponsoring the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles (IFFLA), which is now in its fifth year of bringing the best of new Indian cinema to movie fans in Southern California. It runs April 17-22 at ArcLight Hollywood.

'Time Warner Cable is excited to sponsor the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles this year and proud to give our 1.9 million customers in southern California access to more Bollywood and South Asian movies,' said Roger Keating, executive vice president, Time Warner Cable.

'By creating a separate international category to showcase films from around the world, Time Warner Cable connects people to the many diverse cultures represented in the southland on the

most convenient, easy-to-use platform cable has to offer,' he said.

'We are truly delighted to be working with Time Warner Cable of Los Angeles this year,' stated Festival Director Christina Marouda. 'The availability of international films On Demand is an important step towards highlighting Indian cinema. IFFLA's commitment to present quality Indian cinema creates an ideal partnership.'

With this new partnership with IFFLA and BODVOD, Time Warner Cable digital customers can view a movie of their choice for just \$3.95 with unlimited access within 24 hours. Film genres in the International category include Bollywood, Chinese, French, Italian, Japanese and Spanish.

'This is a perfect strategic fit between Time Warner Cable and IFFLA and we are happy to bring them together,' said Anjali Jindal, head of programming for BODVOD Networks, the provider of Time Warner's and other cable operators' Bollywood on-demand category.

'In addition to content, we focus on developing innovative, mutually beneficial partnerships in the community to create awareness for both on-demand services and support reputable cultural organisations.'

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