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SUNDAY 1 OCTOBER, 2006
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ERINNE FENWICK

I WANT TO LIVE IN AMERICA Bollywood films are travelling overseas to a theatre near you.

The new Hollywood

Bollywood films and their traditional, romantic plot lines are becoming increasingly popular with North American audiences

RYAN HEISE
Arts & Entertainment Writer

After playing for over two months at Cineplex Odeon in South Edmonton Common, *Kabhi Alvida Maa Khena* (Never Say Goodbye) has become but one example of the rising popularity of Bollywood cinema in Canada.

Centered in Mumbai, India, Bollywood contributes between 200–300 Hindi-language films to India's yearly national output of around 1000, making it one of the largest film industries in the world. However, it's been the exports of Bollywood—whose films are often categorized by their torrid love affairs, use of traditional Indian values and elaborate song-and-dance routines—that have found success throughout the world.

"Bollywood is massively entertaining. It's never been about high art. It's a completely free-enterprise exercise; there's no government money put into it. It's made simply to entertain."

DR STEPHEN SLEMON

According to Dr Stephen Slemmon, a professor of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta, the fast-growing appeal of Bollywood films in countries such as Canada can be attributed to a few different reasons.

"Bollywood is massively entertaining," Dr Slemmon said. "It's never been about high art. It's a completely free-enterprise exercise; there's no government money put into it. It's made simply to entertain."

"A lot of people are going down to the video store and renting some seriously crappy movie, and discovering in the process of doing this that

it really wasn't much fun—it was made without a great deal of heart," Dr Slemmon continued.

From his perspective, movie lovers can go down to 34th avenue or Stony Plain Road and rent a Bollywood film for a dollar or two, or, if they feel so inclined, buy them in a two-for-one or three-for-one deal; it's the only rational thing to do.

Dr Slemmon also pointed out that, with such a large Indian population in Canada, the cultural connection to one's homeland plays a significant role. Bollywood has attempted to reach out to the vast Indian demographics around the world and offer a glimpse into India's dynamic culture.

English and Film Studies PhD student Mridula Chakraborty echoed this sentiment. "It's very interesting in the way that [Bollywood] educates the nation, but also educates the diasporic Indian audience about the changing morality that's happening in their home country," she said.

Bollywood has also been very proactive in using the rise of the English language and popular culture to produce films that resonate within not only varying generations of Indians, but also many other cultures throughout the world.

"They know exactly what's going on in hip-hop and they know what's going on with Beyoncé's latest thing; [Bollywood]'s really tuned into popular culture," Dr Slemmon said. "These changes in Bollywood cinema are targeting new demographics around the globe, while still appealing to its traditional Hindi base."

U of A student Manik Chahal's attraction to Bollywood is in line with Dr Slemmon's description. While she loves the cultural insights the films grant her, the entertainment value isn't lost.

"There's so much to it," Chahal said. "You have the music, you have these beautiful song and dance numbers, and you can watch them over and over again. It doesn't matter if you know the ending, because it's about being entertained by the whole movie. You watch a three hour thing and make a night out of it."



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