

tongues on fire

UK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

THU 1 - SUN 11 MAY 2025



LONGING
BELONGING



ukasianfilmfest

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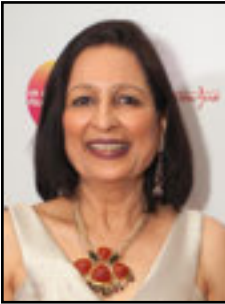


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PHOTOGRAPHY	Raakesh Katwa (RaakeshPhoto)
FESTIVAL FOUNDERS	Dr. Pushpinder Chowdhry MBE, Mrs Harvinder Nath

WELCOME

LONGING & BELONGING



Dr Pushpinder Chowdhry MBE
CEO & Festival Director

Welcome to the 27th edition of the UK Asian Film Festival. This year, we reflect on the twin forces of longing and belonging—emotions that sit at the heart of every migrant journey, every border crossed, every story that seeks a home. Through cinema, we explore how identity is shaped, lost, reclaimed and celebrated.

This year's programme is our most expansive yet, shaped with care by a new generation of curators from across the UK and South Asia. From *Slaves of the Empire* to *Headhunting to Beatboxing* by two-time Academy Award winner **A.R. Rahman**, these powerful documentaries uncover hidden histories and celebrate the vast, untold legacies that shape our world. Films like *My Melbourne* and *We Are Faheem and Karun* unpick the quiet ache of distance, while others like *Hari Ka Om*, *The Glassworker*, and *Parikrama* remind us how love, resilience and memory bind us across generations. In this spirit, we are hosting acclaimed directors **Sandhya Suri**, **Imtiaz Ali** and **Onir**, and one of India's most prolific author's **Shobhaa Dé** to share new stories with our communities. We are proud to honour the centenary of one of Indian cinema's most iconic figures—**Raj Kapoor**—whose work epitomised both the yearning for something greater and the comfort of shared humanity.

We are especially proud that the majority of this year's programme showcases British Asian talent—filmmakers, curators, and creatives who are finally beginning to receive the visibility and recognition they deserve. Their work is bold, thoughtful, and deeply rooted in lived experience.

As part of a three-year AHRC-funded India-UK research project, we have grown our **Emerging Curators Lab** in partnership with Queen Mary University of London, JNU's School of Arts & Aesthetics, and Habitat International Film Festival. This international initiative nurtures new curatorial voices across borders, with participants selecting the *Emerging Curators' Choice* - a film awarded and screened at this year's festival.

This year also marks an important milestone: **Tongues on Fire** has become a **registered charity**. This new chapter strengthens our commitment to platforming unheard voices and nurturing artists across the diaspora.

We invite you to join us—whether you're attending a glittering gala, a thought-provoking panel, or a community celebration like the **Mystic Mela**. These are your stories, your screens, your stage.

So come share in the laughter, the tears, the poetry—and above all, the power of seeing yourself reflected on screen.

SPONSORS & PARTNERS

UK Asian Film Festival is produced annually by *Tongues on Fire*, a charity run by a small team of dedicated people. Our incredible festival is only possible because of the invaluable support from our sponsors, partners, advisors and friends. Thank you all.

Special thanks to: Arts Council England, BFI, Film Hub Midlands, The National Lottery Community Fund, Chanchal Singh Chowdhry, Raj Baddhan, Neeta Desor, Leena Mehta, Ritu Soni, Tanu Banaik, Sunita Nigam, Suman Bhuchar, Poonam Joshi, Rupal Patel, Durraiya Hasta & Shikha Lalani (Digital Fix) and Tony Gill & Arika Murtza (Media House).

PUBLIC FUNDERS



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GOLD SPONSORS



OPENING GALA EUROPEAN PREMIERE

MY MELBOURNE

BFI SOUTHBANK Thursday 1 May 6pm Red Carpet | 8pm Screening | 10.15pm Q&A with directors Onir & Imtiaz Ali, Emma writer Samira Cox and producer Mitu Bhowmick Lange

Four stories. Four journeys. One powerful anthology exploring identity, belonging, and resilience. My Melbourne brings to life true experiences from underrepresented voices in Australia, guided by legendary Indian directors **Onir**, **Rima Das**, **Imtiaz Ali** and **Kabir Khan**.

From a queer man's emotional reunion with his estranged father (*Indraneel*), to a deaf dancer fighting for her dreams (*Emma*), a food blogger forging an unlikely bond with a homeless poet (*Jules*), and a refugee girl finding hope through cricket (*Setara*), My Melbourne is a deeply moving, bold celebration of diversity.

Directed by Onir, Rima Das, Imtiaz Ali, Kabir Khan
Australia 2024, 123min, English



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VENUE PARTNERS



CLOSING GALA LONDON PREMIERE

THE GLASSWORKER

BFI Saturday 10 May | 6:30pm Red Carpet | 8pm screening
London screening followed by Q&A with director Usman Riaz

PHOENIX LEICESTER Sunday 11 May 4pm

A young, gifted Vincent and his father Tomas run the finest glass workshop in the country and find their lives upended by an approaching war in which they want no part. The arrival in their town of an army colonel and his young aspiring violinist daughter, Alliz, shakes their reality and tests the relationship between father and son. As the love develops between Vincent and Alliz, they will need to gather up their courage to confront their fathers.

Directed by Usman Riaz
Cast: Sacha Dhawan, Anjali Mohindra, Art Malik
Pakistan, 2024, 98 min, English



A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair and a sparkling earring, holding a transparent glass trophy. The trophy features a stylized flame design and the text 'UK ASIAN FILM AWARDS' and '2012'. The background is a warm, textured gold color.

CLOSING EVENT & UKAFF AWARDS

UK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL AWARDS

RIVERSIDE STUDIOS CINEMA 1 Sunday 11 May 12:30pm

The 2025 UKAFF will close in style with plenty of glitz, glamour and entertainment! Highlights include conversations with acclaimed guest stars and the presentation of the following awards:

- Golden Flame Lifetime Achievement Award
- Golden Flame Award for Contribution to Hindi Cinema and Television
- Golden Flame Award for Contribution to Film Journalism
- Golden Flame Trailblazer Award
- Best Actor Award
- Best Supporting Actor Award
- Best Film Award
- Filmwallahs Choice Award
- Emerging **Curators** Award
- Best Director Award
- Best Documentary Award
- Best Short Film Award
- Best Long Short Film Award
- Best Debut Award
- Celebrating Festival Theme Award
- Championing Change Award



YAVAR ABBAS

RIVERSIDE STUDIOS Sunday 11 May 2:45pm

Yavar Abbas is a distinguished writer, broadcaster, journalist, and filmmaker whose work bridges cultures, languages, and generations. Born in Lucknow, the heartland of Urdu culture, and raised in a devout Shia family, Abbas was immersed from an early age in the poetic tradition of Meer Anees, whose epic *Marsiyas* inspired a lifelong passion for Urdu literature. His distinctive style of *taht-ul-lafz* recitation has been enriched by a career in broadcasting and filmmaking that spans continents and decades.

Educated at Allahabad University in English and Persian literature, Abbas seamlessly navigated roles as a producer, translator, and director at the BBC Urdu Service. He translated and adapted the works of Shakespeare, Wilde, Shaw, Chekhov, and many others into Urdu, producing seminal series such as *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Masterpieces of English Prose*, and *Historic English Speeches*. His BBC series *European Poets of Urdu* remains a landmark contribution to cross-cultural appreciation.

As a filmmaker, his documentaries—including *India! My India!*, *Faces of India*, and *Mother Ganges*—offer deeply personal yet globally resonant insights into post-Partition India. His films, shown widely and celebrated at retrospectives including at the Cinémathèque Française, capture both the grandeur and grassroots of Indian life. A consultant to the UN and a cultural bridge-builder, Abbas's work is grounded in pluralism, empathy, and unwavering commitment to truth. Urdu, and particularly Anees, remains his first and deepest love.

GOLDEN FLAME AWARD: LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT



BIDDU

RIVERSIDE STUDIOS Sunday 11 May 2:45pm

Biddu was born in Bangalore, where he began his career in a pop group inspired by The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. Following early success in India, he travelled west with a guitar, a plastic bag of clothes, and no money. In the UK, he worked in a hamburger joint by day and wrote songs by night.

His big break came producing the unknown Carl Douglas and the 9-million-selling global No.1 hit "Kung Fu Fighting". He followed this with hits as the Biddu Orchestra, including "Summer of '42" and the Ivor Novello-winning "Rain Forest". He also wrote or produced classics for Tina Charles and Jimmy James: "I Love to Love", "Dance Little Lady Dance", "I'll Go Where the Music Takes Me" and "Now Is the Time".

He composed for the platinum-selling Joan Collins films *The Stud* and *The Bitch*. In Bollywood, "Aap Jaisa Koi" sung by Nazia Hassan was a game-changer, followed by *Disco Deewane*, India's best-selling pop album.

In 1995, he wrote and produced *Made in India* for Alisha, selling 13 million copies. His career total surpasses 45 million records. He also produced hit tracks for Indian Idol winner Abhijeet Sawant.

Biddu's autobiography *Made in India* was published in 2009. He recently received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Rolling Stone and was named among the top 30 producers of all time.

Supported by





IN CONVERSATION WITH

SANDHYA SURI

RIVERSIDE STUDIOS Sunday 11 May 2:45pm

Sandhya Suri is a British-Indian filmmaker, often blending intimate narratives with broader societal themes. Her documentary *I for India* (2005), praised at the Sundance Film Festival, is an unparalleled depiction of the migrant experience constructed from Super 8 film letters sent between India and England over 40 years. In 2018, her acclaimed short film *The Field*, nominated for a BAFTA, showcased her talent for capturing deeply personal yet universal stories in a deeply sensuous way. Her debut fiction feature, *Santosh* (2024), which screened in Official Selection at Cannes Film Festival is a gritty neo-noir which tackles patriarchy and inequality in rural India. The film was Bafta nominated and shortlisted for the Oscars Best international feature.



IN CONVERSATION WITH

SHOBHAA DÉ

RIVERSIDE STUDIOS Sunday 11 May 2:45pm

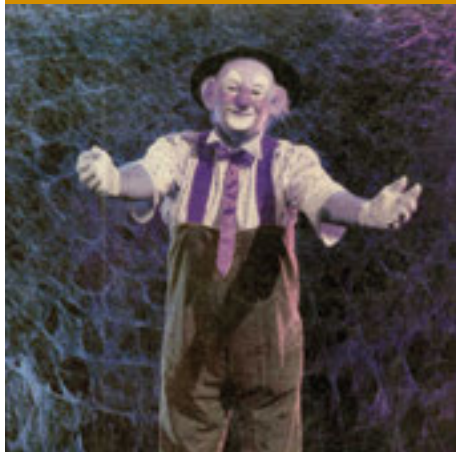
One of the most vivacious writers in India today. WILLIAM DALRYMPLE

In conversation with Seema Anand.

Shobhaa Dé is an Indian novelist and columnist renowned for her candid portrayals of Mumbai's social elite and bold exploration of sexuality, earning her the moniker "India's Jackie Collins."

She began her career as a model before transitioning to journalism in 1970, founding and editing magazines such as *Stardust*, *Society*, and *Celebrity*.

RAJ KAPOOR CENTENARY



FROM THE ARCHIVES

KEHTA HAI JOKER

SO SAYS THE JOKER

RIVERSIDE STUDIOS Sunday 11 May 1:15pm

Raj Kapoor, India's most celebrated filmmaker and star, died in the 80's. This film, made in his centenary year, explores his work and life through interviews with family and many filmmakers. He has been awarded India's highest film award.

Directed by Bobby Bedi
Featuring: Shammi Kapoor, Shashi Kapoor, Shyam Benegal, Rishi Kapoor, Randhir Kapoor, Karisma Kapoor, Shekhar Kapur, Mohan Agashe, Ritu Nanda
India 1988, 60min, Hindi with English subtitles

EXHIBITION



SHOLAY

50 YEARS LATER

NEHRU CENTRE Monday 5 - Friday 9 May
10am - 6pm, closed for lunch 1:30pm

Step into the world of Sholay, India's most iconic film, in a captivating exhibition marking its 50th anniversary. Celebrating the legacy of Ramesh Sippy's 1975 blockbuster, this exhibition offers a rare glimpse into the film's impact across generations and continents. Discover exclusive memorabilia from Sholay's journey—from vibrant posters and lobby cards to song booklets and glass slides, including visuals from the legendary "Yeh Dosti" bicycle scene. It shines a light on Amitabh Bachchan's Jai, Dharmendra's Veeru, and the unforgettable ensemble that redefined Indian cinema.

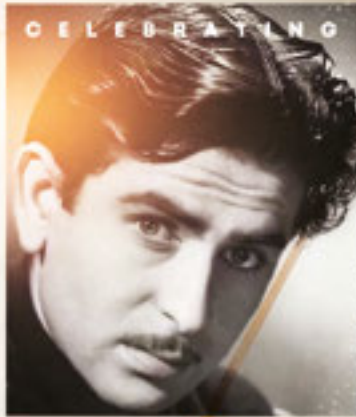
Curated by Dr Monia Acciari, Associate Professor in Film and Television History and Director of the Indian Cinema Archive at De Montfort University, the exhibition is part of the UKRI-funded research project Creative Archives: Producing, Preserving and Showcasing Transnational India Film Heritage. Dr Acciari has curated acclaimed exhibitions in Leicester, Delhi (JNU), and Nashik, engaging communities with India's cinematic heritage.

Whether you're a lifelong fan or a curious newcomer, join us for a celebration of Sholay's magic—where stories, stardom, and shared memories collide.

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Fri 9 May



RAJ KAPOOR

MAGICAL MEMORIES LIVE MUSIC

Chirag Rao, Rekha & The 515 Crew



harrow arts centre

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£26 - £28

TICKETS



DIRECTORS IN DIALOGUE

IMTIAZ ALI

Imtiaz Ali is a celebrated Indian film director, writer, and producer known for his lyrical and introspective storytelling. Born in Jamshedpur, he studied English Literature at Hindu College, University of Delhi, where he founded the dramatics society Ibtida. He began his career in television before making his film debut with *Socha Na Tha* (2005).

He gained acclaim with *Jab We Met* (2007), *Love Aaj Kal* (2009), *Rockstar* (2011), and *Tamasha* (2015), each exploring themes of love and self-discovery. On streaming platforms, he created *SHE* (Netflix) and *Dr Arora* (SonyLiv).

Imtiaz has also written screenplays for *Ahista Ahista* (2006) and *Cocktail* (2012), and supported new voices through projects like *Laila Majnu* (2018). His latest film, *Amar Singh Chamkila* (2024), continues his tradition of charting emotional journeys with poetic realism.

ONIR

Onir, born Anirban Dhar in Samchi, Bhutan, is a celebrated Indian filmmaker, screenwriter, editor, and producer. He studied comparative literature at Jadavpur University and trained in film editing in Berlin before returning to India to work across various media.

He gained acclaim with *My Brother...Nikhil* (2005), a pioneering Hindi film on AIDS and same-sex relationships, and *I AM* (2011), an anthology exploring LGBTQI rights and social taboos, which won the National Film Award. His films have earned numerous accolades, including the Film Victoria Diversity Award (2019) and the Likho Award for his memoir *I Am Onir* and *I Am Gay*.

Recent works include *Pine Cone* (2023), honoured at BFI Flare, and *We Are Faheem and Karun* (2025), the first Kashmiri-language queer feature, premiering at DIFF and BFI Flare. Onir is also part of the Indo-Australian anthology *My Melbourne*.



BY PUBLIC DEMAND

WE ARE FAHEEM & KARUN

WARWICK ARTS CENTRE Friday 2 May 7pm

GARDEN CINEMA Tuesday 6 May 8pm

PHOENIX LEICESTER Thursday 8 May 7pm

In the remote border village of Gurez, a young security officer from South India, Karun, meets Faheem, a local Kashmiri man with a disarming smile. What begins as a chance encounter at a checkpoint unfolds into a tender and unexpected romance—one shadowed by secrecy and societal pressure. This is the first Kashmiri-language feature to centre an LGBTQI+ relationship and offers a rare and deeply human perspective on lives often overlooked in stories from conflict zones.

Inspired by a true story, this landmark film was denied filming permission by India's Ministry of Defence, who deemed the story "derogatory to the army," the film triumphed through resilience and premiered three years later at the BFI Flare Film Festival.

Followed by Q&A with director Onir.

Directed by Onir

Cast: Mir Tawseef, Akash Menon, Mir Salman

India 2024, 79 mins, Kashmiri, Hindi, English, Malayalam with English subtitles

UK PREMIERE



THE COLLABORATOR

KILN THEATRE Friday 2 May 8pm

As war rages in Kashmir in the early 1990s, a young man from a nearby village is recruited by an Indian army officer to perform a grim task, to go into the conflict zone where militants have been killed and retrieve their weapons and ID cards. Based on the critically acclaimed novel by Mirza Waheed.

Directed by Travis Hodgkins
Cast: Rudi Dharmalingam, Nitin Ganatra, Nikhil Singh Rai, Vikram Kapadia, Anastasia Jairath, Meera Ganatra
United States 2024, 128min, English.

**NEW WRITING: PUBLICATIONS
FOCUSING ON INDIAN CINEMA**

NEW WRITINGS FROM THE UK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

BFI SOUTHBANK REUBEN LIBRARY
Saturday 3 May 11:15pm

This book launch spotlights two stellar publications that appraise India's monumental Parallel Cinema movement (1968-95) and the contemporary new wave of Indian Indies, which have carved a singular niche distinct from mainstream commercial Bollywood.

This conversation charts seminal moments, creative luminaries, and pathbreaking films from Parallel Cinema and new Indian Indie cinema constellations.

The discussion will be chaired by Dr Ashvin Devasundaram (Reader in Global Cinemas, Queen Mary University of London), whose influential book trilogy has established a new research sub-discipline on contemporary independent Indian cinema. Panellists include Dr Omar Ahmed (Writer, Film Curator), Dr Jayjit Sarkar (Assistant Prof, Raiganj University), Dr Anik Sarkar (Assistant Prof, SRM University, Sikkim) and Dr Toyeba Mushtaq (Project Manager, Tongues on Fire - UK Asian Film Festival).

Tickets are free and bookable at the box office.

EMERGING ARTISTS

CREATIVE MINDS OF TOMORROW

**DISCOVERING CAREER
PATHWAYS TO FULFIL YOUR
CREATIVE POTENTIAL**

BFI SOUTHBANK BLUE ROOM Saturday 3 May
1-4pm.

The festival hosts a series of open-day workshops aimed at offering insight and guidance to those looking to carve a career in the creative industries. From writing and producing to curating these workshops are designed for participants to interact freely and seek guidance towards taking the next step in their careers.

WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTION TO FILM ANALYSIS AND FILMMAKING

BFI SOUTHBANK Saturday 3 May 2:30pm

UKAFF presents a special workshop with British Asian author Saz Vora, where you will learn how to apply film theory to short film analysis from a filmmaker's perspective. Additionally, you will gain insight into applying these tools to your own creative film production, including generating a photographic storyboard and using key scenes to tell a story.

DOCUMENTARY

HEADHUNTING TO BEATBOXING

BFI SOUTHBANK NFT4 Saturday 3 May
2:30pm

Two-time Academy Award winner AR Rahman presents a musical documentary.

A tribe in the far North East of India engulfed in the depths of violence and bloodshed, resurjects itself through the healing power of music and emerges through a musical renaissance.

Directed by Rohit Gupta
India 2024, 62min, English, Nagamese with English subtitles



CURATED CONNECTIONS

LONG STORIES THAT STAY WITH YOU

BFI SOUTHBANK Saturday 3 May 6pm

UKAFF presents a series of long shorts from and about South Asian experiences while addressing the 2025 festival theme 'Longing and Belonging'. In every corner of the world, people wrestle with feelings of longing – a yearning for love, home, acceptance, or meaning – and the deep desire to find a place where they truly belong. Selected by our curators, the films in this programme explore identity, self-acceptance, and reconciliation with the past alongside queries around cultural displacement, its effects on family dynamics, and the associated search for home.

This programme will also screen the winning films from the students' Short Film Festival organised by Queen Mary University, London, and Christ University, Bangalore.



CUPPA CHAI

After the death of her Nani Ji, eighteen-year-old Mira arrives back in her hometown and is confronted by the fact that she knows very little about the woman who passed away. She must learn more about her grandmother's life the only way she knows how, through the perfect cup of tea and halwa.

Directed by Amit Kaur



A LITTLE BIT OF GLITTER

When Vidya, a 62-year-old recently widowed Indian woman, sublets a room in her house to a 19-year-old black gay man, she rediscovers her sense of self and her love for makeup, despite complications from the family.

Directed by Siddharth Menon



IF

An arranged marriage tears a lesbian couple apart. But with a mother's love, perhaps another future is possible.

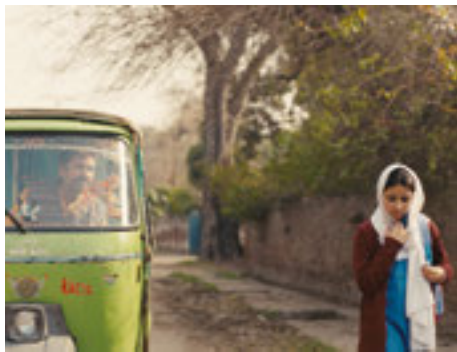
Directed by Tathagata Ghosh



JAMIE'S WAGER

After his father's sudden death, Jamie is caught between his Muslim uncle Hafiz and his father's new-age girlfriend Alicia at the funeral director's office.

Directed by Sean Kardar



DON'T BE LATE, MYRA

Inspired by true events in Lahore, 10-year-old Myra must find her way home after missing her school van. The short thriller takes a dark turn as she tries to dodge men harassing her on the streets.

Directed by Afia Serena Nathaniel



THE SEND OFF

After years of estrangement, Rahila returns home to visit her ailing father. Facing struggles in her marriage, she hopes for support, but unresolved tensions make healing difficult.

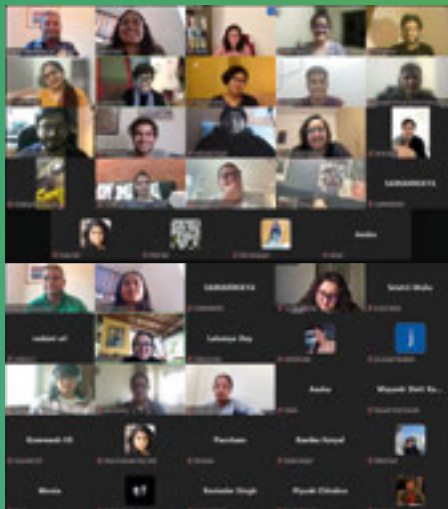
Directed by Amina Imran

LIGHTS, CAMERA... YOUR CALL

JOIN OUR LONG & SHORT
FILMS AS A CURATOR

Passionate about storytelling that stays with you? Join us as a curator and help shape our next season. We're seeking keen eyes and open hearts to spotlight powerful short films that deserve lasting attention

Email: info@tonguesonfire.com



EMERGING CURATORS LAB

As part of the three-year AHRC-funded India-UK research project Connecting Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage: India-UK Film Festival Federation, Youth Curation and Community Co-Creation, the Emerging Curators Lab (ECL 2025) online weekend workshop took place on 8th and 9th March 2025.

ECL 2025 was led by the UK Asian Film Festival (UKAFF), Queen Mary University of London, India film festival partner Habitat International Film Festival (HIFF, New Delhi) and academic partner School of Arts & Aesthetics, JNU (New Delhi). ECL 2025 was designed to nurture a new generation of India-UK film curators and showcase a diverse spectrum of South Asian cinema. Emerging curators had the opportunity to gain information about film curation, develop their curatorial skills and watch a selection of new feature films submitted to the UK Asian Film Festival from which they selected a film that will be screened as the Emerging Curators' Choice and will receive a special film award at UKAFF 2025.

We particularly encourage applicants from a diverse range of underrepresented communities.



UK PREMIERE



THE UMESH CHRONICLES

RICHMIX Saturday 3 May 8:30pm

Set in 1980s India, *The Umesh Chronicles* follows a young Radha as she questions privilege, freedom, and the unseen lives that shape hers. Years after a boy named Sundar disappears, a grown Radha sets out to find him—only to confront who is truly free.

This poetic coming-of-age drama is a moving portrait of a society in transformation produced by Shoojit Sircar and Ronnie Lahiri (Piku & October).

Directed by Pooja Kaul
Cast: Amitabh Bachchan, Babil Khan, Vivek Gomber, Zayn Marie Khan, Kriti Pant, Leela Samson, Aiza Khan, Bobby Pal and Adil Hussain.
India 2024, 130 mins Hindi, Kashmiri, English with English subtitles

MYSTIC MELA

BECK THEATRE Sunday 4 May 11:30am - onwards

Free & Ticketed Events

Step into an extraordinary day of storytelling, spirit, and cultural celebration at Mystic Mela – a vibrant fusion of film, music, workshops and heritage. Presented as part of the UK Asian Film Festival, this unique mela offers a soulful journey through cinema, community and creativity.

Begin your day with a beautiful Opening Ceremony, featuring traditional rituals, reflections and blessings to set the tone for what lies ahead.

Throughout the day, experience live music, interactive workshops, yoga and breathwork sessions, and a children's corner to keep younger guests entertained. Don't miss the delicious food and artisan stalls—a feast for the senses!

Mystic Mela is more than an event—it's a gathering of hearts and heritage. Whether you come for the films, the food, or the festive spirit, you'll leave inspired and connected.

Explore a powerful collection of film screenings, including:

- **PAIGHAAM** at 12pm
A heartwarming short film where a young girl discovers her connection to Mother Nature, carrying a message of unity and humanity. **FREE**
- **CHALO INDIA WITH ERIC JI** at 12:30pm
A special screening of this travel docu-series pilot, with a Q&A diving into the vibrant tapestry of India, featuring the iconic Mahakumbh in Prayagraj. **FREE**
- **MUSICAL SEGMENT** at 3pm **FREE**
- **JAI MATA JI LET'S ROCK** at 3:30pm
A riotous Gujarati comedy about an 80-year-old woman's unexpected windfall and her hilarious, heartfelt choices. **TICKETED**

In the evening, join us for a special panel event: **ASIANS ON THE SQUARE** – A celebratory discussion marking 40 years of South Asian characters in British television soap opera EastEnders, offering insights, memories and conversations with familiar faces. **TICKETED**

DOCUMENTARY

CHALO INDIA WITH ERIC JI

BECK THEATRE Sunday 4 May 12:30pm

Join Eric Ji on a vibrant journey through India in Chalo India with Eric Ji. In this upbeat pilot set in Varanasi and Prayagraj, witness ancient rituals at the Maha Kumbh Mela and explore the heart of a nation where tradition meets modernity. With music, food, colour, and unforgettable people, this series invites the diaspora to rediscover India's past, present, and future.

Directed by Rajdeep Chowdhury





WORLD PREMIERE

JAI MATA JI - LET'S ROCK

BECK THEATRE Sunday 4 May 4pm

PHOENIX LEICESTER Saturday 10 May 8pm

A government scheme turns the life of an 80-year-old lady overnight, presenting her with four outrageous choices: seek revenge on her sons and their wives, rekindle a long-lost love, embrace a swanky lifestyle, or go full thug life with all of the above. Jai Mata Ji - Let's Rock is a Gujarati comedy brimming with laughter, emotions, and surprises. Centered around a quirky family, it's a fun-filled ride you won't want to miss.

Directed by Manish Saini

Cast: Malhar **Thakker**, Vyoma **nandi**, Tiku Talsania, Vandana Pathak, Neela Mulherkar

India, 2025, 124 min, Gujarati with English subtitles



ASIANS ON THE SQUARE

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF EASTENDERS

BECK THEATRE Sunday 5 May 6:30pm

Join us for a very special event as we celebrate 40 years of the Asian family in the iconic BBC Soap, EastEnders, which has kept audiences hooked to the lives of the families on Albert Square.

In 1985, Naima and her husband Saeed Jaffrey were the first Asian characters who waltzed into this drama. **Ain**ce then the Kapoors, Ferreiras, Masoods and now the Panesar family have taken up residence in E20.

Let's cheer all these wonderful migrants who were brave enough to settle in Walford and go on a journey with them as we ponder on representation and our progress as a community.

Panel discussion with clips.

Panellists include: **Shreela Ghosh, Sudha Bhuchar, Shobu Kapoor** and **Navin Chowdhry**
Chaired and moderated by **Suman Bhuchar**

Sudha Bhuchar's photo credit: Harry Elletson.

UK PREMIERE



THE STORY OF A ROCK

RICH MIX Sunday 4 May 2:30pm

A teenage girl's world is upended when her mother leaves for migrant work. Thrust into survival mode, she faces exploitation, heartbreak, and injustice. But just when all hope seems lost, a stranger's compassion sparks a glimmer of light. Gritty and moving, this powerful film explores resilience and the extraordinary strength found in unexpected kindness

Music by award-winning composer Jeffrey Carabelos, best known for **Star Wars: The Apprentice** (2013)

Directed by Zak Mir
Cast: Safana Nomoni, Sahana Rahman Sumi, Lara Lotus and Simrin Lubaba
Bangladesh 2024, 84min, Bengali with English Subtitles

DOCUMENTARY



UNITED FOR CHANGE CYCLING TOWARDS A BRIGHTER FUTURE

COURTHOUSE CINEMA Sunday 4 May 12.30pm

Filmmaker Manny Singh explores one of Mumbai's largest slums, capturing powerful stories of resilience and the transformative impact of education. Made with editor Raj and cinematographer Krystian, the film celebrates community and compassion.

Directed by Manpreet Singh Pabla
India. 2023.51 min. English.

Supported by



UK PREMIERE



MERCY

RICH MIX Monday 5 May 2.30pm

On Christmas Eve, Shekhar faces the unthinkable decision to end his mother's life support.

Mercy unfolds over one haunting night that reshapes his relationship with his family and forces him to confront the weight of love, loss, and responsibility. A powerful, intimate portrait of a man forever changed by mercy.

Directed by Mitul Patel

Cast: Adil Hussain, Raj Vasudeva, Niharica Raizada, Kunal Bhan and Aparna Ghoshal

India 2024, 99min, Hindi with English subtitles

DOCUMENTARIES



KIDS FIGHT

Monday 5 May 3.30pm

GARDEN CINEMA

In Lahore's toughest streets, Bilal, Usman, and their peers find purpose through MMA. Filmed over five years, this raw and inspiring documentary captures their journey from struggle to self-discovery, shining a light on Pakistan's overlooked youth.

Directed by Manpreet Singh Pabla

India. 2023. 51 min. English.



HER RIGHT TO PLAY

Monday 5 May 6pm

GARDEN CINEMA

After an eight-year ban, Pakistan's women's football team returns—ranked 172 and chasing Olympic dreams. This powerful documentary follows their journey through setbacks, injuries, and cultural resistance, capturing a story of resilience, sisterhood, and the fight to play.

Directed by Sarah Tareen

Pakistan. 2025. 103 min. English, Punjabi, Urdu.



LONDON PREMIERE

A TEACHER'S GIFT

RIVERSIDE STUDIOS Tuesday 6 May 6pm

When a charming English retiree enrolls in his Hindi class, Rohan—a teacher with a fake diploma and a complicated past—finds an unexpected connection. But when marriage pressure, secrets, and a mysterious trip to India collide, tensions spiral. With love, identity, and truth on the line, A Teacher's Gift becomes a gripping journey of self-discovery, unfinished business, and the courage to face the past.

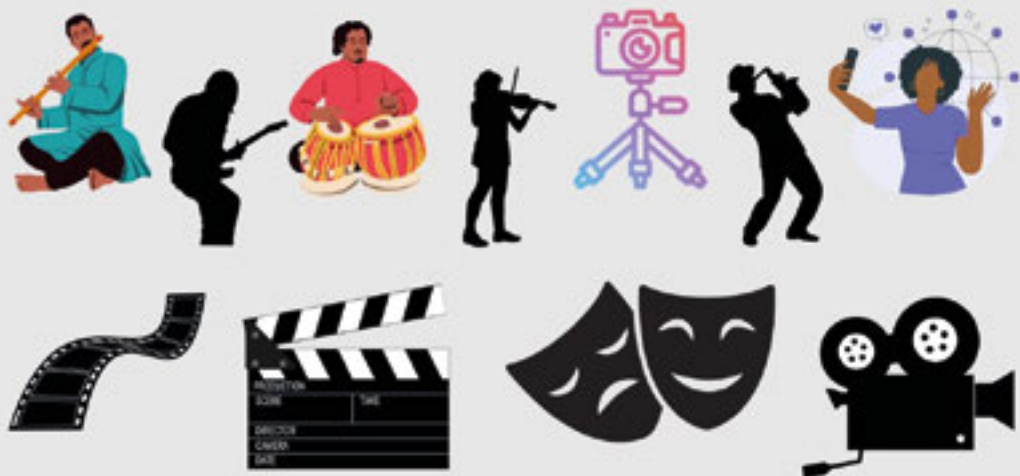
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Directed by Artur Ribeiro
Cast: Rajdeep Chowdhury, Anthony Calf, Anjali Patil,
Dhruv Sehgal
United Kingdom. 2024. 104 min. English

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UK PREMIERES



NUKKAD NATAK A STREET PLAY

RICH MIX Tuesday 6 May 8:15pm

Best friends Molshri and Shivang must redeem themselves after being expelled from college. Tasked with getting five underprivileged children into school, they face an uphill battle against poverty, apathy, and their own personal struggles.

Set against the backdrop of India's street theatre scene, this heartwarming and bold coming-of-age tale explores youth activism, identity, and what it truly means to fight for change.

Directed by Tanmaya Shekhar
Cast: Molshri, Shivang Rajpal, Nirmala Hazra, Danish Husain
India 2024, 107 mins English, Hindi with English subtitles



MAARAN

HARROW ARTS CENTRE Wednesday 7 May 7pm

When two strangers—bold, guarded Tara and whip-smart Birwa—find themselves trapped in the web of a man out to settle scores, survival becomes strategy. As their worlds collide, the rules shift. Maaran is a razor-sharp psychological thriller from National Award-winner Abhishek Jain that slices through patriarchy with tension, twists, and two unforgettable women who refuse to go down quietly.

Directed by Abhishek Jain
Cast: Deeksha Joshi, Yash Soni
India 2024, 137min, **Gujrati** with English subtitles



UK PREMIERE

HARI KA OM

REGENT STREET CINEMA Wednesday 7 May TBC
PHOENIX LEICESTER Friday 9 May 8pm

A traditional father and his free-spirited son are forced on a journey to Varanasi after a health scare shakes their already strained bond. As they navigate memories, rituals, and buried emotions, Hari Ka Om becomes a heartfelt road trip of unexpected humour, reconciliation, and rediscovery. A moving tale of generational divide, healing, and the love that lingers beneath silence.

Directed by Harish Vyas

Cast: Raghubir Yadav, Anshuman Jha, Soni Razdan,
Ayesha Kapur, Jagat Rawat and Shivani Tanksale
India 2023, 105 mins Hindi with English subtitles

UK PREMIERE



PARIKRAMA

WARWICK ARTS CENTRE Wednesday 7 May 7pm
GARDEN CINEMA Thursday 8 May 8pm

An Italian filmmaker journeys along the sacred Narmada River, searching for meaning through cinema. Along the way, he meets Lala, a young villager fighting for his displaced family's dignity. As their lives intersect, one grieving a mother, the other a homeland, the film unfolds as a poetic reflection on loss, belonging, and the quiet connections that transcend borders.

Both screenings include Q&A with director Gautam Ghose



Directed by Gautam Ghose
Cast: Marco Leonardi, Chitrangda Singh, Cristina Donadio
India, Italy 2025, 112min, English, Hindi & Italian with English subtitles

DOCUMENTARY



SLAVES OF THE EMPIRE

BLOC, QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
Thursday 8 May 3.30pm

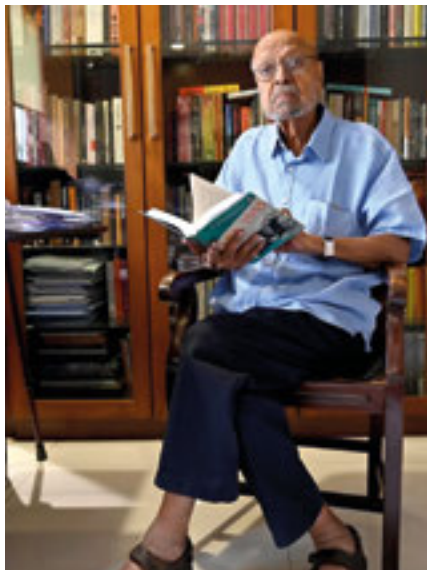
PHOENIX LEICESTER Friday 9 May 6pm

An Italian filmmaker journeys along the sacred Narmada River, searching for meaning through cinema. Along the way, he meets Lala, a young villager fighting for his displaced family's dignity. As their lives intersect, one grieving a mother, the other a homeland, the film unfolds as a poetic reflection on loss, belonging, and the quiet connections that transcend borders.

Both screenings include Q&A with director Rajesh James

Directed by Rajesh James
India 2024, 51 min, Malayalam with English subtitles

CELEBRATING SHYAM BENEGAL



BENEGAL'S WOMEN: A PANEL DISCUSSION ABOUT THE WOMEN IN SHYAM BENEGAL'S FILMS

Join acclaimed author and cultural commentator **Shobhaa De** as she leads a special tribute to legendary filmmaker Shyam Benegal. Featuring a screening of his satirical classic *Mandi*, this event honours his powerful portrayals of women — bold, layered, and unapologetically ahead of their time.



MANDI

THE SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES (SOAS) Friday 9 May 5pm

Rukmini Bai runs a high-profile brothel, but an illicit affair threatens its future. A sharp satirical comedy on politics and prostitution with a stellar ensemble cast.

Directed by Shyam Benegal
Cast: Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil, Naseeruddin Shah
India 1983, 167 min, Hindi with English subtitles



SHOBHAA DÉ

Celebrated author, columnist, and cultural icon, Shobhaa Dé has been one of India's most fearless and influential voices for over four decades. Known for her sharp social commentary and bestselling books, she has chronicled modern Indian life with wit and honesty. A long-time admirer of Shyam Benegal's work, she leads this special tribute, reflecting on his iconic female protagonists and the lasting impact of his cinematic legacy.

INDIA-UK CO-PRODUCTIONS

FUTURE-FORWARD THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF INDIA-UK CO-PRODUCTIONS

BFI SOUTHBANK NFT3 Saturday 10 May
10:30am

A panel discussion on the evolving landscape of India-UK Co-productions offering an understanding of co-production treaties between India and the UK, tax incentives and funding avenues. Representatives from public funding bodies and successful co-production experts will demystify the latest tax incentives, funding pathways and treaty advantages that can make a cinematic vision a market-ready reality.

The event will be followed by an exclusive Pilot Market Workshop, with selected filmmakers pitching their UK-India feature projects. The event includes a screening of a feature film, followed by a Networking Event in the BFI Blue Room.



CO-PRODUCTION SCREENING

SISTER MIDNIGHT

BFI SOUTHBANK NFT3 Saturday 10 May
10:30am

A newly arranged marriage. An oddball couple shoved together in a small Mumbai shack with paper-thin walls. They are awkward and alone-together. Unpredictable Uma does her best to cope with the heat, her total lack of domestic skills, nosy neighbours and her bumbling spouse until the nocturnal world of Mumbai and its inhabitants lead her to face her own strange behaviours.

Directed by Karan Kandhari
Cast: Radhika Apte, Ashok Pathak, Chhaya Kadam
UK, Sweden, India 2024, 110min, Hindi with English subtitles.



UK PREMIERE

PUSHTAINI

PHOENIX LEICESTER Saturday 10 May 5:15pm

Hrithik Roshan presents this feature by actor & director Vinod Rawat.

A struggling Bollywood actor forced to return to his home and face his past, travels through the Himalayan mountains and shares adventures with strangers, unaware of what the journey has in store for him.

Directed by Vinod Rawat
Cast: Rajkummar Rao, Vinod Rawat, Prema Karayat
Rita Heer, Mithilesh Pandey
India 2024, 90 mins Hindi with English subtitles

SHORT FILM COMPETITION

UNDER 10 MINUTES. UNLIMITED IMPACT.

REGENT STREET CINEMA Saturday 10 May 7pm

Short on time, never short on power—these films prove that when it comes to storytelling, less can be so much more. Each under ten minutes, these cinematic gems distil emotion, urgency, and imagination into unforgettable snapshots of life, identity, and connection.

From intimate dramas to searing social commentary, these shorts are competing in our Short Film Competition, showcasing fresh voices and bold perspectives.

The selection has been judged by a panel of industry experts led by British Asianriter Saz Vora, joined by Neetha Syam, Raj Awasti, Riad Arfin, Meera Ganatra, and Rohit Bhardwaj. Joining them as Curators are Tabassum Islam, Ariadne, Jappy, and Rubinder Kaur Rall. Together, they have championed storytelling that stays with you—long after the credits roll.



THE SEAS BETWEEN US

In 1960s Trinidad, a young girl's world expands when her bold aunt arrives from India.

Directed by Faisal Lutchmedial



A PEARL IN THE OCEAN

A male belly dancer from rural Kolkata finds freedom in defiance and dance.

Directed by Vasundhara Jadhav



GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY

Amid anti-immigration riots in 2024, a father and son face violence—and the deeper cost of belonging.

Directed by Islah Abdur-Rahman



CODE/SWITCH

Ashir races to a dream interview in trackies, code-switching through a white world—only to question if belonging is worth the cost.

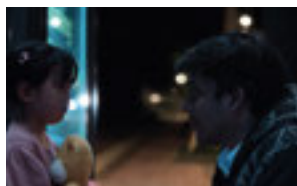
Directed by Alexander Moffat



ALOO POORI

The night before she leaves home, Sejal confronts her mother's silent struggle—over a final meal of aloo poori.

Directed by Aditi Sridhar



A BETTER PLACE

A warm night in Seoul takes an unusual turn for two strangers, when they meet and form an unlikely bond.

Directed by Ali Sohail Jaura



SEEN

Two women lost in a stepwell uncover desire and connection while searching for a phone—and something deeper.

Directed by Shuchi Kothari



TIME

After her husband's death, an elderly woman navigates grief and the quiet ache of newfound solitude.

Directed by Kiran Rai & Baljit Singh



FAREWELL

Two friends. One heartbroken, one marrying.

A day's journey through grief, memory, and hope.

Directed by Soham Kundu



THE CLOSEST POINT

A couple faces a tough choice, testing their love and the bond they share.

Directed by Dilesh Korya

SHORT FILM COMPETITION JUDGES



MEERA
GANATRA



NEETA
SYAM



RAJ
AWASTI



RIAD
ARFIN



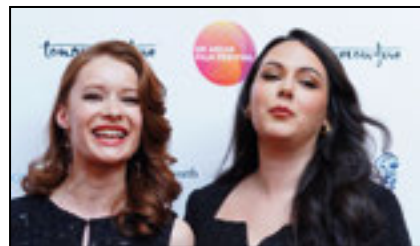
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BHARDWAJ

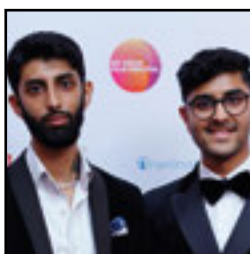
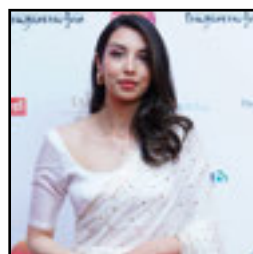
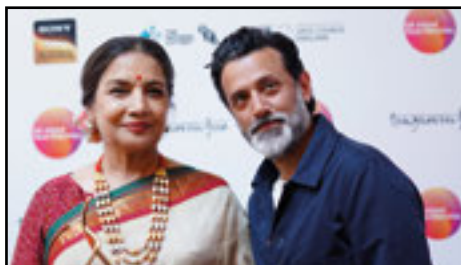
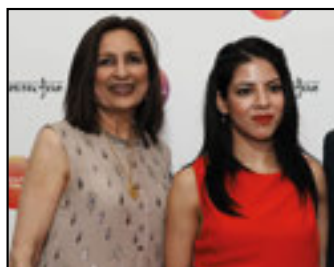
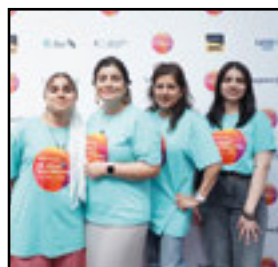
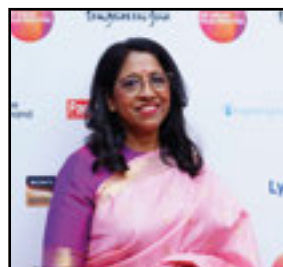
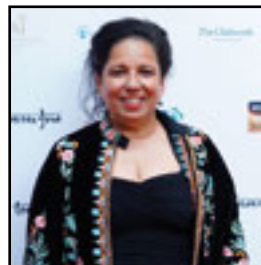
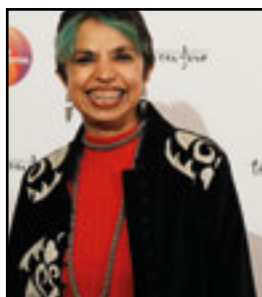
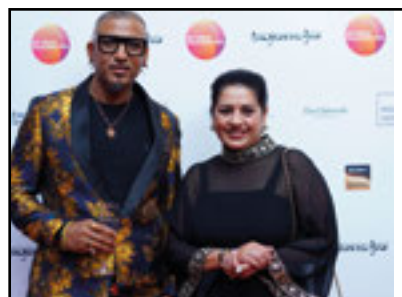


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FLASH OF 2024 FESTIVAL

Our festival is full of glitz and glamour from Bollywood and beyond. Just take a look at the stars bringing style and substance to the festival from last year! All due to the immense support and enthusiasm we receive from great film makers, fantastic celebrities and passionate film buffs.





UK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

DATE	TIME	EVENT	VENUE
1 May	18:30	RED CARPET OPENING GALA RECEPTION	BFI Southbank (Foyer)
	20:30	OPENING FILM: MY MELBOURNE	BFI Southbank (NFT 1)
2 May	19:00	WE ARE FAHEEM AND KARUN	Warwick Arts Centre
	20:00	THE COLLABORATOR	Kiln Theatre
3 May	11:15	NEW WRITINGS FROM UKAFF	BFI Southbank
	13:00	CREATIVE MINDS OF TOMORROW	BFI Southbank Blue Room
	14:30	FILM ANALYSIS & FILMMAKING WORKSHOP	BFI Southbank Blue Room
	14:30	HEADHUNTING TO BEATBOXING	BFI Southbank NFT 4
	18:00	LONG SHORTS	BFI Southbank NFT 3
	20:00	THE UMESH CHRONICLES	Rich Mix Screen 2
4 May	11:00	MYSTIC MELA	Beck Theatre
	12:00	PAIGHAAM	Beck Theatre
	12:30	CHALO INDIA WITH ERIC JI	Beck Theatre
	3:30	JAI MATA JI - LET'S ROCK	Beck Theatre
	6:30	ASIANS ON THE SQUARE	Beck Theatre
	14:30	THE STORY OF A ROCK	Rich Mix
	12:30	UNITED FOR CHANGE	Courthouse Cinema
5 May	10:00	EXHIBITION: SHOLAY 50 YEARS LATER	Nehru Centre
	14:30	MERCY	Rich Mix
	15:15	KID'S FIGHT	The Garden Cinema
	18:00	HER RIGHT TO PLAY	The Garden Cinema
6 May	10:00	EXHIBITION: SHOLAY 50 YEARS LATER	Nehru Centre
	18:00	THE TEACHER'S GIFT	Riverside Studios
	20:00	WE ARE FAHEEM AND KARUN	The Garden Cinema
	20:15	NUKKAD NATAK (A STREET PLAY)	Rich Mix
7 May	10:00	EXHIBITION: SHOLAY 50 YEARS LATER	Nehru Centre
	19:00	MAARAN	Harrow Arts Centre
	19:00	HARI KA OM	Regent Street Cinema
	19:00	PARIKRAMA	Warwick Arts Centre
8 May	10:00	EXHIBITION: SHOLAY 50 YEARS LATER	Nehru Centre
	15:30	SLAVES OF THE EMPIRE	Queen Mary University
	19:00	WE ARE FAHEEM AND KARUN	Phoenix Cinema Leicester
	20:00	PARIKRAMA	The Garden Cinema

UK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

DATE	TIME	EVENT	VENUE
9 May	10:00	EXHIBITION: SHOLAY 50 YEARS LATER	Nehru Centre
	17:00	BENEGAL'S WOMEN: A PANEL DISCUSSION BY SHOBHAA DÉ & FILM SCREENING: MANDI	The Brunei Gallery, SOAS
	18:00	SLAVES OF THE EMPIRE	Phoenix Cinema Leicester
	20:00	HARI KA OM	Phoenix Cinema Leicester
	20:00	MAGICAL MELODIES: CELEBRATING RAJ KAPOOR MUSICAL CONCERT	Harrow Arts Centre
10 May	10:30	INDIA-UK CO-PRODUCTION PANEL	BFI Southbank NFT 3
	10:30	SISTER MIDNIGHT	BFI Southbank NFT 3
	13:00	INDIA-UK CO-PRODUCTION NETWORKING	BFI Southbank Blue Room
	19:00	SHORT FILM COMPETITION	Regent Street Cinema
	17:15	PUSHTAINI	Phoenix Cinema Leicester
	18:30	CLOSING GALA RECEPTION	BFI Southbank Balcony Bar
	20:00	JA MATA JI - LET'S ROCK	Phoenix Cinema Leicester
	20:00	CLOSING FILM: THE GLASSWORKER	BFI Southbank NFT 1
11 May	12:30	CLOSING AWARDS GALA RECEPTION	Riverside Studios Cinema Foyer
	13:15	TRIBUTE TO RAJ KAPOOR, KEHTA HAI JOKER (SO SAYS THE JOKER)	Riverside Studios Cinema 1
	14:45	IN CONVERSATIONS	Riverside Studios Cinema 1
		UK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL AWARDS CEREMONY	Riverside Studios Cinema 1
	18:00	AFTER-PARTY	Riverside Studios River Room

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Tel: 0343 310 0044
becktheatre.org.uk

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Belvedere Rd, London SE1 8XT
Tel: 020 7928 3232

COURTHOUSE CINEMA

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Tel: 020 7297 5555
courthouse-hotel.com

HARROW ARTS CENTRE

171 Uxbridge Rd, Hatch End, HA5 4EA
Tel: 020 3773 7161
harrowarts.com

NEHRU CENTRE

269 Kilburn High Rd, London NW6 7JR
Tel: 020 7328 1000
kilntheatre.com

KILN THEATRE

269 Kilburn High Rd, London NW6 7JR
Tel: 020 7328 1000
kilntheatre.com

REGENT STREET CINEMA

307 Regent St., London W1B 2HW
Tel: 020 7911 5050
regentstreetcinema.com

RICH MIX

35-47 Bethnal Green Rd, London E1 6LA
Tel: 020 7613 7498
richmix.org.uk

RIVERSIDE STUDIOS

101 Queen Caroline Street Hammersmith
London W6 9BN
Tel: 020 8237 1000
riversidestudios.co.uk

THE SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES (SOAS) KHALIL LECTURE ROOM

10 Thornhaugh St, London WC1H 0XG
soas.ac.uk

THE GARDEN CINEMA

39-41 Parker Street London WC2B 5PQ.
Tel: 020 3369 5000
thegardencinema.co.uk

MIDLANDS VENUES

PHOENIX CINEMA AND ART CENTRE LEICESTER

4 Midland Street, Leicester LE1 1TG
Tel: 0116 242 2800
phoenix.org.uk

WARWICK ARTS CENTRE

University Of Warwick, Coventry
CV4 7AL
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