

# cinema



\* Ed Norton and co-stars in Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom*, that will open this year's Cannes Film Festival.

## The Cannes collection

By Gautaman Bhaskaran

America makes 600 movies in a year. India twice as many. But at the Cannes Film Festival, to roll on May 16, there is just one Indian movie. And five works from the USA. Four of them in the 12-day Festival's top Competition, and one screening outside.

Ashim Ahluwalia's *Miss Lovely* from India will not compete for the Palm d'Or, but screen, happily though, in the event's second most important slot, *A Certain Regard*.

The last Indian work at Cannes was Vikramaditya Motwane's *Udaan* in the 2010 *A Certain Regard*. Shaji N Karun's *Swaham* was the last Indian work in Competition, and that was in 1994.

*Miss Lovely*, set in the Mumbai of the mid-1980s, is a story of sleaze and suspicion. Two brothers, Vicky and Sonu, make C-grade movies, and fall in love with the same woman. *Miss Lovely* stars Niharika Singh, Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Anil George.

Although Cannes may add a title or two in *A Certain Regard*, I seriously doubt whether south Indian actor Kamal Hassan will be able to push his *Viswaroopam*. Remember the bragging and the hype some weeks ago, when the Indian media reportedly quoting Kamal himself had concluded that his latest work would be competing for the Palm. The reports

### Seeing red on the red carpet

Last week I wrote about starry arrogance. Here is one more example. Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai has been going to Cannes for years, mostly as the L'Oréal Face, though she has been on the jury once. I am not sure whether the festival itself wants her year after year, but the cameras at Cannes seem to love her. Of course, the star wants no competition when she is posing for photographers on the red carpet. Last year, there were stories on the French Riviera of how she lost her cool when

even said that a nine-member jury would decide! You cannot blame Indian actors and directors. Much like their screen products, they let their own imaginations run riot.

I know there were several other Indian films trying to walk the French Riviera's famed red carpet. But in deference to what the top men at Cannes had always told me, "Gautaman let us not talk about the rejects..." I will refrain from naming the titles that did not make it.

However as the director of the Mumbai Film Festival, S Narayan, said, "Cannes has a deep prejudice against Indian cinema". Is this true? I will be able to answer this question only after watching the movies at the Festival this May.

Cannes has always been overly fond of American cinema, and it did not surprise me when the Festival's artistic director, the affable Thierry Fremaux, told the Paris press conference last week – while announcing the lineup – "American cinema is back".

Hollywood will be well represented with such star-studded films as Walter Salles' *On*

she was told that there would be a rival, Sonam Kapoor. This year, Rai could back on the red carpet, but she might have to let the lenses look at Karisma Kapoor as well. There is a possibility of Vikram Bhatt's *Dangerous Ishq*, starring Karisma in her comeback venture, being showcased at the Cannes Market. In 3-D, the picture is not yet ready, but who cares. As long as a film is screened – even as a rough cut – the Indian media could be seduced to scream, "*Dangerous Ishq* at Cannes". A dangerous habit, indeed.



\* Niharika Singh in a scene from India's *A Certain Regard* entry *Miss Lovely*.

*the Road*, Lee Daniels' *The Paperboy*, David Cronenberg's *Cosmopolis*, Jeff Nichols' *Mud* and Andrew Dominik's *Killing Them Softly*, besides an out-of-competition screening of DreamWorks Animation's *Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted*.

And these movies have actors who would up Cannes's glamour quotient. Brad Pitt, Reese Witherspoon, Robert Pattinson, Nicole Kidman and Marion Cotillard and McConaughey will be attending.

I suppose the best of Indian cinema lacks in allure. The worst of it may even have an excess of this appeal, but Cannes cannot be caught including such fare. Yet, if Fremaux is to be believed, at Cannes nobody talks about stars. They discuss actors. Kidman the actress will take prominence over Kidman the star. As much as she dazzles, she performs.

Fremaux has also been quoted as saying that Cannes is a window to the world (this year there are entries from Egypt and Morocco). Only that it has not really opened out to India. Why? I have tried to find an answer for many years, but have not been able to come out with something convincing.

Back to the 2012 Competition, some of the other works here are *Holy Motors* by Leos Carax, *The Angels' Share* by Ken Loach, John Hillcoat's *Lawless*, starring Shia LaBeouf, Tom Hardy, Guy Pearce and Gary Oldman alongside Jessica Chastain in a Prohibition-era drama. We then have French auteur Alain Resnais, who is pushing 90, and with a telling title, *You Haven't Seen Anything Yet*, an adaptation of Jean Anouilh's *Eurydice*, starring Cotillard and Cannes veteran Mathieu Amalric. Jacques Audiard's *Rust and Bone*, Michael Haneke's *Amour*, Thomas Vinterberg's *The Hunt*, Abbas Kiarostami's *Like Someone in Love*, Egyptian Youssry Nasrallah's *Baad El Mawekaa* are other entries.

The last two names are significant, given Jafar Panahi's 20-year ban on movie-making by the Iranian authorities.

Among the special screenings announced are *The Central Park Five* by Ken Burns, Sarah Burns and David McMahon, and *Roman Polanski: A Film Memoir* by Laurent Bouzereau. The Out-of-Competition film slate includes *Me and You* from Bernardo Bertolucci.

Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom* will open the 12-day Festival on the French Riviera, and Claude Miller's last work before he died early this month, *Theresa Desqueyroux* (with Audrey Tautou), will close the event on May 27.

A nine-member jury of the Italian master, Nanni Moretti, will award the Golden Palms, while American actor-director will head the *A Certain Jury*.

(Gautaman Bhaskaran will be covering the Cannes Film Festival this year, and may be contacted at gautamanb@hotmail.com)