



Seattle South Asian Film Festival 2014 Preview, Capsule Reviews SSAFF includes six films concerning LGBT issues

by Sara Michelle Fetters - SGN A&E Writer

Programmed by local nonprofit Tasveer, an organization founded on the promise to curate thought-provoking artistic work of South Asians through films, forums, visual art, and performances that engage and empower the community, the 9th Seattle South Asian Film Festival presents its most ambitious slate yet. Showcasing 24 features, 17 shorts and with 18 filmmakers currently schedule to attend, the festival promises to be an absorbing showcase highlighting themes and ideas universal in scope yet also reflective of the cultures, people and countries represented.

The schedule includes two documentaries, two narrative features and two shorts revolving around LGBT subject matter, and in the case of the entries from India and Sri Lanka, comment, whether directly or indirectly, on those country's draconian laws concerning Lesbian, Gay and Transgender rights. All four of the features are highly worthwhile, especially Nepal's stunning *Soongava: Dance of the Orchids*, a Lesbian drama that might look like your typical coming-of-age coming out tale, but in the end fascinatingly becomes anything but.

A full schedule along with ticket information can be found at <http://ssaff.tasveer.org/2014/>. The film festival runs October 31-November 9. Following are short capsule reviews of the four LGBT-themed feature motion pictures screening during the festival, all of which I highly recommend and urge everyone to make the effort to go and see.

And You Thought You Knew Me (Saturday, Nov. 1, 5 p.m., Mobius Hall - UW Bothell) A film that taught me a new acronym, one that makes me shudder just thinking of it again, PAGFB. What's it mean? 'People Assigned Gender Female at Birth.' What's the point? It's the answer to that particular question you learn while watching Pramada Menon's absorbing documentary, each of these five disparate souls becoming activists of one sort another in large part thanks to the cruelty done to them at the time of their respective

births. An unforgettable story, their collective tales are both chilling and optimistic, sometimes both at the exact same time. (Plays with In Between Days.)

Frangipani (Saturday, Nov 8., 4 p.m., Roxy Cinema - Renton) Moody, atmospheric love triangle from Sri Lanka, the movie's political agenda in regards to horrific local laws sometimes overshadows its simple, straight-forward and beautifully slight central story, three friends - two men, one woman - living with one another for reasons they cannot openly disclose, yet yearn to flaunt all the same. The movie works best when it lets actions and emotions speak for themselves, and it's only when director Visakesa Chandrasekaram take a more direct approach that things get a little overtly didactic. Still, this is a strong, character-driven drama with surprising moments of light and levity, everything building to a suitably stirring climax that suits all that came before it rather beautifully.

In Between Days (Dui Dhuranir Golpo) (Saturday, Nov. 1, 5 p.m., Mobius Hall - UW Bothell) Shot over a period of 14 months, director Sankhajit Biswas' In Between Days is a surprisingly vibrant, refreshingly honest slice-of-life documentary looking at Transgender Bengali teens Bubai and Chiranjit, best friends who are involved in the local sex trade. Landing jobs at an NGO doing HIV outreach prevention, the pair explore their dreams and desires while also coming to terms with the life they have at this very moment. Perceptive almost to a fault, at less than an hour the film can't help but bring up issues it can't hope to completely dissect in close to enough detail. At the same time, Bubai and Chiranjit's stories are impossible to forget, and the bits of hope and a yearning for a better life that permeate throughout are oftentimes earthshattering in their emotional intensity. (Plays with And You Thought You Knew Me.)

Soongava: Dance of the Orchids (Saturday, Nov. 1, 7 p.m., Mobius Hall - UW Bothell) Nepal's 2013 submission for the Best Foreign Language Film Academy Award, this Lesbian coming-of-age melodrama is a powerful, thought-provoking groundbreaker that's universal in both message and theme. The story of a 22-year-old dancer who ends her engagement to take off with her best friend on an impromptu road trip, the movie is an exhilarating treatise on following one's heart and the sometimes earth-shattering consequences that can oftentimes arise from doing so. Masterful.

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