

'Salt' Producer Adds Spice to Hollywood Films

By LISA TSERING
India-West Staff Reporter

The success of "Salt" has changed the face of Hollywood action films — its lead role was originally written for a man (Tom Cruise had agreed to star), but Angelina Jolie stepped in and made the title role fearless, sexy and feminine.

The film also marks the changing face of power in Hollywood, as it was produced by an up-and-coming Indian American filmmaker with an enviable track record and a very promising future.

Sunil Perkash, 40, studied economics and communications at Stanford University. "Initially, my parents were very reticent" about his going into the film industry, he explained. Perkash's parents, both doctors, would have been relieved if he'd chosen medicine

or engineering, but they have since come to understand that Perkash's career is flowering on its own.

"Making a movie, you are amalgamating the creative and practical sides of your personality," Perkash told **India-West** this week from Los Angeles. "You are the creative CEO of a project."

Perkash has produced four films: "Blast from the Past" (1999), starring Brendan Fraser and Alicia Silverstone; "Premonition" (2007), starring Sandra Bullock and coincidentally, also produced by Ashok Amurtraj; "Enchanted" (2007), starring Amy Adams; and now "Salt," directed by Phillip Noyce, which has grossed \$79 million.

Perkash prefers to produce original scripts, and he believes that is why his films have done so well. "Hollywood usually gets it



Sunil Perkash has had an impressive innings in Hollywood: out of the four films he's produced, two have been successes and two have been blockbusters. His latest film is "Salt," starring Angelina Jolie. (Getty Images)

wrong, doing so many comic book remakes and sequels," he said. As a producer, he brings projects



Angelina Jolie stars in "Salt," now in theaters.

to studios such as Sony, Disney and MGM in search of financing.

"Eventually, I will start raising my own financing," he said.

Spandana's 'Super Singer' Contest Concludes in SF Bay Area

By PEARL S. DRIVER
Special to India-West

SAN RAMON, Calif. — Spandana Foundation's "Super Singer" contest concluded with a mega finale in the San Francisco Bay Area July 31 with 63 participants from across the United States competing in three age groups to win the title.

Organized in association with the Bay Area Telugu Association, the competition was open to amateur and aspiring singers of Indian origin residing in the U.S., who have no professional singing experience.

"We divided the participants into three different groups based on their age and knowledge of classical music. It would be unfair if adult contestants competed with the younger participants," Giriprasad Lankipalle, an organizer of the Spandana Super Singer competition, told **India-West**.

With participants free to sing in any Indian language of their choice, the contest was an appropriate celebration of cultural diversity.

The 63 finalists were screened in round one of the mega finale and only 34 participants went on



Winners of Spandana Foundation's "Super Singer" competition in the "teens" category with judges Mano (sixth from left), Mallikarjun (fourth from right) and Parthu (third from right), at the mega finale in San Ramon, Calif.

to compete in the final round of the competition.

The finalists not only had the opportunity to perform before famous singers from the Telugu film industry, including Mallikarjun, Parthu and Mano, but they also received constructive criticism and tips on improving their performance in the future from the judges.

"When you sing without music, you should not select a song which

is primarily orchestra-based," Parthu advised a contestant, who sang the popular "Mahiya Mahiya" number from the film, "Guru," minus one track.

The organizers had arranged for online auditions to encourage participation from regions where the auditions were not being held.

While Sporthi Rao from Dallas, Texas, Amrutha Turlapati from the SF Bay Area, Calif.; Vikshita Pallerla from Detroit, Mich.; and

Keerthana Annamaneni from New Jersey were adjudged winners in the non-classical category in the junior age group, Pragathi Guruprasad from the Bay Area won the classical singing category in the same group.

Shilpa Sadagopan from Houston, Texas, won the classical singing category in the teenage age group, while Sruthi Khandai from Los Angeles; Vikhyathi Pallerla from Detroit, Mich.; Maina Edula from Charlotte, N.C.; and Prithvi Guruprasad from the

Bay Area won the final competition in the non-classical singing category.

In the senior age group, Akshay Anaokar from Los Angeles; Prachi Apte from Minneapolis, Minn.; Moonmitha Ghosh from the Bay Area; Vinod Krishnan from Minneapolis; and Ujwala Chinni from New Jersey were declared winners at the competition.

After the prize distribution ceremony, the three judges enthralled the audience as they performed popular Telugu songs.

Mano performed duets with Sarada, a popular singer from Houston, Texas; and Lata Kannan, a singer from Washington, D.C., while Parthu sang the song that earned him the Paadutha Theeyaga competition title a decade ago. The third judge, Mallikarjun, sang a popular dance number as the participants and audience joined him on stage and grooved to the song.

Proceeds from the event will be forwarded to the four initiatives undertaken by the Spandana Foundation, including "Pratibha" and "Vidyalaya," with a focus on education; "Cheyutha," which attends to healthcare needs; and "Aashraya," which aims to support victims of natural calamities.



Judges and organizers with the winners of the "seniors" category in the "Super Singer" contest organized by the not-for-profit organization Spandana Foundation.



Judges Mallikarjun (seated, first from left) and Parthu (seated, second from left) listen to a participant in the first round of the mega finale of Spandana Foundation's "Super Singer" competition at the Windmere Ranch Middle School in San Ramon, Calif., July 31. (Pearl S. Driver photos)