

In-Conversation session at 54th IFFI unravels the mysteries of 'The Road to Oscars'

Film Distribution is the key in the race to Oscars: Guneet Monga Kapoor

A Government fund can help Indian films run successful campaigns for their Oscar journey: Resul Pookutty

It is great stories that win us awards: Carter Pilcher

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The Academy awards popularly known as 'the Oscars' is one thing that excites every film maker across the world. For Indians, this coveted Oscars remained beyond their reach for a very long time. Then one day, Bhanu Athaiya broke that glass ceiling when she won the Academy Award for Best Costume Design for her work in the 1982 film, Gandhi. Later on many Indians like AR Rahman, Resul Pookutty, M.M. Keeravani, Guneet Monga Kapoor and Kartiki Gonsalves scripted success in Oscars and proved us that this award is achievable and winnable. But the ways of winning an Oscar still remain a mystery to many. An In-Conversation session held today at the 54th International Film Festival of India unraveled the mysteries and charted out ways to win Oscars.

Initiating the conversation, Guneet Monga Kapoor Producer of 'The Elephant Whisperers' which won the Academy Awards 2023 in the Best Documentary Short Film category said that distribution is the key in getting a film to excel in the path to Oscars. "Films that are distributed in the US have a headstart in the race for Academy awards. You need knowledge of the system, a strategy and right partners. The Committee that chooses films for Oscars in India must optimize the chances of getting the film shortlisted ", she added. Guneet Monga Kapoor also emphasized the role of film festivals in highlighting the films on the global stage. For increasing the chances of a film at Oscars, Guneet Monga Kapoor reiterated that the film should be screened at international festivals and win awards there.

Guneet Monga Kapoor has also produced close to 30 feature films including *The Lunchbox*, *Masaan* and *Gangs of Wasseypur*, all of which received critical acclaim at prestigious international festivals such as Cannes, TIFF and Sundance. Sharing her Oscar winning formula, the ace producer said that she starts with an assumption that every film she makes will win Oscars.



Resul Pookutty, acclaimed Sound designer and production mixer who brought home Oscar glory for his work in *Slumdog Millionaire* differed with Guneet Monga Kapoor that only international collaborations will bring Academy awards to a country. Resul Pookutty opined that when India is sending a film to the Academy Awards, the film must necessarily represent the country and its diversity. Quoting legendary film maker Ritwik Ghatak, he continued, "The most nationalistic we become, the most universal we become. The most nationalistic idea can even become a universal thought".

Resul Pookutty also suggested that the Government could set up a fund for supporting Indian films on their Oscar journey so that they can run successful campaigns with the help of public relation agencies. He also added that there must be a healthy and competitive streamlining of films in the process of selecting films for Oscars. As a piece of advice to young film makers, Resul Pookutty and Guneet Monga Kapoor said that one should not be fixated only about Oscars as it is not the be all and end of film making excellence.

Glimpses from 'In Conversation' with Guneet Monga Kapoor, Carter Pilcher, and Resul Pookutty as they share the intricacies of the film making process 🎬
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Carter Pilcher, Chief Executive of ShortsTV and voting member of both the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) and British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) who was also part of the session said that it is great stories that win us awards and India has got many rich stories to tell. Carter Pilcher also admitted that the competition has become intense even in the short films category of the awards. Carter also elaborated on the process and timeline followed by the AMPAS in deciding Oscar awards.

Sonal Kalra, the Chief Managing Editor for Entertainment & Lifestyle at Hindustan Times and the recipient of Ramnath Goenka Award for cinema journalism moderated the session.

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