

BOLLYWOOD HEART THROB GOES GAY

My Brother Nikhil is the first mainstream Indian film to deal with HIV/AIDS and gay men. Bollywood heart throb, Sanjay Suri talks to us about his performance in the movie.

My Brother Nikhil touches on the very real issue of HIV/AIDS in India.

Me and my friend Onir (Director) were trying to work together on films for a long time since 2000. But somehow nothing was working out due to funding problems. All our subjects were not typically Bollywood song and dance kind of films, and that was a road block. After a lot of frustration and being tossed around from one studio to the other, we decided to do something which we could produce ourselves.

Onir had this idea about the film and he wrote the script in ten days. When he gave me the script to read, I was moved and touched on a human level first and the then also as an actor.

What's your understanding of playing gay roles in Indian cinema?

My brother Nikhil is the first main stream film in Indian


cinema where the protagonist is gay. One of the reasons of not getting funding was that the producers were not comfortable with the gay theme. They would say that change it to a heterosexual character and we will fund the film. And that for us was just not acceptable. A lot of people advised me against it and said that I was committing commercial suicide. After the film was released, it was very well appreciated with the audience and also highly critically acclaimed.

You bring a wonderful emotional depth to the role?

The role was very well written so that really helped. I did a lot reading on the net and met up people with HIV/AIDS. I got a lot of information and what ever could be incorporated with the film and character, we tried to do that. Our main issue was that it should not be

a caricature or laughing stock as mostly films portray gays like that.

But the relationship between Nikhil's and Nigel is so tame?

A lot of people told us that there should have been more physicality between the two. But for us it would have lost its purpose as the media here would have just talked about their physical proximity, the kisses and so on and not really been sensitive about the relationship and message we were trying to put across. Also we did not want that to be the selling point due to any controversy arising. At the end of the day one would not like to just term it as a gay film, it has lots more to offer that just that. 

My Brother Nikhil screens ACMI cinemas, Sunday March 5, 6.15pm Details: www.melbournequeerfilm.com.au



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