

Bol: Talk about a revolution...

HUMAIMA MALIK ON HER FILM

by ASJAD NAZIR

THE film that caught everyone's attention last year was Pakistani super hit Bol.

The movie was praised for being a captivating drama, and sparked debates about the powerful subject matters discussed in the storyline.

In addition, the powerful performance by lead star Humaima Malik was admired across the board. The talented model-turned-actress admits she

was pretty sure *Bol* would bring about a revolution in Pakistani cinema and society when she was reading the script.

"I was

tensions. She respects the norms which have been given by her parents, yet is compelled by her intuitive logic and sense for justice to rebel."

Humaima reckons *Bol* did well all over the world because it highlighted serious issues and enabled audiences to reflect on their own actions. Finding the middle ground between entertainment, drama and debate enabled *Bol* to become one of the biggest-grossing Pakistani movies of all time.

"It was a challenging role and a film that challenged audiences. *Bol* made people aware of the sensitive issues that surround huge ongoing problems in our country in relation to religion, child raising, women's rights and poverty. The biggest challenge, I believe, was that I was given the lead role and the story revolved around me so I had to grip the movie with my acting and I did it."

The success of *Bol* has sparked debates about issues like women's rights across Pakistan. While some have admitted the need for drastic change in the country, other more conservative elements attempted to ban the movie altogether. A cinema in Lahore was set alight and Humaima herself got caught up in the cross-fire of the heated debates.

"I was even told by my friends to leave the country during the release of *Bol* because they believed extremists wouldn't leave me alone. But I stayed and never went anywhere because I knew everything in the movie was right and I believed in my hard work," she says.

Apart from the social lessons, *Bol* also taught the former model that she could lose her glamorous image and still be in a successful film. Even though she went into serious depression after the shoot was over, because she absorbed so much of her character's pain, *Bol* has inspired Humaima to look for more challenging roles like this one.

Not surprisingly, critics, audiences and even human rights workers have praised Humaima's performance. She was particularly pleased with the response *Bol* received in India.

"Although the most memorable compliment was being named Woman of the Nation, I will never forget one of the biggest critics in India calling me the Shabana Azmi of Pakistan."

Talking of India, Humaima would welcome the opportunity to work in a Bollywood film. But instead of taking up the first offers that

have come her way, she is being selective and looking for the right projects. She only wants to be a part of serious cinema and says she definitely doesn't want to court the kind of controversy other Pakistani actresses have done in India.

"I am being careful about the assignments I take up. I want to respect all boundaries, have to respect my parents as well and my country, so I won't do anything unjust. I want to make people cry with my acting rather than showing my skin doing an item number."

The ambitious actress also has one eye on the west and says working in Hollywood would be a dream come true. "I have always admired the American film industry for the talent it has produced and the type of movies, from romantic to edgy and sci-fi."

But getting international attention and acting offers from around the world isn't going to result in Humaima abandoning Pakistani cinema. She is happy that *Bol* caused a revolution of sorts and smashed a number of box-office records. Like many young actors in the country, she is very positive about the future of films in Pakistan.

"*Bol* has made producers realise that a Pakistani movie can break records, which has inspired many



of them to start making more movies with heavy budgets and amazing ideas. Shoaib saab has taken the first step with *Bol*, hopefully others will now follow him and help our industry grow."

Humaima is doing her part to help Pakistani cinema by becoming an ambassador of sorts for the industry. That is why she readily agreed to be a part of the London Asian Film Festival despite having a very busy schedule.

"I'm really looking forward to being a part of the festival. I've always loved representing Pakistan around the world and have seen positive reaction to *Bol* and my character from different countries. I am now looking forward to getting feedback from England and meeting audiences there."

The actress has a connection to England because her sister is studying business Administration at a university in Manchester. She has regularly visited England and Scotland in the past, but this will be her first official visit. She says being a part of the London Asian Film Festival will help to feed her immense appetite for quality cinema.

"I love movies because you get all types of people from all walks of life who enjoy watching movies. This is a medium that brings people together. Watching movies can make you reflect on the character, make you look at your own personal circumstances and make you think. It takes a team of individuals to come together and create a film, and it is when the finished production has been seen that people can sit back and really appreciate the effort taken to make such a movie."

Humaima wants people to support the festival because it will help meaningful cinema grow, which will subsequently bring about social change. "We need more movies like *Bol*. It is a way for a nation to open its eyes and look at problems we face, to speak our heart and soul, to be bold. I think cinema is the only way from which we can bring revolution in this nation now."

She is definitely all about girl power and is happy that women are becoming a force to be reckoned with. Humaima finishes off by telling us what her idea of happiness is. "My idea of happiness doesn't lay in success, money or youth. Happiness for me is seeing my parents and my siblings happy, healthy and content with life. I think none of your relationships in life are stronger than your blood relations. It's only my family who means everything to me. The more I do for them, the more I am happy about life."

Bol will be screened at the 14th London Asian Film Festival at BFI Southbank next Sunday (18) and at Harrow Arts Centre on March 19. Visit www.tonguesonfire.com for more about this and other events at the festival, which runs until March 24.

Priya Mulji



Follow Priya Mulji on www.twitter.com/priyamulji or log onto <http://priyamulji.wordpress.com>

Variety is the spice of life

WHEN it comes to dating, I have recently learned that it's quantity over quality when first starting out.

Think of it as a weeding-out process. First, you need to filter the dates before even agreeing to meet them. If you're looking for someone who doesn't live with mummy and daddy, chances are that if you do go on a date with someone who does, the evening won't go well.

After the screening process, you may find three perfect guys. Once you have picked and chosen the guys you want to go on a date with, you could potentially have three first dates in two weeks. After going on those dates there may be someone you like, someone you don't and someone who is plain boring. In this case the solution is obvious, ditch the two you don't like and try to pursue a relationship with the nice guy. However, if you go on three dates in two weeks and you like all of them, what do you do?

Ladies, I will let you into a secret. For those of you who are 'actively dating'; that is, who have tried online dating websites, speed dating events or introductions, chances are that men are dating more than one person. So why shouldn't we do it too? Not all seeds sown will blossom into flowers and the same goes for relationships, so there is no point in getting disheartened if the first date doesn't turn into a second. Furthermore, out of the three guys you go on a date with not everyone will turn into a third or fourth date. Until you decide that you want to take things onto the next level or start to develop feelings for one person in particular, there is no harm in dating more than person. It's better than making a decision right at the beginning based on a first date and then things not going to plan.

I will share a personal example with you. I once dated a guy for a couple of months. We had met online and for me he was the only one on the scene at the time. I had found out about a month into getting to know him that he had messaged another girl on the same website a few weeks after we had our first date (this girl is a friend who knew about me and him) so that backs up my example of men keeping their options open.

I'm not saying act like a hussy and sleep around, but just be wary that not everyone will be dating just one person. And neither should you. We're in 2012 and you should pick the best person to fall in love with and share a happy life with them. People can say you are being choosy or fussy, let them. At the end of the day, your happiness should be the most important thing in the world to you.



sure it is going to be another masterpiece from (director) Shoaib Mansoor, who has been a pioneer in the Pakistan film industry. I felt the suppressed women of our society would definitely applaud the courageous film, which exposes the issues plaguing them and society. I knew it would raise questions, challenge age-old customs and mirror reality most convincingly. I have always been sure about the outcome of my work because I believe if we put in the best of our efforts, why would the outcome be negative? It definitely has to be positive," explains Humaima.

The Pakistani star will be in London this month to attend a screening of *Bol* at the London Asian Film Festival and to participate in what is sure to be a fascinating post-film discussion. Humaima was attracted to the strong, bold character and powerful storyline when *Bol* was offered to her. The other things she was excited about were working with renowned director Shoaib Mansoor and the opportunity to be a part of a dramatically different story.

"*Bol* is a courageous film that challenges traditional customs and mirrors reality convincingly. I play a daughter who is affected the most by family