

## 'Lakshmi' To Open 16th Annual London Asian Film Festival

Thursday 8 May, 2014

LONDON, Thursday 08 May: 'Lakshmi', a hard-hitting drama about child trafficking in India, directed by Nagesh Kukunoor, will open the 2014 edition of the London Asian Film Festival (LAFF).

The film is based on the real-life story of an impoverished 14-year-old girl kidnapped from her village in Andhra Pradesh and forced into prostitution and who eventually testified in court against her traffickers.

'Lakshmi' will have its European premier at LAFF, Europe's oldest and most respected showcase for independent South Asian cinema.

Acclaimed writer and director Kukunoor will travel to London for the occasion and take part in an exclusive tete-a-tete following the screening on 1 June at the capital's historic Tricycle Theatre.

'Lakshmi' stars newcomer Monali Thakur in the central role, as well as Indian TV stalwart Ram Kapoor and veteran Bollywood star Satish Kaushik who was also part of the film's production team.

The film had its world premier in January at the prestigious Palm Springs International Film Festival 2014 where it won the Audience Award for 'Best Narrative Feature'.

Director Kukunoor has been praised by critics and audiences alike for his unflinching portrayal of the horrors of child trafficking and sexual slavery in India where more than 50,000 abductions and 'disappearances' are recorded every year, with an overwhelming majority of those cases remaining unsolved.

Kukunoor, the US-qualified Chemical Engineer-turned-filmmaker, is renowned for his intense and deeply authentic directing style and 'Lakshmi' is the ultimate example of that ethos: Kukunoor was reportedly accosted following a special screening in March in the Kamathipura 'Red Light' District of Mumbai with enraged sex-workers demanding that the producers hand over the man who plays the film's brutal and malevolent pimp, not realizing that the role was essayed by the director himself.

'Lakshmi' kicks off a 12-day celebration of independent South Asian arts and cinema across London as LAFF returns for a record 16th year.

Among the other highlights of this year's Festival are an exclusive appearance by filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj, Pam Chopra, the wife of the late, great Yash Chopra, Indian-American comedian Nadia P Mansoor as well as films from Pakistan, India and the UK.

For listings and venue information, visit [www.tonguesonfire.com](http://www.tonguesonfire.com)

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Notes to Editors

The London Asian Film Festival is presented by Tongues on Fire, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing a platform for independent art and cinema from South Asia. The festival was founded by Dr Pushpinder Chowdhry, a practising psychotherapist.

LAFF has previously hosted such luminaries of South Asian cinema as Shyam Benegal, Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta, Shabana Azmi and Javed Akhtar.

For full listings and venue information, visit [www.tonguesonfire.com](http://www.tonguesonfire.com).

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