2

'I feel humble that I have won the award for 'The Most Popular Actor'. I have waited for this award since a long time. However, I recently saw Ghajini and thought that Aamir deserves this' – Akshay



Akki's award goes to AAMIR

Akshay refused to accept a popular award, suggested it be given to Aamir

A fter all the drama and exchange of annoyance that took place on stage of an award ceremony recently, it was Akshay Kumar, who saved the show with his kindheartedness. The actor took many by surprise when he refused to accept 'The Most Popular Actor' award saying that not him, but Aamir Khan deserved the award for his work in Ghajini.

Our sources say, "Akshay Kumar saw Ghajini in New York when he was there for the premiere of Chandni Chowk to China and was floored by Aamir's performance and effort. On his return to India from London, Akshay saw Singh Is Kinng in the flight and thought that Aamir's effort was far more commendable.

Receiving the award Akshay said, "I feel humble that I have won the award for 'The Most Popular Actor'. I have waited for this award since a long time. However, I recently saw Ghajini and thought that Aamir deserves this award more. I know that Aamir does not accept awards, but I want him to accept this as a symbol of love that people have for him. I want him to enjoy the award as much as I would have done."

When contacted Akshay Kumar said, "I did something that I genuinely felt. I really do not wish to talk about it."

ENTERTAINMENT

Shilpa's Kerala connection

Revealed may not be her hometown, but Shilpa Shetty just loves the place. The damsel has just returned to good ol' Mumbai after a refreshing vacation, and as soon as she empties her travel bag, it's going to be time to pack all over again. Shilpa is headed to Kerala — not for another vacation — but for her Indo-Chinese venture, Desire. Of course reports mentioned that Shilpa would be shaving off her hair et al for this motion picture. Talk about bald...oops bold babes, we mean! However, the Shetty girl got all emotional when we got chatting with her about Kerala. "I love that place. I shot my Yoga DVD there. The locales are so picturesque and the Ayurvedic massages are therapeutic." Now, after calling London her second home, let's hope she doesn't go hammer and tongs calling Kerala her third!



Chala Imran Saleem banne

Well, we don't know about you, but author Saleem Sinai of Midnight's Children? Well, we don't know about you, but author Salman Rushdie is convinced that Imran can play Saleem successfully in a Deepa Mehta adaptation of the novel. Of course, the young actor doesn't have the special nose that Saleem the casting for the film. He will also look into who plays Saleem, and quite approves of Imran. He is yet to meet Imran though, to take a final call."

Apparently, Rushdie feels Imran is one of Bollywood's most glamourous superstars. To this, Deepa said, "I personally feel that if an actor is good and suited to the role he plays,

FILMS OF THE WEEK

NIKHAT KAZMI

Changeling (drama) ★ ★ 1/2 Cast: Angelina Jolie, John Malkovich, Michael Kelly Direction: Clint Eastwood



1 928. A single mother (Angelina Jolie) in Los Angeles returns after a hard day's work to find her son missing. Like any law abiding citizen, she takes the recourse of law and goes to the LAPD with her problem. And like any tax paying citizen, she believes the police department will find her son — the sole lifeline in her vapid life — someday, even though its five months now since he disappeared. Culpable Jolie. Confused Jolie. She somehow got it all wrong. For how can the cops solve her problem, when they were the problem themselves.

Familiar story? Well, Bollywood may have milked the corrupt cop story dry by now, but for Clint Eastwood, it's a tale that needs to be told with all the characteristic anger, pathos and power that is part and parcel of his oeuvre. And like Million Dollar Baby, this time too, he finds an unsual female protagonist: a frail, vulnerable, genteel lady who takes on the might of the powerful police department, when other well-meaning townsmen have failed. these include, John Malkovich, the preacher, who has been campaigning against their cruel, brute force in his radio shows.

The problem begins when the cops claim to have solved the mystery and deposit another little boy in Jolie's care, even though she insists he's not her son. When her protests get too loud, they put her in a mental institution for her share of the One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest crunch. Running parallel is another track of a psychopath who seems to have a fondness for axing kids in a chicken coop. Jolie's son may have been a victim too, but Jolie's fight isn't just that of a mourning mother. For her, it's a larger cause, where justice must prevail for all her newfound friends: the women who have been incarcerated in mental homes due to police brutality.

Jolie may have lost out on the Golden Globe for her wide and wet-eyed portrayal of the crusading mother, but the Oscar buzz still remains. The film has been directed as a detailed period piece about an age when no one thought of photographic evidence or DNA testing. Yet, despite its gritty overtones, this one falls short of Eastwood's other highs, *Unforgiven* and *Million Dollar Baby*.

Merry Christmas (drama) ★★★1/2 Cast: Diane Kruger, Benno Furmann Direction: Christian Carion

The film may be set in the battlefield of World Warl, but it's message rings loud and clear, even today. For here, in the midst of death, destruction, war and violence, the armies of the feuding nations — the Scott, the French, the Germans — learn the most important lesson of history. One that declares, in unambiguous terms, that war is meaningless. Because humanity is one; there are no enemies in this overarching brotherhood of man. Supplant war with terror, and this multi-lingual film which has won applause at sundry international film

each other a short while ago are now sharing photographs of their loved ones and inviting each other for wine and song, once the war is over. Of course, nobody wants to ask the key question: how many of us will survive this needless violence? Christmas comes and goes. Ironically, the war doesn't. The hapless commanders of the respective armies are made to pay the price for their rationality in this season of hate, where young children sing songs of annihilation and priests send out the believers to kill the 'vile OTHER', in the name of God. Do not miss this strong and stirring antiwar statement.

Chandni Chowk to China (comedy) ★1/2 Cast: Akshay Kumar, Deepika Padukone, Mithun Chakraborty Direction: Nikhil Advani

ake a break Akshay! You've spoilt us by making us laugh so many times

with some of the snazziest comic scenes of contemporary cinema, performed with such elan. Needless to say, it shocks us to sit through your latest venture with a straight face that doesn't pucker up even once, despite your desparate tomfoolery on screen. Real potato heads we must be, for wondering why nothing tickles our funny bone when you get kick assed in Chandni Chowk and reach the sky; when you get bludgeoned in China, without losing your goofy grin; when you crack jokes about chaddis, walnuts and what not, and we can't see what's funny. Sorry buddy! Either we're losing it or you need to reinvent yourself as the Hera Pheri scamster. The hokey-jokey stuff is losing its tang, as is the yokel act: almost a bore. So much so, Happy Singh in Singh is King seems almost like a classic compared to seedha-saadha Siddhu.

The trouble with Chandni Chowk to China (CC2C) is its toothless story that barely traces the transition of a low brow vegetable chopper from parathe wale galli to the Great Wall of China, where he is mistaken as a lost messiah, Liu Sheng. Siddhu's transcontinental journey with a potato and a conman (Ranvir Shorey) for company remains rootless and purposeless, despite the fact that the pulverised locals believe he will deliver them from the evil Hojo (Gordon Liu) and his henchmen who include the ornamental Miao Miao (Deepika Padukone). Siddhu's blabberings and buffoonery take a perfunc-tory back seat when Hojo kills off his Dada (Mithun) who keeps egging him on to fight, despite being a ghost. Time for our joker to learn the moves from his kung fu trainer (Roger Yuan), summarily pulled out from the Great Wall itself.

How did he reach there? Now that's another convoluted story about a daddy-gone-missing, twin Deepikas going their separate ways and destiny bringing them all together against their common enemy: hat thrower, Hojo.

The film is low on both IQ and EQ. On the one hand, the story rambles incoherently. On the other, there is no emotional connect with any of the characters, unlike Akshay's earlier comic acts where he always managed to strike a chord with the audience. You might end up applauding some of the action cuts, where our one-man-army showcases his expertise with chopsucky, but this ain't no crouching tiger. Shaolin chamber, fist of furv footwork. While Akshay relentlessly plays over the top, Deepika looks lost and forlorn for most of the film. Ranvir Shorey, was that you? Tch Tch! The only decent act comes from that old warhorse, Mithunda who tries to bring some normalcy in the proceedings.

Somewhere in the *tamasha*, Akshay confesses he doesn't care if he was Liu Sheng or a *macchar* (mosquito) in his last birth. Frankly, my dear, even we wouldn't give a damn! Maybe Drona would.

has that ema curr role T "My

has in the book, but Rushdie is of the opinion that Imran would be the best person for a cinematic version of the book. Reportedly, Imran currently leads the shortlist of actors for the

Telling us more about the film, Deepa said, "My friend Rushdie will take an active part in then his popularity will only add to the film's equity."

Interestingly, Imran's uncle Aamir Khan's 1947 Earth, which was directed by Deepa is considered one of his best films. Now Imran, we hear, is open to the idea of signing on for Midnight's Children. festivals, becomes almost mandatory viewing.

It's Christmas eve. The crusading armies decide to issue a temporary cease fire and crawl out of their trenches after they hear a famous German tenor set aside bullets and bloodshed and split the air with his soulful rendition of 'Silent Night.' Soon, the German tenor and his mate (Diane Kruger), a guest on the front lines, are joined by the Scott and the French and the enmities are set aside for a combined mass, followed by football, champagne and loads of camaraderie. Soldiers who were brutally killing



