



AROUND THE WORLD CINEMA

● Neha Raheja Thakker is part of a collaborative feature film, *The Owner*, shot by 25 filmmakers



(Top) Nawazuddin in *The Owner*. It'll be screened at Kitab Mahal, Mumbai, on May 25 and Alliance Française, Bengaluru, on May 26.

Shot by filmmakers across five continents, *The Owner*, traces the journey of a backpack as it travels across the world. In the Mumbai director's four-minute segment, *The Bullock Cart*, the bag ends up on a cart in Mumbai. Excerpts from the interview:

HOW DID THE IDEA FOR YOUR STORY ORIGINATE? In Bandra and Khar (in Mumbai), bullock-carts are used to ferry construction material as they are cheap. From that emerged the idea of a colloquial character who is negotiating the modern city in his own way, by absorbing Bollywood influences and reaching out to the city's inhabitants like they were part of his village.

KAHAANI ACTOR NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUE PLAYS THE CENTRAL CHARACTER IN YOUR FILM. When he's in the frame, he's riveting to watch. He improvised and gave me a lot to work with. I saw an article where someone said that he was not good-looking... but I disagree, I think he is! **DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE STORY FROM THE OWNER?** There are

stories about two Irish boys trying to fix their parent's marriage, an obsessive postal worker granny, etc. My favourite one is about a busy magazine editor who makes a mistake.

YOUR SHORT FILM ERASED WON A FEW AWARDS. DO YOU WANT TO GET INTO FEATURE FILM-MAKING NOW? Yes, I'm working on a feature film script; this project has served as a phenomenal transition. Over two years, we made changes and gave feedback about each other's work, always keeping in mind the larger narrative of the feature film. —DIVYA UNNY

TOP LEFT: TUSHAR MANE

The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel

Judi Dench, Bill Nighy, Maggie Smith, Dev Patel | ★★★☆

REVIEWED BY ALYNDIA WHEAT

DRAMA

A passel of British seniors clutch their pearls and their wallets when they check into a cut-rate Indian retirement hotel that turns out to be a near ruin. Buffoonish manager Sonny (Patel) insists it will be a palace soon, but in the meantime its occupants settle for learning clichéd lessons as white people in a brown country. Evelyn (Dench) is the stifled widow, Douglas (Nighy) the henpecked husband, Muriel (Smith) the racist and Graham (Tom Wilkinson)



The film hits theatres on May 18.

the one with the secret. *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel's* cast is stuffed with world-class actors who elevate the thin material, but just

barely. Still, the footage is lush, and India gets fair treatment. With a richer script, this exotic *Hotel* really might've been the best.