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HiFi in Bollywood reflects my journey in film industry

AUTHOR RISHI VOHRA SPILLS THE BEANS ON HIS LATEST BOOK HIFI IN BOLLYWOOD, SAYS IT OFFERS AN INSIDE ACCOUNT OF HINDI FILM INDUSTRY

Anannya Chatterjee

After making a mark and special mention in the Hollywood Book Festival for his first book *Once Upon the Tracks of Mumbai*, Rishi Vohra comes up with his second book *HiFi in Bollywood* which is all about everyone's favourite topic, Bollywood. Rishi's book is an interesting account of a young boy's passion for Hindi movies. The book takes the reader from the streets of Berkeley to the film studios of Mumbai; from red-light areas to police stations and from reality to dreams and back to reality again. In a conversation with Rishi...

In your last book where reality collides with fantasy and readers found a glimpse of their own self, will *Hi Fi in Bollywood* do the same? How is it different from the previous book?

HiFi in Bollywood reflects my own journey in the film industry. I

have worked in the film industry for close to seven years. During this time, I worked as an assistant director for Sohaail Khan and Shimit Amin, while independently directing live shows and for the small screen on the side. All the happenings in the book related to the film industry are entirely fictional, but the father-son friction and other personal struggles of the protagonist are similar to my own. The main difference between my two books is that *Once Upon the Tracks of Mumbai* was alternative fiction while *HiFi in Bollywood* is more mainstream.

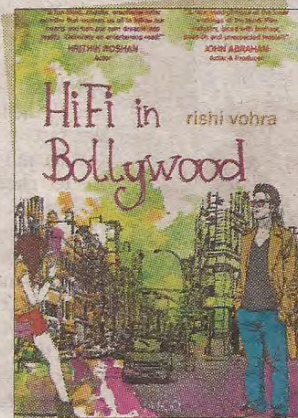
Tell us about *HiFi in Bollywood*.

Hrithik Roshan and John Abraham have summarised the book well in their endorsements on the book cover. Hrithik says, "A fun-filled, chaotic, emotional roller-coaster that inspires us all to follow our hearts and turn our own dreams into reality." John says, "A rare vivid glimpse of the Hindi film industry laced with humour, passion and unexpected twists!" I couldn't have put it in better words!

What prompted you to write this book?

A twitter post by Salman Khan in which he suggested and advocated *HiFi* as a more appropriate name than *Bollywood* caught my attention. *HiFi* stands for Hindi film industry. At the time, I had placed my first book for publication and was contemplating writing a book based on my experiences while in the film industry. The term *HiFi* stuck in my mind and I decided to tie it in with the story. Before publication, I met Salman Khan and ran it by him. He liked the idea. By the way,

Salman makes a special appearance in the book (with his permission)!



Have you drawn your inspiration from any of the B-Town personality in particular? If yes, who and why?

I have worked and interacted with many B-Town celebrities, so I guess some facet of these personalities helped me create the characters in the book. So I can't pinpoint any particular celebrity. But some of the on-the-set situations in the book are real.

How difficult it was to blend humour, passion and unexpected twists all into one keeping *Bollywood* as the theme?

Very difficult! *Bollywood* is synonymous with glamour and gossip and almost all the books set in the film world highlight these two aspects of it. But all the hard work, crisis management situations and uncertainties are rarely mentioned. In *HiFi in Bollywood*, I have done just the opposite. Though I have touched upon the starry aspect, I have also explored the on-the-set workings, frustration and concentration that go into getting that one good shot. To keep it an entertaining, I have also blended it with humour, drama and love triangles.

What do you opine about the current Hindi film industry?

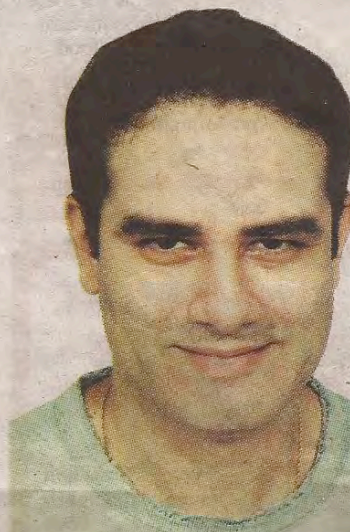
It's more fast-paced and it's all business. Earlier, there were silver and golden jubilees, so the success of a film hovered around the people associated with it for much longer. Now, it's just a few weeks and then that's the end of the film. Also, in the past there was just one film industry. Now, every star runs his or her own industry. Apart from that, I miss film mahurats. But then on the flipside, I favour the digital age that the film industry has embraced.

Any criticism you received so far?

My first book did receive a little criticism here and there, but then it was written from the point of view of a mentally unstable person so the story kept changing pace in keeping with his mindset. It received a special mention in the fiction category at the Hollywood Book Festival, a festival meant to spotlight books worthy of further consideration by the entertainment industry. So I feel I did something right. With regards to *HiFi in Bollywood*, readers have been writing in telling me that they loved it and found it very different from all other books set in *Bollywood*.

What next for you?

My next book is a fiction book set in Mumbai that explores the complex layers of humanity and the city that engenders them. It's a fast-paced and entertaining read. Irrfan Khan had expressed an interest in the film rights of *Once Upon the Tracks of Mumbai* but that didn't go through. I have been getting some enquiries here and there, but nothing concrete yet. I'm very keen to see it made as a film. That's the feedback I've been getting from readers!



Rishi Vohra