

An insider's view of B-Town

Rishi Vohra reveals that his latest book is inspired by his journey in the Hindi film industry

Boski Gupta

Before pursuing a Green MBA, Rishi Vohra assisted many well-known directors in film industry. But the world of entertainment pulled him back after he returned to Mumbai. In his second novel *HiFi in Bollywood*, Vohra gives an insider's view of this glamorous and glitzy industry. Excerpts from an interview...

You did a Green MBA and a Masters Diploma in Environmental Law. What induced you to get back to entertainment?

When I moved back to Mumbai, no one in either the corporate or NGO sectors was receptive to my post-graduate qualifications. The success of my debut novel, *Once Upon the Tracks of Mumbai*, took me on a different journey altogether. And I periodically write for *delWine*, India's premier online wine newsletter.

When did you first realise that you wanted to be a writer?

I was working in the film industry aspiring to be a filmmaker, while independently directing live events, music videos, promos and a television show. I took a

break to pursue an MBA in the US. It was during that time I sat down to write a screenplay but at the spur of the moment, I decided to write a novel instead. The process made me realise that I enjoyed this medium of storytelling much more. When Indian publishing houses expressed their interest to publish my debut novel, I felt further encouraged to explore my journey as a writer/author.

How did the idea of *HiFi in Bollywood* come about?

HiFi in Bollywood is somewhat based on my own journey in the film industry. I worked as an assistant director to Sohail Khan, and then Shimit Amin. And I thought it would be interesting to write about a different take on the film industry that highlights all the hard work, frustration, and madness that happens behind the scenes. Almost all the books set in the film industry only spotlight the glamour that is associated with 'Bollywood.'

Did you get inspired by real events?/people?

Absolutely. All my books, including the forthcoming ones, are inspired from either real events or real people. But it's only when I'm able to

visualize the story as an entertaining or a powerful one, do I think of penning it down.

What's your writing routine? Do you write everyday? Or it just comes to you?

When I start a book, I make it a point to write every day. I aim to finish off a chapter but if not, I try to write for at least four hours. After the completion of the book, I start working out my next story. When I feel the urge to pen it down, I get going again. I write very sporadically.

Which are your favourite authors and books?

I like the books of S Hassan Zaidi as his books unravel the mysteries of the underbelly of Mumbai. And I loved *Sacred Games* by Vikram Chandra. I'm always drawn towards books set in Mumbai.

What are you reading right now?

Two books — *Stranger to History* by Aatish Taseer and *Radhika's Story: Surviving Human Trafficking* by Sharon Hendry.

Would you like this book to be made into a movie? If yes, who would you like to cast?

Of course! I would definitely like to see this story reach a wider audience and film is the only medium that can do that. I feel that Ranbir Kapoor and Parineeti Chopra would fit well into the film, along with Preity Zinta, Boman Irani, Vinay Pathak, Gautham K Sharma (the lead actor of *Bhindi Baazaar, Inc.*), and others.

What's in store for your readers now?

A book set in Mumbai that explores the complex levels of humanity. This book is based on true stories and I'm very excited about it.

What advice would you like to give to aspiring writers?

Your story should mean something to you if you want it to mean something to your readers!

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