

Bollywood Awards Macau in China

Looking back, it was a great experience – at the time though, I wondered why I pitched to go! It was 5 days of very little sleep, lots of running around, and exhaustion mixed together with the glitz, glamour and glitterati of the world's largest film industry – Bollywood.

As Macau got a taste of Bollywood fever, a small team from the BBC headed out to report on the 10th anniversary of the International Indian film academy awards. Set in the Venetian Resort the 3 day extravaganza hosted a special performance by Circ du Soleil, a charity celeb fashion show, film launches, a global business forum and numerous other fringe events, culminating in a seven hour long awards ceremony.

I was there as the Multi Media producer for BBC News, working together with a team from the Asian Network who were out there for their Love Bollywood programme, and their Events reporter Shabnam Mahmood.

Having had a taste of the IIFA's two years ago when they visited Yorkshire, I had an idea of what I was letting myself in for, but I have to say that this exceeded my expectations.

Arriving on Monday afternoon, and having never been to the Venetian Resort in LA or in Macau, I was overwhelmed at its size and atmosphere. Deciding to familiarise myself with the surroundings (I mean the hotel!) I went for a walk... And kept walking, and walking and walking. It was at this point when I realised I'd be staying in what I can only describe as a shopping centre for the next week. However, it slowly dawned upon me that I wouldn't have much, if any time to spend my HK dollars!

Our room was our office. On one desk I had set up a mini edit station, and on the other Shabnam set up her mini radio edit suite. Work started from Tuesday – and it was manic. Gathering during the day, and editing during the night. We'd be there during arrivals of stars, press conferences, fringe events, green carpets, sit down chats, film launches – you name it and we were there. Both of us were up until 4.30-5am editing and filing back for various outlets, making sure that radio, tv and online were happy – and then with as little as 3 hours sleep we were up again ready to go! An emergency stash of chocolate and Pringles kept us going!

Thousands of fans packed into the Venetian over the 3 days to catch a glimpse of their idols on the Green carpets. You may ask why they are green and not red? Well, it is all about the message of being environmentally friendly. The aim of IIFA is to not only take the industry to the rest of the world, but to also take the message of 'Global Cool' to its millions of fans worldwide. Each year the three day extravaganza takes place outside India in various destinations. The awards began in 2000 when the first ceremony was held in London at The Millennium Dome. They've since been held in places like Sun City, Amsterdam and Dubai. The aim is to take the Indian film industry to the rest of the world. In doing so it also hopes to increase tourism and the local economy for the host country.

Almost eight thousand people packed into the Cotai Arena on Saturday night for the main awards show. Guests at the event included Peter Andre who also performed at the IIFA Fashion show. The singer wore a traditional Indian style 'kurta' and 'pyjama', complete with ethnic style shoes. He even hinted to us that 'he'd like to sing or act in a Bollywood film'.

As the stars headed down the final green carpet of the weekend, Love Bollywood were broadcasting a live show with celebrity guests, and we were gathering material for our packages. The atmosphere was electric – with fans who had flown in from across the world some with tickets to the event and some without eager to get a peak at the who's who of the Indian film industry. As the awards show started, I made my way to our room to edit, and Shabnam was poised in the winner's enclosure to get the clips she needed for bulletins. This had to be longest night of all. After being up for about 32 hours we decided to grab a power nap for an hour before editing and filing the final pieces. At that point we were awash with feelings of exhaustion, hunger and immense emotion – oh yeah and relief!

Packing up the kit, and our suitcases, the week felt like a blur. Did it really happen? Did we really live on chocolate, crisps and room service pizza? Did we really not sleep for all that time? Looking back at the footage – yes it did happen, and looking at the scales... yes we did live on junk food, but I have to admit it was an amazing experience, and given the chance, I'd even do it again! I heard a rumour that Italy may be the location next year? At least the pizza will be better!