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CHARLES B. WANG CENTER | FILMS

SAVE THE DATE



LONG ISLAND SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2022 | 12:00-6:00 PM | CHARLES B. WANG CENTER
VIP RECEPTION: 6:00-8:00 PM

19
NOVEMBER
2022

For film schedule and ticket information, visit www.lisaff.com
General Admission: \$20 per block of programming
Student: \$15 per block of programming
\$50 for an all-day pass
\$40 for an all-day pass
New: All-day pass includes 3 blocks of films (1.5 hours each)

A NEW FILM FESTIVAL
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The LI Comic Book Expo returns this weekend
newsday.com/lifestyle



ON THE COVER
 Harbinder Singh has a short featured in the Long Island South Asian Film Festival. He's also volunteering at the fest.

NEWSDAY / JOHN PARASKEVAS

A film fest first

Stony Brook's Wang Center hosts South Asian celebration

BY NATALIA DE CUBA ROMERO

Special to Newsday

Being the only kid wearing a turban at Ward Melville High School back in the early '80s might seem more character-building than career-building, but for Harbinder Singh, the Sikh turban has been a pathway to a career in television and film.

This weekend, you can see just how far Singh — and the South Asian community — has come. Singh's short film, "Manpreet," his first screenplay, will have its

world premiere at the first Long Island South Asian Film Festival on Saturday from noon to 8 p.m. at Stony Brook University's Charles B. Wang Center.

Singh, whose family moved to the United States from India in the '70s, wasn't a movie buff — his day job is in IT at a hospital — but growing up in a community with few South Asians ("If you ran into one person in a week, it was a lot") made him want to build connections. He discovered he liked performing by organizing Diwali cultural programs, and at the same time noticed how Sikhs were represented on screen.

"You'll see a guy with a long beard and turban and he's always stereotyped as the gas station or bodega owner," Singh says. "That irked me." So he started doing "background work": appearing in television shows like "Law & Order," always wearing his turban. Casting agents began to request him.

In 2019, he and his wife appeared in a short Hewlett-Packard documentary about how they met. "History of Memory: At First Sight" went to the Tribeca Film Festival, where the red carpet, the big audience, the talkback, beguiled him. "It was the first time I

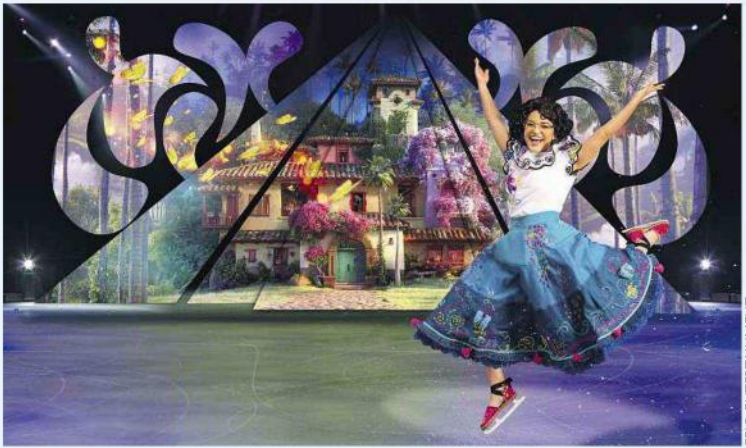
LONG ISLAND SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

WHEN | WHERE Film festival runs Saturday, noon to 6 p.m.; VIP cocktail reception is 6 to 8 p.m. 100 Circle Rd., Stony Brook, longislandsaff.com/tickets
COST \$20 per block of programming and \$50 for an all-day pass; students and seniors are \$15 per block or \$40 for an all-day pass. All-day pass includes three blocks of films (1.5 hours each) and the cocktail reception.

felt like, 'I want to do this,'" he says.

Speaking roles followed, in locally produced feature-length films like "The Scrapper" (2019), "Long Island Gus" (2022) and the upcoming "Sunita" (2023).

Singh traveled to Texas in May for the DFW South Asian Film Festival — now in its eighth year — where he met SAFF founder, Jitin Hingorani. While Hingorani already runs a New York City SAFF, Singh persuaded him to try Long Island where the community is growing fast.



FIELD ENTERTAINMENT

Disney on Ice brings "Encanto" and "Frozen" to UBS Arena this weekend.

MORE WEEKEND FUN

DISNEY ON ICE "Encanto" and "Frozen" hit the ice at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Friday, 11 a.m., 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at UBS Arena at Belmont Park. Basic tickets range from \$20 to \$128 (prices may fluctuate with demand); parking starts at \$21.73; 2400 Hempstead Tpke., Elmont, ubsarena.com, 516-460-8598.

'80s VS. '90s NIGHT The '90s Band and Decadia perform at 8 p.m. Friday at Mulcahy's Pub and Concert Hall; Tickets: \$17.45; 3232 Railroad Ave., Wantagh, muls.com, 516-783-7500.

NATURE WALK ON THE MONTAUK SEAL HAUL OUT TRAIL This is recommended for ages 10 and older. It's moderately paced through the Maritime Forest in Montauk with the Friends of the Long Ponds Greenbelt. Bring binoculars to look for harbor seals at 10:30 a.m. Saturday. Free, register at sofo.org, 631-537-9735.

SUFFOLK WINTER LANTERN FESTIVAL The Smithtown Historical Society grounds transform from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Tickets: \$24, \$14 ages 3-12; 239 E. Main St., smithtownhistorical.org, 631-265-6768.



You might see seals on Saturday morning in Montauk.

Do not expect Bollywood extravaganzas here. "Bollywood already has its place," says Hingorani. "Festivals like ours create platforms for independent films."

Hingorani lived in Wyandanch when he first arrived from Texas in 2008. He is well-known by South Asians as an entertainment reporter for Asian Variety Show.

There are 13 short films, one short documentary and one feature film. Attendees can choose by session: South Asian shorts from places like Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives; U.S. diaspora shorts; the feature film; or get a full day pass that includes a Q&A and a VIP reception

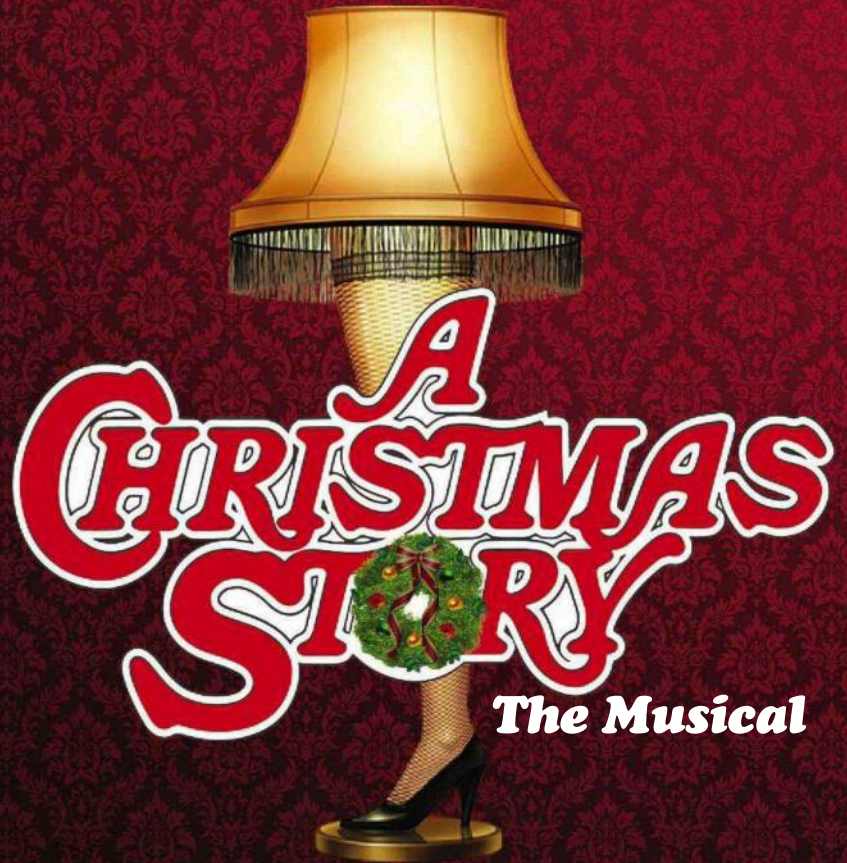
with refreshments. South Asia has many languages; all films have English subtitles to make them accessible to everyone.

As for Harbinder Singh, he hopes the festival and his film — in which he also stars and financed himself — are just the beginning. "Making the film is something not a lot of people even think about doing, so it's already a big accomplishment. I know I want to do it again," says Singh, who is helping with festival publicity and also volunteering on Saturday. "But I also want the film festival to be a big networking event for South Asians, and also for other people. Long Island is diverse and people need to know that. We are here! It's an exciting time."

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