

# reading bank

## Forget Hollywood and Bollywood

1 You are going to read about two alternative film industries. Before you do, look at the picture. Which country's films do you think the posters show?

2 Read the article. Match the people mentioned in the text (1-4) with the correct description (a-d).

- 1 Randall Harper
  - 2 Lancelot Imasuen
  - 3 Feroogh Farakzad
  - 4 Dariush Mehrjui
- a Director and poet
  - b Nollywood film director
  - c Film-afficionado
  - d Venice Film Festival winner

3 Answer the questions.

- 1 Why did the Nigerian film industry start to grow in 1992?
- 2 What is the main theme of Nigerian films?
- 3 What was Lancelot Imasuen's impression of filmmaking in the US?
- 4 What makes Iranian film-making the 'perfect antidote' to Western films?
- 5 How did Iranian films change from its early beginnings to the 1960s?
- 6 How did the Islamic revolution help Iranian filmmakers?

4 Find words or phrases in the article that match the following definitions.

- 1 (of buildings, vehicles, furniture, etc.) in a very bad condition and needing repair (paragraph 1)
- 2 a thing that develops from sth, especially a small organization that develops from a larger one (paragraph 3)
- 3 (of goods, work, etc.) made or done badly and with not enough care (paragraph 3)
- 4 (informal) a lot of noisy, exciting activity that is intended to attract people's attention (paragraph 5)

- 5 not showing respect to sb / sth that other people usually respect (paragraph 6)
- 6 very brightly coloured in an unpleasant way (paragraph 7)
- 7 describing a story, play, picture, etc. in which each character or event is a symbol representing an idea or a quality, such as truth, evil, death, etc. (paragraph 8)
- 8 to tell somebody about sth, especially sth that you have experienced (paragraph 8)

## Over to you

- 1 Which foreign country's films would you most like to see?
- 2 What about your own country's film industry? Are there any recent must-see films?



**Answer key**

- 1 Students own answers
- 2 1 c 2 a 3 d 4 c
- 3 1 Because in 1992 the national TV stations stopped making soap operas, which were very popular in Nigeria and the film industry took advantage by filling the gap in the market with cheap dramas.
- 2 There are many themes but the main one is good defeating evil.
- 3 He felt that in the US a lot of the budget for a film was wasted because it took sixty days to make a film.
- 4 The fact that the industry has to work with the government to obtain their movie licence and different ways to tell stories and such it has been inspired by Iran's poetic traditions.
- 5 The first major films were influenced by the time of Hollywood but by the 1960s they were influenced by poetry.

6 The Islamic revolution placed restrictions on filmmaking but the allowed filmmaking to carry on, about making films for more money and be more allegorical.

- 1 1omstucke
- 2 cthrao
- 3 bhoooy
- 4 ntriozaz
- 5 mrefence
- 6 gath
- 7 olligooal
- 8 moun

# Forget Hollywood and Bollywood

**1** We all know about the modern 'film factories' of Hollywood and Bollywood, but what about other film industries which are doing things differently? Where are they based and what kind of films do they produce? Film-aficionado Randal Harper tells us about two emerging powers in the world of movie-making.

**2** It's a far cry from LA or Mumbai but Surulere, a ramshackle suburb of Lagos in Nigeria, is the home to the third largest film industry in the world: Nollywood. With over 1,000 films shot annually, generating revenues of \$250 million and an audience of 600 million spread around the world, the film industry is the second largest employer in Nigeria and is producing stars that are recognized across the globe.

**3** Unlike Hollywood and Bollywood, the Nigerian film industry is a direct offshoot of television drama and has provided an alternative to TV for millions of Nigerians. It is widely agreed that Nollywood was born in 1992 when the state run TV company stopped making the popular soap operas that captivated audiences across Nigeria. The first film, *Living in Bondage*, was characterized by poor dialogue, shoddy acting, and terrible continuity, but its direct-to-DVD release began to satisfy the demand for easy-on-the-eye dramas. Although production values have improved, the films are still produced cheaply – costing about \$15,000 – and quickly. They get shot in about ten days. Each movie will sell between 25,000 and 50,000 copies, and occasionally a 'blockbuster' will sell 500,000.

**4** Fans of Nollywood would say the films cover a range of issues dealing with family, religion, conflict, and corruption but the main themes are witchcraft and the triumph of good over evil.

**5** Leading Nollywood director Lancelot Imasuen recently made a film in the USA and was shocked by the waste, amazed that a film could take sixty days to make. 'I had the pleasure of shooting a film in Hollywood,' Imasuen said in an interview. 'And I told them, I want you to know that 75% of your budget and time is

wasted! Sixty days to shoot a film! How many working hours are actually in those sixty days? It's all razzmatazz! Nollywood has certainly stripped away all that excess and simplified the film-making process.

**6** Iran's film-making has long been seen as being the perfect antidote to Western irreverence. Due to political constraints, film-makers had to find different ways of telling their stories and used the country's rich poetic heritage for inspiration. But Iran may be unique in so far as the founding figure of its film industry was a woman, and government intervention has actually helped to improve its reputation.

**7** Very early Iranian films were influenced by Bollywood musicals, and characterized by garish costumes and romantic themes. Things changed in the sixties however, when poetry began to influence film-makers. Poet Farough Farakzad's documentary about a leper colony, *The House Is Black*, is widely perceived to be the first example of Iran's unique cinema tradition. The film was released in 1962 and it set the standard for documentary, fable-like films. However, it wasn't until the seventies that the West started taking notice when *The Cow*, a film by Dariush Mehjui, won a top prize at the Venice Film Festival.

**8** After the Islamic revolution, Iranian cinema hit a golden age. The restrictions the new regime put on film-makers freed them of market pressures and allowed them to be more allegorical in their work. The contrast with the West was noticeable. *Where Is the Friend's House?* – Abbas Kiarostami's account of an eight-year-old schoolboy trying to return his classmate's notebook – was made in 1986 when Western cinema was arguably at its most superficial. Kiarostami continues to be one of the big names in Iranian cinema, along with Mohsen Makhmalbaf whose *Moment of Innocence* recounts the stabbing that put him in jail for five years.

**9** Iranian films continue to stand out. *Twenty Fingers*, starring and directed by Mania Akbari, won the best digital film at the 2004 Venice Film Festival, showing that what Iranian film-makers have lacked in money they have more than made up for in creativity.

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The main themes in Nigerian films are witchcraft and the triumph of good over evil

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Iran's film-making is the perfect antidote to Western irreverence

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## Glossary

**a far cry** a very different experience from sth  
**continuity** making sure that actors' clothes, objects, etc. are the same from one scene to the next  
**antidote** anything that takes away the effects of sth unpleasant

**leper colony** a place where people with leprosy, an infectious disease, live together