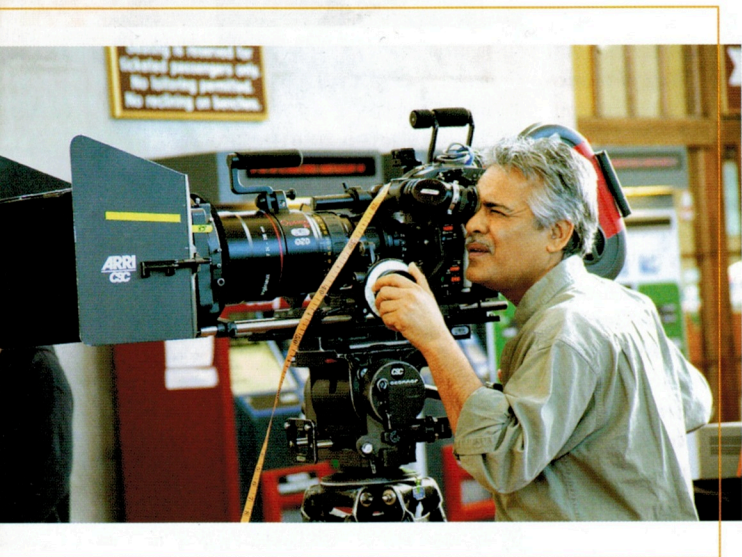


KANK

A Bollywood Production Filming

Manhattan has seen many amazing things, but even The City That Never Sleeps was unprepared for the impact of a full-scale 'Bollywood' production filming on its streets. KANK is the latest feature film project from Dharma Productions and stars some of the biggest names in Bollywood. Their presence at any of the New York locations and the spectators that they drew could bring the area to a complete halt, a reminder never to underestimate a film industry with an audience estimated at 3.5 billion.



KANK stars the legendary Amitabh Bachchan along with Shah Rukh Khan, Rani Mukherjee, Preity Zinta, Abhishek Bachchan and Kiron Kher. It is directed and produced by Karan Johar, the son the Dharma founder Yash Johar. Amongst the films previously directed by Karan Johar, KABHI KHUSHI KABHIE GHAM entered the US and UK Top 10 box office charts and had long-running mainstream releases in France, Germany and Poland.

KANK was shot over 70 days on 60 locations throughout New York and New Jersey. It was photographed by Anil Mehta, one of the leading cinematographers in India. Having previously used an ARRICAM from ARRI Media on UK Producer Charles Salmon's production MARIGOLD, Anil was

keen to repeat the experience when filming in New York and at Charles' suggestion he contacted ARRI CSC.

In addition to his use of the ARRICAM, Anil chose the Super 35 format, and a Digital Intermediate process in post production. Both of these choices are relatively new to the Indian film industry, where anamorphic is traditionally the format of choice. ARRI News caught up with Anil back in India whilst he finished principal photography on KANK earlier this year.

Have you filmed in New York before?

Anil Mehta: Yes – in fact I have, in 2003 for another Hindi feature film KAL HO NA HO.

What were your impressions on this occasion?

AM: New York is such an intense cataclysmic sensorium that it leaves me gasping for breath. Trying to fit a vertical city into an anamorphic frame, trying to film through changing seasons (September to December 2005), trying to create rain in sub-zero temperatures, trying to make a predominantly outdoor schedule work when after 4.30pm it is not even T2 – these are some of the impressions that will remain, along with the great sushi, an Ethiopian dinner and the Belgian beer.

What are the most distinctive differences between filming in India and in New York?

in New York

You used an ARRICAM on MARIGOLD prior to KANK. What drew you to making that decision?

AM: I feel that the ARRICAM is a very versatile blend of camera designs as they have evolved. I enjoy its compactness, its lightness (as the LT), its reliability (no down time at all, on either film), its simplicity with the user-friendly electronic control panel and film transportation and its versatility in Steadicam or handheld mode. For a sync sound project it will definitely be my first choice.

What lenses did you choose for KANK?

AM: I chose the Zeiss Ultra Prime range, for the simple reason that they were the sharpest set available to me. Since the film is Super 35 and going through a DI process, I chose to stay with the sharpest image capture available to me.

You tested examples of new ARRI Master Prime lenses while you were filming. What were your impressions?

AM: I did get a chance to lay my hands on some Master Primes while at work, and though I cannot claim to have tested them systematically I was quite taken by their vivid clarity – the image in the viewfinder was a delight. In addition the ability to eye focus even the wide lenses at long distances, the complete lack of breathing and the clarity of the markings were all very reassuring.

You have pioneered the use of the Super 35 format. What do you see as its advantages on this production?

AM: Super 35 is being used more and more in India. It would not be right to say that I have pioneered it in any way. In fact I have probably waited for the technology to be primed before using it.

You are also using the digital intermediate process in post production. Is this common practice in Bollywood?

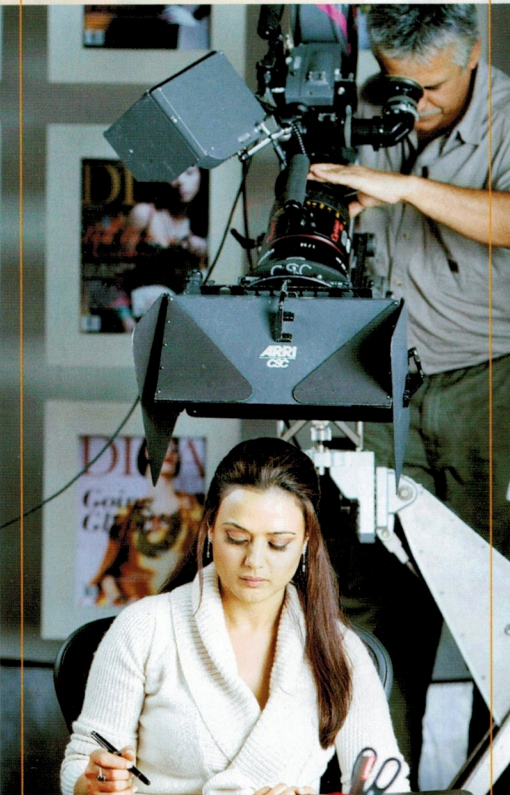
AM: Digital intermediate is still in its stabilizing stage in India, although an increasing number of films are taking this route. With KANK I will probably be scanning at 4K then down sampling to 2K, an option only recently available to us. The digital intermediate chain is gaining currency very rapidly in India. Almost every movie has some component of DI (titles, vfx, opticals) and increasingly features originating on the Super 16 or Super 35 format are taking the DI option (ZINDA and RANG DE BASANTI). Also films originating on 4 perforation anamorphic (a very popular format in India) have chosen to go DI for the 'look' (BLACK & PAHELI). The DI chase is on; the technology and those who operate it now need deliver.

The Indian film industry is easily underestimated. What would you like to see from a company like ARRI in terms of support for such a prolific market?

AM: We have a forum in Mumbai called 'The Cinematographers Combine' which has been interacting with ARRI over the years. The one thing we have not tired of repeating is that ARRI needs a direct presence in India, to support all the ARRI equipment that is the Indian market standard. Also to further develop the sale and distribution of new products and to recognize a significant market that needs to be nurtured.

With thanks to Anil Mehta and to Anadil Hossain of Dillywood Inc. of New York for their cooperation with this article.

Simon Broad



DoP Anil Mehta shooting actress Preity Zinta

AM: The difference between shooting in India and New York is that in India we plan, then let circumstances and chance take over, madness ensues and films get made. In New York we plan, distribute paper, talk methodology, distribute paper, plan some more, distribute more paper, then chance and circumstance take over, madness ensues and films get made. As long as films get made and not a Kafkaesque castle, I sleep well. Our line producers in New York, Anadil and Driss worked very hard to bridge the cultural gaps and make our filming possible. Joe White, our location manager also adapted rather well to our 'organic' approach. Without them New York would have been an impenetrable castle.