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SALTAF 2007 CELEBRATES SOUTH ASIAN CREATIVE TALENT

The South Asian Literary and Theater Arts Festival (SALTAF) 2007, held on November 3rd at the Meyer Auditorium in the Freer and Sackler Galleries of the Smithsonian Institution, brought together an exciting group of artists for a day of entertainment, reflection, and celebration. This year's festival marked the fourth year of the partnership between the Network of South Asian Professionals (NetSAP-DC Foundation) and the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program, a collaboration that has opened the doors for a diverse audience to enjoy South Asian arts and raised the profile of South Asian literature, theater arts, and film in the nation's capital.

SALTAF 2007 opened with the screening of director Manish Acharya's debut film, *Loins of Punjab Presents*, which follows seven contestants competing for the title of Desi Idol. The film recently won Best Feature Film at the 65th First Run Film Festival in New York and has received rave reviews for its humorous and revealing examination of Indian American identity.

The afternoon's literary panels featured authors Amitava Kumar, Rishi Reddi, Thrity Umrigar, and multi-talented author and actress Madhur Jaffrey (who also appeared in the festival's other feature film, *Partition*). The first panel, "Transcending Boundaries" found Amitava Kumar and Thrity Umrigar exploring issues of class, caste, and religion as well as reflecting on the writing process and their careers in academia. In the second panel, "Feeding the Immigrant Soul," Rishi Reddi and Madhur Jaffrey discussed the fluidity of diasporic identity and examined the meaning of 'home' in relation to their lives and families.

Director Vic Sarin closed the festival with the U.S. premiere of his critically acclaimed film, *Partition*. *Partition* is a moving love story about innocent people struggling to find happiness in treacherous times. Sarin was on hand to answer audience questions about the film, which has particular significance to Sarin as it is based on his family's experience of Partition and features the acting debut of his young son Jaden Rain.

Following the success of last year's "Meet and Greet" event, SALTAF hosted an evening reception at Teatism in Penn Quarter where festival-goers had the opportunity to meet the featured artists. The 'Meet and Greet' reception was a lively event that provided an intimate and informal space for the artists to interact with their audience.

For seven years SALTAF has celebrated the diversity and dynamism of South Asian literature and film, showcasing the work of emerging and established South Asian artists and providing a space for artists and their audience to engage each other. As South Asian and South Asian diasporic arts become increasingly visible in mainstream literature and media, SALTAF is proud to provide a forum that uses the arts to instigate meaningful discussions on the issues that affect South Asian communities around the world.

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For more information on the event or to schedule an interview with one of the festival organizers, please contact Neil Shah at 412-901-7467 or visit our website at www.saltaf.org.