

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 08, 2009



**Director Richie Mehta to attend the
Art Gallery of Hamilton Festitalia International Film Festival
screening of his film *Amal***

The Art Gallery of Hamilton Festitalia International Film Festival is pleased to announce the attendance of director **Richie Mehta** at the screening of his Genie-nominated film **Amal** on Saturday, September 26 at 1:30 pm at the Westdale Theatre, 1014 King Street West, Hamilton.

The screening of *Amal* is presented by Upper James Toyota.

Richie Mehta has been solidifying his role as a serious up-and-coming filmmaker for years, and been mentored by industry legends such as Wim Wenders, Shekhar Kapur and Brian DePalma. Mehta's feature films to date -- *Amal* and *System of Units* -- have screened and garnered him much acclaim and numerous awards around the world at film festivals such as Telluride, Palm Springs International Film Festival, Montreal International Film Festival, and the London International Film Festival. *Amal* was nominated for a 2009 Genie Award in the categories of Best Achievement in Direction and Best Adapted Screenplay. The film won the Jury Award for Best Narrative at the 2008 San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival. These experiences, along with his travels to India and afar, have granted him access to a global filmmaking community and assisted in further nurturing his independent spirit and international perspectives.

Set in New Delhi, *Amal* tells the story of a seemingly homeless man who cheats everyone he meets. When *Amal*, an auto-rickshaw *wallah*, generously allows him to dodge his fare, both are affected in a way that has far-reaching consequences. This vividly textured portrait of contemporary India is a powerful and touching story of one man's decency.

Audience members will gain insight to the film with a special question-and-answer period with director Richie Mehta.

"We are thrilled to welcome Richie Mehta to the Art Gallery of Hamilton Festitalia International Film Festival as part of our Showcase Series," says Louise Dompierre, AGH President and CEO. "His film *Amal* certainly fulfills our mandate of providing film lovers of this area with the best in Canadian film."

As with all AGH Festitalia International Film Festival screenings, short-format films by local filmmakers and musicians will also be presented. A screening of *Frankencottage*,

featuring local band Dark Mean and produced by Vibewrangler Studios of Hamilton will take place prior to the screening of *Amal*.

Tickets to this screening are \$10.00 and are available in advance online at www.artgalleryofhamilton.com, at the AGH Front Desk during Gallery hours (123 King Street West, downtown Hamilton), or at Westdale Theatre (1014 King Street West, Hamilton), 30 minutes prior to screening time.

For complete AGH Festitalia International Film Festival film line-up and to view trailers for all festival films, please visit www.artgalleryofhamilton.com.

The Art Gallery of Hamilton Festitalia International Film Festival is grateful for the support of its Festival Partners: Cineplex Media, The Hamilton Spectator, Milli Fashions for Women, L.I.U.N.A. Local 837, RBC Royal Bank, Turkstra Lumber and Upper James Toyota.

Thanks is also extended to the Friends of the Festival: Cable 14; The Department of Canadian Heritage (Government of Canada); Empire Theatres; Fenian Films; Hamilton Film and Television Office; Movieola; TLN Telelatino; Westdale Theatre; Film Circuit, A Division of the Toronto International Film Festival, and The City of Hamilton.

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For further information about the **Art Gallery of Hamilton Festitalia International Film Festival**, please contact:

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Backgrounder:

Art Gallery of Hamilton Festitalia International Film Festival Spotlight Series: *Amal*

Saturday, September 26th, 1:30 pm
Westdale Theatre -- **Director Richie Mehta in attendance!**

Presented by Upper James Toyota.

Director Richie Mehta, Canada, 2007, 101 min. Rated 14A.

In chaotic New Delhi, an aged and irascible man, seemingly homeless, cheats everyone he meets. When Amal, an auto-rickshaw *wallah*, generously allows him to dodge his fare, both are affected in a way that has far-reaching consequences.

This vividly textured portrait of contemporary India is an extraordinarily ambitious and heartfelt debut from first-time director Richie Mehta. Showing us an unvarnished India rich in flavour, *Amal* is a powerful and touching story of one man's decency.

When a beautiful client has her bag stolen from Amal's auto-rickshaw, Amal (Rupinder Nagra) chases after the young thief, but the little girl runs into traffic and is struck by a car. Amal takes her to the hospital and assumes responsibility for her care – an expense he cannot afford. Meanwhile, the irritable old cheat has died, and his funeral reveals he was in fact G. K. Jayaram (Naseeruddin Shah), the patriarch of a wealthy family. Disillusioned with his grasping children, he has willed his fortune to Amal. Now, within thirty days, the estate's executor must find one anonymous man in this city of fourteen million. If he is found, the wastrel heirs will be deprived of their inheritance and the little pickpocket can receive the care she needs. Familial machinations descend to vicious levels as the search for Amal plays out.

Mehta – who also co-wrote the film – viscerally conveys the feel of working-class Delhi. Nuanced performances from some of India's most revered and beloved performers, including Seema Biswas (*Water*), Shah (*Monsoon Wedding*), Roshan Seth (*Such a Long Journey*) and Koel Purie (*White Noise*) enhance the film's authenticity and immediacy. Nagra brings a serene wisdom to Amal that captivates and transports us.

The life-affirming story evokes lingering vestiges of the caste system and examines a family in which wealth creates nothing but the hunger for more. At the end of his life, the patriarch holds up a mirror to the world he inhabited as a tycoon but departed as an ascetic. Amal is an inadvertent inspiration to Jayaram, for Amal has always known something that the rich man only just learned; we are defined as much by what we sacrifice as we are by what we possess. 2007 TIFF.