

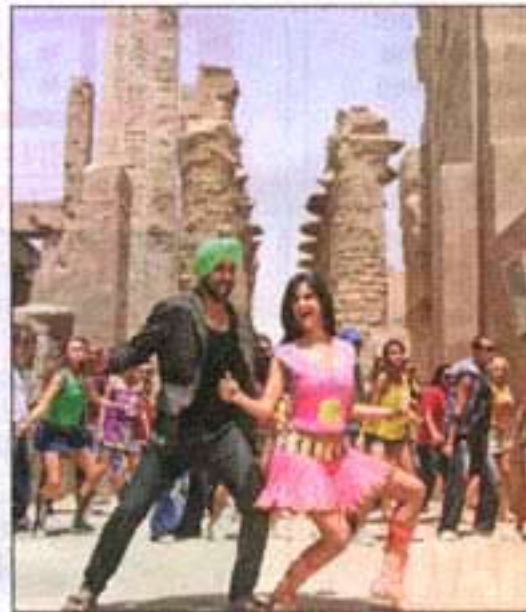
# Bollywood looks east & west for the best

Bharati Dubey | TNN

The skyline of Gold Coast City, deserts of Namibia, the architecture of Prague and the Grand Bazaar of Istanbul are the new backdrops of Bollywood. No longer just London, New York and Switzerland work for the production designers of Bollywood; the hunt for exotic locations has begun. It may be at the film's exchequer a great deal to shoot in places like Gold Coast City, the Bahamas or Jordan, but if the location lends character to the film, filmmakers will go for it. And they are expanding markets and multi-revenue streams to thank for.

'Singh is Kinng', helmed by Akshay Kumar, has been extensively shot in Gold Coast City and Egypt. Gold Coast in Australia is one of the most expensive destinations in the world, and the film shot there for close to 10 months.

"Singh is Kinng, being a slick action comedy, we wanted a location that would make the film look swank," says Vipul Shah, director. "Gold Coast has an interesting skyline with great beaches. And Egypt, where we shot songs and some scenes, provided the desired contrast to Gold Coast in terms of the colours and backdrop.



**BOLD AND BEAUTIFUL:**

Yes, both locations are expensive, but the look of a film today is as important as any other part of it," says director Vipul Shah.

Drona, a big budget fantasy action film starring Abhishek Bachchan, has been shot in Prague and Namibia.

Dhillin Mehta, producer of Blue—which stars Sanjay Dutt and Akshay Kumar—has just finished shooting the first schedule in Nassau, Bahamas. Says Mehta, "The Bahamas are perfect for Blue. To date, no Bol-

## BROADENING THE AUDIENCE BASE

Not only is Bollywood exploring newer destinations, but several producers also intend to convert those locations into audience bases. Boxwalla says, "Mission Istanbul will be dubbed in Turkish and released there a few weeks after the film releases in India." Pooja Bhatt claims that she has always kept the local flavour in mind while making her films. "I ensure that each location I set my films in emerges as a 'character' itself and not merely as a prop."

lywood film has been shot in there. The facilities and the atmosphere of the Bahamas were not available at any of the other short-listed locations. The script required underwater shark sequences and they were easier to shoot here than at any other island. Nassau offers gambling, plus the Ardastra Gardens zoo."

Pooja Bhatt is currently shooting in Jordan for three reasons. She says, "The terrain fits the canvas, scale and story of my film perfectly. Secondly,

Jordan is one of the most spectacular and undiscovered countries on the planet. And it is an absolutely fresh location. I will be filming here at Petra—one of the seven wonders of the world—and across all of Jordan's highlights like Wadi Rum, a place akin to the topography of Mars, and Jerrash, the largest Roman ruins outside of Rome."

Suniel Shetty's Mission Istanbul travels to another parched terrain. Says executive producer Shabbir Boxwalla, "We were invited by the Turkish government to look around. And we were very impressed with this country that is half in Asia and half in Europe."

Filmmakers are ready to spend big money to add value to their project, and locations leverage that value. But unlike before, they are not looking for rebates. Bollywood is not shying from choosing exclusive destinations because of sops from local authorities.

"Bollywood is being given royal treatment at many top-end destinations. Especially if the film has a big star cast," says a production person.

Mahesh Bhatt ventures, "Most production houses like shooting in familiar areas because it is convenient."

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