



Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Singh with director Habib Faisal during a discussion after the screening of "Do Dooni Char," the opening film of the New York Indian Film Festival at the Paris Theater May 4.

story of a sleuth in Kolkata; and "You Don't Belong" celebrated nature; and "Holy Kitchen," made by New York chef Vikas Khanna, explored the feeding of thousands of people each day in Hindu temples, pilgrimage centers and ashrams, mostly in India.

Through the five days, glamour and celebrity moved with the screenings, as a big draw for film enthusiasts.

Veteran and new actors rubbed shoulders. Aparna Sen, Madhur Jaffrey, Aditya Bhattacharya, Ajay Naidu, Samrat Chakrabarti, Meetu Chilana, Rehana Mirza, Sarita Choudhury,

Ami Sheth and Poorna Jagannathan came to the five-day event.

However, it was the glamorous Neetu Singh Kapoor and Rishi Kapoor duo who stole the show.

Right from the start as they came on the red carpet on the opening day, to the closing night gala, the celebrated couple was the center of attraction as they mingled and mingled with other filmmakers and celebrities.

Neetu Singh looked stunning in her cream-colored salwar kameez prior to the screening on "Do Dooni Char" as she walked between her husband and writer-director Habib Faisal. She

looked equally glamorous in a blue-salwar kameez at the Asia Society event as she handed the best actor trophy to her husband.

During one of the several discussions held during the festival, the couple admitted they were surprised to be approached to play roles in the film.

In a May 4 discussion moderated by Chhabra, Neetu Singh admitted it needed more than a little convincing for her to agree to a silver-screen comeback.

"I am not ready for a career," she said but admitted that a similar story line or a chance to work with son Ranbir would make her

act again. Indian films are very youth-oriented, Rishi Kapoor said, adding that the idea of playing "a middle-class character, who is also the main protagonist of the film, in an emerging India," attracted him to the film.

"I don't chase women down the valleys and run around trees anymore," he said with a smile.

For Faisal, the hero of the film was the storyline.

Once he wrote the film, drawing inspiration from his personal experiences, he said he knew he wanted Rishi Kapoor to play the lead role. And once he was roped in, the director was convinced that nobody else but Neetu Singh would fit opposite him.

While casting them as the middle class couple, he hoped the audiences aged 35 and above would be swept by nostalgia.



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Above, Sen with her best director trophy. Left, celebrity chef Vikas Khanna whose "Holy Kitchens" was among those nominated for the best documentary. Below left, Dr. Sudhir M. Parikh, Padma Shri award winner and publisher of Desi Talk, 2nd from left, and Dr. Manuja Bansal, with Aparna Sen and Pulitzer Prize recipient Dr. Siddhartha Mukherjee at the gala benefit dinner at the Jumeirah Essex House, May 4. Below right, Rishi Kapoor and Neetu Singh with Aroon Shivdasani, executive director of IAAC, 2nd from left, and festival director Assem Chhabra.



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