



The Maverick

Independent Pakistani filmmaker Iram Parveen Bilal talks to Society about her first feature film, Josh, Nigeria and Pakistan's obsession with Bollywood and her tête-à-tête with Shah Rukh Khan

BY MANALI SHAH

Iram Parveen Bilal is a busy woman. Her first feature film *Josh* recently premiered at The Mumbai Academy of Moving Image (MAMI) film festival in Mumbai. From scripting and directing to raising finances, Iram did it all by herself and it took the young filmmaker nearly four years to make the movie. The cast is entirely Pakistani, Iram shot the entire movie in Karachi and it was the only Pakistani movie to be screened at the film festival in the last five years.

While *Josh* is a socially conscious film, Iram categorically states that she is not a documentarian. "Everyone feels that there are so many issues in Pakistan that you have to be a documentary filmmaker. I have made short films before; I like making fiction. I wanted to do something cinematic and with a little more glamour. I would love to do a typical Bollywood film someday," she says. *Josh* is the story of Fatima, who has grown up in a privileged setting. She loses her nanny, who comes from a feudal village. The movie shows how she and her friends try to find out what exactly happened to the nanny, and in the process, create a revolution in the village.

In between meeting with distributors in Mumbai, Iram, who is aiming at an Indo-Pak theatrical release of *Josh*, squeezes in a quick interview with *Society*. She divides her time between LA and Pakistan but travels to places her work takes her to. Speaking of the film industry in Pakistan, she explains there was a thriving industry after Partition but General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq wiped it all out in the 1970s. "There was a wave of extremism and films were looked down upon. The crowd was not necessarily the most educated and sophisticated. Most films were just rip offs of