

Real on reel

Shivendra Singh Dungarpur on India's own Celluloid Man

in conversation



Shivendra Singh Dungarpur

VER 20 film festival screenings, names like Gulzar, Shabana Azmi and Naseeruddin Shah chipping in and two national awards may go to some people's heads, but the only question PK Nair asks director Shivendra Singh Dungarpur is this — "Will it help film preservation?" It is this passion for film preservation and restoration that makes Nair the endearing subject of critically acclaimed documentary *Celluloid Man*. The film releases next week in PVR Cinemas as part of the celebrations for India's 100th year of cinema, and explores the

contributions and perseverance of India's own Celluloid Man, Nair. More from Dungarpur on why 100 years of cinema almost boil down to one man.

On Nair as an inspiration. I studied at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), so I'd seen the great films that Nair had shown us. He gave us exposure not just to Indian, but world cinema too. It led to so many great filmmakers coming out of the FTII, from Rajkumar Hirani to Girish Kasaravalli. Even personalities like Jaya Bachchan and Naseeruddin Shah, both featured in *Celluloid Man*, state that learnt cinema from him.

The trigger behind the film. I am big on preservation anyway — I collect tickets and photos of actors. In June 2010, I left for Pune to meet Nair *saheb* and that's when I saw the

deplorable condition of the film prints, which he treated like his children. Plus, there was his remarkable association of showing films in Heggodu, Shimoga. It is the home of cultural organisation Ninasam, started by an arecanut farmer called KV Subbanna. Nair went there every year for a convention, and screened films by Ray, Kurosawa and so on. I went there and met people in there who were talking like they'd grown up watching these films! They had no DVDs, nothing — except Nair. And that finally triggered the making of *Celluloid Man*.

Did using 11 cinematographers affect the film's consistency? Not at all. The film was like a soulful spirit with one mission — that of the

thought process of this man. It connected so beautifully. We had so many cameramen because everybody, the absolute top, wanted to work on it.

Why did you choose to shoot it on film, versus digitally? For Nair, film cans are living beings. I thought there can be no other way to pay respect to a man who brought film into our lives.

Another problem, apart from preservation, that you feel plagues Indian cinema. We have to focus on independent cinema, not just popular cinema. There has to be a voice, a theatre and government support for it, and for documentaries too. The three have to be in tandem.

Releases on May 3

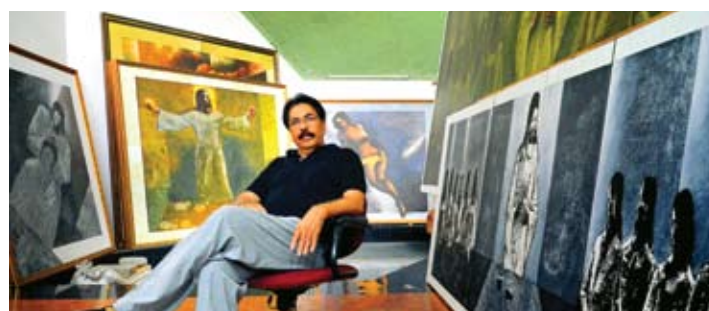
—Shefali Rao

in the studio

Inspiring Canvas

Yusuf Arakkal talks about his haunting past and current inspirations

IN his homely living-room, surrounded by family portraits, over iced tea, Yusuf Arakkal award-winning artist, sculptor and writer, shows me around his studio and hints at forthcoming projects — the most intriguing and striking being his latest Christ series. It has depictions of Christ and *The Last Supper*, which have even received praise from a delegation at the Vatican, where it is expecting to be show-



Pic: Jithendra M

cased later this year. He refers to the persistent pain of his parents passing when he was just seven, clearly reflected in much of his work. "I don't wait or search for inspiration, I find it in ordinary people, like people on the street," he says. Arakkal discovered his unique identity through a more traditional approach of realistic figuration; a brave choice that was often disapproved of by art critics in his early

days. "I was known for three things in school: football, writing and art," he recalls. With a family opposed to his artistic aspirations, Arakkal, at 16, left home (Kerala) for Bangalore. "I spent over a year homeless on the streets, but it was the best time of my life because it taught me so much about human beings," he reveals. A lot of his work is based on experience, feels the artist, alluding to one of his favourite writers, Ernest

Hemingway — "Hemingway would have never been so successful had he not contributed his own experiences to his writing."

His in-house studio is clearly his castle. "I'll be in my studio from 7 am every morning," he smiles, adding that his projects can take anywhere from six months to six years to plan and produce. After, all, Arakkal's aforementioned series on Christ, did begin about three years ago.

This is part of the In The Studio series, where we meet artists in their creative spaces.

Catch Arakkal's work at Galerie Sara Arakkal, BEML Layout, ITPL Road. Details: 4112622

—Ciara Conway

what's on



Captured by nature

For your share of art and photography, head to the exhibition *Textures from Nature*, by city-based artist Bhavani GS. The works are all part of her explorations of texture, order, structure and matter in the natural world. Look out for images of leaves, flowers, clay and blades of grass, which she says mesmerise and inspire her. At Tangerine, Sizzlers and More, Koramangala. Details: 41152679



Bluesy weekend

Strawberry Soul trio, comprising Venkat Subramaniam, Hemant Diwakaran and Elvis Lewis, will be performing at bFlat this Sunday. Their set includes heavy funk with classic blues, rock 'n' roll, and soul. Some of their inspirations are Gary Clarke Jr and D'Angelo. 8 pm onwards. At 100 Feet Road, Indiranagar. Details: 25278361



Garage sound

Underground bands are back with their punk, progressive and multi-genre music. This Saturday, Garage Jam is presenting acts Grossty, Ontologus, Pisakas and Nauseate. Needless to say, you can expect non mainstream sounds and power packed performances. At Sonido Musicals, Brigade Road. Details: 41251429



SPY

A minor scuffle between two kids at school, leads to a big one between parents in this play titled *The God of Carnage*. The play, directed by Preetam Koilpillai, is a classic comedy. Till May 3. At Ranga Shankara, JP Nagar. Tickets (₹200) at bookmyshow.com