

We have gathered here to celebrate the remarkable achievements in Hindi cinema over the past year. As a chairperson of the jury for the Star Screen awards, I am delighted to address you tonight. We, the jury, were pleased to contribute to the longstanding and prestigious tradition of the Screen awards that kicks off the award season each year.

The responsibility of choosing the best is always a difficult one. This year, our task was made even more arduous by the wide variety of choices. I am highlighting just a few noteworthy points that struck all of us during the nomination and final selection process.

- To begin with, we were offered an eclectic mix of movies that belonged to completely different genres. We had the rare opportunity to cheer for the hugely successful unapologetic blockbuster entertainers like Dabangg and Rajneeti along with the non-mainstream low budget films like Peepli Live, Love Sex and Dhoka, and Udaan. The thematic diversity was underscored by the presence of several talented debutant directors with a fresh perspective and unique stylization.
- There were several flashes of brilliance amongst the performances. The ongoing list of debutant actors is but one stream of this new breed of talent. Changing trends were also reflected in some of the bold choices that the mainstream actors made. Thus it was heartening to witness a leading lady portray a role with negative shades in Ishqiya or a young heartthrob essay a mature character with grey shades in Rajniti or in Ravan.
- This was a year full of surprises where, boundaries were pushed in several departments merging mainstream tastes with niche sensibilities. This merger had an added dimension in that the so-called boutique cinema won the audience patronage. Only time will tell whether this combination of box-office success and critical acclaim is an indicator of the evolving taste of a mature audience.

I would like to take this opportunity to applaud all the nominees in various categories and congratulate the winners. In particular, this is a time for celebration of our young talent for their new confident voices. But it is also an occasion to introspect as all accolades always bring a new sense of responsibility. The coming years will prove whether this year marked just a transient phase or is our cinema truly aligning with the increasingly sophisticated parameters of entertainment.

Let's welcome the emerging ventures...

Let's be supportive of these variant strokes...