Bidesia is Bhojpuri for ‘the one who leaves home’. One in four migrants in Mumbai is Bhojpuria, a people from the north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Bambai is their name for Mumbai/Bombay. The bidesia in Bambai, like most recent migrants in this ‘global city’, inhabit the precarious edges of Mumbai. Along with his meagre belongings though, the impoverished migrant brings with him a vibrant musical culture.

Bhojpuri pop music is produced, circulated and performed in the crumbling sites that is home to the bidesia in the big city. Migration is the predominant theme in the music, and the mobile phone is a recurring motif in the songs. Frequently sexually charged, at times religious, often lyrical and occasionally political, the migrant is both the subject of, and the audience for this music. The musical landscape he inhabits mobilises notions of masculinity; gives form to his identity; makes tangible his desire for a place in the city; and evokes his longing for home.

Bidesia in Bambai charts the travails of two ambitious singers – Ramanuj Pathak, a one-time taxi-driver chasing his first record deal; and Kalpana Patowary, one of the stars of the Bhojpuri music industry. The lives of these singers are punctuated by the fractured landscape of the city, where, much like their lives, structures are built and torn down regularly. This feature-length film attempts to make the migrant visible by celebrating the musical sphere that he inhabits, in a city that renders him illegal and unwanted.

Profile

Surabhi Sharma is a filmmaker. She studied anthropology in St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai, before specialising in direction at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune. Her films include Jahaji Music: India in the Caribbean; Aamakaar – The Turtlepeople and Jari Mari: Of Cloth and Other Stories. Using an ethnographic approach Surabhi’s key concern is to document cities in transition, and understand cultures in circulation. Her films explore a range of subjects, including music and identity, labour and globalization and women’s health. Her practice includes feature-length documentaries, video art and installation works. Surabhi is visiting faculty in film and design schools in India, and has curated programmes for festivals and organisations. Her documentaries have been awarded at international film festivals including Film South Asia, the Kara Film Festival, the Festival of Three Continents and Eco Cinema; and screened in museums and universities in Asia, Europe and north America. She is the recipient of the Majlis Fellowship, and was awarded the Puma Catalyst Award for Bidesia in Bambai. She recently completed Tracing Bylanes, a rumination on the Indian city of Chandigarh; and Can we see the baby bump please? a film on commercial surrogacy in India.

Event Details
Thursday, 9 May 2013
2.00pm to 4.30pm
(Screening followed by a Q&A session with the filmmaker)

Faculty Auditorium
AS7 #01-02
Kent Ridge Campus
National University of Singapore

All are welcome

Please email to sassec@nus.edu.sg to register