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Filming Happy New Year in Dubai

Atlantis The Palm insiders tell us how they worked with Bollywood's biggest names



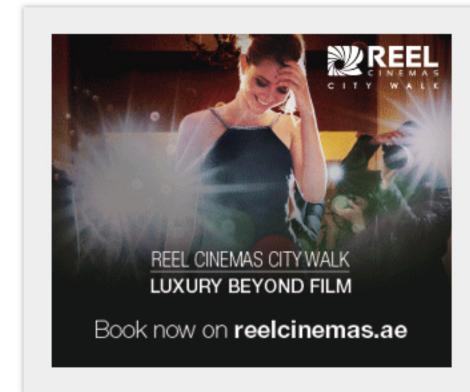
By Benita Adesuyan 03 November 2014







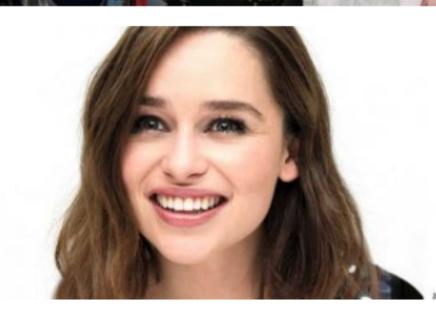




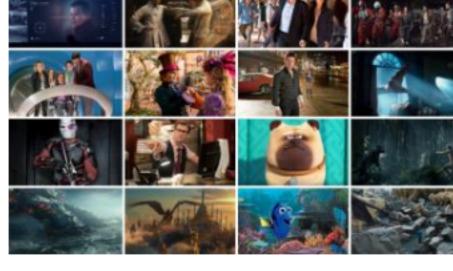
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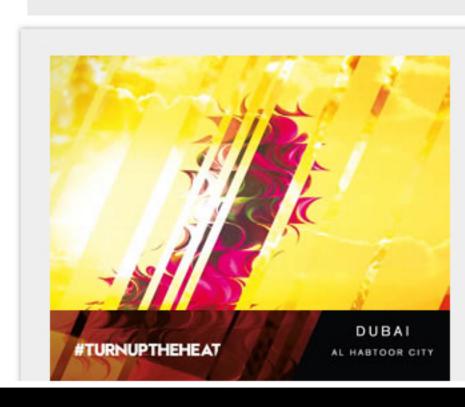




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Filmed at Atlantis The Palm, Happy New Year has Dubai at its core. Benita Adesuyan caught up with Andrea Krenn at the hotel to find out how they worked with Bollywood's biggest names while providing for guests as normal.

There are ten weeks before the end of the year. How time flies. It seems like just a few weeks ago we were watching the record-breaking fireworks on the Palm. So it might seem premature to be talking about the festivities already, but new Bollywood movie Happy New Year, shot at Atlantis The Palm, opened last week at a glittering premiere.

The film, starring some of the biggest names in the industry including Shah Rukh Khan, Deepika Padukone, Abhishek Bachchan and Boman Irani, is a comedy with plenty of action and, of course, romance.

The story, written and directed by Farah Khan, who also directed blockbusters Om Shanti Om and Main Hoon Na, revolves around a diamond heist, and Khan wrote the script around the landmark hotel. Filming took place in September last year and the Red Chillies Entertainment production team took over Atlantis The Palm for a month.

the filming. She explains that though the actual filming only lasted one month, the whole organisational process took much longer. 'We were approached by Red Chillies Entertainment about two years ago,' she reveals. 'Since Khan actually wrote the script around Dubai and the location of Atlantis, we were involved in the early stages to be the location for the movie.'

Andrea Krenn, vice president of public relations at Atlantis The Palm, was part of the team overseeing

Khan's crew and cast filmed all over the hotel – at Nasimi Beach, in the grand lobby, the Ambassador Lagoon, on the Royal Beach, at the helipad and at Dolphin Bay. All the while the hotel was still running and functioning as usual for guests and visitors. So how did it balance the demanding filming schedule of a full film crew and cast with the needs of its paying residents? 'We had to be very careful balancing our guests' requirements and wishes so that they weren't affected by the filming, because our guests are priority number one,' says Krenn. 'We had several recces before filming started so that we had a clear picture and schedule. The Red Chillies team were flexible and knew all of our concerns so that we didn't have to alter the normal running of our hotel business. So they filmed at night, for example, and we provided outside areas where they wouldn't distract guests. But it was actually quite nice to see that when we filmed on the beach, our guests were really interested in what was going on.'

Bollywood films typically have big dance scenes and Happy New Year is no different. The plot involves a dance competition where Shah Rukh Khan and his heist crew enter the Word Dance Competition as part of the hustle. Many of the crowd scenes required extras and Krenn says that some of the team at Atlantis may spot themselves on screen. 'Some staff were in the dance scenes and at the welcome scenes in the hotel, so it made the entire resort very excited about the project. We're very keen to see the movie now.'

Krenn says that at any one time, up to 100 cast and crew members were on set at the hotel, so after a month at Atlantis, the team and staff began to feel like family. 'The numbers on set depended on what scenes were being shot, but we got to meet with all the cast and crew during the making of the film. They were all very professional and we were quite amazed because it was such a big production. But it was still easy to do.'

Despite the Bollywood takeover at the hotel, Krenn says that nothing was damaged and no overhauls were required. But some of the guests may have thought they'd walked into a time machine when they found the lobby bedecked in festive decorations.

'I think it was very fun for our visitors because the film is centred around New Year's Eve, so we decorated the entire hotel as if it were Christmas. It must have been quite surreal for them to walk into the lobby in September and see Christmas trees everywhere.' Happy New Year is out now in cinemas across Dubai.

Dubai on film

Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol (2011) Tom Cruise, Jeremy Renner, Simon Pegg

Possibly one of the most famous films shot in the emirate to date, with Tom Cruise abseiling down the

Burj Khalifa. Syriana (2005) George Clooney, Matt Damon

A political drama about the state of the oil industry, which used Dubai's deserts and sprawling

highways as a backdrop to many scenes. City of Life (2009)

Alexandra Maria Lara, Sonu Sood, Saoud Al Kaabi

A romantic urban drama that saw the lives of Dubai residents brought together through a series of

random events.