

Fankar Gali

***A tele-film.
Directed and produced
by Sarmad Sehbai (Pakistan, 1990)***

'Scintillating cuts that fit into reality's fuzzy frame like windows of a passing train'
The Nation, '93

Fankar Gali draws inspiration from the actual Fankar Mandi which comes to life every night in the heart of Karachi's downtown. Singers, musicians, dancers- and all types of stage performers- await the chance to entertain and earn a livelihood. Sanwal is one of these struggling entertainers whose spontaneous humour often offends the audience. Salomi, a small time stage-performer is another victim of the theatre mafia and has to sell herself to the gallery. They live on lies and fantasies, hiding behind postures and fictitious worlds, disguising their failures in make-believe stories, romancing with each other by mimicking their matinee idols. Another world lies beyond these dark shadows- a world of glamour, sizzling with wealth and fame. Like others, they yearn to touch this inaccessible tower of prosperity.

'A dark portrayal of a society which has gone mad for materialism.'
The Muslim, '93

Fankar Gali has become a seminal text in Pakistan- a living metaphor of the state of the arts in society.

After filming half of the video, Sarmad Sehbai faced huge financial setbacks. Finally, the video play was made on a budget of merely 5 Lak rupees (approximately £5,000).

Three years after completion the local channel, NTM, decided to screen the film, subject to heavy cuts by the Pakistani Censor board which even forced him to end the film on an upbeat note.

Critics billed the piece as a triumphant success, and many suggested that the play should go forward to international festivals. Sarmad responded in interviews that 'There is no market for the film abroad. What they want is an anti-Pakistan film made by expatriates who have a love-hate relationship with the country.'

Context Theatre present *Fankar Gali's* first uncensored screening outside of Pakistan.

PDF from <http://www.contexttheatre.co.uk/>