

BOLLYWOOD AND BUBBLES

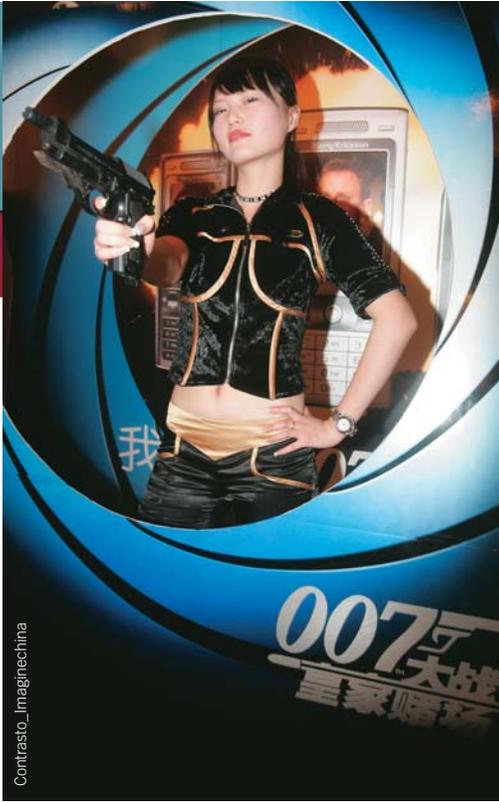
Curry, Tandoori and Sauvignon. The cult of Bacchus has arrived in the land of sacred cows. Six years after the ban that prohibited its sale (often circumvented through enigmatic diplomatic channels) **Indians are discovering a new business: wine. Demand is growing, wine-producing companies are growing and above all, the well-to-do portion of the population which simply can't do without Westernisation, with regard to gastronomy in particular, is also growing.** In fact, there are now 1.6 million families with an annual income above 100,000 dollars and approximately 200 million people belong to a “middle class” with a good level of education (India is the country which graduates the highest number of engineers after the United States), who thanks to their work-related travels and multi-media contacts with the West are becoming experts on barriques and Bordeaux bottles. **Consumption of wine is still somewhat limited (the pro-capita rate is 4.6 litres), but it is expected to double by 2008,** spurred on by the ever-increasing array of associations, trade shows such as the Indian Food and Wine Show, wine clubs and new professional figures like the on-line “wine educator”, Mr. Ajay Kumar Gothwal. The euphoria has taken over the Internet and Indianwine.com, Somelinerindia.com, Dehliwineclub.com, Indianwineacademy.com are just a few examples of the many sites guiding this wine revolution, with articles and editorials rivalling those written by the most ferocious of “Gambero Rosso” critics. Advice is given out over the Web for lovers celebrating St. Valentine’s Day (Champagne, Riesling or Pinot Nero), in addition to recommendations about which wine goes best with Chicken Tandoori (Alsatian Gewürztraminer) or what will help wash down a very spicy Tikka

Massala (Côtes Du Rhône or an Australian Shiraz). It might seem a bit strange. “Wine appreciation is a recent phenomenon in India”, says Malika Shogun, a gourmet expert from the blog Quickindiancooking.com, “but there are local wineries, like Grover and Sula, that have been producing high quality bottles for many years now.” And not just for the domestic market: the top national wine and export pioneer, Château Indage, came third at the international Wine & Spirits competition in London in 1986, thereby helping its motherland make its mark in the “world wine market”. Nashik, in the region of Maharashtra (whose governor – as it would happen – was one of the instigators of the abolition of the ban in 2001): is the “Napa Valley” of India: with its 9.4 million litres, this area alone is responsible for 30% of regional production and about half of local production, made easier by the favourable weather conditions and a genuine “eno-system” with infrastructure, nurseries and laboratories. This doesn’t mean that one can’t make a toast with a foreign label as well. According to the ICE (Italian Institute of Foreign Commerce) of New Delhi, the volume of imported wine in India has grown 30% in the last five years, despite the constraints of customs duties, which can fluctuate anywhere between 75% for wines priced under 25 dollars to 50% for those costing between 25 and 40 dollars and 20% for those with a price tag of 40 dollars and above. **Leading the import market is France, Italy** (in the first nine months of 2006, Italy exported 166,500 litres of wine valued at about 1 million euros), followed by Australia and California with well-known names like Pernod-Richard, Miguel Torres, E&J Gallo, not to mention Italian labels such as Gaja, Antinori, Jermann, Ornellaia, Carpené Malvolti and Cà del Bosco, many of which took part in the most recent festival of Vinitaly India. But it

wasn’t a one-way ticket to India: “For the first time ever, the next edition of Vinitaly, scheduled for March 29 through April 2, will host local Indian winemakers”, explains Giovanni Mantovani, the General Director of Veronafiere. Who knows? Maybe they’ll decide to copy our Pandoro as well.

AGENT 007, FROM CHINA WITH CENSURE

Twenty-one’s the good one. That’s the number of films it took to officially cross the threshold of the Heavenly Empire. After Sean Connery, George Lazenby, Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton and Pierce Brosnan, Daniel Craig made it. **Casino Royale, the latest episode of the world’s most famous spy series opened throughout a thousand Chinese movie theatres to conquer an audience of one billion three hundred thousand potential movie-goers.** Just like last year with *The Da Vinci Code*, its production company, Sony Pictures, spared no expense for the Bond premiere: huge advertising billboards, ads in every square centimetre of print news, gala evenings (Craig appearing in person, along with his co-star Eva Green and director Martin Campbell), boatloads of sponsors (Smirnoff vodka organised an “after-party” fit for an emperor at the premiere in Shanghai) and utmost attention to voiceovers to be certain that the slang used by the film’s characters was translated precisely. “The response will be excellent”, remarked Li Chow, General Manager for China for Sony Pictures Entertainment, to the newspaper “Shanghai Daily”: “After all, **there were such great expectations: everyone here is familiar with the 007 films**”, even if they are contraband. **Casino Royale had already appeared on the Chinese black market last December**, probably supplied by Russian sources, but its official entry into China can be considered an unsteady milestone in the Great Wall



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of Censorship that was erected long ago by the SARFT, the State Authority for Radio, Film and Television, which for 45 years (from the time Bond was born) has continuously vetoed Ian Fleming's cinematographic creations. "The government could hardly sympathise with an international spy, especially one as scandalous and audacious as Bond", continues Chow. "His 'licence to kill', his sexual escapades do not mirror our values, not to mention those belonging to the communist government during the Cold War." The last 007 adventure to be rejected was *Die Another Day* with Pierce Brosnan, and in that film the "bad guy" looked a bit too much like the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-il, one of Beijing's faithful allies. However, this foreign film-prohibitionism is not limited to films about the Martini-loving spy: Martin Scorsese's *The Departed* was purged of the scene in which a Chinese arms dealer tries to purchase nuclear components, and *The Da Vinci Code* was **boycotted on more than one occasion by China's Catholic Church**, not to mention the cinematic creations which criticize the government: whatever their nationality, these films are sure to be prohibited. The heavy hand of censure is even more severe with local directors like Lou Ye, who had to accept 65% of the 15 cuts proposed for his most recent film *Lost in Beijing* in order

to have his film put up on the big screen. One might ask why did *Casino Royale* make it through? The answer, according to some, can be found in one magical word: propaganda. If James Bond number 21 fights international terrorism – and more importantly avoids "at-risk" Asian settings and characters – how can you not support his mission?

THE YOUNGER BOSSES GROW UP

The cradle of the Mafia might be Italy but, as Vladimir Putin declared last year at the Lahti European Council, Russia is now a great kindergarten. The latest official statistics released in Moscow from the Minister of Internal Affairs demonstrate that: **today in this country there are 12,000 people participating at some capacity in the mafia; 184 godfathers, 446 clan members, 2,000 others fall under their power; in 2006 there were 37,000 crimes – mostly corruption – this is an increase of 7% as compared to last year.**

The daily newspaper "Izvestia" reported that it's a phenomenon that is spreading – still difficult to measure as compared to the Western world because the *Organizatsya* is not structurally organized from the top of the ladder down, but is more dispersed throughout micro-organizations and groups that have local bases; some in fact extend over entire provinces or Republics. These clans also have another characteristic: the capacity to gain control over legal activities in addition to the traditional racketeering. *Cosa Nostra*, the Yankee counterpart of the Sicilian mafia, took an entire generation to develop, while the Russian crime scene in 1996 already controlled a large piece of the national and international economy with its illegal trafficking of weapons, drugs, human organs, and its legal trading through controlled organizations of oil, gold, diamonds and other precious goods. The Vice Minister of Internal Affairs, Oleg Safonov, explained to the Muscovite daily newspaper that the nine most powerful mafia groups – out of the 446 – have connections with other criminal organizations

spread through the world; 50 of which have connections regionally while the others are made up of local gangs. Within the *Organizatsya* there are three membership levels: small groups made up of approximately 10 independent people (even if they are affiliated somehow); brigades made up of two to three hundred people which control the smaller groups, and lastly the "thieves within the law" (*vor v zakone*), in other words – the clan members with the most power – often made up of lawyers, physicians, engineers, politicians and, within the last few years, many property agencies have also been a part of this group; all of whom are capable of carrying out large financial transactions thanks to the capital resources accessible to them. Ludwig Fainberg belongs to this last category, a Russian-American with Jewish origins who has today ended up in Israel after his deportation; also known as "Tarzan" for his long hair and for the fact that when he was young he loved to jump, screaming, from the second and third floors of buildings. His personality inspired the character played by Nicholas Cage in the 2005 film *Lord of War*. From fiction to reality, today General Aleksandr Elin, Vice Head of the Department for the Fight Against Organized Crime and Terrorism of the Ministry of Internal Affairs expresses optimism: "Last year in Russia 47 bosses were arrested, 33 of whom had trials and 4 of whom were expelled; currently 40 are in prison paying for their crime". The alarm remains a serious one however. Even though Elin publicly made light of this fact in the local press ("The Russian Mafia? It's only a myth"), **Putin just recently declared the need to strengthen the fight on corruption, especially within the zones at high risk: the Moscow region, the Far Eastern region of Russia, the Volga region and the North Caucasus region; a total number of 130,000 men are out in the field working in conjunction with police forces.** In fact, this is the same number of men as in the national army. Is this really only a myth?