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Global Hollywood on Cruise control? Maybe not.

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Curator's Note

Thwarted by the dominance of Hindi, Tamil, and other cinemas in India, Hollywood has failed to break through a single-digit market share since the early 1940s. But recently, fortunes have shifted, with the *Harry Potter* and *Marvel* film franchises all doing brisk business in India. Announced in 2009, *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* was designed to capitalize on these recent successes, contracting Bollywood star Anil Kapoor for a role in Tom Cruise's popular film series. Kapoor plays Indian entrepreneur Brij Nath with Cruise reprising his role as Ethan Hunt, and for 20 minutes towards the end of the film the action shifts from Dubai to Mumbai as Hunt's team works to take over Nath's telecommunications network. *MI-GP*'s India scenes were shot in April 2011, but interior scenes that placed the stars in Mumbai and Bangalore were shot in Dubai and Vancouver. To accomplish this visual sleight of hand, Cruise's double stood in for him during second-unit action and chase scenes shot in South Mumbai.

Accompanied by his *MI-GP* co-star, Paula Patton, the real Tom Cruise arrived in India for a pre-release promotional tour in December 2011– the first time that a major Hollywood star had come to India to promote a film. The press coverage of the publicity junket included scenes of hundreds of Indian fans screaming Cruise's name as he exited the Mumbai airport. But the local press revealed that these folks had been paid 150 rupees (about \$3) and promised a buffet lunch to fabricate their ardor. Though many didn't know who Cruise was – they were simply instructed to shout "Tom!" at the foreign VIP coming out of the gate – some "fans" were experienced cheerers used to making money shouting for celebrities. Paid crowds are common in Mumbai and local security actually prefers them to the real thing because they are considered less unruly. However, Wizcraft, the Indian event management company coordinating Cruise's visit, joined Paramount and Anil Kapoor in denying the staged adulation, claiming that that the enthusiasm for Cruise was "pure."

Released in December 2011 across 1000 screens in four languages, *MI-GP* set the record for highest opening weekend gross for a Hollywood film in India, collecting over US \$5 million. But that's the least interesting part of the story. More significantly, Tom Cruise's virtual Indian presence tells us that the material reality of global Hollywood is a necessary but ghostly protocol.

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