



**The changing landscape of Global Cinema - Ajit Duara**

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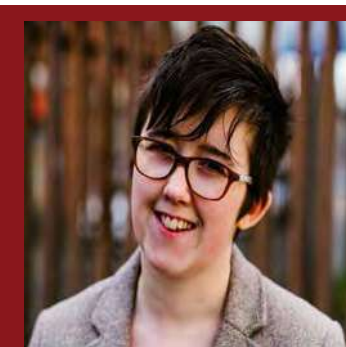
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## Pune unfolds its very own international film festival

Rishika Aradhya

The 21st edition of Pune International Film Festival (PIFF), jointly organised by the Government of Maharashtra and Pune Film Foundation, was inaugurated at Theater Academy's Sakal Lalit Kala Ghar in Mukundnagar on Feb. 02, 2023.

Iranian thriller Holy Spider, directed by Ali Abbasi, opened the film festival. The theme of this year's edition is "Celebrating 75 years of Independence with cinema". They showcased more than 120 films from 2nd February to 9th February, from categories like Global Cinema, Indian Cinema, Animation, Documentaries, etc. Marathi and World Cinema competitions were also organised.

The PIFF distinguished award was awarded to veteran actor Manoj Kumar. The award was also conferred to Enoch Daniels, music composer who is active in the industry for six decades. The SD Burman International Award for creative music and sound was conferred to Usha Mangeshkar, who became a household name in the country with her song Aarti tarpon re Santoshi Mata ki. National Award-winning film editor, A Sreekar Prasad and Polish director Krzysztof Zanussi, were also felicitated during the inauguration.

## BAAZIGAR WAS MY TURNING POINT: JOHNNY LEVER AND HIS MUSINGS ON LIFE, HUMOUR AND FILMS

Akshay Acharya

Johnny Lever is a well-known humorist Bollywood films, having worked with both younger and older actors. He is very familiar with the genre of comedy in mainstream media. In an exclusive interview, he spoke about comedy as a genre in mainstream media, his turning point in the film industry and more...

**What changes do you witness through the perspective of comedy as a genre in mainstream media?**

*The artists today are doing well. They are going a bit towards vulgarity and people have some problems about that. I said that if a person does not have masala (spice) then he goes towards vulgarity. But some people are nice as well who keep the families in mind and who try to make content which is suitable for families. Say for example Amit Tandon. He is doing well. But I think that there is no extra effort as actors used to take earlier. There is no effort because we don't have time... Now even producers don't have time. Earlier when films were made, it used to run for 100 weeks. Golden Jubilee, Diamond Jubilee, Silver jubilee, 100 days. Now it's a big deal if the films even work*

*on Friday, Saturday, Sunday. If it works on Friday then it will work on Sunday. The game is confirmed in three days. You invest something and your earn something. What investment do you do for talent? You are using the bestowed talent. So you are getting the talent for free as you are not investing anything, so don't you think, you should make some efforts?*

*...This can be said that we are living an artificial life. I say this with sadness and this is hurting me. See*



*we have worked for 40 years, I started with stand up in 1974 and since 1980 I have been doing films.*

*This is my 43rd year. During this tenure, I have seen a lot of ups and downs. Earlier there used to be competition but it used to be a healthy and positive competition, but now the conception takes place on negativity. It feels like people are venting out their outburst and hatred and insulting humor is taking place. People are laughing at that. This should happen occasionally and not regularly or else people will get used to it and the future generation will make humor on that only.*

**Do you see any prospects in the new mediums such as podcasts or OTT platforms?**

*Yes, yes we will come why not! But I am not able to work much on it because it is extremely dangerous work. There is too much abuse, and I cannot do that. I try to avoid it. If there is talent and sheer talent then there is no need for vulgarity and absing. These days*

responsibility of the youth and have expectations from the youth on how can you cage the scenario.

**Would there be any occasion when audiences would see you in a serious role or as a protagonist? Do you think there should be more comic protagonist based movies in mainstream media rather than conventional protagonist films?**

*Someone would come for sure with this concept. Things will change and so will the trends. Someone will come and change the trends. Anything can happen. We have done our part. Now we want something good to happen. We want good things to be made.*

**What actor from this generation do you see your traits in and who could carry forward your legacy of comedy?**

*I guess there is no such person to be seen for now. But someone might come as I did as well. You loved me just because they saw something in me. I have worked in languages, I became Sardaar, Sindhi, Marathi and the people loved it. People enjoyed the way the director portrayed us. So we need variations so that people enjoy it as well.*

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## Mismanagement at PIFF: Everything that went wrong

Despite huge success, PIFF's management team fell short

Tanveer Singh Kapoor  
Mrinalini Majumdar

The 2023 Pune International Film Festival saw some mismanagement and mishaps. The film festival gained popularity, with many starlets gracing the venue. The management staff, meanwhile, struggled to maintain coordination and a smooth flow of work.

The spark of all that went downhill was being observed since the first day of the festival. The crowd management was poor, with elderly people being shuffled and young people constantly racing to get seats. A member of the audience stated, "This is such a big festival yet no professionalism and discipline...".

An Iranian movie, in place of a German movie, was screened for five minutes at one of the auditoriums at PVR Pavillion, causing complaints from the audience. Management eventually realized their mistake and changed the movie.

People gathered in colossal numbers, waiting in a long queue to watch the Vidya Balan Masterclass event on 8 February. The organizing committee and the attendees waiting in line got into a heated argument. The doors of the PVR Pavillion Auditorium 6 were

shut, which enraged the waiting audience. The management team received a lot of criticism for their work. A few audience members emerged to speak to the person in charge, but the outcome was futile. They accused him of rude and unprofessional behaviour. A few other members of the organizing committee, including PIFF Dy. Director Coordination and Communication Aditi Akkalkotkar, also arrived at the scene to diffuse the situation.

"There had been a long queue for two hours. The capacity of Auditorium 6 is 170 seats.

We closed the doors because the auditorium got packed," Akkalkotkar told INK. She continued by quoting, "20 seats were reserved for the delegates and others for media officials. Moreover, we don't allow anyone to sit in aisle seats."

In December, there were a lot of Covid cases in Maharashtra, and the government enacted new Covid regulations. Before each movie was screened, an announcer would tell the audience about Covid rules that they should follow; though, the security, some of the PIFF staff, and a small percentage of the audience followed the basic rules of Covid prevention.

### Triangle of Madness: chaos and tussle

Khushi Vats  
Saishree Mohanty

Over 300 people crowded the hall outside Auditorium 1 of PVR at The Pavillion before the screening of the Oscar-nominated film Triangle of Sadness on Feb. 5. Delegates gathered for the movie over 150 minutes early, causing chaos.

Back to back screening of Broker and Triangle of Sadness in the same screen was one of the reasons for the chaos. The hall's facilitated with 243 seats. However, many of these seats were left empty as the doors to the auditorium were closed after overcrowding in the hall.

"There were three different queues all colliding into one pool of clustered audience trying to get in...ultimately we decided to skip the screening despite being the initial people in the queue," Anas Qureshi, a student delegate, said. He also expressed his dissatisfaction over PIFF's management.

"...We closed the door of the auditorium to prevent any injuries. We are ensuring that the rules and queue are adhered to. Even if they want to line up hours before the show, they must not overcrowd the place. We are making sure of that too," said a volunteer from the programme.

After this incident, the committee ensured proper queue formations outside auditoriums with one person taking one place

## 'Madaar', 'Tori Et Lokita' and 'Klondike' - The films that won big at PIFF 2023

Prakriti Deb

The Marathi film 'Madaar' stole the show at the 21st Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) by receiving 5 awards. Ukrainian film 'Klondike' became the only international film to bag more than one award. These awards were presented in two categories - Marathi Competition and World Competition.

'Madaar' and 'Tori et Lokita' received awards for Best Films in their respective categories. The Marathi Competition was dominated by 'Madaar' as it also won other

prominent awards for Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress, and Best Cinematography. 'Panchak' received the award for Best Screenplay, while 'Giraki' and 'Diary of Vinayak Pandit' got Special Mentions in the same category.

On the other hand, 'Klondike' received the Best Director and the Human Spirit awards. Special Jury Mentions in this category were given to two Arabic-language films - 'Boy from Heaven' and

'The Blue Caftan' were presented on 9th February, during the event's closing ceremony Kalaghar. They were introduced by dignitaries like PIFF Chairman and Director Jabbar Patel, ministers from the state and local governments, and renowned actress Vidya Balan.

The winners had been decided by a jury of eight members from around the world, including two Indian filmmakers. It consisted of filmmakers, cinematographers, academicians, and the founder of the Busan International Film Festival.



Credits: Ankit Sonariya



Credits: PIFF, Facebook

## Hallyu wave dips At PIFF

Ishika Roy  
Ichha Sharma

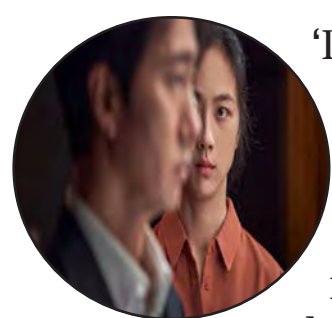
One of the only two South Korean movies being screened at the Pune International Film Festival 2023, *Broker* premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2022. Song Kang-Ho, of *Parasite* fame, won the Cannes Best Actor Award for his moving performance. Hirokazu Kore-eda's 129-minute-long drama explores the exploitative adoption system rampant in the country through the lens of two do-gooders who start a business of stealing abandoned toddlers and selling them to a set of willing parents. The film takes a turn when a helpless mother embarks alongside them on their journey and gets embroiled in a murder mystery. The trio is joined by a four-year-old orphan who finds his way inside their minivan to experience the thrill and freedom of a road trip.



At times funny and introspective, *Broker* takes the audience on a rollercoaster of emotions until the baby finds itself in safe hands. The Japanese director's first foray into the Korean cinema space, *Broker*, paints the picture of a found family brought together by an unlikely combination of greed, desperation, fear of abandonment and good hearts. With two dedicated cops fast at their heels, tensions and suspicions rise each party sceptical of the other's loyalty to the cause, despite their fondness for them.

Unlike the neo-noir crime thriller *Decision to Leave* by filmmaker Park Chan-Wook, *Broker* is a quieter, more intimate

introspection into the political and economic nuances in the social fabric, focusing on the marginalization of oppressed communities dabbling in sex work and their unchecked systemic exploitation. A film with heart-tugging commentary on the significant divide between the upper and lower class, *Broker* will resonate with all those who walked out of the theatre fans of the Academy Award winner in 2020.



'Decision to Leave' does not disappoint as the only other South Korean screening. Park Chan-Wook's films share a surreptitious fondness for the darkest urges of the human soul - violence, deceit, and the desire to betray - earning him the reputation of one of the best storytellers in South Korean cinema. The romantic encounters seen through Park's lens are often fraught with peril, and the uneasy attraction between workaholic detective Hae-jun (Park Hae-il) and widow Seo-rae (Tang Wei) is no exception. Park Chan-Wook's *Decision To Leave*, South Korea's entry for Best International Feature Film at the 95th Academy Awards. The film has received more than 50 accolades including the Golden Elm Award, EDA Award, and others.

Park's approach to filmmaking is distinct, reinforcing the notion that he is a modern-day auteur. The emphasis on narrative, story, and characters is fundamental to his style, as opposed to an emphasis on technical aspects of filmmaking. He's not just one of the legendary Korean filmmakers but one of the greatest filmmakers in film history and a true Auteur.



Credits: PIFF Official website

## I haven't felt hungry in a while, says Vidya Balan

Prakriti Deb

Speaking about her experience as an actress in the Bollywood industry, Vidya Balan spoke about her 'hunger' to act. "I've always been asking people to offer me something I haven't done before. I really want someone to surprise me, to shock me with something. But I haven't felt hungry for something in a while," she said, during her masterclass at the Pune International Film Festival (PIFF). "I didn't want to play roles that were subsidiary to men... wanted to do something which had substance, mirch, everything... *jisme aap Durga bhi ho, aap Rambha bhi ho.*" On being asked how she feels about

the industry being male-dominated, she replied, "No, I feel females are getting more opportunity. Now, as a man, you're either the victim or the hero. But women [are portrayed to] have a journey. Now is the era of women-based films, which are mostly by women. But I have also worked with male directors like Sujoy Ghosh, who have told the stories of women beautifully," said the actress. She challenged the perception that women-centric films are only meant for OTT platforms, and asked instead to let the content dictate the medium of release.

The actress also expressed her displeasure with the idea of acting careers mixing with political ideologies. On this, Jabbar

Patel, director of PIFF, joked if she would rather play a political role, "Maybe a female chief minister?" "For sure," she replied. "Prime Minister! More power!" she laughed.

Reminiscing about her days of starting out in the industry, Balan said that she dreamt of being like Madhuri Dixit. But once one of her films got shelved, she was portrayed as 'jinxed' by some regional magazines, which got her thrown out of around 12-15 films. "It was a very bad time. I fought a lot with my mother. She used to say 'yeh acting-vacating chhod do'. I would go to bed crying every night. But the next morning, again, the 'hunger' would come in."

## 'The Whale', a beautiful abhorrent

Shiva Joshi

Director: Darren Aronofsky

Cast: Brandon Fraser, Sadie Sink, Ty Simpkins and Hong Chau.

Synopsis: A fantastic compilation of trigger warnings with excellent acting, consisting and comprising of various social evils and their beliefs within people, and their impact on people, their lives and their personal relationships.

Darren Aronofsky's *The Whale* is grotesque, yet brilliant; it's the kind one would neither want to watch nor digest. *The Whale* was one of the most sought-after films screened at PIFF, with the number of footfalls marking its success. It was one among the top five movies, but the audience could neither understand its gravity nor the kind of characters represented.

Aronofsky's direction, with Fraser's acting, gave an outstanding result.

However, the latter's character became the main point of discussion. The film is the kind that would either make you speechless or provoke a discussion about its metaphorical and philosophical meaning. The movie seems slow-paced at first, but proceeds to evoke sympathy in its audience for the protagonist in a fat suit to add over 220 kg. The man who feels lost and disgusted by his own self as he can't walk without support makes us sympathise with his deterioration. The movie makes us painfully aware slowly of the various disorders portrayed.

Brendon Fraser's acting has shone more light on his character Char

lie than what he was given credit for. With his amazing acting, dialogue delivery, and chemistry with his on-screen partner who was never really part of the film but made us feel we knew him personally all added sweetness to the whole plot. Certain scenes and dialogues could trigger some people with how relatable it can be.

As he rightly says in the movie, "He thinks his life will be better if he can just kill this whale, but in reality, it won't help him at all," he addresses the connection. "This book made me think about my own life," he adds, talking about his daughter's article.

All in all, *The Whale* is a mystery to those who fail to understand its philosophy, but a beautiful parallel for those who connect to the sentiments.

Credits: TV Insider



## Raj Kapoor shaped today's cinema: Rahul Rawail

Manav Singh  
Prathamesh Basagare

February 6th, 2023, at the 21st edition of the Pune International Film Festival, Veteran Director and Producer of the Hindi Film Industry Rahul Rawail alongside PIFF Director Dr. Jabbar Patel, Chairman of the Film Selection committee Samar Nakhate conducted a PIFF Masterclass on how Raj Kapoor shaped today's mainstream cinema calling him 'Genius'.

Rahul Rawail had worked under Raj Kapoor as the Assistant Director in films like *Betaab*, *Gunhegaar*, and *Arjun Pandit*. Rawail mentioned during the masterclass that Raj Kapoor was one of the firsts to catapult Hindi cinema to overseas and made a mark at places like Russia. While interacting with Samar Nakhate said "When I saw Raj Kapoor working at the sets of *Circus*, it mesmerized me. He conducted 5000 people like a symphony. I am fortunate that I worked with Raj Kapoor, who was a genius and conscious



Credits: Manav Singh

about his films". Rawail also mentioned cinematic techniques while giving an example of how Raj Kapoor used to tap his fingers during the shooting to get an idea of the background music of the concerned scene.

According to Rawail, Kapoor used to make unpredictable choices. An instance was how he was the only one who liked the audition of Dimple Kapadia for the film *Bobby*. He also recalled the time Kapoor once traveled 1198 km from Bombay to Ooty to shoot "Mera joota hai Japani" song for proper location.

Raj Kapoor was known to have a good sense of humour and was erratic on set. Rawail in his Masterclass published the Marathi edition of the book *Raj Kapoor: The Master at Work* which centres around the personal and professional life of Raj Kapoor. The event was held at a PVR auditorium Pavilion Mall, Pune.

## PIFF closing ceremony: Sudhir Mungatiwar promises to empower Indian film industry

Aakanksha Jetley

Pune's successful weeklong international film festival ended with the award distribution at its closing ceremony held at Sakal Lalit Kalaghar in Mukundnagar.

The ceremony was attended by Pune's Guardian Minister Chandrakant Patil State Minister for Cultural Affairs Sudhir Mungatiwar, actress Vidya Balan, and PIFF's Director Jabbar Patel and prominent personalities such as filmmaker Jahnur Barua and playwright Satish Alekar.

Addressing the crowd, Sudhir Mungatiwar said, "All forms of culture from theatres, films to literature are important, and the Maharashtra government will go full force towards uplifting these art forms." He further added, "I often ask 'why do we refer to the Mumbai film industry as Bollywood.' India makes the maximum number of films as compared to any other country. We have to stop copying others and ensure that they copy us,"

Mungatiwar said that the state government had also decided to develop Mumbai and Kolhapur Film Cities and make them better than Universal Studios or Ramo-

ji Film City to empower the film industry. The Maharashtra government also intends to start an initiative to give equity to people who have "good ideas for making films, but no money," Mungatiwar stated. This would be similar to the Bombay Stock Exchange and allow people with limited financial resources to invest in films.



Credits: Bolly

## Holy Spider: Religion, Society and Morality

An edge-of-the-seat thriller that showcases blurring ethics with the weight of religion in society

Sudeshna Ray

**Director:** Ali Abbasi

**Cast:** Mehdi Bajestani, Zar Amir Ebrahimi, **Synopsis:** An ordinary Iranian man, Saeed, on his mission to cleanse his society as he turns serial killer to rid Mashhad of street prostitutes. Based on a true story, the plot highlights the killing of unsuspecting sex workers that Saeed would pick up from the streets. Gender, society, and religion are at the crux of the story, explored by the viewers through the lens of a female investigative journalist, Rahimi.

More interesting than these killings by a man who believes he is doing a service to society is the reaction of the society that raises the "Spider Killer" to the status of a folk hero for safeguarding the contours of their religion. Rahimi struggles through the constructs of patriarchy to investigate the case and has close brushes with danger herself to uncover the truth of the culprit.

With many chilling visuals, like that of one of his dead victim's feet glaring at him in the face when family man Saeed is with his wife, the film does an excellent job of bringing out what an otherwise seemingly ordinary person can be capable of doing in the name of religion.

Rahimi offers relief and hope to the viewer looking for some kind of a resolution to moral policing taking a turn for the worse in the film. As a woman on the job, she herself is policed at every stage for the most basic things.

The film also shows Rahimi's interac-



Artwork by Sudeshna Ray

tions with sex workers and an eerie resonance of how different yet similar their lives as women in a patriarchy are. Saeed's wife, Fatemah, is another pivotal character in the plot, who as another religious woman in society backs her husband's actions in an almost delusional stand.

A gripping plot and an even more impactful ending leave viewers in an agitated and baffled state of mind. Ali Abbasi's *Holy Spider* is not just a gripping watch but shows a mirror to society on the chilling impact blind faith in religion can have on the next generation.

## Iranian movies at PIFF '23: a sombre reminder of women's status in Iran

Films highlight the country's political stance and the oppression women experience each passing day.

Druti Banerjee

The films screened at the 21st Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) have been the talk of the town since the audience experienced the world of cinema. But if something has made a mark this year, without any doubt, it would be Iranian Cinema.

This year's PIFF brought to its audience some eye opening Iranian films. Of all films this year, three most fascinating ones were *Holy Spider*, *The Childless Village* and *Leila's Brothers*. Despite the difference in genres, the status of women in Iran was portrayed clearly.

The movies show how women are objectified, how they are always blamed without reason and how their opinions or decisions are always looked down upon or dismissed.

*Holy Spider*: Sex workers are treated as mere commodities and are considered unimportant. The story is a serial killer drama based on true events from about 20 years ago. Saeed Hanaei murdered 16 sex workers in the city of Mashhad as a process of "cleansing" the society. The victims, except for one, weren't named, portraying how irrelevant Iranian society deems women to be. The journalist who tries to lure the serial killer out of his den was sexualised, and looked down upon multiple times. Also, towards the end as the trials against the serial killer goes on, society idolises him instead because they believed in the cleansing process the killer followed.

*A Childless Village*: Reza Jamali's *A Childless Village* is an uplifting comedy about a village where men divorce their wives because of infertility issues. However, when the divorced women get married to someone else in a different city, they are able to conceive and give birth. It is then revealed that the men were infertile. A film director of that village earlier made a movie on women's infertility to demean them. But later, he made a movie revealing that it was the men who were the root of the problems. Men from the vil-

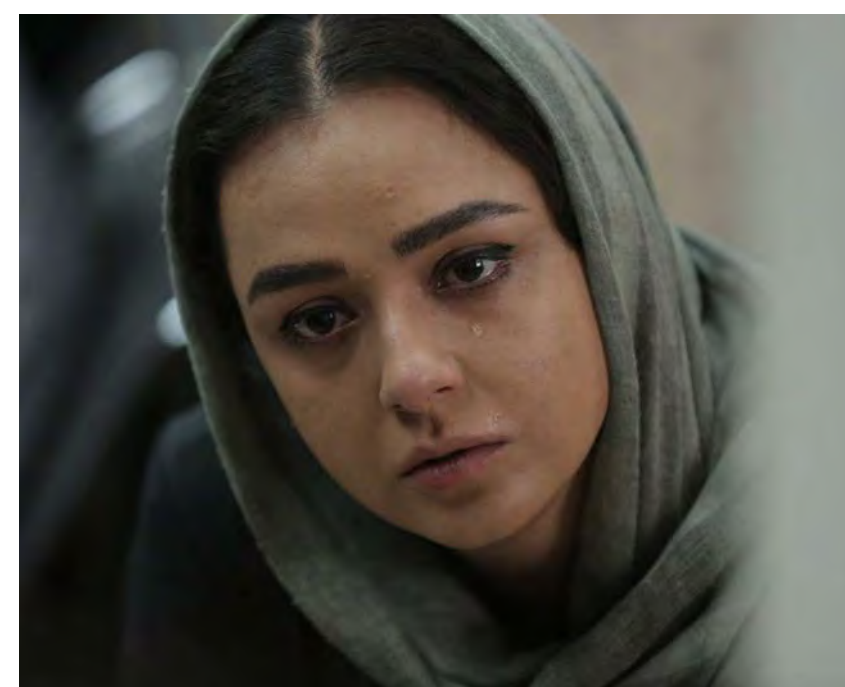
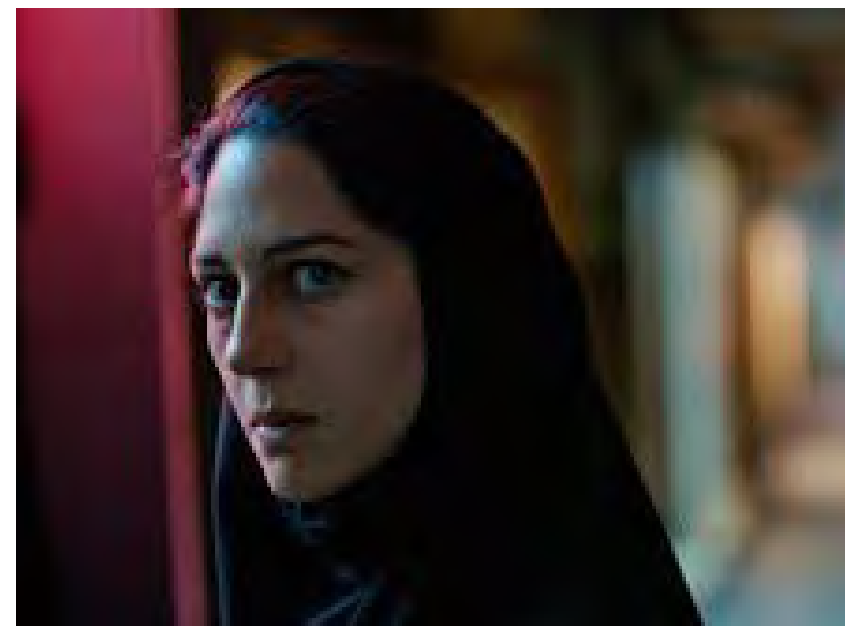
lage ran away with the camera to hide the truth. Not being able to conceive is always seen as the woman's problem; nobody wonders if the men are at fault as well.

*Leila's Brothers*: This movie shows how a woman's opinion is buried because of toxic masculinity, patriarchy and misogyny. With neither of the five brothers having proper employment, the family was not able to make ends meet. In comparison, their sister Leila had a better job which would have somehow helped the family.

Leila planned everything to help the family and the brothers. But the men of the family never understood what a wise plan hers was. She wasn't taken seriously because the family assumed she was naive and unrealistic.

The three movies bring out the true picture of women's struggles in Iran. The directors have used various techniques to tell the audience how unaccommodating of women society is. *Holy Spider* and *Leila's Brothers* have shown two very powerful female characters ready to fight the world but are continuously oppressed by their family or society.

The violent brutality and oppression women experience are depicted in these movies. After the recent incidents in Iran, the condition of women has worsened. Women are confined to their homes since they are constantly under public scrutiny when they step outside. The innate sexism of Iranian males, how they view women, and how women are generally undervalued are all subject to in-depth analysis in the movies.



Left-top: A still from *Holy Spider*, Left-bottom: A still from *Leila's Brothers*, Right-top and Right-bottom: A still from *A Childless Village*

## The Changing Landscape of Global Cinema

Ajit Duara

I attended my first film festival in Delhi - IFFI - back in the '80s. The experience was totally immersive cinema, simply because we did not have access to films in those days. Film festivals were the only way to watch non commercial cinema. Videos were non-existent for these kinds of films, and we only had VHS of Hindi or Hollywood movies.

The first thing that struck me when I was going to my first film festival was that you were actually travelling the globe. You were watching films from all over the world and entering cultures. They do not dub the movies at festivals, so you hear the original sound of the language; be it Spanish, Arabic or French. It is an important aspect of film watching. And because it is in a theatre, it is immersive. You can't leave the theatre in a film festival, because it is so packed, somebody else might occupy your seat. In this closed space, you watch a film from beginning to end and the first instinct you have after watching the film is to discuss it with someone else. These are some of the reasons why theatres are not dying, and will never die.

The post-film discussion, whether or not you identify with the plot or a character, expressing all the questions in your mind, make the film experience immersive, outside the theatre also. That is the purpose of film culture. Your experience in a film festival happens in four parts: Watching the films, reading about the films - reviews, analysis and other text - discussing the films with others, and interacting with the directors themselves, if they have been invited.

Film festivals are great opportunities for students to learn by themselves. You do not need a Professor to explain things to you (thank God). You have the option to choose what you want to watch, who you want to watch and discuss it with, and even to interact with the creators.

People generally watch films to get away from reality, pop culture films like *Pathaan*, for example. It is amazing that people, including feminists critical of the patriarchal society, are celebrating the film, dancing in theatres etc. Maybe it's something to do with Shah Rukh Khan's return. I've read them on

Facebook, academics some of them, writing lavish, laudatory pieces on *Pathaan*. They go : "It's a wonderful film. A little melodramatic and over the top, but a great film". Pray, how is a movie over the top and still great? That is the miracle of theatre watching! But these art films are closer to reality. They tell reality in a poetic manner. Especially the middle eastern films. The dialogues and metaphors are out of this world. In this edition of PIFF, they were easily the most interesting ones.

In the 1980s, European movies were the most sought-after. Over the last 40 years, especially in the 21st century, Europe has exhausted its stories. Since World War II, they've been telling stories -- adaptations of European folk tales and European literature. Now, it's mostly based on exotic tales and a plethora of LGBTQ experiences. Their source material has dried up. The stories in Arab films are all untold. That is why it is so fascinating. This is the context the global culture of cinema brings. *The Blue Caftan* from Morocco is incredible. It is a story of the fluidity of sexual orientation, but so movingly told, without any directness or graphic details, only suggestions through hands and faces. Other fine films from the festival were *Holy Spider* and *Leila's brothers* from Iran, and *Boy from Heaven* from Egypt.

European cinema, in comparison, is too direct today. The indirectness of good cinema seems to have vanished. Old masters like Ingmar Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni, Francois Truffaut, and Tarkovsky do not seem to have been replaced by equally great ones. Good cinema has a new geography. The new generation of European directors is interesting, but lacks what the post war ones had. Europe was destroyed and had to be reconstructed from scratch. So, they had a hell of a lot of stories to tell. I think the same is true for India. We've told all our stories; our film history is so long and convoluted. You have to wait for another 20 - 30 years before you start telling new stories. The new cinema is from the Arab world, Korea, and Latin America. This year's PIFF is far superior to previous editions.

(Transcribed from a conversation with Ajit Duara by The Ink Team)

## 'The Blue Caftan': A story of beautiful companionship, repressed desire, and intimacy.

Aakanksha Jetley

**Director:** Maryam Touzani

**Cast:** Lubna Azabal, Saleh Bakri, Ayoub Missioui

**Synopsis:** Halim and Mina run a traditional caftan store in one of Morocco's oldest medinas. In order to keep up with demanding customers, they hire a talented young man as an apprentice. Mina slowly realizes just how much her husband is moved by his presence.

The opening scene shows beautiful glossy pieces of silk being caressed by gentle hands in a close-up shot. There is something so achingly beautiful yet lustful about this shot that it sets the right tone for the movie. It is immediately apparent that this Moroccan drama, which portrays a middle-aged couple invested in selling hand-sewn caftans, is wrapped around the theme of intimacy and desire.

Halim and his wife Mina run a small shop having expertise in creating traditional caftans in a medina in a northwestern Moroccan city. The creation of this ceremonial garment is a form of dying art. When Halim, a quiet yet meticulous man in his forties, hires a young apprentice, Youssef to everyone's surprise the young man expresses a particular fondness towards the art and especially towards braided gold thread.

Halim informs his new employee that there are no more "maalems" (masters) of this work. And the shop's customers aren't as supportive and grateful as they could be. They complain about how long it takes to complete a hand sewn garment, claiming that the alternative could only be machine stitching.

But Halim's undying love for traditional tailoring has been passed down to him by his father and hence Mina backs him up all the way by hawking the painstakingly beautiful caftans displayed at the entrance of their shop. She was wise enough to know when to flatter and exactly when to draw the lines with the customers.

Halim and Youssef's relationship gradually isn't purely professional. When Halim teaches Youssef a particular stitch, it feels like he's flattering every stitch gently, patiently and passionately. It portrayed that Halim wasn't only trying to teach Youssef but there was a sense of intimacy in it. Naturally, Mina feels the sexual tension between the two as well.

As the film progresses, an inside picture of Halim's very personal life is featured. His frequent visits to a local bathhouse, where he has sexual encounters with men.

Mina is critically sick and likely to succumb to her illness. In these tough times despite his longings, Halim is a faithful and diligent husband, and he does it out of more than a sense of duty. As her illness affects the couple's companionship and their craft, it draws Youssef into both their professional and personal life.

*The Blue Caftan* sets up what appears to be a love triangle on the verge of exploding, but the film stays at a simmer throughout. The situations in this meticulous, compassionate, and subtly alluring picture are however undeniably tense. This story becomes a letter to the layers of love that exist.

## 'Manticore': A Subtly Disturbing Thriller

Jovan Thomas

**Director:** Carlos Vermut

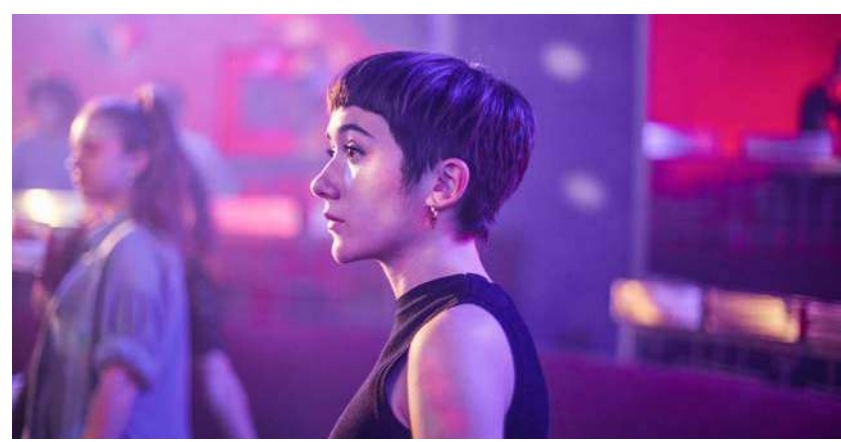
**Cast:** Nacho Sánchez, Zoe Stein, Cataline Sopolana

**Synopsis:** Trauma from a fire causes a video game designer to develop a terrifying fixation.

Ever watched a psychological thriller that doesn't really seem like a thriller for the most part because you're not sure what to feel but still keeps you hooked? That is the kind of experience the film Manticore can potentially give you. The movie takes you through an uncertain journey that seems pleasant at times but later comes a subtle shift to uneasiness.

Vermut has showed his brilliance through this movie as he managed to pull off a thriller that is quiet and unusually mature. The movie is about a man named Julian (Sánchez) who develops an obsession which even he cannot comprehend after a traumatic experience. His social isolation makes the situation worse. The cinematography constantly uses a dark tone to signify his isolation. Cinematographer Alana Mejía González executed the visuals quite aesthetically.

With the introduction of Diana, character played by Zoe Stein, the movie takes a rather colourful turn. It seems to be a positive distraction for Julian as well as the movie viewers. The conversations the two have are innocent, introspective and interesting. Seeing a socially isolated man like Julian being loved raises a sympathetic and optimistic



Credit: IMDb

feeling. The actors did a great job in forming that chemistry. But it gets crushed after the revelation of his dark secret. The secret is something unethical, yet the movie manages to stay neutral on the portrayal of Julian instead of judging him.

The movie ensured that his struggles were put across; it shows he is helpless in dealing with his monsters. Speaking of monsters, there is something fascinating about the way this movie draws parallels- Julian is a video game designer who specifically creates monsters for a living. Coincidentally, he was dealing with his mental monsters that were unfathomable for him.

Manticore is a Persian mythical creature that has the body of a lion and the head of a human. During the climax, he sees a picture of a human head with a tiger's body and it makes him emotional. It is a well-crafted scene which struck the viewers and made them emotional.

It is a movie that is uniquely paced and uniquely written. If you are a lover of thought-provoking plots, then you should definitely give this movie a watch.

## Dip in reception of animated movies at PIFF

Shagun Roy  
Sneh Ticku

The reception of the five animated films at the Pune International Film Festival witnessed a sharp dip as compared to previous years, when over eighteen animated movies were screened and enjoyed a much larger audience.

Critics and cinema fanatics had previously indulged in analysing these films in huge numbers, whereas the auditoriums barely registered any audience this year.

Critically acclaimed movies such as My Love Affair with Marriage (Directed by Signe Baumane) despite being a socio-political commentary, and a satire on

gender roles, saw a very sparse crowd.

Notable film critic Laurence Boyce was quoted as saying, "The film is a musical, too, with Zelma's tale often told through a number of catchy songs provided by Italian composer Kristian Sensini, often sung by a Greek chorus of 'sirens' who follow Zelma throughout her life."

No Dogs or Italians Allowed (Directed by Alain Ughetto) saw a comparatively higher audience reception on the 8th of February, perhaps as it premiered in the evening. The stop motion film with a tragedy-centric storyline revolves around the life of immigrants in last century's Europe.



Sumana Das

Ádám Császi's second feature, Three Thousand Numbered Pieces, talks about the Roma community, historically titled as the Gypsy Hungarians. A troupe of Roma youngsters with traumatic backstories join a theatre group. The play capitalises on their miseries, creating satirical humour against the stereotypes faced by the community in real life. In this interview, the director talks about the Roma community and what obstacles an oppressed community faces.

**Can you shed some light on the origin of the Roma Community?**

The Roma community is originally descend-

ed from Indians around the 10th or 11th century and shifted to East Europe and have been living there ever since. But now, they are a minority group with a population percentage of 8 to 10 and are the victims of violent discrimination such as racism, slavery, and genocide. In recent times, the majority of East European Hate is projected toward this community. My film conveys the message of the Whites exploiting this population in a derogatory manner.

**What are the factors you think as a director are responsible for mass hate towards an oppressed community?**

It has never been one specific factor for sure. Discrimination against Romas has

## Lyra: An investigative journalist who fell victim to New IRA

Mrinalini Majumdar

**Director:** Alison Millar

**Cast:** Lyra McKee, Sara Canning, Nichola Corner

**Synopsis:** Using Lyra McKee's own writing and images, this documentary follows the life of the Northern Ireland investigative journalist.

The most awaited film festival for the city of Pune, returned with a collection of gems. The Pune International Film Festival 21st edition brought back the craze and love for cinema after two years of COVID. Lyra, a documentary, was one such film that struck an emotional chord.

Lyra McKee was an investigative journalist whose mission was to expose the New IRA's atrocities. She brought her first major novel, The Lost Boys, to life.

It was a study of the children who went missing during the Troubles (a 30-year ethno-nationalist conflict in Northern Ireland between the 1960s and 1998), almost often as a result of terrorist activity.

Her work, however, was never published after her death in 2019. The documentary focuses on Lyra's life, her journalism career, her death, the New IRA's deeds, and, most crucially, the horrors in Northern Ireland.

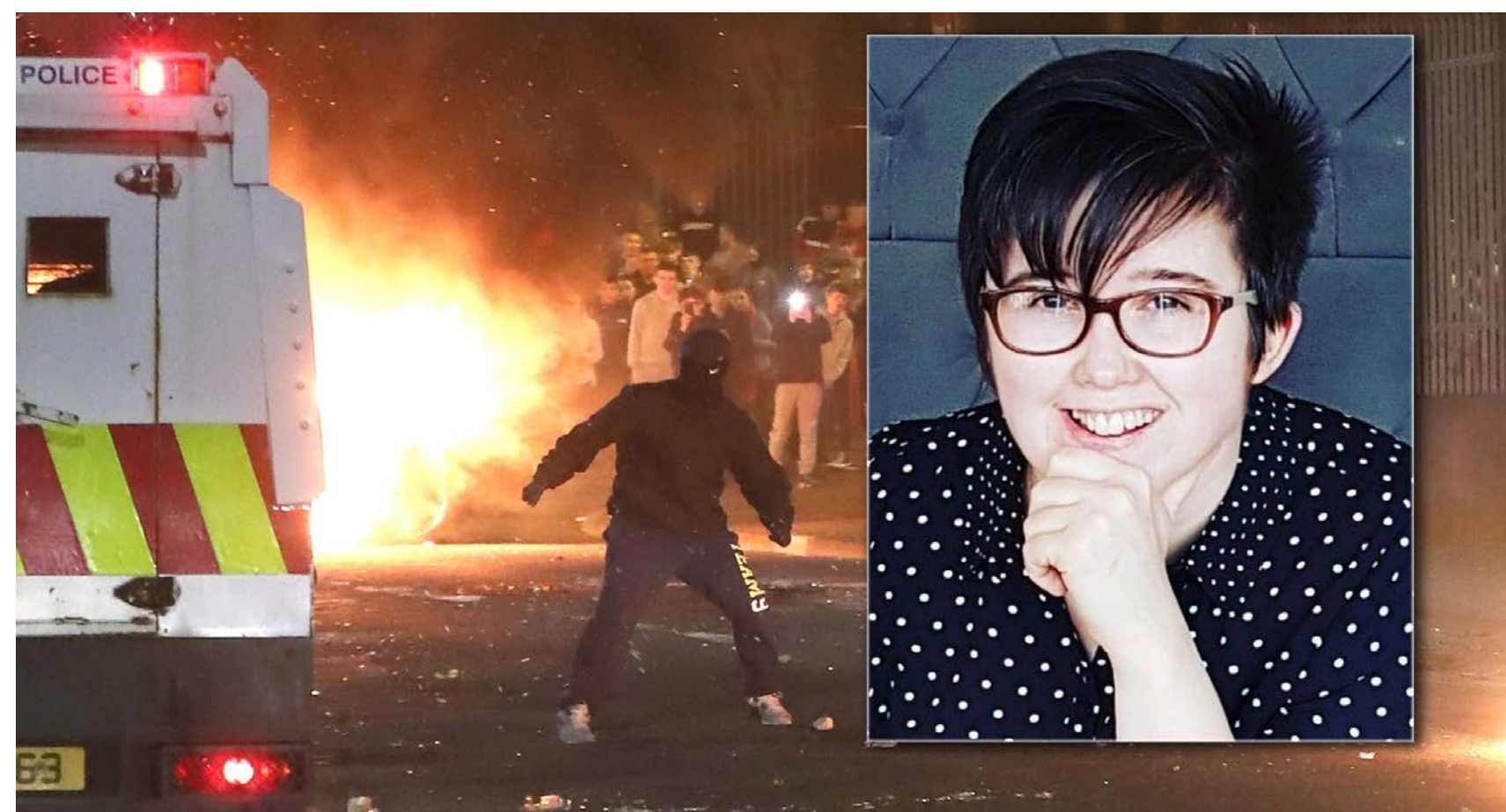
The documentary provides information on what truly happened in Northern Ireland. Lyra was one of the New

Little Nicholas, (Directed by Laurent Tirard) is a comedy based on a young child named Nicholas's childhood, adeptly showcased his pranks, arguments and shenanigans.

The filmmakers skilfully created two contrasted animated worlds to represent, on the one hand, the real world of the authors and, on the other, the graphic universe of Nicholas.

However, the audience reception was dull as there was very little crowd, limited only upto two rows of seats, in a hall that had a lot of remaining occupancy.

This dip in the reception of animated films was not anticipated, and only the years to come will predict the future of animation in terms of global cinema.



Credits: Skynews

IRA's numerous victims. The conspiracy that resulted in her death was the driving factoid of the film and it made headlines in the UK and Ireland.

Although the film's cinematography is not as fancy, it is a well-combined amalgamation of Lyra's footage and the interviews. The documentary's emotional core was heightened by the presence of Lyra's sister, Nichola, and also her lover, Sara.

Whilst the documentary's focus is on one innocent life lost due to political warfare, the book, The Lost Boys, appears to have received some covert advertising.

The book in question appears to be in-

-complete, but it is stated to be under evaluation and has enough substance to be published.

The documentary felt disjointed at places, as a lot of confusing material has been compiled. The film's energy kept it together, yet it seemed unfinished. The sequences that formed the 'disjointed' aspect were the transitions from Lyra's youth to the moment of her death.

Overall, there is much to study and comprehend about Northern Ireland's political situation from this documentary. It's also inspiring to watch a narrative about an investigative journalist whose mission, which became her demise, is now etched on screens for all to see.



A still from the movie 'No Dogs or Italians allowed' (French), Director: Signe Baumane  
Credit: Gebeka Movies

## Adam Csaszí: Roma, Racism And Revival

a very long history. It did not start yesterday. In mediaeval society, Roma people were called Gypsies. They were treated like outcasts and the lowest of the low, and were enslaved all over East Europe, especially in Romania near Hungary. Therefore, hatred and discrimination have a very long history and are built on your language and thoughts about a certain community.

Since one's perception of a certain community is structured by 400-500 years of prejudices, they barely see them as people. In Hungary, racism isn't very evident. Looking down upon the community has never been thought of as such. We should address that to build a new image of them which my film sensibly points at.

**Cinema is a very powerful tool for conveying messages to the mass. How does the art of making cinema help to portray an oppressed race?**

The sole responsibility lies on the shoulders of the film creators. If a film is about genocide toward an ethnic community, the writer and director have to know they can't contribute baseless information or invalidate by reproducing the traumas on screen; they also have to keep this mind that they aren't doing it for shock value. My film is a black comedy where we have kept a satirical approach toward racist stereotypes.

**"...one's perception of a certain community is structured by 400-500 years of prejudices, they barely see them as people."**

Every inch of the film, you will feel the irony blowing a whistle of air on your face.

**Speaking of truthful depiction, how do you feel when you see a white actor playing a person of colour in films?**

It is completely unacceptable as identity politics comes to play. A white person can't play a person of colour in the guise of artistic freedom; this is disrespectful. This is an utter perpetuation of racism in films.

There is a statement that people of colour are not talented enough to be cast for the role. A particular role that has an idea of an ethnic group should be played by someone from that community itself so nothing negative comes out of it. It starts with such baby steps.

Nowadays, streaming platforms like Netflix are sensible enough to provide inclusion of diversity. But the problem with the inclusion is that you just can

never stop - you have to keep going.

**What were the cultural faultlines and misconceptions you found within yourself while working with this community?**

I had to work on my white saviour complex. I was called by one of my Roma friends to help his theatrical group in an educational project which consists of Roma youths. But I didn't realise my white saviour complex, which is also a part of racism. You always have to criticise yourself on your current thoughts as a white person after coming across an ethnic group subjugated to discrimination.

Any gesture you make can be disrespectful or misinterpreted by them. So I had to keep in mind that even when I'm in an authoritarian position, I can't subjugate them. Another thing where I faced difficulty initially was the inclusion of the group in the creatives of the movie.

**What were the cultural faultlines and misconceptions you found within yourself while working with this community?**

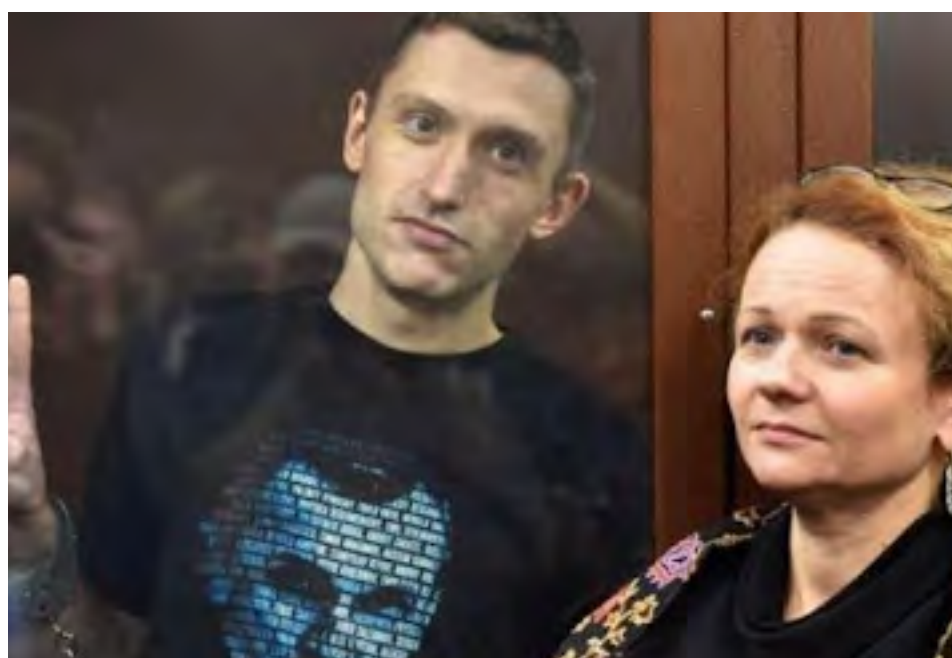
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## 'The Kotov Case': A fair trial, Putin's pity or media's win?

The Kotov Trial brings forth the autocratic system and a desire to fight it.

Swara Garge  
Prakhar Dobhal

The Case' documents the detention and sentencing of Konstantin Kotov, a member of the Moscow-based "For Human Rights" movement and of the Anti-Corruption Foundation. Kotov is also a volunteer for OVD-Info —an independent media outlet defending those detained, accused or con-



Credits: The Moscow Times

demned on politically motivated charges. The Russian documentary follows the struggles of Lawyer Maria Eismont as she works to get the wrongly convicted activist released. Kotov was arrested in 2019 without a warrant. And was tried for a "repeated violation of the regulations for organising a public assembly, rally, demonstration, march or picket" (Article 212.1 of the Criminal Code). This led to his participation in many peaceful protests, making him a prominent activist amassing a following on Facebook.

In the documentary we see how his lawyer was not able to enter the police station. She

was repeatedly stopped by the policemen.

We witness the flawed functioning of the Russian police system as the policemen let the delivery person in and not the lawyers. Pizza and alcohol were delivered to the police station as media, lawyers and family members waited for an update. This shows the tight-lipped working style of the Russian government. There are numerous Russians in prison charged with cases with no access to lawyers or fair trials.

The authorities opened the 'Moscow Case' after the anti-corruption protests against President Putin. Around 3000 protestors were detained and 14 were booked for causing 'mass unrest'. Kotov was sentenced to prison for four years. Despite challenging the verdict multiple times, Maria claimed the trial to be unfair. The case was soon taken up by the Russian media and Kotov gained support. It was Maria's zeal and spirit that brought media attention to the case. Working on severe time crunches expressed how, under normal circumstances, the case study would have a time period of three to four years.

Despite her efforts of assembling a team of leading lawyers, the decision could not be overturned. Kotov got married in prison with only his wife being allowed to see him. Later, when Putin was questioned by a reporter about Kotov, the sentence was reduced to 1.5 years. Though it seemed to be a win for Kotov and his Lawyers, it was really Putin's 'pity'.

## 'Klondike', 'Butterfly Vision' - Depicting Ukrainian War Misery in Women

Surabhi

Though the Pune International Film Festival had many interesting titles in its bag, the two Ukrainian war movies Klondike and Butterfly Vision grabbed a little more attention than the rest. Klondike was released on 21st of January, 2022 and Butterfly Vision on 25th of May of the same year.

These two movies were not just nominated for PIFF but also bagged a lot of other awards- Klondike won second place at the Berlin International Film Festival under the Panorama Audience Award category, and was also selected as the Ukrainian Entry for The Best International Feature Film at the 95th Academy Awards.

Butterfly Vision was also nominated 16 times and won 5 awards

Credit: Klondikemovie.com



at the Grand Prix, Prix d'interprétation feminine, Golden Duke Parallels, and Encounters, and Cineuropa Prize. Both these movies were based on real life events that took place during the Donbass war. The directors of both these movies have their own ideology yet relate with each other on depicting what women go through during war. Women are often the easiest target during wars is the message that both these directors tried to portray.

The director of Klondike, Maryna Er Gorbach, wove a strong tale, whereas Maksym Nakonechnyi, the director of Butterfly Vision, said in an interview that he wanted to show the world the Ukrainian women who were fighting in the ongoing war.

The two movies spoke about how whenever there is an ongoing war, the focus is always on how many died, how did they



Credit: IMDb

die and who is going to dominate whom; nobody speaks about the brutality women go through during war. These movies both feature pregnant women as their protagonists, and how they are treated at times like these.

Neither of these movies were a product of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, but were potentially triggered by it as they were released right after. The events in these movies are real stories based on what happens during war.

They also emphasized on the gender discrimination that is rampant during any war, which is how both these movies won a number of awards and recognition from the audience and the critics.

## Life Outside Film Festival with Indie Filmmaker Prithvi Konanur

Ishika Roy  
Sanjana B.

Seventeeners (Hadileneleentu), a Kannada film directed by software-engineer-turned-filmmaker Prithvi Konanur, was the only Indian movie to be nominated for the World Competition segment at the Pune International Film Festival. The film explores the deep-rooted caste divide embedded in the social fabric of Karnataka. Team Ink caught up with Konanur.

Why did you choose to leave the ending of Seventeeners ambiguous?

When you try to portray so many social issues in a realistic way, any conclusion would be forced. That's why the open ending. Also, the end of this film should only be the beginning of another complex story.

Do you think the Kannada film industry has space for socially progressive movies? How hard is it to find distribution for indie films?

Distribution has been a real challenge, I accept. Unlike Marathi, Malayalam or even Tamil cinema, distribution of indie films is not that easy in Kannada. Unless you're backed by a major star or have sufficient resources for marketing, it is next to impossible. This has to change. Despite all the setbacks, I'm positive about the future.

Two of your movies - Seventeeners and PinkiElli, premiered at Busan International Film Festival. How do you feel about the international exposure to Kannada cinema?

Kannada has had a rich tradition of parallel cinema for a very long time. Previously, filmmakers like Girish Kasaravalli have taken Kannada cinema to the international arena. Recently, my films and many others have taken Kannada cinema to some major International film festivals. The only difference is that because of the recent commercial success of Kannada cinema, many people are taking notice. Shortly,



A still from the movie, Seventeeners.

I see more Kannada parallel films reaching major international film festivals and winning recognition.

Your movies are usually social commentaries. What kind of issues do you encounter in painting a realistic image of exploitation?

One major issue I face in a realistic portrayal of exploitations is research. When you want to keep something close to reality, then research is your weapon. I do a lot of research in most of my writing. And sometimes, this becomes the most difficult issue.



Director: Prithvi Konanur

Talking about the kind of issues I see in society, there are plenty. More than what I know, there is plenty I don't know. And in the future, I want to explore this unknown area so I can tell more original and authentic stories.

**"Unlike Marathi, Malayalam or even Tamil cinema, distribution of indie films is not that easy in Kannada."**

Do you think you'll have more flexibility directing films for OTT platforms rather than as a mainstream director?

That's an interesting question. Any place that gives freedom to a filmmaker is the best platform to put your film on. As of now, I find that freedom being an indie filmmaker.

Do you plan on switching genres? If yes, to which one and how would you portray the story?

I'm not that particular about genres and would love to explore different genres in the future. But let's recognize that genres and styles are two different things. You can explore different genres in the same style of filmmaking. However, I do intend to explore both genres and styles.

## PLAN 75: FICTION, BUT FOR HOW LONG?

Prata Sai Divya

Chie Hayakawa, a first-time director, proposes a programme that would encourage the elderly to end their own life in this sci-fi-tinged social drama. The premise of "Plan 75" is a dark dystopian future for a hypothetical Japan where the elderly are paid money to consent to euthanasia and avoid being a burden to society when they reach the age of 75.

Candidates who are at least 75 years old will be given a modest allowance to help them retire or give to their heirs. They may find some solace in knowing that they are no longer a burden to society in the meantime. Hayakawa is too sympathetic a director to actually advocate for this proposal, as it is clear by the way she presents it that "Plan 75" is only a thought experiment.

However, Hayakawa skips over the most pertinent one: Would Japan, or any other nation, truly support a plan like Plan 75? The only thing that distinguishes this film as science fiction is the way it presents that premise as inevitable; otherwise, Hayakawa concentrates on how shabbily many elders are already treated: abandoned by families, ignored by social agencies, and left to fend for themselves. The Japanese government is short of

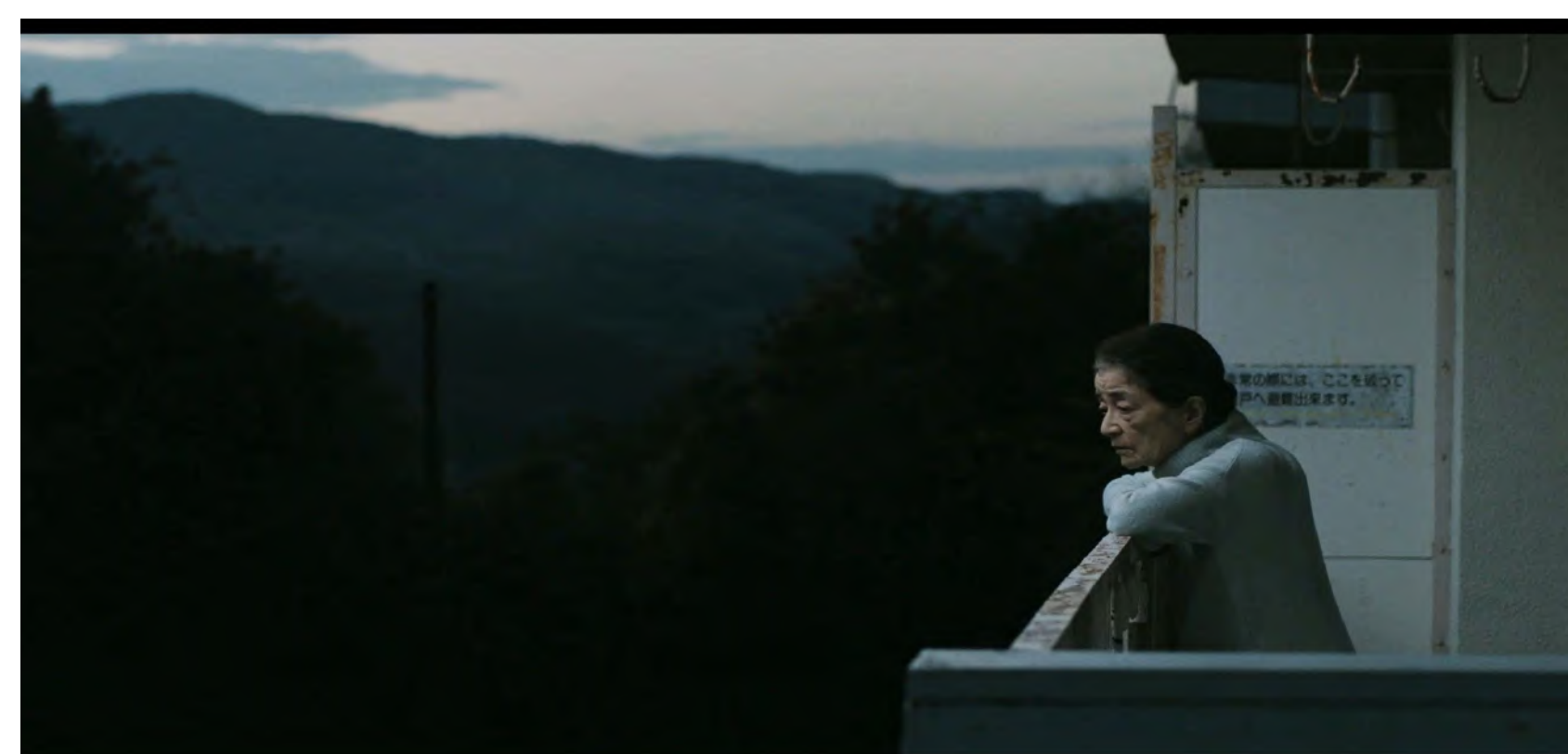
time as its population declines. When it comes to laws governing conception and childbearing, it's now or never, according to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

Most economists agree that demographic trends will stifle output growth and cap the rise in economic welfare. Although increased capital intensity, productivity gains, and higher labour participation rates should lessen the impact on per capita incomes, a declining population is linked to decreasing employment and output.

A simulation based on the current benefit and transfer structure predicts that contributions to the primary wage-based employee pension scheme will rise from 171/2% to 30% by the end of the next 50 years. Medical contribution rates would need to increase by a comparable amount, mostly due to the sharp increase in elderly medical expenditures.

Despite these gains, maintaining financial balance in the social security system would require tripling government transfers to more than 5% of GDP annually, demonstrating how much more challenging the budgetary picture would become as the demographic transformation takes hold, as per IMF.

A still from the movie, Plan 75



## Silence through different perspectives: Analysis of Soul of Silence

Garima Ranjan  
Darshita Jain

Xhobdo Nixhobdo Kolahal, an Assamese film popularly known as "Soul of Silence" by debutant director Dhanjit Das, is a classic example of how Indian cinema, and especially regional cinema, can depict the three ideas of dissonance, silence, and sound in a meaningful setting.

The representation of constructs and ideas is not an easy option in cinema, but its depiction in the movie through minimal words and limited resources made it an exception and got major critical acclamations.

Set in an Indian frame in a village setting, it aims to capture the real essence of the characters and situations. The movie will address the audience through relatability, one of its strong tools.

We will also observe the various angles from which the movie can be understood. The first is about domestic workers and their on-the-ground situation while the second is about the evils of domestic violence.

To understand the idea of not using much sound, it was necessary to portray how silence leaves individuals in a place of disorientation, through which coming out becomes hard.

Undergoing constant domestic abuse, the protagonist is silenced throughout, which sets an underlying idea of how silence can be subjective to all and lead to varied repercussions. The character's silence was meant to portray her helplessness in the situation, which left her in a state of defeat. The Sound is the chapter where the sudden capability of hearing given to the protagonist makes a carefree life into a complicated one. Until he was unable to hear, it was a situation of not being related to most things that change over time, and being able to acquire one of the many senses puts his life in an upside-down situation.

Understanding the third chapter can be similar because even after the senses of hearing and speaking are intact, synchrony still needs to be established. The two protagonists who lose their child in an accident reflect dissonance throughout



Credits: The News Mill

It will be interesting to understand the concept through different mirrors. It is set with minimal sounds in the first chapter of the movie. Even simple conversations are kept brief and to the point, and

and also portray how being in harmony with our emotions is important because being unreceptive to the emotions only puts us in a place of dilemma and regret. The audience is made to consider the idea that even silence can speak and how it needs to be weaved in a proper format.



Credits: PIFF Official website

Classical music singers Rahul Deshpande, of Me Vasant Rao fame, and Priyanka Barve performed with a collective at the opening ceremony of PIFF '23. He also rendered his voice for the theme song composed for the film festival.

## "BAAZIGAR WAS MY TURNING POINT." : JOHNNY LEVER'S MUSINGS ON LIFE, HUMOUR AND FILMS

Continued from Page 1

Some people tell me that we could not forget Mehmood Sahab, but in place of Mehmood bhai, we remember you. So this is a very big deal for me.

So there should be someone who should come in future and he should also be told that you came after Johnny Lever and you remind me of Johnny lever. We need this to happen just because we want people to laugh and be happy, we just need someone who could make them laugh.

Which part of your career do you think of as your turning point?

For me it's *Baazigar*. People started enjoying me and my acting through *Baazigar* and they used to say *maza aa Raha hai* (enjoying a lot). The industry people also started noticing me and said this boy knows the work and the art. I understood the meaning of my work.

With which actor did you enjoy the most while shooting your films?

I have worked with many actors both from younger generations and old generations. But I really enjoyed working with Paresh Rawal. I am very fond of him and he is fond of me as well. Shooting with is always an experience in itself.

## Adam Csaszi: Roma, Racism and Revival

Continued from Page 4

But I didn't realise my white saviour complex, which is also a part of racism. You always have to criticise yourself on your current thoughts as a white person after coming across an ethnic group subjugated to discrimination.

Any gesture you make can be disrespectful or misinterpreted by them. So I had to keep in mind that even when I'm in an authoritarian position, I can't subjugate them. Another thing where I faced difficulty initially was the inclusion of the group in the creatives of the movie.

# THROUGH THE LENS OF MAHESH NARAYAN

Aishwarya Kumar

Mahesh Narayan is a Kerala state award-winning director for his debut movie- *Take-off*. His latest film *Aryippu* was screened at prestigious film screening festivals like Locarno, BFI London Film Festival, 27th BUSAN Film Festival, and Marrakech Film Festival.

In his exclusive interview with the student desk of INK from SIMC, he talks about how Trivandrum influenced the storyteller in him, his journey from editing to scripting and directing, and how Asgar Farhidi's filmmaking influenced him.

You once mentioned in an interview that the Trivandrum Film Festival is special and how it influenced the storyteller in you.

Trivandrum is not just about festivals. Trivandrum used to have a lot of film screenings in theaters and in auditoriums. These screenings ended with open discussions. This used to be a platform of learning for film enthusiasts. Technicians from other film industries would visit as guests. Commercial cinemas mostly in Kochi and Trivandrum used to have parallel cinemas. Trivandrum can be called as the art school cinema capital of Kerala.

There have been changes to how people perceive Malayalam movies. What has caused this shift in Malayalam cinema?

Malayalam cinema has always strived to make content-driven films. People are discuss-

ing it because of easy access through OTT. There is a revival that happened in terms of content and format, and one example of this content revival is the relatability aspect.

You started your journey with



Credits: FilmiBeat

photography, then moved to editing. Was it a conscious decision to move from editing to scripting to directing and lastly to cinematography?

It was a simple decision. Before joining a film school I had no idea about editing. I used to read a lot, but didn't approach writing seriously. I had an urge to go to a film school. I applied and got in for editing.

umentary is no less than writing one, as it is not just the director's vision but also the editor's vision. With experience, I started developing my own narration technique.

Then there was a point, when I felt the urge to tell stories rather than just edit. Thus, I started to make a movie in 2011. But it took seven years, in 2017, I released my first movie *Take-Off* as a director.

How has Asgar Farhidi's filmmaking influenced you?

My fellow directors look up to a lot of legendary directors as their mentors. Farhidi is one among them. When I try conceptualizing a story, his influence comes as study materials to me. When you are telling a story, there are layers to it. His movies follow a classic way of storytelling. Especially the three act method of Setup, Confrontation and Resolution. I consider myself old school that way. My stories are

influenced by events that happened in my life. For instance, this scene in *Take-Off* where Sameera is tying her pants tightly to hide her pregnancy is something that I have seen one of my friend's wives do.

Similarly for *Aryippu*, I got inspired by a news article of a woman seeking for declaration regarding a lookalike video of her that is being circulated in some porn sites.

**"The only way to learn films is by rewatching and rewriting."**

Any advice for young aspiring filmmakers?

The only way to learn films is by rewatching and rewriting. For instance, when I watched the *Bicycle Thieves*-film by De Sica as a student, it was different. When I watch now, it's different and one discovers new elements previously missed. Yes, one should watch new films, it enhances the understanding but also rewatch. Similarly, rewriting is important. There are stories and scripts that people invest a lot of time in.

The downside is, content is easily available, rewriting helps in catering to the sensibilities of the audience during a period of time. Film students are adamant on rewriting scripts as they feel the essence will go. Keeping the essence, and timeline is important. As storytellers you need to keep this classification in mind. You have to be very sure of your audience and you need to communicate with them as a storyteller.

(For the full interview, visit [www.simcwire.com](http://www.simcwire.com))

## A Glimpse at Farmer Life: Soil, Household, and Money in 'Global Aadgaon'

Shalaka Kachare  
Navya Naveli



Credits: PIFF, Instagram

Maharashtra ranks first in urbanized villages. It is a rebellious struggle against capitalist control and an endless conflict of human courage. Maharashtra has been facing the issue of urbanization of villages for years. Anil Kumar Salve's direction "Global Aadgaon" has widely captivated people's attention as it is based on the life of farmers and all their hardships. The movie focuses on the farmers' battle with urbanization, modernization, and globalization.

The movie uses the region's local language-Marathwada and its old sayings, and punch lines. It has been selected for several film festivals like Kolkata International Film

Festival, AIFF International Film festival and the New Jersey Marathi film festival. The movie talks about the ever-expanding concrete, development of smart cities, and how it renders the soil infertile for agriculture. The movie portrays how the ambitions of the villagers are being restricted and how the villagers, their income, the land that they call home are exploited in the name of progress.

The movie is a message to society.. The state farmers were already fighting with the uncertain weather, on top of that urbanization of their motherland has shattered them. The concept of development had made the poor farmers forcefully sell their land and move to a completely new place and start from scratch.

There are certain reasons why these farmers were forced helplessly to sell their land which they compare to a mother. Firstly, large-scale crop destruction occurs due to erratic weather patterns and inadequate rainfall. Droughts, weak pricing structures, and poor water management have impacted agriculture in the state. It's hard for farmers to repay tons of debt which they are forced to take loan at times of scarcity. Farmers are persistent that their next generation shouldn't follow their footsteps, instead study and do a stable job. Many of these farmers sell their land just for the family's well-being, and some have to do it because of governmental pressure.

Government and foreign companies have manipulated thousands of farmers into selling their motherland by offering them money and a hope of better employment. The director, Anil Kumar Salve, spoke about his motive for the movie concept "I am myself a farmer's son and have seen things like this happening around me. So when we decided to make the movie, I knew it would be close to my heart. And I am happy that so many people like this movie."

## 7 Marathi Films shortlisted for PIFF; 'Madaar' steals the spotlight

Auhona Roy Chowdhury

Seven films got nominated for the Marathi Competition section of the 21st Pune International Film Festival (PIFF). The films were nominated by the Pune Film Foundation and the Government of Maharashtra. Among these movies were Dharmaveer - Mukkam Post Thane by Pravin Vitthal Tarde, Diary of Vinayak Pandit by Mayur Sham Karambalikar, Giraki by Kavita Datir and Amit Sonawane, Global Aadgaon by Anil Kumar Salve, Madaar by Mangesh Badar, Panchak by Jayant Jathar and Rahul Awate and lastly, Territory by Sachin Shiram Mulemwar.

The shortlisted films were announced by Dr Jabbar Patel, the festival director and president of the Pune Film Foundation. The film Madaar, directed by Mangesh Mahadev Badar, won the Government of Maharashtra's Sant Tukaram Best International Marathi Film Award at the closing ceremony

which was held at the Sakal Lalit Kalaghar at Mukundnagar. The award was received by Mangesh Badar in the presence of Sudhir Mungatiwar, Vidya Balan and Dr. Jabbar Patel.

Madaar won several other awards too. The director Mangesh Badar, won the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Chitrapat Mahamandal Best Director Award. Actor Milind Shinde won the Best Actor Award, Amruta Agarawal won the Best Actress Award. Akash Bankar and Ajay Balerao won the Best Cinematographer Award for the film.

Rahul Awate won the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Chitrapat Mahamandal Best Screenplay Award for the film Panchak. The film has been co-produced by Madhuri Dixit Nene along with her husband Dr. Shiram Nene.

Commenting on the response to the film, they said, "We were humbled and elated with the response we received at the screening at the festival". The Special Mention Jury Award for the Director was bagged by Kavita Datir and Amit Sonawane for Giraki while the Special Mention Jury Award for Art Direction was won by Kunal Vedpathak for Diary of Vinayak Pandit.



Credits: Pune Times Mirror

## Woman who challenged the status quo to become the 'First' in Indian Cinema

Kruti Dave

The First female technician in the film industry, five time national award winner across various categories, pioneer in women-steered films - Aruna Raje has many more hats that makes her stand out in the film space. We at The Ink sat with her to chat about all things cinema at PIFF. Excerpts from the interview below.

**What are the difficulties 'You' being a women director faced while working in the industry?**

The film industry has always been male-dominant. So, if one day, suddenly, your boss becomes a female director, it is difficult to swallow. The film industry was such that they wouldn't listen to you because you're a woman. For years, I would get this 'Ladki hai.' Crew members on the set would neglect my words. So, I started giving them orders. However, I realized they were men. Nourished with patriarchy, these men won't take orders from a woman.

So, I used to move things myself, change the setting, etc. I played every role while shooting my films, from a director to a crew member. Watching me doing things on my own, these men used to feel ashamed and would then start working with me, cooperating with me. You find a way to make them work for you, be it a request. But find a way to ensure they work for you with their will.

**Why did you choose female protagonists against traditional male leads for your films?**



Credits: Hindustan Times

## Director Chaitanya Tamhane's notes on effective processes during filmmaking

Shrutika Patil

Chaitanya Tamhane, film director known for, films Court and The Disciple, believes that good communication and excellent people management are essential to the craft of filmmaking because so much of the work revolves around them.

"The off-screen casting plays as important a role as on-screen casting. Every individual behind the camera is as vital to the actors on the screen," he stated during the 'Vijay Tendulkar Memorial Lecture' at PIFF.

Even if my films had a central male character, the female characters would still over shadow the male lead in my films. My mother inspired me. She was a very independent, well-read, extraordinary, and dynamic person. She had this aura that made her personality very powerful. My female leads also had such personalities that they never needed validation to be female protagonists. Growing up, I was a voracious reader, which made my films a little less mainstream. The idea was and will always be to make movies that would make you feel it belongs to you and that you are a part of the world.

**What are your thoughts on these special categories for women-directed films?**

For me, what I stand for is creating phenomenal films. Impactful films give out social messages and show respect to men and

women. I hate the fact that they categorized our work. There were times when I was asked if I, along with other female directors of movies, should be given a special women-directed film category. I refused. We don't want a special section or category for our films. If our films are ingenious, we want to compete; they will find their way to the top.

**How was the experience working with female lead actors like Hema Malini and Neena Gupta, among others?**

All my actors were nice, kind and very supportive. Even among male actors, Vinod Khanna was always supportive and kind. Men and women alike have given me huge respect for my work. I consider all these people who showed their support as my life treasures and supporters. I made space like that, and I could be whatever I wanted.

**Will we be watching your movies on the big screen again?**

Yes, absolutely, yes. Firebrand is my debut movie on the OTT platform, released in 2019. I am working on one project, and everyone will soon know about it. I wish to work, work, and work. Make films that the audience can relate to.

I wrote a book on my life, 'Freedom: My Story,' which pens every experience of my life. I have a lot more to contribute to this industry, and gradually as and when required, I will keep contributing.

Image credits: PIFF, Instagram

When talking about the abilities needed for filmmaking, the young director emphasized the significance of "knowing thyself", and how the art stems from the unconscious. Tamhane also encouraged budding filmmakers to have faith in themselves.

"You must understand yourself and your working style. To perform at your best, one must understand your temperament as well as how to deal with pressures, interruptions and feedback. I follow a mantra that is 'I don't know the answer and I am going to

find it through a process, which will give me my space. We also have no choice but to do it by ourselves," he opined. Saying that he does lots of preparation before everything, Tamhane said, "Always remember two things: test test test...prep prep prep. This will give you the satisfaction to make things right.

Conceptualization, scripting, and production process of the film should be done properly along with rigorous preparation beforehand. And remember to protect your gut throughout the process."

## Cinema depends on the right chord to resonate at the right time: Indrasis Acharya

Ichha Sharma

Indrasis Acharya is an engineer turned Bengali writer-director, who has created cinema that has bagged him accolades at Asia Pacific Screen Awards, New York International Film Festival, and Asia Film Festival. Indrasis' most recent work *In The Mist* is the only film entry at Adelaide Film Festival.

It's a heartwarming story about a woman who finally empowered herself after enduring a dark and abusive childhood while searching for her gender identity on her journey to adulthood. Shilajit Mazumdar and Anuradha Mukherjee star in the lead roles, with Anindya Sengupta playing a supporting role.

As a writer-director, your feature films, *Bilu Bhokkosh*, *Pupa*, *The Parcel*, and now *In The Mist*, have received critical acclaim globally. What elements drive a film's narrative and cinematic synthesis, according to you?

The film is not about a person. The film is about proportion, craft, music, sound, deliverables, message outcomes, and how to deliver them. As a result, people must understand what cinema is. The majority of people do not. They require entertainment. And only 10% of people think of cinema as an art form. The synthesis is a substantial deviation from traditional filmmaking. I've always wanted to make realistic films because I've written my signature, which is realistic.

Audiences have now become language agnostic creating an avenue of global exposure for regional cinema. What is your thought on the extensive coverage of southern regional cinema than that of Assam, Bengal, Manipur and what is making meaningful cinema?

There are plenty of films that will appeal to audiences all over the world, and we must make them aware. We don't use gimmicks, stars, or anything else that has an extra alluring ability to attract people in our films. As for the emphasis, I do not think so. The films are of high quality, and they have a



Credits: The Times of India

strong presence on the international circuit. Regional filmmakers must have compelling stories. So it is not that they are doing good or not being recognized. Slowly they are coming up, and now the cinema is very promising, especially, the north eastern films.

A myth prevails that there is a threshold. If you make a cinema beyond that threshold, it is bad. If you make it above that threshold, it's a good cinema. It's all about the penetration to the market and how people perceive your movie, how they are inclined to your thought process, and your storytelling. So meaningful is different from the thing that cinema depends on. It depends on the right chord to resonate at the right time.

**The Mist taps into topics not omnipresent in Bengali cinema, especially incest and homosexuality. What made you choose these strands of sociocultural aspects?**

The movie was based on a novel written by Sanjib Chattopadhyay, and it was written in 1986. Niharika reveals the intricate nuances of human emotions. In this film, the thin lines between affection, love, gender attraction, and sexuality are somehow in

thin lines between affection, love, gender attraction, and sexuality are somehow intertwined. My intention in making films is to expose the dark concepts that deserve human emotions. Because our upbringing, associated commitment, progression, or education has prevented us from expressing it. The question I raise is, is it a crime to question your emotions irrespective of the person or relation you share.

**In The Mist covers all the three seasons of nature. What was the process of ideation and conceptualization for this symbolic element in the movie that depicted the phases of life?**

As filming of Niharika went on in installments due to severely transitioning weather, we decided to make it happen seasonally. It was a beautiful accident to have summer, monsoon, and winter as three distinct seasons that each have their charm. The vast, empty landscape at Simultala and Giridih, areas of rural Bihar, under the wide lenses symbolized our existence as well and was one of the most prominent features of the film.

## Tora's Husband: Struggles of Running a Food Business during Covid

Rima Das' fourth film showcases the hardships faced by a middle class restaurant owner.

Tanveer Singh Kapoor



A still from the movie, Tora's Husband

Credit: World Film Bangkok

The COVID-19 pandemic became the face of quite a few problems in the world in 2020 and 2021. Millions of people lost their lives across the globe, and a plethora of middle class and poor people's lives were affected. In *Tora's Husband*, Rima Das paints a poignant picture of a person who belongs to a similar category.

Abhay Das, the protagonist, owns and runs a restaurant-cum-bakery in a small town in Assam. Abhijit Das delivers an inch-perfect performance, portraying a character who is fighting to keep his business afloat.

While the pandemic impacted all kinds of businesses, we witness the difficulties in the running of a restaurant in this film. It depicts how people are hesitant while visiting a food joint in the midst of a pandemic. There is always a risk when it comes to safety.

Das is forced to overcome numerous obstacles while getting his restaurant back on track. The new chef is not as good as the previous one. The cakes are now creamier and melt quick

ly, which is something the customers complain about. Paying employees even while running low on funds requires special attention. Das takes on a debt to ensure they get their wages. Additionally, he stands up for them. One such incident which proves this sentiment is when a rude customer bashes a waiter for the quality of the coffee served to him. Das condemns his rowdy and uncivilised behaviour, asking him to leave the place. The film tells us how some customers can be the bane of an owner's existence.

It is quite clearly portrayed that the quality of food served in Das' restaurant is not as good as it was pre-pandemic. Because of a negligible amount of profit, it becomes an uphill task to maintain standards consistently. This stress takes a toll on Das' health, and he finds a coping mechanism in alcohol.

It not only provides us the glimpse of a middle class man surviving, but also the life of the labour class living in extraordinary circumstances, doing their utmost to hold their life together.

## Technical strength compensates weaker story in Beginning

Harshita Mathur



Screengrab from the movie Beginning. Credit: Thirrupathi Brothers

Directed by Jagan Vijaya, the movie *Beginning* was one of the technically creative films screened in this edition of PIFF. Two different stories are told to us parallelly on the screen, this movie has made an earnest attempt to become Asia's first split screen film.

The movie centres around two characters, a girl, Nithya who is abducted and locked inside a room by 3 masked men on one screen, and a specially-abled boy Balasubramaniam on the other half of the screen.

Nithya after regaining consciousness tries to find a way out of the room where she finds a drawer with multiple phones. She struggles to make one of those phones work but her initial attempts go in vain.

Nevertheless, she manages to activate a phone and tries to call up people for help but the phone turns out to be defective. After a random dial her call gets connected to Balasubramaniam's landline, and she asks for his help. After numerous attempts of

trying to make the specially-abled boy understand the situation and help her, she succeeds in making him understand her plight.

Balasubramaniam, listening to Nithya's story of being raped, says "it's just dirt, it will go away while you bathe". Nithya's friend who wanted to marry her is also abducted by the masked men and Nithya is raped in front of him which results in him refusing to marry her. Both Balasubramaniam and Nithya are shown helpless as they are locked

inside their house and room respectively. After a series of intense activities going on both sides simultaneously, one of the abductors comes to know about Balasubramaniam being on call while he identifies him as his neighbour and he goes to help her accompanied by his friend.

In the end, it is shown that Nithya punishes the goon but it is left for the viewers to decipher what she would have done with him.

When talking about the technique of split screen, the director said, "Usually many stories shown in a single frame if you want to go to another you have to cut the scene and come back, but I wanted to convey two story in two parallel frames, I wanted to visualise both characters emotions on the two frames, From the beginning to end I written the story and screenplay on that way. And it will be a new experience for the audience."

In a social context, the movie showed captivity wherein on one of the parallel screens a girl was abducted and locked in a room while on the other a specially-abled autistic boy Balasubramaniam was locked inside the house by his mother for safety reasons. The director through his screenplay has reiterated the idea that specially-abled people must not be seen as disabled or incompetent.

In his exclusive statement for Ink, the director said he wanted to present the specially-abled in a different way which is why he created the character of Balasubramaniam where the audience is made to view the character in a positive light and not only with sympathy.

The director shows rape in 2 different angles, in the film which he considers as the

core element of the movie, wherein he felt that the girl should not be projected in a bad light for what has happened to her and should not carry the burden of it, which is why he incorporated the dialogue "it's just dirt, it will go away while you bathe".

The director in his statement mentioned that he wanted to present a film to the audience without any distraction and stated that with a good script and technical knowledge anyone can ace the split screen style of movie making. He would consider the film to be a success if the audience learnt something from it.

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