



C I N E M A

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PIFF SPECIAL

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Tapestry of Transformation: Evolution of the Festival Through the Years

Dr Jabbar Patel, the Director of PIFF Pontificates over the Cultural Transformation of Films and the Impact of Global Cinema

By Janhvi Ahuja, Savikalpa Thapa & Vidhi Thacker

PUNE: The Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) yet again celebrated its tradition of hosting a vibrant tapestry of films from across the globe. With its rich cultural significance, it provided its audience with the opportunity to expand their understanding of cinema. Variety marked another successful edition of the Pune International Film Festival that celebrated movies from worldwide sources. The cultural importance of this festival gives viewers the chance to grow their cinematically astute awareness. Its 23rd edition took place from 13th to 20th February 2025 and was carefully crafted to continue the legacy of film culture in Pune while providing fertile ground for filmmakers to showcase their talent. PIFF started with the concept of building a healthy film culture that gave enthusiasts access to global cinema.

Every edition elaborated on a peculiar contemporary theme. It reels films from various countries and cultures by portraying talent from different categories such as World Competition, Global Cinema, Marathi Competition, and many more. The festival acted as a gateway for cinephiles to witness unique storytelling perspectives, blending diverse



Director of the film festival Dr Jabbar Patel talking about PIFF over the years.

artistic styles and cultural narratives. PIFF sought the visionary lens to represent not only global cinema but also indigenous films. It strived to create a rich cultural exchange of traditions and customs encouraging viewers to immerse themselves into the depths of rich cinematic experiences. The festival provided

a dynamic opportunity for building connections. People from different fields in the industry came together to indulge in conversations about the ongoing trends of the industry.

To further elaborate on the importance of PIFF, The Ink Reporters had the opportunity to interview the Director of the festival, Dr Jabbar

Patel. Speaking about how the Pune International Film Festival elaborates on the cultural importance of films, he emphasized on how films act as bridge between nations. He said "Watching 20 films is like visiting 20 countries." The diverse films presented in the film festival represented different cultures, making the festival a window to global events and cultures.

The main highlight of this year's PIFF is its tribute to the legendary filmmaker Raj Kapoor. "This is the first time we have devoted PIFF to one filmmaker. I am very happy we have devoted this festival to Raj Kapoor. He's a great filmmaker. And also we are remembering great people like Mohammed Rafi, singer and Madan Mohan, music director." Dr. Patel shared.

Reflecting on PIFF's transformation over the years, he noted its increasing impact on the budding filmmakers. "Especially in Pune, the films presented are inspiring young people who aspire to become filmmakers, not just based in the city but also from the rural areas." He said.

With its commitment to celebrate global Cinema and the birth century of Cinematic Legends, PIFF 2025 provided a platform for cultural exchange and cinematic appreciation. Every year, this festival presents diverse storytelling inspiring the Cinephiles and aspiring filmmakers.

PIFF'25: A SHIFT OF VISION

By Ajit Duara

Every edition of PIFF brings home to us the sheer joy and immersive experience of watching movies on the big screen. The film literate audience, the darkened theatre, the absence of the cell phone ring and its digital glow; all of this directs our undivided attention to a director's individual voice.



For most of film history, these voices have been those of men. But with every new film festival across the world, what is notable is a clear shift to a vision of the world women have always possessed; women looking at men, but more importantly, looking at themselves. One striking example was the film 'Salve Maria' by Mar Coll. The Spanish film is about postpartum depression. It is an indescribable sadness, occasionally so severe that it triggers fantasies of self-harm or even child harm. Director Mar Coll chooses the thriller genre to make her film. The story is of a young writer and new mother who reads about a French woman who has just drowned her baby twins.

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Showman's Magic: PIFF Reiterates Raj Kapoor's Identity in Shaping Cinema

The State Cultural Affairs Minister put forth the announcement of building a Centre of Excellence in Mumbai Film city for the film and entertainment industry

By Shubhangi Chauhan & Thamanna Saddique

PUNE: A grand opening ceremony of the 23rd Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) took place on Thursday, 13 February, 2025 at Ganesh Kala Krida Manch. The Pune Film Foundation along with the Maharashtra government collaborates to organize this festival which will end on Thursday, 20 February, 2025.

State Cultural Affairs Minister Ashish Shelar presented his announcement of building a Centre of Excellence in Film City Mumbai for film and entertainment industry activities. AVGC (Animation Visual Gaming and Comic) represents the centre's name as it brings expert professionals from across the globe to train students in film and entertainment sector advancements, according to Shelar. Guests included Vikas Kharge, prin-



Director of PIFF, Dr Jabbar Patel and Creative Art Director Samar Nakhate

cipal secretary of cultural affairs, together with Swati Mhase Patil from Film City and filmmaker Shaji Karun at the ceremony. Playback singer Kavita Krishnamurthy joined Shubha Khote, an experienced actress among esteemed guests at the event. Other important individuals included director Dr. Jabbar Patel of PIFF alongside Ravi Gupta, the secretary of Pune Film Foundation;

trustees Dr. Satish Alekar and Dr. Mohan Agashe of Pune Film Foundation; and creative director Samar Nakhate, together with member Abhijeet Randive in the PIFF Selection Committee. Actors Shreya Bugade and Kshitish Date served as hosts to begin the program by displaying the official PIFF catalogue.

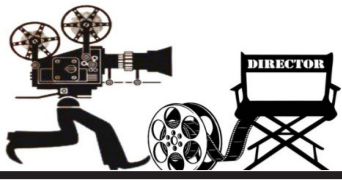
During its theme celebration of 'Showman' Raj Kapoor's

birth centennial, the former actress Shubha Khote received the distinguished honour at PIFF for her notable achievements in Indian film industries. The renowned SD Burman International Award gave Kavita Krishnamurthy recognition for both creative music and sound creation. Krishnamurthy expressed gratitude to her teachers and team, delighting the audience with her performance of Pyar Hua Chupke Se.

Speaking at the event, Kharge emphasised PIFF's growing significance in Maharashtra and the overlooked economic impact of filmmaking. While entertainment is a key aspect, films also serve as powerful tools for social messaging. The film industry contributes 2% of the national GDP; the entertainment sector is growing by 8% per annum. Kharge reiterated Maharashtra government's commitment of supporting both national & inter-

national films, citing that the state possesses excellent infrastructure and shooting locations, prompting international filmmakers to pick up on Maharashtra for their projects.

The festival, as noted by Dr. Jabbar Patel spans various segments and a tribute to the iconic filmmaker Raj Kapoor will mark the festival in the upcoming edition. Upholding high standards, PIFF's judges screened 150 films from 1,500 submissions across 81 countries. The festival features four major sections: World Competition, Marathi Competition, Global Cinema, and Indian Cinema. The director also spoke about the current condition of Marathi cinema production. Addressing how it encounters problems because OTT platforms keep growing. This active issue will constitute a part of the festival's discussion points.



‘Courage and Conviction decides fate of your success’, says Boman Irani

By Anushka Rajvedi & Disha Gupta

PUNE: “I was a young boy who used to sit along with my mother in our shop. One day my father’s friend Farooq Chacha came to visit us. Since the wall of our shop was adjacent to the walls of Novelty cinema, I started narrating the story to him. My mother asked me to take him to the cinema. As I narrated the story to Chacha, he suddenly started crying. People wondered why I had to narrate the story to him in a cinema, the reason being that Farooq Chacha was blind. It was that day when I realized that I must become a storyteller one day.”

‘Vijay Tendulkar Memorial’ on 16 February 2025 at the 23rd edition of Pune International Film Festival. He spoke about his journey of becoming an actor and a filmmaker and emphasised on how great artists like Govind Nilhani, Shyam Benegal and Vijay Tendulkar have inspired and shaped him. Irani emphasised that for a person to be a good actor or a filmmaker is not only to understand the character but to get into the screenplay of the film.

Talking about his journey as an actor, Boman said that for him it was never easy, he faced a lot of challenges before he reached the destination. Boman revealed that he was dyslexic since child-

hood and hence he never had the courage to dream of becoming an actor. However, one person who stood by him to fight all odds was his mother. His mother sent him to watch films everyday to overcome his disability and that was the first turning point of his life. The second turning point was when he gave a job interview at Hotel Taj Mahal, when the interviewer told him that, ‘if you dream and have a want, you need to start from the scratch to make your way to the top.’

The second part of the workshop emphasised on screenplay writing. Irani explained that in a movie, the script is divided into several parts that are; set-up, midpoint, conflict and conclusion. The protagonist gets a false victory or failure and needs to concentrate on the structure of the screen. The characters should have conflict of thoughts as it decides the path they will choose to hurdle over their wants. ‘Need & Conflict develops a character.’

“What do you want to achieve, What do you need in your life? This is what conflict gives you, to raise stakes for yourself. Conflict needs to be of equal weightage,” he added. He talked about how the formation of a character in a film is a reaction to the conflict of a scene, which they further unravel by revealing and negotiating on desires. He concluded the session with a note on explaining the needs of a character, the wants of the audience, emphasizing on that president that it is only the character who is responsible to take care of the flaws as everything is a vision or art.



Boman Irani at PIFF 2025 presents lecture on Acting. Clicked by Disha Gupta

Famous celebrity actor Boman Irani delivered a lecture in regards to the

Convergence of Creativity & Politics: Documentary Filmmaking in India

By Kashifa Wisal

PUNE: “As the landscape of documentary filmmaking has changed with the growth of technology, brilliant documentaries are being made in India. These documentaries have even found success in international cinema,” said renowned filmmaker Umesh Kulkarni, moderator of the seminar on ‘A talk on documentary by renowned makers’ at the 23rd Pune International Film Festival (PIFF). The session held on February 15, 2025, brought together celebrated filmmakers to discuss the evolving nature of documentary storytelling.

Anupama Srinivasan, a filmmaker and cinematographer recognized for works such as I Wonder and Nocturnes, began by discussing her journey into documentary filmmaking. “My journey started from FTII as a cinema maker, not a documentary maker. But I wanted to pursue documentary making as it gives full independence and freedom of the production,” she said. She went on to describe her initial

experiences creating shorter documentaries where she managed all aspects of the production, including cinematography and editing.

“When you shoot and edit the film yourself, you understand yourself better. It was a critical experience of my life,” she added. Srinivasan also shared how her film I Wonder took seven years to make, as she sought to explore the extremities of the nation and its education system. Sarvnik Kaur, the director of Against the Tide, talked about political complexities in her film. “Against the Tide is a political film,” she explained, referring to how climate change impacts coastal communities. “Organizations like CMFRI keep preaching about sustaining life in the sea and ocean, but through this film, I wanted to show the actual displacement of people because of climate change.” Kaur’s film juxtaposes traditional values with modern realities, showing how identity and survival intersect in the face of environmental challenges. “One’s identity becomes greater than livelihood, thus each life is very po-

litical in itself,” Kaur remarked. Kuldeep Barve, who was the editor and music composer of Phool Ka Chhand, spoke of the vision for making the documentary, which focuses on the life of musician Kumar Gandharva. He explained, “It was not just a project. This is an essay film about the life of the great musician Kumar Gandharva.” Barve also explained the use of animation in this film which represents music in an abstract form, highlighting that this opened doors to a more interpretive approach. He also underlined the collaborative process with director Amit Dutta, mentioning, “Usually, Amit has a very clear vision of what he wants, but this time he was very open with inputs from us.”

The session on documentaries turned out to be an opportunity for filmmakers and cinema enthusiasts to engage with the creative and political dimensions of documentary filmmaking with the help of a Question-Answer round at the end. It shed light on the complex challenges faced by documentary filmmakers in addressing contemporary issues.

PIFF’25: A Shift of Vision

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This tips her into her own paranoid anxiousness. She sees signs and omens in what she hears and looks at, and the filmmaker uses sounds and spaces to get an insight into the terrified mind of the new mother. It is a style reminiscent of the artist of anxiety, Alfred Hitchcock. His 1963 film, ‘The Birds’ comes to mind, especially when a crow, in this film, functions as a symbol of the animal world taking revenge on the humans for unspeakable atrocities committed upon them.

There were other striking films by women. A film set in Glasgow, Scotland, ‘On Falling’ by Laura Carreira, about a young Portuguese woman falling through the cracks of the immigrant worker experience, is so uneventful and so sad, it makes you weep. It is an

extraordinary debut by the writer and director, who understands, in-depth, the sense of impending loss, working in a dreary job, in a cold and wet land, in a cold and dry language not your own. There were many other voices of women writers and directors at PIFF, each one of them distinct.

The writer is an adjunct faculty at SIMC.



A Talk on Marathi Cinema and its New Challenges: Production to Audience

By Aditi S Bade

PUNE: A panel discussion on February 19, featured industry stalwarts like Sunil Phadtare, Paresh Mokashi, Addinath Kothare, and Aditya Sarpotdar. They shared insights on Marathi cinema’s evolving landscape, storytelling, creativity, and the current challenges. The conversation began by addressing the main challenges of attracting audiences. Filmmaker, Paresh Mokashi, commented that ‘attracting an audience in multiple languages is a difficult task. He mentioned that making a good film is the only remedy possible; even that does not guarantee commercial success.’ Sunil Phadtare pointed out how Marathi films attract publicity on social media but would still not bring audiences to the theatres. Addinath Kothare stressed on taking independent decisions in Marathi cinema and argued that bold storytelling and experimentation push the industry further.

The panel further highlighted Marathi cinema’s lack of promotion. Corporate studios, often led by non-Marathi decision-makers, tend to overlook Marathi films. Meanwhile, South Indian cinema has gained nation-

wide traction through strong satellite TV exposure over the years. The debate on whether Marathi cinema can spark a cultural wave similar to Punjabi and Bengali films across India, engaged the audience. The panel discussed how filmmakers like Aditya Sarpotdar and films like Munjya are making gradual strides. The panel also had a discussion on why Marathi cinema doesn’t produce superstar-driven action films like other industries. The panel defended Marathi cinema’s tradition of prioritizing content over stardom.

There was an acknowledgement from the panel that OTT. However, they focused on the need of cinematic presentation and visual storytelling because theatrical experience of the audience is critical for financial viability. They also emphasised on encouraging larger investments in the Marathi cinema.

The discussion concluded on an optimistic note about Marathi cinema’s evolving future, with filmmakers exploring diverse genres. Panelists like Srinivas, Aditya Sarpotdar and Paresh Mokashi emphasized on the need for collective effort to elevate Marathi films and encouraged young creators to take risks to promote the industry further.



Panel discussion: Sunil Phadtare, Paresh Mokashi, Addinath Kothare & Aditya Sarpotdar at panel Discussion. Clicked by Aditi S Bade.

‘Cultural Sensitivity is huge in India’, Says Swaha’s director Abhilash Sharma



Director Abhilash Sharma & his team being felicitated by Samar Nakhate

By Prachi Mishra & Rounak Khare

PUNE: The 23rd Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) displayed a curation of noteworthy films from around the world. ‘In the Name of Fire - Swaha’ was one of the nine films from the non-marathi Indian cinema that were a part of the festival. Directed by Abhilash Sharma, the film is a commentary on caste differences in the country, infused with elements of folktales and witchcraft. It follows the story of three characters; a husband out on the streets looking for work to feed his family, a wife awaiting her husband’s return while struggling to make ends meet for her newborn, and a crematorium worker, who tries to find meaning in his work and life.

Abhilash Sharma, in this artistic masterpiece, has incorporated the state’s culture into his story-

telling through the use of folk music. The use of original music like “Maati ke dhela, ee jagah mela” was successful in providing an immersive experience for the viewers in terms of the plot of the film, and resonated with the suffering and pain of the characters shown in the film.

Upon being asked about the plot setting and narrative style, he said, “The entire film is shot in a village in Bodh Gaya as it aligns with the kind of shots we desired.

The narrative style of the film weaves together the life of the three protagonists - the mother, the father and the cremator and discusses the themes of caste-discrimination, poverty and individual’s fight for dignity.”

When asked about the reason behind 98% of the film being in black and white picture format, he explained, “We edited the film in black and white. After consulting

with national award winning-technician Xavier, we came to this decision. Black and white bring about a sense of a dynamic zone.”

He also explained the establishing shot of the film, which was a master shot of the village the film was set in. “The establishing shot sets the mood and moment in the film. It should be a part of a natural process, like the films of the Koyin Brothers, or the scene in ‘Two Days, One Night’ where the woman walks in the establishing shot.”

The film also revolved in grey area, rather than operating in simple black or white. While for some people the film would be haunting, while for others who are aware of the sacrificial practices happening in society it would simply fall in the genre of drama. Sharma further added, “My entire aim was to bring these nuances of life to a broader audience, Nothing happens without a cause; many factors come into play beforehand for something significant to occur.”

Creative Director Samar Nakhate, said, “The cultural sensitivity of India is so huge and therefore, we have the opportunity to present different kinds of Indie films. The whole journey of these filmmakers is so stupendous because of the kind of task they take up starting from the whole visualization to putting everything in its place. And, I just want to congratulate them on their journey.”

Movie from the heart of Maharashtra: PIFF 2025



Still from the film, Sangala captivated audience at festival. Source: piff.com

By Aditi S Bade

PUNE: Directed and co-produced by Raoba Gajmal, “Sangala” won this year’s Sant Tukaram Best International Marathi Film award and a ₹5 lakh cash prize. The film focuses on water scarcity in Maharashtra’s Marathwada region, which has suffered from drought. It depicts the realistic everyday struggles of the elderly farmers, while subtly highlighting the resilience and indomitable spirit of the local population.

Sangla talks about the various problems involved in getting water for the almost desiccated area of Marathwada, including the fading of motors and probably the breaking of family unity due to scarcity.

In an interview with Raoba Gajmal, he stated, “I wanted audiences to feel that struggle, at least for once in their lives, to understand the value of the very element of nature called water.” Talking about his directorial approach, he said, “It was my first film, therefore I was forced to be resourceful. There were limits to the budget, but the most important to me was to actually deliver the story to the screen in any way that was as meaningful and authentic as possible. Every image was designed to make the audience feel the characters’ reality; therefore, camera work had great intent and purpose, making sure that the vast, unforgiving landscape almost became a character.”



Source - Indian Express

When asked about the unique theme of the film that specifically focuses on traditional ways of life, he said, “I wanted to demonstrate a high degree of respect for the culture and customs of this area. Individuals carry their culture through the tightest circumstances. The relationship of people to nature, and details about how animals respond to drought— all that has to be integrated. I wanted to highlight so much of this to create a bond between these elements and the stories that felt more organic.

He further mentioned that “Sangala” was different from other films as he wanted to keep it simple yet impactful. He said, “I did not want to present an exaggerated, melodramatic view of the suffering. I wanted to demonstrate the richness of the ordinary in ways that have their own intensity. An act as simple as drawing water, or chasing after a paltry amount of water can be deeply charged with tension. It is that tension that produces the excitement of the story: true-life events instead of these contrived drama-and emotion sequence structures.”

Talking about the challenges faced while shooting the film, the director said, “The remoteness of the locations made it difficult to shoot in those conditions. Pardon the pun, but that was the point—we didn’t want to stage the reality. Some two years of preparation, right down to the most minute aspect of what sprung from our brains, went into making this film look real. The cinematographer did wonderful work capturing the harsh terrain of Marathwada.”

At the end, he mentioned that through his film he wanted to make his audience understand the importance of water conservation. He said, “If Sangala can make people think about their own relationship with water, then I think we have succeeded.” He also added, “To me, it does truly matter if the film gets out and makes a difference to folks. It is my wish that the audiences really resonate with the film and relate to the message that we are trying to convey.”

In his concluding statement, he mentioned that one should always chase for glory. “Sangala” is a paradigmatic case of cinema that forces the story of an authentic problem.

Witches: Rewriting The Narratives of Motherhood Through Cinematic Frames

By Shweta Jena

‘Every Woman is a Witch. And every Witch needs a Coven.’
- Elizabeth Sankey

PUNE: “Witches” a moving documentary connects the stories of the European witch trials to motherhood and the popular portrayal of women in society. Sankey through her personal stories as a mother links the portrayal of witches in Western society and popular culture to the experiences of numerous women who have experienced postpartum psychosis. Through film clips of witches and her own and her female friends’ experiences, as well as interviews with medical professionals, she challenges the myths surrounding maternity and creates her own grimoire for all to use.

The film starts with collected clips of witches from popular cinema across decades to demonstrate the false narrative of wickedness and madness associated with them that have been incorporated inside our heads for ages. Sankey, explains how this narrative of binaries such as good and bad witches has become a cultural symbol and has been woven into the minds of us young girls and women to make



Art Work By Shweta Jena

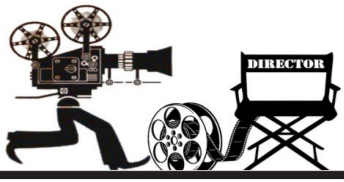
us behave according to society’s framework. Later on, she shares her personal story and connects the madness attached to wicked witches with perinatal mental health. The documentary also shows female solidarity and support during the time of crisis. Those women Sankey interviewed had already experienced it all and helped her recover, providing her physical and mental support during need.

The narrating aspect of the film is powerful and resonating, where Sankey directly talks with the audience as if opening her journal for them to read and review. The background music adds a spellbinding effect to the film, enhancing its gravity and also adding a sense of

eeriness and longing to it. There is a peaceful undertone to the music when clips of midwives and healers are shown and an unsettling and painful throb with witch burnings.

The archival footage i.e. the clips of witches and witch trials used sets a tone for the film, making the underlying message clear to the audience and simultaneously making it interesting and engaging for them. A variety of people from doctors to patients are interviewed, recording their firsthand experience with postpartum psychosis. These interviews provide a profound picture of the realities around maternal mental health and the loopholes in the system, adding authenticity and clarity and providing a spine to her book of spells. It is a well-composed piece including statistics and personal cases of postpartum life.

Witches is a pivotal piece of art bringing maternal psychosis to mainstream cinema, changing the narratives of binaries and introducing the spectrum of womanhood and motherhood. It is a well-scripted documentary, incorporating real experiences and facts surrounding postpartum. More than a film it serves as a guide for navigating postpartum psychosis and a testament to resilience.



Gloria! A Symphony of Defiance and Representation of Female Solidarity

"A film dedicated to all female composers who like dried flowers were left in the pages of history to die." says Margherita Vicario, director of the film



Source: Sobrenet

By Shweta Jena & Nethra Sailesh

PUNE: The 23rd Pune International Film Festival kicked off with an extravagant opening event and the screening of 'Gloria!' (2024) an Italian historical musical film.

Set in the heart of Venice in the year 1800, the story follows Teresa, a silent and solitary maid who works in Sant Ignazio, a religious institution for orphans, that trains girls in music. She often goes unnoticed and isn't allowed to pursue any of the music lessons that take place on the premises. Yet, she sees the world differently. She imagines the rhythms of daily life creating melodies of their own. Everything changes when she discovers a hidden pianoforte, untouched and collecting dust. As she secretly plays it when everyone is asleep, it reignites her dormant love for music. Her

newfangled music akin to today's Italian pop, calls to the other girls. Against the backdrop of a deeply misogynistic society, Teresa and her newfound companions begin to craft something entirely different. Music that defies the norm and symbolizes rebellion and freedom.

The cinematography by Gianluca Palma captures the aura of the French Revolution in 1800 Italy and skillfully portrays it through each frame. The selection of the Venetian institution as the backdrop set for all scenes serves rightly for the themes of rebellion and artistic expression. It soon delves into an artistic revolution.

Regarding acting, Galatea Bellugi as Teresa showcased a refined portrayal of the quiet yet transformative journey of an orphan girl often considered 'voiceless', sidelined, and silenced by society, until



Source - Kino-Zeit

she stuns them with her music abilities. Her chemistry with the rest of the young female cast contributes to the film's overall sense of female solidarity and collective defiance.

Another central element is how music is a protagonist throughout the story, taking the plot forward. Vicario uses a mix of both a classical baroque style and modern elements of Italian pop. It is used tactfully to show the distinctness of rebellion between the main protagonists Teresa and Lucia. Vicario's expertise as a singer and songwriter emerges when she uses music not only to entertain but deepen the emotions in the film.

As the opening film, Gloria! inticed the audience with its toe-tapping, groove-in-your-seat experience. For people interested in period films with an all-female band then Gloria! is surely a must-watch.

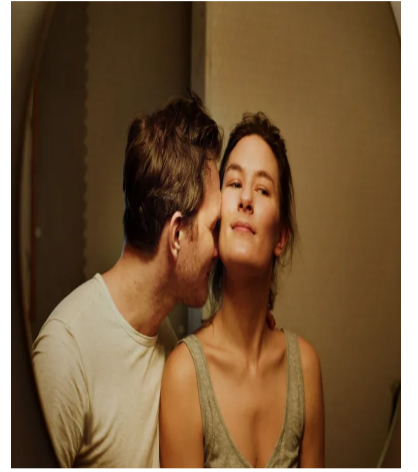
Loveable: Who is to blame for a failed second marriage?

By Somya Panwar

PUNE: Lilja Ingolfsdottir, the Director of 'Loveable' ate and left no crumbs. The film is an honest depiction of grief, love, trauma and rage that comes with the separation and annulment of a marriage. A buoyant intro to fool the audience, a classic background score and a bright color palette for the visuals to introduce a young divorced mother falling in love with a charismatic musician covers all the layers of a successful rom-com, however, the film gradually shifts tone and narrative.

Maria, a young divorcee with two kids determined to have Sigmund, a musician, since the moment she laid eyes on him, makes quite advances to lure him. Sigmund is later smitten by Maria leading the affair between them and vaulting into a marriage after which she gets pregnant. The story then takes a leap of seven years, where she is seen struggling while her husband is busy with tours. Absent husband's failed career and hostile relationship with her teenage daughter has left Maria harried.

Arguments, escalated fights over laundry and unequal childcare disputes suggests that the marital problems the couple has, might be deeply rooted because of their different, incompatible personalities. Sigmund, suggesting Maria to take anger management classes retaliates by proposing a trial-separation. Sigmund and Maria's rage-filled confrontation during the couple's therapy session shows that marriage has agony in spite of its evident beauty and the worse they speak about each other, the more they realize the emotional cost of



the process in the scene. The incidental details and the monologues with brilliant cinematography by Erica Alexandria Silverman kept invoking the hope in the audience for the couple to get back together throughout the film. Close-up shots, mirror shots and dynamic camera angles that can show the depth and true emotions of the characters make the script remarkable.

A solo scene performed by Heidi Gjermundsen Broch in front of a mirror where she repeats her self-help mantras is the most powerful scene of the film. It not only shows how unsafe she has felt throughout the relationship to express her true emotions to Sigmund because of the fear that he might measure her worth with her trauma and leave but it also portrays a fierce woman who has accepted that she is loveable, and can hold her own hand when there is no one to pick her up.

The film ends with desolating Maria's rage into cathartic self-scrutiny and healing her relationship with her children while accepting her failed second marriage, however the ending leaves most to their imagination.

In the Belly of a Tiger: Conversation with actor Sourabh Jaiswar

A feature film set in Pilibhit based on true events that highlights the struggles, sacrifices and the silent battle of survival in Indian rural society

By Disha Gupta

PUNE: The 23rd Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) displayed a collection of noteworthy international films from around the world. One of the Indian films that grabbed the attention of the audience was 'In the Belly of a Tiger' directed by Siddhartha Jatla.

'A disaster was caused by a tiger in the village of Pilibhit. The villagers are losing their lives. But the government prioritizes the life of a tiger over its people. The enraged villagers demand compensation for the lives lost.' An opening like this makes people wonder what the film is about. The film revolves around a landless farmer who makes a drastic move to save his poor family, who are trapped into the wrath of 'capitalism and poverty'. From struggling families to noble sacrifices, the film talks about how an elderly father

decides to sacrifice his life to a tiger, only to free his family from the shackles of poverty.

Speaking about the screenplay, writer Amanda Mooney and director-cinematographer Siddhartha Jatla said that, they crafted an incisive and moving portrait of rural distress in which the helpless victims of relentless systemic violence look inwards and dwell upon the struggles of their lives and find hopes to survive with their family.

Bhagole and Saharsh's dreams and beliefs can, at best, be a window that opens out into a space where the harsh realities of life are obscured. The film holds up the faith that the marginalized have in the power of the divine, something they accept as unquestionable, as a contrast to the shocking insensitivity of the power. Bhagole's desire stems from his innate belief in Lord Vishnu, who makes an appearance in



Source- PIFF, Incisive and moving portrait of Rural Distress

the stage production. The lotus that emerged from his belly, symbolizes the beginning of all creation.

In the Belly of a Tiger contrasts sad resignations with human perseverance, which is enhanced by a gentle, affecting background score

by Shigeru Umebayashi, composer of "In the Mood for Love". The farmers who are now factory laborers, including a woman who is expecting her third child, must continue with poor working conditions and insufficient pay.

Sourabh Jaiswar, the protagonist, when asked about what the ending of the film signifies, said, "We should have hope and faith in us. We have also inculcated the angle of Vishnu in the film as we all are God's children. We might plan things, but God has different plans for us; that's why in the end the angle of mythology was there in the film. People can't achieve anything without struggle." Asking about the making of the film, Jaiswar added, "It took us six years to finish the film from audition to completion. Since the story was based on true events, most of the cast was from Pilibhit, which was the location of shooting." The main characters in "In the Belly of a Tiger" imagine what life could have been and could be. However, the movie does not suggest that dreams may genuinely alter anything in the real world. Jatla captures the true spirit of rural struggles.

‘Future of Media will be Wild’, Paco Torres

“AI is a co-pilot, we are the pilot”: Masterclass on use of AI in filmmaking

By Disha Gupta

PUNE: Paco Torres conducted the workshop Creating Creative Film Content with AI at the 23rd Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) on February 18, 2025. This workshop became one of the primary activities during the sixth day of the festival. Torres addressed how companies need to establish ethical AI priorities before pursuing simple profit objectives.

The famous filmmaker director, Paco Torres appeared at the 23rd PIFF to share how artificial intelligence transformed the film industry. During the workshop participants studied approaches to leverage AI for improved human creativity instead of replacement while concentrating on AI technologies in cinematic content generation. Talking about AI, he said, “AI helps us in every manner. We can

work in a classical, creative way because of AI which make us unstoppable. Gen Z, Alpha and all people use AI. Imagine we see an AI-perfect movie, which will always be error-free but involving AI into a film will be flawless”

Torres stated, “The future of media will be wild,” highlighting the huge opportunity that AI has to transform the world of film. By introducing the idea that “event + reaction = outcome” is a way of thinking about change, he urged artists to welcome this change instead of being afraid of it. He encouraged filmmakers to use technology by saying, “Don’t be afraid of the wave, surf the wave.”

Torres used AI tools to create the one-minute short film “Chai & Secrets,” which highlighted the creative part of AI. He gave an example of how artificial intelligence (AI) may help film-

makers with ideation, visualisation, visual improvement, and editing, increasing the effectiveness and accessibility of content creation.

The speaker explained that Apple along with Netflix, Microsoft and Amazon guide industries at a worldwide level. According to him, technology has unleashed a fresh era of change which needs people to exercise both fundamental thinking and originality. He highlighted the concept of the “Blue Ocean”, encouraging innovative thinking beyond conventional limits. He also advised against becoming overly dependent on technology, urging people to be mindful of wireless connectivity, excessive screen time, and the constant use of screenshots in daily life.

Torres emphasised the value of spontaneity and warned against relying too much on perfection, even when AI increases efficiency. “Spontaneity will be killed by perfection. Since learning will make you unstoppable, we are making the shift to an ongoing education process,” he said. Torres talked to the audience about the increasing work requirement for the film sector and how professionals need to be both smart and hardworking to remain competitive in the industry dynamics.



PIFF 2025: Workshop on Creating Creative Film Content with AI

Lights, Camera, Experience: Students of SIMC offer reflection on PIFF 2025

By Ishita Malakar, Swastika Chowdhury & Shreyanka Nandan

PUNE: Pune just witnessed the finest of experience for all cinema lovers through 23rd International Film Festival “Celebrating the Showman” from 13th till 20th February, 2025. The screening was done at three different theatres across the city where the last screening went until 6pm.

The students of Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication attended the festival with great enthusiasm and interest for learning. Not just SIMC, but students from all over India attended this festival. For some of them, although “the films portrayed a wide variety of countries and cultures, it lacked gender representation,” according to few students of Christ University, Bangalore.

Several genres of films were screened in the Pune International Film Festival ranging from under the categories of the World Competition (released a year earlier to compete in the much-coveted Prabhat Best International Film Award), Marathi Cinema (Marathi Art Films that were released last year for the Sant Tukaram Best International Film Award), Indian Cinema (often excludes cliché Bollywood films but is an amalgamation of offbeat Indian films which are made across all Indian languages), Global Cinema (non-competi-

tion category for cinema around the globe), Documentaries and lastly PIFF Workshops by varied industry personalities, talks and seminars.

One classic anecdote from PIFF includes how most of us got to see Boman Irani, one of the most notable actors across films in Bollywood. He was there on the 16th of February at the Pavillion Mall, delivering a Vijay Tendulkar Memorial Lecture on Acting. He went on to talk about his unconventional journey and his iconic performances in 3 Idiots and Munna Bhai M.B.B.S. To quote him, “If you want to become an excellent actor, you must have a dream and work hard to make it a reality”, and insisted that budding filmmakers and aspiring actors should pursue their dreams and passions rather than fame. The PIFF 2025 was an immersive experience for the students of Symbiosis as it was beyond a cine-

matic event for us. It deepened our understanding of global cinema. It engaged us through the films of different genres, insightful panel discussions and interaction with renowned industry professionals. Thus, for us, PIFF was an opportunity to explore the method of filmmaking beyond the classroom and gain the experience of how visual narratives shape the perspectives and challenge conventions.

The festival had a diverse lineup ranging from independent national gems to international masterpieces with themes like unknown historical facts, social changes, religious prospect and so on. It was also a moment of inspiration and motivation for aspiring filmmakers and media professionals also to push the boundary of creativity. Actually it fostered the sense of community among film enthusiasts, creators and critics.



A talk on documentary by Renowned Filmmakers

PIFF 2025: Analysing the Expectations and Reality

With shifts in venue, changing film selections, and fading audience interactions, cinephiles debate



Attendees in queue for PIFF; Source: The Free Press Journal

By Sidhima Choudhary & Chanakya Ch

PUNE: The Pune International Film Festival (PIFF), has been a cornerstone of celebrating cinema since the year 2002, offering an enriching experience for audiences from all over the world. It has since provided a place for filmmakers from all over the world to showcase their artwork to a wider audience. From its early days at the National Film Archive of India (NFAI), and City Pride to its 2025 edition organised at PVR INOX, the festival has instantly evolved.

PIFF 2025 brought together a variety of people from all demographics, spanning from young cinephiles in their 20s to seasoned film lovers in their 80s, all bound by a shared passion for films. During a conversation with INK reporters, attendees reflected on their insights and experiences of PIFF comparing their expectations with reality. Nikhil, a passionate cinephile working in the engineering industry took a 10-day leave from his work to fully immerse himself in the film festival. His excitement for the festival was so immense that he created an Excel sheet, colour-coding films based on priority to ensure he enjoyed the most of it.

Reflecting on his experiences, Nikhil shared his expectations and reality, “This is my third time at PIFF. Back in 2016, 2017, and 2018, PIFF was an immersive experience where film festivals were more than just about watching films, it was about meaningful conversations and forming new friendships, which this new venue of PVR lacked.” Subsequently for Mandar, a 60-year-old businessman, attending film festivals is more than just an event—it is a cherished family tradition passed down from his mother and shared with his wife. Mandar, a loyal attendee of PIFF for the past decade, admits that while he remains committed to the festival, the selection of films in recent years has left him somewhat underwhelmed.

He believes earlier when Jabbar Patel, Director of PIFF was more actively involved in the curation process, the selection of movies had a distinct charm and artistic depth, but now the essence of Jabbar Patel’s magic is losing its grip. He further said, “Attending a film

festival is like a holiday for me,” wishing for the festival to uphold its legacy, ensuring the quality does not get depreciated but just appreciated.

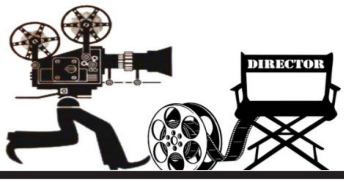
Further, Amit, a 50-year-old orthopaedic doctor and a regular attendee of the festival for the past 6-7 years emphasised the importance of venue in shaping the film festival experience. Reflecting on earlier editions, Amit revealed that when PIFF used to happen in City Pride, Kothrud, three screens were dedicated to PIFF and the auditorium with 420 seats was jam-packed with some people even sitting on the staircase of the auditoriums. During those times, PIFF was about meeting like-minded people and forming connections through cinema. He claimed, “Before Film Festivals were an interactive celebration, now it is just an individualistic experience.”

Whereas, a bunch of Savitribai Phule Pune University Media students, attending PIFF for the third time, expressed their disappointment over the festival’s declining interactive spirit. They mentioned that before, PIFF used to offer student passes which allowed the students to engage and merge with the crowd more. However with the removal of the student passes, they felt a growing disconnect between the students and the larger audience of the festival.

Beyond these concerns, the students also talked about the unfair selection of Iranian films in the festival where they claimed that a lot better Iranian movies could have been projected.

After analysing all such statements, a common sentiment emerges about their expectations where almost everyone talks about the lack of interaction and community engagement between the audience. Attendees across different demographics echoed the same concern: the festival now feels like a passive viewing experience rather than an immersive cultural event.

The festival was just limited to simply entering, watching a film and leaving immediately after, with no room for discussion, reflection or the organic conversations which once shaped such film festivals. As PIFF progresses, cinephiles hope for a return to its roots—where films were not just watched but experienced, debated, and celebrated as a collective passion.



Exploring the Visionary Themes of Theatre: Lecture by Actor Shubha Khote



Shubha Khote in conversation with Dr. Jabbar Patel and Samar Nakhate

By Savikalpa Thapa, Janhvi Ahuja & Vidhi Thacker

PUNE: One of the rather inspiring sessions conducted by PIFF was the press conference with actress Shubha Khote, who received the PIFF Distinguished Award for Outstanding Contribution to Cinema. Shubha Khote is a cherished actress whose career in cinema spans decades. She has undoubtedly made a lasting impact on Indian cinema and theatre. She entered the film industry during the 1950s and immediately imprinted her journey's mark through her graceful and versatile acting skills.

She is known for her colourful and fantastic screen presence. She gained prominence for her roles in films such as Brahmachari and Ek Duuje Ke Liye. Her genuine and warm demeanour always attracted the attention of audiences who glued themselves

to the screens, not missing even a mere part of her performances.

Her creative resilience in stagecraft and immaculate ability to connect with live audiences reassure her talent as a born performer. Apart from this, Khote also appreciated the dedication of women in cinema as she paved the way for the representation of women in Indian films. Looking back on how it all started, she shared that she used to accompany her father, Nandu Khote, a stage actor, wherever he went and would work as a replacement when there were dropouts, gradually adapting and stepping into the world of theatre.

Her transition into cinema began at 17 or 18 when Amiya Chakrabarty noticed one of her photographs in a newspaper showcasing her sports accomplishments. This led to her casting in her debut film, "Seema." She attributes her comfort in front of the camera to the experience she

gained while working in theatre.

She discusses the technical aspects of acting and how she learnt the basics during her first film with Amiya Chakrabarty. She also discusses playback singing and shares a technique for whispering the song, which helped her appear more natural and in character on screen. She sees dubbing as a necessary evolution in show business, enhancing character portrayal. Critiquing today's comedy scene, she believes it often feels disconnected from the story, inserted just for laughs. In contrast, she recalls how, earlier, comedic roles ran parallel to the main leads and blended naturally into the narrative.

She remembered how she met with an accident while working on her first film, "Seema." This experience led her to explore other roles in the industry, such as editing and directing. As a result, she produced the well-known Marathi movie "Chimukala Pahuna." She continues to enjoy directing all her plays even today. Shubha Khote has had a strong and varied career in cinema and theatre. She shared her experiences at the press conference, celebrating her achievements and inspiring young artists. Through her work, she continues to influence and enhance Indian cinema and theatre.

On Falling: Exploring Immigration & Loneliness

By Prashanth Rao



A UK and Portuguese production, *On Falling* was my favourite out of all the films I saw in this year's PIFF. Directed by Laura Carreira, in her debut feature, the film follows the story of a Portuguese immigrant Aurora (played by Joana Santos), who works for a warehouse as a picker.

The film does an exemplary job of documenting the hardships and struggles of an immigrant worker, who is bound by the capitalistic structures that govern her world and the dehumanizing experience of being a part of the gig economy. Aurora is an immigrant trying to get by in the UK and with barely anybody around her unable to understand her struggles, she tends to keep herself alone and hesitates from forming any bonds in fear of being judged for her work.

The film does an outstanding job of showing how a lot of workers from the gig economy can barely afford to survive from one day to the next. A brilliant example of this is shown when Aurora sneaks up to the common area on her floor she is sharing with other people. In the middle of the night, she ends up stealing a packet of crisps from her



flatmate's grocery packet, as she cannot afford to buy or make any food.

In a world invested constantly in digital connections, Aurora is trying to find real ones. Aurora's loneliness is also shown in a very interesting scene where she goes to the common area constantly to try and talk to her flatmates and their friends, just to not feel alone.

For me, *On Falling* portrays a very personal and intense experience of immigration and social isolation. In a way, it protests against the capitalist bindings of working in a gig economy and strongly preaches for a world where things are different and people are treated as humans and not a cog in the machine.

The writer is a Teaching Associate at SIMC.

Lights, Camera, Winners: Opening Acts to Awards Felicitation



Juries from all over the world participated in PIFF 2025

By Naysa Shrivastava & Aditi S Bade

PUNE: The closing ceremony of the 23rd PIFF was held on 20 February 2025, at Bal Gandharva Rang Mandir, Shivaji Nagar. It was hosted by Kshitish Date, who recently won the Best Supporting Actor award at PIFF for his spectacular performance in the film *Dharamveer 2*.

The event began with a mesmerising performance 'Dhol Tasha', a group of students from MIT ADT University, followed by various Rajasthani, Assamese, and Marathi dance performances. The event, celebrating the art of innovation was attended by a variety of esteemed guests. The chief guests for the day included Dr Rajendra Bhosale, Pune Municipal Commissioner, and Dr Dhananjay

Sawalkar, Joint Managing Director of the Maharashtra Film, Stage, and Cultural Development Corporation. The director of PIFF, Dr Jabbar Patel, felicitated the chief guests and expressed his happiness on the successful completion of the event. He also expressed his gratitude to the guests and said, "I would like to thank the students from MIT and the respected juries from across the globe, I am grateful for your contribution." Dr. Patel concluded the speech by paying tribute to the legendary actor and filmmaker Raj Kapoor. It was the first time PIFF had honoured a single filmmaker.

The director's speech was followed by a note of gratitude by Rajendra Bhosle. He said, "I am very grateful that the festival is facilitated in Natyagruh. Jabbar and I had a conversation and he wanted a

place to organize this event. I helped them by providing a stage and office space." He then spoke about Raj Kapoor, "One cannot forget his contribution to Indian Cinema, he made beautiful films." Bhosle paid tribute to the famous art and production director Nitin Chandrakant Desai. He concluded his speech by emphasizing the growth of youngsters in audio-visual filmmaking and matching international standards. Dr Dhananjay Sawalkar then addressed the audience. Congratulating all the participants and juries, he said "Cinema is a celebration of art, storytelling and filmmaking, it is fostering the community of artists."

Before the results for the winners were announced, the jury panel was honoured with the Puneri Pagdi. The jury panel was a team of distinguished people from all over the globe such as Anirudha Roy Chowdhury (Indian Director), Urvashi Archana (South Indian Actress), Marco Bechis (Chilean-Italian director), Margarida Gil (Portuguese filmmaker), Petri Kotwica (Finnish filmmaker), Tamineh Milani (Iranian filmmaker), Djordje Stojiljkovic (Serbian cinematographer), Sudath Mahaadivulwewa (Sri Lankan director).

WINNERS OF PIFF 2025

CATEGORY

WINNERS

Best International Film	Armand (Halfdan Ullmann, Tøndel, Andrea Berentsen Ottmar)
Best International Film Director	Darkest Miriam (Naomi Jaye)
Jury Special Mention Awards	April (Déa Kulumbegashvili), To a Land Unknown (Mahdi Fleifel)
Best International Marathi Film	Sangala by Raoba Gajmal
Best Director	Gajendra Ahire (Snow Flower)
Best Actor	Anil Dabhade (Sangala)
Best Actress	Chayya Kadam (Snow flower)
Best Cinematographer	Amey Vasant Chavan (Raavsaahab)
Special Jury Mention Certificates	Swati Sadashiv Kadu (Nirjali), Bhakti Ghogare (Giran)
Special Recognition	Mankap Nokwoham