

THE PEACOCK

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Illustration by Chloe Cordeiro

दामोदर मावजो

पावस सोंपलो आनी आमगेल्या आंगणा-पोरसांनी मोर येवपाक लागले. पाचव्या वाठारांत मोरांची थुयथूय पळयतां तेन्ना इफ्फीची याद आयलेबगर कशी रावतली? सिनेमा रसिकांक उमळशीक लागल्या 56 व्या चलचित्र महोत्सवाची. कोणूय म्हणीत- दर वर्सा येवपी ह्या महोत्सवाची नविदाद ती कसली? चवथ, दिवाळी, नातालां, ईद नेमान दरवर्सा येतात वतात. तरी लोक फुडल्या वर्सा नव्यान परबेची वाट पळयतात. कारण नव्या वर्साची परब नवी उमेद, नवे रंग आनी कलेचे नवे आविश्कार घेवन येता. तीच ही उमळशीक. ओंदू नवें कितें मेळटलें काय हाची उत्सुकताय. आनी आमी फटवचे नात हाची आशा.

उक्तावणाचो सुवाळो ओंदू पणजेंत पोरन्या जीएमसी संकुला कडेन उकते सुवातेर जातलो. ह्या वेळार चलचित्रमळार पन्नास वर्सा पुर्ण केल्ल्या रजनीकांत आनी बालकृष्णन ह्या दक्षिण भारतीय कलाकारांचो भोवमान जातलो. ह्या महोत्सवांत जपान हो चलचित्र केंद्रीत देश म्हूण जाहीर केला. स्पेन हो वांटेकार देश आनी ऑस्ट्रेलिया हो प्रकाशझोतांतलो अशें आयोजकांनी कळयलां. हें सर्वसमावेशक नदरेन घाल्लें एक पकदस्त पावल.

महोत्सवा निमतान सर्जनशीलताय, विविधताय आनी चलचित्रांच्या माध्यमांतल्या नवे नवे विशय मांडपी संवसारीक पावंड्या वयली चलचित्रकला सादर जावपाची आसा. तातूंत संवसारांतल्या व्हड व्हड महोत्सवांनी पुरस्कार जोडपाक पाविल्लीं चलचित्रां पळोवंक मेळटलीं. 7500 प्रतिनिधींचे हजिरेत 84 देशांतलीं 270 फिल्मांची दाखोवणी जातली. तेभायर भारतांतल्या वेगवेगळ्या राज्यांतले, विंगड विंगड भाशांतले नामना जोडिल्ले सिनेमाय प्रदर्शित जातले. तातूंत 46 आशियाई चलचित्रांचे प्रिमियर, 4 आंतरभारती आनी 13 संवसारीक चलचित्रांचे प्रिमियर प्रदर्शित जातले. गोंयकारां खातीर अभिमानाची गजाल म्हळ्यार राजेंद्र तालक हांगेलें 'क्लाउडिया' हें

कोंकणी चलचित्र वर्ल्ड सिनेमा विभागांत गाला प्रिमियर म्हूण प्रदर्शित जातलें. पयलेच खेपेक बायलदिग्दर्शकांनी निर्मिल्ल्या 50 चलचित्रांची दाखोवणी जातली. तेभायर 50 पयलट करपी निर्मात्यांनी फिल्मां दाखयतले. ऑस्कराक वेंचून काडिल्ल्या 21 सिनेमांचो आसपाव आसा हें एक खेरीत आकर्शण.

अशीं हीं प्रजावंत निर्मात्यांनी तयार केल्लीं आव्हानात्मक चलचित्रां आतां रसिकांची वाट पळयतात. तातूंत 'ऊल्लिमु आझूल' / 'द ब्लू ट्रेल' हें ह्या महोत्सवाचें उक्तावणाचें फिल्म आसतलें. ब्राझीलंतल्या गाब्रिएल मास्कारू हांणी दिग्दर्शित केल्लें पुर्तुगेज भाशेंतलें हें गाजिल्लें चलचित्र. 'नो अदर चॉयस' हें पार्क च्यान वुक हांचें कोरियन भाशेंतलें, 'फादर मदर सिस्टर ब्रदर' हें जीन जारमुश हांचें फ्रेंच भाशेंतलें, वालेन्तीना आनी नोकोल बेर्तानि हांचें 'मॉस्किटोस' हें इतालियन फिल्म... अशा अनेक विदेशी चलचित्रांचो आसपाव आसा.

ओंदू कांय बदल जाल्यात तांतलो म्हत्वाचो म्हटल्यार उक्तावणाचो दबाजो. फाटलीं कांय वर्सां शामाप्रसाद मुखर्जी स्टेडियमाचेर मनयताले तो आतां आयनाॅक्सा फुडल्यान रस्त्यार मनयतले. शिगमो-कार्निव्हालाचो उगडास जागोवपी संस्कृतीक रथयात्रा काडून. शारांतल्या रस्त्यांचेर काडिल्ल्यान ज्या गोंयकारांक इफ्फीचो उक्तावण सुवाळो पळोवंक मेळनासलो तांकां ही झलक पळोवं क मेळची हो हेतू खंय. मनरिझवण संस्थेन हे रथयात्रे खातीर कांय विशय संकल्पना येवजिल्यात- 'भारतीय सिनेमाचो उत्सव' 'संवसारीक वेदीचेर भारत' आनी 'भारतीय सिनेमाचो फुडार'. रथयात्रेचें गोंयकारांक विशेश अप्रूप आसतलें अशें दिसना. पूण मनरिझवण संस्था नवे प्रयोग करुंक सोदता. ओंदू 'रोमटांमेळ सर्त दवरल्या. हेर लोककलेचे प्रकारूय दाखयतले. 'फाटल्या महोत्सवांतल्यान लिसांव शिकून आमी नवें कितें तरी करुन दाखयतात. तेंच घेवन फुडें वतले अशें ना. घडये आजून वेगळें करतले वा केलां तें चुकलां अशें दिसल्यार फुडाराक सुदारतले, हे भावनेन मनरिझवण संस्था वावुरता अशें दिसता. एक खरें, भारत आनी भारता भायरसून आयिल्ल्या प्रतिनिधींक तशेंच गोंयचे भोंवडेर आशिल्ल्या पर्यटकांक ती एक आगळी वेगळी परब कशी दिसले बगर रावची ना.

SHORT TAKES



I have not experienced anything like this before. My husband works in this industry, so I want to explore and see as many films as I can.

Aparna Kulkarni
Banker
Pune



I look forward to seeing world cinema. This time, for the first time you are going to have a parade and no opening ceremony, so let's see what it is like.

Dharmindra Mehra
Filmmaker
Mumbai



To meet so many people at one place - that is what I'm looking forward to at IFFI. I prefer realistic stories, that's what pulls me toward films.

Gayatri Sharma
Actor
Delhi



I love movies. At IFFI you get to see different faces - new faces from other countries. It's just magical.

Dnyaneshwar Gawade
Civil Engineer
Valpoi

Chief Minister in Charge

INTERVIEWED BY CHANDRAHAS CHOUDHURY

In its 22nd year of being the permanent venue for IFFI, what are the unique strengths and capacities of Goa?

Goa offers a rare and compelling combination of strengths that make it an ideal home for IFFI. The state has proven festival infrastructure, a compact and well-connected geography, and a hospitality industry experienced in managing large international gatherings. Since IFFI began in Goa in 2004, the festival has benefitted from continuous improvements in venues, logistics and accessibility. Beyond infrastructure, Goa brings strong public engagement, vibrant cultural programming, and a wide network of hotels, transport options and event services that can scale seamlessly for delegates and filmmakers. This unique blend—scenic surroundings, organizational experience and tourism capacity—has helped IFFI grow steadily in global stature.

How many venues and cities in Goa are going to screen films this year?

This year IFFI's screenings and events span multiple venues across the state. The five principal venues are INOX Panaji, Maquinez Palace (Panaji), INOX Porvorim, Z-Square/Samrat Ashok, and Ravindra Bhavan (Madgaon).

What was behind the idea of having open-air screenings at Miramar and Vagator? Is it to reach out to newer audiences?

Yes. The open-air beach and park screenings are a deliberate step toward making IFFI more accessible, inclusive and experience-driven. By bringing films out of the traditional cinema hall and into community spaces, the festival allows locals, tourists and passers-by to participate more freely. Delegates also enjoy a relaxed, open atmosphere. The provision of free transport to these venues further shows that the initiative is both logistical—distributing crowds across sites—and audience-focused, widening participation.

How is Goan cinema represented at IFFI this year?

Two Goan films—*Claudia* and *The Pilot*—have been selected for major festival categories, representing the state in the broader programme. In addition, ESG has curated a special Goan cinema section under the "Director's Cut" and "Producer's Cut" sections. This includes *Zero Bulb*, *Halad*, *My Dad Invented the Vadapav* (Ashok Vaidya and Sons), *Meraki – By the Sea*, and *Ghar*. These films, selected from the entries received, showcase the diversity, creativity and storytelling strength of local filmmakers.



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

Goa is India's top film shooting destination. What plans does the government have for promoting film shootings in Goa?

Goa has adopted a multi-pronged approach:

- Film Finance Scheme: The state already offers financial assistance to local producers, with tiered grants of up to Rs.50 lakh for A-category feature films and smaller grants for other formats.
- Simplification of permissions: Goa has updated its Film Shooting Rules and the First Amendment Rules, 2025, moving toward streamlined and transparent permissions. Efforts are under way to operationalize a full single-window system.
- Promotion at IFFI: The State uses IFFI as an outreach platform—through the Waves Film Bazaar, industry meetings and inventive publicity—to position Goa as a preferred filming destination. These steps, combined with India's national reimbursement incentives for foreign productions, make Goa increasingly competitive and filmmaker-friendly.

There are states that offer subsidies for film makers. Is your government

planning anything on those lines?

Yes. Goa already provides targeted financial assistance through its Film Finance Scheme and is continually strengthening its regulatory framework to be competitive. By refining its rules and moving toward a robust single-window permission system, the state aims to offer filmmakers the same predictability and support associated with subsidy-led destinations.

What are the features of the "IFFI Mile" at this year's festival?

The IFFI Mile serves as the public spine of the festival, stretching from the ESG complex to Kala Academy. Its features include:

- A series of exhibition stalls and pavilions hosted by ESG and partner organizations
- Cultural performances, interactive activities and family-friendly engagement zones
- Culinary experiences, music and pop-up events
- A continuous pedestrian-friendly promenade connecting major festival hubs and promoting Goan cinema

IFFI Mile is designed to blend the festival into the city's everyday spaces, making it an open, lively and immersive experience

for delegates and the public.

Do you have any memories of going to the cinema in your childhood?

I have never been an avid moviegoer. However, in recent times I have watched powerful films such as *The Kashmir Files* and *Article 370*. These films, in my view, attempt to present the reality of our history with honesty and courage. I believe young filmmakers should continue to take up such meaningful subjects—films that go beyond entertainment to spark awareness, inspire debate and contribute to positive social transformation.

The actor Rajnikanth is going to be honoured at the closing ceremony of IFFI, for completing 50 years in cinema. Do you have a favourite Rajnikanth film?

Rajnikanthji is an Indian star with a uniquely diverse fan following. He is a global icon and a legendary figure who has made the country proud. I am delighted that he will be part of IFFI this year and that his remarkable contribution to Indian cinema is being honoured. I am sure film enthusiasts and his countless admirers will be thrilled to witness his presence in Goa.

Newcomer's Guide to Panjim

BY PANKHURI ZAHEER DASGUPTA

So you made it to IFFI, the country's biggest film festival. Congratulations. You are now a Cinephile of Consequence. You don't watch films as and when they come out on OTT. You embrace the festival chaos and savour cinema in auditoriums with other opinionated strangers.

Consider this first issue of *The Peacock* 2025 that you are holding as your credentials as "connoisseur" (no further certificates necessary).

But before the rush of back-to-back screenings, zoom out a bit and take in the city where you are. Panjim has been around for some 200 years before you. Did you see it as just "that place where IFFI happens"? It has survived empires, land reclamation, and an appalling number of tourists wearing matching co-ords and straw hats. And it will definitely survive our festival, but let's not make that too hard. Now that I'm officially a Panjim resident, allow me to share a few suggestions and caution against some mistakes that you were probably going to make.

Firstly, as someone in her mid-30s, I wish everyone could lower decibel levels everywhere. But that's a difficult ask at any film festival. You will talk, you will queue, you will complain about subtitles, you will be overwhelmed by the number of screenings and ancillary events, and you will loudly swear your allegiance to that obscure director that no one around you has heard of. Do what you must, but try not to turn Panjim into collateral damage. Please treat it as co-host of the festival, not as coincidental backdrop. Engage with this beautiful city, and be curious about its history, complexity, rhythm, and pressure points.

To begin with, consider resisting the urge to rent the latest SUV. Panjim is one of the last truly walkable cities

in the country. Most parts of the city have sidewalks, and even where they are lacking, walking alongside traffic doesn't feel like a death wish. When given the unhurried pace it demands, the city rewards you with under-the-radar delights that you will most probably miss zipping past on wheels. Take the festival headquarters, for example. The majestic building was once the iconic Goa Medical College.

After finishing your drink at one of the many distinctive bars of Fontainhas, walk down to the old post office square, where you'll see the domineering bust of Dr.

Gomes (cast so intricately that it feels like it might move any second), and the beautiful riverside promenade (to contemplate the films that you just watched, of course!)

The buses run infrequently, but they do run. Besides, there is a shuttle to different screening venues, if you need one. The nearest bus stop to the festival is right outside the Maquinez Palace. You might find yourself waiting for a while, but turn around and watch the Mandovi sky shift colors as the day progresses. And of course, use this time to note the timings of the films you want to see the next day.

would be to push your palette beyond the fish thali. Try ordering the salted tongue at Clube Nacional, crab xec xec at Viva Panjim or feijoida at Mum's Kitchen. Be patient, and please tip fairly. I've often seen service staff in Goa being spoken to sharply by visitors who forget that patronising a business or visiting a place does not come with automatic entitlement. Enjoy the hospitality that Panjim offers with the same kindness and respect that you might expect in return.

Like all South Asian cities, Panjim's society is a complex interweb of caste, class, migration, neighborhood identities, and political allegiances. You will not figure it all out in ten days. You should try not to. Even living here, I have barely scratched the surface, if that. But if you stay curious, a chance conversation with a local Ponjekar might reveal something small but real. A casual opinion on local politics, a historical detail about part of their family migrations, or a recommendation for an eatery that is only frequented by the locals. Hold these snippets with care and let Panjim reveal itself to you. They are more valuable than any Google list.

However, don't expect that every Goan you meet is obliged to provide you with entertaining conversations and "insider" information. Meet people as and

where they are and let the occasional grumpy uncle, who wants nothing to do with IFFI visitors, be.

By the end of it all, you will fall in love. I know I did. The apartment "back home" will seem strangely bleak compared to the beautiful *balcões*, tiled roofs, and seashell windows. You might watch the sunset from your homestay, and feel an inexplicable urge to buy your own villa. Breathe. Let that feeling pass. Appreciate the city that has opened its heart for our beloved IFFI and continues to give. Love it in all its complexity and whimsy. And then let it go.



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

Miguel Caetano Dias, who, while serving as the Director of GMC, revolutionized healthcare in the state. Another favorite is the unassuming National Museum of Customs and GST, a 15-minute walk from the festival. Take a moment to marvel at the curious display of illegal goods captured in Goa. You'll have newfound respect for both smugglers and customs officers. Other gems at a walking distance from the festival venue are the colorful Panjim market (don't miss the fish vendors at the back), the towering statue of parliamentarian and intellectual FL

As a woman, there is a certain ease that I feel in Panjim, which is rare to find in other Indian cities. You can dress how you like, enter a bar by yourself, and be out till late without a male chaperone. At most, an aunty might look at you quizzically if your outfit is particularly experimental. Although fair warning, you will definitely get screamed at if you walk into people's yards to film that aesthetic b-roll for your vlog.

You can find many "restaurants-to-visit" lists for Panjim. Some accurate, some questionable. My gentle suggestion



I came all the way just to watch this one film by Park Chan-wook *No Other Choice* (2025). His filmmaking is so peculiar and unique.

Krishna Reddy
Assistant Director
Hyderabad



I am hoping to watch the panel discussions with the film fraternity and some really nice films from different parts of the world. This is my first time at IFFI.

Mahiema Anand
Filmmaker
Delhi



I plan to go to Margao because there is hardly any crowd there. It doesn't always have to be the fastest finger first; I don't like racing to see a film.

Uttam Sirur
Screenwriter
Mumbai



I'm looking forward to more regional content. Regional cinema shows the very fabric of life, and India is so diverse—it's always interesting to watch.

Maryanne Lobo
Ayurvedic Doctor
Goa

Gabriel Mascaro - “Why can’t a rebel septuagenarian inspire us?”

BY KINJAL SETHIA

“When I came to Goa five years ago, I was inspired. I was working on the screenplay for this movie, and after seeing the casinos here I wrote in a scene of people betting over fighting fishes in a river,” says the visual artist and filmmaker Gabriel Mascaro, whose *O Último Azul / The Blue Trail* (2025) opens the International Film Festival of India 2025, after winning the Silver Bear - Grand Jury Prize at the Berlin Film Festival earlier this year. The 42-year-old Brazilian says “I think I could move to Goa permanently. Especially because my hometown Recife also has similar Portuguese-era colonial architecture, and I also recognise similarities in the cuisine. The weather, the vegetation, the sunlight; everything reminds me of home.”

As a teen, Mascaro aspired to become a musician, and play guitar in a band. “Obviously I failed at that, he says, “even when I began studying visual arts, I was not thinking of making films. I just wanted to explore the process and aesthetics of creation in itself. Visual Arts made it possible to explore the different possibilities; it was the kind of study where not only the result, but even the process mattered.” From there, Mascaro moved to amalgamating visual arts with documentaries: “I came to film-making by accident, and I discovered myself as a director while using filmmaking as a tool. Films allow me to explore the grammar of aesthetics in diverse ways.”

Mascaro says he has learned that “the story is not as important as how you tell it. You have to think about how the grammar of the film is working to express what you want it to. There are lots of stories, but the grammar of films is very singular. That is why I built an absurd world in this film, a kind of speculation about Brazil that is suspended from reality of space and

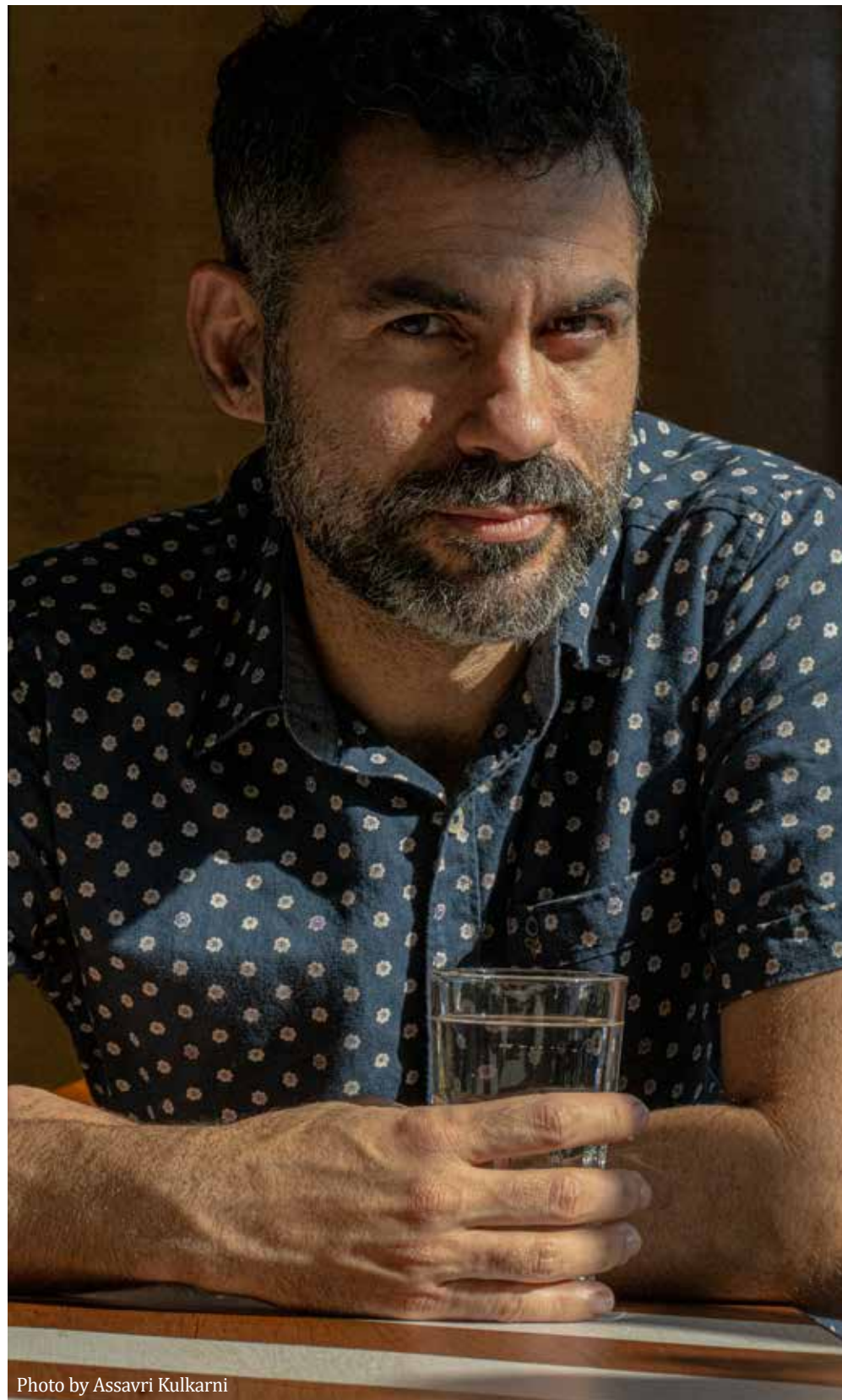


Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

time.”

The protagonist in *O Último Azul* is “a rebellious septuagenarian” says Mascaro, “actually, the character is inspired by my grandmother, who took to painting as her new way of expression after my grandfather died. There were no artists or creatives in our family. It was a very unusual choice of dealing with grief. And that made me reflect on how we look at old age; about movies with elderly protagonists.”

It is an interesting and unusual choice for a 42-year-old male director to focus his movie on a 77-year-old woman. He says “there are genres and tropes. Most films on youth explore themes of liberty, romance, desire, and so on. Elders are usually shown as preoccupied with illness or death. Another theme associated with old age is nostalgia; disconnected with the present and preoccupied with the past. I wanted to make something different. Why do we expect the old people to stay at home, safe, out of our way? What happens if a grandmother comes home to exclaim that she has made a new friend or is getting married again?”

Mascaro is becoming animated now, raising his arms over his head to accentuate his points: “why do we expect domestication of the body in old age? We don’t think of elderly people reengaging with life, or learning something new, and living new experiences. That is why I use the aesthetic language of youth with an elderly protagonist, who follows the arch of dystopia, journey, exploration and coming of age— themes normally associated with youth in cinema. Why do we idolise youth as the only one capable of newness? Why do we categorise discovery, exploration, newness with only the youth? It is very important for me to realise that the grandmother can continue inspiring us as a society! Why can’t a rebel septuagenarian inspire us to rebel against the system?”

SHORT TAKES



I’ve come for the last 10 years, and I just like to see films from as many different countries as possible.

Paul Gatward
Retired
United Kingdom



This is my 22nd year attending IFFI. It is special because of the world cinema, the premieres, and above all, the masterclasses and seminars. I’ve come here as a student as well.

Yogesh Sanghvi
Writer
Mumbai



I find IFFI to be a very useful platform for independent filmmakers. I enjoy the documentaries, and also look forward to *No Other Choice*.

Prabhu Sundharaji
Filmmaker
Chennai



What keeps me coming back are the people, the directors, actors. Everybody is together, the whole world in Goa - a proud moment.

Ruby Dharmindra Mehra
Homemaker
Mumbai

TEXT BY SHERRY FERNANDES

In Panjim, wildlife thrives in the most unexpected corners. Cradled by the Mandovi River and dotted by estuaries, mangroves, hidden creeks and green pockets, the city shelters an extraordinary variety of creatures. This guide invites you to look closer to help you discover Panjim's wild neighbours — some shy, some bold and all surprising. See something wild? Share it on the iNaturalist app and help put Panjim's biodiversity on the map!

Common Crow (*Corvus Splendens*)**Konkani Name: Kavlo**

Often overlooked and unfairly labelled as plain, the Common Crow is anything but. Sharp-witted, curious and remarkably aware, crows are one of the most intelligent birds sharing Panjim's urban spaces. Spend a moment observing them, and you'll see problem-solving, teamwork, and vivid personalities. They form tight social bonds and have astonishing memories. They can recall individual human faces for years, especially those who have been kind (or unkind) to them. Crows also display one of the most intriguing behaviours in the bird world: they hold what look like funerals. When a crow dies, others gather around the body, calling loudly and studying the scene. Scientists believe they do this to investigate the cause of death so that the murder can avoid similar threats — especially, poisons or unsafe areas. It's a remarkable display of intelligence, awareness and emotion. In a bustling city like Panjim, the crow is a survivor, a thinker, and a community-driven bird. Proof that urban wildlife is far more complex and fascinating than it first appears.

Indian Flying Fox (*Pteropus giganteus*)**Konkani Name: Pakko**

Look up at dusk and you might spot large, dark silhouettes flapping across the sky. These are Flying Foxes, the giant fruit bats that help keep Panjim's trees thriving. Their long snouts, bright eyes, and pointed ears give them an unmistakable fox-like face, which is exactly where they get their name. As the city winds down, these midnight gardeners get to work, pollinating flowers and dispersing seeds across long distances, quietly shaping the city's greenery. Despite their dramatic wingspans, they're gentle fruit-eaters and vital to a healthy urban ecosystem. On hot Goan afternoons, they can be seen fanning their wings or shifting lower in the canopy to catch the breeze. That's nature's version of bat air-conditioning! Walk along the Kala Academy stretch at 7:30 P.M. and you might just see them roosting.

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Illustration by Govit Morajkar

Indian Ocean Humpback Dolphin (*Sousa plumbea*)

Graceful and sociable, Humpback Dolphins appear where the Mandovi River meets the Arabian Sea. Their curved dorsal humps and a preference for shallow coastal waters make them easy to spot on a lucky day.

While there's no single Konkani name for these dolphins, local fishermen sometimes refer to certain large males as "Gaddo Reddo," meaning "angry bull."

The nickname comes from the big, powerful individuals that often venture upriver. These dolphins are sensitive to disturbances, so glimpsing them is a reminder that Panjim's urban waterfront still supports one of the ocean's gentlest. You can view them from Miramar beach or River Mandovi confluence. Found all along the tropical and subtropical coasts of the Indian Ocean, from South Africa to India, they rarely venture into deep seas, preferring muddy river mouths, sandy bays, and estuaries — exactly the kind of waters Panjim is built around!

They are among the few marine mammals that comfortably travel between the ocean and the river. Some individuals swim all the way up to the Mandovi bridge, following the tides into calmer waters.

Humpback Dolphins are especially fond of mackerel and mullet, which come to breed in the mangroves upstream, making the river a crucial feeding ground for these coastal hunters.

Smooth-coated Otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*)**Konkani Name: Udhaa**

Elusive, playful, and quick as ripples on water, the Smooth-coated Otter is one of Panjim's most charismatic wild neighbours. Goa is remarkably home to three of the world's 13 otter species, and this one is most commonly seen gliding through the city's mangrove creeks and estuaries. They move in tight-knit family groups, chattering in chirps and whistles as they work together to hunt fish and crustaceans. If you're lucky, you might spot them during the quietest part of the day: around 5:30 A.M., at St. Inez Creek when the river is calm and the city hasn't quite woken up yet.

Mon Picturewing (*Rhyothemis Variegata*)

Konkani Name: *Bhirmuto*

Monfly decorated like yellow and black stained glass, the Mon Picturewing flutters at dizzying speeds over ponds and marshy areas. At first glance, it might look like a butterfly, but its wing pattern as the wings catch sunlight, making it one of the most striking insects in the city. The fastest flying insect, dragonflies are natural mosquito controllers and excellent indicators of healthy wetlands. Dragonflies only breed in clean, unpolluted freshwater. Unlike butterflies, they undergo complete metamorphosis: the nymphs hatch underwater and, after ever forming a chrysalis, transform straight into adults, emerging at night or at dawn. Many of them can be seen flying at the Panjim Promenade and at Campal.

Asian Green Bee-eater (*Merops orientalis*)

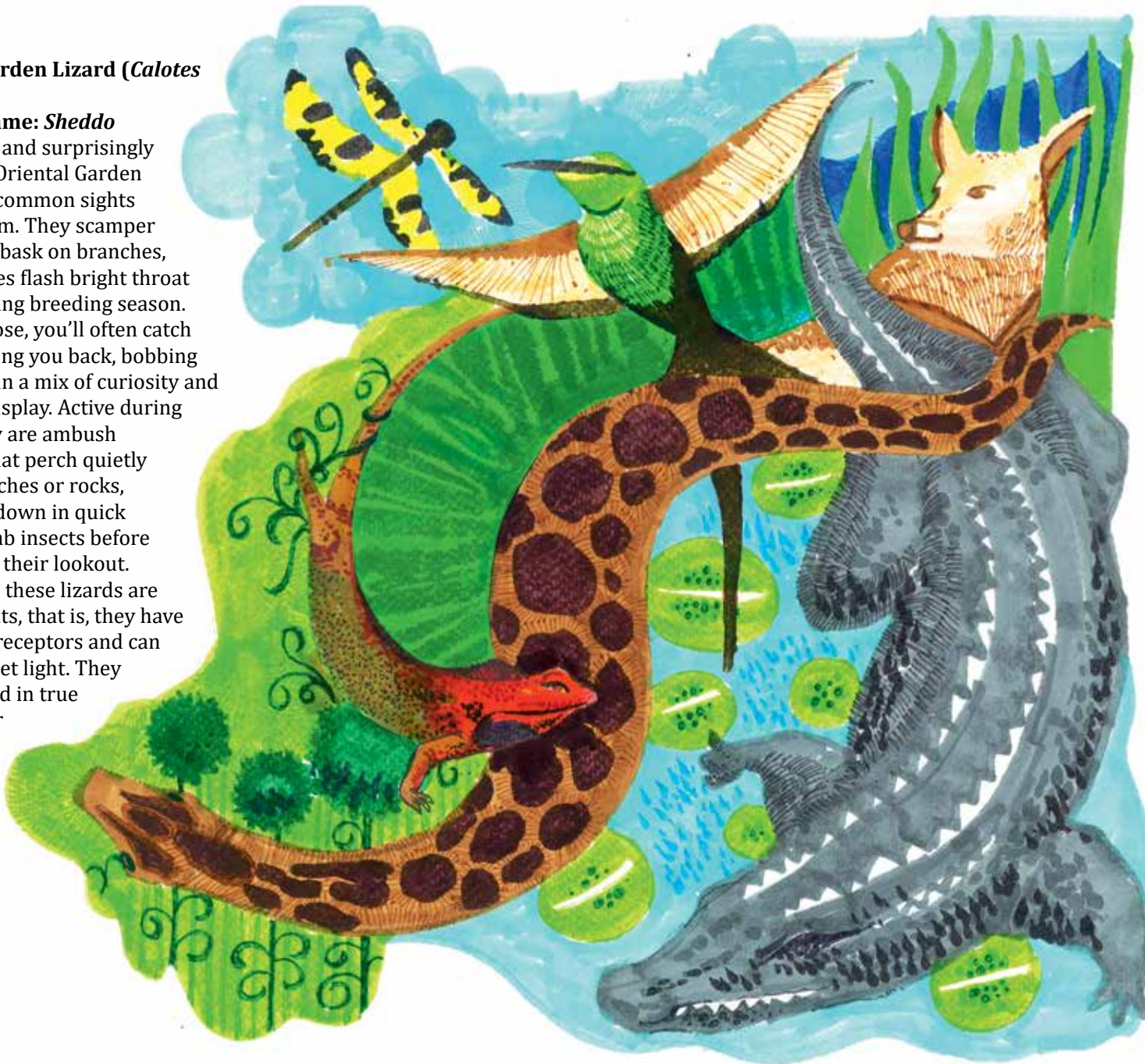
Konkani Name: *Dhaaklin Pataakilli*

Darting back and forth with dazzling agility, the Green Bee-eater moves and feasts on small insects. India has six of the world's 27 bee-eater species, and Goa is home to four of them while the fifth species is a passage migrant, making these aerial acrobats a familiar sight. Their bright green plumage, warm brown crowns, and elegant tail streamers — shaped almost like a tiny bow and arrow, make them easy to recognise even in fast flight. Expert hunters, they catch bees, wasps and at this time of year, plenty of dragonflies. A single bird can hunt down nearly 200 insects a day, keeping the skies well balanced. For a good chance of spotting them, stroll along the Panjim Promenade between 7:00 and 8:00 A.M., where you'll see them swooping gracefully from their favourite perches along the walk.

Oriental Garden Lizard (*Calotes versicolor*)

Konkani Name: *Sheddo*

Quick, alert, and surprisingly expressive, Oriental Garden Lizards are common sights across Panjim. They scamper along walls, bask on branches, and the males flash bright throat patches during breeding season. If you get close, you'll often catch them watching you back, bobbing their heads in a mix of curiosity and territorial display. Active during the day, they are ambush predators that perch quietly on low branches or rocks, then sprint down in quick bursts to grab insects before returning to their lookout. Remarkably, these lizards are tetrachromats, that is, they have four colour receptors and can see ultraviolet light. They see the world in true technicolour with shades we can't imagine!



Indian Rock Python (*Python molurus*)

Konkani Name: *Haar / Ajgar*

Muscular and far more graceful than their size suggests, the Indian Rock Python is one of Goa's most impressive snakes, capable of growing up to five metres long. That's roughly three adults head to toe! They move silently through grasslands, wetlands, sewer drains, and even people's backyards, often hiding in plain sight thanks to beautifully patterned keratin scales, the same substance found in our hair and nails, they blend seamlessly into leaf litter and mud. Despite their formidable appearance, pythons are naturally shy and avoid confrontation whenever possible. While they seem intimidating, they are non-venomous and play a vital role in keeping rodent populations in check.

Unlike many snakes, pythons are excellent climbers and swimmers, moving with surprising ease through trees and water. They've even been reported climbing coconut trees with effortless strength. In Panjim, encountering a python is common. Every now and then, one is spotted crossing a quiet road at night and for those lucky enough to witness it, it's truly a remarkable sight.

Indian Marsh Crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*)

Konkani Name: *Maange*

In Goa, the Indian Marsh Crocodile — better known as the freshwater mugger is a familiar presence, gliding through the brackish waters of mangroves, estuaries, and creeks with the cool, unhurried ease of an old river king. Like many reptiles, their sex is determined entirely by the temperature of the eggs. This means that warming climates can tip entire clutches toward only males or only females.

Goa doesn't just tolerate muggers; in some communities, it honours them. The tradition of Maange Thapnee celebrates and worships the mugger, reflecting a centuries-old cultural bond and a remarkable example of coexistence between people and a powerful wild animal.

Ironically however, despite the deep reverence they receive, crocodiles are not native to Goa's rivers. They were introduced nearly 500 years ago, when Adil Shah of Bijapur released them into local waters as a defensive strategy to deter Portuguese invaders. Since then, these formidable reptiles (and former defendants) have settled in and become part of the region's ecological identity. To witness them in Panjim, patience will be your ally. Sit quietly along the St. Inez Creek, and with a bit of luck, you might see a mugger basking on the mudbanks.

Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*)

Konkani Name: *Kolo*

Often heard more than seen, Golden Jackals are an essential part of Goa's ecological and cultural fabric. They are shy and surprisingly adaptable mammals that quietly share spaces with people across Goa. They move through fields, scrublands, village edges, and even parts of the city. In many Goan villages, jackals aren't just wild neighbours, they're part of local folklore. Children grow up hearing stories of kolo mama and koli mami "jackal uncle" and "jackal aunty," and sing playful songs that reveal little ecological truths. One such tale tells of a jackal who climbs a jamun tree to feast on ripe berries while children call out, "Kolo mama, throw some jamun for us!" The jackal eats the fruit and cheekily tosses the seeds instead.

These stories aren't far from reality. Jackals have a wonderfully flexible diet of small prey, crabs, scraps, fallen fruit, berries, and even grass. Studies from India show that jackals can feed on the fruits of more than 20 plant species, including jamun. In doing so, they help disperse seeds across the landscape, helping forests regenerate in places they prowl. In Panjim they can be heard during quiet evenings in the fields of Taleigao and in Altinho. (Information on the Golden Jackal is adapted from oral narrative research shared by wildlife biologist Malaika Matthew Chawla.)

Around the World in 15 Films

BY POULOMI DAS AND SAACHI D'SOUZA

Film festivals are passports stamped in light: they fling open doors to countries we've never stepped foot in, letting us feel their weather, their wounds, their wonder through story. At this year's International Film Festival of India (IFFI), these are our 15 picks — the journeys waiting for us in the dark. All of them are new releases.

It Was Just an Accident: *It Was Just an Accident* marks Iranian auteur Jafar Panahi's electrifying return to filmmaking after his release from prison. Set in Iran and shot without official permission, the film follows a group of former political prisoners debating whether to confront their torturer, a narrative that, for Panahi, is a direct response to the government that tried to silence him. "If I hadn't gone to prison, I would not have understood these characters," Panahi admitted in interviews, and you feel that truth in every frame. Winner of Cannes' top prize, the film lands like a controlled explosion — Panahi striking back with craft, clarity, and a courage the state cannot contain.

No Other Choice: With *No Other Choice*, Park Chan-wook returns to the bruised underbelly of modern life with his signature mix of elegance and brutality. The South Korean filmmaker — once a film critic, now a titan of world cinema — is known for weaving crime, mystery, and mordant humour into genre-bending thrillers, and his latest outing is no exception. The black comedy, also South Korea's official Oscar submission for Best International Feature, follows a desperate paper-industry expert who decides to eliminate his competition just to secure the job that keeps his family afloat. It is sharp, darkly funny, and unmistakably Park — beautifully framed, morally jagged, and pulsing with dread.

Sentimental Value: In the Cannes Grand Prix-winning *Sentimental Value*, Joachim Trier crafts a piercing, deeply affectionate look at a father (Stellan Skarsgård), who has always been better at directing films than raising daughters. When the celebrated director decides to mine their shared family history for his next film, the two estranged sisters are pulled into an emotional crossfire. As the boundaries between art, memory, and responsibility blur, old resentments surface, new tenderness flickers, and the line between performance and truth dissolves. With it, Trier builds a gently devastating portrait of what happens when art forces a family to reopen the rooms they've locked shut in Norway's Oscar submission.

Sham: Based on a real case from Japan, *Sham* follows a respected middle-school teacher who is accused of psychological torture after a student of mixed heritage attempts suicide, and is charged by the boy's mother in a dramatic courtroom fight. As the trial unfolds, the narrative flips: what began as a straightforward tale of victim and villain becomes a maze of competing perspectives. Director Takashi Miike positions you to question truth, blame, and institutional failure as the teacher insists that the entire case is a "sham."

Magellan: With *Magellan*, Lav Diaz — the uncompromising giant of Philippine slow cinema — steps into unexpected territory: an epic historical drama, his first film not in Tagalog. Diaz casts Gael García Bernal as Ferdinand Magellan, tracing the explorer's entanglement in Portuguese and Spanish colonial campaigns across Southeast Asia. Now the Philippines' Oscar submission, the film blends Diaz's signature long-take austerity with a sweeping, colonial-era canvas. What makes it singular is Diaz himself: a filmmaker who turns history into reckoning, reshaping national memory with the patience of someone unafraid of time itself.

Sirat: In the searing deserts of southern Morocco, a father, along with his son, embarks on a haunting journey searching for his daughter who disappeared amid the pulsing chaos of a desert rave. Tagged along by a crew of ravers, they plunge into a surreal, apocalyptic road-trip of shared grief, electronic music, and existential danger. As conflict erupts and the land itself turns hazardous, they must confront what's lost and what they're willing to sacrifice. Directed by Óliver Laxe, the film won the Jury Prize at the 2025 Cannes Film Festival.

Sound of Falling: Directed by Mascha Schilinski and set on a secluded farm in Germany, the Cannes Jury Prize-winning film traces four young women across roughly a century of history (pre-World War I, the 1940s, the GDR era, and the early 21st century). Though their lives never overlap, the place they inhabit carries the weight of generational trauma, violence, secrecy, and the unspoken ties between them. Visually spare, emotionally haunting, and richly symbolic, Germany's Oscar submission asks how landscapes themselves remember.





Kontinental '25: *Kontinental '25*, Radu Jude's sharp-edged comedy-drama, continues the Romanian provocateur's streak of irreverent, discomfiting cinema. With a title inspired by Roberto Rossellini's *Europe '51* (1951), the film trails a bailiff whose attempt to evict a homeless man hiding in a soon-to-be luxury hotel's basement ends in catastrophe, pushing her into a reckoning with the contradictions she has long ignored. Winner of Best Screenplay at the Berlin International Film Festival, the film examines responsibility, indifference, and the uneasy line between personal duty and collective failure in modern-day Romania.

Black Rabbit White Rabbit: In *Black Rabbit White Rabbit*, Iranian filmmaker Shahram Mokri brings his signature puzzle-box storytelling to Tajikistan's Oscar submission. When a man dies during an illegal gun deal in an antique shop, the fallout links a filmmaker remaking an Iranian classic, a props manager uneasy about a weapon on set, an actress rebelling against her mother, and a wealthy woman trapped in a marriage. Mokri's trademark fracturing of time and consequence turns these threads into an eerie meditation on fear and human frailty.

Amrum: In spring 1945, on the North Sea island of Amrum, 12-year-old Nanning flees bombed-out Hamburg with his mother, pregnant sister, and aunt, as Germany's war unravels. While his staunch Nazi mother slips into despair, Nanning toils in potato fields and hunts driftwood to keep his family alive. In trade for butter, sugar, and honey, he confronts the secret burdens of his father's military past and a community on the verge of collapse. Directed by Fatih Akin, the film had its world premiere at the 2025 Cannes Film Festival.

The President's Cake: In 1990s Iraq, under the shadow of Saddam Hussein and crippling sanctions, nine-year-old Lamia is unexpectedly selected to bake the obligatory birthday cake for her school — and thereby, the president himself. Living in the marshes with her grandmother and pet rooster, Lamia embarks on a harrowing quest with her friend Saeed to the city's bazaars for flour, eggs, and sugar — commodities nearly impossible to find. The journey morphs into a portrait of absurd authority and survival, as childhood innocence collides with brutality and deprivation. Directed by Hasan Hadi, *The President's Cake* premiered at the Directors' Fortnight sidebar at Cannes Film Festival, where it picked up two prizes.

A Poet: Struggling poet Oscar Restrepo lives in the shadows of failed ambition: older, erratic, his dreams of poetic acclaim long vanished. When he meets a talented teenager, he sees in her the hope he lost and takes her under his wing. As their unlikely mentor-mentee bond deepens, the film explores art, failure, and the cost of bringing someone into your world. Directed by Colombian director Simón Mesa Soto, *A Poet* premiered in the Un Certain Regard section at the Cannes Film Festival, where it won the Jury Prize.

A Useful Ghost: Directed by debut filmmaker Ratchapoom Boonbunchachoke, *A Useful Ghost* blends absurd humour with political allegory — giving a voice to “ghosts” of Thailand's past. In this surreal supernatural black comedy-drama, recently deceased Nat returns as a ghost bound to a vacuum cleaner, determined to protect her husband from illness and the fallout of his mother's electronics factory business. As Nat asserts her presence and utility, the family becomes caught up in hauntings, corporate guilt, and memories of industrial exploitation.

Father Mother Sister Brother: Jim Jarmusch returns to filmmaking after a six-year hiatus with *Father Mother Sister Brother*, an anthology steeped in melancholy and wit. Three estranged family relationships unfold across three countries, each vignette shaped by Jarmusch's deep love for loners and imperfect connections. The ensemble — Tom Waits, Adam Driver, Charlotte Rampling, Cate Blanchett — feels like a chorus of familiar ghosts. Winner of the Golden Lion at Venice International Film Festival, the film is a gentle reminder of why Jarmusch remains American independent cinema's most unhurried, soulful observer.

The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo: In his radiant feature debut, Diego Céspedes delivers *The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo*, a queer-tinged drama set in a mining town in 1980s northern Chile. The story follows 12-year-old Lidia as a mysterious illness targets her queer family, stirring panic, prejudice, and fragile tenderness. Winner of Un Certain Regard's top honour at Cannes and chosen as Chile's Oscar entry, Céspedes blends realism and myth with remarkable delicacy in his debut, observing cruelty and love with equal, shimmering clarity.

Nouvelle Ghunghat

BY SACHIN CHATTE

When Jean Luc Godard made *Breathless* (1960), a seminal film that not only influenced the French New Wave, but also the landscape of cinema as we understand it today, the critic-turned-filmmaker and Godard's close friend, François Truffaut, remarked, "The film of the future will be an act of love."

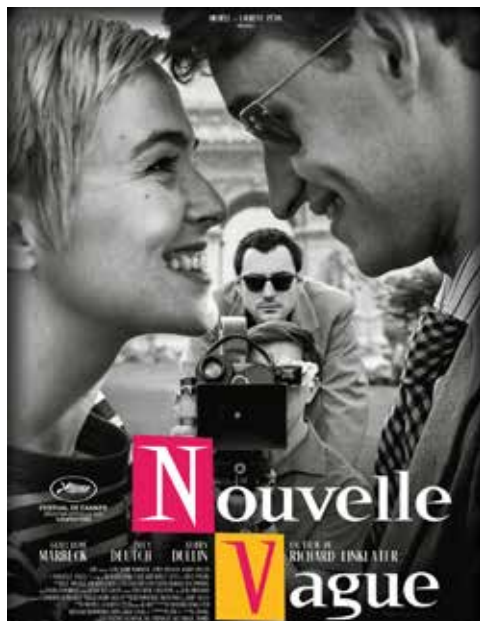
As November approaches, this act of love transitions from filmmaking to film watching in Goa, with the International Film Festival of India (IFFI). For both local and visiting film enthusiasts, there is a palpable thrill in experiencing cinema from around the world. Delegates invest in travel and accommodation, facing the occasional uncertainty of securing tickets for their desired screenings, all driven by their passion for cinema.

Coming to Godard's *Breathless*, Richard Linklater paid a tribute to the film with a comedy-drama, *Nouvelle Vague* (New Wave), which stands as one of the finest love letters to cinema. Linklater said that any filmmaker who has been working for a while should, at some point in their career, make a film about the process of making a film. He selected an exemplary film to illustrate his point, resulting in a delight for cinephiles. *Nouvelle Vague*, which has recently begun streaming on OTT platforms, explores how Godard, with his unique quirks and conflicts with the producer, and actress Jean Seberg, brought *Breathless* to life. Seberg nearly abandoned the project midway due to the director's chaotic approach. When she tragically passed away at the young age of 41, having appeared in approximately forty films, her obituary prominently identified her as the actress from *Breathless*.

I was so enamoured with Linklater's tribute that I saw it twice at this year's Cannes film festival. The first viewing was during the regular screening of competition films, and the second was on the final day when the films are repeated. I aimed to conclude the festival on a high note, having already seen 21 out of the 22 competition films – I am unsure whether



to feel proud of this or to be concerned about my social life. There was no better way to do this than by watching a film about filmmaking. My only concern was the limited time of 40 minutes between the film ending and my train's departure from Cannes station. I had to hurry back to my room from the venue, gather my bags, rush to the train station, and ensure I was on the right platform. To complicate matters, the entire region in France



was experiencing a power outage that morning (they also have power cuts, ha!), which added to my anxiety about whether the electronic door at my accommodation would open. Ultimately, the cinema gods were kind, and everything worked out smoothly.

Filmmaking is not solely a democratic medium; film watching is equally accessible. While multiplexes often require you to part with your kidneys to enjoy a film, accompanied by exorbitantly priced, gold-plated popcorn, the dwindling single-screen theatres still provide an opportunity for those who cannot afford the high prices of multiplexes.

Last year, during a visit to Patna, I chose to watch a Bhojpuri film. Many people have preconceived notions, but I wanted to experience a full-length film myself to gain insights into the cultural and technical elements of Bhojpuri cinema. The film I zeroed in was titled *Ghungat mein Ghotala 3*. I am unsure how the title translates into English, but 'Mischief under the veil' would be a close approximation, and the title suggested that it might be a B-grade film. But why would there be two sequels to a B-grade film, I wondered. It turned out that the



first two were immensely successful horror films (the bride is supplanted by a ghost), and similar to Marvel franchises, they opted to produce another sequel. The film's cultural aspects were not especially remarkable, appealing to the lowest common denominator; however, it featured a 5.1 sound mix and was produced with a relatively substantial budget in London.

Beyond the experience, what lingered with me was the passion for cinema among the working class, who had gathered at the theatre for the night show. While I was waiting outside, a middle-aged man in with somewhat worn out clothing approached me, requesting for change - which I unfortunately did not have. A few minutes later, he returned and mentioned that he was short Rs.10 for the ticket and asked if I could lend him ten bucks. A first class ticket was Rs.40, dress circle Rs.60 and balcony was Rs.100.

I gave him a 20 rupee note, and shortly thereafter, he returned to repay ten rupees. The entire sequence unfolded so swiftly that I could barely comprehend it. Later, while watching the film I realized I should have done more for a fellow film lover. My only regret is that I didn't give him more money to watch more films.

SHORT TAKES



I've been coming here for the last 9 or 10 years. We like to learn; the learning process never ends. I like to watch movies by newcomers.

Sangram Shirke
Filmmaker
Mumbai



When watching films, I always look for what's changing in technology. This festival gives good exposure to the trends of filmmaking today.

Sashshidhara N
Vice President
(FFSI)
Bengaluru



I look forward to seeing different cultures and different people at IFFI; empathising with people's pain and people's lifestyles.

Shabeer Yogapooranima
Yogi
Calicut



I like art films. I'm interested in visualization more than anything else.

Surendran Cheekkile
Counselor
Calicut



Illustration by Sayali Khairnar

BY VIVEK MENEZES

We will only know for sure at the end of this 56th edition of the International Film Festival of India – and the 22nd consecutive edition to be hosted in beautiful Goa – but in the air all around us is the distinct feeling of changing times and generational churn, with an amazing array of fresh voices and new perspectives enriching the global cultural landscape.

It is an interesting paradox. These are certainly fraught times, as everyone is well aware, so our attention tends to focus on creative freedoms under pressure in many parts of our country and world. Yet, that is not at all the end of the story, and we can already tell this year's edition of India's oldest and most prestigious banquet of cinema is packed throughout with exciting debutants, emerging auteurs, and a host of young artists on a mission to impact our imaginations. Youth power is radically remaking our societies from Nepal to New York, now you can count on its presence in this festival as well.

In your hands is the first issue from the 11th annual print run of *The Peacock*, your hard-working festival daily newspaper, and integral highlight of every IFFI experience. There are many film festivals, but – as we are always told each year all over again – this publication is entirely unique. It is the labour of love of an intensely dedicated homegrown little team, brimming over with original art and illustrations along with brilliant portrait photography led by our celebrity lenswoman

Assavri Kulkarni. We have daily columns by the redoubtable cinephile Sachin Chatte, and the great Konkani writer and Jnanpith Award winner Damodar Mauzo, plus exclusive original cover paintings by the wonderful Goan artist Shilpa Mayenkar Naik.

Of course, IFFI is about cinema and that will be your main focus. But that is not all *The Peacock* will cover each day, because we want you to appreciate and enjoy the cultural history alive all around you: in the magnificent Old Goa Medical College heritage precinct that was the first modern college of medicine in all of Asia, at the Charles Correa-designed architectural masterpiece that is Kala Academy, and all through the heritage city of Panjim, once nerve centre to an extensive maritime empire ruling right from Mozambique to Macau (in fact, our festival venue Maquinez Palace is named after its original occupants, two brothers from the island now part of China).

Today our Panjim is beleaguered in many ways – please read Pankhuri Zaheer Dasgupta's excellent Newcomer's Guide on page 4 – but it still retains many charms and surprises, including several of the very best restaurants and bars in the country and an unusually intact biodiversity (do not miss Govit Morajkar's guide to urban wildlife across our centrefold today, with inputs from Sherry Fernandes). As you will see over the next nine days, our team loves the IFFI hometown, and we want to share its manifold blessings with you. On the side of your movie schedule, there's plenty to see and enjoy here, and we sincerely hope you get to do exactly that. Mai-mogacho Yevkar, welcome!

Pragyaverse

by Pragya Bhagat

arrival

walk with me
past plank on pulley, skeleton of steel
by the *aayi* in her navy shirt, the swish of a stiff broom
around the piles of *Fs* and *Is*
over the drawbridge from a filmy fairytale
i'm reminded of a Punjabi wedding
equal parts extravagance and care

on the path from ESG to Kala Academy
iridescence co-exists with casuarina tree
a peacock fans his tail
unfurling purple-green-gold witnesses
courts passersby with sass, coos:
you've arrived. woo hoo!

IN ALL CINEMAS

INOX Panjim Audi 1 - 7:00 PM | INOX Panjim Audi 2 - 7:15 PM | INOX Panjim Audi 3 - 7:30 PM | INOX Panjim Audi 4 - 7:45 PM | Maquinez Audi 1 - 8:00 PM
Samrat - 7:00 PM | Ashok - 7:30 PM | Porvorim Audi 1 - 7:00 PM | Porvorim Audi 2 - 7:15 PM | Porvorim Audi 3 - 7:30 PM | Porvorim Audi 4 - 7:45 PM
Ravindra Bhavan Madgaon - 7:00 PM | Magic Moviez Ponda - 7:00 PM



The Peacock 2025 exclusive cover paintings are by Shilpa Mayenkar Naik, the award-winning Goan artist, part of the significant cohort of some of India's smallest state's best painters and sculptors who went on from Goa College of Art in Panjim to earn graduate degrees from Sarojini Naidu School of Arts & Communication at the University of Hyderabad. Both these academic influences are evident in her artworks, which are further distinguished by their intense observation and unhurried style, as seen in today's very lovely image themed on greeting, with the traditional brass lamp lit in welcome to each and every one of you, and strewn about with the talismanic Parijat flowers (*nyctanthes arbor-tristis*) aka night-flowering jasmine. The artist says their "delicate but distinctive fragrance" evokes for her the arrival of the cool season we call Hivalo in Konkani.

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Airport Partner 	Inclusion Partner 	Mobility Partner 		
Content Partner 				
Technical Partner 	SONY 	NOVEX 		
MOVIEMAX ACCESS 	SMPTA 	Feel the Beat 		
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