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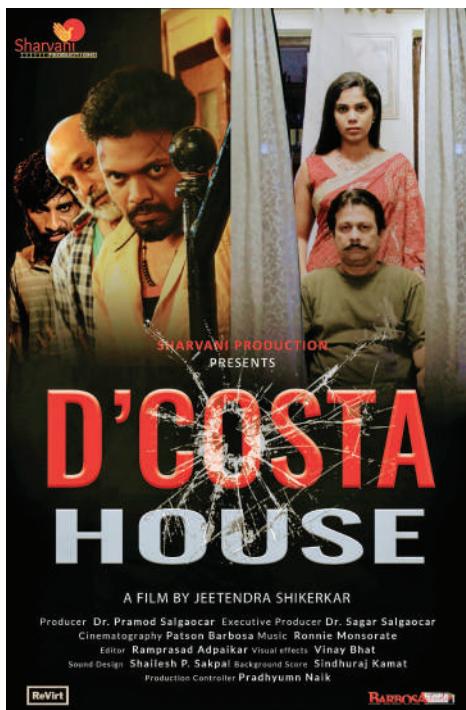
PEACOCK

SUNDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2021



Bhisajig.21

THE END



It's Time to Say Goodbye

The 2021 edition of the International Film Festival of India is finally coming to an end. This year was organized in the shadow of the possibly fading Covid situation.

The delegates did put on a celebratory mood, though everybody was apprehensive of the risk posed by the pandemic. Admittedly there were flaws and shortcomings in the orderliness at the event. We can hope that the pandemic will soon take leave of us and will provide the opportunity for DFF and ESG to take stock of the wrongs, and strive to come out with a better edition in the coming year.

IFFI 2021 had only four films in Konkani, which is the official language of our state, and being the host, delegates could have expected bigger numbers. Fortunately, Jeetendra Shikerkar has given us a wonderful film *D'Costa House*, that has met my satisfaction.

It excelled in most of the compartments including photography, background music, and acting. The experienced director has done a good job of writing the story, screenplay, and dialogues. It appears that aspiring filmmakers of Konkani prefer going for short films for understandable reasons, because the almost unaffordable cost involved in film-making is the

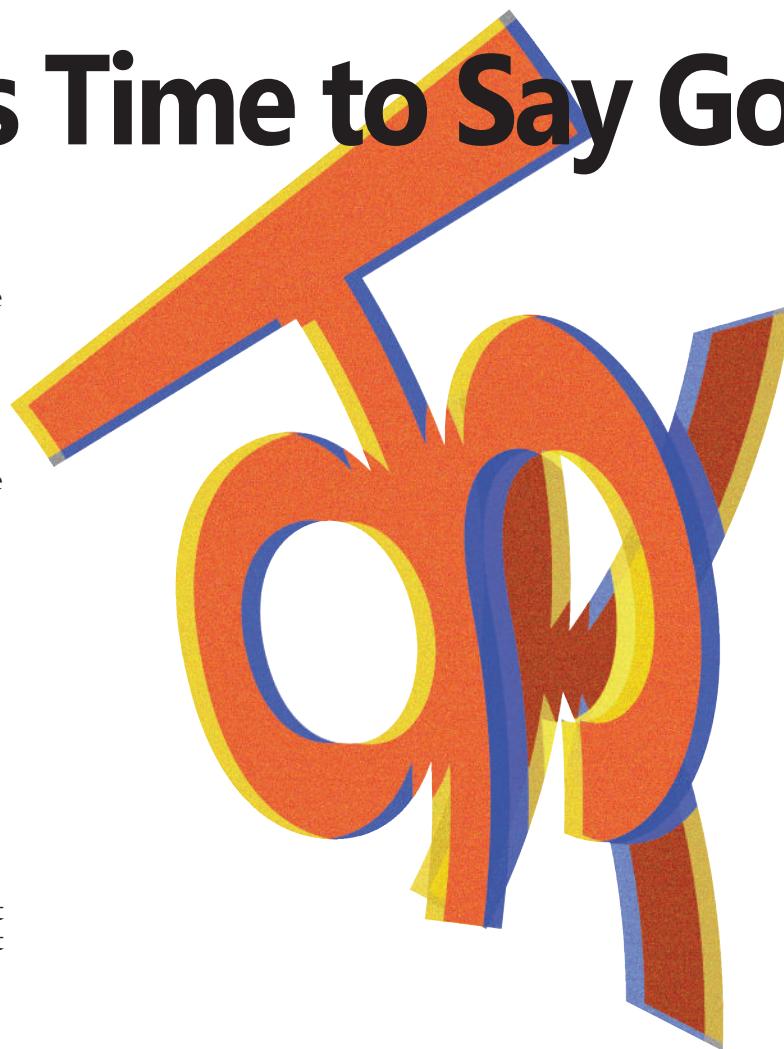
biggest hurdle.

Short films have their own space. They are exhibited at various film festivals where good films can aspire for awards and rewards. Besides most of the short films are made available on YouTube, that has a wider viewership. But most importantly, in my view, short films are a stepping stone for the newcomers. If they taste success at shorter versions they will try to go for feature films.

Konkani is a language that suffered at the hands of repressive rule in the colonial past. It is the duty of the Union and State governments to make available all the necessary infrastructure needed to make Konkani films. I am happy that Konkani is being treated on par with the rest of the recognized languages of India, yet we certainly need a package that will give a boost to filmmaking.

Goans are a peace loving people who expect a fair deal from the dispensation. If they are taken for granted, they can turn violent. In the past, Konkani was made the Official Language only after a violent agitation. We hope, the aspirations of the people of Goa are met with due respect.

Mog Asumdi, Alvida, Adeus, Goodbye.



SHORT TAKES

The decor at IFFI has really improved over the years. It's nice to see the crowds have increased since the last festival. We've taken a lot of care to follow safety protocols because of the pandemic.

Trupti Naik
Accountant, ESG,
Goa



I distribute *The Peacock* to delegates every day and it's great to see their reactions to the different artworks on the covers and hear so many positive reviews about it.

Nachiket Shetty
Marketing team,
ESG, Goa



It is lovely to see so much unity among people who love films from all over India. I hope that IFFI will continue to encourage more Konkani films and supports young Goan artists.

Bharati B Pai
Deputy Director of Accounts, ESG,
Goa



It's been great to work with the creative teams and see how the festival comes together behind the scenes. The highlight of my week has been seeing Manoj Bajpayee from *Family Man*.

Pratik Naik
Graphic Designer,
ESG

Cake Actually (2021)

BY URVASHI BAHUGUNA

After eight days of writing about the power of cinema, I find myself asking – have stories lost their impact in the pandemic, or have they become more important than ever?

More than halfway through the festival, I had dinner with a friend. We both confessed we had lost the taste for literary fiction in the last year and a half. We no longer wanted to enthusiastically dissect story structure with intelligence. After spreading the good gospel for years, we were coming to the belated realization that it may not matter as much as we thought it did.

Of course, my opening question rests on a false binary. It's possible neither dramatic outcome has come to pass. But what I hypothesize has happened is that creators and appreciators of art have had a moment of reckoning.

I had the strangest experience of having a book come out in the pandemic. Try as I did, I could not bring myself to promote it. The pyramid of societal needs had so drastically rearranged itself in my head that I could not countenance a book taking up space.

Two months later, the second wave stormed through our lives. The well-rested mind appears elastic. The mind in a crunch feigns elasticity. One does what one must do. One of the images I will most associate with the pandemic is an oxygen cylinder.

On and off for fourteen years, I have been living in a city that ran out of oxygen in the summer of 2021. Understanding the mechanics of an oxygen cylinder and the practical difference between a 5-liter and a 10-liter concentrator wasn't on my bingo card for several decades or ever. But the mind made space.

There was a level of arrogance in the populace, and I was guilty of it too, at the start of the year. For a disorganized, still-developing country, we had come out relatively unscathed. I recall the surreal feeling of eating momos in Delhi's SDA Market in March and thinking to myself that it would take a long time for this luxury to feel normal again.

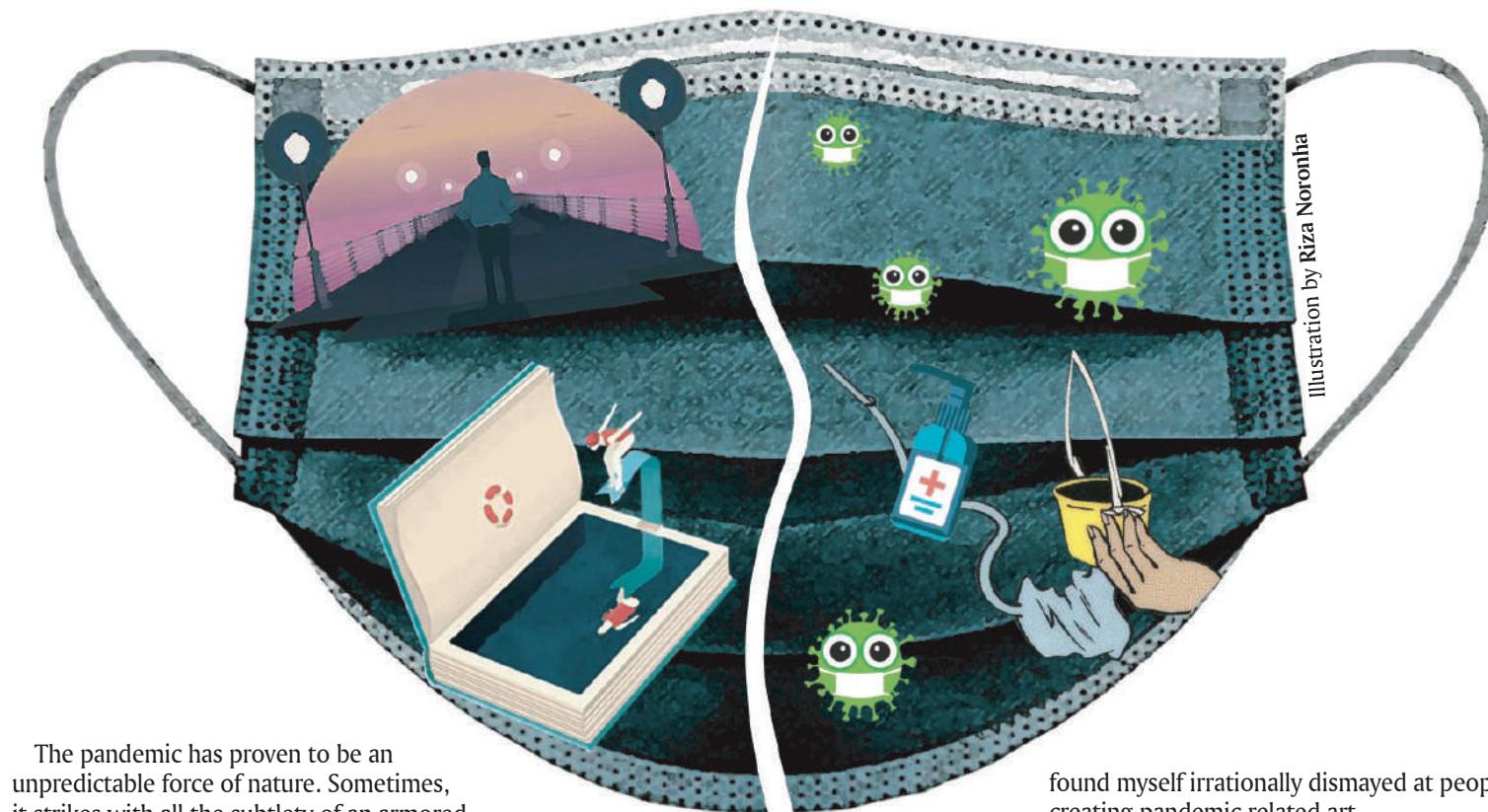


Illustration by Riza Noronha

The pandemic has proven to be an unpredictable force of nature. Sometimes, it strikes with all the subtlety of an armored tank and sometimes, it operates like a snake in the grass.

This summer felt apocalyptic in a way that last year had merely hinted at. Maybe we were in shock when it arrived, expecting it to ebb away like an errant current that had lost its way. Lost its mind, if we were being honest. It couldn't possibly take on a globalized, hi-tech society.

It would all be over by May 2020. September 2020. Definitely by December 2020. We were making plans. Businesses were making plans.

Once the shock wore off, and the pandemic bore on, I felt bewildered. Why hadn't our stories prepared us for this? We have been reading and watching disaster-centric and post-apocalyptic fiction for years. I believe the answer lies in the degree of destruction brought about by Covid-19.

We weren't in a state of total or near annihilation which is the preferred backdrop of many works of dystopian fiction. We

weren't even descending into complete political anarchy (another popular premise) – with the exception of places such as Afghanistan, Lebanon, and a few others.

Instead, we existed in a state of suspension. People were dying. People were falling sick despite never leaving their homes. The virus was a mutating monster and India was at the core of the crisis.

It turns out nothing prepares you. No amount of watching whacky alien movies or soul-crushing experimental cinema strengthens you for the incoming punches. Stories are a shadow. Sometimes, they're a shadow so close to flesh-and-bone that you experience longing, heartbreak, and peace in a way that simulates reality.

But the dreaded knock comes, and you wonder if stories are only good for processing. You wonder if stories are less for survival and more for revival and escape. I

found myself irrationally dismayed at people creating pandemic-related art.

Not because I have a moral position on it or believe it will necessarily turn out bad, but because I am creatively tapped out and because the pandemic feels like an abyss to climb out of and immediately forget about.

I imagine the period after the Great Wars felt like this for many, many people. Like the world was now divided into people hell bent on repression and people who could not and would not forget. For a whole host of reasons, blockbusters are still made on the subject.

I don't know whether the pandemic will defy depiction, will resist adaptation, will have audiences turning away. I don't have an answer to my questions. There are nights where my Kindle doubles as a security blanket, evenings where I would rather spend time with Netflix than an actual person.

I cannot shake the sense that art may be the icing. But a sense of safety and access to community are cake. And icing needs cake.

SHORT TAKES

In spite of the pandemic and restrictions, the festival has been smooth sailing this year. It's always very exciting to meet the celebrities and attend the opening and closing ceremonies.

Krutika Vadkar
HR Team, Goa



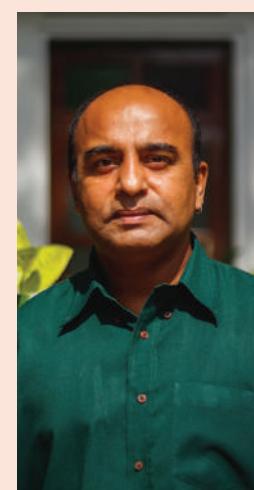
The delegates have been very nice and I've learnt a lot from interacting with people. My favourite part of the festival is the decor and the paintings in the art gallery.

Harsh Valaulikar
Ticketing Team,
Goa



The best part of my job was being present for the speeches by the directors and actors of the films. I've been able to meet a lot of creative people from different countries.

Shiuli Veluskar
Awards
Presentation
Team, ESG, Goa



I began working here in February, 2016. Since last year the festival has been hybrid. We have 14 digital media, 2 radio channels, 8 local TV channels and around 17 newspapers to take care of.

Vrundawan Raikar
P.R Department,
Fatorda



Photo by Michael Praveen

Refugees in a Hybrid War

BY PATRICIA ANN ALVARES

“Why can some stay and why must some leave?” is the complex question posed by Antti Rautava (the writer) and director Hamy Ramezan in *Any Day Now* (2020). Debunking the status of refugees as just a statistical identity, they tackle the sensitivity of human emotions, family, and human endurance, and their film is being showcased in the International Competition section at IFFI. In conversation with *The Peacock*, Rautava highlights the essence of his work.

The film is loosely based on the life of your colleague, Hamy Ramezan?

Yes, though the film is loosely based on the life of Hamy Ramezan, on the emotional take, it is a hundred percent his. Ramezan was an Iranian refugee who fled his country during the Iran-Iraq conflict as a young boy of nine. He and his family stayed at a refugee camp, and eventually arrived in Finland after a long journey. The emotional trauma of those times, almost 30 years ago, left a very deep impact on him, but he kept it within. In 2015 when the refugee crisis in Europe erupted, it could no longer remain private. The personal was forced to become public.

What is the story about and what is the message you are trying to convey through it?

The film is about the impending deportation of 13-year-old Ramin Mehdipour, and his Iranian family who are living in a refugee centre in Finland. Although their asylum application is rejected, they re-apply, keeping a positive attitude and continuing with their everyday lives. For young Ramin it is even more difficult as he knows that with each passing moment he must cherish his school friends, and the things he likes, not knowing when he may see them again. In the midst of these tensions, we get to see their powerful family ties, their dignity, and their ability to cherish the present.

We have tried to project two aspects in the film: First, a simple universal question as to why some people are allowed to stay in a country, while others are compelled to leave, and second, to show that being a refugee is not just a nameless identity, but that there is a human being behind the label. We have tried to show the humanitarian side of it. This is a universal problem and our film highlights the current situation, about how refugees are forced into a hybrid war and marketed as a hostile force, even though they are desperate to survive.

Why were you brought on board to write the script? We understand it was a 10-year old-project.

When Hamy wrote his manuscript, it was an outpouring of his anguish and pain of those days, resulting in a dark and political story. But since it was his debut as a writer-director, he knew he needed a more objective script. His producer Jussi Rantamaki advised him to have a writing partner. Hamy and I had known each other earlier, so it was easier to relate. I immediately accepted. What was important then was although I was expecting to see a very dark version, once Hamy and I started to talk, he changed his perspective. He wanted to move from the dark to the light.

How did you do justice to your role considering you are from a different culture?

I must admit that when I started I did not know much. But through a series of anecdotes Hamy very gently guided me through the various nuances of their lives, their struggles, travel to a foreign land, their time in a refugee camp, and their love for each other as a family. Trading stories and collaborating despite our diverse backgrounds turned to our advantage.

What has been the response to the film?

The response, at various festivals around the world, has so far been tremendous. Different countries found different access points and connections, and recognized the heart of the film.



SHORT TAKES

It was great to meet so many delegates who are so passionate about films and to help them with booking shows. They were all pleasant to interact with, one of them even gave us chocolates!

Samiksha Asnodkar
Ticketing Team, Goa



We get quite a few absurd questions and some people can be quite rude. We had the opportunity to watch a couple of amazing films like *A Higher Law* and *The Great Wall*.

Aaron Franco
Call Center & Help Desk, Goa



It's been fun to work with the IFFI team across all departments to bring the festival together. The biggest challenge for me was coordinating taxis and making sure they arrive before the invitees.

Runali Naik
Transport Coordinator, ESG, Goa



This is my first year working for IFFI; my sister works here as well. I enjoy films like *The Truman Show*, *The Butterfly Effect* and *Shutter Island*. I don't like typical love stories.

Dinesh Kutiyal
Help Desk, Porvorim

75 On the Rise



BY IMPANA KULKARNI

“We wanted aspiring filmmakers to connect with industry professionals; to have a convergence of art, culture, and education,” said Chaitanya Prasad, the International Film Festival of India director, explaining the purpose of the ‘75 Creative Minds’ initiative by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and IFFI 2021.

Created to celebrate the 75th anniversary of India’s independence, in tandem with the ‘Aazadi ka Amrit Mahotsav’ program across the country, portfolio entries were requested from Indian filmmakers and teams aged 16-35 in October this year. The entries were judged for various aspects – direction, editing, writing, and sound – and selected based on the skills reflected in the films each submitted. Two teams of jury members were appointed for selecting the 75 – a selection jury – with

Vani Tripathi Tikoo, Anant Vijay, Yatindra Mishra, Sanjay Puran and Sachin Khedekar; and a grand jury that comprising more well-known figures: Prasoon Joshi, Ketan Mehta, Shankar Mahadevan, Manoj Bajpayee, Rasul Pookutty, and Vipul Amrutlal Shah.

In the end, rather unfortunately, there are only seven young women who were selected out of the 75 participants, which leaves a whopping preponderance of 68 guys. Nonetheless, everyone is excited to be here. *The Peacock* spoke to Indu Shekhar, a film student from Jammu, who submitted films on mental health awareness and passive smoking. He told us, “I have seen these two issues predominantly in society. Hence, I made movies on them as part of my college assignments, and now am able to submit them for festivals too.” Shekhar says his three-day trip to Goa for the festival provided good exposure: “I met and spoke with media students and filmmakers. I even made a lasting friendship

with Tushar Nongthombam from Manipur, who has more experience in making films. He and I are planning to work on something together soon.”

The young filmmakers were felicitated on stage in the opening ceremony of the film festival, and then invited to a special dinner by the government. Over a three-day itinerary, they participated in two masterclasses at the festival and caught film screenings together. Kashvi Jain, a first-year media student from Delhi, made a stop-motion animation film on domestic violence. She said, “We were provided with good accommodation and travel facilities. The masterclass with Madhur Bhandarkar was great! I have learned a lot on this trip.”

Aryan Kumar, the youngest selected filmmaker who is all of 16, said he began making films three years back after attending a ten-day workshop by Ritesh Takshande in Patna, Bihar. He is a student at Kilkari Bihar Bal Bhavan, a centre for

children aged eight and above, that not only offers classes in music, dance, theatre, and cinema, but also encourages them by providing equipment and resources. “My friends from the theatre department act in my films, and I get all my equipment – the tripod, reflectors, camera, lenses, etc. from Kilkari.” With more than 15 short films in his bag, Aryan is looking forward to participating in more film festivals. “I have taken them to various other film festivals too, but this one at Goa was the largest.”

The Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Anurag Thakur, said, “Next year we will have 76 creative minds; this will be a continuous process of learning between the inaugural batch and subsequent batches.” It is a noble idea, which gives much-needed encouragement and exposure to young filmmakers. Here’s hoping the film festival and industry get to hear the voices and stories of more women applicants too, in subsequent years.

SHORT TAKES



It's been a whole new learning experience, it's interesting to see how hectic it is behind the scenes. You have to be really flexible about your working hours and have a strong work ethic.
Shreya Kudchadkar
P.R Department, Margao



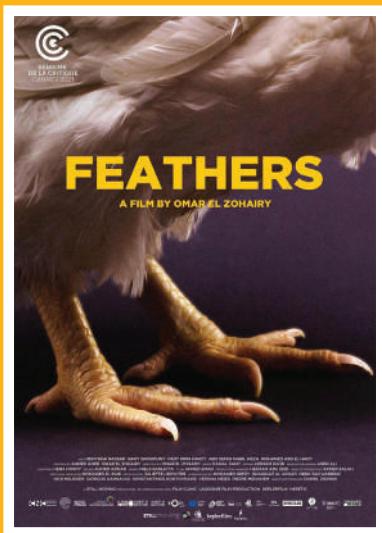
The workload for the technical team has increased a lot in these last few years. There's a lot of last minute troubleshooting and we're always getting calls from different departments.
Parshuram Naik
Technician, Panjim



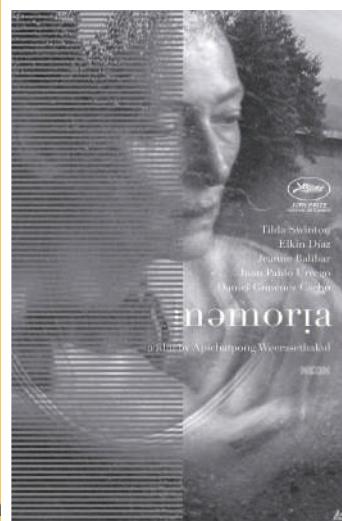
This is my first year at IFFI and the environment is very chilled out. The workload is also a lot less. I enjoy Bollywood and Ranbir Kapoor is my favorite actor.
Madhuri Chapke
Transportation & Hospitality, Caranzalem



Every year we try to introduce something new and correct our mistakes. Our aim is to make the festival more interesting and get more delegates who can enjoy themselves.
Vaibhav Kurdikar
Administration & Marketing, Margao



Hasta La Vista!



BY SACHIN CHATTE

As awful as it was on several counts, the year 2021 had the distinction of having two editions of the International Film Festival of India in the same calendar year. This has never happened with IFFI and to the best of my knowledge this has never happened before with any other major festival either.

The 52nd IFFI gave us some sense of normalcy as far as the movie-watching experience is concerned. Given that major festivals around the world in 2020 were cancelled or went online, there was a good crop of films waiting to be showcased this year. Here are some of my favourites.

Since he made waves with *The Happiest Girl in the World* (2009) and subsequently *Aferim!* (2015), Radu Jude has been a prolific filmmaker and consistently makes quality films. In barely a year, he made *Uppercase Print* (2020) followed by *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn* (2021) which won the Golden Bear at Berlin earlier this year.

With a title like that, you could expect a lot of you-know-what, the kind of stuff that can make some people squirm in their seat, but the film has not won awards for that – it is a brilliant piece of work from a filmmaker who is cynical, critical, and an equal opportunity offender. Bravo to that! It is amusing to hear a chuckle and applause from the audience when a certain ideology is mocked – but when their own ideology is questioned, even



them question it.

Divided in three parts, the first and third were about a teacher whose sex tape has gone viral. The first act has the protagonist walking around the streets of Bucharest. Agnès Varda's (may her soul rest in peace) *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962) has such a profound influence that whenever you see a woman in a film walking down some streets, it reminds you of that masterpiece by one of the pioneers of the French New Wave. But Radu saves his punches for the second chapter which is described as "A short dictionary of anecdotes, signs, and wonders." A collection

with provocative and thoughtful statements on religion, morality, war, politics, and even parts of the anatomy. There is a lot to digest in that chapter that lasts for about 25 minutes. I would love to watch it again.

Although I couldn't catch as many films as I would have liked, there were at least a handful that left an impression. It would be hard for a film lover not to love *Bergman Island* (2021). Mia Hansen-Løve's latest offering has enough references to the legendary Swedish director to keep you happy, and in its own right, the film certainly has substance. *The Odd-Job Men* (2021) is

a perfect example of how you can take a very simple story, build on the characters, and make an endearing film, without too many complications. Every self-respecting cinephile would love to watch Pedro Almodóvar's work, no matter how good or bad it is – in the case of *Parallel Mothers* (2021) it was nice to see the Spanish director still going strong, and after all these years he still has a lot of fuel left in the tank.

Before *Memoria*, the last time I saw Apichatpong Weerasethakul's work on the big screen (*Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall his Past Lives*, 2010), like many others, I came out wondering, what on earth was that – and that is putting it mildly. *Memoria* was a far more interesting experience and you have to reset your bearings and understanding of cinema when you watch the work of this Thai auteur.

Lebanese film maker Mounia Akl's debut feature *Costa Brava, Lebanon*, about environment, politics, freedom, personal liberties, and relationships was mighty impressive – it also had one of my favourite film personalities, Nadine Labaki. Much has also been said and written about the Icelandic film *Lamb* and the Egyptian feature *Feathers* – both received accolades and for good reasons.

With the new Omicron variant of Covid-19 making news, let us hope that the joy of watching films together is not short-lived.

Only time will tell. Until next time, *hasta la vista* and happy viewing!

I manage the call center as well as the help desk, a team of 30. The first few days are hectic because delegates and senior citizens have trouble registering. This is my eighth year at IFFI.

Vaibhavi Lanjekar
Team Leader (Help Desk), Mapusa

I've been working with IFFI since 2004 when Parrikar was our Chief Minister; this is my 18th year. I've presented films in almost every auditorium, including Ravindra Bhavan in Margao.

Jesus Ribeiro
Anchor, Panjim

I've been working here since 2015. Every year feels the same. My job stayed the same even during the pandemic. We don't get any time to watch films at the festival, we're always busy.

Manjita Manoj
Paiginkar
Office Assistant (H.R), Quepem

I've worked here for three years. I don't get a chance to watch films here, but I like watching movies at home. My favorite actor is Salman Khan.

Sameer S. Naik
Security Guard,
Goa

The spaces and stones of Panjim hold the memory of its past. Goa's medieval period was harsh: blockades, plagues, and invasions led to the collapse of one of the great cities of its day. But the fall of Old Goa was accompanied by the rise of Panjim, which was built by literally consuming the former capital while incorporating memories of the older city deep within its DNA. Goa's history lives in public memory, family histories, and inner landscapes. We are what we are because of the events that shaped us. Our capital city's imagination is full of stories that are waiting to be told.



Illustration by Govit Morajkar

PONJE TURA MOGA KHATIR

PEACOCK FILMS ★ STARRING GOVIT MORAJKAR

ASSAVRI KULKARNI

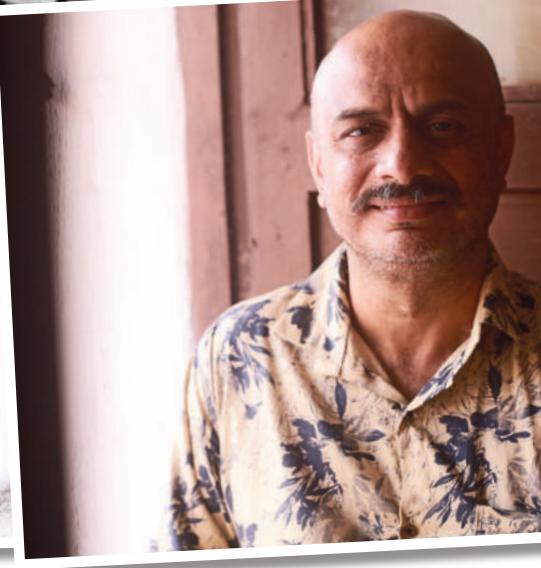




Photo by P PHADTE



Cliché Goa

“The return of tourists to Goa can be best judged by their numbers at the Panjim Church Square,” said a friend just after the Covid-19 lockdowns ended. A few weeks later, and much to the disgust of worshippers and local residents, a huge simulation of a car bomb was set off near the Church steps as part of a film shoot. Goa was well and truly open for business.

The “Goa Movie” is creating an image of India’s smallest state that is being consumed by tourists long before they set foot here. These movies stereotype Goa to narrow consumerist categories: fun, leisure, churches, beaches, and hedonism. As the tourism industry becomes all the more visible in all sectors of Goan life, it is leading to the shallow reproduction of tourism tropes that derive from deep within Goa’s society. In this way, Goa is literally becoming a simulacrum of itself.

The “Goa Movie” has built itself up on a long tradition of travel writing that looked upon the state and its culture as being culturally distinct and in need of interpretation. The British colonial traveller Richard Burton was one such individual. His book “Goa, and the Blue Mountains: Or, Six Months of Sick Leave” (1851) is full of insinuations, and horrifyingly racist observations about the natives. More than 100 years later, and in kinder prose - the Brazilian anthropologist Gilberto Freyre and British writer Graham Greene still looked at the state as being distinct from the rest of the subcontinent.

Today, this theme of Goa’s difference is sustained by movies which are rarely generated from within the state or its culture. They are produced at centres of cultural production located far away from the everyday realities here. This is why our actual political and social discourse is ignored in favour of simplistic feel-good themes of fun and leisure. Since these movies are consumed nationally and internationally, they are then conveniently leveraged by the state’s massive tourism industry, and their



themes get reproduced locally ad infinitum.

Even Goa’s immigrant communities are not immune to this stereotyping in diaspora. Paromita Vohra’s short documentary *Where’s Sandra* (2006) is a search for the origins of the racy female stereotype “Sandra from Bandra” – The quintessential good-time girl who wears dresses, drinks alcohol, and

loves to dance. The documentary narrows down the root cause of this to a minority stereotype perpetuated to the Christian female characters portrayed by Bollywood in the 70’s and 80’s, but also on the fact that Goa had opened up as a tourism destination.

That “Sandra from Bandra” of the yesteryears has evolved into the eccentric

buffoonery that is found in movies like *Finding Fanny* (2014). The tourism industry is quick to pick up on these themes and then reproduce them for tourism consumption. It is not uncommon to find a real-life character named something like “Maria”, who is dressed in costume to play her part in the tourism trade.

Films have an ability to generate tourism revenue from even a random landscape. Every day in the village of Arpora – hundreds of tourists, social media influencers, and their accompanying camera crews jostle for space on a narrow coconut tree-lined road. On closer examination there isn’t anything particularly special about that road, but *Guzaarish* (2010) and *Dear Zindagi* (2016) were both filmed here. Much like the ancient rituals of retracing the steps of saints, a new type of ritual pilgrimage is playing itself out in Goa.

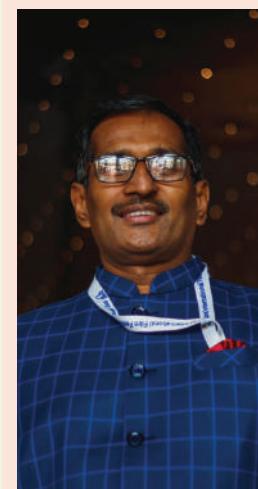
There have even been “Goa Movies” that create a Goa image without being filmed in Goa. *Mujhse Shaadi Karogi* (2004) directed by David Dhawan is a case in point, shot in the Seychelles. Having Akshay Kumar and Salman Khan dancing bare-chested with garlands and skirts made of coconut leaves on the beach is apparently all that it takes to recreate Goa today.

Similarly, in architecture, films have become a mood board and a starting point. Some of the largest architectural commissions were won by firms situated outside the state, with their rather derivative and half-understood versions of Goan architecture. The South Goa District Hospital and Mathany Saldanha Administrative Complex is a case in point. In this way, when the Goan landscape and way of life begins reproducing the “Goa Movie” trope of mainstream cinema, things start getting absurd.

SHORT TAKES

Working at IFFI has been great. It's been a great learning experience on how to deal with problems and questions nobody is going to prepare you for.

Simray Singh
Call Centre
Correspondent,
ESG, Goa



I'm a life skill coach, I do team building workshops and I'm a master of ceremonies. I love watching films and that's the main attraction of working with IFFI.

Sushant Surlakar
Anchor, Margao



The questions we get are sometimes relevant and sometimes baffling. Some people are grateful and others just insult you on the phone.

Penny Niranjan
Call Center & Help
Desk, Panjim



We had a few hurdles in the beginning of the festival but now things are running smoothly. Over the past six years we've switched to digital tickets and it helps us save paper.

Rohit Naik
Web & Social
Media, Fatorda

Expanding My Horizons

I am often asked why and how I became a curator.

People perceive working in the arts as being something idyllic, romantic, and exciting – it is all that, but much more too. Studying for a fine-arts degree in the mid-90s, I was drawn to understanding my fellow artists' minds, their processes, and what they wanted to communicate through their art. It set me out on an experimental journey of interpretation and mediation for others, which formed the basis of my growing interest in curation. A post-graduation in art history compounded my orientation towards writing and research, and propelled me into the art world as a professional.

Art writing was a niche area (and continues to be so) and curation was a growing field; there were very few people writing on artistic practice, critically or otherwise, and I quickly got into a rhythm of 'reviewing' shows for the local newspapers that had weekly columns, as well as fashioning text for catalogues.

Over the past two decades, I have learnt with each new project and opportunity – I expanded my repertoire, learnt how to write scholarly papers, edit, do interviews, curate exhibitions, and work on large budget projects in different parts of India and abroad, with vastly different clients. Budgeting, selling, designing posters, hitting nails into walls, packing, couriering, pacifying irate artists, and juggling the press – everything was part of a 'curator's' job then. Artists (young, old, urban, rural, outsider, and any other) are fascinating and complex creatures – and my own training in art has always stood me in good stead in finding entry points into their journeys.

In addition to writing about, and understanding art of different mediums and genres – I also learnt how to connect with people, a crucial ability that I am eternally grateful for since it is central to doing any kind of meaningful work that brings people together.

Fast forward to the last ten days at IFFI, in which I have been engaged in producing a daily column for the *Peacock*. While writing

the final piece today, I'm aware of how exponentially my horizons have expanded.

In the beginning, I was slightly sceptical about my ability to respond with the true spirit (and correctly) to cinema – an area in which my knowledge is meagre. There is a difference between watching films for entertainment, and responding to them critically as bodies of art. Though I have often curated video art and photography, feature length cinema has been beyond my area of investigation until now. The challenge of producing 700 words of meaningful commentary every day, on different aspects of art and moving-image has given me fresh perspectives on both. The experience has allowed me a deeper comprehension of commonalities and differences in the respective visual languages, as well as technicalities employed in the two streams.

These are tightly interlinked worlds; one can find painterly and graphic approaches in cinematographic views, and dynamic or stark worldviews in drawings or installations. They are all storytellers and creative makers – narrating histories, making social commentaries, sharing experiences, showing a mirror to the contemporary world, and bringing people together through artistic, aesthetic, emotional and contemplative journeys.

Art, whether static or moving, can transport one into an alternative world

that transcends mundane limitations of time and space. It is these relationships between reality and fiction, past and present, personal and collective experience that have resonated with me in these past few days.

I managed to watch four films through the duration of the festival – *The Untouchables* (1987), *Land of Dreams* (2019), *Memoria* (2021), and *Kalkokkho* (2020) – in the magic luxury of a darkened theatre. Over some wonderful conversations with cinephiles, reading the texts of experts in *The Peacock* team, and following up with research, I have also marked off a great list of films that I look forward to viewing at the earliest opportunity. The experience has opened out dazzling new areas of information, like a prism, that are inspiring me to think more divergently as a curator. I look forward to the next episode of cinema, and learning!

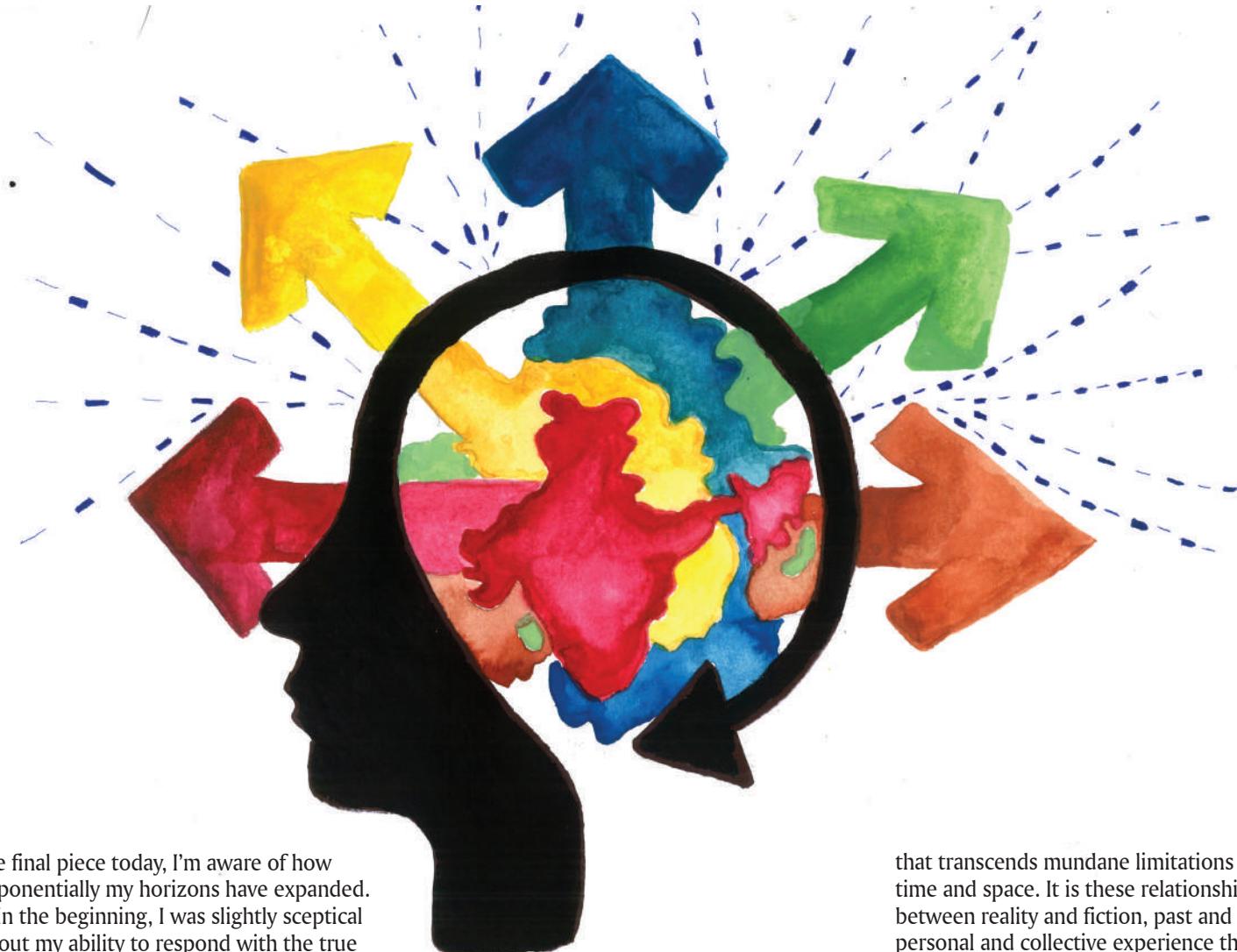


Illustration by Keziah Pereira



SHORT TAKES

As anchors we have to be prepared 24x7 to deal with last minute changes. We have to act as mediators between the audiences and the guests in case there are delays.

Elias Fernandes
Anchor, Talaulim



In the past two years the website is stable despite having more than 15 or 16000 unique visitors and millions of hits every day. My work is quite relaxed but when there's an issue it gets intense.

Aditya Parab
Web Developer,
Porvorim



I've been working here for 20 years. I like films a lot. *Maherchi Sadi* is my favorite film and Shah Rukh Khan is my favorite actor.

Vatsala (Aai)
ESG Staff, Goa



I began working with IFFI in 2012. Over the years we've improved our infrastructure. We handle the backend. I joke with my team that if we unplug a single cable we could shut down IFFI.

Vivian De Souza
IT Professional,
Aldona

Tech Force



BY VIVEK MENEZES

The most valuable players in the annual International Film Festival of India game don't ever get to watch a movie.

These guys – and yes, they are all guys – know the details of each film (for the record, there are 247 in 73 languages from 73 different countries), every seat across nine venues, and all the nuances of scheduling 249 separate screenings, but you will rarely see them anywhere outside their windowless offices in the hidden innards of the Maquinez Palace headquarters of the Entertainment Society of Goa.

Meet 31-year-old Arjun Narvekar, who heads the 80-strong IT team dedicated to IFFI, and is passionate about the positive benefits of technological systems.

"Automation helps to smooth out the potential impacts of human behaviours and biases," he says. The more that the festival has moved its vital tasks of registration and ticketing online, and into the digital sphere, the more seamless its user experience has become.

Narvekar is an old hand in a festival that reinvents itself each year, quite often with new leadership. A six-year veteran of hosting the event, he has the long view and vital experience that comes from addressing the festival requirements on repeated occasions. Though none of his team gets to actually sit through any movies at IFFI, they have compiled extensive data sets that illustrate and explain the moods, needs and desires of delegates, and they work hard to develop detailed strategies to deliver the desired results to the greatest degree of satisfaction possible.

"We are always trying to improve," says Narvekar, pointing to the new addition of nine hand-held scanners that have made queues move much faster this edition. In addition, he is happy that at least 2600 delegates have been utilizing the festival mobile application to handle their booking, in just the first year of its implication. "What we find is that it does take time for cinemagoers to adjust to new policies. But this one is progressing very fast, and to our satisfaction," he said.

IFFI 2021 has felt bursting at the seams at various times, with dauntingly huge crowds who have ventured out despite the pandemic conditions. "It's true that we did not really expect so many to register and attend," says Narvekar. All indications were that there would be few more delegates than the last edition – which was also held during the pandemic – but this turnout has

been significantly exceeded all projections: 4166 delegates registered, from 24 states and 12 different countries, and there were an additional 389 media passes, and over 1000 official invitees.

The additional demand has been handled deftly, after a few initial hiccups and anxieties. As we move to the end of IFFI 2021, everyone agrees that the overall tech management has been solid, with some places that can be further improved.

Narvekar and team have been listening to feedback, and have a variety of ideas. For instance, taking into account specific concerns from senior citizens, they hope to reserve some seats to be released on the mornings of screenings, so that elderly delegates don't have to stay up past midnight. It's that attention to detail that makes the difference, and we will see the results in 2022.



This experience has given me exposure in hosting events and more confidence in overcoming stage fright. I enjoyed introducing the films, directors, and actors to audiences.

Tejeswa Naik
Event Anchor, Goa



I like the bright colors, and being in an environment where everyone is working so hard. There are fewer people this year because of the pandemic, but nothing can stop the people who are really enthusiastic.

Mayank Sharma
IT Professional,
Porvorim



Sometimes we have a lot of aggressive delegates so that is a little challenging to handle. I like interacting with the delegates, especially senior citizens.

Vijaykumar Yadav
Team Leader
(Ticketing
Department), Mala



This year we have an app. Some senior citizens were not very happy with the idea of digital tickets, but I think most of the response has been positive.

Akshay
Chopdekar
Ticketing
Manager, Panjim

A Reader Writes Back

BY PRITISH BAGDI

I must confess that, despite being a full-time filmmaker for the last six years, I have been committing the crime of not attending the International Film Festival of India till now.

After I redeemed myself this year, I had some truly great experiences in the last eight days and one of the finest has been reading the artistic festival daily newspaper *The Peacock*, which caught my attention right on Day One.

The Peacock is more than just another newsletter, because I've never seen attendees queuing up to get a copy of any such publication at any event. From the very first day the daily became a 'must have' in my press kit. Scrolling through the abstractly coloured illustrations, and gazing into the thoughts of its creators, *The Peacock* became my most beautiful time-out in the hectic schedule of IFFI.

What's amazing in this daily is the idea behind the section of 'short takes'. This section creates a sense of inclusivity amongst the people at IFFI. It makes them feel like

they are an intrinsic part of this festival. I was really impressed when I came across a very genuine comment of an elderly delegate, who was struggling to book movie tickets because of the online ticketing system and his comments were published without fear of the management of IFFI being seen in a questionable light. I think it is this freedom, which the editorial team of *The Peacock* holds, that made me an avid fan.

This daily is working miracles for cine-lovers and professionals who are present here for networking. Since this magazine features people who are present on the premises, this gives everyone an initial insight into whom they can potentially connect with. Even otherwise, what is published in the day's edition becomes an ice-breaker on almost any table, connecting film enthusiasts to film professionals, and we never know — this could be the beginning of something big. So *The Peacock* is not only updating people but also linking likeminded people.

The original artworks published daily, that too, on almost every page, left me scratching my brains — "How did they do



it!" All these illustrations and graphics are created daily and it makes me wonder what kind of time warp the editorial team is using

to put everything in place in just 12 pages, including the day's screening schedule.

One suggestion to make *The Peacock* more useful would be to provide a transportation guide to the city, with the relevant helplines of the concerned officials in the IFFI management team, to assist delegates who are visiting from outside Goa. This daily is carried by everyone and could really prove to be an essential little handbook for some minor emergencies.

What I was really looking forward to in any one of the editions was information on what changes were made in IFFI after Covid-19, because regular visitors to IFFI were taken by surprise by the new format of the festival, dropping of the Kala Academy venue, and other changes.

A big thanks to *The Peacock* team for featuring me on short takes on Day 3. *The Peacock* indeed became an important part of the essence of IFFI, and I'll be carrying all the copies back home.

(This article was written with inputs from my colleague and professional partner, Swati Bhat)



Photo by Michael Praveen



12 Angry Hens

Deu Borem Korum

The Peacock squawks, takes valiant flight for full nine days, and then it's time to rest until the next edition of the International Film Festival of India.

These past few days have felt nothing short of a miracle: full theatres, delegates from around the world, an incredible banquet of cinema. Was it perfect? Actually, it was even better, because the past few days have felt *normal*. Coming after so many long, painful pandemic months, that was more than enough. Thank you all for making IFFI 2021 an unqualified success.

Over the past few days, we have seen our editions avidly sought out and read, with a steady stream of visitors coming to our office at the Maquinez Palace to pick up back copies (there are still a few remaining). It is extremely gratifying to our young team to see their work appreciated, and owe a debt of gratitude to the Entertainment Society of Goa for making our work essentially hassle-free.

This is the first IFFI under the charge of Dr. Tariq Thomas, and we greatly appreciate his calm competence, and ready accessibility.

As always, we are also thankful to Arantxa Afonso. This team is your team, Ma'am, and we are proud of working for you.

Way back in what seems like another eon, *The Peacock* was conceived to fill a vacuum that has plagued India's oldest film festival. There's a deeply regrettable absence of institutional memory. What happened at IFFI 26, or IFFI 32? We don't know, and it's extremely hard to find out. But now that there's a daily newspaper of record, we have a copious archive, and each year we continue



Illustration by Chloe Cordeiro

to build it with great purpose.

Crucial to that role from day one was the editorial team of Sachin Chatte and José Lourenço (with Amol Kamat on design), and it is great to have that brain trust

restored after some years. Alongside us, the tremendous poise of Impana Kulkarni, who has become the irreplaceable gears of our machine. Thank you all, dear editors.

Why is *The Peacock* so beloved of IFFI delegates? We are well aware a big reason is how it looks. You can visit any number of similar festivals in every location in the world, and we are confident you'll never see anything quite as vibrant, stylish, and filled with original art every single day. This year, our covers have been a tour de force by Bhisaji Gadekar, and we've also had simply brilliant illustrations by Govit Morajkar, as well as many more from the talented trio of Chloe Cordeiro, Riza Noronha, and Keziah Pereira. Take a bow, illustrators!

Of course, the visual feel of *The Peacock* is also substantively built on the exceptional portrait photography of Assavri Kulkarni, one of the very best anywhere. Huge thanks to her for always doing such an amazing job, in tandem with the capable extra hands of our photo team of Siddhartha Lall and Michael Praveen (who also handles our website). Congratulations, shutterbugs!

This year, we have relied heavily on our columnists. The great Damodar "Bhai" Mauzo, the foremost Konkani writer of our times, is nothing less than the anchor of our editorial identity. Lina Vincent – one of the

leading art curators in India – has done an outstanding job in her debut for our pages, as has Fernando Velho, the deeply thoughtful architect, heritage activist, and all-round urbanist. In another vein altogether, the full-page visual column by Nadia de Souza has rapidly become one of our most beloved features.

Also invaluable is Patricia Ann Alvares, who pulled in great interviews, and the preternaturally talented Urvashi Bahuguna, who, besides being ultra-capable of every kind of cultural journalism, is also an absolutely fabulous poet who enlivened this page with original verse every day. We are thankful to Karishma D'Mello and Nomita Saldanha for doing such an excellent job with Short Takes, an integral feature that allows us to get as many widely representational voices into the paper as possible.

Dear delegates, you should know *The Peacock* is strictly non-denominational, but we still feel this year's festival run should end with a prayer of thanks. To have experienced this kind of joyous community celebration, in close company with so many old and new friends, and sit in bliss with each other in the presence of such great cinematic art, is beyond a blessing as we head into the last month of 2021. Thank you all for making it possible. See you next year!

Poem of the Day by Urvashi Bahuguna Let's Talk about Rex, Baby!

Let's talk about you and me. And the 40-foot dinosaur Spielberg had to center at the end of *Jurassic Park* because the crowd may have lost their mind if he hadn't. I am a fan of audience pressure. When it goes my way. Love to see a good show get un-cancelled. Love to see an engaging character brought back from exile. Rex was a good name in 1993. That was the half of it. Del Toro, patron saint of complicated monsters, was still climbing his way to the top of the Hollywood sign. That was the other half – no one batting for the good bad guys. It was the old days. People wanted a beast they could save or tame.

PEACOCK PICKS



Olga - H92
Inox Porvorim, Audi 4, 2:30 pm
France, Switzerland
Dir: Elie Grappe
86 min



Fathers
Inox Panjim, Audi 1, 12:45 pm
Iran
Dir: Salem Salavati
86 min



Compartment No 6 - H11
Inox Panjim, Audi 1, 10:00 am
Estonia, Finland, Germany, Russia
Dir: Juho Kuosmanen
107 min



A Hero - closing film
Inox Panjim, Audi 2,3,4, 7:00 pm
Iran
Dir: Asghar Farhadi
127 min



52nd INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OF INDIA GOA 2021 28th November 2021

INOX Panjim (AUDI 1)	H11 10:00 Compartment No. 6 (FK) Dir: Juho Kuosmanen Finland, Germany, Estonia, Russia Finnish, Russian 107 min 2021 (IP)	H12 12:45 Fathers (WP) Dir: Salem Salavati Iran Persian 2020 86 min. (WPr)	H13 15:00 Leader (IC) Dir: Kasia Przybieniak Poland Polish 96 min 2021 (WPr)	19:00 Closing Film
INOX Panjim (AUDI 2)	H21 10:15 Tailor (WP) Dir: Sonia Liza Kenterman Greece, Germany, Belgium Greek 100 min 2020 (IP)	B R E A K H22 13:00 Pack of Sheep (DD) Dir: Dimitris Kanellopoulos Greece, Serbia Albania, Greek 113 min 2021 (AP)	S A N I T I Z I N G H32 13:15 The Forsaken Land (Sulanga Enu Pinisa) (JP) Dir: Vimukthi Jayasundara Sri Lanka, France Sinhala 108 min 2005	A Hero Dir: Asghar Farhadi Iran & France Persian 127 min 2021 (IP)
INOX Panjim (AUDI 3)	H31 10:30 Asterrarium (WP) Dir: Armen H'AkopianDmitriy, Tarkov Russia Russian 95 min 2021 (IntP)	B R E A K H42 13:30 Onoda, 10000 Nights In The Jungle (SoA) Dir: Arthur Harari France, Japan, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Cambodia Japanese 167 min 2021		
INOX Panjim (AUDI 4)	H41 10:45 Sons Of The Sea (BRICS) Dir: John Gutierrez South Africa English, Afrikaans 82 min 2021			
MAQUINEZ PALACE 1	H51 11:00 The Seed (WP) Dir: Mia Maarel Meyer Germany German 97 min 2021 (AP)	H52 13:45 Book of Delights (WP) Dir: Marcela Lordy Brazil, Portugal Brazilian, Portuguese 2020 100 min. (AP)		
INOX Porvorim (AUDI 1)	H61 10:15 The Hunt for Red October (Spl Trbt) Dir: John McTiernan United States English 135 min. 1990	B R E A K H62 13:30 Father (Apa) (LTA) Dir: Istvan Szabo Hungary Hungarian 98 min 1966		
INOX 2 Porvorim (AUDI 2)	H71 10:30 Celts (WP) Dir: Milica Tomovic Serbia Serbian 106 min 2021 (IP)	S A N I T I Z I N G H72 13:15 You Live only Twice (SplTrbt) Dir: Lewis Gilbert United Kingdom, Japan English 117 min 1967		
INOX 3 Porvorim (AUDI 3)	H81 10:45 From Russia With Love (Spl Trbt) Dir: Terence Young United Kingdom 1963 English 115 min	H82 13:45 Mephisto (LTA) Dir: Istvan Szabo Austria, West Germany Hungarian, German, English 144 min 1981		
INOX 4 Porvorim (AUDI 4)	H91 11:00 Colonel Redl (Oberst Redl) (LTA) Dir: Istvan Szabo Austria, Hungary German 144 min 1985	H92 14:30 Olga (Sprt) Dir: Elie Grappe France, Switzerland French, Russian, Ukrainian 86 min 2021 (IP)		



The eyes have it as the sun goes down on the 52nd edition of the International Film Festival

of India, and our cover artist has given a cinematic spin to the culmination of competition: the jury decision about the Golden Peacock. It has been a rather dazzling run for Bhisaji Gadekar, whose works have run the stylistic span from traditional to futuristic, with powerful icons for our times that speak deeply of Goan culture. Viva!



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