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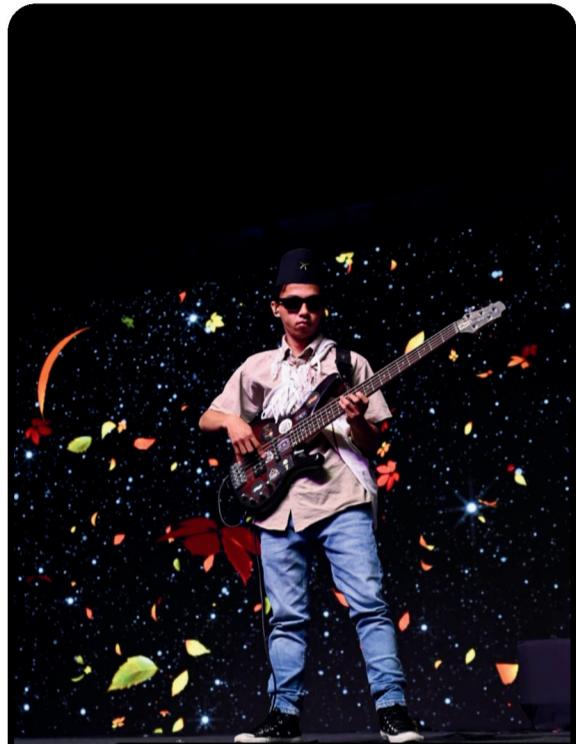
IFFI
International Film Festival of India
Celebrate the joy of cinema

Vol 4 | Issue 5

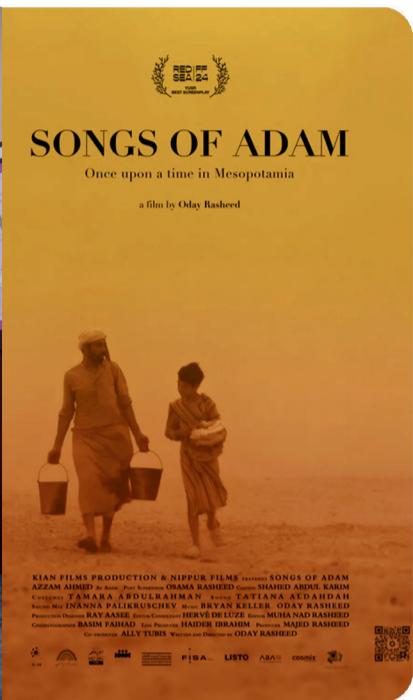
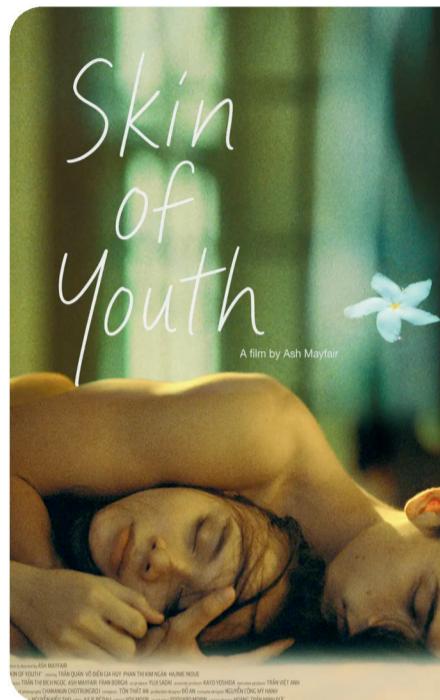
Your never-ending reel!



IFFI Frames



RACE TO THE GOLDEN PEACOCK



Songs Of Adam (Anāshīdu Ādama) Iraq | 2025 | Arabic | 97' | Color

Songs of Adam is a deeply personal and visually rich film that blends magical realism with the emotional landscapes of childhood memory and national transformation. Rooted in the director's own early encounter with loss, the film traces the inner world of a young boy growing up in Mesopotamia—a land the makers describe as “vast, fertile, and timeless,” offering an evocative backdrop to a story that transcends individual experience.

Speaking at the press conference organized by PIB at the 56th IFFI, co-producer Asama Rasheed revealed that the project has been “nurtured over years,” evolving gently from a seed planted in the director’s adolescence. “He conceived the idea at the age of 12, after the death of his grandfather,” he said, noting how the film’s emotional core emerged from that formative moment. Elaborating on the narrative arc, he added, “The

story goes far beyond the boy at its center. The narrative mirrors the societal transformations that Iraq has lived through.”

Asama emphasized that the team spent more than three years shaping the film’s texture, symbolism, and emotional depth, ensuring that its themes of displacement, memory, myth, and rebirth resonate universally. The film’s magical-realist style allows intimate personal recollections to sit alongside sweeping cultural histories, creating a poetic interplay between the individual and the collective.

Ultimately, Songs of Adam offers not just a portrait of a boy grappling with loss, but a reflection of a nation negotiating its shifting identity—where myth meets memory, and where the past quietly shapes the future.

Skin Of Youth (Ôn ào tuổi trẻ) Vietnam, Singapore, Japan | 2025 | Vietnamese | 122' | Color

Skin of Youth, directed by Ashleigh Mayfair, is an intimate exploration of the

transgender identity, familial bonds, and the quiet resilience that shapes the lives of those often pushed to the margins. Mayfair describes the film “not merely as a film, but as an act of remembrance and affection,” rooted deeply in her own lived experience. “It is a deeply personal story,” she shared, explaining that she is one of three siblings and that the film draws from the journey of her younger transgender sibling.

At the press conference, lead actress Văn Quân Trần spoke with candour about the urgent need for visibility and representation. “There are not many films about the transgender community, and their situation is still difficult,” she said.

Together, their reflections underline the film’s core purpose: to illuminate, and to challenge silence. Skin of Youth emerges as both a cinematic tribute and a compassionate call for understanding, offering audiences a heartfelt portrayal of courage and vulnerability.

DECODING THE MAGIC OF CINEMA



At the Kala Academy Hall during IFFI 2025, the acclaimed filmmaker Rajkumar Hirani took the stage for his masterclass, titled “Film is Made on Two Tables – Writing and Editing: A Perspective”. What followed was not just a session, it was a deep, inspirational experience for everyone present.

1. Writing Is Emotion Imagined

Hirani opened with a line that instantly resonated: “Writing is a place of dreaming.” For him, the writer’s world is limitless: no budgets, no constraints, just pure imagination. The true spark of a story begins with a character’s desire. “A film begins only when a character truly wants something. That desire becomes the heartbeat of the narrative,” he explained.

He stressed that writers must ground their imagination in lived experiences. “A good writer must pick triggers from life,” he said, reminding the audience that authenticity comes from moments that stay with us—funny, painful, bizarre, or tender. These real snippets breathe life into fiction.

2. Conflict Is the Oxygen of Cinema

If plot is the heartbeat, conflict in the plot is the breath. “Conflict is oxygen, without it, nothing breathes,” Hirani said, driving home that drama

depends on pressure, obstacles, and tension. He urged writers to ensure every character, not just the protagonist, has a point of view. “Every character believes they are right. That is where the story’s electricity comes from.”

Screenwriter Abhijat Joshi expanded on this, revealing how real memories shaped the conflicts in *3 Idiots*. He shared how the electric-shock gag came directly from a real-life college incident that stayed with him for decades. “Those moments,” Joshi said, “carry a truth that scripted invention often can’t match.”

3. Theme Is the Film’s Soul

Throughout the masterclass, Hirani reminded creators that the theme must quietly guide every scene. Exposition, he insisted, should never interfere with drama. Instead, it must blend seamlessly. “Theme is the soul of a film,” he said, “and it must whisper beneath every moment.” Joshi added that the strongest themes emerge from stories where “two valid, opposing truths collide.”

This clash creates depth—far more powerful than simple good-versus-evil narratives.

4. Editing Rewrites the Film

Switching to his first love-editing, Hirani illuminated the invisible but immense power of the editor. “When the footage reaches the editing table, everything becomes different,” he said. The editor, in his eyes, is the final storyteller. “The writer writes the first draft. The editor writes the last.”

He illustrated this through the power of a single shot. Placed in a different context, it can flip the story entirely. “So powerful,” he smiled, “that an editor can flip a story 180 degrees.” As the session concluded, it comes to a realisation that Hirani and Joshi didn’t just teach, they reminded the audience why cinema matters. It is imagination anchored in truth, conflict fuelled by human desire, and meaning sculpted quietly on the editing table.



“HUMANS COME FIRST, GENDER LATER”— BOBBY BEDI



Lala & Poppy is a tender, gender-bending love story set in the bustling heart of Mumbai, following Lala, a young man transitioning into a woman, and Poppy, a young woman transitioning into a man. Their evolving identities shape a romance rooted in courage, self-discovery, and the hope for acceptance beyond binaries.

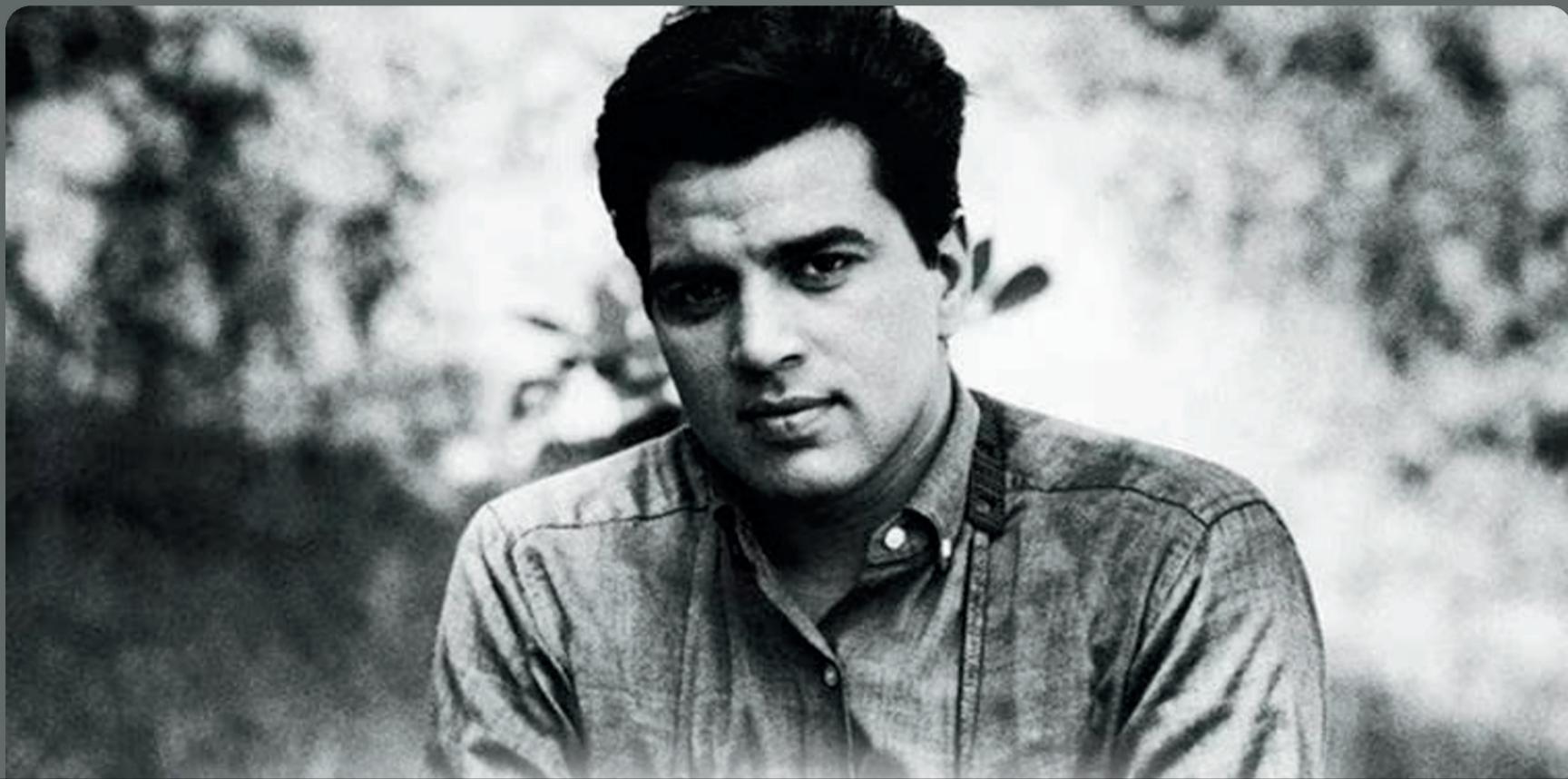
Director Kaizad Gustad, known for his unconventional storytelling, shared that he aimed to tell a universal love story rather than a labelled narrative. Years of research and deep engagement with the queer community informed the film's emotional accuracy.

“Love transcends gender, and it doesn't need to be shouted; it needs to be felt,” he said. At the IFFI press conference, producer Bobby Bedi set the tone for the film's message, stating, “Humans come first, gender later.” He emphasised that while India's laws now recognise transgender identities, society still has distance to travel.

Bedi highlighted that the film is meant for mainstream viewers: “Preaching to the converted does nothing. This film is for everyone.” Reflecting on changing times since his landmark film *Fire*, he added, “The law has accepted queer people. That itself is a major shift.”

Actors Veer Singh and Suruj Rajkhowa, both transgender performers, brought personal truth to their roles. Veer shared, “If this person can do it, I can do it too.” Suruj noted how the film finally lets them exist on screen simply as people: “It feels like history.” In a world still learning to accept fluid identities, *Lala & Poppy* stands out as a story of dignity, authenticity, and love without boundaries.





The legendary actor Dharmendra passed away at 89, leaving behind more than an iconic filmography.

The He-Man of Indian cinema, he is known for bringing this rustic charm to every role he took on. His strength was not only in his on-screen presence but in his sincerity as an actor, in movies like Sholay, Bandini, and Satyakam.

Dharmendra shaped Indian cinema through performances that blended vulnerability with charm, emotion with restraint. His body of work, from poignant dramas to successful action films such as Mera Gaon Mera Desh and Phool Aur Patthar, revealed an artist deeply attuned to storytelling.

Team PIB pays homage to the legend...

WHY IFFI ...?

Satyajit Ray said, "Art is the revelation of truth," and cinema is where storytelling meets that artistic pursuit. But cinema expresses this truth in many different ways. Some films rely on spectacle and scale, others on quiet introspection; some aim for global mass appeal, others for personal or experimental expression. These differences don't place one above the other, they reflect the vast spectrum of what cinema can be.

That is why we need festivals like IFFI, which work to protect and nurture India's (and the world's) thirst for artistic and narrative variety.

Through initiatives like Waves Bazaar and Creative Minds of Tomorrow, IFFI gives young and marginalised filmmakers access to mentorship, screenings, and industry networks that would otherwise remain out of reach. Far beyond being a showcase of glamorous premieres, the festival provides a vital platform for all

smaller producers, independent teams, and first-time creators to bring their stories to national and global audiences.

In doing so, IFFI ensures that no single mode of filmmaking overshadows another. It protects the space where diverse forms of cinema can flourish and where art, however it is expressed, can continue revealing truth, just as Ray believed it must.

SILVER DEBUTANTS

At the 56th IFFI 2025, the Silver Peacock for Best Debut Feature Film of a Director honors the most promising new voices in international cinema. Showcasing seven outstanding fiction debuts—five international and two Indian—the category highlights the creative vitality of emerging filmmakers who bring fresh perspectives, bold narrative styles, and distinctive aesthetic identities. Through these remarkable first features, the segment reaffirms IFFI's commitment to nurturing innovative storytellers and reflecting the evolving landscape of contemporary filmmaking. Three films were presented yesterday; today's catalogue features two more.

Hesam Farahmand- *Raha* (My Daughter's Hair)

Iran | 2025 | Persian | 109' | Colour

Hesam Farahmand, born in 1983, is an Iranian filmmaker. He wrote and directed *Raha* (2025), which won the Crystal Simorgh Award for Best Film at the 43rd Fajr Film Festival. His earlier short films *Herfei* (2021) and *Lipar* (2021) commonly explore human struggles set against socio-political landscapes in grounded realism.

Raha is a teenage girl who is studying animation, but when she is about to submit her university project, her laptop is stolen, and she is forced to cut her hair and sell it to buy a new laptop. Her father Toheed buys a second-hand laptop using money from selling his daughter's hair. However, the new laptop plunges *Raha*'s family into a mysterious adventure.



Shivraj Waichal- *Aata Thambaycha Naay* (Now Don't Stop)

India | 2025 | Marathi | 144' | Colour

Shivraj Waichal is a multifaceted Marathi film director, actor, and painter from Pune. Known for directing the award-winning short film *Arjun*, he has also acted in notable Marathi films such as *Phuntroo* and *Pawankhind*. He co-founded the theatre group *Theatron Entertainment* and is actively involved in theatre festivals. Besides cinema, he is a trained painter and shares his artwork publicly.

Aata Thambaycha Naay is an inspiring Marathi film based on a true story from Mumbai. It follows a group of BMC sanitation workers in their 40s and 50s who make the extraordinary choice to return to school and appear for their 10th standard exams.



TODAY'S PRESS CONFERENCES

Time	Film	Section
11:00 AM -12:00 PM	Frank + Little Trouble Girls	International Section
12:00 -01:00 PM	Ru Ba Ru + Whispers of The Mountains + Thudarum	Indian Panorama
2:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Mother's Baby + My Father's Shadow	International Section
03:00 PM - 3:30 PM	Khoya Paya	Indian Panorama
03:30 PM - 4:00 PM	Bindusagar	Gala Premier
04:15 PM - 04:45 PM	Rangoli Book Release	Others
5:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Chalo India With Eric Ji + Vanya + Chowk University Ka Vice Chancellor-Padmabhushan Amrit Lal Nagar	Indian Panorama

Talks from IFFI...



I am watching many movies from all over the world, especially films directed by women. I watched fascinating works by women directors. Today, I saw a Romanian movie. It was so wonderful. I have an interest in making documentaries, so I try to learn a few techniques from these films, how to go about it and how to present things. I try to learn by looking at these movies.

Kanaka N Swamy
Goa

I love to watch a lot of international films. They give me an idea about the culture, their attitude towards life, and the problems faced by people. Through films in general, I try to understand the problems faced by the new generation. Cinema records all these in history. We all have something called inertia in life at some points, and some movies help us accept changes by adopting even some small elements in our lives

Surendran
Kerala

