

Bringing the world to Chennai: The Samsung Women's International Film Festival

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The Samsung Women's International Film Festival (SWIFF) prides itself as a celebration of "woman's film" that has its roots in Chennai. "We are keen for Chennai city to make this their own festival. We firmly believe that the festival should be moored in Chennai and that it should grow from here. This is a Chennai festival and if people want to be a part of this Festival they will have to come to here every July", says Rathi Jafer, Director of InKo, the organization which curated the 120 films being showcased here. The films are an eclectic mix of feature, short and documentary and the festival does not limit itself to one genre in particular. Any film which is not "anti women" by way of form, concept or expression is always welcome here.

The bulk of the films which are featured in the 5th edition of the festival are drawn from India and South Korea. The Indian selection comprises of the recently released Tamil film "Vazhakku En 18/9", and "Suraj Ka Satvan Ghoda" by veteran film maker Shyam Benegal. Films from 48 other countries including Italy, Iran, UK and South Africa have also made the cut. These films have been handpicked by a team of 5 curators who are assigned specific geographic areas around the world. They spent about a year selecting these movies, with 98% of them being non commercial and a few which have never had a screening before the Festival. SWIFF also serves as a platform for the audience to have a meaningful dialogue with the directors of the films being showcased through the "in conversation" session.

According to the organizers this is not a festival based on advocacy but rather is about showcasing the woman's point of view. But they also admit that they have no clear definition on what constitutes a "woman's film" but are constantly in the process of finding one that should be inclusive and not exclusive. The films being featured here are directed by both men and women as there are only good or bad directors

never be limited to gender. Related events such as a photo exhibition and a documentary film making session were also a part of the festival.

The festival is trying to do away with the image that it's a niche festival and is trying to finding a footing as a parallel to mainstream space. The festival is currently being held across several locations in the city including the Russian Centre of Science and Culture, Kalakshetra Foundation and the InKo Center. The organizers are trying to woo a younger audience which they hope will consume non commercial cinema. The festival which began on July 15th will come to a close on the July 21st with the screening of the National Award winning film "Byaari" at the Russian Centre of Science and Culture.

For more information on the festival and its schedule visit <http://www.inkocentre.org/>