



IFFI 2025 Showcases Seven Debut Masterpieces from India and Around the World

Celebrating New Voices in World Cinema: Best Debut Director Award at IFFI 2025

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Aimed at promoting outstanding new talent in international cinema, the Best Debut Feature Film of a Director Award at the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) 2025 will showcase a hand-picked selection of five international and two Indian films.

The winner will receive the coveted Silver Peacock, a cash prize of ₹10 lakh, and a commendation.

An eminent jury of cinema stalwarts will decide the winner, chaired by acclaimed Indian filmmaker Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, joined by Graeme Clifford (Editor and Director, Australia), Katharina Schüttler (Actor, Germany), Chandran Rutnam (Filmmaker, Sri Lanka), and Remi Adefarasin (Cinematographer, England).

Like every year, this year's selection too exemplifies outstanding work by first-time filmmakers and showcases the cinematic vision of the next generation of storytellers from across the world.

Fränk

Estonian filmmaker Tõnis Pill makes his feature debut with this poignant coming-of-age drama. The film premiered at the International Film Festival for Children and Young Audience – SCHLINGEL 2025, where it was nominated for several awards including the FIPRESCI Jury Prize.

After a brutal incident of domestic abuse, 13-year-old Paul is uprooted and finds himself in a new town, where his search for a sense of belonging leads him into a series of poor choices. Just as his future begins to spiral, an unexpected bond with an eccentric, disabled stranger alters the course of his life.

The film tenderly explores fractured families, the quiet ache of childhood wounds, and the transformative power of unlikely friendship.

Fury (Original Title: La Furia)

Spanish filmmaker Gemma Blasco's powerful debut feature *Fury* is a brutal drama that heralds the arrival of a bold new voice. The film premiered at the SXSW Film Festival 2025 and the San Sebastián International Film Festival 2025.

After being raped on New Year's Eve, actress Alexandra channels her pain through the character of Medea, while her brother Adrián grapples with guilt and rage for having failed to protect her.

The film offers a fresh feminist exploration of fear, shame, disgust, and guilt faced by survivors of sexual assault in a violent, patriarchal society.

Karla

German filmmaker Christina Tournatzés' debut drama *Karla* premiered at the Munich Film Festival, where it won two awards — Best Director and Best Screenwriter.

Set in Munich in 1962, the film tells the true story of 12-year-old Karla, who presses charges against her father, seeking protection from years of abuse.

Told with great sensitivity and atmospheric cinematography, the film is an empowered telling of the child survivor's tale in her own words. With *Karla*, Tournatzés forges a cinematic language capable of approaching the unsayable — one shaped by tenderness, clarity, and fierce protection.

My Daughter's Hair (Original Title – Raha)

Iranian director Hesam Farahmand brings a compelling social drama to the screen with *Raha*, following a career built on acclaimed short films and documentaries.

The film centres on Tohid, who sells his young daughter's hair to buy a second-hand laptop — a small act of joy for the family. But when the laptop's ownership is contested by an affluent household, a chain of conflicts exposes deep class divides.

Drawn from lived realities, Farahmand crafts a world where morality blurs and justice is fragile. With unflinching observation, *Raha* becomes a universal story about dignity, struggle, and the quiet cost of survival.

The Devil Smokes (and Saves the Burnt Matches in the Same Box)

(Original Title – *El Diablo Fuma (y guarda las cabezas de los cerillos quemados en la misma caja)*)

Mexican filmmaker Ernesto Martínez Bucio's distinctive debut feature won the inaugural Perspectives Competition at the Berlin International Film Festival 2025.

The story follows five siblings left to fend for themselves after being deserted by their parents. As they navigate isolation, they mirror their anxieties through the unstable mind of their schizophrenic grandmother, blurring the line between imagination and reality in their struggle to hold on to one another.

Told through an elliptical narrative, the film offers sharp, haunting insights into the terrors and instincts of childhood, transforming a familiar "home alone" premise into a psychologically layered exploration of fear, fantasy, and survival.

Shape of Momo

Indian filmmaker Tribeni Rai's debut feature Shape of Momo makes a fitting entry into the debut competition after an impressive festival journey. Selected as one of five Asian works-in-progress for the "HAF Goes to Cannes" showcase at Cannes 2025, the film premiered at the Busan International Film Festival and screened at San Sebastián, where it was nominated for the New Directors Award.

Set in Sikkim and filmed in Nepali, the story follows Bishnu as she returns to her multi-generational household of women, now drifting in inertia. Determined to reclaim agency — for herself and for them — she disrupts routines shaped by patriarchy, forcing each woman to confront whether to accept or resist inherited limitations.

Shape of Momo is a lyrical reflection on tradition, independence, and the quiet revolutions born within families.

Ata Thambaycha Naay! (English Title – Now, There's No Stopping!)

Actor Shivraj Waichal's debut feature is a Marathi-language drama based on the true story of a group of Class IV Mumbai Municipal Corporation sanitation workers who, inspired by a dedicated officer, decide to return to school to complete their 10th standard exams.

Blending humour and heart, the film honours resilience, the dignity of labour, and the transformative power of education — proving it is never too late to learn, dream, or begin again.

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