57th IFFI 2026 Unveils New Animation Segment to Celebrate the Heart and Soul of Animated Storytelling

> Five acclaimed international animated features from Japan, France, China, Singapore, and the USA to paint an eclectic canvas of human experience

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Across every culture and age, animation has a rare gift for turning simple drawings into stories that move us deeply. Expanding its cinematic horizons, the 57th International Film Festival of India 2026 unveils a dedicated new Animation segment to celebrate the artistry and emotional depth of animated storytelling. Curated with five standout international animated features from Japan, France, China, Singapore, and the USA, the section shines a spotlight on films that move the heart just as much as they dazzle the eye.

Opening a tender window into modern romance and social anxiety is the Japanese animated film *Cherry and Virgin*, directed by Masanao Kawajiri. The 2026 animated feature follows Ryo, a 32-year-old erotic manga artist who struggles to speak to women, and 28-year-old Ami, who finds it equally difficult to interact with men in real life. Despite their fears and lack of romantic experience, the two meet and slowly begin to understand each other, overcoming their insecurities to discover the quiet happiness of a genuine connection.

Blending live-action footage with manga animation, the film is told with disarming warmth and humour. A graduate of Osaka University of Arts, Kawajiri previously earned widespread festival recognition for his 2018 animated short film *A Japanese Boy Who Draws*, establishing a hybrid aesthetic that continues to draw acclaim in Japan and abroad.



Bringing sharp wit and heart to contemporary satire is the French animated film *Jim Queen*, co-directed by Nicolas Athané and Marco Nguyen. Set in Paris, the 2026 animated feature centres on Jim, a popular fitness influencer admired across the city's gay community, whose world collapses overnight when a mysterious virus named Heterosis begins turning gay men straight, costing him his followers, friends, and social status. With only Lucien, a loyal yet less popular young man, standing by him, Jim sets out through the lively streets of the Marais to find a doctor rumoured to hold a cure. Both directors trained at the renowned Gobelins school of animation. Athané has previously worked on *Rayman* games, *The Rabbi's Cat*, and *The Red Turtle* alongside co-directing animated series like *Mr Flap*, *Startup Heroes*, and *Peepoodo*, while Nguyen brings rich visual pedigree from his contributions to *The Rabbi's Cat*, *Ernest & Celestine*, and *The Summit of the Gods*.



Exploring solitude, longing, and attachment in a rapidly changing world is the Chinese animated film *Light Pillar*, the 2026 animated feature debut from writer, director, and production designer Xu Zao. Set in a future where space travel is routine, the film follows Zha, a lonely cleaner tending to the grounds of a bankrupt film studio, who falls in love with a woman inside a lush virtual world. After working extra hours to afford a ticket to join her on the Moon, Zha discovers his ticket is invalid. As a film crew arrives to demolish the old studio for a movie climax, Zha makes the poignant decision to stay behind and fade away alongside the only world he has ever known. Born in Anshan, China, in 1991, Xu Zao holds a master's degree from the Beijing Film Academy and previously won acclaim for his animated short *No Changes Have Taken in Our Life*, which premiered at IFFR.



From Singapore comes the Chinese-language animated film *Magic Atlas*, a haunting 2026 allegory on memory and resistance directed by Sun Xun. When a mysterious magician arrives in the isolated coal kingdom of Luocha, his presence sparks fear and unrest in an already tense society. Arrested and imprisoned alongside an orphan boy named Xiao Zhi, the magician secretly entrusts the child with a magical atlas just before being burned at the stake during the Mimeng festival, a state ritual in which citizens are made to forget their past. Born in Fuxin, China, in 1980, Sun Xun is a Beijing-based artist and graduate of the China Academy of Fine Arts who founded π Animation Studio in 2005. With works screened at Venice and Berlin, *Magic Atlas* arrives at IFFI following competition runs at the Locarno and Tokyo film festivals.



Rounding out the segment is the English-language American animated film *Ray Gunn*, helmed in 2026 by Academy Award-winning filmmaker Brad Bird. Set in the futuristic metropolis of Metropia, where humans and aliens coexist beneath skies crowded with flying cars and everything comes at a price, widespread corruption lurks behind a gleaming facade. Amid this landscape, Ray Gunn, an old-fashioned private detective struggling to hold onto his values in a world that views his profession as obsolete, finds himself pulled into the biggest case of his career. Celebrated globally as a writer, director, producer, and voice actor who seamlessly weaves emotion, humour, and action, Bird brings the signature storytelling mastery of classics like *The Incredibles*, *Ratatouille*, and *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* to this retro-futuristic animated noir.



Through this new segment, the 57th IFFI 2026 invites festival-goers to look beyond the medium and experience animation as an intimate mirror of our hopes, vulnerabilities, and shared humanity.

About IFFI

Established in 1952, the International Film Festival of India is one of Asia's oldest and prominent international film festivals. Organised by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, in association with the Government of Goa and the Entertainment Society of Goa, IFFI celebrates the best of world cinema while promoting Indian films and talent on a global platform. Held annually in Goa, the festival serves as a platform for creative exchange, discovery of new voices and fostering cultural understanding through cinema.

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