23rd PIFF Selection Committee Highlights Importance of Film Festivals in a Streaming World

With the rise of OTT platforms, the Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) continues to be a key platform for showcasing diverse, artistic films that may otherwise be overlooked. PIFF selection committee members, including Abhijit Deshpande, Meena Karnik (Marathi competition) and Saibal Chatterjee (World competition) emphasized the vital role festivals play in preserving creativity and regional cinema. They were speaking to the media at PIFF.

Speaking on the selection process, Deshpande highlighted how PIFF prioritizes originality and regional storytelling. Films like Fandry and Sairat, which brought local stories to the global stage, exemplify the festival's commitment to showcasing narratives with regional depth, even if they are low-budget or technically unpolished.

Chatterjee, a member of the Global Competitive Cinema Selection Committee, stressed the importance of selecting films that can depict the essence of a culture and resonate with audiences globally. Despite the dominance of algorithm-driven OTT platforms, he emphasized that film festivals offer a unique, curated experience.

Karnik expressed satisfaction with the increasing number of rural filmmakers submitting films, noting that PIFF has significantly contributed to this growth. She also called for more women-centric films that can bring social issues to light.

Addressing the lack of exposure for Marathi films on OTT platforms, Deshpande pointed to the success of Sant Tukaram at the Venice Film Festival as proof of Marathi cinema's potential to reach international audiences.

As streaming services reshape film consumption, PIFF remains a crucial space for artistic films to gain recognition. The committee concluded that festivals like PIFF provide a vital cultural platform, showcasing creative, diverse films that might otherwise be overlooked by mainstream platforms.