



PONDICHERRY UNIVERSITY FILM FESTIVAL

17 - 20 Mar, 2025

Pondicherry University

# REINTRODUCING PUFF

The second edition of the student-run film festival PUFF is set to begin on Monday. The initiative was launched in 2024 and aimed to expose university students to the vast world of cinema and build a community to discuss cinema. The inaugural edition of the film festival was a huge success, and Malayalam director Jeo Baby was featured as a guest. The festival was conducted for three days, showcasing 27 films across three screens within the Department of Electronic Media and Mass Communication. The curated list of films featured different films from around the globe. The students of DEMMC formed different teams and divided the work between the two batches of students for the smooth functioning of the festival. Many faculty members from other departments and students attended the festival.

The second edition of PUFF in DEMMC also features the newly integrated UG students as part of the festival. With more students, the festival will be extended to four days and will screen 28 films across three screens named Medai, Thirai and Parvai. This edition also features two guests, filmmaker Fazil Razak and Adhithya Baby, who is also a student of Performing Arts at Pondicherry University. PUFF also aims to promote independent cinema and features many independent films in this year's lineup. Guest films and interactive sessions are also included in this year's schedule. The festival also features a Memoriam category, which features three veteran filmmakers who passed away in 2024. MT Vasudevan, David Lynch, and Shyam Benegal will be paid tribute at the festival, and their films will be screened under the Memoriam category.

An inaugural ceremony will be held at the department auditorium (Medai) at 1 pm. The function will be inaugurated by the Dean in charge of the School of Media and Communication, Dr Arulselvan. There will also be a special address by the HOD of DEMMC, Dr Radhika Khanna, and felicitation by Associate Professor Dr T Balasaravanan. Special guest Adhithya Baby will also be present on the dais.

The student coordinator for PUFF, Ramesh S, will convey the welcome address and the presidential address by student representative Aardra P. Student coordinator

Meenakshi Ajith Kumar will deliver the vote of thanks.

PUFF 2025 will commence at DEMMC on Monday, with the first screening at 9.45 am.



# From the Curator



Last year, around the first week of April 2024, the Department of Electronic Media and Mass Communication conducted the first edition of the Pondicherry University Film Festival (PUFF) with minimal resources but an abundance of passion. The festival started as nothing but an ambitious idea of a few media students who were our seniors who inspired us to carry forward the legacy. The idea of cinema being celebrated and being witnessed as a community, being engulfed by a spectacle, something larger than life itself, is the basis of something called a film festival. The festivities are not the literal way; it is the intent. This year, we have decided to celebrate that very intent as we have tried to include cinema from almost everywhere for everyone. Cinemas spanning time, geographies, languages, ideologies, and genres, as a token of the love of the art and its history, will be screened at the festival. A focus of the most solid debuts from the country includes Rima Das's 'Village Rockstars', Rakshit Shetty's 'Ulidavaru Kandante' and Vikramaditya Motwane's 'Udaan' is included as part of the festival. These films stand as a testament to the undying independent spirit of cinema and as a reminder that you have to start somewhere, however small, intimate, or rough the output may be.



'No Other Land', which was awarded the Best Documentary Feature Film at the 97th Academy Awards, is a debut documentary made by the Palestine-Israel collective of activists. It shows the destruction of the occupied West Bank's Masafer Yatta by Israeli soldiers and the alliance that developed between the Palestinian activist Basel and Israeli journalist Yuval. This year, regional cinema and its representation have been a core idea behind the curation process. Chaithanya Tamhane's sophomore feature, 'The Disciple,' tells the story of art, an artist, and the lengths they go to master it and eventually asks the greater question, 'Is art bigger than life itself?'. Guest films Sarathkumar V's 'Neelamudi' and Fazil Razak's 'Thadavu' share the same independent spirit of cinema and enthusiasm that was behind the birth of PUFF in the first place. C. Rudraiah's 'Aval Appadithaan' and Sanjiv Shah's 'Hun Hunshi Hunshilal' are lesser-known classics of our country. From Akira Kurosawa's 'Ran' to Agnes Varda's 'Cleo from 5 to 7' to Wong Kar Wai's 'In the Mood for Love' to The Wachowski's 'The Matrix', the curation team has tried to include a cinema for everyone, from everywhere. I extend my heartiest gratitude to my curation team for helping me through the process, my friends for being them, and my seniors for showing us that there is nothing wrong in dreaming a little too big.



**Devakrishna S**



# Werner Herzog

## the art of being insane

Werner Herzog may be best described as ‘insane’ by the world. And if you look at all the different expeditions he has done across various mediums, geographies, and languages, it is only typical and understandable that someone would adorn him with such detail, though at times, however belittling the description may be, and sometimes with clear deliberation. He made a film about moving a ship across a mountain by literally moving a ship across a mountain. What else do you expect? His films always carry that very sense of mythical quality of the extremes that can’t be described by forming words into coherent sentences. Stare long enough into those very words, and you’ll find it fails to contain the spectacle and its lore. Maybe something like music or love; it can only be felt when it happens to you, happens through you. A myth is usually supported by stories and is sprinkled with awe. How can someone made of flesh, bones, and thought, like any of us, achieve a feat so monumental that we have nothing but awe for it? It may be bad or brutal in the ugliest way possible, but there is something to admire in the very process of making it happen, that our ‘sanity’ can’t fathom this ‘insane’ act. Herzog famously shared a sentiment about how our civilisation as a whole is “starving for new images.”

He explained, “We do not have adequate images of our kind of civilisation... We are surrounded by images that are worn out, and I believe that unless we discover new images, we will die out.” Does anyone have any idea as to how ‘insane’ that is? This expedition for new images has led him to geographical and psychological terrains that are real, harsh, and beautiful. One such project is the 2016 documentary ‘Into The Inferno’, which talks about volcanoes worldwide. It meanders through magma and madness to contemplate humanity’s insignificance in the face of nature’s most spectacular and destructive power and how people try to find meaning in such overwhelming natural forces. Many may have been labelled ‘insane,’ but someone rarely demonstrated it with such grace.



# Harshness of Humour

Who would have thought that a simple act of friendship could unveil a harsh social reality. Yes, it is the blue haired truth (Neela Mudi) of Sharath Kumar. Flickering flames of reality captivated audiences, making it a standout at the International Film Festival of Kerala, 2023.

Film goes through the daily life of four vlogger friends, Kannan, Siddhu, Pari and Soni. What started as seemingly innocent jokes, gradually reveals deeper societal issues. Later, they try to even interfere in the personal interest of their friend. The underlying reality behind these mere acts of fun makes this film thought provoking, leaving the audience in a moment of silence, new insights into what constitutes personal liberty.

Kannan, who sports striking blue hair, becomes a symbol of individuality and rebellion. How minority expression is crumbled down under the major stereotypes, where personal freedom gradually stifles. Unchallenged and unnoticed acts in the film portrays

how stereotypes are normalised, making a section to accept societal narratives as truth.

Vlogging is employed as a storytelling device where not even one frame loses contact with the audience. Organic crafting of themes made the film an engaging journey for the audience. Serving as a clever metaphor, Vlogging highlights the contrast between the curated and polished images that we present to the world and the raw and unfiltered truth that lies beneath. Audience applause was driven by the compelling performance of characters, mainly the chemistry of the four friends. Conversation of Pari and his wife also brings the elements of feminism.

This skillful balance of humour and poignancy, Neela Mudi- will be screened in 2nd Pondicherry University Film Festival, 2025. Aditya baby, played the role of Sony, also a student of Performing Arts in Pondicherry University is joining with us in this celebration of cinema.

---

## For the love of Cinema!

To reminisce about PUFF is to recall the dreams and aspirations of many media students who were stranded but united for the love of cinema. PUFF '24 came to me as an ambitious idea from two of my friends, who later became the student coordinators of the pilot edition of PU's first-ever student-led film festival. When they gave me the task of the content head, I was skeptical and uncertain of the possibility of the idea. Looking back at it and seeing PUFF '25 brewing, I'm happy and proud to say that I tagged along an idea that seemed insurmountable at one point. With no legacy to follow, we had to start from scratch. From the ideation to its application, everything that happened during PUFF '24, the little significant achievements and the inevitable misgivings, were undoubtedly the most rewarding experiences of our university life. PUFF was never a recreational activity for us; it was personal and professional and resulted from our perseverance. Congratulations to the coordinators of PUFF '25 for keeping on the legacy. May this build the long road to more editions.

**Malavika Remadevi**





# PUFF Pays Homage

## Syam Benegal

Benegal's films are not just stories; they are reflections of India's socio-political landscape. He used cinema as a medium to tell real stories about ordinary people, setting him apart from the fantasy of mainstream Bollywood. His work became a cornerstone of India's Parallel Cinema movement, which attempted to create meaningful and socially relevant films.

Benegal's debut film, *Ankur*, was a pioneer work on rural India, exposing the caste dynamics and feudalism. The film's raw authenticity, use of non-professional actors, natural location and created a new benchmark for realism in Indian cinema. Films like *Nishant*, *Manthan*, and *Bhumika* further showcased his ability to blend artistry with social commentary. He was honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan and eighteen National Film Awards.

## David Lynch

An enigmatic filmmaker who revolutionized American cinema and television with his dark, surreal, and bizarre vision, David Lynch is nothing short of a master of cinematic artistry. Spanning over five decades and nearly 36 films, Lynch's career has forged a distinct narrative and aesthetic style—one that would later be recognized as Lynchian. His films, often unsettling and dreamlike, immerses audiences in a paradigm unlike anything seen in mainstream cinema.

His introspective vision and unique perception of reality have given us some of the most acclaimed films in cinema history, including *Mulholland Drive*, *Blue Velvet*, and *Eraserhead*. From fantasy to tragedy, from desire to despair, his films explore the whole shebang of human consciousness, leaving behind a legacy that continues to inspire and engage storytellers and audiences alike.

## M.T. Vasudevan

Disturbed past, rebelling for being an ordinary man, only to eventually succumb to the inevitability of fate. Despite this tragic end that his characters finally stumbled upon, his words always persist for change. The underlying call for transformations makes his writings a resistance to shackles imposed by society. He began his literary life amidst the turbulent atmosphere of poverty and Kerala's declining feudal society. Poverty and societal norms became antagonist, where the blood is shed by the protagonist as a sacrifice and silent cry for change. Cross sections of society in his stories and the distinct character portrayal rooted in social and cultural context gave him four national film awards for best screenplays.

PUFF 2025 presents *Thazhvaam*, where the intense storytelling of MT immerses the audience in the gripping tale of revenge and suspense.

## The Stage is Set

PUFF 2025 will feature three screens, screening 3 shows simultaneously. Inspired by cinema, the screens are in Tamil named *Medai*, *Thirai* and *Parvai*. *Medai* refers to the stage that signifies the primary space for performance. *Thirai* symbolizes the silver screen where films are screened. *Parvai* signifies the perspective emphasizing how films shape our understanding and perception of stories. *Medai* can accommodate 150 people, while *Thirai* and *Parvai* each have a capacity of 80. The 350-slot delegate pass has been fully distributed. At the movie screening venue, 50 seats will be reserved for delegates during each screening. Students without a delegate pass can still attend by registering on the spot for each screening, subject to availability on a first-come, first-served basis.

