

FIPRESCI-INDIA NEWSLETTER

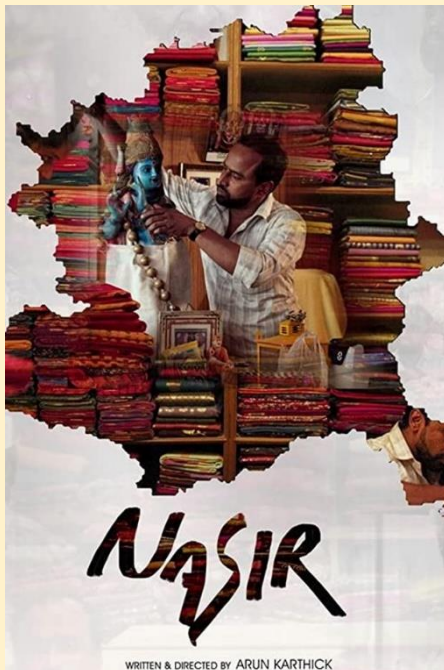
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ARUN KARTHIK'S "NASIR" WON FIPRESCI-INDIA GRAND PRIX 2020

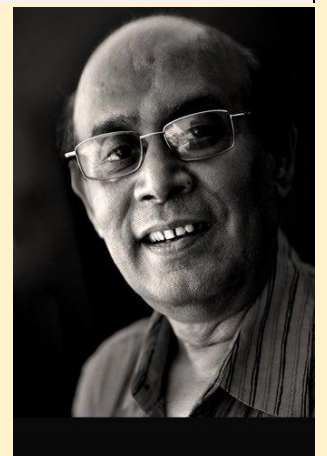
Tamil feature film "Nasir" directed by Arun Karthick won the FIPRESCI-India Grand-Prix for the Best Indian Feature Film of 2020. VK Joseph, President of the India Chapter of FIPRESCI declared the result through a press release from Trivandrum on 30 May 2021.



Evaluating 20 feature films primarily recommended, the TOP-10 were nominated by the Members of FIPRESCI-India through secret voting. Films in TOP-10 of 2020 are (in alphabetical order): 1. "1956 Central Travancore" (Malayalam, 94M, Dir. Don Palathara), 2. "A'hr" (Malayalam, English, Hindi, 104M, Dir. Sanal Kumar Sasidharan), 3. "Ashes on a Road Trip" (Marathi, 109M, Dir. Mangesh Joshi), 4. "Bridge" (Assamese, 88M, Dir. Kripal Kalita), 5. "Kosa" (Hindi, 85M, Dir. Mohit Priyadarshi), 6. "Laila Aur Satt Geet" (Gojri-Hindi, 98M, Dir. Pushpendra Singh), 7. "Mayar Jonjal" (Bangla, 104M, Dir. Indranil Roychowdhury), 8. "Nasir" (Tamil, 78M, Dir. Arun Karthick), 9. "Pinki Elli?" (Kannada, 107M, Dir. Prithvi Konanur) and 10. "Sthalpuran" (Marathi, 86M, Dir. Akshay Indikar). The Award will be handed over to the Grand-Prix Winners of 2019 (Film: "Hellaro" by Abhisek Shah) and 2020 (Film: "Nasir" by Arun Karthik) in a program at the earliest possible physical occasion to be announced soon. (Read review of "Nasir" in Pg.2)

BUDDHADEB DASGUPTA PASSED AWAY

FIPRESCI-India deeply mourns the sad demise of the legendary filmmaker Buddhadeb Dasgupta who passed away at his Kolkata residence on 10 June morning in his sleep at the age of 77 (Born: 11 Feb 1944). He was one of the most important voices of the post Satyajit Ray era of Indian cinema. He emerged as an important filmmaker from his debut feature film "Dooratwa" (The Distance, 1978) and continued to establish his mastery in other landmark films like "Neem Annapurna" (Bitter Morsel, 1979), "Grihajuddha" (Crossroads, 1981), "Andhi Gali" (Blind Ally, 1984), "Phera" (The Return, 1986), "Bagh Bahadur" (The Tiger Man, 1989), "Tahader Katha" (Their Story, 1992), "Charachar" (The Shelter of the Wings, 1993), "Lal Darja" (The Red Road, 1996), "Uttara" (The Wrestlers, 2000), "Mondo Meyer Upakhyam" (Tale of a Naughty Girl, 2002), "Anwar Ka Azab Kissa" (The Sniffer, 2013) and many others. Most of his films were highly acclaimed by the critics and scholars, participated in many festivals worldwide and won several national and international awards and honors. He was an eminent poet and novelist who started his career as a Professor of Economics but left the teaching profession to become a fulltime filmmaker. Besides feature films, he made many important and award winning documentaries. He made his last feature film "Urojahaj" (The Flight) in 2018.



FIPRESCI-INDIA GRAND-PRIX WINNER “NASIR”: UN/REAL INDIA UNMASKED

Tamil feature film “Nasir” (2020) directed by Arun Karthick posits a very transparent theme in narrative style. No miracles. There’s nothing out of the box for those who realise the Indian reality. Still, through the same lucidity, “Nasir” presents the intrigue realities of the populist culture which determine the hyper-constitutional, fanatical and violent historic aspects of nationhood as well as citizenship and its colossal development into high voltage fascism. As a film, “Nasir” does not pursue the trajectory or constructs of Tamil cinema history. The film is conceived and completed earnestly and artlessly, without resorting to over-sentimentality, artificiality and slipping into evasive narrative techniques.

The theme of the film is a day's life of the protagonist, Nasir who is a salesman in a small textile shop in Coimbatore. This character is not only Nasir, but any Muslim human of Indian polity. Through him, we come across not only Muslim, but any refugee/migrant labourer, the ostracised Dalit, the home-bound woman, and any other helpless Indian. He himself is India.

The proprietor of the shop is a practicing Hindu as well as a hard-core communalist. When he realizes through a phone call that a procession is passing through a street where he has an edge, he instructs his henchmen to pelt stones at them. The audio spatial dominance in this sequence is quite visible and audible. In addition to the privilege of wealth, he wields the unbreachable cultural power of citizenship provided by nation/region. An Indian Muslim like Nasir has been living in the Indian mainstream as an ‘other’, for decades on end. His silence and the degraded socio-economic status are the clear cut pointers of the same ‘otherness’.

We come across a Ganesh Chaturthi speech which declares that India is a spiritual land and Tamilnadu is an integral part of it. It is further detailed that the interlopers, the migrant settlers, traitors and antagonists are disastrous, and the Hindu faith will safeguard us. Nasir quite apprehensively articulates the fact that the urbanscape which primarily belongs to the labourers, industrialists, traders, farmers and students is rapidly getting under the clutches of extreme rightist Hindutva fascists.

“Nasir” pays equal or more prominence and care to the audio narrative along with the visual. The intended political sharpness/precision is visible through the diligently and meticulously recorded audio fragments done while shooting, during the lab works and brought out finally through the screening. Karthick posits the basic question, why this Indian whose routine life is practically least indistinct and which never raises any challenge to the nation as well as society gets killed.

“Nasir” won the coveted FIPRESCI-India Grand-Prix as the Best Feature Film of 2020. It bagged the NETPAC award for the Best Asian film in Rotterdam Film Festival. “Sivapuram” (2015), the debut film of Arun Karthick also had its premiere in Rotterdam. Koumarane Valavane, the Franco-Indian actor, theatre director and researcher portrays Nasir in the film. Sudha Ranganathan played in the role of his wife. The film is based on a short story titled ‘A Clerk’s Tale’, written by Dilip Kumar. DOP

of the film is Soumyanand Sahi. Arun Karthick is aurally and visually locating a meditative spot of humanism from the numberless visuals and limitless cacophony of everyday city life. He came to the forefront of cinema mastering it through the film festivals and film societies.



The anti-Muslim ethos had gripped common psyche of Coimbatore at varied phases after the notorious 1998 bomb explosions. The city was shaken by the anti-Muslim campaign in 2016, as well. The director internalises the city as his own heart and body. Arun feels the street sights, its paces, races, noises, reverberating speeches and outbursts as if they were produced from within him. The instance of how high voltage communalism sets the laymen into an orgy, which in turn leads them into a mass psychosis, can be cited from the recent history of Coimbatore. “Nasir” is surrounded by the trauma of this sense of history.

By: G P Ramachandran.

[Translated from Malayalam by Mammed Montage]

LEENA MANIMEKALAI'S "MAADATHY" COMING UP ON OTT PLATFORM

Leena Manimekalai's highly acclaimed Tamil feature film "Maadathy: An Unfair Tale" which won the FIPRESCI-India Award in the 7th Aurangabad International Film Festival (5-9 Feb 2020) getting released on the OTT platform "NeeStream" on 24 June. The film written and produced by Leena Manimekalai under the banner of 'Karuvachy Films' addresses the gender and caste identity,



religious beliefs and violence through a fictionalised story on the lives of the Puthirai Vannar community in Tamil Nadu depicting how they are discriminated not only as "untouchable" but also as "unseeable". The film was acclaimed in many festivals like Busan International Film Festival, Kolkata International Film Festival, Third Eye Asian Film Festival Mumbai, Chicago South Asian Film Festival, and Latin American FICCI 60. Besides FIPRESCI-India Award it also won the 'Golden Kailasha' for the Best Film, Best Actress and Best Cinematography Awards at the 7th Aurangabad International Film Festival.

(Leena Manimekai receiving the Citation of FIPRESCI-India Award in Aurangabad International Film Festival from Ashok Rane, VK Joseph and Premendra Mazumder).

CANNES CRITICS WEEK 2021



The 60th edition of the Cannes Critics Week (La Semaine de la Critique: 7-15 July 2021) declared its lineup. Following seven feature films will be there in the competition: 1. "Amparo" (Clomobo, Sweden, Germany, Qatar, 2021, 95 mins) by Simón Mesa Soto, 2. "Feathers" (Francee, Egypt, Netherlands, Greece, 2021, 112 mins) by Omar El Zohairy, 3. "The Gravedigger's Wife" (La Femme du fossoyeur, Finland, Germany, France, 2021, 82 mins) by Khadar Ayderus Ahmed, 4. "Libertad" (Spain, Belgium, 2021, 104 mins) by Clara Roquet, 5. "Olga" (Switzerland, Ukraine, France, 2021, 85 mins) by Elie Grappe, 6. "Piccolo Corpo" (Small body, Italy, France, Slovenia, 2021, 89 mins) by Laura Samani and 7. "Rien à foutre" (Zero Fucks Given, Belgium, France, 2021, 110 mins) by Julie Lecoustre & Emmanuel Marre. Critics' Week will open with "Robuste" (France, 2021, 95 mins) by Constance Meyer and the closing film will be "Une histoire d'amour et de désir" (A Tale of Love and Desire, France, 102 mins) by Leyla Bouzid.

MANOJ BARPUJARI'S DOCU

Manoj Barpujari, a Member of the India Chapter of FIPRESCI is making a documentary on the firebrand tribal leader Bhimbor Deori (1903-1947), a visionary politician who took a unique role in shaping the future course of Assam's political landscape and safeguarding its social identity. Despite his birth centenary celebrations in 2003 and installation of the Bhimbor Deori Award by the Government of Assam in 2019, study of his immense contributions remained below par. To reevaluate this extraordinary personality whom the veteran freedom fighters and statesmen fondly remembered as 'Jananeta' (people's leader) the documentary is conceptualised and directed by the national award-winning film critic, author and poet Manoj Barpujari. Following an intensive research carried out for last two years, Manoj has shot the film at the birthplace of Bhimbor Deori and in several other remote places of upper Assam. He is now doing its post production.



(Manoj Barpujari directing his documentary)

MASURKAR'S "SHERNI" RELEASED



Amit Masurkar's "Sherni" (Hindi, 2021) premiered on the OTT platform Amazon Prime Video on 18 June. After four years of his highly acclaimed "Newton" (Hindi, 2017) Masurkar made this film on a complex narrative with a very rich visual texture to depict the conflict of the so called human civilization with the animals of the forest. Rakesh Haridas's cinematography and Anish John's sound designing brilliantly transcribed Aastha Tiku's vivid screenplay to give an insight into the complicated social pattern of the village and forest, human being and animal, people and government, power and corruption and several other related issues. Vidya Balan's remarkable performance with more or less similar support from her co-actors Vijay Raaz, Brijendra Kala, Neeraj Kabi, Sampa Mandal, Sharat Saxena made the film thoroughly fascinating.

FAJR INTL. FILM FESTIVAL



FIPRESCI Award in the 39th Fajr International Film Festival (26 May - 2 June) was given to "200 Meters" by Ameen Nayfeh (Palestine, Jordan, Qatar, Sweden, Italy, 2020, 96 mins). Jury composed of Alin Tasciyan (Turkey), Giovanni Vimercati (Slovenia/Italy) and Omid Rohani (Iran) followed the "Eastern Vista" competition. This film already got the FIPRESCI Award in EIGouna Festival in Egypt earlier this year.

KRAKOW INTL. FILM FESTIVAL



FIPRESCI Award in 61st Krakow Film Festival (Poland, 30 May to 6 June) was given to "Children of the Enemy" by Gorki Glaser-Müller (Sweden, Denmark, Qatar, 2021, 97 mins). The Jury composed of Vladimir Seput (Croatia), Dieter Wieczorek (France) and Piotr Czerkawski (Poland) followed the documentary films in competition. Jury mentioned in their citation that "Children of the Enemy raises important ethical questions around human guilt, responsibility and inheritance of trauma, while avoiding a one-sided perspective on the complex political issues and showing how the European political diplomacy didn't play the most elegant role in humanitarian efficacy." The Jury watched the films online.

KYIV INTL. FILM FESTIVAL



FIPRESCI Award in the 50th Molodist Kyiv International Film Festival (Ukraine, 29 May - 6 June) was given to the film "Celts" (Kelti) by Milica Tomovic (Serbia, 2021, 106 min). The Jury composed of Alberto Castellano (Italy), Raúl Reis (Luxemburg) and Andriy Alferov (Ukraine) followed the international competition of first feature films. The Jury watched the films online.