



## ANNOUNCING THE 2021 INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL, BACK IN CINEMAS AND ONLINE – PLUS OPENING NIGHT FILM ‘WOMB’

**Indian Film Festival of Melbourne Physical Festival** • August 12-21 • Venues across Melbourne

**Indian Film Festival of Melbourne Opening Night** • Thursday August 12 • HOYTS Melbourne Central

**Indian Film Festival of Melbourne Virtual Festival** • August 15-30 • Online

The **Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM)** is delighted to announce its return to cinemas in 2021. Following last year’s virtual festival – which reached IFFM’s largest audience to date – IFFM returns this August as a hybrid festival with both physical cinema and virtual screenings, ensuring audiences around the country can join in and celebrate the best of contemporary Indian cinema, in the 75<sup>th</sup> year of Indian independence.

In 2021, IFFM takes over five key venues in Melbourne’s CBD and suburbs, while an extended virtual season will see films stream for free via the festival’s website, [iffm.com.au](http://iffm.com.au). IFFM has partnered with the *Mental Health Foundation Australia*, and viewers will be encouraged to donate to the organisation when they stream Festival films.

Kicking off a diverse and dynamic program of **more than 70** feature films, documentaries and shorts – the largest festival of its kind in the southern hemisphere – is the 2021 IFFM Opening Night film, Ajitesh Sharma’s ***WOMB (Women of My Billion)***.

A heart-wrenching and heart-warming documentary about the dreams and the fight against all forms of violence that unify the women of India today, *WOMB (Women of My Billion)* follows one young woman, Srishti Bakshi, as she embarks on a monumental journey, walking nearly 4000 kilometres over 240 days, from Kanyakumari in South India, to Kashmir in the North. Along the way, she meets and learns first hand about the experiences of women from all corners of the country.

**Srishti Bakshi** said: "Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation. Since the outbreak of Covid-19 and the world locking down to live within four walls, emerging data and reports from those on the frontlines have shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, has only intensified. In this documentary we celebrate ordinary women who show extraordinary courage to rise above their limitations and challenge deeply entrenched gender norms. We do this to unite the majority because what we discovered was that ‘gender-based violence is a crime perpetrated by the minority but perpetuated by the silence of the majority.’"

Producer Apoorva Bakshi, said, "We take great pride in presenting our film at IFFM as the opening night gala presentation and look forward to sharing it with audiences worldwide. This documentary not only presents facts but also highlights possible solutions which can be implemented today.

**Mitu Bhowmick Lange, IFFM Director:** "After the unprecedented challenges faced over the last 18 months, we are excited to bring the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne back to the big screen, while our digital platform will ensure viewers around Australia can access the Festival too. In 2021, IFFM pays tribute to not only the best of Indian cinema, but to many of our COVID-19 heroes, offering vital community support, connection and hope in these challenging times."

**Caroline Pitcher, Film Victoria CEO:** "Film Victoria is proud to be the principal partner of the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne. For over a decade, this incredible celebration of Indian film and culture has given Victorians the opportunity to engage with diverse and compelling screen stories, and it’s wonderful that this year we can come together both in cinemas across Melbourne and online."

The Indian Film Festival of Melbourne is the southern hemisphere's greatest annual celebration of Indian cinema and films

**Festival Locations** • HOYTS Melbourne Central, HOYTS District Docklands, HOYTS Chadstone, HOYTS Highpoint • Federation Square  
**Virtual Festival** • Films accessible to stream for free online at [www.iffm.com.au](http://www.iffm.com.au)

from the Indian sub-continent. Established in 2010, it is recognised as an important feature of the State’s cultural calendar. IFFM is proudly supported by the Victorian Government via Film Victoria – principal partner of the festival.

**The full 2021 IFFM program launches on date TBC**



**2021 Indian Film Festival of Melbourne dates: August 12-21 in cinemas; August 15-30 online**

<https://www.iffm.com.au/>

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