

India to host Iran's globetrotting 'Scent of Wind'

ILNA - Iranian film 'Scent of Wind', directed by Hadi Mo-haqeq, will be screened at the 21st Chennai International Film Festival in India. The festival will run from December 14 to 21.

The film has participated in several international festivals, having been screened in film festivals such as Busan in South Korea, Nantes in France, and Shanghai in China, where it received several accolades.

Following its success in many festivals in France, the film enjoyed a five-month screening, debuting in 106 cinema halls. The demand for the film increased, prompting its screening in an expanded network of 387 cinema halls, attracting over 32,000 viewers throughout France.

The story is set in a distant Iranian village where a paralyzed man collects herbal medicine in the mountains for making his living with his sick child. The electricity goes off in his house and an electrician comes to fix it. Unfortunately, the problem is bigger than what was anticipated and may take days to be resolved. When he sees the child on the sickbed, he feels committed to doing whatever he can to bring the electricity back. However, he has a tough job ahead with facing nature and some unexpected events.

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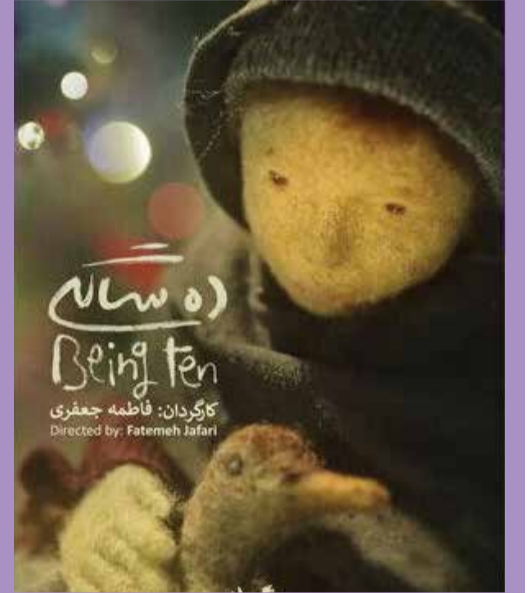
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Two Iranian films shine in Albanian festival



Iranian animated films, 'The Lovely Sky' and 'Being Ten,' won awards at the 14th International Film Festival for children and teenagers, known as AniFestROZAFa, held in Albania.

'The Lovely Sky,' directed by

Amir Mehran, won the Best Film Award in the eight-year-old age group. In addition, the animation, 'Being Ten,' directed by Fatemeh Ja'fari, received the Special Prize for Best Animated Film at the Albanian festival, IRNA reported.

Both films, produced in 2021 and 2023, belong to the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults.

Organizers of the children and youth film festival believe that through cinema, young audi-

ences can recognize their rights and enhance their cultural curiosity.

In this edition of the AniFestROZAFa, only short films for children and youths were selected and judged. A panel of 23 judges, aged eight to 12, ap-

pointed by the European Children's Film Association, evaluated the films in competition.

Previously, the animation, 'What With,' directed by Mahin Javaherian, had participated in the 11th edition of the festival in 2020.

Comedies in Iranian cinema: Opportunity or cause for concern?

Arts & Culture Desk

After some figures were published on the success of Iranian comedies in cinemas, Mohammad Mehdi Esmaili, Iran's minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, said in a recent interview that some would like to suggest that only comedies are successful in Iran. Despite the success of comedies like 'Fossil' this year, Esmaili's statement raises eyebrows, according to an article published on asriran.com, an Iranian news website.

The minister acknowledged the success of 'Fossil,' stating that the film was a great success and had nearly \$6 million in sales over nine months of public screening. Although

other Iranian films that broke the record of over \$2.4 million were also comedies, the minister stressed that we had successful works "on children and social issues" as well. However, some wish to imply that only comedy films attract movie lovers, the minister highlighted.

Elsewhere, recently, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ezzatollah Zarghami highlighted the importance of joy in people's lives, stating, "One of our losses is the issue of joy." The current top five grossing films in Iranian cinema are 'Fossil,' 'Hotel,' 'Shahr-e Hert,' 'Smart Kid,' and 'Three Puffs.' Looking at previous years, there has been a similar trend of suc-

cessful comedy films.

What is essential, and the message that the community conveys through the success of comedy films, is that not only do people prefer comedy, but they also feel the necessity of entertainment, joy, and laughter.

Iranian audiences, dealing with tight household budgets and economic pressures due to foreign sanctions, desire an escape from the nerve-racking world, even if only for two hours, to enjoy and distance themselves from the crises around them. Considering the current economic challenges, rising living costs, and income gaps, going to the cinema has become the most accessible and affordable



form of entertainment for all walks of life.

It's crucial to be reminded that in the real world, considering various factors ranging from production costs to return on investment, comedy films are collective serendipity; they

not only sell well but satisfy both the audience and the film industry.

Comedy films worldwide share the characteristic of being well-received, but not to the extent seen in Iran. The highest-grossing film in a country for years

in a row is rarely a comedy, but in Iran it is.

The point that the audience prefers comedy films to other genres must be taken seriously because it signifies both an opportunity and a cause for concern.

Almost 1,000,000 children in the UK do not own a book



Almost a million children in the UK do not have a single book of their own at home, according to new research conducted by the National Literacy Trust (NLT).

Some 91.4% of children aged five to 18 who were surveyed said that they had a book of their own, meaning that 8.6% (one in 12) did not, the Guardian wrote.

The study also found that twice as many children aged eight to 18 who received free school meals did not report owning a book (12.4%) compared with those who did not receive free school meals (5.8%).

The gap in book ownership between children who did receive free school meals and those who did not is at its largest in a decade. "Pressure on household budgets due to

increasing food and energy prices has a direct impact on families' ability to support reading at home," states the report.

NLT research published earlier this year found that 36% of families who felt that they were struggling financially with increases in the cost of living said they were spending less on books for their children.

Book ownership was lower among the five to eight age bracket (80.8%) compared to the eight to 18 group (92.9%). The NLT said that lower book ownership among younger children is "concerning" because "foundational reading skills, behaviours and attitudes are often being established" at this age.

Girls reported own books at slightly higher rates than

boys. In the five to eight age group, 83.7% of girls reported book ownership, compared to 77.5% of boys. This gap is the highest it has been for five years.

London-based children aged eight to 18 owned books at a slightly higher rate than other regions, with 94.6% of children in Greater London reporting that they had a book of their own. The lowest ownership was reported in the north-west (91.2%) and the East Midlands (91.3%).

The report urged that support for book ownership be targeted at younger children and children from lower-income backgrounds, "allowing them the same opportunities as their peers to enjoy reading their own books at home".

The NLT is also launching a Christmas fundraising cam-

paign to give books to children. "Christmas is a time for family and sharing stories, so it is devastating to think almost a million children might not have books to read and enjoy with their loved ones this year," said Jonathan Douglas, CEO of the NLT.

The NLT surveyed 71,351 children in two questionnaires distributed to schools. One survey was for the five to eight age bracket (Year 1 to Year 4, or Primary 2 to Primary 5 for Scotland) and the other was designed for the eight to 18 group (Year 4 to Year 13, or Primary 5 to Secondary 6 for Scotland). The surveys contained similar questions, but the survey for younger children was shorter and more pictorial. Teachers decided which of the surveys their Year 4 pupils completed.