



For immediate release

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**3rd i's 24th Annual San Francisco International South Asian Film Festival
Oct 9-11 at The Roxie Theater, San Francisco**

From art-house classics to documentaries and innovative visions, 3rd i Films is committed to promoting diverse images of South Asians through independent film.

3rd i's **24th annual San Francisco International South Asian Film Festival**—*Beyond Bollywood* presents award-winning narrative, documentary and short films from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, France, South Africa, the UK, and the USA. From dark comedy to riveting drama, and from heartwarming social satire to unique perspectives on the human condition, 3rd i offers groundbreaking cinema from South Asia and its Diaspora.

For the Festival **Opening Night**, 3rd i is thrilled to honor the creative genius of award-winning British-Indian director and screenwriter Avie Luthra with a showcase of his comedic, nuanced, complex, and socially insightful short films. Join us for “A Celebration of the Extraordinary Work of Avie Luthra”, an inspiring retrospective of his brilliant narratives that lift up stories of immigration, relationships, identity, gender, sexuality, and social justice. **Q&A with director Avie Luthra.**

Continuing our mission to provide a platform for the **Voices of Women**, 3rd i brings films that feature women both behind the lens and onscreen. Acclaimed filmmaker Anusha Rizvi directs her latest tour de force, *THE GREAT SHAMSUDDIN FAMILY* (India, 2025), a witty, razor-sharp, heartwarming social satire. Her first film, *PEEPLI LIVE*, was India's entry to the Academy Awards and the first Indian film to screen at Sundance. Set within a Delhi apartment and unfolding during one day, her new comedy cleverly turns domestic chaos into a microcosm of modern India. In the magical, sweet, and visually evocative narrative *GHOST*



SCHOOL (Pakistan/Germany/Saudi Arabia, 2025), British-Pakistani director Seemab Gul captures a child's pursuit of answers in a community weighed down by fear of ghosts. Journeying through an expansive, sun-drenched landscape, ten-year-old Rabia encounters people from all classes and backgrounds in her quest to uncover the reasons for the ghostly tales and why the only school in her village is closed.

This year's Festival presents **indie narratives** that resist easy categorization and push the boundaries of storytelling. Darkly comic and colorful, Sarmad Khoosat directs LALI (Pakistan, 2026), a layered thriller in which ghosts walk among the living and prophecies weigh heavily on a young Punjabi couple and their families. Zeba—whose three previous fiancés died mysteriously—marries Sajawal in a wedding full of quirky family drama and humor. Beginning as an exuberant social satire, the tone moves into a darker exploration of gender roles, jealousy, and the supernatural. Khoosat also produced JOYLAND, a Cannes Film Festival Jury Prize winner and Pakistan's first film to be shortlisted for the Academy Awards. In the arthouse experimental film SAND CITY (Bangladesh, 2025), director Mahde Hasan explores Dhaka, Bangladesh, where the landscape and its inhabitants share a profound connection: sand. French cinematographer Mathieu Giombini paints a moody, gritty, and beautiful picture—not just of a place, but of a living, breathing entity. Emma and Hasan have parallel lives that intersect through their relationship with sand, solitude, urban alienation, dysfunction, and the strange things they need to survive in this metropolitan wilderness.

Illuminating **documentaries** such as director Gautam Sonti's TECHNOCATS (India, 2026) also appear in the Festival lineup. At India's elite Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), a "Cat" is someone who aces everything. These engineering schools have produced the CEOs of Google, Microsoft, IBM, and other tech giants. An IIT alumnus himself, Sonti explores the cost and meaning of excellence, the reality behind the rankings, and the quiet resilience of young minds navigating one of India's most intense institutions. Shot across breathtaking forest landscapes, a portrait of a complex and resilient Indigenous community emerges in ETERNAL TREES, ETERNAL MOUNTAINS



(India/USA, 2026), directed by Harsha Reddy and Chris Chekuri. In 1998, American student Harsha ventured into the forests of South India to study tigers. Over the next two decades, he returned with his historian friend Chris to the villages of the Chenchu people, a tribal community whose roots run as deep as the ancient forests they call home. **Q&A with directors Harsha Reddy and Chris Chekuri.**

The Festival will close with THE LOYAL MAN (France, 2020), a riveting and romantic gangster thriller directed by audience favorite, French-Sri Lankan Lawrence Valin, essential viewing for “Valin” fans. Following last year's rave reviews for his sold-out opening night film LITTLE JAFFNA, 3rd i follows up with his first French-Sri Lankan Tamil film to immerse us in the gritty underworld of iconic Paris, France. The character Aathi must confront his allegiance to his mob boss when he falls in love with a trafficked woman, Minale, who is under the mob's control. The program begins with the short film HOMEBODY, directed by Shruti Parekh. **Specially recorded Q&A with director Lawrence Valin.**

Individual films are \$13. Buy tickets online up to 30 minutes before showtime. The Roxie Box Office will sell tickets 30 minutes before a show. More information: thirdi.org.

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