ABILITYFEST® 2017
India International Disability Film Festival

11 - 14 September 2017
Sathyam Cinemas, Chennai, India
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ABILITY
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Ability Foundation is a national cross disability umbrella organization working across the country and headquartered in Chennai. Moving steadfastly towards an equitable society for every citizen with disability, the Foundation focuses on empowerment and the potential of persons with disabilities and bridges the divide between people with and without disabilities.

The core areas of Ability Foundation’s involvement include advocacy, empowerment, information dissemination and rights. Towards this, the Foundation’s activities cover a wide range from publishing, employment, media, culture, legislation, human rights and implementation of policy. The unwavering commitment is towards an equitable civil society, making available the right opportunities at the right time. So much more then becomes possible... all it takes is an open mind.


Ability Foundation, 4/23, Third Cross Street, Radhakrishnan Nagar, Thiruvanmiyur, Chennai 600 041. India
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JAYSHREE RAVEENDRAN
Festival Chairperson

C K RANGANATHAN
Festival President
Ability Foundation proudly presents AbilityFEST 2017, India International Disability Film Festival, from 11 to 14 September 2017 at Sathyam Cinemas. This is the 7th edition of the festival, and we would like to thank everyone for coming in large numbers over the years to watch each screening.

AbilityFEST is held every two years with the objective of:

• Giving people the unique opportunity of watching movies from all over the world that sensitise the public to disability. These movies are not only well appreciated in global film festivals, but are beautiful in their portrayal of life and disability.

• Providing access to movies, by introducing techniques like captioning and audio description. With these techniques, complete accessibility of movies is ensured. People with and without disabilities experience the magic of cinema together. Access includes holding the Fest at a disabled-friendly location as well.

• Creating awareness about disability through cinema. Cinema is a popular medium of informing and entertaining mass audiences. What better way to celebrate diversity?

AbilityFEST 2017 brings to the film loving public a host of award winning feature films, documentaries and short films from around the world by, with and about people with disabilities. Award winning films from across the world have been selected to give this year’s Fest a global perspective of disability and inclusion.

Our feature films include the acclaimed films from Iran ‘A time to Love’ and ‘The Sea and the Flying Fish’, the thought provoking ‘The Quiet Ones’ from U.K and the lighthearted ‘Close to You’ from Germany.

The three presentations from India are the inspiring documentaries ‘Two Feet to Fly’, ‘The Deep Rising’ and ‘Scribbling’.

We are also delighted to present the first public screening with audio description for the blind of the Tamil blockbuster ‘Vikram Vedha’.

Be a part of AbilityFEST 2017…see you at the movies!
Dear Friends and Film lovers,

We are into our 7th year of AbilityFEST: India International Disability Film Festival. At the outset, I must state that we miss our guide and the backbone of our festival PKji – P K Nair saab. His presence and his knowledge gave so much to our festival and will remain our “book of guidance” for our future years too. Janaki and Bharathi at Ability Foundation, who have worked on watching and getting the films for the Festival have been empowered by him and his guidance. The foundation he laid will always be the strength of our festival. Thank you PKji.

The reach of the modern day media has widened so much that movies that are made the traditional way or released the traditional way in large screens are slowly becoming history. More people have access to bringing their stories alive and also getting it viewed. It is an age of visual media in my opinion. From phone conversations, to board meetings, to long distance education, even surgeries, have become visual through technology that is so advanced. In these times it is so easy to get and give information of any kind. In this web of technology, the one thing that remains unchanged is the human connect in any storytelling aspect and that is what AbilityFEST has always strived at doing: to bring films, documentaries that connect with our hearts-souls and leave an ever lasting impression.

Our one set back this year though, has been the cancellation of the “60 Seconds To Fame”, One Minute Film Competition category from our festival. This has always been a favourite with me. This category was planned with an aim towards creating a bank of people’s thoughts towards different aspects of disability. It was mainly to have an interactive audience in our festival and with their participation understand what the general society feels and thinks on issues pertaining to disability. And also to induce more people to think on inclusion of persons with disabilities. With the growing access to media and media tools we felt students as well as others interested in telling stories, would get into this and we would be challenged with an avalanche of stories and visual quality through the “60 Seconds To Fame”. Sad to say, this did not happen.
Therefore, this time, keeping all issues of our previous experiences in mind we chose a very simple topic – “Equal Opportunities for All”, and also explained the core meaning of the topic in simple language. We received a little more than 100 films and only 3 or 4 films actually addressed the topic. After a lot of thought and discussions we had to reluctantly make the decision to cancel this year’s “60 Seconds To Fame” category from the Festival itself. This was a very hard decision for us. The films with stories sympathising or patronising towards a “handicapped person in public” continues, and it seems as though only the disabled are sensitive to other disabled people and the rest are preachy kinds. We at Ability Foundation need to introspect on this... as to how we can get people to understand the theme better and get this back in 2019. After all, our constant striving for 21 long years has been towards inclusion and a level playing field for all disabled persons.

I would also request you - having been part of our festival and caring about people with disabilities in our society – to send us your suggestions about this.

As with every biennial year, this time round too, we at Ability Foundation have been able to bring you the best of cinema on the issue of disability at AbilityFEST 2017. I am sure you will enjoy the films in this edition of our Festival as well.

With warm regards,
Revathy Asha Kelunni.

JAYSHREE RAVEENDRAN
Festival Chairperson

Yesterday is but today’s memory, and tomorrow is today’s dream.” - Kahlil Gibran

As we step on to AbilityFest 2017, these are the words that come to our mind. As we begin our ‘today’ what dominates our thoughts are our memories of yesterday, the time when we were so privileged as to have the late Sri P.K. Nair, former director of National Film Archive of India, curating our Festival, taking on the mantle as Festival Director. His worldwide reputation, his valued passion and
knowledge of cinema were our guiding light that gave shape to our dreams and made the prospect of organising India’s first ever disability film festival, a reality. Today, it is with this valuable knowledge that he left us that we carry on.

I do believe, that the infinite role of “the movies” per se: to create an immense impact on people and in greater society, has been happened at every AbilityFest we have held and to a very large degree.

Movies are a voice for many… making community as a whole, understand about other people’s lives, opinions and struggle for the acceptance of one’s own identity. And towards this, the movie theater itself is, in fact, a place where people rediscover what it is that brings them together. The audience are extremely diverse, not only in terms of what they look like or feel like or live like or how different their personal experiences are. Here happens a discovery spree when one realizes to what an extent some people’s lives are harder than someone else’s, and that so many people who don’t look like us don’t have the right to live and work for the dreams and the goals that we have.

The power of communication as diverse human beings, that movies have, is enormous That’s one of the reasons that certain filmgoing traditions have lasted for so long and expanded across the whole world, so decisively. The vast majority of humans love communication through the art of story. We crave familiarity through unique lenses. They’re a voice for many, to make the world understand their ideas and opinions and life through acceptance of one’s own identity. Add to this our steadfast adherence to total inclusion and access: a mainstream hi-tech multiplex theatre right in the heart of the city, made accessible by us, captioned movies and audio described ones too. Four days of four screenings of award winning films – totally free of cost. Absolutely unforgettable and not-to-be-missed event, I would say.

With these insights, goals and determination on top, this year’s AbilityFest 2017, lays out its rich fare for each and every one of you to experience, enjoy and empathise. As with every edition, we lay out a rich fare of outstanding world cinema for you. Thank you very much for being there for us. There are, of course, no words to express our gratitude to our sponsors, supporters and volunteers and selflessly dedicated Team Ability.

I would welcome your thoughts and observations, post festival.
C K RANGANATHAN

Festival President

Ability Foundation for years together has been a frontrunner in instituting awareness initiatives for disability. The India International Disability Festival – AbilityFest 2017 is one such phenomenal effort undertaken by the Foundation to sensitize the public about disability. The biennial event captures our constant and ardent desire to educate the public through cinema, which is both informative and entertaining. Today in India, Cinema has become a powerful tool of communication. Portraying the various shades of society. Cinema has undergone a myriad of transformations and has played a pivotal role in changing mindsets at large.

Despite its duration, a film with strong message captures the attention of the viewers and sets them to think on a path of change and transformation. We strongly believe that our Festival has over the years contributed in a significant way towards transforming mindsets of people, towards disability. Our Festival is a standing testimony for creating massive awareness on various concerns of disability and we are honoured to continue our journey in this path.

We as a team from Ability Foundation, are happy to play a catalytic role once again, as we are all set to successfully roll out the seventh edition of Ability FEST on 11 September. Handpicked from the very best, a variety of award winning films and documentaries from across the world offer a global perspective on disability and inclusion appealing to all. Scheduled for four, full, consecutive days, the screenings from varying cultures and backgrounds will leave the audience enthralled.

Today, the initiative stands as a strong pillar of support on awareness on disability and this has kept us motivated to further spread our wings in educating the public. We shall continue to strive in building an inclusive society and we are sure to impact many lives.

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Why do we do what we do?
Why do our late nights always bleed into early mornings?
Why do we stand for hours in the rain, in the sun,
Eat most of our meals on the run?
Why do we risk everything for a single moment frozen in time?
Why are our conversations always hurried
And our minds always on the move?
Why are we always on the hunt for that elusive next story?
Why are we never satisfied with checking things just once?
Why do we stay up long after the rest of the world
Rests in sweet slumber?
Why do we seek the truth and not stop till we find it?
Why do we wait until every last page leaves the press?
Why do we rise even before the sun every morning?
Why do we never rest even on the day of rest?
We do it because we want to be a part
Of something bigger than ourselves.
We do it because even if all else is forgotten, print remains.
Long after memories fade and times change.
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We do it  #ForTheLoveOfPrint.
This fascinating documentary follows American High School football team the Rangers, from the Texas School for the Deaf. Ask the school’s head football coach, players, and the athletes’ parents and you’ll find out that deafness is not a weakness, but a strength.

A Normal Life is a semi-autobiographical film by 19 year old writer/director Alex Herz. This is a story of a young man who is leaving for college soon and worries about the independence of his brother with Down syndrome.
**ANNA**
New Zealand /2015 / 8.31m
**Harriett Maire**
*Diversity in Cannes Short Film Showcase 2016*
*ReelAbilities film festival 2017*

Anna enjoys living a life of rigorous routine and her condition is made easier by her ability to control the little details of her day, which give her a sense of regularity. This film follows the actions and interactions of Anna, a young woman on the Autism Spectrum, and what happens when her routine is unexpectedly interrupted.

**AUF AUGENHÖHE - AT EYE LEVEL**
Germany / 2016 / 98m
**Joachim Dollhopf, Evi Goldbrunner, Martin Richter**
*Ale Kino!-International Young Audience Film Festival 2016*
*Munich Film Festival 2016*
*ReelAbilities film festival 2017*

Michi, 11 years old, lives in a children’s home and one day finds out who his father is. But when he eventually meets his dad Tom, it’s a shock for both of them, because Tom happens to be a dwarf. In this tender and powerful story, Michi struggles with the embarrassment and shame he feels, while Tom wants to accept the challenge of fatherhood.
Cybathlon is the world’s first bionic Olympiad for people with disabilities using assistive devices including robotic technologies. This documentary captures work being done on exoskeletons and other robotic devices to enable people who are paralyzed participate in Cybathlon.

Sisi Coala travels the length and breadth of her native Fiji, helping visually impaired students excel in mainstream schools and advocates for fairer employment opportunities for visually impaired people.
BUILDING A WORLD FOR ALL
Australia / 2015 / 2.22m
Elle Spring
U.N Enable film festival 2016

A celebration of the new global goals that include people with disability which invites everyone to help build a world where all people can thrive.

DAN AND MARGOT
Canada / 2016 / 75m
Chloe Sosa-Sims
Scottish Mental Health Arts and film festival 2016
The Other Film Festival 2016

Dan And Margot is intimate look into the life of a young modern woman struggling to take back the three years of her life that she lost to schizophrenia. Margot gives a voice to the many relatable stories of mental illness as she demonstrates a person’s right to fail, living with one’s past traumas and hope, the key to human existence.
A story about an artist eager for freedom and full of devotion. A deaf, young boy living in a juvenile detention center, Ehsan has a special talent: painting. In fact, it is the only method he has for communication. The officers who run the facility see nonsense in Ehsan’s art, but eventually, they see how it affects him and others, and they allow him to continue painting—giving him space on the facility walls. But that’s not enough for Ehsan, and, after learning some devastating news about his sister, he dreams of escaping.

DARYA VA MAHI PARANDE - THE SEA AND THE FLYING FISH
Iran / 2015 / 78m
Mehrdad Ghafarzadeh
Russian Film Critics Award - Special Mention, Moscow International Film Festival 2015

DisAbility
Italy / 2015 / 15.47m
Linda Paganelli
The Other Film Festival 2016

Three women with disabilities living in the Gaza Strip had the chance to attend workshops as part of the INCLUDE project, that led them to be aware of their rights as women with disabilities thereby acquiring decision-making power over their lives. The INCLUDE project aims to combat discrimination faced by persons with disabilities in Palestine by promoting their rights, and economic and social empowerment.
**DWA ŚWIATY-TWO WORLDS**

Poland / 2016 / 52m  
**Maciej Adamek**  
*Best Feature Documentary, Rhode Island International film festival 2016*  
*The Other Film Festival 2016*

The film is a portrait of deaf parents and their twelve-year old daughter, Laura. Laura takes on the role of her father and mother’s mouths and ears helping them in everyday activities. She is also the medium that, with empathy, introduces the spectator to the daily life of people with disabilities.

**GANZ NAH BEI DIR - CLOSE TO YOU**

Germany / 2008 / 88m  
**Almut Getto**  
*Audience Award, Max Ophüls festival 2009*  
*CineStar Award, Schwerin Art of film festival 2009*

Quirky Phillip lives in his own sealed-off world. When the blind cello player Lina stumbles into his life, Phillip is thrown out of his well-ordered orbit. As they draw closer, they keep moving away from the life that they had before – and are forced to realise that things which they previously considered to be important are, in reality, perhaps not at all as important as they thought.
The focus of the documentary is the international wheelchair ballroom dancing competition held every year in Manchester, which showcases a wide range of talent, from Beginners to Elite dancers. Two groups from Manchester and Southend are followed and shown as they prepare for the competition.

**HEELS AND WHEELS**  
UK / 2016 / 45m  
Daniel McAleavy, Tristan Green and Sidney Robb (Flying Monk Community Film team)  
Together!2016 Disability film festival

A comic gangster story based on two gangsters involved in a series of problems due to their mismanagement.

**LAS MUELAS DEL CUCO-CUCKOO MOLARS**  
Spain / 2016 / 18m  
Jose Miguel Rodriguez  
The Other film festival 2016  
DEAFFEST 2017
For 18-year-old Maja, being a teenager isn't so easy. Born with Down Syndrome, Maja's attempts at exploring her sexuality are blocked by her mother and overprotective community in a small Danish town. Frustrated with being belittled and increasingly curious, Maja takes control and seeks out answers for herself.

**LET ME KNOW**  
Sweden / 2016 / 11m  
Bim Jacobsson  
*The Other Film Festival 2016  
Lisbon International film festival 2016*

An inspiring look at the life and times of Fariba. She earns a living by stitching scarves, doing embroidery and tailoring for clients and is full of dreams - of supporting her parents and building her dream house someday.

**LIFE BENEATH THE SKIN OF TOWN - ZINDAGI ZIR PUST MAN**  
Iran / 2013 / 17.38m  
Behrouz Noorani Pour

An inspiring look at the life and times of Fariba. She earns a living by stitching scarves, doing embroidery and tailoring for clients and is full of dreams - of supporting her parents and building her dream house someday.
A group of remarkable young people with Down syndrome embark on a trek through the Indian Himalayas, accompanied by their brothers and sisters. Set against the richly colorful backdrop of India, the film opens new horizons and greatly deepens our understanding of people with special needs and their families.
For centuries, travel writing has shaped the way we view the world. But when’s the last time you heard from a travel writer with cerebral palsy?

NO LIONS IN PARIS  
Kenya / France / 2016 / 5.57m  
Musa Kirokote and Michael Joseph  
U.N enable film festival 2016

How Tiffany who lost her ability to walk because of cerebral palsy, and Alex who lost his vision to an eye tumour, overcame obstacles and found employment.

RECHARTING MY DESTINY  
Hongkong, China / 2016 / 12.10m  
Jackie Chan  
U.N enable film festival 2016
In a shantytown of Brazil, a man refuses to let his physical disability prevent him from living a full life, to become the first known capoeira master with paralyzed legs and to fulfill his dream of being able to live with his son.

Scribbling is the story of Anju, a five-year-old girl with dysgraphia, a learning disability. The struggle of her mother in accepting her is also depicted.
SPECTRUM : A STORY OF THE MIND
USA / 2015 / 24m
Jill Jones
ReelAbilities film festival 2017

Spectrum seeks to explore the underlying sensory differences in autistic brains. The story is a series of character driven portraits beginning with Temple Grandin, the most well-known autistic adult in the world. Rather than fearing autism, Spectrum seeks to understand it.

STUTTER
USA / 2016 / 14 m
Ivo Huahua
DGA Student Awards 2016
Gasparilla International film festival 2017
ReelAbilities film festival 2017

A strong-willed recent widower with a heavy stutter is determined to win the respect of his son by speaking to the boy’s class on Career Day.
The film explores the unique art practices of artists with disabilities and their world, both within and outside of their personal space and the collapse of the “we and they” dichotomy created by the mainstream society. It demystifies the popular myth that people with physical or mental disabilities are incapable of leading a dignified and productive life.

**THE DEEP RISING**  
India / 2015 / 26m  
*Merajur Rahman Baruah*  
*We Care film festival 2016*

The story of a boy who rather spends his time indoors playing video games instead of discovering what’s waiting in front of the door. One day his mum decides to get a little surprise for her son, which makes it hard for him to concentrate on his video game.

**THE PRESENT**  
Germany / 2014 / 4.18m  
*Jacob Frey*  
Canada International Film Festival 2015  
Mexico International Film Festival 2016  
Austin Film Festival 2015
THE QUIET ONES
England, UK / 2015 / 14.58m
Teresa Garratty
Together! 2016 film festival
Winner, Best film Of the Year, FiCSor 2016
ReelAbilities film festival 2017
The Other Film Festival 2016

A teacher at a deaf boarding school is brutally murdered and the suspects have been narrowed down to four students. Can Detective Clarke and psychologist Dr Barton reveal the murderer’s identity before it’s too late?

THE RIGHT TO BE RESCUED
USA / 2015 / 16m
Jordan Melograna
Advocacy Award, Superfest International Disability film festival 2016

The Right to be Rescued is a documentary that tells the stories of people with disabilities affected by Hurricane Katrina. Released days before the 10th anniversary of the storm, the film aims to make emergency planners aware of the specific needs of people with disabilities and push them to alter their disaster plans to make sure those needs are met.
Two Feet to Fly weaves the true accounts of how six amateur runners from India broke free from their shackles by tapping into the inimitable power of running. The film celebrates the irrepressible urge of the human spirit to push forward against all odds.

TWO FEET TO FLY
India / 2015 / 48.39m
Akshay Shankar and Pavitra Chalam
Awareness film festival 2017

The Vocational Training and Job Creation for Youth with Disabilities project provides training courses for women and men with disabilities in the Gaza strip.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND JOB CREATION FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES IN THE GAZA STRIP
Palestine / 2016 / 6m
Ashraf Al-Mashharawy
U.N Enable film festival 2016
What do you do when one of your friends gives up? You find a way to get them back on track. This is a film about the power of friendship and believing in yourself.

WRESTLESS
UK / 2015 / 11.37m
John Tilley and Kelly Turnbull
Together! 2016 film festival

The biggest hurdle Babak faces isn’t his disability, but gaining acceptance in his own family. When Babak is confined to his room, sealing him off from the outside world, it will take the intervention of new friends and allies to help him win his family’s acceptance.

ZAMAANI BARAAYE DOOST DAASHTAN-A TIME TO LOVE
Iran / 2008 / 90 m
Ebrahim Forouzesh
Melbourne International film festival 2010
VIKRAM VEDHA
India / 2017 / 147m
Gayatri and Pushkar
Producer – Mr. Sashikanth
Audio description (Narration & Voice over) – Radio Mirchi Team
Sound Mixing – Mr. Rajakrishnan (4 frames sound company)
Content Mastering – Mr. Prabhu BMA (Qube Cinema technologies Pvt Ltd)

A team led by Vikram, a ruthless, no-nonsense encounter cop, is on the hunt to capture or kill Vedha, a dreaded gangster.

The cinema viewing experience for blind people is changing the world over thanks to a quiet revolution called audio description. Before ‘accessible’ cinema came about, when blind people visited the cinema, a friend or partner would usually explain what was happening on the screen, often to the annoyance of other members of the audience. All that is changing now.

Audio description is a pre recorded narrative that is inserted between the dialogues. The normal film soundtrack comes through the cinemas surround sound speakers in the usual way, and a recorded narrator explains what’s happening on screen - in gaps in the dialogue - through personal headphones.

It has been our endeavour to have one feature film audio described for every edition of AbilityFest, to drive home the importance of access to cinema for blind people.

We are delighted to present at AbilityFest2017, the blockbuster Tamil film Vikram Vedha. This gripping story with R. Madhavan and Vijay Sethupathy in the lead roles, has taken the cinema world by storm.

We thank producer Shashikanth and directors Gayatri and Pushkar for recognising the importance of access and giving us permission to audio describe the film.

The narration and voice-over for the audio description was by the Radio Mirchi team; sound mixing by Rajakrishnan of 4 Frames sound company and content mastering by Prabhu of Qube Cinema Technologies Pvt Ltd. Our special thanks to every one of them.
At The New Indian Express group, we have always believed in the paramount importance of presenting truth as it is. Our editions across the five south Indian states, Odisha and The Sunday Standard from NCR, carry within them a core of integrity, and this has been our legacy, 80 years on. The new Indian deserves to hear the truth more so than ever – and hearing it through an original voice makes it more of a pleasure.
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