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Revisiting 2001: Filmmakers Who Took Hindi Cinema in New Directions Reunite 25 Years Later



CHENNAI – 28 Nov, 2026 A village takes on an empire with a game of cricket. Three friends navigate friendship, heartbreak and the uncertainties of growing up. And a filmmaker turns the camera towards women and realities society often chooses to ignore. Three films with unconventional stories, 2001 was one of the most remarkable years in Hindi cinema.

Lagaan, Dil Chahta Hai and Chandni Bar didn't just entertain; they challenged conventions, broke new ground and changed the cinematic conversation. While Lagaan celebrated the spirit of rebellion, Dil Chahta Hai captured the mood of a generation, and Chandni Bar brought attention to women and lives often left unseen.

Twenty-five years later, the creative mavericks behind these iconic films —Ashutosh Gowariker, Farhan Akhtar and Madhur Bhandarkar reunited at the 57th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), Goa, for 'The Legendary 25s', a session that celebrated films that dared to break the mould and creators who chose to follow their own path.

"AI May Change Filmmaking, But It Cannot Replace the Human Soul"

Championing cinema as a reflection of society, filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar reiterated his commitment to telling stories drawn from real life, particularly those that bring untold narratives and overlooked realities to the forefront. Recalling the challenges of advocating for female-centric subjects at a time when the industry was hesitant to embrace unconventional portrayals of women, he spoke about how films like Chandni Bar, Corporate and Fashion emerged from his conviction to portray women in all their complexities, vulnerabilities and strengths. "I have always wanted to make films about subjects that people hesitate to talk about or even explore. I am drawn to the stories behind the scenes, the realities that often remain hidden from the public eye. For me, cinema has always been a mirror to society. I would rather explore real life than create an idealised reel life," he said.