

Behind the Lens: Rishi Selvam Dives into the Layers of *Munnel* at 22nd PIFF

By Advait Iyer

Renowned cinematographer Rishi Selvam, speaking at the 22nd Pune International Film Festival (PIFF), shared insights into the award-winning film *Munnel* (Sand). A Tamil film from Sri Lanka, *Munnel* was showcased in the Global Cinema category on Day 3 of PIFF.

Selvam shared that *Munnel* is a profoundly layered cinematic experience that may reveal its full depth over multiple viewings. It unfolds as a beautiful love story, drawing inspiration from real-life experiences.

The film won the Special Jury Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, 2023. Despite budget constraints and the ongoing economic crisis in Sri Lanka, the makers of this film persevered even when the initial producer withdrew support. Remarkably, the film was completed 14 days ahead of schedule. Selvam attributes this success wholeheartedly to the director, Visakesa Chandrasekaram.

The narrative of the film centers on Rudran, portrayed by Sivakumar Lingeswaran, a Tamil militant who returns home after his release on bail from military detention. His quest unfolds as he embarks on a search for his lost girlfriend, Vaani, played by Thurkka Magendran, who mysteriously disappeared during the Sri Lankan Civil War.

The film captivates visually, holding your attention with its exceptional cinematography by Selvam. The film successfully narrates its story with minimal dialogues, emphasised Selvam. ‘The film will explain itself visually instead of relying on dialogues’, explained Selvam. The film’s

authenticity resonates, not just visually but also through its evocative background music and compelling performances.

The film premiered on January 28, 2023 at International Film Festival Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands, where it won the Special Jury Award and at the Bengaluru International Film Festival where it was nominated for the 'Best Film' award in the Asian Film Competition.