

## Shaunak Sen's 'All That Breathes', to Be Screened at Cannes, Documents Undying Love for Kites



Shaunak Sen's deeply moving documentary All That Breathes will be the only Indian entry at the upcoming Cannes Film Festival playing in special screenings.

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GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN

Shaunak Sen's documentary 'All That Breathes' is a telling account of the debilitating affect of Delhi's pollution on birds, especially kites.

### All That Breathes

Director: Shaunak Sen

The world faces an environmental catastrophe with unusual global warming and deathly pollution. Some even aver that the current disastrous coronavirus pandemic may have had its origins in the way we ill-treat our planet. As much as pollution is horribly harmful for us humans, it also gravely threatens birds and beasts, and Shaunak Sen's deeply moving documentary, All That Breathes – which will be the only Indian entry at the upcoming Cannes Film Festival (May 17-28) playing in special screenings – talks about two brothers in a lower middle class Delhi locality who have made it their life's mission to save kites.

These birds, which have been victims of the capital's debilitating air pollution, are rescued by the brothers, Mohammed Saud and Nadeem Shehzad, treated and set free once they are ready to fly again. The two are helped by an employee, Salik Rehman, and all of them have dedicated their lives to this enormously difficult rehabilitation venture.

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Sen's work is a quiet effort to document in detail the brothers' patience and sacrifice. Carrying on in the face of punishing impediments, including lack of funds, Saud and Shehzad live in hope with a never-say-die attitude. There is an extremely touching scene when one of them goes to a meat shop and asks for a concession in price. It is not easy feeding kites, which are birds of prey and have an enormous appetite.

It may sound incredible but the brothers have been at it for two decades, struggling to get funds at home and from abroad. We learn as we watch the documentary that they feel taking care of kites and helping them to fly again by themselves are rewards. They love feeding the winged creatures, and the way they caress them establishing an undying bond is marvelously shot by Sen.

He also lets us into some tender moments as when one of the brothers in an autorickshaw takes out a baby squirrel from his shirt pocket, lovingly strokes it and puts it back. Such moments of compassion make the movie a great watch.

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The cost of this love is unimaginable; although Shehzad and Saud earn a living by manufacturing liquid soap dispensers, they are much more interested in tending to kites, some 12 hours in a day, and this comes at the cost of neglecting their families. In a telling scene, Shehzad and his wife are ruminating over Delhi's worsening air

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The narrative has a zing about it; it is not cold or matter-of-fact, and this makes All That Breathes compelling. Aiding this is magnificent cinematography by Benjamin Bernhardt, Riju Das and Saumyananda Sahi. Some of the shots are superb, like when they show kites flying with a commentary; while these birds appear to swim effortlessly in mid-air, the others struggle to stay above the ground. Kites really make a beautiful picture as they appear motionless in the skies. What is even more touching is the brothers' deep dedication.

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**GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN** *Gautaman Bhaskaran is a movie critic, commentator and an author, who penned the first ever biography of Adoor Gopalakrishnan, and has been covering ma...* [Read More](#)

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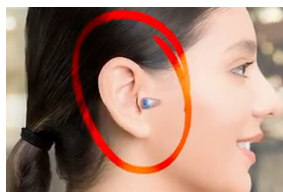
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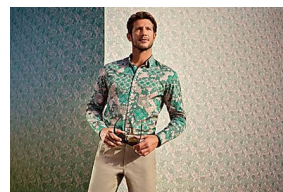


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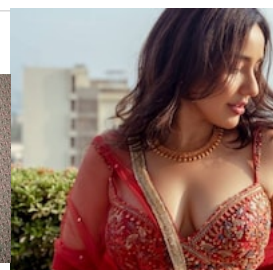


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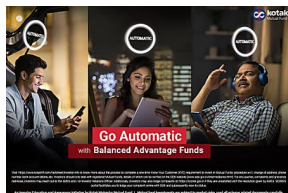
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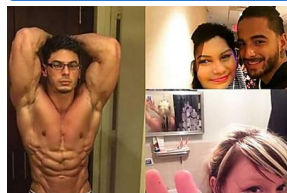


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