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SEPT 2024

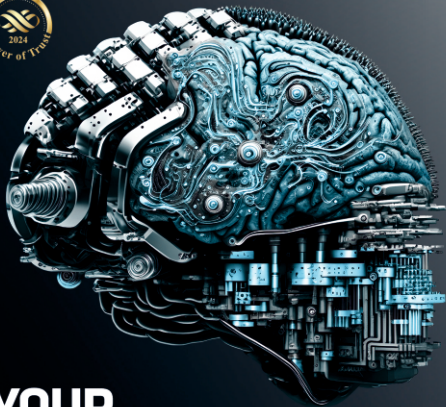
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Animation. The art of bringing to life. In India, though the industry has been going through a dull phase because of well-known reasons, green shoots are beginning to peep through, giving indication that animation studios are getting animated themselves. Animated with service work. Animated with original IPs.

For observers like animationxpress.com which has been a bellwether for the AVGCXRE industry for more than 20 years, this is indeed good news. Reason: there is more action in the field upon which we can report. Also, it encourages us to bring the industry together at forums and conferences where professionals can pause, huddle and ruminate about their present and the way forward. Like the very successful Animation & More Summit.

The theme of this year's Animation & More Summit is 'Animation: Comes Out Trumps'.

Like in card games, just one right pick up from a deck can prove a trump and win you a fat purse, animation looks set to be that trump card which will take the AVGCXRE sector to the next level and earn the players tremendous returns and the government dividends.

Indian studios are a world conquering set now.

They have ridden over cyclonic storms like the Covid lockdowns and the writers' strike wherein survival looked grim as work from US majors simply dried up even as Indian broadcasters slashed their per episode budgets.

Indian studios have used the rough weather to develop new skillsets – technical, creative, hybrid working practices. They have right sized themselves, and have kept a tight rein on costs. They have developed IPs, in which they have invested. The several visits they have made to MIPCOM and Anney have helped them create the right product. Now they have to find the right partners, which they surely will. It's only a matter of time and the right project.

On the brighter side, Indian kids habits are also changing with Japanese anime starting to appeal to them as they travel more and more globally with their families. This is getting Japanese studios interested in the Indian market as they study if they can get quality anime work done by Indian animation outfits. It's quite possible that they might find the right partners during their hunt.

The Indian animation ecosystem is also getting organised with associations coming up in almost every state including the latest ones in Goa and Maharashtra. Clearly, this can only help the scattered animation producers band more together and impress upon state governments to provide an environment conducive for them to grow.

We at animationxpress.com are hopeful – no, we are optimistic about the animation industry's prospects. The sky is the limit!

ANIL NM WANVARI



Being part of AnimationXpress for almost six years, I've had the privilege of immersing myself in the dynamic world of animation, VFX, gaming, and comics. My journey, from a curious trainee reporter to deputy editor, has been filled with diverse experiences—interviewing industry trailblazers, crafting stories that capture the essence of this ever-

evolving field, and even curating our in-house signature events like the Animation and More Summit and Ann Awards.

What started in 2019 as a modest one-day event has transformed into a vibrant celebration of creativity and innovation. While I missed the first edition, I've had the joy of watching this event grow and evolve into something truly spectacular. Each year brings new challenges, but there's nothing more rewarding than seeing the smiles and hearing the applause during the awards ceremony—it's a reminder of why we do what we do.

This year's summit holds a special significance. Despite the industry facing a rollercoaster of challenges—from the Hollywood writers' strike to major mergers—we've remained resilient. Our chairman and editor-in-chief, Anil Wanvari, wisely states, "We should give people a chance to celebrate and something to look forward to, even in tough times." And celebrate we shall!

Before we dive into the exciting lineup for this year's summit, let's take a moment to reflect on the shifts happening in the industry. The media and entertainment landscape has been anything but dull, with a whirlwind of changes shaking things up. Yet, amid the chaos, creativity continues to thrive. Indian animation is breaking free from its 'kids-only' mold, with visionary directors like S. S. Rajamouli, Imtiaz Ali, and Nag Ashwin weaving animation into their blockbuster films, pushing the boundaries of storytelling in Indian cinema.

Independent creators are also shining—Vaibhav Kumaresh's *Return of the Jungle* and Ishan Shukla's *Schirkoo: In Lies We Trust* prove that passion projects can resonate globally. And let's not

forget about the advertising world, where animated ads are capturing audiences like never before! Birla Opus Paints' *Duniya Ko Rang Do* campaign and Vaibhav More Films' festive ad for Coke have garnered millions of views and numerous awards, showcasing the power of animation in brand storytelling.

And then there's the buzz surrounding anime! Major broadcasters and OTT platforms are eager to capitalise on this growing market, providing viewers with a wealth of choices. This boom indicates a demand for quality adult animation content, which the industry should embrace.

Returning to the summit—this year, we're pulling out all the stops. Highlights include a masterclass by DNEG Animation's India team on the making of *The Garfield Movie* and sessions exploring the rise of anime in India, featuring industry leaders like Julia Cheng from Muse Communication and Devika Prabhu from Disney Star. We'll also dive into the world of Lego animation with Zebu Animation Studios, dissect the animation in Imtiaz Ali's live-action film *Chamkila*, explore successful international collaborations, celebrate independent creators, and much more.

For the first time, we're excited to introduce an on-the-spot paid internship opportunity with Zebu Animation for the winner of the "Whimsical Ink with Venky" masterclass, where participants can showcase their sketching talents. Additionally, to foster more collaborations and work opportunities, we're thrilled to host two international pavilions—Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) and Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC). With their studios joining us at the summit, we're truly going global!

As we come together to celebrate the brilliance of our industry and honour the pioneers who have shaped its legacy, I can't help but feel a rush of excitement for what lies ahead. I eagerly anticipate the incredible stories, innovations, and celebrations that await us in the years to come.

We're deeply thankful for the support the industry has shown us, and we hope to continue this journey with your encouragement and enthusiasm. Here's to many more years of creativity and collaboration!! Cheers! :D

- Prerna Kothari

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



56 HONOURING LEGACY: RAM MOHAN & ARNAB CHAUDHURI AWARDS

58 ANN AWARDS 2023 WINNERS

61 AM SUMMIT 2024 - ADVISORY MEMBERS

63 AM SUMMIT 2024 - SPEAKERS

07 AUTHORED ARTICLE
Shaping anime experience for Indian kids

08 REPORT
Indian M&E opportunity

09 AUTHORED ARTICLE
India & Japan business ties

14 FEATURE FILM
Chamkila: A blend rarely explored

16 ANIMATED SERIES
Green Gold & Disney bring Chhota Start Up

19 AUTHORED ARTICLE
Monetisation models in animation industry

26 STUDIO PROFILE
Powerkids Entertainment's iconic IPs

37 AUTHORED ARTICLE
MDEC - Leading Malaysia's digital creative industry

38 ANIMATED SERIES
Jay Jagannath: Celebrating Indian folklore

41 ANIMATED SERIES
Baahubali's legacy continues

44 FEATURE FILM
Return of the Jungle: Retelling ancient tales

48 FEATURE FILM
Appu: Baby elephant on a mission

50 SHORT FILM
Maatitel: Govinda Sao's social tale

52 NEWS
India to Japan: DigiCon6 Asia shortlisted projects



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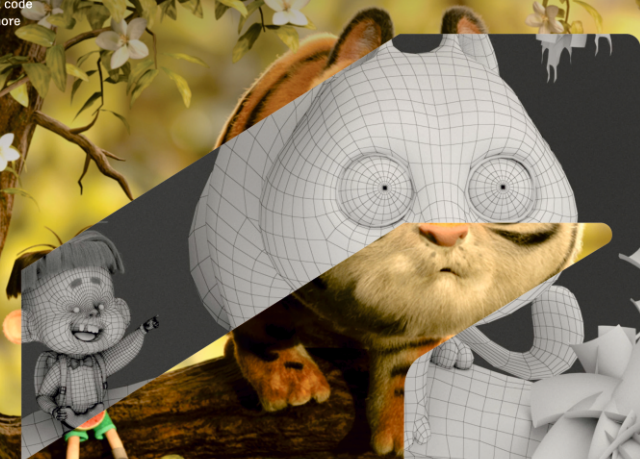


Image Courtesy of Erica Liu Kwan

Shaping the anime experience for Indian kids

India today ranks second only to China in global anime consumption, per research conducted by Epic Dope, an independent anime website based in Delhi and we have been witnessing a remarkable transformation where anime has only grown and captivated young audiences with its unique storytelling and animation along with cultural appeal. I feel fortunate to have played a role in this journey since 2006, when we set out to create a generation of anime fans in India. We introduced the now iconic characters like Doraemon, Shinchan, and Pokémon; recognising anime's potential before it became mainstream. This helped turn anime into a major powerhouse in kids' entertainment today

Anime's appeal to Indian kids is multifaceted and stems from its unique narrative style, which sets it apart from traditional animation. At its core, anime offers complex story arcs and character development, allowing young viewers to form deep connections with the characters. The vibrant and expressive animation, characterised by exaggerated expressions, dynamic action sequences, and imaginative worlds appeals to the young Indians, who are drawn to the colourful environments that anime presents.

To harness this potential, we developed a strategic approach that involved curating and localising anime content that resonated well with the Indian kids and families. We collaborated with the most renowned anime studios in Japan and localised the content to ensure cultural relevance and accessibility. For millions, their introduction to this interesting world began with Hungama. By bringing in popular shows like *Doraemon*, *Shinchan*, and *Pokémon*, we wanted to make anime a familiar and loved part of their entertainment.

Localisation played a critical role in the growth of anime. It's not just mere dubbing; it involves reimagining content to reflect the Indian ethos while preserving the essence of the original narrative. We have made anime feel like a natural extension of what kids already love. For nearly two decades, our localisation strategy clubbed with focused promotions, and collaborations have broken down barriers and made anime more accessible to a wider audience. This approach has been instrumental in making anime a household staple in India. I can validate this by sharing some statistics -- just last year, Japanese anime made up over 21 per cent of the kids' content mix and contributed 32 per cent of the viewership, solidifying its place as a dominant force in the kid's entertainment universe*.

In India, where storytelling is integral to our culture, anime has been a natural fit. From merchandise and content platforms to comics and everyday conversations among both kids and adults, anime reflects a seamless fusion of

Indian narratives and innovative global perspectives. This blend has made anime a beloved part of our culture. As an anime fan myself, I watch at least one series a month; often swapping recommendations with friends. And now, as my son starts to show interest, I enjoy sharing this world with him, watching his excitement as he discovers new characters and stories.

As we look ahead, our focus will be on nurturing this passion, guiding young fans as they explore more diverse and complex forms of anime as they grow older. And we are dedicated in making the first step into the world of anime as magical and meaningful as possible. At Disney Star, we remain committed to ensuring that we continue to lead the way in delivering content that delights, entertains, and empowers the next generation of Indian viewers. ■

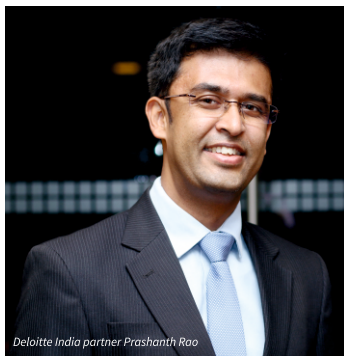
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(This article has been contributed by Disney Star kids and infotainment business head Devika Prabhu and AnimationXpress does not necessarily subscribe to these views.)



Devika Prabhu

The great Indian media & entertainment opportunity



Deloitte India partner Prashanth Rao

In the past few years, the Indian market has emerged as an essential element of the global expansion playbook, and with good reason. Over 20 international OTT platforms are active in India. For Netflix, India is the second-largest market by subscriber growth and third-largest by revenue growth in 2024; anime streaming platform Crunchyroll expects India to account for 60 per cent of global growth; and Amazon Prime Video views India as a crucial growth market. India's spending on entertainment jumped by 100 per cent between FY2022 and FY2024.

India has proven to be a great test market, business partner, and consumer market, attracting attention from major players in the global media and entertainment (M&E) industry. This article analyses the factors that make India an attractive M&E market.

ROBUST FUNDAMENTALS DRIVING GROWTH

In 2023, India became the world's third-largest economy by GDP based on purchasing power parity, growing at 8.2 per cent in FY24 amid global uncertainties. Additionally, over a third of the Indian population lives in urban areas, and over 600 million people are in the age group of 18–35. Additionally, gross disposable national income grew at nine per cent year-on-year in the year ending March 2024. These indicate the country's growing purchasing power. With almost a billion internet subscribers and over 50 per cent penetration of 5G services, entertainment consumption has also increased substantially in

India. The per capita consumption of data stands at 213 GB annually in 2024, up 13 per cent from the previous year. The average time spent on entertainment per person is four hours per day in 2023, which is nine per cent higher than in 2020.

This sets a solid foundation for India's M&E market, valued at US\$28 billion in 2023 and projected to post a CAGR of 10 per cent between 2023 and 2026. Gaming, and animation and VFX (AVFX) are the fastest-growing sectors, with CAGRs of 21 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively.

DIVERSITY IN ENTERTAINMENT CONSUMPTION

Diverse content for diverse sensibilities

India is a melting pot of cultures, languages, and sensibilities, with each segment offering a sizable market opportunity.

Though Hindi cinema has been a dominant force and continues to attract audiences, recent years have seen regional content transcending state borders and achieving mainstream popularity. South Indian movies, such as *RRR*, *Baahubali* and *KGF* achieved significant pan-India and global acclaim, including an Oscar. This success has led to ~US\$360 million investment by domestic and international streaming majors in regional content. This has also enabled the growth of smaller regional platforms and studios.

There is also a strong appetite for global content, fuelled by streaming platforms creating accessibility. Since 2021, ~75 per cent of the top-viewed series on Netflix in India is international content. A streaming major lost four million subscribers after losing licences to tentpole Hollywood shows. Genres such as anime and K-dramas have also caught the audience's fancy, reflecting their expanding content palates. Imminent advancements in AI-based live language translation and subtitling tools will enable wider consumption of international content. There is a place in India for various types and genres of content.

Diverse offerings for diverse audiences

With entertainment becoming democratised and ubiquitous, India's M&E players serve diverse socioeconomic strata. For price-sensitive and lower-income audiences, free linear TV infrastructure and channels are offered, with some free TV broadcasters even eyeing profitability.

For high-income mobile audiences, integrated DTH and streaming offerings have enhanced choice, improving customer acquisition and retention for streaming platforms. On the

theatrical end, with collections rebounding to pre-pandemic levels, there is a higher focus on providing luxury experiences with premium amenities and advanced technologies.

Untapped technologies, such as Free Ad Supported TV (FAST) and immersive experiences (AR/VR), present a white space.

FROM SERVICE PROVIDER TO DOMESTIC INNOVATOR

India has long been a global service provider, offering low-cost, highly skilled human resources that can work effectively across cultural contexts. Over decades, it has emerged as a leading VFX partner to the global film industry, partnering for iconic titles, including *Avatar*, *Dune*, *Interstellar*, and *Game of Thrones*. The assimilation of these global best practices has elevated the domestic sector. There is increasing AVFX investment in Indian films, such as *Brahmastra* (US\$17 million in VFX, ~40 per cent of total budget), and *Kalki* (US\$27 million in VFX, ~40 per cent of total budget). In addition, animated content viewership has now transcended the kids' demographic, with original IPs such as *Hanuman: The Legend* and *Bahubali: Crown of Blood* garnering a combined 16 million views on an SVOD platform in 2024.

A similar phenomenon plays out in the gaming industry, which has its roots in offshore development centres, such as Zynga and Ubisoft. This has bred a whole generation of gaming entrepreneurs, developing casual and battle royale titles for Indian and global audiences and seeing investments of US\$3 billion between 2018 and 2022.

CONCLUSION

The Indian M&E industry is undergoing a transformation, characterised by rapid growth, expansion and innovation. Its dual role as a thriving consumer market full of opportunity and a global partner positions it as a compelling target market. India offers immense potential for those who can harness the power of storytelling, technology and consumer insight to create a strong product proposition. As the industry continues to evolve, there will be many opportunities for growth and disruption ■

(This article has been contributed by Deloitte India partner Prashanth Rao and AnimationXpress does not necessarily subscribe to these views.)

JETRO

Japan External Trade Organization

Strengthening cultural and business ties between India and Japan

JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization) is excited to participate in the upcoming Animation & More Summit, a key event that brings together global leaders in the animation and creative industries.

As a government-related organisation, JETRO has been a driving force behind promoting mutual trade and investment between Japan and the world since its establishment in 1958.

Initially focused on boosting Japanese exports, the organisation's mission has evolved in the 21st century, placing a greater emphasis on fostering foreign direct investment into Japan and empowering small to medium-sized Japanese businesses to expand their global export reach.

With 74 offices in 54 countries and 48 regional offices within Japan as of January 2020, the trade body's global presence allows it to build robust networks that benefit Japanese companies in international markets. At the Animation & More Summit, it aims to spotlight Japan's flourishing content industry, which encompasses animation, gaming, music, and comics.

JETRO is committed to nurturing the growth of Japan's creative sectors by expanding its B-to-B support system. Leveraging its extensive network of overseas offices and industry partnerships, the organisation plans to deepen collaboration between Japanese and Indian content industries. Through strategic initiatives such as business

development activities and stakeholder networking, it will promote Japanese content in India and open doors for Indian companies interested in the Japanese market.

As the body continues to build bridges between Japan and India, the Animation & More Summit provides a platform to further strengthen the cultural and business ties between the two nations, fostering a thriving and globally connected creative industry. ■

Studio Eeksaurus showcases the power of 2D animation in ‘Wait Of Ashwatthama’ featured in ‘Kalki 2898 AD’

The studio brings global atrocities to life in 90 seconds on onscreen marvel

By Binita Das

The saga of Ashwatthama, an immortal who has lived through and witnessed the rise and fall of human civilisation across millennia, finds a stunning visual portrayal in the global blockbuster *Kalki 2898 AD*. Studio Eeksaurus team, under the visionary guidance of Suresh Eriyat, crafted the breathtaking animated sequence that encapsulates this epic chronicle within just 90 seconds.

Eriyat seized the opportunity to showcase animation's power to convey complex narratives without relying on extensive explanations or voiceovers. The sequence, titled *Wait Of Ashwatthama (Keshava Madhava)*, stands as a testament to animation's ability to tell profound stories with minimal explanation.

Reflecting on his collaboration with director Nag Ashwin, the national award-winning animation veteran tells Animation Xpress, "Being a part of a mega-blockbuster like *Kalki* was an exhilarating experience for me and my team. My goal has always been to demonstrate the power of animation to the Indian audience, especially beyond the realm of cartoons. Animation can deliver impactful messages in a short span of time, and this project perfectly aligned with that vision."

The film boasts an ensemble cast, including Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Disha Patani, and Keerthy Suresh. Their stellar performances, coupled with the seamless integration of cutting-edge technology and human emotions, has earned the film widespread acclaim.

DEPICTING HUMANITY'S DARK SIDE

Studio Eeksaurus faced the challenge of depicting humanity's transformation in a brief time, emphasising the rise of cruelty and atrocities. Due to the tight schedule, they collaborated with multiple studios to complete the animation. "Ideally, a sequence of this complexity would need at least three months of dedicated production, but we had to complete it in just one month," Eriyat shares.

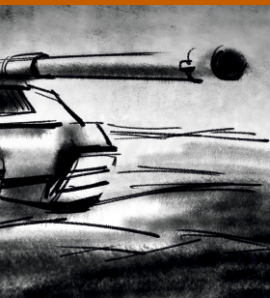
Understanding Ashwin's vision, the team explored various historical catastrophes resulting from human greed, refining their approach through iterative feedback. The final sequence, incorporating at least 10 depictions of human atrocities, was intricately woven into the narrative fabric of the film. Certain sequences had some correlation with the film's content like abducted children, especially girls, had some relevance to the theme of fertile girls captivated in the film.

The other sequences that were brought in, to highlight human atrocities were deforestation, cruelty against animals, wars, historical tragedies like the Colosseum of Rome, and the Holocaust to highlight the violent streak in human beings and its impact on global peace and communal harmony. The aim was to present a comprehensive view of how hatred and violence pervade worldwide, with humans as the architects of their own suffering.

"Ashwatthama (played by Amitabh Bachchan) is wrapped in bandages due to a wound that never heals, and this influenced our entire sequence design. We had creative freedom in this project, and it was immensely rewarding," he expresses.

A rough Telugu soundtrack describing the return of Vishnu's avatar to save the world helped shape the sequence. "Our sequences aimed to depict the tragedy of humankind, emphasising this urgent need for redemption," he explains.





“Animation can deliver impactful messages in a short span of time, and this project perfectly aligned with that vision.”



FINALISING THE ANIMATION STYLE

Ashwin collaborated with Eriyat as he was impressed with his remarkable projects, particularly some of their recent 2D animation works. However, during the initial stages, Ashwin's team faced uncertainty about whether to use 2D or 3D animation for the sequence.

“While Ashwin wanted 2D for the intro sequence right at the onset of our discussions, there was a stage where there was a dilemma at their end whether to go with 3D when there was hardly any time to execute the CG version of this film. At that point of time we felt that the project was off. Convincing them of 2D's potential, especially when they were accustomed to CGI, was challenging without a demonstrative sample, and we didn't have time to create one. However, we stood by our belief in 2D animation. After presenting a sample shot to Nagj (Nag Ashwin) and receiving my personal assurance, they decided to proceed with this approach,” Eriyat reveals.

Their team primarily used TV Paint software to create the animation. However, the hand-drawn style was new and unfamiliar to the *Kalki* team, leading to questions about the smoothness and appearance of the frames. Eriyat notes, “This experience underscored the importance of showcasing unique animation styles on the big screen, allowing audiences to appreciate the unconventional visual styles that animation can offer. While viewers are accustomed to the super smooth, cartoony Disney style, our ‘moving painting’ style, with its deliberately rough line drawings, offered something distinct and valuable.”

He adds, “I believe that a stronger comic book or graphic novel culture in the country



CHALLENGES FACED WHILE EXECUTING THIS ANIMATED GEM

The team was racing against time and aiming for something so ambitious that even the *Kalki* team couldn't fully anticipate the effort required. The live-action team struggled to grasp the complexities of Studio Eeksaurus' animation pipeline, which was unfamiliar to them.

Giving a sneak peak of meeting deadlines, the master animator discloses, "I had to explain our process several times—drawing and painting frame by frame, layer by layer, making decisions and finalising the sequences. Once everything was finalised, we were left with just about a month to produce the sequence. There were moments when it seemed uncertain if we could meet the 27 June deadline. We worked tirelessly on the sequence even on the 20 and 21 June, and ultimately delivered

it on the 23rd, just in time for the film release."

The sequence features music that is composed by Santhosh Narayanan who lent his voice to the Telugu version. Bachchan's voice adds a significant depth to the Hindi version.

Regarding Bachchan's contribution, Eriyat comments, "I am getting used to it and obviously the audience loves it. Since it's the main character's perspective, it was apt to use his voice. However, after hearing Narayanan's rough track countless times while animating, adjusting to Bachchan's final version took some getting used to."

Eriyat concluded with a light-hearted note, expressing his eagerness to collaborate with Ashwin again on something even more challenging. "Hopefully not with such tight timelines!" he jokes ■



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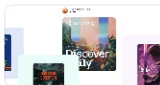
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A Blend Rarely Explored

Imtiaz Ali and philmCGI collaborate on an unprecedented blend of animation and live-action for Indian film

By Anshita Bhatt

Anyone who has watched Indian director Imtiaz Ali's films will attest to his distinctive storytelling, memorable characters, and masterful filmmaking, evident in works like *Highway*, *Love Aaj Kal*, *Rockstar*, *Jab We Met*, *Cocktail*, and *Tamasha*. However, his latest Netflix film, *Amar Singh Chamkila*, takes an unexpected turn, setting a new benchmark in Indian cinema.

Ali's film is a biopic based on the life of Punjabi singer Amar Singh Chamkila – who at the mere age of 27, along with his wife was shot dead by assailants in 1988. While the film has been applauded for its portrayal of the young singer (popularly known by the name “Chamkila”) who was known for his notorious lyrics, it has also been hailed for its narrative that blends animation with live-action, a style yet uncharted for Indian cinema.

Segments of Chamkila's life are depicted through animation, crafted by VFX and animation studio philmCGI. Under the creative direction of Kanchi Kanani, the team of 10 artists pitched three distinct styles to the film's director Ali: traditional 2D animation, roto animation (drawing frames over live-action footage), and comic-style sequences. “Imtiaz Ali was so impressed that he made the bold decision to incorporate all three styles into the film — a move unprecedented in the film industry,” shares Kanani. “His enthusiastic approval marked our entry into the world of *Amar Singh Chamkila*.”

The film's script had pre-identified sequences for animation, with Ali envisioning the rawness of 1980s rural Punjab. “To align with his vision, we provided a diverse range of references and videos, refining the desired aesthetic to ensure the animation seamlessly integrated with the live-action,” explains Kanani. “This innovative approach worked out beautifully, as each style served a purpose within the narrative, enhancing the storytelling in unique ways.”

The Pune-based studio's team engaged in numerous creative discussions with the director and DA, and developed rough thumbnails to ensure a cohesive vision before filming began. Kanani was present on set to oversee the shots before and after the



animation sequences. “Following the shoot, we followed the regular animation process - creating animatics, character designs, environments, animation and final compositing. Since integrating live-action with animation is rarely seen in Indian mainstream cinema, we were particularly focused on making this transition smooth and maintaining the integrity of the live-action narrative,” highlights Kanani.

The young creative director believes that the fusion of animation and live-action in *Chamkila* is a big moment in cinema. “This innovative approach not only expands the possibilities of storytelling but also showcases a new and captivating form of filmmaking that has yet to be explored on celluloid. With animation, the director has the freedom to depict scenes and concepts that may be impossible or impractical to achieve in live-action, unlocking endless potential,” she says. “As Imtiaz Ali aptly



Photo: [instagram/imitiazofficial](#)



Photo: [instagram/imitiazofficial](#)



Photo: [instagram/imitiazofficial](#)

describes it, this venture was akin to discovering a new tool—one that added a fresh dimension to storytelling.”

Chamkila marked philmCGI’s first project with the acclaimed director and his production house Window Seat Films. “For our team, this opportunity was the culmination of our aspirations. To have the chance to bring this vision to life alongside such esteemed collaborators is nothing short of exhilarating. Working with the best directors, actors, and production teams, we’re proud to contribute our craft to the film while carving out our own unique space in the cinematic landscape,” she points out.

For Kanani, the highlight was being on set and working closely with the director and DOP. “It was a learning experience like no other,” she exclaims. “What made it truly special was the director’s commitment to creative freedom, his genuine eagerness to listen, and his openness to our opinions and feedback. Under his leadership, each department was motivated to showcase its talents and share its perspectives on the project. In *Amar Singh Chamkila*, this approach has yielded remarkable results!”

Kanani’s team at philmCGI is currently immersed in a documentary *Indira’s Emergency*, where their animation styles will again drive the story.

For Kanani, “despite the challenges, the opportunity to contribute to something remarkable like *Chamkila* has made every moment of hard work utterly worthwhile. It’s moments like these that fuel my drive and remind me why I love what I do.” And isn’t that the same for all passionate artists? ■



Young Entrepreneurs

Green Gold and Disney India bring the perfect animated series for kids

By Anshita Bhatt

Just in time for summer, Green Gold Animation and Disney India have introduced the perfect animated series for children. Created by Green Gold and Wackytoons animation studios and airing on Disney India network's Hungama channel, the show – titled *Chhota Start Up* – follows the story of three ingenious youngsters as they help businesses in their city of Pocketpur navigate challenges with their quirky yet practical solutions, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among young viewers.

The 2D animated show is created by Green Gold Animation founder and managing director Rajiv Chilaka, Wackytoons CEO Niloy Kanti Biswas, and independent animation writer and director Sonam Shekhawat. It is directed by Ravi Shankar Gunda and



Amruta Anant Kulkarni, and produced by Chilaka and Srinivas Chilakalapudi.

“While brainstorming, we created a list of what kids aspire to become and how we can inspire them to achieve their aspirations,” says

Chilaka. “After discussing various themes like superheroes and mythology, we started discussing professions and something just clicked when we landed on “entrepreneur.”

Initially, the idea was about our main characters kicking off their own start-up, but we realised

that we shouldn't just limit ourselves to one start-up. So the show evolved into our characters helping various start-ups across their city.”



The team at Wackytoons studio working on the show Chhota Start Up

Once the concept was developed, Green Gold and Wackytoons began pitching it to platforms. Disney India recognised the potential and commissioned not just 13 or 26 episodes but an impressive 156 episodes. "The team at Disney understood the need of the hour and took up the challenge to bring this show to life," Chilaka reveals.

Soon after the show was greenlit, the pre-production began. A creative team was put to work for the ideation and story development while the visualisation began in the 2D production unit simultaneously. "A team from Disney India also joined the pre-production and provided its constant and valuable feedback," reveals Chilaka. "During production, we encountered difficulties as the show was not action-packed. So we came up with creative ways to incorporate fun-filled drama, action-comedy, and lots of innovation to keep it engaging."

Green Gold, a big name in the Indian animation industry, had its humble beginning with the 2D animated show *Chhota Bheem* which started airing on Warner Bros. Discovery's (WBD) Pogo channel and became an instant hit with kids. So for *Chhota Start Up*, using the word "Chhota" ("small" in Hindi) was a conscious decision since it has proved lucky for the studio. "As our work on the show progressed, the word not only made sense but also became profoundly meaningful. We found that it resonated perfectly with our show's essence, and we couldn't help but fall in love with our working title."

Chilaka believes that this project represents a refreshing change for kids' programming. "*Chhota Start Up* brings forth a contemporary theme that resonates with the dreams of youth. By showcasing the journey of young entrepreneurs, the show not only entertains but

also inspires, instilling the values of innovation and creativity."

For Green Gold, collaborations with broadcasters like WBD and Disney have offered a blend of seasoned expertise and fresh talent. "With Disney, the highlights include a dedicated team for our show and a genuine openness to collaborate with multiple writers. Ultimately, what truly matters is that our goals remain aligned," he mentions.

Green Gold has always been a powerhouse of new ideas and stories. "We understand the need to widen our horizons and offer something fresh and relevant to today's audience. *Chhota Start Up* represents a bold step in this direction."

As India rapidly develops, Chilaka sees the next generation playing a key role in economic advancement. "We would need many more entrepreneurs, and this show is just our way of contributing to the growth of the nation."



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Monetisation models in the animation industry & navigating the international market

The animation ecosystem is undergoing a rapid transformation, with a wide range of monetisation opportunities available for creators. From streaming platforms to mobile apps and games, the ways to generate revenue have diversified. Whether you are an independent artist or a studio executive, understanding these revenue streams is crucial for achieving success in the ever-evolving animation landscape.

The animation industry offers several monetisation models, each with its unique advantages and challenges. Traditional TV and film distribution remain significant sources of revenue, involving the sale of broadcasting rights, theatrical releases, and physical media sales. While facing competition from digital platforms, this model still holds potential, especially for established franchises. Mobile apps and games provide lucrative opportunities through in-app purchases, ad-supported models, and premium paid apps. Licensing and merchandising offer additional revenue by leveraging brand recognition for consumer products, theme park attractions, and adaptations into books and comics. Streaming platforms have become crucial for distribution, with exclusive content deals and revenue-sharing models gaining prominence. Understanding these primary monetisation models and how to window each right is key to navigating the industry.

Maximising revenue streams in animation requires innovation beyond traditional channels. Crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter and Patreon allow to finance projects while engaging fans. Subscription-based models provide steady income by creating dedicated streaming platforms or partnering with existing services. Social media platforms such as YouTube, Meta, TikTok, and Instagram offer monetisation opportunities through ad revenue, brand partnerships, and sponsored content.

Diversifying content formats, such as creating mobile games, interactive experiences, merchandise, and educational content, open additional avenues for revenue generation. Virtual and augmented reality experiences offer immersive opportunities for monetisation through theme park attractions, merchandise, and virtual meet-and-greets. NFTs and digital collectibles introduce a new frontier, providing limited edition digital artwork and exclusive content. As technology advances, these trends continue to create innovative monetisation models, allowing animation producers to explore new ways of generating revenue and enhancing viewer engagement. By embracing these diverse revenue streams, animation creators can establish a more stable and profitable business model.

Expanding animation businesses into international markets offers a wealth of opportunities, but it requires strategic planning. Building global networks is essential, involving collaboration with foreign studios for creative inputs and leveraging various incentives and tax breaks, attending

international film/content festivals, joining online communities, and engaging with international distributors. Legal considerations, such as copyright protection, licensing co-production agreements, and tax implications, need careful attention, with local experts providing invaluable assistance.

Cultural adaptation is vital for resonating with local audiences, necessitating research into cultural norms, localisation/subtitling, character design adjustments, and collaborations with local artists. Identifying target regions by analysing market size, competition, audience preferences, and economic factors ensures a focused approach to international expansion.

In conclusion, the animation industry presents numerous monetisation opportunities, from traditional distribution models to innovative digital platforms and merchandise. By understanding these revenue streams and exploring international markets, animation creators and studios can significantly expand their reach and financial potential.■

(This article has been contributed by Powerkids Entertainment CEO Manoj Mishra and AnimationXpress does not necessarily subscribe to these views.)





Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba - To the Hashira Training

From entertainment to cultural movement

Tracing the evolution of anime from a niche content genre to a global cultural phenomenon

By Anshita Bhatt

The anime wave in India is just beginning to gather momentum, growing steadily each month with no signs of slowing down. What started as a content boom has now evolved into a vast market, encompassing everything from media consumption to merchandise, fan communities, and experiential zones. Major broadcasters and OTT platforms are keenly eyeing this burgeoning market, eager to capitalise on its immense potential.

Pinpointing the exact moment anime viewership surged in India is difficult. But it's fair to say that Disney Kids Network played an important role in introducing the anime genre among the Indian kids when *Shin chan* started airing on its Hungama channel in 2006, followed by *Doraemon* which has since then moved to Disney Channel. In the 2000s, anime in India was largely limited to shows like *Shin chan*, *Pokemon*, *Beyblade*, *Dragon Ball Z*, and *Naruto*, popularised by TV channels. With the rise of streaming platforms, however, the anime landscape has expanded significantly, offering acclaimed titles such as *Psycho-Pass*, *Vinland Saga*, *Jujutsu Kaisen*, *Attack on Titan*, *Death Note*, *Hunter x Hunter*, and many more.

ANIME HERE, THERE, EVERYWHERE

The surge in anime enthusiasm across India can be attributed not only to the genre's intrinsic appeal but also to several key factors. Broadcasters are ramping up their anime content, while

streaming giants like Netflix and Prime Video, along with dedicated anime platforms such as Crunchyroll and Muse Communication, continue to expand their libraries.

Broadcasting Expansion:

Disney Kids Network remains a major player among broadcasters, airing shows like *Doraemon* and *Gatapishi* on Disney Channel along with *Shin chan*, *The Hagemaru Show*, *Atashinchi*, *Perman* on Hungama and series like *Beyblade* on Super Hungama. This summer, the network launched the new *Pokémon Horizons: The Series* on Hungama. Per BARC, *Pokémon* has been one of the most-watched series on Hungama, reaching 87 million viewers in 2023.

Warner Bros. Discovery's Cartoon Network has also joined the anime scene, airing popular titles like *My Hero Academia* and various shows and films from the *Dragon Ball* franchise in 2023. Sony YAY! began airing the highly popular anime series *Naruto* in August 2022.

Streaming Giants:

Crunchyroll, an anime-exclusive platform, offers over 700 titles—close to 7,000 hours of content—in India, witnessing a growing community of anime fans. Netflix continues to bolster its anime slate, soon adding Japanese blockbuster films *The First Slam Dunk* and Studio Ghibli's *Grave of the Fireflies* to its library. Prime Video hosts anime content from three

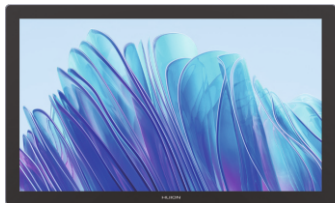
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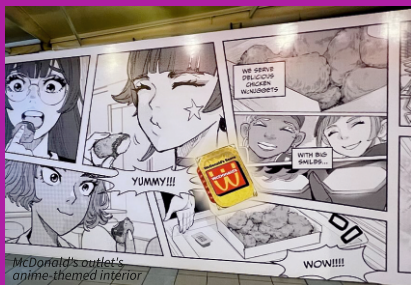
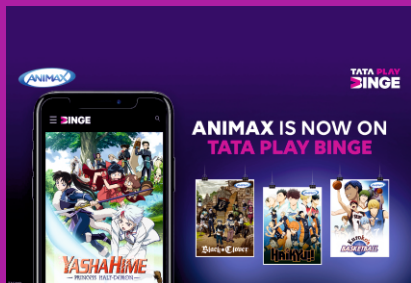


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Crunchyroll's booth at Bengaluru Comic Con



channels—Animax (part of Singapore-based KC Global Media Entertainment), Anime Times (Japan's streaming service), and Crunchyroll.

In 2024, Indian telecom provider Bharti Airtel launched Anime Booth on its DTH services—Airtel Digital TV and Airtel Xstream TV—in collaboration with Sony YAY!. Tata Play Binge partnered with Animax to bring anime content to its platform, and JioCinema introduced Anime Hub, featuring popular shows like *Demon Slayer*, *Mob Psycho 100*, *Spy x Family*, and more.

ADDING THE LOCAL TOUCH

For hardcore anime enthusiasts, dubbed versions might be a dealbreaker, but the industry cannot overlook the immense demand and potential that local language content holds in India. Dubbed anime has played a crucial role in helping broadcasters and digital platforms reach a broader audience.

- Sony YAY! airs *Naruto* in five languages.
- Cartoon Network airs *My Hero Academia* in four Indian languages – Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada – and *Dragon Ball Z Kai* in five Indian languages – Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.
- Apart from English subs, Crunchyroll offers multiple titles dubbed in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.
- Tata Play users can watch anime in Hindi, Tamil, and Malayalam.
- Even the recently launched Anime Times offers some shows in Hindi dubs.

BIG, BIGGER, BIGGEST: CINEMA SCREENS

Indian cinema giants PVR and Cinépolis have embraced this cultural shift by bringing anime to the grandeur of the big screen.

- *Demon Slayer: Mugen Train* released in India in August 2021.
- *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba – To the Swordsmith Village* released in PVR in March 2023.
- When Japanese-director Makoto Shinkai's film *Suzume* released in India in April 2023, PVR hosted a Makoto Shinkai Film Festival in May, during which the theatre chain screened four of Shinkai's previous anime films along with *Suzume*.
- The highly anticipated *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba – To the Hashira Training* hit the Indian theaters on 22 February 2024 in Imax and premium large formats (PLFs). A special fan screening of the film was hosted at Jio World Plaza in Mumbai by Aniplex, Crunchyroll, and Sony Pictures Entertainment.
- *Haikyuu!! The Movie: Decisive Battle at the Garbage Dump* released in India in June 2024.
- The movie *Spy x Family Code: White* hit the PVR Inox screens in India on 19 July 2024.
- *Demon Slayer: Infinity Castle Arc* will be released in theaters globally as a trilogy of films.

OFFLINE EVENTS AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

The anime boom in India extends far beyond content consumption, evolving into a vibrant ecosystem that includes offline community-building events, fan gatherings, and film screenings.

The Japanese Film Festival India, organised by the Japan Foundation in partnership with PVR Inox since 2017, showcased 11 anime films in major Indian cities from October 2023 to January 2024. The festival featured screenings including *Father of the Milky Way Railroad*, *Lupin The 3rd: The Castle of Cagliostro* (directed by Hayao Miyazaki in 1979), and *Detective Conan the Movie: Crossroad in the Ancient Capital*.

In October 2022, the third edition of Atsumaru Euphoria took place in Bengaluru, drawing anime enthusiasts from across the city. The event featured a curated anime playlist, merchandise, a dedicated gaming pavilion, and a taste of Japan with authentic dishes courtesy of the Japanese restaurant, Matsuri.

In October 2023, Indian entertainment channel Zee hosted the Zee Cafe Anime Fan Fest at Phoenix Marketcity in Mumbai's Kurla Mall, bringing together anime fans for a celebration filled with anime-themed experiences, cosplay performances, live music, games, and pop-up shops.

To celebrate its launch on Prime Video in India, Anime Times hosted Anime Fusion events at FTII in Pune and ITM IDM in Mumbai, featuring cosplay competitions, quiz sessions, and a special screening of the anime series *Zom 100: Bucket List of the Dead*.

MERCHANDISE AND LICENSING

India's young and affluent population forms a key demographic of anime fans, creating a significant opportunity in the licensing and merchandising market—a fact that hasn't gone unnoticed by broadcasters and digital platforms.

Sony YAY!, the first master licensee for *Naruto* in India, introduced official merchandise through The Souled Store, offering *Naruto* apparel, accessories, footwear, and personal care products. The broadcaster also collaborated with the fashion brand Only to launch the IP's clothing line.

Crunchyroll partnered with brand licensing agency Black White Orange to manage L&M for over 35 anime titles streaming on its platform, including *My Dress-Up Darling* and *Zom 100: Bucket List of the Dead*.

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

In 2022, Crunchyroll entered a strategic partnership with Comic Con India, becoming the associate partner for its Bengaluru, Delhi, and Mumbai editions. It further deepened its engagement with fans by becoming the powered-by partner for Comic Con India in 2023, featuring five events across the country. The platform attracted fans with anime-themed activities, quizzes, competitions, giveaways, and special screenings. At Bengaluru Comic Con, it created an immersive *Spy x Family* fan experience with a walk-through exhibit inspired by the Forger Family's living room.



Terminator Zero



Dragon Ball Z

Taking immersive experiences to the next level, McDonald's introduced "McDonald's" at select locations worldwide, including one in India. In April 2024, McDonald's transformed its Mumbai outlet on Linking Road, Bandra, into a WcDonald's universe, a fictional realm inspired by anime and brought to life by DDB Mudra Group. The restaurant's decor and ambiance were completely revamped to reflect anime aesthetics, offering fans a unique dining experience. Enhancing the theme, McDonald's introduced a Savory Chili WcDonald's Sauce to its menu, wrapped Chicken McNuggets in manga-inspired packaging, and launched four anime-themed brand films on its social platforms.

Extending the immersive experience into music and gaming, Crunchyroll introduced Game Vault, offering premium members access to anime-inspired games like *Behind the Frame: The Finest Scenery*, *Captain Velvet Meteor: The Jump+ Dimensions*, *Inbento*, *River City Girls*, and *Wolfstride*. Additionally, the platform partnered with Spotify to launch curated anime playlists.

NOT A GENRE, BUT A PHENOMENON

Anime's global influence is stronger than ever, luring entertainment and brands across countries and demographics. Streaming giants are increasingly recognizing this universal appeal, not just by expanding their anime libraries but by reimagining popular live-action franchises into anime adaptations—such as *Terminator* (*Terminator Zero* in anime) and *The Lord of the Rings* (*The War of the Rohirrim* in anime). Additionally, they're venturing into original content with anime-inspired storytelling, as seen in projects like *Blue Eye Samurai* and *Rick and Morty: The Anime*.

This surge in anime content reflects a broader trend: anime is no longer a niche genre but a dominant cultural force shaping entertainment worldwide. With its blend of storytelling, genres, and rich artistic expression, anime continues to enthrall and fascinate a growing global audience. The boom is not just a passing phase; it's a sustained phenomenon that shows no signs of slowing down, cementing anime's place at the forefront of global pop culture.

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Powerkids Entertainment: Tracing its journey in India through iconic IPs and collaborative growth

By Binita Das



Singapore-based Powerkids Entertainment, a leading producer and distributor of kids' and family content, is making waves in the Indian market. Backed by OCP Asia, Powerkids is known for an impressive portfolio of shows including *The Jungle Book*, *The Psammy Show*, *Robin Hood*, and *Peter Pan*. Their entry into India marks a significant expansion, reflecting their commitment to delivering imaginative and culturally rich animated content to diverse audiences.

A DYNAMIC TEAM AND GLOBAL COLLABORATIONS

Under the leadership of founder and CEO Manoj Mishra, Powerkids boasts a core team of over 30 seasoned professionals overseeing editorial and creative aspects. In collaboration with more than 400 talented artists across partner studios, they create a vibrant production environment that drives the success of their projects.

One of their key achievements includes co-producing the *Dragonero* series, an adaptation of Sergio Bonelli's popular Italian comic book, alongside Bonelli Entertainment, Rai Ragazzi, and Nexus TV. This project not only diversified Powerkids' offerings but also solidified their position in the global animation industry. Another notable milestone is the production of the fourth season of their flagship series, *The Jungle Book*, and their partnership with Sony Pictures Networks India to co-produce *Young Achievers Academy*.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND MARKET LEADERSHIP

Powerkids' success in the competitive animation market is driven by strategic partnerships. Their collaboration with JioTV and

JioTV+ has allowed them to tap into India's growing demand for quality children's content, offering a blend of Indian and international programming. Additionally, its expansion in the FAST sphere through their partnership with Samsung TV+ has further established the company as a key player in India's entertainment landscape.

Powerkids also supports smaller studios across India by outsourcing production work, recognising and nurturing hidden talent. They have always believed that there is great talent hidden across various pockets of India. Yet, many of these do not have the necessary resources or means to break into the highly competitive mainstream. So, they endeavour to identify these talents and provide them with an opportunity where they can display their abilities and carve out a niche for themselves within the industry's ecosystem.

POWERKIDS' REMARKABLE PROJECTS

Powerkids has produced several iconic shows, but their flagship franchise remains *The Jungle Book*. With four seasons, two TV movies, and a spinoff already produced, two more spinoffs are currently in development. The series has been licensed to platforms in over 160 countries, including India, and enjoys tremendous success on YouTube, with over 24 billion lifetime views and two billion watch hours.

Their co-production, *Dragenero - The Tales of Paladins*, based on the best-selling *Dragenero* comics by Bonelli Editore, is another significant achievement. With season one airing across various territories and season two already in production, the series is poised for continued success.

Powerkids is also developing new shows like *The Adventures of Akira and Mowgli*, *Cuddle Cubbies*, and *King Eggbert*, promising an exciting future for their portfolio.

EXPECTATIONS AND INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

Powerkids believes that financial incentives like tax breaks and grants can encourage investment in new projects and technologies. They also emphasise the importance of policies that facilitate international collaboration and the need for enhanced skill development tailored to the AVGC-XR sector.

Strengthening industry-education partnerships and incorporating vocational training into academic curricula are seen as crucial steps in equipping future professionals with essential skills.

On the topic of AI in animation, a Powerkids spokesperson shared, "While AI has evolved significantly and offers great support in technical aspects, it still lacks the unique creative flair and emotional depth that humans bring to the table."

Powerkids' journey in India is a testament to their dedication to excellence and their ability to adapt and thrive in new markets, paving the way for future achievements in the realm of animated storytelling. ■



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Filmmaker in a dystopian world

Ishan Shukla transforms his vision from an animated short to a feature film

By Anshita Bhatt

In a dystopian world where people are forced to wear paper bags over their heads, a newly appointed council member sparks an accidental revolution.

When independent animation filmmaker Ishan Shukla released his first animated short *Schirkoo* in 2016, he knew that the universe he created in the story extended far beyond the scope of the short film. The short film's success reaffirmed his belief in the potential of *Schirkoo* as a multi-dimensional narrative. This belief culminated in *Schirkoo: In Lies We Trust*, Shukla's 103-minute-long animated feature.

Written and directed by Shukla, the English-language film is an international co-production between his India-based studio Red Cigarette Media, France's Dissidenz Films, and Germany's Rapid Eye Movies. The film saw its world premiere in early 2024 at Netherlands' Rotterdam Film Festival where it received the NETPAC Award for Best Asian Film.

TWO DISTINCT WORLDS

Schirkoo: In Lies We Trust presents two

contrasting dystopian worlds. *Schirkoo* is a nation striving for perfection, enforcing the "Bag Act," which mandates citizens to wear paper bags with codes instead of names. In contrast, *Konthaqa* is more human, colourful, romantic, sometimes irrational yet chaotic. "Both nations have thought-provoking ideas to run their nations and the better alternative can only be subjected to an individual's perception," explains Shukla.

"The film is a metaphorical reaction to the world I live in today – a perpetual conflict between two dimensions of our world," he points out. "Thus, I imagined an alternate timeline where the whole world is concentrated into just two nations – an eclectic mix of cultures, identities, and languages."

Against this giant backdrop, there's an intimate story following the events in the life of a meek man whose life keeps ascending to extremities as he travels through these two worlds trying to find meaning between society, spirituality, and family, elaborates Shukla. "As the story treads forward we transit from a

relatable contemporary setting to an avant-garde fantastical territory. I tend to see the world through an absurdist lens – for me, animation provocatively amalgamates absurdity and fantasy while still keeping the visual poetry and human moments intact."

EMBRACING TRADITIONAL METHODS AND NEW TECH

Shukla's debut feature blends 2D and 3D animation, utilising a unique hybrid of animation and live-action techniques. His team employed a motion-capture process over two weeks, allowing them to shoot the film like a stage play. "Hundreds of hours were devoted to manually fine-tuning each performance," Shukla says, crediting his team of skilled animators for bringing life to the characters.

The film was entirely developed in Epic Games' Unreal Engine. "Integrating data into the game engine marked a turning point in our creative process, allowing us to approach shooting with the fluidity of a live-action movie. This newfound

creative freedom opened doors to experimentation, enabling us to explore diverse multi-camera setups and lighting techniques. Unlike the locked-in nature of traditional storyboarding, the hybrid game engine pipeline granted us the incredible ability to make real-time adjustments. We could modify shots, edit sequences, and entire scenes on the go. This process fostered a dynamic environment where we could continuously refine design, camera angles, animations, sets, and colour. Surprisingly, this approach didn't inflate the budget, and actually allowed us to work efficiently with fewer resources," he reveals.

Shukla believes his film showcases the advantages of using Unreal Engine, which handled vast data efficiently and reduced rendering times. This approach also minimised energy consumption and resource usage. He hopes more filmmakers will adopt this sustainable method, setting a new standard for the future of animation.

A MULTICULTURAL VOICE CAST

Shukla's film has an ensemble of talented voice actors – from international names like the Iranian actress Golshifteh Farahani, Italian actress Asia Argento, French musician and actress Soko and music producer Arish A. Khan (aka "King Khan") to Indian cinema stalwarts like actor Denzil Smith, filmmakers Karan Johar, Shekhar Kapur, Anurag Kashyap and poet and actor Piyush Mishra.

Highlights Shukla, "I wanted *Schirkoo: In Lies We Trust* to encapsulate the essence of our global society, where multiculturalism has become an integral aspect of modern life. Just like the world we inhabit, it portrays the coexistence of various cultures and civilisations, each at different stages of evolution."

THE FILMMAKER HIMSELF

Shukla, who drew his first comic at the age of six and created many original comics before finishing school, completed his first short film *Schirkoo* single-handedly. The film received more than 30 awards and became the first Indian animated short to get longlisted for the Academy Awards, followed by a tremendous reception at more than 120 international film festivals. He founded Red Cigarette Media to focus on artistic, adult-oriented animated feature films.

The talented filmmaker also directed "The Bandits of Golak" – one of the nine short stories from the Lucasfilm anthology series *Star Wars: Visions Volume 2*, which premiered in May 2023 on Disney+ and was produced by Indian animation studio 88 Pictures. "Working on *Star Wars: Visions Vol. 2* was a blast. 88 Pictures has a great vision and a top-notch team. It was a great experience to share this journey with them. Having the opportunity to contribute to this iconic universe was an incredibly rewarding experience. One of the most beautiful aspects of the project was the freedom Lucasfilm granted us to incorporate Indian culture into the *Star Wars* universe. It was a chance to infuse my own heritage and artistic sensibilities into a world that has captivated audiences for generations. Of course, working within such an established



Ishan Shukla



universe required adapting to a different filmmaking style, but I embraced the opportunity to blend a more classic Star Wars narrative with the vibrant energy of the Hindi cinema and the richness of Indian culture," he says.

SCHIRKOO'S GLOBAL JOURNEY AND EXPANDING HORIZONS

Schirkoo: In Lies We Trust has been selected for multiple international film festivals including Göteborg Film Festival (Sweden), Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival (Belgium), Taipei Film Festival (Taiwan), Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival (South Korea), Munich Film Fest (Germany), Neuchatel International Fantastic Film Festival (Switzerland), and Edinburgh International Film Festival (UK).

Shukla envisions *Schirkoo* as a story that can be explored in various mediums, not limiting it to an animated film. "Certain aspects of the world are more suited for a graphic novel, allowing a more in-depth look at the world's intricacies, lore, and aesthetics. There are more immersive world-building aspects that are best suited to interactive mediums while the journey of some key characters can certainly be explored in a TV show. From art installations, board games to Lego sets, there are almost too many possibilities," he exclaims.

Shukla's work exemplifies the potential of independent animation, pushing the boundaries of storytelling through innovative technology and a global perspective. As *Schirkoo* continues to travel the world, Shukla's story reminds us that the possibilities of animation are as limitless as the imagination itself. ■



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Animation Creators Pitch: A triumph for creativity and collaboration

AnimationXpress Creators Pitch's first winners see their ideas take shape

During the Animation & More Summit 2023, AnimationXpress took a revolutionary step with the Animation Creators Pitch (ACP), in collaboration with 88

Pictures and Zebu Animation. This groundbreaking initiative has emerged as a beacon for aspiring animators and storytellers. The inaugural edition of the ACP provided a platform for directors, creative artists, students, professionals, and filmmakers to present their innovative story ideas. Among the winners of this transformative event were Nagesh Chakilam and Asha Girdhar, whose pitches have been selected for production, bringing their creative visions to life.

A STORY FROM THE HEART: NAGESH CHAKILAM'S JOURNEY

Chakilam's pitch is deeply personal, inspired by his experiences during the pandemic. "I lost my grandfather during the pandemic, which made me realise the importance of life," he explains. His story addresses the critical issue of self-harm and suicide stemming from stress and depression. "In a world with viruses and pandemics, living a healthy life itself is a blessing, and we should value it."

Zebu Animation's founder and creative director Veerendra Patil, who is also Chakilam's boss, was particularly moved by the subject. "It's important to foster and maintain an environment where individuals facing challenges feel encouraged and



Veerendra Patil

supported to seek help. Creating such a space can empower them to confront and overcome their personal demons," Patil notes.

Patil admired Chakilam's dedication to his project, stating, "I was thoroughly impressed by Nagesh's commitment to his ideas. Seeing him so passionately engaged in discussing his story was a remarkable experience."

To ensure a nuanced and informed approach to the sensitive subject matter, Zebu Animation has brought a psychologist on board. "We're on track to complete the film in time for the upcoming edition of ACP," Patil reveals. Chakilam, whose primary experience lies in 3D modeling, will be involved in all stages of the film's development, from design to final render. "With the help of our full-fledged team at Zebu Animation Studios, I want to contribute as much as possible," Chakilam says. "I am grateful to Zebu and AnimationXpress for creating a platform where anybody can pitch their stories irrespective of their professions."

A CREATIVE HORIZON UNLOCKED: ASHA GIRDHAR'S TRIUMPH

Another shining star of the ACP was a creative writing and visualisation expert with an illustrious 35-year career. Despite her extensive experience, she was drawn to the ACP initiative for the industry exposure and connections it offered. Known for her weekly interactive educational series in The Jakarta Post titled *Sonny & Zap*, Girdhar's pitch resonated with the panel.

Girdhar's pitch was inspired by a theme central to her children's series: the belief in oneself. "In today's world, people, particularly children and youngsters, are increasingly getting influenced by the idea that happiness lies outside of oneself—in material things and in popularity on social media platforms. This has led to many problems, including those in the area of mental health. We need to rediscover ourselves, to learn to look inward for real long-term happiness. We need to trust ourselves. This message was at the crux of my pitch, which took the form of a fantasy story," she shares.

Girdhar expressed her excitement and gratitude for being one of the first winners of the ACP initiative. "The Animation Creators Pitch is a milestone initiative, and to be one of the first-ever creators to be awarded this honour is a source of immense joy for me," she exclaims.

Girdhar believes the ACP will inspire creators to push the limits of their craft, leading to innovative storytelling and visual styles. "Such recognition might also attract investment in experimental projects, promoting a wider variety of animated content," she notes.

THE ROLE OF ACP IN FOSTERING INNOVATION

The Animation Creators Pitch initiative is not just about winning or producing content—it's about fostering innovation within the animation community.

As 88 Pictures founder and CEO Milind D. Shinde notes, "This platform bridges the gap between creators and industry experts and has the power to reshape how we perceive and engage with animation. It's opportunities like these that fuel the evolution of our industry, driving it toward a future where creativity knows no bounds."

For Patil, the ACP initiative aligns with Zebu's long-term goals. "Our mission is to actively participate in India's indie animation scene, and we eagerly look forward to opportunities where we can make a meaningful contribution," he highlights. He also stresses the importance of establishing platforms like ACP for mentoring animators and storytellers, asserting, "By broadening our team to include other experts, we can transform this concept into a true incubator for innovative ideas."

A CALL TO ASPIRING CREATORS

Both Chakilam and Girdhar encourage other aspiring animators to put themselves out there and tell their stories. "I was also worried that my submission wouldn't get shortlisted, but I just told myself to stop overthinking and pitched my idea," Chakilam advises. Girdhar echoes this sentiment, emphasising the importance of compelling storytelling, originality, and seeking constructive feedback.

The Animation Creators Pitch 2023 has proven to be a transformative platform for animators like Chakilam and Girdhar. Through this initiative, their heartfelt stories will soon come to life, inspiring others and contributing to the rich tapestry of animation in India. As the animation industry continues to evolve, platforms like ACP will play a crucial role in nurturing the next generation of creators, ensuring that creativity knows no bounds. ■



Milind D. Shinde

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MDEC: Leading Malaysia's digital creative industry onto the global stage

The Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) is honoured to participate in the Animation & More Summit in Mumbai, India. As a driving force behind the growth of Malaysia's digital creative industry, MDEC has been pivotal in launching initiatives that promote growth, spark innovation, and foster global partnerships.

At MDEC, we recognise the transformative potential of digital content in propelling Malaysia's economy. Our initiatives have consistently nurtured talent and established platforms that connect Malaysian creators with global opportunities. Our mission is to position Malaysia as a leading hub for digital content creation, innovation, and collaboration in Southeast Asia and beyond.

Our flagship event, the **Malaysia Digital Content Festival (MYDCF)**, is Southeast Asia's largest digital content gathering. Held annually at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC), this three-day festival brings together creators, consumers, and industry professionals. MYDCF showcases the latest in animation, gaming, virtual reality, and digital arts, serving as a platform for idea exchange, collaboration, and the exploration of new opportunities. This event underscores Malaysia's strength in digital content creation and solidifies its status as a regional leader.

Another cornerstone initiative, **Kre8tif!**, launched in 2009, has become the premier business networking platform for the animation industry in Southeast Asia. Kre8tif! connects local animation companies with global partners, opening new markets and production opportunities, and has firmly established itself as the definitive gathering for animation professionals across the region.

In the gaming sector, **Level Up KL** has been transformative. Since its inception in 2015, it has emerged as the leading event for game developers in Southeast Asia. This conference unites industry leaders, developers, and enthusiasts from around the globe to discuss trends, share insights, and explore new technologies. Through Level Up KL, MDEC is cultivating a dynamic gaming ecosystem in Malaysia, where local developers can showcase their talents and engage with international partners.

Our latest initiative, **Immerse KL**, focuses on cutting-edge fields such as XR, blockchain, metaverse, and Web3 content. As these technologies rapidly evolve, Immerse KL has become an essential platform for industry leaders and innovators to explore these new frontiers. Now in its second year, the event convenes key players worldwide to shape the future of these emerging technologies. Through initiatives like Immerse KL, MDEC ensures Malaysia remains at the forefront of the digital content industry, poised to seize new opportunities and lead in innovation.

As MDEC continues to champion Malaysia's digital content industry, our commitment to nurturing local talent, fostering innovation, and facilitating international collaboration remains steadfast. We are proud to be part of this vibrant global community and eagerly anticipate forging new collaborations and partnerships at the Animation & More Summit 2024.

This year's MYDCF is scheduled for 13-15 September 2024, while Kre8tif!, Level Up, and Immerse KL will take place from 1-3 October 2024. For more details on MDEC and the event, please visit our website at www.mdec.com.my and <https://mydcf.my/>.

Don't forget to check out the Malaysia booth at the Animation & More Summit 2024!



Celebrating Friendship, Adventure, & Indian Folklore

Ele Animations and Toonz Media Group bring 'Jay Jagannath' – a vibrant new series to Pogo

By *Binita Das*



With a shared vision of promoting cultural diversity through animation, Ele Animations and Toonz Media Group have come together to create an adorable animated series *Jay Jagannath* (52 x 11'), immersing viewers into Indian heritage and folklore while delivering bite-sized storytelling experiences.

Lord Jagannath. We understand the importance of honouring this heritage and are exploring opportunities to bring *Jay Jagannath* to audiences in languages that resonate with Eastern India. English is definitely a possibility, considering its universal appeal and the diverse viewership it can attract."

Toonz Media Group chief executive officer P Jayakumar explains that the project's unique storytelling approach and thematic depth drew them to collaborate with Ele Animations. "We recognised the potential to introduce audiences to the lesser-known narratives surrounding Lord Jagannath and were eager to bring these stories to life," he says. Toonz holds exclusive distribution rights for the IP.

The 2D episodic debuted on Warner Bros. Discovery's kids TV channel Pogo on 20 May 2024. "While we initially released the show in six languages – Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, and Malayalam, we are open to expanding to more languages in the future based on audience demand," says Ele Animations founder-director Durga Prasad. "Odia is also on the cards, given the Indian state Odisha's significance as the abode of

The show will be accessible to viewers across South Asia wherever the WBD's Pogo channel is available.

"Stories infused with local flavours possess a unique charm and authenticity that often transcend geographical boundaries. While *Jay Jagannath* celebrates Indian culture and folklore, we believe its



universal themes of friendship and adventure, and stories derived from India's rich cultural heritage have the potential to resonate with global audiences," said Warner Bros Discovery South Asia kids cluster head Uttam Pal Singh.

Jayakumar too feels that Indian stories with a local flavour resonate with the Indian diaspora worldwide. "We've seen this with other successful Indian animated properties and believe that *Jay Jagannath* will captivate viewers across the globe."

When asked about important aspects to connect with the Pogo's audience, Singh replies, "A crucial element is highlighting relatable and culturally resonant content with characters that are not just fun but present strong role models and heartwarming personalities, such as the lead characters of *Chhota Bheem* and *Little Singham*. Pogo has strategically secured a commanding market share in kids' programming by offering animated content spanning multiple genres from comedy to slapstick to adventure to mythology. These diverse range of stories in varied and engaging formats cater to kids across two to 14 years."

Toonz has aimed *Jay Jagannath's* viewership at everyone from children to adults. While young viewers will be enchanted by the colourful characters and engaging storylines, older audiences will appreciate the narrative depth and the cultural significance. When asked if this series would appeal to youth who feel distant from traditions and devotion, Prasad says, "We believe that *Jay Jagannath* can resonate with youth by presenting timeless themes of loyalty and self-discovery in a modern and relatable context. The series aims to bridge the gap between tradition and contemporary values, making it relevant to a diverse audience."

To maximise the reach of the series, Toonz is considering distribution on OTT platforms. Jayakumar also discusses merchandise and

licensing opportunities, "Plans are in motion to develop a range of products inspired by the series, including toys, apparel, books and more, to further engage with fans and extend the brand's presence beyond the screen."

The promotional efforts and the post-launch response have been overwhelmingly positive across social media and other platforms. "While we focused on the successful launch of the first season, we are optimistic about the potential for future seasons. Discussions are underway, and we're excited to continue exploring the adventures of the show's characters Jagan and Balram in subsequent seasons," adds Prasad.

The first season of this poignant tale focuses on captivating viewers with rich storytelling and cultural heritage. Eventually, it will explore innumerable untold stories of Lord Jagannath ■



RELIANCE

Animation

Reliance Animation is an original IP production company established in 2005 with a vision to create fresh content and impeccable execution, bringing the best of both worlds together.

Reliance Animation is an award-winning studio in partnership with noted filmmaker ROHIT SHETTY, best known for delivering IP-driven animation content like Little Singham, Golmaal Jr., Little Krishna, and Smashing Simmba.

Little Krishna was its first 3D production from India, written by Jeffrey Scott, followed by one of the greatest stories ever told - 'Krishna aur Kans', a theatrical spectacle released in August 2012. Reliance Animation produced an animated version of India's first superhero, 'Shaktimaan.' The studio parallelly worked on some service projects like Astra Force, Ting Tong, Keymon Ache, Daduji, Gaju Bhai, and Tik Tak Tail, to name a few.

The studio takes pride in producing 'The Davincibles' show, which was a co-production with Moonscoop US and Neo Network. With creative energies and exemplary execution coming together, the team recently delivered a harmony show, 'The Twisted Timeline of Sammy & Raj,' which is a co-production between Nickelodeon US and Nickelodeon India.

The studio has won many international and domestic awards and accolades for its aforementioned creations. Little Singham and Golmaal Jr. are among the leading IPs in India and are creating records across platforms. Both have become very popular among kids in a short time. Little Singham is being aired on Pogo India as well as on Netflix, while Golmaal Jr. is aired on Sonic/ETV channel and VOOT.



Baahubali's Legacy Continues

Disney+ Hotstar's 'Baahubali: Crown of Blood' takes viewers back to the origins of Baahubali and Bhallaladeva, the lead characters of the fictional universe

By Binita Das

Baahubali, the epic fantasy franchise created by S S Rajamouli, stands as a monumental testament to Indian cinema's prowess and potential. The franchise, which began with the groundbreaking two-part live-action film series, has evolved into a multi-platform phenomenon encompassing animation, a graphic novel, and a trilogy of novels. Its success is not merely measured in box office receipts but in the depth of its world-building and the fervour it ignites among fans.

The films, boasting a combined budget of INR 430 crore (USD 65 million), shattered records and redefined the cinematic landscape upon their release. *Baahubali: The Beginning* unveiled the majestic realm of Mahishmati kingdom in 2015, setting a new standard for grandeur and storytelling in Indian cinema. Its sequel, *Baahubali 2: The*

Conclusion, continued the saga, captivating audiences worldwide with its scale and spectacle.

Expanding the universe with animation

The 2017's animated series, *Baahubali: The Lost Legends*, streaming on Prime Video, served as an appetizer to the grand narrative, exploring untold stories within the Baahubali universe. However, it's the recent spin-off, *Baahubali: Crown of Blood*, that delves into the earlier days of the protagonists, offering fresh insights into their journey. Directed and produced by Jeevan J. Kang and Navin John, this series expands upon the rich lore established by Rajamouli, weaving a tapestry of intrigue and adventure.

A Graphic India and Arka Mediaworks

production, *Baahubali: Crown of Blood* is produced by Rajamouli, Sharad Devarajan and Shobu Yarlagadda, and streaming on Disney+ Hotstar.

Graphic India co-founder Devarajan met Rajamouli, and Arka Mediaworks founders Prasad Devineni and Yarlagadda shortly after the first *Baahubali* film launched. "We shared the same passion for 'world-building' and what they had achieved with the film was one of the most ambitious and inspiring projects to have come out of India — similar to the type of mission we are on at Graphic India which is to spark a creative renaissance in this country across new genres and stories," Devarajan tells AnimationXpress.

The idea behind the prequel story

The idea behind the prequel series, *Crown of Blood*, was to explore the rich backstories



and intricate world-building that Rajamouli had developed during the scripting of the films. "The Baahubali franchise has captured the hearts and minds of millions across the country, and its rich universe offers endless possibilities for storytelling," Devarajan explains. Creating a prequel animation series allowed for the exploration of untold stories and hidden secrets that shaped the characters from the films.

According to Devarajan, Rajamouli's ability to craft intricate storylines, develop complex characters, and create a rich, immersive universe that spans multiple mediums is a testament to his unparalleled vision. His world-building skills are up there with the greatest cinematic universe storytellers of today's time, such as George Lucas (*Star Wars*) or James Cameron (*Avatar*).

From the live-action films to the animated series and comics, Rajamouli has been the inspirational force behind every iteration of the Baahubali franchise, ensuring that each element fits seamlessly into the larger narrative tapestry, opening avenues for new possibilities in Indian entertainment.

Contribution to the existing storyline and style

The animation style and techniques used in *Crown of Blood* have evolved from those in *The Lost Legends*. The previous episodes were designed as more self-contained and shorter story arcs within larger seasonal arcs. This series had over five seasons and 70 episodes.

When asked about the connection between these two animated series, Devarajan says, "They both fall under the Baahubali universe, but *Crown of Blood* exists separately and was designed as an older, more gripping and sophisticated story with a more serialised longer story-arc that goes across nine episodes and delves into the early years of Baahubali and Bhallaladeva and some of the critical psychological moments that shaped them into the characters we see in the films."

Crown of Blood offers fans a fresh and exciting new chapter, expanding the universe in meaningful ways while also staying true to the core elements of the franchise. The series follows the young princes Baahubali and Bhallaladeva as they navigate the complex political landscape of

Mahishmati, facing new challenges and forging alliances. A mysterious warlord, Rakhtadeva, threatens the kingdom, forcing the brothers to work together to protect their people and birthright. The tale of brotherhood, betrayal, duty, dharma, and destiny promises to keep fans on the edge of their seats.

The animation style and technique used in *Crown of Blood* bears some similarities to those used in *The Lost Legends*. However, they have made "significant improvements and changes to the visual style and quality to ensure that this new series delivers an even more impactful and immersive experience for fans." Kang led the visual character designs and development for both the shows and worked hard to make the news series distinct.

Success and future plans

The prequel ranked as the number one show in Hindi on 20 May 2024, above all other live-action shows and films on Disney+ Hotstar. Independent media consulting and data analytics group Ormax Media listed it among the top three Hindi shows or films (across all

streaming platforms in India), in its opening week. Ormax estimates the show received 3.3 million viewers in just the first few days.

The world of Baahubali is vast and rich with possibilities. "We are always open to the idea of further exploring this universe in future seasons or other creative projects. We still have a lot of stories we want to tell," concludes Devarajan.



Sharad Devarajan



Baahubali: Crown of Blood

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Rediscovering Ancient Tales

Vaibhav Kumaresh blends indigenous storytelling and modern animation in his feature film 'Return of the Jungle'

By Anshita Bhatt

Since childhood, Vaibhav Kumaresh has been captivated by Indian folk tales and mythology. Believing these stories to be both entertaining and rich in timeless lessons, he embarked on creating *Return of the Jungle* (ROTJ), his first 3D animated feature film, produced by his independent studio, Vaibhav Studios.

A MODERN ADVENTURE ROOTED IN ANCIENT WISDOM

Set in contemporary India, *Return of the Jungle* (ROTJ) is the story of a group of junior school classmates who are faced with the daunting task of outwitting the biggest, meanest bully in school. To help them ride through this impossible journey, they have *Thatha* – the coolest grandpa in town, who peps them up with his highly inspiring stories from the ancient jungles of India. Together, they must build a ruthless Dinosaur, fight a nerve-racking game of cricket, and travel all the way to the Indian state of Rajasthan, to rediscover the power of friendship, compassion and determination.

"I had a strong desire to retell our folk stories my own way and I found animation to be a highly potent medium to execute them. Moreover, I didn't see anyone making these films the way I had them in my head! So I was even more determined to do it," exclaims the film's director Kumaresh.

THE STORY TAKES SHAPE

With a small team of artists, Kumaresh took a step-by-step approach to producing the film. He delved into India's popular folk tales—*Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesha*, and *The Jataka Tales*—drawing inspiration and gradually building a story structure that excited him. Characters and situations began to emerge, a dedicated team was assembled, and they even taught

themselves new tools to bring the film to life. Songs were written and recorded, dances choreographed, and storyboards timed to scratch dialogues, making individual scenes come alive.

BUSINESS AND CREATIVITY GO SIDE-BY-SIDE

The 105-minute feature has been in production since 2012, a challenging time for Indian animation films facing box office struggles and funding scarcity. To finance the film, Vaibhav Studios' core team of 17 artists decided to self-fund it by saving from their commercial projects.

Vaibhav Studios has created commercials for M&E giants like Disney and Nickelodeon, as well as FMCG companies like Hindustan Unilever, Havmor, and DS Group. Notably, the studio produced the Emmy Award-nominated series *Lampu* for Cartoon Network. *Lampu* was conceptualised by Kumaresh, produced by Vaibhav Studios, and released on TV and digital platforms by Turner, instantly becoming globally popular.

"Creating original and successful IPs for our clients has been our core strength and our main source of business," shares Kumaresh. Since the team is financing the project from its commercial revenue, they often adopt a stop-start technique: saving money from commercial projects to invest back into the film. "When business is good and we've saved enough, we aim to finish large chunks of work. When funds run low, we take on external projects to replenish our budget before resuming work on the film," he explains.

However, this approach takes a toll on the artists and the studio's infrastructure, according to film's chief creative producer Tony Singh. "You may not be able to upgrade your hardware and software as much as you need. You may not be



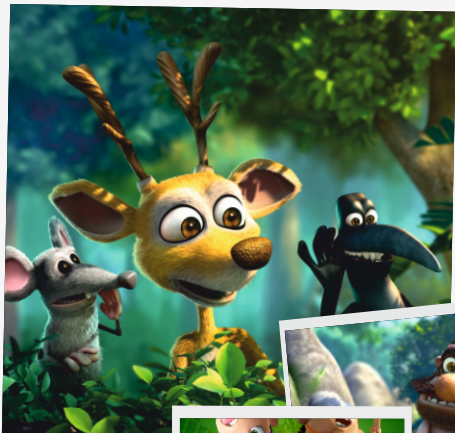
Vaibhav Kumaresh



Tony Singh



The team at Vaibhav Studios



INDIAN IN SPIRIT, UNIVERSAL IN APPEAL

Though deeply rooted in Indian culture, *ROTJ* carries universal themes. Be it the emotional journey of the school children or the fun-filled animal stories, the themes of friendship and courage shine throughout. "I am sure families across the globe will enjoy watching this film together. For the first time, they will see India captured in animation with such everyday realism," exclaims Kumaresh.

ROTJ was one of the five films chosen by India's National Film Development Corporation to be screened at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival market. The film has won at the New York International Film Awards and the Oniros Film Awards, New York. It was also selected for competition at the Cartoons on the Bay Pulcinella Awards, the Tokyo Lift-Off Film Festival, and the Uganda Film Festival.

SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS FILMS

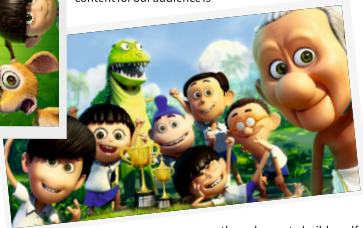
Kumaresh highlights the shortcomings of government film

policies that incentivise foreign collaborations while neglecting indigenous productions. He elaborates, "Producing indigenous content for our audience is

able to offer the bonuses and salaries that your team deserves. You may have to refuse some interesting projects along the way because you must get back to the film. So, it is not easy when you have limited resources that force your hand on all fronts."

He further mentions, "There is no formula or magic wand to overcome such challenges. You just have to dig in deep, suck it up and keep at it. Patience and faith are good collaborators to have around. To remain committed to a project, to believe in the film and the filmmaker, to stay the course through thick and thin is no small task."

Both Singh and Kumaresh commend their artists for their unwavering commitment and passion in bringing the film to fruition.



the only way to build a self-sufficient industry. Focusing solely on outsourced projects increases our dependence on foreign markets and their economic uncertainties. The devastation caused to the Indian VFX industry by the USA's Writer's Strike is a cautionary tale. The best way to insulate our talent from such situations is to build

our own ecosystem of demand and supply of local content.”

To boost local content creation, Singh suggests providing incentives to the distribution system. Reminiscing the time when animated shorts on social issues used to be screened before feature films in the theatres, Singh opines that a similar system must be bought back with incentives for creating and screening such films. “Many accomplished artists will be happy to develop content if we can create a supportive system for sales and distribution,” he believes. “In the long run, more artists and small studios will want to join this movement. The entire ecosystem stands to gain. It is a win-win for everyone.”

DEAR FILMMAKERS, KEEP THE FAITH

“Producing an [independent] feature film is a marathon that requires stamina,” says Kumaresh. He explains how it is not only important to create a good product, but also to get the right partners to market, distribute, and exhibit it. “I strongly feel it is important for an animation film in India to appeal to audiences beyond kids. *ROTJ* aims to do exactly that.”

To independent and aspiring filmmakers, Singh advises, “You must stay true to your course and focus on good storytelling. Do not take shortcuts to please everyone in the market. Do not let anyone discourage you by quoting from the past performance of Indian animated features. Good content will taste success. We have the stories, the history, and the culture of visual storytelling. If mainstream feature films can do it, there is no reason the animation community cannot.”

WHAT'S NEXT FOR ROTJ?

Back at Vaibhav Studios, a full *ROTJ* universe – comprising a

series and two more films – is in development.

“It’s vital to capture stories by indigenous storytellers in our films,” Kumaresh believes. “The more local and personal our stories, the more unique they become for audiences—especially in today’s context, where there is an overwhelming influx of global content” ■





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Baby Elephant On A Mission

New Indian feature film brings awareness on wildlife conservation through a heartwarming story

By Anshita Bhatt

Animal poaching is an under-explored yet significant subject. Even rarer is its introduction into children's content. In India, this critical topic is yet to be addressed within the realm of kids' animated entertainment. But Appu Series' Sanjay Raheja changed that with his animated feature film *Appu*.

Appu is a lively, naughty elephant calf who loves his life in the forest. His world is devastated when poachers kill his mother and take away his father. Determined to rescue his father, Appu embarks on a journey that helps him discover his inner strength and latent powers, which he uses to stand up against injustice.

This 3D animated film from Indian edutainment content creator Appu Series hit 160 big screens across major cities in the country on 19 April 2024 in English and Hindi. The film is directed by Prosenjit Ganguly, Ajay Velu and Archisman Kar, and produced by Sanjay Raheja, Suraj Raheja, Suresh Raheja.

"Elephant poaching is a grave concern that could severely impact our environment if measures aren't taken to curb it. And we felt that a film would be the perfect way to spread awareness and drive this cause," says Appu Series director Sanjay Raheja.

The making-of Appu

Crafting a film on such a sensitive topic is no easy-feat. However, director Raheja rose to the occasion by onboarding Ganguly - a top-tier story writer who painstakingly researched and gathered factual data from relevant sources for the 90-minute feature. With a workforce of approximately 1,000 people, the collaborative effort behind this project was immense. Shares Raheja, "Our writers wove the story keeping in mind Appu's vibrant character and his deep attachment to his forest family, all the while having the issue of poaching at the core."

Mature concept with relatable character

While Appu has special powers, he also has his own set of weaknesses. The elephant calf feels fear yet summons the courage to face it. Despite feeling under-confident, he taps into his fullest potential and remains determined to succeed. "All these attributes make him real, relatable, and an inspiration for children," mentions Raheja.

Regarding the exposure of children to mature concepts like animal conservation, he explains, "They are the future of the world. It is necessary to make them aware of realities that could impact the



environment. This awareness would only lead to responsible actions as they grow into adults."

The film, however, is also targeted at adults. Appu's positive attributes have a message for parents too, says Raheja. "Parents must prod their children to embrace their limitations and fears, push them to overcome them and encourage them to treat all beings with kindness."

At the box office

From the time of its release, the film ran for four weeks and is still showing at a couple of cinema halls in the country. "The reviews have been excellent. *Appu* has been a great success with schools that bring in large numbers of students for a movie that both entertains and educates with its strong message about elephant conservation," shares Raheja.

It has so far recovered about 20 per cent of its making cost, a remarkable feat for an Indian animated film. "The total earnings remain undetermined as schools in Delhi continue to get children to the theatre to watch *Appu*," he adds.

What makes the IP "Appu" stand out

Starting with multimedia training, CD-ROMs, books and moving to web, TV and now a full-length animated feature, Appu Series has come a long way. The IP's YouTube channel currently has more than two billion views and close to two million subscribers.

Raheja created the IP to change the way children learn, by making learning as entertaining as possible. At Appu Series, his team creates engaging learning aids in the form of videos (stories, songs, rhymes, and learning modules) as well as

physical products. The adorable elephant calf Appu, has captured the hearts of children worldwide as the lead character of Appu Series' stories and the mascot of its rhyme videos.

Raheja wants to use the appeal of animated content to improve the quality of education in India. "We have decided to focus on creating animated content for kindergarten to grade seven in Mathematics. We hope to take this to the underprivileged communities across India, where quality education is the need of the hour. We aim to bust the notion that access to quality education is a privilege."

With *Appu*, Raheja believes he has filled the gap of animated Indian IPs that have a global appeal.

"The film *Appu* is a curtain raiser on the cruelties inflicted on animals by people riding on greed. Apart from being a kids and family entertainer, it is an initiative to draw attention towards the unrestrained and widespread poaching that is severely affecting the elephant population. We hope and believe that *Appu* will sensitise the world to the plight of elephants and have them join hands to conserve this priceless species," concludes Raheja. ■



Sanjay Raheja

"Appu hit 160 big screens across India and has recovered about 20 per cent of its making cost"

WEEK 02

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Govinda Sao's poignant social tale 'Maatitel' garners international acclaim

Animated short bags the Lotte Reiniger Award in the Graduation Films category at Anney International Animation Film Festival

By Binita Das

Raised in an artistic family, surrounded by epic tales, soulful bhajans, and rhythmic beats, National Institute of Design graduate Govinda Sao's formative years were wrapped in artistic practices. His 2D animated short *Maatitel*, which means kerosene—a vital liquid fuel used in rural domestic India—won the Lotte Reiniger Award in the Graduation Films category at the 2024 Anney International Animation Film Festival.

Maatitel, a Chhattisgarhi language film with English subtitles, tells the story of a family of four. Set against the backdrop of rural India, the film portrays a day in their lives as a joyful evening escalates into a heated argument. The film serves as a poignant reminder of the social issues prevalent in rural communities.

"The film underscores the importance of addressing lives that deserve upliftment with frequency. Through its rooted and nuanced narrative, it takes us back to the pain of the majority, leaving us with countless

questions and a glimmer of hope," the film's director delves.

TRANSFORMING OBSERVATIONS INTO ART

Sao's journey in storytelling was shaped by the environment he grew up in—a rural setting that initially left him feeling detached from the broader world. As he witnessed the transformation of his surroundings, from lush greenery to industrial encroachment, he became increasingly curious about the struggles faced by his community.

"Over time, the transition from lush greenery to industrial encroachment, alongside struggles with education, infrastructure, and well-being, sparked a deep curiosity in me. Witnessing the extreme mental and societal challenges faced by the communities, I felt compelled to explore these themes and transform my observations and emotions into a narrative," he says.

Expressing his gratitude for all the support, Sao reveals, "The film is the culmination of constant motivation and the invaluable contributions of my friends, including talented animators, actors, sound and music designers, who helped bring the vision to life. I am especially grateful to Sornnath Pal, a close mentor and remarkable artist and filmmaker, who produced the film under his creative firm - Goia. These unwavering support and encouragement made our film possible."

Govind Sao

He was assisted by many talents on this award-winning project. Ajay Tiwari was on board as the guide; Thomas Hohl as sound designer; Rohan Deep Saxena as dialogue recordist & direction; Nikhil Patil as boom operator; and Sao, Mouparna Barai, Rishav Mohanty, Akhil KT, Sampada Kokane, Shantanu Karkare were the animators.

The cast of *Maatitel* included Shruti Pandey and Mohan Sagar; composing and VFX was done by Ameya Agrawal; Anshul Gupta worked on the title and graphic design; subtitles were by Anshara Naaz; music (instrumental) was given by Jhankhar and Group; and the music mixing and mastering was taken care by Dhruv Pant.

THE ANNECY EXPERIENCE

For the budding storyteller, having *Maatitel* selected for the Anecy International Animation Film Festival was a dream come true. The film's journey from a corner of rural India to an international stage where it resonated with audiences



worldwide was an inspiring experience. "*Maatitel*, a vulnerable cry of thousands of unheard voices, found its echo and love at Anecy. This was only possible because of the amazing team that made it happen. My deepest gratitude to everyone who believed in our story," he shares.

It was inspiring for him to meet the artists and immerse himself in the diverse mediums of storytelling and art. Attending numerous film screenings, talks, events, and programs were like a visual and emotional treat, offering him bundles of different perspectives.

CREATIVE FOUNDATIONS AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Sao grew up in a vibrant environment filled with creativity. His grandfather's epic tales weaved a narrative of wonder, while his grandmother's soulful bhajans filled his heart with devotion. The rhythmic beats of his parents' music resonated throughout his home, inspiring him to explore the depths of art and music from a tender age.

"My journey evolved through drawing, a practice I enjoyed throughout my childhood. This passion motivated me to

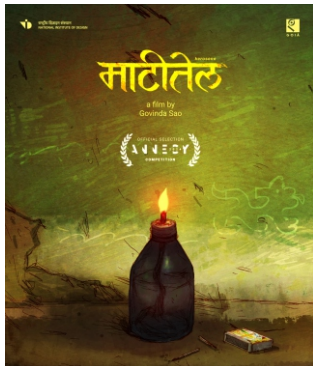


further explore the world of storytelling after completing school. As I delved deeper into this field, I realised that animation is a powerful and versatile medium for expression and storytelling. This unlocked the door to my professional pursuits, making me more sensitive and aware of my surroundings," he reflects.

Currently, Sao is focused on writing and researching several ideas for his animation projects. Additionally, he continues to explore and document his surroundings through sketching, aiming to tell stories, create films, and express emotions through his art.

"I aspire to see a new era and a healthy space for animation in India. I aim to explore different storytelling mediums while practicing wellness for myself and those around me," he adds.

Govinda Sao's journey from a rural upbringing to international recognition highlights the power of storytelling to bridge cultural divides and shine a light on the lives of those often overlooked ■



India to Japan

Four projects shortlisted from India will compete with multiple others at Japan's short film contest DigiCon6 Asia Awards 2024

By Binita Das



Continuing its role as the official Indian representative for Japan's DigiCon6 Asia Awards, AnimationXpress announced India's top four projects that will go on to compete with other Asian contenders at the 26th edition of the awards. The finals of this short film contest will be held on 19 October 2024 in Tokyo.

As the official media partner for the 26th DigiCon6 Asia Awards, AnimationXpress received over 135 entries. The esteemed jury members from India include IDC-IIT Powai professor of practice Dhimant Vyas; Whistling Woods International vice president & business head, CTO & emerging media head Chaitanya Chinchlikar; M2 Animation creative director Mahesh Holla and AnimationXpress founder, chairman & editor-in-chief Anil NM Wanvari.

PHOOL DEI BY KARTIK MAHAJAN [GOLD CATEGORY]

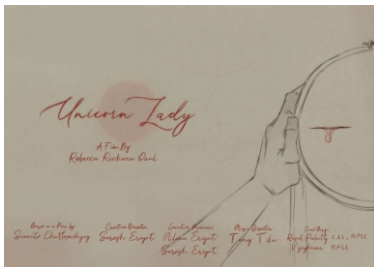
Located in the fictional realm of Dev Bhoomi and nestled among majestic mountains, the narrative of the story is about the festival of flowers that celebrates the culture and togetherness of Uttarakhand, seen from the perspective of a small girl Medha as she goes on a magical and an adventurous journey to collect flowers for her village before it turns into a ghost village. The film focuses on the impact of migration in Uttarakhand, India in the last five years and shows the helplessness of the change through the journey of the main character.

Mahajan, a recent graduate of the National Institute of Design, Madhya Pradesh (NID MP), expresses his love for animation and dedication to the people of Uttarakhand through this heartfelt self-funded project. "With themes of change, adventure, magic, and the undeniable force of nature, 2D animated *Phool Dei* is both a tribute to Uttarakhand's traditions and a poignant commentary on the challenges it faces," he tells AnimationXpress.

THE LEGEND OF ARANA BY ADITHI KRISHNADAS [BEST STORY CATEGORY]

Seasoned storyteller Mr. P.N.K Panicker, an elderly gentleman from Kerala, narrates the origin tale of the humble reptile Arana (red-tailed skink) and how it came to possess a certain memorable character trait.

This animated short is a follow up to Krishnadas' previous short *Kandittund* which was produced by Studio Eeksaurus and won the National Award for Best Animation Film last year. *Kandittund* was made around a recorded narration of Eeksaurus founder Suresh Eriyat's father, P.N.K Panicker. The



Legend of Arana is too centred around a similar narration, but is sillier and more lighthearted than *Kandittund*, explains Krishnadas, who is an NID alumnus. "The strongest motivation to make the film was the fact that the central reptile character Arana could let me do all kinds of silly things with it," she shares.

UNICORN LADY BY REBECCA RECHANA PAUL [BEST ART CATEGORY]

A visual journey based on the poem *Unicorn Lady* by Sumanto Chattopadhyay, this short film uses animation to explore and experiment with imaginary settings that would transmute into meanings that connect the lines.

Paul elaborates on her film, "In a culture where the size, shape and colour of breasts measure the feminine beauty, the protagonist of *Unicorn Lady* celebrates the physical diversity of a woman's body and her uniqueness of having one breast. She alludes to her ordeal with 'CHOP, SLICE, DICE' rather than the pain of amputated cancerous flesh. Through this celebration, she finds a kind of freedom that is not limited by her physical body. She carries her scars proudly like a splendid tiara. This film is the solemnisation of her freedom."

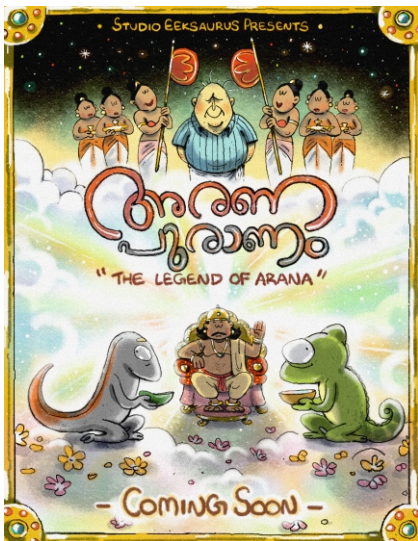
Unicorn Lady is Paul's graduation film sponsored by Studio Eeksauros, where she is currently interning as well. "Our whole team is excited and thankful for this selection. This recognition inspires us to keep making amazing animated films," she expresses

GAMUSA BY MAYA ACADEMY OF ADVANCED CREATIVITY (MAAC) [LIVE ACTION CATEGORY]

Literally translated, the film's name means 'something to wipe the body with' (Go=body, musa=to wipe). However, interpreting the word *gamosa* as a towel is misleading. The word *gamosa* is derived from the Kamrupi word *gamsaw*, the cloth used to cover the Bhagavad Purana at the altar.

"This incredible achievement showcases the extraordinary creativity, passion, and storytelling prowess of our brilliant students from MAAC. We couldn't be prouder of their remarkable success," says Pravir Arora, the chief business officer of Aptech Limited Industry Connect and Alliances, of which MAAC is a part.

Organised by Tokyo Broadcasting System Holdings (TBS Japan), the awards highlight the creativity of talented creators across Asia, with regional contests determining the finalists who compete for the GRAND Awards





Competition Categories

**Student Films - Student Showreels - Insta Reels
Professional Films - Ad Films**

Last Date For Entries : 30TH September 2024



Awards of
Excellence



International
Animation
Day



Workshops -
Behind the
Scene



Master
Classes



Women
Creators
Program



Monthly CG
Meetup

www.asifaindia.com



KOLKATA'S LARGEST ANIMATION STUDIO.....

In the vibrant city of Kolkata, a group of ten visionary artists and storytellers came together in October 2012, driven by their shared passion for animation. This creative collective, under the leadership of Mr. Niloy Kanti Biswas, a seasoned professional with over two decades in animation, media, and entertainment, embarked on a transformative journey. Their collaboration gave birth to Wackytoon Studio Pvt Ltd., a name that quickly became synonymous with artistic innovation and storytelling brilliance.

Wackytoon Studio's journey from its modest origins to industry prominence is marked by several groundbreaking milestones. Early collaborations, such as the highly successful "Chhota Bheem" with Green Gold Entertainment and their original IP, "Chota Startup," developed in partnership with Disney Hungama, established the studio as a beacon of creativity. The collaboration on "Honey Bunny Ka Jholmaal" with Sony Yay further cemented their reputation, showcasing their ability to produce engaging and high-quality animation.



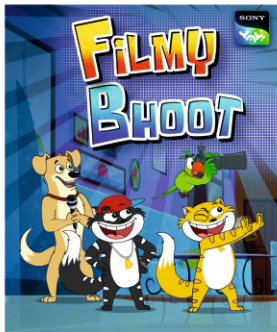
Chhota Startup



NILOY KANTI BISWAS

The creative direction of Subrato Ghosh played a crucial role in "Honey Bunny Ka Jholmaal," with his innovative vision bringing the series to life and resonating deeply with young adults. Mr. Biswas acknowledges, "The success of 'Honey Bunny Ka Jholmaal' was significantly driven by Subrato Ghosh's creative direction. His meticulous attention to detail and imaginative approach made it a beloved series on Sony Yay." Wackytoon Studio's commitment to excellence has garnered numerous accolades, including prestigious awards from the 24th Digicon6 ASIA and a notable nomination at the London International Animation Festival 2023. These honors reflect their dedication to pushing the boundaries of animation and storytelling. Wackytoon Studio is committed to creating original intellectual properties (IPs) that highlight their creative prowess. "Chota Startup," one of their flagship IPs, exemplifies their ability to produce engaging and thought-provoking content. By nurturing their original IPs, Wackytoon Studio maintains a distinctive voice in the global market.

Strategic collaborations with industry giants like Disney, Netflix, and Amazon Prime amplify Wackytoon Studio's reach and impact. These partnerships provide opportunities to work on diverse projects, each presenting new challenges and growth prospects. By aligning with leading industry players, Wackytoon Studio remains at the cutting edge of animation, continually pushing creative boundaries. At the core of Wackytoon Studio's success is their relentless pursuit of innovation. Embracing cutting-edge animation technologies and techniques, the studio consistently sets new benchmarks in the industry. Their investment in research and development ensures that each project is both visually stunning and technically advanced. Adaptability also plays a crucial role in their success. Whether creating content for traditional television, streaming platforms, or digital media, Wackytoon Studio excels in tailoring their creative approach to suit diverse audiences and technical requirements. This versatility allows them to resonate with viewers across various mediums.





Prakash Moorthy receiving Ram Mohan Award for Excellence in Animation

Honouring legacy and innovation

Ann Awards celebrate Indian animation's pioneers and emerging talents

The fourth edition of Animation Xpress' Ann Awards in 2023 was met with overwhelming enthusiasm, solidifying its position as India's premier full-scale animation awards. These awards not only aim to recognise and set benchmarks for the Indian animation industry but also to honour the contributions of the pioneers who have shaped its legacy.

In keeping with this commitment, Animation Xpress, has instituted two special "In Memoriam" awards to pay tribute to these industry stalwarts. The first is the Ram Mohan Award for Excellence in Animation, introduced in 2022, in collaboration with Graphiti Multimedia, to honour the late Padma Shri Ram Mohan, widely regarded as the father of Indian animation. The second, the Arnab Chaudhuri Director's Award, was introduced in 2021 to commemorate the late Arnab Chaudhuri, a visionary who placed Indian animation on the global map.

As we approach the fifth edition of the Animation & More Summit and Ann Awards, it's important to reflect on the journey and significance of these two awards, which continue to inspire new generations by highlighting the indelible contributions of these late artists.

RAM MOHAN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ANIMATION

"Ram Mohan Sir is an iconic figure," says Graphiti Multimedia co-founder and COO Munjal B. Shroff. "He was not only a legendary

artist and mentor but also an institution in himself. He groomed so many skilled artists who in turn have spawned the Indian animation industry as we know it today. He created so many characters that we still watch, love and adore. Many artists leave behind an inspiring body of work but few leave behind a vibrant and thriving industry that today employs lakhs of artists. Such is his legacy."

The Ram Mohan Award honours professionals who have made significant contributions to the industry. In 2022, this award was presented to veteran animation film designer Dhimant Vyas, recognising his lifelong dedication to the craft. The award was presented in the presence of Ram Mohan's family, including his wife, Dr. Sheila Rao, and his son, Kartick Mohan, along with Graphiti Multimedia co-founder and CEO Tilak Shetty and Shroff, and AnimationXpress founder Anil Wanvari.

In 2023, the award was given to Prakash Moorthy, a multifaceted artist and educator known for his contributions to animation, filmmaking, and production design. "It is not often that one receives an award associated with such an incredible pioneer as Padma Shri Ram Mohan," Moorthy had remarked. "I am honoured, humbled, and incredibly proud."



Gaurav Pati and Neeraja Raj receiving Arnab Chaudhuri Director's Award

ARNAB CHAUDHURI DIRECTOR'S AWARD

The Arnab Chaudhuri Director's Award recognises directors whose work demonstrates inspiring inventiveness and pushes the boundaries of storytelling and filmmaking. The award is divided into two sub-categories:

The Arnab Chaudhuri Animation Ace Award: For directors making their mark with boundary-pushing work that showcases a unique creative voice.

The Arnab Chaudhuri Young Ace Award: For student directors who demonstrate innovative creative originality.

Since its inception, the Arnab Chaudhuri Young Ace Award has recognised promising student directors like Sovan Dutta (SRFTI), Balaram J (National Institute of Design), Pivari Kejriwal (Srishti Institute of Art Design and Technology), and Gaurav Pati (NID).

The 2023 recipient, Pati, expressed his admiration for Arnab Chaudhuri's legacy: "Arnab is someone I did not have the privilege to work with, but we know him very well at NID through his work. We have always admired it and it has been of huge inspiration. Getting this award is a huge honour and it is a very big responsibility, as Arnab has achieved so much in his career. We can only take it forward and make Indian animation what he dreamt it to be."

The Arnab Chaudhuri Animation Ace Award has been awarded to directors like Krishna Chandran A. Nair (2021), Upamanyu Bhattacharya (2022), and Neeraja Raj (2023). Raj, a film director, writer, and animator, has worked with top animation companies such as Disney Animation and Aardman Animations.

The winners of the Arnab Chaudhuri Animation Ace Awards were chosen by a distinguished panel of jury members, including Art Design and Technology educator Nina Sabnani; The Walt Disney Company Animation, Media Networks Europe & Africa Original Programming VP Orion Ross; MG University St Joseph's College of Communication academic chairman Moorthy; filmmaker, animator & UCLAN part time animation lecturer Pete Bishop, On Air Promos creative director Rob Middleton; Ashima Avasthi and AnimationXpress.com founder Anil Wanvari.

Along with the trophy, the winners received a cash prize, sponsored by Ashima Avasthi, Vaibhav Studios, and Animation Xpress. Moving forward, the award will open entries to all Asian countries.

As we prepare for the fifth edition of the Animation & More Summit and Ann Awards, we reflect on the journey of these awards and the indelible mark left by the late Ram Mohan and Arnab Chaudhuri on the Indian animation industry. The heartfelt tributes from the guests and family members at the Ann Awards painted a vivid picture of their impactful lives and lasting legacies.



Looking back at Ann Awards 2023: Honouring Indian animation excellence

Celebrating all things animation

Animation Xpress culminates each edition of the Animation & More (AM) Summit with the prestigious Ann Awards—a grand gala that unites students and the industry’s most esteemed professionals to celebrate and honour exceptional talent within the Indian animation sector. The fourth edition of the AM Summit and Ann Awards drew to a close on 13 September 2023, marking yet another milestone in the industry’s journey.

As we gear up for the fifth edition, where the giants of the animation world will once again come together under one roof, we take a moment to reflect on last year’s memorable Ann Awards.

The AM Summit 2023 and Ann Awards were proudly powered by 88 Pictures and co-powered by Zebu Animation. Autodesk served as the creative technology partner while Powerkids Entertainment took on the role of lanyard and badges partner. The event was further supported by our associate partners, Karco, ARK Infosolutions, and Moho. The support partners of the event were ETV Bal Bharat, Sony YAY!, Wacom, Eizo, Reliance Animation, Appu Series, and Huion, with DigiCon6 Asia being the event’s festival partner.

The jury for the Ann awards included: Charuvi Design Labs founder/director Charuvi P. Agrawal, CAKE production VP Ciara Breslin, Joan Vogelesang Consultants consultant Joan Vogelesang, Parle Products senior category head Krishnarao Buddha, Saffron studio director Prabhakar Sambandan, MPC (Technicolor Creative Studio, India) creative director – VFX Rajarajan Ramakrishnan, Paperboat Design Studios founder and chairman Soumitro Ranade, Reliance Animation CEO Tejonidhi Bhandare, and AnimationXpress founder, chairman, editor-in-chief Anil NM Wanvari.

Here’s the complete list of the winners of Ann Awards 2023

DIGITAL & OTT

Best Animated Digital Series – 2D
Varsity Junior by Zerodha Broking

Best Animated Digital Series – 3D
Gremlins – Secrets of the Mogwai by 88 Pictures

Best Use of Animation in a Music Video
Aata Senasaata by Plangle Studio

Best Animated Short Film
Bandits of Golak by 88 Pictures

Best Animated Full Length Feature Film
Peter Pan: The Quest For Never Book by Powerkids

LICENSING & MERCHANDISING

Best Animated Character Merchandise
Chhota Bheem & Funskool Association

from Green Gold Animation

Best Use of Leveraging a Character for Brand Marketing
Chhota Bheem – Bum Tum Association from Green Gold Animation

Best Licensed Animated Series Programme
The Jungle Book Franchise from



Powerkids Entertainment

MEDIA ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

Best Channel Packaging
Sony YAY! Rebrand by Sony YAY!

Best Digital Campaign for an Animated Series
The Quiz Time – Spongebob Squarepants by ETV Bal Bharat

Best Experiential Marketing
Olly's World by Tavrohi Animations

Best Use of Animated Character in a Brand TVC
IPL – Simpoor Singh by Tavrohi Animations

Best Animated Brand Film
Lion and Goat by Tavrohi Animations
Star Mush Detector by Paperboat Design Studios

Best Brand Collaboration
When Chai Met Toast Concert and Van Heusen in Partynite from Gamitronics

Best Innovative Campaign
Baahubali 1 & 2 – Stop Motion by Shemaroo Entertainment

Best Promo
Baahubali 1 & 2 – Stop Motion by Shemaroo Entertainment

PROGRAMMING

Best 2D Animated Series
PaJaMa from Toonz Media Group
Kanha – Yudh Ke Ladoo from Viacom 18 Media (Nickelodeon)

Best 3D animated series
Pffirates from philmCGI
Dragonero: Tales Of Paladins Season #1 from Powerkids Entertainment
Best Preschool Show
Gogo Bus by One Take Media Co.

Best Animated Short Film
The Endless Night by Arijit Ghosh

Best Animated Full Length Feature Film
My Fairy Troublemaker by philmCGI

TECHNICAL

Best Animated Project in Metaverse
Gujarat Titans Metaverse by Tavrohi Animations

Best Music Composer
HappyVerse Song from Sony YAY!

Best Title Song
Abhimanyu from Viacom18 Media (Nickelodeon)

Best Title Design
4AM Worldwide Advertising for Mai

Best Character Design
Roro Aur Hero – Bhoot Mast Zabardast by IN10 Media Network

Tattva_118 by Paperboat Design Studios

Best Production Coordinator
Warner Bros. Discovery – Roohnaz Khan for Little Singham (2D+3D) / Chhota Bheem (2D+3D) / Titoo / Ekans / Baby Little Singham / Simmba / Bunty Billa Babban / Fukrey Boyzzz

Best Composer
philmCGI for The Karate Sheep

Best Modeller
Kumkum Varma / Frameboxx 2.0
Animation & Visual Effects/FC Road for Sword

Best Editing in an Animated Film
Cosmos Maya for Titoo Ki Vampirepanti

Best Screenplay Writer
Vishal TM for Off-Camera

Best Dialogue Writer
Pratilipi Comics for Love in Mussoorie
Nupur Sharma for Little Singham_
Naagsingham (Telefeature)

Best Producer
philmCGI for Pffirates

Best Director of an Animated TV Series
Dhananjay Bhopale from Symbiosys Entertainment

Best Director of a Digital Series
Shyam Wanare & Rajiv Sarkar for Varsity Junior

Best Director of an Animated Film

Dheeraj Berry from Cosmos Maya for Titoo Ki Vampirepanti

Best Animator – Male

Yogesh Rupani from 88 pictures for Bandits of Golak & Gremlins – Secrets of the Mogwai

TECHNOLOGY**Best Hardware Used in Animation**

Studio56
Shemaroo Entertainment

Best Software Used in Animation

Shemaroo Entertainment for Baahubali 1 & 2 – Stop Motion

Best Technical Innovation

Carmond Infinity for Jungle Marathon

PARTNERS/SERVICE**Best Effects**

Vinay A M / Mikros Animation for Kamp Korai: SpongeBob's Under Years

Best Character Design

4AM Worldwide Advertising for character design of Burpy

Best Storyboard Artist

Shresath Tuli from Reliance Animation Studio, for Baby Little Singham – Kite Fun

Best Concept Artist

Aditi Kiran from Zebu Animation Studios for Lego Dreamzzz: Trials of the Dream Chasers (Season 1/ Ep1 – Ep 10)

Best Composer

philmCGI for The Karate Sheep

Best Art Director

Venky Ramanan from Zebu Animation Studios for Lego Dreamzzz: Trials of the Dream Chasers (Season 1)

Best Producer

Ishani Priyamvada from Zebu Animation Studios for Lego Dreamzzz: Trials of the Dream Chasers (Season 1)

Best Animator – Male

Rakshith A from Mikros Animation for Star Trek: Prodigy

Best Preschool Show

Eureka from Assemblage Entertainment

Best Animated TVC

Puma Nitra: A New Era of Running by Famous Digital Studios

Best Animated Digital Series

Booba by Assemblage Entertainment

Best Animated Series

Mia and Me Season 4 / 100% Wolf: Legend of the Moonstone by Studio56 Animation
Miraculous: Tales of Ladybug & Cat Noir by Assemblage Entertainment

Best Animated Short Film

Alvaro: Reignition | Free Fire Tales from SDFX Studios (Company3 Method India)

Best Animated Full Length Feature Film

Mia Movie – The Hero of Centopia by Studio56 Best Partnered Animation Work
Super Giant Robot Brothers by Assemblage Entertainment

SOCIAL MEDIA**Best Reel With The Use of Animation**

Dim Buc Doo by Crazy Cub Animation Studio

Best Social Media Content – Animated

Teen Buddha by Green Gold Animation

Best Social Media Presence by an Animation Platform/Studio

Cosmos Maya for WowKidz

STUDENTS**Best Student 2D Film**

Sreeram J from Indian Institute of Art and Design

Best Student 3D Film

Joy Dust from Maya Academy of Advanced Creativity, MAAC

SPECIAL AWARDS**Best Syndicated Content**

Powerkids Entertainment for The Jungle Book Franchise

Best Use of Animation in a Public Service Message

Off-Camera from Videogyan Studios

India's Most Loved Animated Character

Chotta Bheem from Green Gold Animation

Popular Character (Global)

Mighty Little Bheem from Green Gold Animation

Best Bollywood Inspired Animated IP

Smashing Simmba from Reliance Animation Studios

Best Ensemble in an Animated Series

Cosmos Maya for Motu Patlu
Young Animator of The Year
Dolly Kela

Hall of Fame 2023

Arjun Madhavan

Contribution to the Animation Industry

Ashish Kulkarni

Animation Personality of the Year

Manoj Mishra, CEO, Powerkids Entertainment
Milind D. Shinde, founder & CEO, 88 Pictures

Best Indie Studio

Tavrohi Animations

Studio of the Year

philmCGI



AM SUMMIT 2024

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MANOJ MENON
Creative Director
Mikros Animation



MANOJ MISHRA
Founder & CEO
Powerkids Entertainment



MILIND D. SHINDE
Founder & CEO
88 Pictures



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CEO
Toonz Media Group



PHILIPPE GLUCKMAN
Creative Director, India
DNEG Animation



RAJAT OJHA
CEO
Gamitronics



SONAM SHEKHAWAT
Writer & Director

ESTEEMED SPEAKERS OF AM SUMMIT 2024



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Head of Studio
DNEG India



ABY JOHN
Co-founder & COO
88 Pictures



ADI SHAYAN
COO, International
Division
Cosmos Maya



ANIL NM WANVARI
Founder, Chairman
& Editor-in-Chief
AnimationXpress



ANAND BAID
Head of Feature
Animation, India
DNEG Animation



ANAND BHANUSHALI
Managing Director,
Co-founder
philmCGI



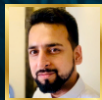
ANUPAM TRIPATHI
GM Marketing &
Media Head
Lenskart



ANUSHREE RAUTA
Partner
(Head of M&E Practice)
ANM Global



DAVID MCGAVRAN
CEO
Maxon



GAURAV MALHOTRA
Founder & CEO
Artha Animation



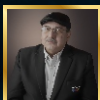
GAURI SRIRAM
Co-founder & Director
Studio56 Animation



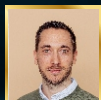
PRABHAKAR SAMBANDAN
Studio Director
Saffronix, India



ASHISH THAPAR
CEO
Hi-Tech Animation



BIREN GHOSE
MD- Asia Pacific &
Global ExCom Member
Technicolor Group



CARLES REINA
VP - Revenue
ElevenLabs



CHETAN HINGU
Head - Inside Sales
Strategy & Value Business
AMD



ARPIT DUBEY
Co-Founder & CEO
Kayra Animation



ARUN P A
Lighting Supervisor
DNEG



ARVIND SINGH JEENA
Co-founder &
Creative Director
Totem Creative



ASHISH KULKARNI
Chairman of AVGC-XR
Forum - FICCI
Founder - Punnaryug
Artvison

ESTEEMED SPEAKERS OF AM SUMMIT 2024



HANSA MONDAL
COO
Ssoftoons



JIGGY GEORGE
Founder & CEO
Dream Theatre



JULIA CHENG
Director - India / Head of Business
Development, Content Distribution
Muse Communication Co. Ltd



KANCHI KANANI
Creative Director
philmCGI



MANISH RAJORIA
Creator- Purple Turtle
Founder- Aadarsh
Technosoft Pvt. Ltd.



MANOJ MISHRA
Founder & CEO
Powerkids Entertainment



MANU KUMAR
Marketing & Corporate
Communications Head
Hero Electric Vehicles



MILIND D. SHINDE
Founder & CEO
88 Pictures



MOHIT SONI
CEO
Media & Entertainment
Skills Council



MUNJAL B. SHROFF
Founder
Graphiti Multimedia



NIYO KANTI BISWAS
CEO
Wackytoon Studio



PHILIPPE GLUCKMAN
Creative Director, India
DNEG Animation



DEVIKA PRABHU
Business Head
Kids & Infotainment
Disney Star



CHAITANYA CHINCHLIKAR
Vice President & CTO
Whistling Woods International



AASHISH MALL
Co-founder/Director
Paperboat Design Studios



RAJIV CHILAKA
Founder & CEO
Green Gold Animation



PRASAD AJGAONKAR
Founder & MD
iRealities



PRIYA REGÉ JAGGI
Associate Director - Marketing
McDonald's
(India - South & West)



ALOK SHARMA
Showrunner/Director/Filmmaker
Founder
Small Town Boys Studios



YASH THAKUR
Writer

ESTEEMED SPEAKERS OF AM SUMMIT 2024



RAKESH PATIL
Co-founder & Global
VP Production
88 Pictures



REJY JOSE
Partner Relations Head
Toonz Media Group



SARATH BHOOSHAN
Founder & CEO
Bhooshan's Junior



SUJOY ROY BARDHAN
Head
Marketing, OAP, L&M
Sony YAY!



SRINIVAS RAJU
CEO
Hornbill Studios



SHAKIR EBRAHIM
Founder &
Chief Storyteller
Bisbo



SHIVANGI RANAWAT
Co-founder & Producer
Ekabhuya Animation



RAMESH BABU PYLA
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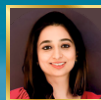
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