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VOLUME-14

ISSUE - 03

ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)

November 2021

Rs. 10

Short films scale new heights during pandemic

Alwin Benjamin Soji

BENGALURU: Short films are a joy to watch. It could talk about an idea or bring up a moral through a video in a short duration. But the way the short films are made, changed during the pandemic. When earlier shoots happened outdoors, the pandemic forced budding directors and short filmmakers to stay at home and come up with their ideas. This was challenging for some directors. Today, let's look at the experiences of budding short filmmakers and the challenges they faced in producing the films during the pandemic.

Pranav Shriram, who is the founder of content creation and production page called "Todays Adda" said, "Two short films by the page were shot during the pandemic. One was set in outdoor settings while the other one was shot fully indoors. The film Roommates had a storyline that required outdoor settings while the second short film "The Art of Starting Over" was shot in the wake of COVID-19. Hence, the whole short film had to be shot indoors." He added that the post-production of Roommates was more challenging than that of The Art of Starting Over because he had to sync the camera work and cinematography that he had in mind for the film.

Romit Majumdar, the founder of Camera7 which is a production house and YouTube channel, said that the pandemic did bring a lot of change to his shooting



Roommates poster

habits. He said that the scripting also needed to be changed so that it would sync well with interior shoots.

He said, "Mainly for me, the shots that needed to show crowded places were becoming difficult. Apart from this, the scripting needed a lot of change. The script had to be changed as per the interior shoots as going out and shooting was becoming difficult. Apart from this, the shooting was getting delayed due to crew members contracting COVID-19. The dates for the release of short films were getting delayed as the shoot was not being completed on time."

"These were the problems that I faced when it came to shooting short films for my channel. On the other side, my freelance work was getting affected during the pandemic. One client gave an advance for the shoot but that has not been completed yet, as the

client is stuck with his funding."

When asked about the experience of shooting films during the pandemic, he said, "This pandemic taught me that for a shoot, you don't always need to go out or have fancy settings. You can bring out a thousand ideas from just inside a room. I feel the work was more hectic when shoots were happening before the pandemic. During the pandemic, the work seemed to be less hectic as scripts were made as per the indoor shoots." He added that he feels good that a lot of short films were made on the topic of Mental Health. He is also working on a short film that deals with mental health problems that were faced by people during the pandemic. He takes into account the food delivery partners, the front-line workers, the homemakers, and many more.

Siddharth Chaturvedi, who has earlier worked with Camera7 and is also associated with the YouTube channel "With The Flow" said, "I have been associated with short films many times in my life. I have experienced both making short films before the pandemic and during the pandemic."

He said that the experience was altogether different. While shooting



Door Bell Poster

Romit Majumdar

films outside, it was a whole different experience. Going to places for shoots used to be full of excitement. He also said that even though there was the trouble of carrying all the equipment to the places of shoots, but that experience was worth it. He recollected being part of a short film titled 'When it feels good', that was shot fully outdoors. "The short-fims during the pandemic were pretty different for me. They were either bound by boundaries that we could not cross or were solely based on zoom calls or Google Meet, where we had to record while being on the call. That was also a different kind of an

experience," he added. "I am someone who has handled the camera, who has been part of short films. I have held various roles in short films. If my personal experiences have to be taken into consideration, I am glad that places are opening up because the experience of going out and shooting is something else. Yes, the equipment and production remains the same, but outdoor shooting is something that cannot be replaced. Shooting films during the pandemic was difficult for me and I am looking forward to being part of more short film projects in the future."

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"A thousand ideas can be conveyed by just shooting from inside a room. That's what this pandemic has taught me."
- Romit Majumdar , Founder of Camera7

Over-the-top (OTT) platforms witness an increase in viewership during the Covid-19 lockdown in India

Sudarshani

BENGALURU: Over-the-top platforms were growing popular well before the Covid-19 pandemic began as a section of the Indian audience started watching several popular series. With theatres closed and TV shows ceased production albeit temporarily, viewership of OTT platforms witnessed an increase, due to the availability of diverse content and user-friendliness of the streaming platforms.

Due to the nationwide lockdown imposed last year to control the spread of the coronavirus, many turned to OTT platforms such as Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, Disney+ Hotstar, Zee5, Voot, SonyLiv, etc for entertainment. The first OTT platform in India was by Reliance Entertainment in 2008, called BIGFlix. Two years later in 2010, Digivive launched the country's first OTT mobile application, nexGTV. The most preferred content to watch on OTT platforms was 'Web Series' and many Indians preferred watching regional content on these streaming sites. With the rise of OTT viewership during the lockdown last year, small screens on mobile devices threatened the film theatre industry. Theatre owners were worried that the viewers would not come to theatres post-pandemic as OTT platforms provided a variety of content that could be watched at the comfort of one's home.

OTT platforms' viewership increased during the pandemic and has led to a change in the viewers' watching habits. A study in 2021, suggested that the rise of OTT viewership would not affect the theatre business and that viewers were willing to experience films on the big screen in the post-pandemic era. Viewers in the same survey agreed that they would watch films both on OTT platforms and theatres. And many viewers said that they were open to a monthly or yearly subscription to film theatres similar to the streaming platforms. In a report titled 'Entertainment goes



Representational Image

online' by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), the viewers of OTT platforms were categorised into three categories: 'Traditionalists', who consume entertainment on traditional platforms like radio, TV, and theatres. The second category of OTT viewers was 'OTT Experimenter', who use both traditional media and new media platforms to consume content. 'Early Adopter' is the third category. People in this category are those who primarily use streaming platforms. "Before the Covid-19 pandemic, I would use Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and other OTT platforms along with TV. But with the lockdown in India, many TV channels had to broadcast older episodes, which made me try out different websites such as VOOT, Zee5 or SonyLiv. My screen time has gone up as I would consume content on my phone for two to three hours, and post-pandemic my screen time is at least five to six hours," said Shelvina B, a resident of Bidar. She further added that she now prefers to get her daily dose of entertainment from these OTT platforms instead of TV.

"TV has five minutes of content and ten minutes of an ad break which disrupts the continuity of the show I'm watching. So I like to watch web

series or movies on Netflix or Prime since they are ad-free," she said.

Anjali Gupta, a third-year medical student from Bidar Institute of Medical Sciences (BRIMS) said, "My screen time didn't increase during the lockdown as my parents hate it when my siblings and I spend a lot of time on our phones. But with nothing new on TV, my only source of entertainment during the lockdown was OTT." She also said that since there was nothing else to do during the lockdown last year, she binge-watched a lot of OTT shows.

Gulabo Sitabo starring Amitabh Bachchan and Ayushman Khurrana was one of the first films to be released directly on Amazon Prime Video, and Dil Bechara starring late actor Sushant Singh Rajput and Sanjana Sanghi was released on Disney+Hotstar. Rashmi Rocket starring Tapsee Pannu and Priyanshu Painyuli, Sanya Malhotra and Abhimanyu Dassani's Meenakshi Sundareshwar and many others followed the suit.

"Ever since the lockdown, my whole schedule for the day has completely changed. As I had all the time for myself, I spent most of my time, consuming entertainment. The frequency of watching movies increased and daily binge-watching Netflix series skyrocketed. Only recently have I got me out of letting

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"TV has five minutes of content and ten minutes of an ad break, this disrupts the continuity of the show I'm watching. So I like to watch web series or movies on Netflix or Prime since they are ad-free." - Shelvina B.

OTT platforms consume almost my whole day. I spent a lot of time on OTT entertainment than I ever had," shared Ajay Bharathi, a resident of Vishakapatnam. At least 35.32 crore Indians used OTT platforms to watch films and TV shows during the last year. This data was revealed by the Ormax OTT Audience Report, 2021. The

study was conducted among 12,000 urban and rural Indians. The Indian OTT market, according to the BCG's report called 'Entertainment Goes Online' is estimated to reach \$5 billion in size in the next two years. As per Statista, Indian OTT industry is currently at \$1.5 billion and is expected to reach \$12.5 billion by 2030.

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Experiments in M-town during the crisis

Anjali Ram

KERALA: After the arrival of the global coronavirus pandemic, like every other film industry in India, the Malayalam film industry too has been facing hurdles. Shooting, screening, production, distribution everything had to be paused when the government imposed the lockdown and rolled out COVID-19 protocols. The number of future projects nosedived as the revenue affected the entertainment industry. After the first wave, even when the government allowed the entertainment industry to work with a minimal crew, the producers and filmmakers delayed the big-screen release. Notwithstanding the challenges arising out of the constraints like minimal crew, minimal tools, many movies were written and shot as experimental projects. ‘C U Soon’ is an experimental movie by Mahesh Narayanan starring Fahadh Faasil, Roshan Mathew, Darshana Rajendran in the lead roles that offered a new way of filmmaking. The whole movie was shot using an iPhone and foregoing the usual tools of cinematography. The film was conceived from ideation to the final production focussing on the dynamics of the OTT platform and the audience. The creative thinking and determination bore the fruit when the film lovers relished the movie. The film revolves around a man and a woman (played by Roshan Mathews and Darshana Rajendran) who meet through a dating app. The twists and turns the story traverses through is interwoven with the resolution of the mysterious past of the female character. “Be it the movie, ‘Santhoshathinte Onnam Rahasyam’ that was shot in a long take or ‘C U Soon’ or ‘Love’, all these movies have an



‘C U Soon’

interesting plot and were shot within the limitations of the pandemic. A desktop movie that uses gadgets or any user interface to a substantial degree and is widely accepted by the audience is a positive development according to film critics. “Movies like Joji and Aarkariyam also show how the pandemic had influenced the lifestyle of people through subtle elements,” said a film critic and a teacher from Chethana Institute Thrissur, Shaju T U. The transition from the big screen to movie release over OTT platforms has created a new wave and has given a different perspective to many filmmakers and audiences. It’s seen as a survival medium for the movie makers for the space is created when the traditional screening platforms were shut, say film critics. He added, “There was always a fear in mind among those who were into movies about the television industry, but cinema is always a medium for a very vast audience. Television was once seen as a threat to the cinema and now people perceive it in the same way. Cinema is a community watching concept and it will continue

to thrive no matter what changes in the distribution eco-system occurs.” It wouldn’t be an easy return to the pre-pandemic viewing habits, he says. Also making movies as a group is not practical. So, production with minimum setting is coming into vogue and surviving the situation by adopting creative ways is the driving factor behind this change. Such movies released on OTT platforms are widely accepted by the audience as well. OTT platforms’ popularity soared during the pandemic when people started depending on them for leisure. He also mentions that it’s a positive thing as many films gained the space they deserved. Taking a look at the movies released during the pandemic, one notices that most of them were shot in just one or two locations like that of Irul, Arkariyam, Joji and many more. In the Malayalam Industry adapting experimental movies with the minimal setting proved to be a blessing in disguise as the challenge of logistics prevailed as stated by a few directors. The Great Indian Kitchen is a movie that was released without any hype

back to plan b was the only option left at that time. There are pros and cons in this transition for those who are into movies. When it comes to big-budget films like ‘Marakkar’ or multi-starrer films, releasing it on OTT platforms will affect the big screen lovers who would want to enjoy the movie with the theatre experience. Not getting a satisfying profit through this will affect the producers as well.” ‘Love’ by Khalid Rahman is a psychological thriller and an experimental movie that was released on the TT platform. The movie was shot within an apartment as its main location and with a very minimal crew as actors. Rajisha Vijayan and Shine Tom Chacko played the lead role and as the name suggests it depicted layers of love between a couple. “For me the evolution of the Malayalam industry and the opportunity that it promises in terms of the encouragement to the experimental projects and finally the transition from big-screen to OTT platforms is amazing. Filmmakers and even the audience have evolved along with that. Most of the movies that were released from 2020 has the essence of creativity,” said Chethan Sindhu Jayan, a filmmaker, and an associate director from Kerala. When many filmmakers started to think, write and produce the movies in a single location or with minimal characters, the movie Santhoshathinte Onnam Rahasyam was shot fully in a moving car with two main characters and ninety per cent of the movie was captured within a single shot. It is also one of the movies that acknowledged pandemics with references to Masks, sanitisers and other things. The pandemic had influenced the mental health, human relationships along with the careers and social life of people and this film is a tale of a couple in conflict and the resolution of the same keeping the relationship intact. The director Don Palathara recorded the whole movie in a single shot capturing the amazing acting of Rima Kallingal and Jithin Puthenchery.

The New Indian Express

and created a wave among the Indian audience. It raised legitimate questions and called out the conservative feudal practices in the Indian family. It had an unexpected acceptance among the audience as it was released on a relatively less known online platform called Neestream. The story portrays an ambitious woman who gets married and lives a monotonous life performing daily drudgery in the kitchen in suffocation. Nimisha Sajayan and Suraj Venjanmoodu play the lead roles depicting the hard truth in a realistic way coupled with acting skills. The patriarchy, the crying in the silence of women are all shown in the movie by director JoeBaby. The main characters do not have a name and this is precisely to signify the universality of the oppressive conditions of thousands of women who have spent their lives in the kitchen subjugated by the archaic notions of the in-laws and families customs. Farzeen, a film critic from Kerala says, “OTT platforms were always present there as a plan B option in the entertainment industry. I think around the year 2013 came the OTT platform in the entertainment media; the Malayalam movie named grandmaster was the first movie to be released. So, when the pandemic hit the entertainment industry going



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Theatre or OTT platforms? Movie buffs opine

Megha Bhattacharjee

BENGALURU: Bollywood has always relied on a distribution chain that is dependent on theatres, as considerable revenue is accrued through this platform. However, due to the pandemic, all movie theatres shut down. Currently, it might not be prudent to declare that we are in post-pandemic times, yet the theatres are thrown open again and films are being premiered. Specific theatre releases are back as well. The first Bollywood film which was released after theatres opened up was Bell Bottom. Directed by Ranjit Tiwari and produced by Pooja Entertainment and Emmay Entertainment, the movie stars Akshay Kumar and was released in theatres and the OTT platform, Amazon Prime. Viewership of the movie included both the theatre-goers and Amazon Prime subscribers. Certain viewers were more inclined towards watching the film in the comfort of their homes.

“We watched it on Prime itself because going all the way to the theatre right now didn’t seem like the best idea,” said Subhobroto Roy, a resident of Bengaluru. “Covid is still not over and it’s much safer to watch the film indoors,” he further added. Another resident of Bengaluru, Mithun Roy, mentioned that the movie was not worth watching in theatres. “I would not spend extra money on watching Bell Bottom when I can just watch it on a prior subscription on Prime. It’s just more cost-



Bell Bottom Poster

Instagram

effective,” she further added. Some viewers thought that theatres made the film experience much better. “I loved watching the film on the big screen after so long,” said Ayush Dixit, a student residing

in Bengaluru. “It was a different experience altogether and felt almost nostalgic,” he further added. Some viewers also went on to compare the screening experience with OTT platforms. “It felt good to

watch a film in the theatres finally and I feel the movie must have felt better on the larger screen,” said Suraj Singh, a resident of Kanpur. “OTT platforms are convenient but they mostly provide you with a small screen and it just doesn’t feel the same as theatre,” he further added.

One of the major concerns people had before visiting the theatres was whether the Covid protocols were being maintained or not. “I was considering watching the film on Prime itself because I wasn’t sure if they were maintaining the necessary protocols in theatres, despite the guidelines,” said Shammi Khan, a resident of Aligarh. “Thankfully, when I went to watch the film, there was some SOP in place-like sanitization and temperature checking,” he further added. Another theatre-goer however had a different opinion. “Social distancing was not maintained at all as all the seats were booked,” said Abdul Azeem, a resident of Bengaluru. “This is a major Covid protocol that should have been followed at all costs,” he further added.

As theatres opened up, cinema lovers ran to the big screen and theatre owners were finally making a profit. Priya Cinema, which is an iconic film theatre in Kolkata has had multiple movie buffs return with the resuming of cinema screenings. Arijit Dutta, owner

of the theatre said that people are slowly returning to the cinema hall because of the flattening Covid curve and the availability of vaccines. Cinema lovers and filmmakers have their opinions on theatres opening up as well. “I think it’s great that film theatres are finally opening up and people can watch films on bigger screens,” said Chethan Sindhu Jayan, a filmmaker from Bengaluru. “OTT platforms may be good for art films but I think theatre screens are way better for blockbuster action films,” he further added. Another cinema critic and filmmaker, Aman S. Raju mentioned as well that Bell Bottom as a film was not worth watching in theatres. “I understand it’s an action film and it might look better on a bigger screen, but the storyline is just not worth the risk of watching it in theatres,” he said. “It’s a one time watch, and when OTT platforms exist, there’s no point in watching this film offline,” he further added. As for revenue collected, certain theatres made good profit whereas some were not that successful. “I think we did not have so many people come in for Bell Bottom because there’s more craze for Hollywood films shown on big screens rather than Bollywood,” said Pratima Kaushik, an employee of Royal Meenakshi Mall, Cinepolis. “I, myself, have watched the film on Prime because it is way cheaper,” she further added.



Bell Bottom Poster

IMDb



Bell Bottom Poster

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Arijit Dutta

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Pandemic hikes the OTT viewership among Sr. citizens

Worinphi Ronra Shimray

BENGALURU: The pandemic caused widespread devastation around the world. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, people were forced to stay indoors, which offered an ideal setting for online activity and television consumption. We live in a time when technology, particularly the media and broadcasting industries is so advanced.

OTT platform material is currently recognized as an even better source of entertainment than television, which was once our only source of entertainment. Movies are rapidly evolving, and an increasing number of people enjoy viewing them. However, individuals have different perceptions of watching cinemas across different platforms. Some people prefer to go to the theatres, while others prefer to watch movies at home. Because of the lockdown, the theatres were closed and most people, including the older generation, shifted to the OTT platform.

Although this platform existed before the pandemic, it has seen an increase in viewership as a result of lockdown. Over-the-top platforms are web-based services that provide high-definition (HD) video and audio streaming content. Once a subscription is paid, anyone can access high-quality content without ads. OTT is also quite reasonable because it could

be viewed over a cheap internet connection without the need for a traditional broadcast or cable video infrastructure. OTT Platforms grew in popularity throughout the pandemic, and they played an important role in the information revolution and progress.

According to a few reports, Bollywood movies and cricket are most widely watched on OTT platforms In India Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar, and other OTT platforms are becoming increasingly popular. People are subscribing to streaming channels in greater numbers as they seek out more on-demand entertainment.

According to the 'State of Seniors' research, Amazon Prime is used by more than 65.7 per cent of senior citizens in India, followed by Netflix. "I never thought of getting an Amazon firestick because I don't watch TV a lot. However, during the pandemic my son convinced me to buy it as I was at home without much work; and now my husband and I are using it more than anyone else in the house," said Julie, a 62-year-old housewife.

According to The Mint, the video OTT market in India is dominated by Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, both holding a 20% share, followed by Disney+ and Hotstar at 17%, ZEE5 at 9%, and SonyLIV and ALTBalaji at 4% each. "I stopped watching television two-three years ago. Now I mostly watch videos on YouTube.



Representational Image

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And sometimes I even watch television shows on applications like SonyLiv or Amazon Prime Video. And since the lockdown, I have been consuming a lot of content on streaming platforms and it's more convenient to watch it here rather than on cable," said Shantamma, a 45-year-old high school teacher from Bidar. "I prefer going to the movies, and whenever a new film comes

out, my husband usually takes me and the kids. We couldn't go out because of the pandemic. My youngest daughter downloaded Netflix on my phone. And I've become accustomed to it. It's quite convenient, and old movies are also available; the video quality is also quite clear and enjoyable to view; it's also reasonably priced, user-friendly, and provides a variety of choices. We can also share a

screen so that each person can view their movie whenever they want," said Mankhaw Wangsa, a 50 years old homemaker. 'State of Seniors' survey found that over 65.7 per cent of elderly citizens interviewed said that they use Amazon Prime for entertainment followed by Netflix. News channels and YouTube were the third and fourth most-viewed platforms by them.



Mankhaw and her husband Sompha

Junlem Wangsa

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Mental health representation finds more space post-Covid

Anna Mariam Ittyerah

BENGALURU: The lockdown helped acknowledge the importance of mental health. While certain films and shows sometimes dramatize certain elements of a mental illness to support a screenplay, some fail to capture the reality of the problem with mental illness. On the bright side, movies and series being made on this theme reflect that a few filmmakers are creating an impact through their work. This gives the viewers a safe space and hopes to move past the prevalent social stigmas.

For a very long time, talking about mental health in itself was considered taboo and was frowned upon. But in recent times, things have changed for the better and the issue has been familiarised more through films like 'Words on Bathroom Walls', 'The King of Staten Island' and so on.

"A lot of films made before have revolved around mental disorders, illnesses etc. However, I don't think they did justice because of the over dramatization and one such example is 'Silver Linings Playbook'. I loved it, but films like 'Joker', 'Kumbalangi Nights', 'The King of Staten Island', and 'The Woman in the Window' are much better representations. People who have watched 'Kumbalangi Nights' will know about this one scene where they show the normalisation of men crying which is ground-breaking in the Malayalam film industry. So, when the pandemic hit, many people (fans) began seeking help thanks to these movies," said Chethan Sindhu Jayan, an assistant



'Home', Malayalam movie poster

director. He further added that the recent Malayalam film 'Home' released in 2021 is another great example of breaking the stigma surrounding mental health. The movie portrays counselling where the character played by Indrans is letting it all out during his therapy sessions.

"I do believe that the importance of mental health and therapy have increased post-pandemic. People have become more aware of it and part of the reason is due to the portrayal of mental health in series and movies. However, I don't think there is any single show or film that has portrayed mental health in its hundred per cent true manner but I could be wrong," said Bhavya Kavitha Subramanian, the social media head for Consilium, an

association under the Department of Psychology in St Joseph's College (Autonomous).

When asked more about the various TV shows that do a good job of depicting mental health she mentioned how the third season of 'Sex Education' showed Aimee going to Dr Jean Milburn for therapy was very realistic. "One show that we need to talk about when it comes to the wrong depiction of mental health is '13 Reasons Why'," she further added. Sidharth Sunil, a cinematographer shared his thoughts on the Malayalam movie 'Sunny' which recently was released in September this year on Amazon Prime.

"The plot revolves around just a single character who is dealing with depression throughout the

film. The loneliness is visualised very poignantly through the lens of Madhu Neelakandan (the cinematographer)."

When asked about the camera work, Sidharth mentioned that to keep the audience immersed in a character's journey, the filmmaker must sometimes visually dramatize a mental health issue. "For example, the Tamil movie '3' showed Dhanush's character having bipolar disorder and how he gets hallucinations of the hologram-like human figures which might not be the accurate visual representation, but it gives an eerie feeling of what the person is going through."

Assistant professor and therapist, Renie Anthony said that in the

finale of the show called 'You' Joe knows that something is wrong with him and he believes that his son Henry needs to be kept with healthy people so that he could grow up not to be like his father. "That portrayal is a good way of showing how individuals after the pandemic had some amount of self-awareness to know that something is wrong with them, and the right thing to do was to step out of that environment and do best for others around me," she added.

Renie also mentioned how the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic pushed many people towards self-reflection, wherein some people enjoyed it while others just dismissed it.



Netflix's 4th season 'You'

Instagram

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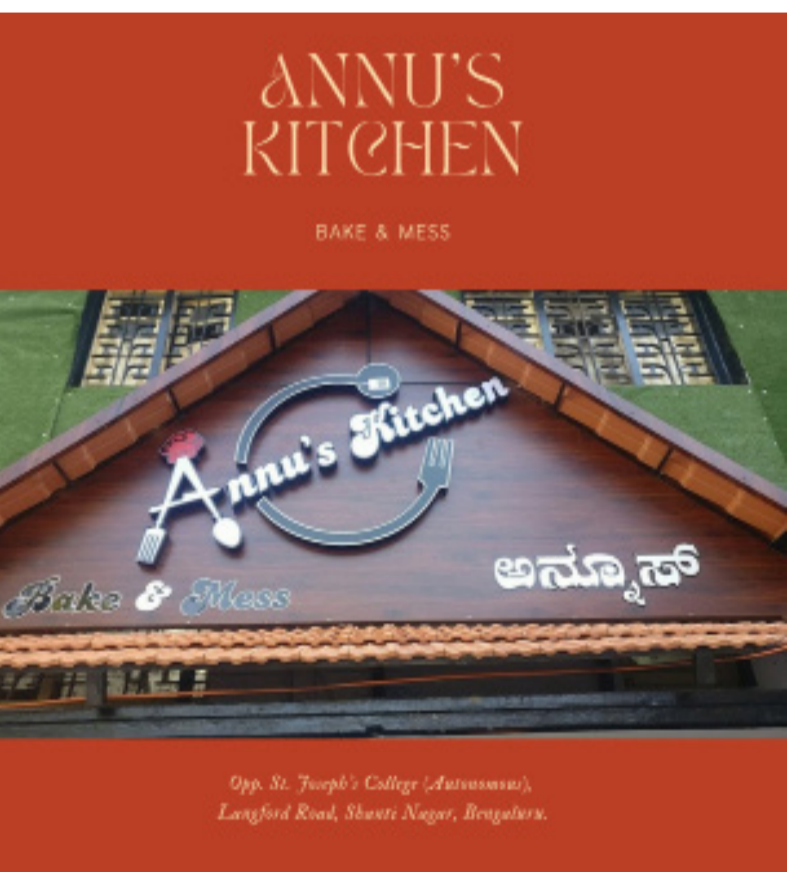


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"In order for the audience to invest in a character's journey, the filmmaker must sometimes visually dramatize a mental health issue."

- Sidharth Sunil

Delving into inspirations: How Mollywood film makers made feature films in 2021 out of real life incidents

Niranjan Damodaran

BENGALURU: Just as every other sector went through the period of crisis so also the film industry. While theatres were hit hard, technology helped creators to reach the audience through Over The Top (OTT) platforms. But with decline in COVID cases, creators were encouraged to release their films in theatres like how it was originally intended to. Interestingly, some Malayalam movies, much awaited and talked about ones, that were released in 2021 (in theatres and OTT platforms) have one feature in common; that they are based on some real incidents.

Nayattu (The Hunt)

Directed by Martin Prakkat, the movie was released online in April 2021. It tells the story of three police officers who are on the run after being accused for a murder and the system that tries to follow and track them down. Writer Shahi Kabeer, who is also in the police department, said in an interview that when he tried to talk to the people who were involved in the issue, they were “reluctant” in talking to him, let alone reveal the real incidents. The movie received acclaim from critics for its dark tone, performances and direction, while some critics were divided in their opinion of how the movie treated the subject matter and caste politics. The writer said as he did not receive the inputs or insights he was looking for, he constructed a story based on the main theme; where the police hunted the police. While discussions online emphasized on how the film’s portrayal of the underprivileged community was problematic, the creators justified the presentation citing how only during the elections the communities gain consideration.

Assistant Cinematographer Devu Narayanan said film makers should be given creative liberty. “Not all movies are fictional, but everything cannot be portrayed in a film. That is where a creator must enjoy creative liberty. That is



Nayattu

IMDb

essential,” she said.

Malik

One of the most anticipated films of the year, Malik, directed by Mahesh Narayanan, narrates the story of Sulaiman who fights for the betterment of the community who eventually becomes the leader of his coastal village. Narayanan, who is also the editor and writer of the film, has said the movie and the characters are fictional. But critics and audience were prompt in drawing similarities between the movie and the police shooting that occurred in Trivandrum’s Beemapally in 2009 that left 6 dead and 42 others injured. While the performances, score and cinematography received praise, critics were polarised on the film’s perspective of the real-life shooting. The movie focuses on Sulaiman’s actions and repercussions, and how crooked politics played a part in the shooting that is a cornerstone in the film. The name of the coastal area is also changed from Beemapally to Ramadapally.

Engineer and short-film maker Govinda Raj says Malik depicts

very strong imagery. “Every shot or every dialogue makes an impact. The audience is the final judge and if they find discrepancies between the real incident and the film, you cannot blame them as the incident involves politics and emotions,” he said.

Kurup

The eponymous movie is based on the most infamous fugitive in Kerala, Sukumara Kurup, who killed and burned an innocent who looked like him, to claim the insurance. Although the original Kurup was never caught, three movies have been made loosely based on his life: NH47 (released in 1984, directed by Baby), Pinneyum (released in 2016, directed by Adoor Gopalakrishnan) and Kurup directed by Srinath Rajendran. The lattermost was released in 2021 in theatres and had already created much hype with the cast and crew releasing posters and teasers. Prior to release, the movie found itself amid controversy for alleged ‘glorification’ of a dreaded criminal for commercial interests, and was called out for releasing merchandise

in his name. The family of the affected had raised their concerns about how the movie was treating the character, but was later satisfied after the director decided to premiere a show just for the family to assure them no glorification had taken place.

Athul Krishna, a media student and a film enthusiast, said the movie had heroic elements which he found problematic. “The creators said they wouldn’t glorify or celebrate the criminal fugitive. Even the son of the actual victim said there weren’t elements like that in the film. Although the film does show the crookedness of the ‘anti-hero’, they sure did add ‘mass’ BGMs and slow-motion shots,” he added.

Marakkar: Lion of the Arabian Sea

The much awaited Marakkar, directed by Priyadarshan, is based on the historic naval chief Kunjali Marakkar of Zamorin of the then

Malabar region. He led the princely state’s naval defence against the Portuguese invasion between the early and late 16th century. The film was originally scheduled to be released in August 2020, but was later deferred multiple times due to the pandemic. With many movies opting OTT platforms, the crew wavered between theatre and OTT, before finally deciding to release in theatres in December 2021. With a budget of over 100 crores, Marakkar is the most expensive movie in Malayalam.

Anjitha, a Communication student, opined that hype kills a film. “Enormous hype discourages the audience to some extent. People expect a lot and this burden of expectation is bad. Mohanlal’s much hyped ‘Odiyan’ suffered this predicament. I hope Marakkar is an exception,” she said. She added that she expects director Priyadarshan to change his narrative style as it is a historical epic.



Malik

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Kurup

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Korean Wave: The rise of K-dramas in OTT Platforms

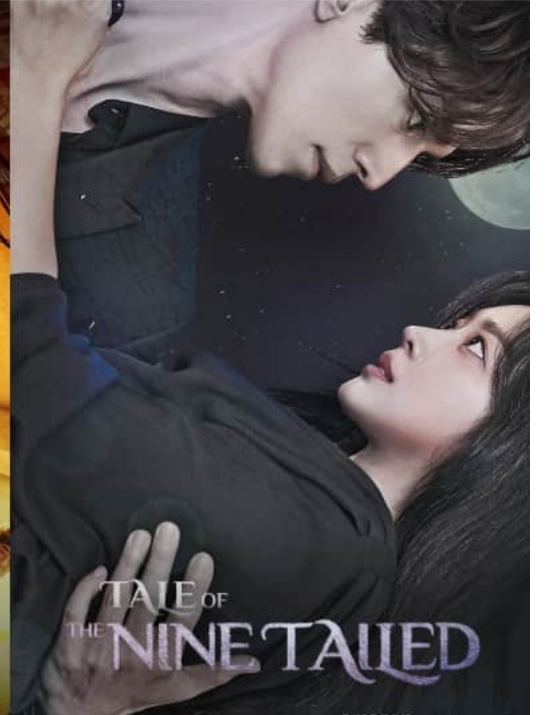
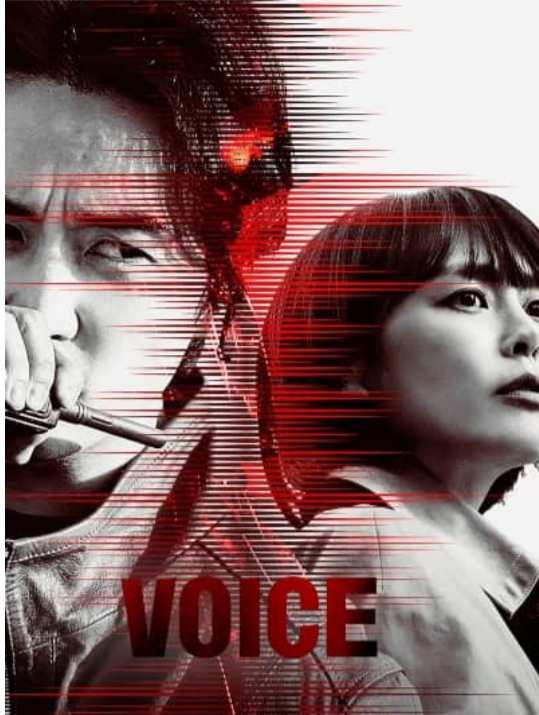
Godwin Emmanuel E

BENGALURU: Over the recent years in India, the word 'Hallyu', a term that stands for 'Flow of Korea', referring to the Korean Wave has witnessed a change in its usage and meaning. There are many industries in the Hallyu culture, namely, K-Pop (Korean pop music), K-dramas (Korean dramas), Webtoons (Korean comics), K-Movies (Korean movies), Kbeauty (Korean beauty), and computer games. Among all these Hallyu products, K-Pop and K-dramas have gained huge popularity in India. In the year 2016, K-dramas started arriving on Netflix and have seen an increase in the number of viewers since then. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck India, the viewing of Korean dramas saw an even bigger increase. Netflix India observed a growth of 370 percent in viewership of K-dramas in 2020.

The most popular in the year 2020 were "The King: Eternal Monarch", "Kingdom (S2)", "It's Okay to Not Be Okay" and the "Start-up". With many Indians watching this genre, MX player is offering K-dramas in two regional languages, Tamil and Telugu. The Korean drama, Squid Game (2021) which was released on Netflix on September 17, ranked number five on the top 10 titles on the streaming site. Netflix also shared that this series has been viewed via 111 million accounts worldwide. Korean Dramas are a fundamental part of the Hallyu wave and have been widely accepted by many Indian audiences. At the beginning of this wave in India, Korean Channels like KBS World were already broadcast in the North East region. Doordarshan aired K-dramas, Full House (2006), Jewel in the Palace (2008), and Emperor of the Sea (2008). Since then there has been a massive increase in the number of Korean shows.

"I have translated many Korean movies for Zee5, and it's been a very fun experience. Since the COVID-19 exposure, entertainment content has been online and translators are very important," said Hemavathi DM, an engineer, and a freelance Korean translator.

According to the Economic Times, Rakuten Viki, the Asian TV shows and movies streaming platform saw an increase in the Indian audience, and the language translation has grown in recent years. The pandemic has created a huge market for translation now". Neetha has worked on subtitles for Korean movies and has interviewed many



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Korean celebrities for magazines. She further added, "When translating the Korean language to English and other local Indian languages, it's important to add the right essence for the audience. As a translator, I feel so proud, to be building bridges between languages." According to a survey conducted by Statista, a business data platform in the year 2019, 24.4 percent of respondents considered K-dramas to be very popular in India. However, the largest share of respondents considered this to be either quite popular (33.6 percent) or only popular with some people (28 percent). In the year 2021, Squid Game and Hometown Cha Cha Cha turned to be the biggest hits in India. Jyoti Lawrence, Select Care Consultant at SAP Concur, told Communique, "The popularity of Squid Game is more than any other marketing technique you have seen on OTT platforms. It's the word of mouth that did the magic. As a K-drama fan, I would watch this drama because it's just another one for me. But

for other fans, it was a curiosity that got triggered after hearing from others or looking at all the snippets and memes that got them excited to watch the series. India is now a huge place for K-dramas." Steve D'cruz, a student told the Communique, "The Legend of the blue sea was the first I watched on Netflix and was during the pandemic. I was bored, and started

surfing Netflix and discovered it." There is a huge market now and the traffic has increased by 46% during the lockdown. Maheshwari Reddy, a student told, "I used to watch Korean dramas on illegal sites because no sites were streaming K-dramas but now, almost every OTT platforms have Korean content." When Amazon Prime Video released Oscar-winning

Korean movies, 'Parasite' and 'Minari' on their platform, there was an increasing demand for more content. With the booming interest in Korean dramas, Amazon Prime Video launched popular dramas like "Strangers from hell", "Taxi driver" and "True Beauty" on their service. In November, all four seasons of "Voice" and "Doctor" will be released.



Squid Game

Netflix

"I used to watch Korean dramas on illegal sites because there were no sites streaming K-dramas. But now, almost every OTT platform has Korean content."

- Maheshwari Reddy.

Anthologies: A series of disappointments?

Pavithra Prabhu

BENGALURU: The Crisis caused by the pandemic had left the coffers of the film industry severely affected. Indo-Asian News Service (IANS) recently released a report on the financial dip in the film industry. It revealed that the outdoor cinema and film shooting plummeted during the two years as well as the audience viewership. Productions were stopped abruptly with many crew members and actors testing positive, and the consequent loss of work in the film industry gave rise to various anthologies from different regional languages. They were produced by both independent and veteran filmmakers.

Anthologies are a collection of short films carrying a common theme. The crew and monetary requirement to produce an anthology are significantly lesser than that of producing a two or three-hour-long movie. Filmmakers and producers faced financial constraints and the production activities had to comply with the standard operating procedure for Covid-19.

In this scenario, India's OTT platforms witnessed a surge in the release of anthologies. "These anthologies are the by-product of the pandemic. Anthologies require a minimum crew and most of the time they are shot in one or two locations; so, it is the by-product of the pandemic. The Indian film industry



Paava Kathaigal

Netflix India

was obsessed with anthologies. For instance, the Malayalam film industry had an anthology called Aanum Pennum and so also the Tamil film industry which witnessed around three anthologies. I watched Kutti Story in the theatres," said Vivek Mysore, a film editor working for Deccan Herald.

OTT platforms approached reputed directors and writers who could produce short films that catered to a particular theme. Well-known directors like Mani Ratnam, Gautam Menon, Vetrimaran, and many others came together in a collaborative effort to produce

creatives from different backgrounds and possibly contribute to the art. "In Navarasa, the OTT platform, Netflix approached big names for the anthology. For example, we have Mani Ratnam producing it, and Priyadarshan, Gautam Menon as directors. Arvind Swami made a debut as director and also acted. You have experienced big names involved in the projects.

Anthologies are a different ball game. And Navarasa is an example of how experienced filmmakers haven't understood the format and how to impress the audience. Out of the 9 short films, only 1

or 2 were good. It was rightly criticised for taking 9 short films and conveying nothing. It is also because the veteran filmmakers have not reinvented themselves," expressed Vivek Mysore. He further added, "While watching Gautam Menon's short film in Navarasa, you can see that he is still stuck with the ideas that made them a sensation. His characters in romantic films look the same, the hero or the heroine. His concept of romance and the idea of love reminds you of those days when it was fresh. But now we don't see relationships or love in the same way. It has completely evolved out he seems to be stuck in the past."

Although the anthologies created hype, they fell short of the expectations they created. Anthologies released in the past year have been successful in marketing themselves. The OTT platforms pushed the anthologies as a novelty and brought in veterans who were solely streaming movies and series. Roshan N, a film journalist, pointed out that the feeling of lack of gratification from the audience came from the inconsistencies of the short films.

"Each short film failed to invoke

the same sense of satisfaction. This left the audience feeling dissatisfied even after watching an entire anthology," he added.

This leaves one to wonder about the scope for experimentation in the anthology genre. Filmmakers usually use the short film format to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and creativity. Kannada film director, Srinivas Kaushik expressed, "Any director can make at least one short film in his or her career. 20 years ago, directors would make one or two short films. They act more like a visiting card and a ticket into the film industry. Now anyone can make a short film using their mobile phone. There are various platforms where they can stream their films for an audience. There are more resources in the current day and age."

Experiments and the growth of a genre go hand in hand. "If any genre that does not have any potential for experiments, it meets its death. Take the western movies; thrillers, spy dramas or any historical film. You can't keep the genre alive without experiments. Anthologies have not been pushed to that extent. I think the industry is changing. People are getting acclimated to watching movies on OTT platforms," said Roshan N.

The boundaries for anthology scripts and production are ever-widening, provided they experiment and are successful in keeping an audience for the genre. The presence of platforms like short-film festivals, academic requirements of students to produce short films is creating new platforms for expansion.

OTT platforms that are willing to release anthologies present opportunities for future and veteran filmmakers to push the boundaries of the anthology format. It also allows filmmakers to produce more gratifying work for the audience.

Anthology filmmaking although an old concept is uncharted territory. Audiences have to await the arrival of new productions or take a chance as a filmmaker to invent.



Gautam Menon

Netflix India

"It was rightly criticised for taking 9 short films and conveying nothing. It is also because the veteran filmmakers have not reinvented themselves."

- Vivek Mysore, Film Critic, Deccan Herald.

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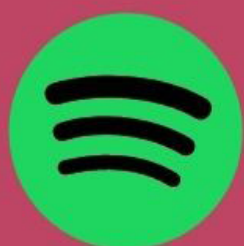
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