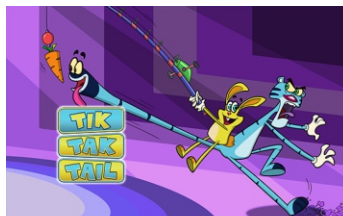


# SPARK

An AnimationXpress.com Special **Issue No. 2**

April 2019



## COSMOS

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WITH A CREATIVE EDGE

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Animation content

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Adding 50 half hours per month



# EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK



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AVAILABLE ON

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**DOCUBAY.COM**



**androidtv**

**firetv**

**ROKU**

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO PAGE NO. : 16 & 17

# SPARK

An AnimationXpress.com Special Issue No. 2

Part of IndianTelevision Dot Com Group



## Indian live action studios get animated!

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- Local animation gets a leg up
- Indian OTT: The originals gambit gains pace
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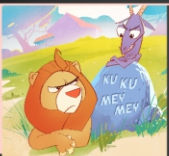
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Industry gears up for  
another busy MIPTV!

mip**tv**

Content has always been – and continues - to be the lifeblood of enjoyable and engaging entertainment. And that's why markets like MIPTV, MIPCOM and ATF (in Singapore) continue to be important as the world shrinks into a global village where programmers, creative talents, producers, and distributors congregate to look for the next big creative idea in video.

What's crashing the geographical, cultural and language boundaries is the spread of global streamers like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Apple TV and the soon to come Disney Plus. Additionally, local streamers in almost every region are also looking at expanding their footprint region-wide and some even worldwide.

And their maw for content, both catalogue and extremely edgy originals, continues to grow as they seek to feed the insatiable hunger of their millions of subscribers globally.

For long, four major studios have been the flagbearers of Indian animation. Now Green Gold, Toonz, Cosmos Maya and DQ Entertainment are about to get some company. TV producers with a track record of rolling out successful drama series are now haring into animation. This trend is tracked in our cover story on page 18 and also our cover page showcases animation projects from three live-

action studios.

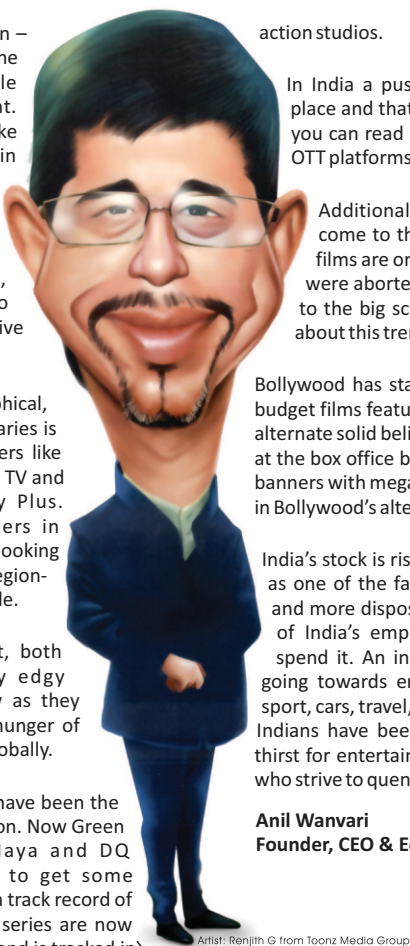
In India a push towards local originals is taking place and that is documented in the story which you can read on page 14. Both broadcasters and OTT platforms are abetting this trend.

Additionally, attempts to get audiences to come to theatres to watch animation feature films are once again being made. Previous tries were aborted and the few ones that did make it to the big screen bombed. You can read more about this trend on page 8.

Bollywood has started a new trend wherein smaller budget films featuring a new breed of actors but with alternate solid believable storylines are making a mark at the box office beating the collections of big budget banners with megastars. You can read about this trend in Bollywood's alternate storyline on page 25.

India's stock is rising globally and it is making a mark as one of the fastest growing economies. As more and more disposable income comes into the hands of India's employed, they will need avenues to spend it. An increasing amount of that money is going towards entertainment – television, movies, sport, cars, travel, eating out – and what have you – as Indians have been deprived of it for decades. This thirst for entertainment is going to benefit the many who strive to quench it. Indian or international.

**Anil Wanvari**  
Founder, CEO & Editor-in-Chief



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**Cover Images:**

**Left-** Contiloe Pictures' *Mahayodha Rama*

**Right-** Sphereorigins' *Kuku Mey Mey*

**Bottom right-** One Life Studios' *Kilkariyan*

# Asit Kumarr Modi: India's Chuck Lorre ventures out



## Neela Tele Films Way Forward...

With over 5000 episodes of original content produced for top Indian television channels including Sony Entertainment Television India (Sony Pictures Networks India), Colors (Viacom 18 Media), Star Plus (Star India) and SAB TV (Sony Pictures Networks India), Neela Tele Films has emerged as one of the leading IP and content creation studios in India.

Hardly any television enthusiast in India has escaped the waves made by its flagship show, *Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah* (TMKOC), the daily family comedy show that has dominated Indian television for over a decade.

## The Man with the Midas Touch

Asit Kumarr Modi, the founder and managing director, who has a great taste for stories with a unique ability for storytelling and catching the pulse of the audience, has been at the forefront of the evolution of his production house. The comedy genre being

his forte, his knack and insights have allowed Neela Tele Films to dish out quality entertainment for family audiences.

Modi has produced an array of shows like *Meri Biwi Wonderful* (an adaptation of English Classic Comedy *Bewitched*), *Yeh Duniya Hai Rangeen* (Comedy), *Humari Saas Leela* (Mother In Law and Daughter In Law Daily soap), *Sab Khelo Sab Jeeto* (Family Game show), *Krishnaben Khakhrawala* (Drama Series of Inspiring Women).



The compelling content it dishes out is designed for broadcast on all media platforms in India is well on its way to spread wings beyond the Indian subcontinent. In a bid to create progressive and thoughtful quality entertainment for family audiences, Neela Tele Films is also set to foray into the digital space.

## *Tarak Mehta ka Ooltah Chashma* (TMKOC)

The world's longest-running sitcom, *TMKOC* is also rocking at number one

position on Indian television with over 100 million views on digital alone. With over 2700 episodes, *TMKOC* is still going strong and has gone on to bag dozens of prestigious awards. The 22- minutes sitcom, is about the comic interplay between the multicultural residents of Gokuldhaam Society in their day-to-day lives, supplemented with social commentary, bringing alive the everyday life situations by characters who look like lovable people-next-door.

The dialogues and characters are very simple and relatable to the common man, each with their own quirks. Their problems are common but their solutions, unique and wacky. "Through our shows, we present a wholesome comedy within the framework of family values, simplicity and togetherness," says Modi.

"On top of this, we celebrate each festival with its own fervour and tastes, putting up grand celebrations and everyone coming together to enjoy the occasion irrespective of their religious and cultural beliefs,

showcasing the unity in diversity that India has to offer, Gokuldhaam Society itself representing a mini-India.," points out Modi.

Modi firmly believes that creating awareness through entertainment and laughter is the best way to bring about social change and is the best way to serve the nation. It is also one of the first nine nominees and the only TV serial that has been nominated by Indian Government's Clean India Mission on 2 October 2014 announced by PM Narendra Modi.



**Founder & MD Neela Tele Films**  
**Asit Kumarr Modi**

He further reveals that they also have a format of *TMKOC* ready with more than 250 stories from the 2700 episodes, which Neela Tele Films is ready to present to the world. The format is also open for distribution in different territories along with dubbing, character licensing, animation and merchandising rights for specific territories.

### **Foray into the animation space with *Taarak Mehta Ka Tapu Sena***

*Taarak Mehta Ka Tapu Sena* which is in the works, is a kid's series and will track the funny and innocent daily adventures of Tapu and his friends who live with their families in Gokuldhaam Society, where the residents have occasional problems that are sweet and hilarious rather than serious ones. The sublime thought behind the concept is Gokuldhaam is like Vrindavan and Tapu is like Krishna, who's loved by everyone.

In the new avatar, the company is all set to undertake new projects in the space of feature films, OTT content, animation series and interactive content in Hindi and other Indian languages. ♦♦

# Animated feature films rev up

Yugandhara Shete

**L**ights! Camera! Action! One often hears this common cue on live action film sets. But one is hearing that increasingly in Indian animation studio offices these days as more and more of them are foraying into the animated feature film space. An increasing number of locally created animated features are finding their way into theatres. And they are being funded with some reasonable P&A budgets.

“Animation as a genre needs to be established in Bollywood. And this will happen only if there are many hits and efforts are made to make this a reality.”

- Green Gold Animation  
Founder & CEO Rajiv Chilaka

“It’s great to see the appetite for Indian studios to produce full length animated features,” says an animation industry veteran. “Studios like UTV, Yash Raj, released films but they received a cold reception at the box office. And that dissuaded even a world class film maker like Karan Johar who kept one of his pet projects *Koochie Koochie Hota Hain* in the deep freezer.” Today, however, professional world class studios such as Green Gold, Cosmos Maya, DQ and other smaller studios are daring to take risks.

## Trend Setter

According to industry lobby outfit Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) latest entertainment industry report which released in March 2019, at the start of 2018, India had around 300 animation studios. Animation grew 10 per cent in 2018 to reach Rs 18.8 billion and by 2021; the animation segment is expected to reach a size of Rs 24.4 billion. Observers point out that the turning point for animated features came with the success of the animated feature *Chaar Sahibzaade* which chronicled the sacrifice that the four sons of Sikh leader Guru Gobind Singh made while battling Mughal invaders.

The latest release from Indian makers is the animated feature, *Goopi Gawaiyaa Bagha Bajaiya (GGBB)*, which is executed from the original story written by Upendra Kishore Ray Chowdhary and brought to the silver screen by Satyajit Ray as *Goopi Byne Baagha Byne*.

**Goopi Gawaiya Bagha Bajaiya**

Produced by the Children's Film Society of India (CFSI) in association with Karadi Tales, *GGBB* is directed by animator and educationist Shilpa Ranade, with the animation executed by Paperboat Animation Studios. Says Ranade: "The language of moving images is so strong and deep that it cuts all the barriers. Audiences abroad have asked if they could have the movie in their language."

"We need original storytelling that kids are going to watch today and five years later as well."

- Paperboat Animation Studios  
Co-founder & Chairman  
Soumitra Ranade

Another film that is set to hit the screens is Bengaluru based Native Puppets Animation Studio's *Misadventures of Coco & Inika*. The interesting combination of live-action and animation will help the creators grab attention from their desired target audience.

"The coming to life of Coco from being an inanimate object in Inika's world to becoming the hyper-cute cartoony baby elephant in to the real world is an engaging transformation," says Native Puppets Animation Studio founder Anand Baid.

In the case of animated films, the budget of global studios would average 20 to 30 times the budget for a typical Indian product. Due to this, even a movie such as *The Jungle Book*, which is India-based, is created by foreign animation houses as they have the budget required for carrying out the

required level of animation.



### **Hanuman vs Mahiravana**

But Green Gold Animation's *Hanuman Vs Mahiravana* is taking a page from the global biggies, as it has been made across five countries and involved various artists and studios from Japan, Australia, Mexico, India and USA. The movie also won the FICCI Frames BAF Award 2019 for Best Animated Film (Indian).

"We wanted this movie to inspire the next generation to feel proud about our heritage and enjoy this as much as they enjoy international features," highlights Green Gold Animation founder and CEO Rajiv Chilaka. With the international animation trend growing tremendously, Indian studios are upping their production quality to that of globally loved films.

### **First of its kind**

Another upcoming feature from Green Gold will see the popular animated character, Chhota Bheem in CGI stereoscopic 3D for the first time. Bheem will be seen travelling to China with his friends in the feature *Kung Fu Dhamaka*.

Keeping cultural and traditional values intact, independent filmmaker Ravi Shankar created *Punyakoti*, the first animated film in Sanskrit.



### Punyakoti

Apart from the concept, what makes the feature standout is its unique animation style inspired by Indian folk-art with a mix of traditional and digital animation techniques with more emphasis on the storytelling than on the technical prowess.

Instead of assigning the project to a single studio, the *Punyakoti* team opened the doors to the best animation talent around the world. Since there was a lot of constraint in the budget space, Shankar, determined to choose a different path, crowd funded the project, which went on to become one of the largest funded projects with over four million rupees collected through a crowd-funding platform in India.

The determination to bring something worthy to viewers has seen some really appreciated projects being created in India. Creators feel that relatable characters, engaging narrative, fresh music and overall good cinematic experience will bring the audience to theatres.

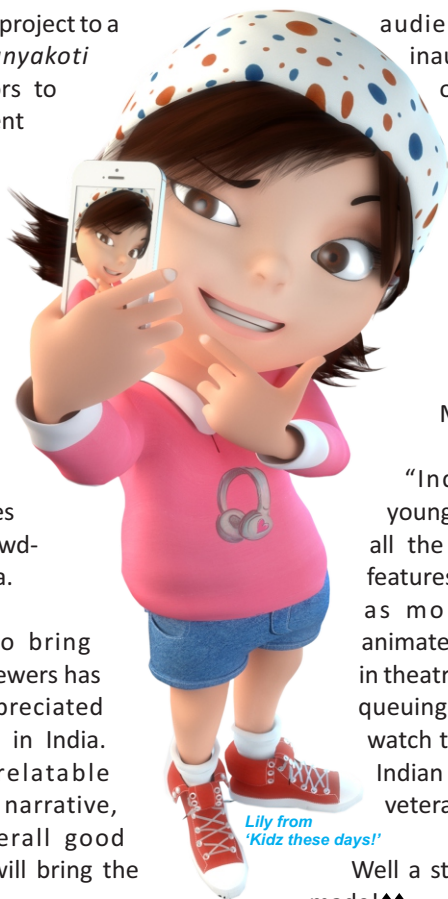
India being a multilingual country, the creators want to cater to even the regional population. One such studio is DP Animation Studio, which is working on a Marathi animated feature that will be released in multiple languages. Titled *Kidzz these days!*, the feature revolves around a nine year old girl Lily Madhav and her adventures in her native town during a vacation.

DP Animation Studio founder Dattaprasad Mete reveals: "I hope that the animated feature gets a better shelf life as it won't be too local to alienate the global audience nor will it be an inauthentic representation of our culture."

*Bombay Rose* by filmmaker and animator Gitanjali Rao is waiting to be revealed soon, besides stop-motion animated feature *Lubdhak* by well-known DOP Avik Mukhopadhyay.

"India has probably the youngest population watching all the international animated features in cinemas. Gradually, as more and more Indian animated features are released in theatres, we will see audiences queuing up at cinema halls to watch them as they get used to Indian titles," says the media veteran quoted earlier.

Well a start seems to have been made!♦♦





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A B2B platform connecting content creators and investors



Conglomeration of industry executives discussing the latest techniques in the post production process



An industry gathering to discuss challenges and best practices in the VFX and motion graphics ecosystem

# Cosmos-Maya:

## The rapidly expanding global entity

Cosmos-Maya has come a long way as one of the most aggressive players in the Indian animation industry. It has paved the way for a lot of changes - industry transition from outsourced service providers to content creators and Intellectual Property (IP) owners and have emerged the most successful in that regard. Nine of their IPs are currently on air and a handful will be added in 2019, of which a major proportion will be international co-productions.



Domestically, Cosmos-Maya has almost 60 per cent market share today. The company's content is aired on all major Indian broadcasters in the traditional and new media space including- Nickelodeon, Disney, Sony, Discovery Kids, Cartoon Network, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Jio to name a few. It is aired in more than 150 countries and has reached almost all corners of the world.

The travesty of animation has for long been the lack of profitability. It is a passion driven business, rather than profit driven. Come

2017, Emerald Media, the Pan-Asian media investment platform backed by US private equity giant KKR, acquired a controlling stake in Cosmos-Maya. KKR's global expertise aligned with Cosmos-Maya's objective of global expansion. There has been no looking back for them since.

Presently, Cosmos-Maya is working on several international projects like Italian co-productions, namely *Leo Da Vinci* (with Gruppo Alcini and All Rights

Entertainment), *Berry Bees* (with Atlantyca, SLR and Telegael), and *Atchoo!* (with Studio Campedelli and Cartobaleno) which is already airing on Amazon Prime Video. Their first French co-production, Galactic Agency with Studio 100, was also recently announced, with *Captain Cactus* and *Help Me Ganesha* in development at the moment.

As a studio, Cosmos-Maya creatively loves to push the envelope for every IP that they develop or partner on. The animation studio has constantly challenged

themselves by balancing different creative sensibilities, merging cultures and taking creative inputs from each side, while co-producing any show as the markets are different. European markets are very different from each other. Cosmos-Maya, as a studio, creatively loves to push the envelope for every IP that they develop or partner on.

Cosmos-Maya has almost 25 years of experience in animation production with training facilities and proprietary software helping in cost cutting. Moreover, they have created an economy of scale where they are able to produce 50 half hours of content every month.

On the syndication front, their shows have been well received internationally. Their current catalogue of shows have been syndicated to different countries, for instance, *Motu Patlu* is doing exceedingly well in Indonesia, Singapore and was recently syndicated to Nickelodeon, MENA region. In fact, such is the admiration of the show that it was recently declared the most popular Indian TV show in the world by Google!

Crossover shows like *Eena Meena Deeka* and *Tik Tak Tail* with a universal appeal, have reached more than 150 countries worldwide, and *Atchoo!* which was recently acquired by Nickelodeon, has reached more than 100 countries.

Cosmos-Maya believes that IP creation is the way forward, and has championed the Indian IP revolution. The company is now staking claims to the global animation pie, and following the winds of change they're on the right track.

Digital platforms have played a huge role in helping their content reach different parts of the world. Today, digital gives real time updates in terms of which audiences from which geographies are spending how much time on which episode of which IP. This level of granular data is very helpful from the perspective of planning the programming strategy of our content. It also helps them draw the creative insights for subsequent projects.

These insights are also helpful in deciding the kind of international co-productions we would want to be part of.

Viewers can now access their content directly on YouTube under their umbrella brand, WowKidz, which is one of the largest on YouTube with more than 18 million subscribers and over 10 billion views as of March 2019.

WowKidz airs a diversified mix of great content. With iconic global brands, from *The Smurfs* to popular digital IPs like *Little Baby Bum*, to one of China's biggest IPs, *Boonie Bears*, Cosmos-Maya has partnerships with other big YouTube channels which broadcast their content in different countries. ♦♦



# Local animation gets a leg up

Sharminidra Paul

**K**ids animation in India is showing signs of growing up. Thanks to the broadcasting and OTT sector that is being increasingly supportive of local studios and commissioning local shows based on local culture and local stories.

India has about a score of kids channels serving more than 200 million strong kids population. Among these are: Disney, Disney Junior, Pogo, Cartoon Network, Nick, Nick Jr, Discovery Kids, Chutthi TV, Hungama, Sony YAY!, Kochu TV, Kushi TV, Chintu TV and Marvel XD.

While most of them broadcast in Hindi and English, some of them have regional language versions of the same. And a new player has been announced in the form of Star Movies Kids which got the governmental nod in early 2019. When it flags off, it will add to the 12 to 14 Indian originated shows which are being churned out every week by India's animation majors.

## The Upward Curve

With a flurry of channels churning out local fare and telling kids to watch them, the genre has seen a spurt in viewership in 2018 from an average 499 GRPs to 550 GRPs. According to the

recently launched FICCI EY report, the animation segment grew by 10 per cent in 2018 to reach Rs 18.8 billion and it's estimated to reach Rs 24.4 billion by 2021.

Animation for domestic broadcasting is growing at a healthy rate of around 30 per cent. TV comprises of 65 per cent of all animation in India followed by film and digital.

This number will continue to increase as the broadcasters are now focusing even more on commissioned original animated shows and building their own library rather than simply licensing content.

Creating an IP is majorly a collaborative effort between broadcasters, production houses, creators, writers, directors, designers and animators. While commissioning any IP, some broadcasters completely own the rights, while others hold the rights in partnership.



***"Broadcasters are generally the outlet to show any content to the world. Any collaboration is successful if the partners have a common goal and are able to leverage that."***

***- Discovery Kids head Uttam Pal Singh***

Paperboat Animation co-founder and chairman Soumitra Ranade adds to this view. Says he: "We need to develop our own aesthetic. IP creation is a scientific thing related to the socio-political situation in the country and the world. It's not going to work if we make B-grade version of Disney or Pixar. In the race to be global, we tend to copy the West which is a trap. We must keep faith in our own art of storytelling ideas, visual and sound traditions and we'll get there where we want to."

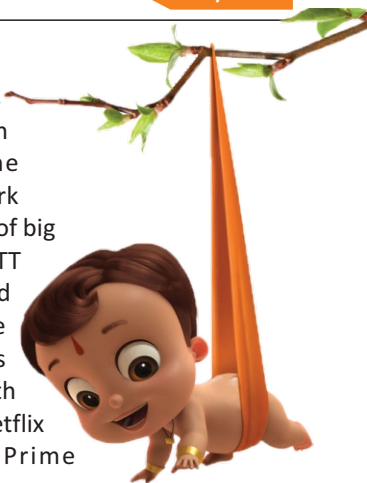
But there's no guarantee that even doing local fare will attract kids to the show."

Hear out Bioscopewala Pictures managing partner Nishith Takia. Says he: "I produced a film called *Delhi Safari*, sadly it didn't run in India at all. But we released it in 1200 screens in China and had more than two million tickets sold in Korea, whose population is lesser than Mumbai. I think if we create a relevant storytelling, we can attract audience anywhere. It did good in all the 32 countries we sold it, except our own. The quality of animation is affected by the budget. If channels here are not giving us budget, we can't provide quality animation unless we invest our own. So we want to collaborate with interested people in Europe who are aware of the aesthetic space and not just budgets."



## The OTT Allure

He also reveals that he has been pitching. Some interesting work with a number of big names in the OTT industry. And that's where some action is taking place with leaders like Netflix and Amazon Prime investing in the genre.



Several animation shows, both acquired and original, are making the rounds of a number of OTT platforms. And almost every major animation studio – whether it is Green Gold or Cosmos Maya or Toonz Animation has been commissioned or is in conversation to produce fresh shows for the OTT platforms.

Golden Robot Animation head of business development RK Chand says: "The best thing about OTT platforms like Netflix and Amazon is that they have given us the liberty to innovate and experiment with the storytelling. *Kalari Kids* is the first Indian kids content (Beyond *Chhota Bheem*) on Amazon. Basically, the secret of success lies on the style of storytelling and reach. With *Mighty Little Bheem*, we're trying to reach that."

Indian animation is expected to make a mark on the global and gain traction with kids, cross age groups and geographical boundaries with their breakout animation show ideas.

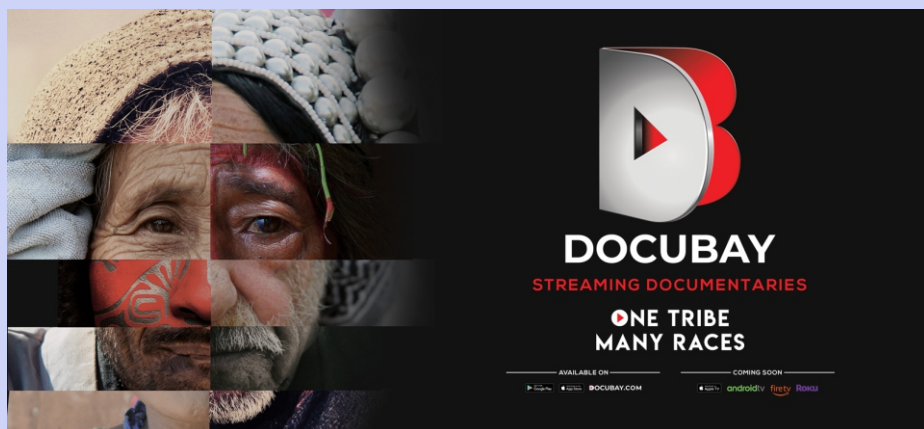
Shall we say amen to that? ♦♦

# Streaming Platform DocuBay to Preview at MIPDOC 2019

**D**ocuBay Media is a global subscription based service designed to stream non-fiction documentaries. A video-on-demand platform, positioned as a niche video service, DocuBay offers premium non-fiction content in categories such as HistoryBay; ScienceBay; NatureBay etc.

the world that cater to the virtually untapped factual entertainment audience, with a particular emphasis on documentaries. DocuBay offered an exclusive first look at MIPDOC 2019.

Headquartered in Mumbai, India, It is scheduled for an international consumer



Laying emphasis on curation and discovery, DocuBay's launch proposition includes a release schedule of one documentary daily.

A global offering from India, it aims at building a community around documentary aficionados. Developed specifically to cater to a gap in the community of factual entertainment viewers, it seeks to immerse viewers into a world that is alive with stunning visuals, extraordinary experiences, and events beyond the scope of imagination

It is India's first and amongst the first few in

launch in the summer of 2019.

***What according to you is the potential for a service like DocuBay, India and internationally?***

The paradigm shift that was forecast with the growing proliferation and penetration of the internet and other online services is happening all around us. An overlooked, and historically under-recognized category within the space of media and entertainment has been the factual entertainment business. Riding this wave of digital transformation, the factual

community of viewers and makers is growing at an unprecedented rate. For example, 16 per cent of the Cannes film market is now documentaries – a remarkable growth, and one which indicates the popularity of this genre. This is the piece of the pie that DocuBay focusses on.

Like there are feature films and series in the broad entertainment category, within the factual entertainment category, there is docu-series and documentary movies. Documentaries are the feature presentation of the factual world. Films of the real world. And everything from their conceptualization, story-telling, and execution has quietly undergone a revolution.

The documentaries of today are engaging pieces that tell the story of humankind.

Documentary makers are not only picking engaging subjects, they're going through great lengths to present cinematic moments using art and innovative technology, pulling the viewer into the investigation, and presenting reality in a raw and real manner which has proven very appealing to the public. This is reflected even in Netflix's stats, where 73 percent of its subscribers watched at least one documentary in 2016 which means over 68 million people watched a Netflix documentary in 2016.

Non-fiction storytelling is pushing boundaries of modern entertainment. Everyone — from professional documentarians, commercial directors, content generators, actors are getting in on the potentials of non-fiction. There are lot

of players the global market offering factual entertainment.

DocuBay has a clear positioning as the window to a selection of carefully handpicked documentaries.

And in the current scenario, the possibilities are truly limitless.

### ***What is the revenue model?***

Subscription. That is the future of quality entertainment. DocuBay is a premium documentary-focused SVOD service that includes innovative discovery features and recommendation models.

### ***What is the plan post immediate launch?***

Grow, grow , and grow some more. Also grow on the consumers as a brand.

A new age in non-fiction has arrived and we are planning to acquire the best catalogue and keep adding new genres and languages for a global audience. There is undeniably no dearth of creativity and a lot of outstanding, award winning documentaries disappear without a shred of the audience they deserve.

Just like at the pitch of MIPDOC, there are innumerable ideas that are seeds of documentaries in the making, and to have these germinate by providing the right kind of environment and support is something that is priority for us.♦♦



**DocuBay COO Akul Tripathi**

# Indian live action studios get animated!

Krishanu Ghosal

**T**he fast growing Indian animation industry has come under the international spotlight over the past decade or so. Many view it as a service destination for odd animation jobs. But what has also piqued global imagination is the dainty steps that Indian animation studios have been taking in creating local characters and stories in television series.

Now even more players are joining this bunch of animation pioneers. And these are coming from top television production houses who are better known for creating TRP busting live action TV series. They are testing the waters with animation features and also beginning to create animation series.

And with reason: studios such as Green Gold, Cosmos Maya, Toonz Animation and DQ Entertainment have left their imprint as IP creators not just in India but in parts of Asia and Europe and they have built healthy pipelines as well as attractive bottomlines. 2018's Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry entertainment report (FICCI) reveals that the animation industry in India grew by 10 per cent in 2018, reaching Rs. 18.8 billion. But wait, it's expected to grow around 30 per cent to touch about Rs 24.4 billion by 2021.

Enough for almost anyone to want to ride that growth. Which the TV guys are doing. Sphereorigins for instance. Headed by the

husband wife duo of Sunjoy and Komal Waddhwa, the production firm has around a dozen top rated shows and 6500 hours of content under its belt for leading broadcasters such as Star India, Zee TV, Colors and Sony Pictures Entertainment.



*Sphereorigins Founder & MD  
Sunjoy Waddhwa*

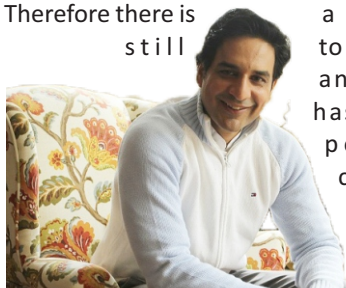
Waddhwa is very enthused with the prospects in animation. Recently, the Rs 1600 million Sphereorigins acquired a small animation studio called Hopmotion and integrated it with itself. And he's bristling to create animated shows that can find audiences not just in India but overseas as well.

Says he: "We feel now is the perfect time to enter the animation ecosystem and be in the business of that vertical as it's growing on a sharp scale. This venture is exciting for us because we believe in the synergy and the insatiable force within and it keeps driving us to explore new avenues. We want to focus and specialise in IP creation, development and production."

Leading TV producer Contiloe Pictures is also gung ho about animation. In fact, founder Abhimanyu Singh has for almost a decade nurtured ambitions to succeed in animation. An early attempted feature on the elephant God Ganesh was a moderate to poor success at the box office. But Singh is not one to give up. He worked on another film on the Indian epic *Ramayana* which won him the national film award which he proudly showcases in his office. Contiloe has been known to have expertise in producing thrillers, historical and mythological fiction – both of which require extensive VFX.

Where earlier he used to work with a gaggle of external studios for this animation features, he has now set up a state-of-the-art animation facility in the Indian state of Odisha to add to its current facility which is in Mumbai. He is expecting to increase the hours of animation output by hiring aggressively in Odisha and rolling out animated shows for both broadcast and OTT platforms.

Says Singh, “The industry has a long way to go, still. There are some stories that have broken out. However, the potential of where and how many more stories can break out is immense. Therefore there is still a long road to travel on and it also has a great potential considering the fact that we are a



**Contiloe Pictures Founder  
Abhimanyu Singh**

young country with millions and millions of children that would want to consume animated content as well as a large young audience that loves watching animated stories and therefore there is great potential and a great growth story there.”

Swastik Productions international arm of One Life Productions too has set its sights on animated content. Founder Siddharth Tewary who has written and directed many of the award winning drama, historical and mythological shows that have been viewership busters on TV would like to see some of the live action fare he has produced over the decade of the company’s existence being remade as animated series, apart from foraying into feature films.

Says he: “I really don’t want to talk much about it. I would rather develop a few successful animated shows and then reveal more. You can be sure that some animation series will emerge from One Life.”

Adds his brother and director in the firm Rahul Kumar Tewary: “We have won the FICCI BAF Awards for three consecutive years (2017 & 2018 - Best VFX Episode, National and International respectively, TV, 2019 - National and International Non-feature Best Visual effects . It’s a growing vertical with a huge potential.”

An observer points out that it makes eminent sense for live action studios to foray into animation and even VFX services. For one they have access to writing and creative talent in-house, along with infrastructure. And the more futuristic looking producers have been investing in VFX facilities and VFX and animation talent

drama series for television.

“With around 150 to 600 seats providing VFX services for their internal shows, the natural extension was to start thinking about producing animation as the domestic demand for local animated series is increasing,” says he.

Tewary gives another reason why animation is seeing a rush. Says he: “There are states which have policies in support of the industry; it creates the right environment of growth. The states understand the potential growth of the industry and its contribution to create a positive impact on employment. Hence they are encouraging us in every way.”

*Others say that the rise of OTT platforms is another reason for the growth in interest, animation for domestic broadcasting is growing at a healthy rate of around 30 per cent, and now accounts for 30 to 35 per cent of revenues generated in the Indian animation segment, according to the latest FICCI report.*

However, given that the OTT industry in India growing exponentially thanks to the availability of cheap data prices, the demand for content has stood up like never before. And platforms like Netflix, Amazon, Disney+, Apple TV Plus, will over the next few years localise even more seeking out local producers with skill sets to produce almost every genre of video programming. Setting up an animation studio might be a challenge for a start up because of the huge investments needed in infrastructure and talent without any project or service work in hand. Additionally, original projects have long gestation periods which prove a drain

on the piggy bank. But with healthy cash flows from their live action shows these leading production houses’ VFX and animation units are constantly busy and they start toying with

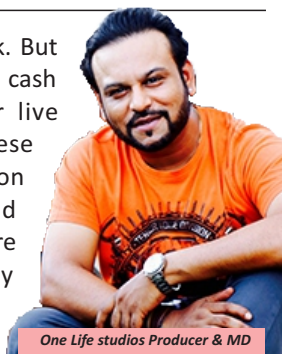
animation concepts and storylines to keep them creatively refreshed. Some of these get converted to pilots.

Says Singh, “There are many stories that may be told through animation in India. And India is a country full of stories. Telling some of these through live action would take hundreds of millions of dollars. But animation allows us to do so in a fraction of that cost and with a lot more ease.”

Even as they are gung-ho about animation, they are also treading cautiously and not going over board on new IPs and projects. “We would like to get everything right rather than going the whole hog,” says Siddharth. “We understand production and have succeeded at it for decades now and have the experience of the same. Getting into animation is our way of building a more complete production firm.”

Adds Wadhwa: “At the end of the day, we are in the business of producing quality fiction content which is engaging and that could be either live action or animation.”

With that kind of approach, it is more likely that they will breast the winning tape.♦♦



One Life studios Producer & MD  
Rahul Tewary

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# Indian OTT:

## The originals gambit gains pace

Sharmindrila Paul

OTT services in India are moving into the fast lane - especially in the area of originals. If you take a dekko at the programming line up of leaders like Netflix, Amazon Prime, ZEE5, Hotstar, Voot, or Sony LIV, ALT Balaji, Jio Digital Life, it looks fresh as a cucumber, as they move into the next phase of their business cycle.



2018 saw them launching some fresh shows, and 2019 is set to see them going into overdrive with originals made in India. Phase I was of getting their services off the ground, getting the distribution in place, and getting stable streams going to deal with the millions who tune-in to watch the shows, and finally customer acquisition.

"Technology has changed. Telling stories to a particular audience in a better way is the trend now. The advantage of OTT is the ability to customise, experiment and be a part of the broader lens," says Viacom18 Media MD and group chief executive officer Sudhanshu Vats.

Programming earlier on OTT was more of acquired shows and films. Then came some insignificant shows from the likes of

Hotstar, Sony LIV and Voot. What changed the game was the huge budget premium shows from Netflix, Amazon Prime as well as the low cost shows from the likes of ALT Balaji, Viu, Hoichoi and originals from ZEE5, EROS NOW.

Adds former Viacom18 COO Raj Nayak: "Audience taste is evolving and they want compelling stories. Everyone is hoping that the kind of content OTT players are producing these days will do the trick."

**OTT Space Heating Up:** According to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)'s 2019 media and entertainment report, digital media in India grew by 42 per cent to reach Rs 169 billion in 2018. Estimates are that, video consumption has been growing at 500 per cent per annum and most of it is coming from mobile handsets.



The report further states that smartphone users reached 340 million in the past year and are predicted to touch 925 million by 2023. The revised data plans have encouraged people to consume more video content. Digital subscription revenues have

also grown by a whopping 262 per cent in 2018 to Rs 14 billion and this is further expected to cross the Rs 20 billion mark in a year from now. It is predicted that over 500 million Indians will have watched videos online by 2020.

**Originals Galore:** The report further states that over 1,200 hours of fresh original content was created for OTT platforms in 2018. And that is expected to balloon significantly in 2019 as OTT platforms spread their services globally.

*"Originals have a very tangible business value. These help us accelerate the business drive through edginess in stories, exploring uncharted genres and attract audience attention."*

- VOOT AvoD business head Akash Banerji

VOOT has launched 12 original shows under the name of 'Shortcuts' which includes - *Derma, Googly, Joy Ride, Bauma* (Bengali), *Chacha and Cheetah's trip, Glitch, Grey, A(U)N, Teaspoon, Maya, On the Road, Red Velvet* and *It's not that Simple*. There are more coming up in the near future.



EROS NOW too is racing up in the OTT game. Its slate of originals this year



includes: *Metro Park, Flip, Operation Cobra, Flesh, Bhumi, Crisis* and many others. EROS NOW chief operating officer Ali Hussein recently said: "We're looking to launch 100 originals in 2019 and also looking for partners and distributors in Southeast Asia."

The investment in originals is going to accelerate exponentially reveals Alphabet Strategy and Economics engagement manager Konstantine Matthies. Says he: "Global VOD players will continue to actively invest in Asian/Indian content and foreign direct investment (FDI) is expected to rise by five times till 2022."

And the best example of this, is streaming giant and industry leader Netflix. The reason: locally produced content in one nation is attracting audiences globally. Says Netflix director of partnerships Abhishek Nag: "Two out of three people who have watched *Sacred Games* are non-Indians. It was localised in 24 languages and viewed in 190 countries. Because of the portrayal of Mumbai in it. Resonating stories and gripping content are what we are focusing on."



Netflix has already launched a number of local originals in 2019, like- *Soni*, *Selection Day*, *Delhi Crime*, *Patriot Act*, *Cricket Fever* (on Mumbai Indians), *Fireband* and there are many more to come. Some of them include *706*, *Mighty Little Bheem*, *Baahubali: Prequel*, *Midnight Misadventures with Mallika Dua*, *Chopsticks*, *Bulbul*, *Upstarts*, *Cobalt Blue*, *15th August*, *Music Teacher*, *Hotel Mumbai*.

Local going Global: Amazon Prime Video too is not far behind and has announced a global lineup of 20 original shows. The first of these to debut was *Inside Edge* which was the first Indian VOD show to be nominated for an International Emmy in 2018.

Exults Amazon Prime Video India director and country manager Gaurav Gandhi, “The shift in content over the past few years has happened as we cater to different sectors of people. The genres being explored today, the treatment and execution were not seen in any other formats. Thus originals are popular and successful.”

Amazon Prime Video’s slate includes *Four More Shots Please*, *Made in Heaven*, *Bandish Bandits*, a romantic musical directed by Anand Tiwari, *The Last Hour*,

crime thriller by Amit Kumar and Asif Kapadia and so on.

Other platforms like ZEE5, Hotstar, ALT Balaji, Viu are also emphasising on a sound number of original shows. ZEE5’s recent and upcoming shows include, *Abhay*, *The Final Call*, *Parchayee*, *The Sholay Girl*, *377 Ab-normal*, *The Lovely Mrs. Mukherjee* (Bengali), *Sharate Aaj* (Bengali), *Veergati*, *Sex*, *Drugs and Theatre* and others.

ALT Balaji’s 2019 slate consists of titles like, *Kehne ko Humsafar Hain*, *Punch Beat*, *Dil hi toh hai*, *Hero Vardiwaala*, *Apaharan*, *Broken But Beautiful*, *Dev DD*, *CyberSquad*, *Karrle Tu Bhi Mohabbat*, *Bewafaa Si Wafaa*, *Romil And Jugal*, *Ragini MMS Returns*, *Maya Thirrai*, *Gandi Baat 2*, *Zaban Sambhal Ke*, *The Test Case*, *Hum - I'm because of us*, *Bose: Dead/Alive* and others.



Regional OTT players like Hoichoi too are producing a number of original content to bring more subscription based audience to their app. Their fresh content line up for 2019 includes *Dhaka Metro*, *Pnaachforon*, *Dhanbad Blues*, *Bou Keno Psycho?*, *Astey Ladies*, *3 Cup Cha* and lot more.

The flood is expected to continue unabated. That should be good news for king Indian viewer. ♦♦

# Bollywood's alternate storyline

Poonam Mondal

There is a new success script being written in India's Bollywood. And it's coming courtesy Indian audiences. Increasingly, they are rejecting films at the box office even if they have mega budgets and a top star cast. Bollywood is no longer driven by the dominance of superstardom. Gone are the days when the success was measured by the popularity of the actors.



Instead, movie buffs are embracing small budget, films with relatively lesser known film stars but with good, alternative storylines.

## Budgets Splurge

Consider: Superstar Shah Rukh Khan starrer *Zero*, despite its fabulous VFX, and numero uno actor flopped with collections of just Rs 89.25 crore. Even though Shah Rukh and his leading lady Anushka Sharma put up commendable performances and the film

portrayed the former as a dwarf thanks to some world-class VFX, the audience could not relate with the unbelievable and flawed storyline.

Then the Aamir Khan and Amitabh Bachchan starring mega budget *Thugs of Hindustan* sank with collections of just



Rs 143.25 crore. The reason: the audience could not relate to the fantasy drama which was quite similar to *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

## Game Changers

As compared to that there have been many sleeper hits with relatively less known talent. Among them: *Badhaai Ho*, *Andhadhun*, *Raazi*, *Stree*, *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety* and *Gully Boy*. All these movies had lesser-known stars in the mix but their

common point was a strong script, alternate believable storylines and characters and direction.

An interesting part of the movie *Badhaai Ho* is that it is a comedy-drama around how a grown-up man faces embarrassment in society when he finds out his ageing mother is pregnant. Starring Ayushmann Khurrana, Neena Gupta, Gajraj Rao, the movie received a massive response - its final gross box office was a staggering Rs 222 odd crore and it was made on a shoestring budget of Rs 29 crore. It emerged as the sixth highest grossing film in 2018.

Sleeper hit *Stree* - which is about a female spirit and her search for a man who could love her no matter what and was made at a Rs 23 crore budget – notched up Rs 180 odd crore at the box office. The film starred actors Shraddha Kapoor and Rajkummar Rao.

*Raazi*, based on the novel *Calling Sehmat*, by ex-naval officer Harinder Sikka, is a fictionalised account of a reportedly true story about an Indian Kashmiri undercover agent, set during the time of the 1971 Indo-Pak war. It recorded gross box office revenues of nearly Rs 200 crore and it was made on a budget of Rs 35 crore.

Another masterpiece *Andhadhun* which is an Indian black comedy crime thriller film is around a series of mysterious events which changed the life of a blind pianist who

aimed to report a crime that was actually never witnessed by him since he was blind. The movie was again a comparatively low budget one but the storytelling and the thrill in the script enticed the audience till the end and it was successful at the box office too with the collection of Rs 111 crore. The movie's budget was Rs 32 crore.

Says a film industry veteran: "There was a time when Indian audiences guzzled down anything that was hurled at them as long as it featured their favourite stars. No more. The collective consciousness seems to have cruised away from the NRI-appealing love stories and fantasies. No longer will the audiences gorge on the saccharin diet of mindless escapist fantasies. They want good well-scripted stories, credible performances from whosoever the actor is, good direction, and good production. The

emergence of multiplexes and OTT platforms has encouraged filmmakers to experiment with genres and stories as they know they will be in a position to monetise their productions. These films are bringing back hitherto disenchanted filmgoers back to the cinemas apart from attracting the new generation."

Another film industry observer points out that small budget films are also getting mega releases by being screened in many theatres. *Badhaai Ho* – for instance-



released in 2100 theatres and *Stree* in 1800 theatres. If they weren't released in so many screens, perhaps they wouldn't have made that much money. Additionally, these movies are being marketed aggressively and are being made available on global digital platforms, attracting global attention.

## Hail Content!

Overall, film buffs are queuing up for films which are relatable, using dialects that are real, passionate and fierce which are like a mirror to society.

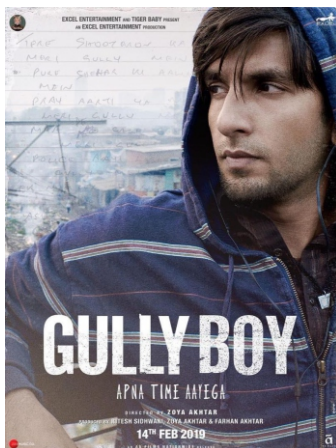
“Apna time ayega... Tu nanga hi toh aaya hai, kya ghanta lekar jaega?” (Your time will come. You came naked.

Do you think you will take anything with you?). That's the rap from the movie *Gully Boy* that everyone is singing these days as the vibe is fresh and the storyline is realistic. Rap has been doing the rounds in India's alternative culture but with the song from *Gully Boy* the genre is gaining popularity amongst the masses.

*Gully Boy* is one of the examples of such a real-life story which is fictional and not a biopic inspired by the real-life stories of underground rappers Divine and Naezy and finally managed to collect Rs 134.3 crore at the box office.

“Small-budget films are depicting big ideas and are running parallel to commercial films. Earlier, by and large, parallel movies

in Bollywood couldn't manage to draw as much of a crowd on the first day or first weekend after the launch. Today the audience gets hooked on the first day and the box office is collecting around five to eight crore from the first day itself,” says another film industry expert.



There is science to making small budget films and producers, writers and directors are bringing all their experience to bear while filming. *Stree* writer Raj Nidimoru disclosed he wrote the screenplay keeping in mind when he would release it. Director Amar Kaushik reveals that *Stree* is his first film. He adds: “I was an assistant director for eight to ten years and thus my upbringing was small budget films-content driven like *Go*

*Goa Gone*.”

Additionally, filmmakers are also digging deep opting for different story tracks focusing on the female-led protagonists in an industry where male-led scripts are the rage. They are also scouring through books, acquiring movie rights for works of literature – allowing for experimentation of a greater variety of subjects.

“It's a great time to be in content creation,” says a senior media observer. “This generation has got opportunities like no generation before, thanks to the collapsing of global boundaries courtesy the internet. Filmmakers are riding this wave and giving freedom to their creativity. And audiences are loving it.” ♦♦

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# Industry gears up for another busy MIPTV!

Parth Kaushik

**M**IP TV, the annually held global TV, and digital content market, organised by Paris-based Reed Midem has been stirring up a storm globally with unfailing regularity.

Having long ridden the crests and troughs, India's content creators, programmers, and distribution executives are prepared to string up their proverbial surfboards and ride the surging MIPTV wave all the way to France where the floodgates of content are set to ceremoniously open on 8 April.

With nearly 10,000 delegates from 102 countries with a unique smorgasbord of learning, networking and deal-stitching opportunities, the salience of MIPTV has particularly attracted Indian exhibitors and participants. Packing a creative hotspot, Indian studios can't wait to sashay down the MIP floor owing to their vast and diverse repository of content offerings and pitches.

IndiaCast SVP and business head syndication and digital Debkumar Das Gupta, SEPC - director general Sangeeta Godbole, Zee Entertainment Enterprises

chief business officer global syndication, co-productions and international ad sales Sunita Uchil, Epic TV promoter Aditya Pittie, DocuBay COO Akul Tripathi, GoQuest CEO Vivek Lath, Greymatter Entertainment director Chandradev Bhagat, One Life Studios managing director Rahul Kumar Tewary, Wilderness Films boss Rupin Dang, and Applause Entertainment head-content business operations Mansi Darbar are some of the

many names that are going to be attending MIPTV and/or MIP FORMATS and MIP Doc this year.



Neela Telefilms COO  
Darshan Ashwin  
Trivedi



FOODLooking Digital  
Director  
Ashraf Abbas



Wilderness Films India  
Founder  
Rupin Dang

While some would be scouting for new shows to acquire, there is an equally burgeoning demand and pre-occupation to do co-productions. With over 900 channels and now a thriving flurry of OTT platforms, India's content creators are slowly but surely setting their sights on capturing a larger share of the international market.

The highlights of this year's MIPTV are the InDevelopment co-production programme, the Buyers Exchange initiative, the focus on France, Cannes Series, and two India sessions, which have been curated by media veteran Anil Wanvari.

One will showcase India's 4K content and the second seeks to put the spotlight on four producers to watch out from India. The producers' session will take place on Tuesday and will feature Contiloe's Abhimanyu Singh, Swastik Productions' Rahul Kumar Tewary, Neela Telefilms' Asit Modi and Applause Entertainment's head-content business operations Mansi Darbar. The 4K panel which will also be held on Tuesday features TravelXP's Sumant Bahl, Ace food show producer Ashraf Abbas of FOODLooking and Greymatter Entertainment's Chandradev Bhagat. Another highlight of this year is that the MIPDoc pitch (which takes place on 6-7 April) is being sponsored by an Indian company EPIC TV's DocuBay - an app that is being launched to feature documentaries from all over the world.

Wilderness Films India founder and owner Rupin Dang who will be showcasing a stunning 4K screener of some of the company's best work for the State of 4K audience at MIPTV, shares: "I am looking forward to getting back to Cannes for MIPTV. I would like to meet various OTT operators, players, and platforms. I would also like to meet the American and Chinese big boys in the game. I hope to have some meaningful conversations, especially after the 4K screening courtesy Sony, as set up by Anil Wanvari."

Echoing the anticipation is Neela Telefilms COO Darshan Ashwin Trivedi. Says he: "When Indian content is going global, I believe content markets such as MIP markets are welcome for the business of content. We are fortunate that we have an opportunity to be a part of it."

India has been the growth leader amongst

major economies including Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDEs) over the last five years.

While Pay-TV penetration alone in India has more than doubled from 32 per cent in 2001 to 66 per cent in 2018, paid video subscribers grew from around seven million in 2017 to around 12-15 million in 2018 according to the latest FICCI FRAMES report.

Leading Indian animation studios like Cosmos-Maya, Toonz Media and Green Gold have already jumped in with both feet in a bid to develop original animated content that would resonate with the global audience and by extension, penetrate the international market.

Adds FOODLooking Digital director Ashraf Abbas: "A confluence of the entire television business happens over those four days which offer content creators a huge opportunity to showcase their work. Great collaborations are formed and world views exchanged. It's rather valuable and educating for everyone who attends."

"India's attendance at MIP markets has been rising over the past few years," says Indiantelevision Dot Com group founder & CEO and MIPTV, MIPCOM, ATF India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh representative Anil Wanvari.

"India's production community is beginning to display courage by investing in productions and retaining syndication rights. As this trend increases, and producers get emboldened I have no doubts India's content will enter the mainstream internationally, just like Turkish, and south Korean content has."♦♦

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