

An AnimationXpress.com Issue No. 5

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MIPCOM 2021 Special

SPARK

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THE LAND OF GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES

- Ssoftoons: A distinct studio with a passion for storytelling
- Charting the success story - Kids' Channels

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Resilience. One word that describes Indian animation studios' nature of working in the past one and a half years. What was once thought to be impossible to achieve, the lockdown has taught us that there is no such word in our dictionaries. We were forced to shift to a work from home culture and while most of the sectors were struggling, one of the industries that flourished during this challenging time was the animation industry. With live-action shoots coming to a stand still and kids bound at home, be it musicians, education sectors or OTT platforms; everyone resorted to animation to keep their audience engaged.

The same was observed in India. While the lockdown seemed to be a bane to many, it turned out to be a boon for the Indian animation industry. They pushed their way forward with sheer determination and innovativeness, cracking deals and producing global content. This was made possible due to the significant rise in kids content consumption both on TV and OTTs. Most producers started focusing on creating new IPs, new episodes of popular/flagship properties as well as carrying out commissioned works in the domestic and international markets. The KPMG report states that the Animation industry has a registered growth of 13 per cent in FY20 with a revenue of Rs 21.8 billion.

Initially, like many others, the studios found it difficult to sustain, however, with ever growing demand for animated content, the studios picked up the pace and managed to shift to the remote pipeline work culture. While Green Gold Animation managed to successfully win hearts of kids across the globe with its Netflix original preschool series *Mighty Little Bheem*, Toonz Media Group and Cosmos-Maya have been pushing boundaries with their original works and have managed to secure various co-production deals. Boutique studios are still on the rise and are churning out content for some of the biggies in the international market. With world class content being produced out of Indian animation studios, new studios are also emerging in India. Even domestic studios are setting up their shops in international markets to expand their horizons.

Simultaneously, Indian studios have also been embracing new technologies. With Unreal Engine's real time animation coming into picture, it has helped Hyderabad based Gamitronics studio successfully deliver Sony YAY!'s hit animated series *Taarak Mehta Kka Chhota Chashmah*. Various animation houses have started experimenting with this engine. Motion capture is another element that is and will be playing an important role in television, animation series, and films. By using motion capture with different software like Motion Builder, Unreal Engine, and Maya, studios are now able to do real-time work. Be it software or hardware, Indian studios are on par with the rest of the world.

In this special edition magazine, AnimationXpress presents to you the main highlights of whatever is happening in the Indian animation industry.

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India: The Land Of Golden Opportunities

Parth Kaushik & Sadia Halima

Boom. Boom. Boom. If there's one positive impact that the dratted covid global epidemic has had, it has been on the Indian animation industry. Kids stuck at home courtesy the lockdowns have not only been attending virtual classes, but they have also been consuming more animated content in their spare time (and they have had a lot of it, courtesy the ban on going out to playgrounds) on television as well as on OTT and You Tube than ever before.

Additionally, co-viewing has forced parents and adults to watch a lot more cartoons. The young kids are also becoming quality conscious too: the exposure to better storytelling and production in animated series and features on OTTs like Netflix and Prime Video is ensuring that.



Mighty Little Bheem

India's animation studios have fared far better than their live action counterparts and have expanded their supply pipelines through unique technologies, partnerships and remote working to meet the booming requirements. Original IPs, co-productions for features, episodic series, short form shows are the order of the day. Not just regionally, but nationally and internationally as well.

But it is in the international animation arena where the impact is being felt the most. According to leading industry barometer Ficci-EGY 2020 annual report, 65 per cent of Indian animation industry's revenues came from international deals. There has been an upward surge in the formation of new studios looking to serve the needs of international

creators. Where earlier, where it was only to give them the benefit of cost arbitrage of lower payroll costs, nowadays it is to stand shoulder to shoulder with them to do co-productions and develop interesting evolved partnerships. Before the pandemic halted travel, it was quite common to see hordes of hungry for growth, Indian animation studios' promoters at every market like Mipcom, Annecy, Cartoons By the Bay

Consider :

- The Rs 325 crore (2020 valuation) Noida based animation studio Digitoonz Media and Entertainment, not only managed to open its second animation studio in Kolkata but also secured collaboration with Milan's Studio Campedelli, and Florence based Cartobaleno (specialises in 2D animation) to co-produce their Atchool! season two. Launching in early 2022, the show already has many fans as its first season was a huge hit across the globe.

- Leading India and Singapore-based animation studio, Cosmos-Maya, deepened its foothold in Indonesia by joining hands with Jakarta-based Spectrum Film. The studio is co-producing a new 3D animated comedy series *Putra*. The 52 x 11-minute animated series will feature the titular character and his friends as they fight crime and solve mysteries. The animation studio will manage the global rights of *Putra* except Indonesia and Sri Lanka, which will be handled by Spectrum.

The studio has also worked with Apollo films for co-production of *Dogtanian And The Three Muskehounds*, a Spanish animated film based on the classic novel *The Three Musketeers*. Apart from that, Cosmos-Maya also joined hands with Irish animation studios Dear Will and Piranha Bar to co-produce the new 52 x 11' 3D animated series, *The Incredible Monsta Trucks*.

As for the studio's distribution arm, WowKidz-Distribution, it has managed to sign a number of global broadcast and streaming deals with

international players. With this, it expanded its reach in the global kids' animation space, securing significant business and international projects.

- Serving global clients based in the United States, Europe, Latin America, Asia and Australia and with operations in India, Singapore, Brazil and Hong Kong, Studio 56 joined forces with Studio 100's Australian subsidiary Flying Bark Productions to work on the animated series *100% Wolf – Legend of the Moonstone*. Recently, Amazon's IMDb TV service acquired the AVOD rights for the 26x22 minutes CGI-animated series for the US.

- Another leading Indian animation studio, Toonz Media Group has been making its mark in the international marketplace. Imira Entertainment – the Spanish subsidiary of Toonz Media Group – joined Spain's leading teen and children's broadcaster Clan as co-producer of a 2D animation series titled *Sunnyside Billy*. Created for children above the age of seven, *Sunnyside Billy* is an upbeat action-packed comedy about a friendly fried egg Billy who is oddly positive about every situation.

The studio has also signed a deal with Ferly, the Finnish animation, publishing, and licensing outfit to co-produce new animation series *Kingdom of None* which is set to debut with 52x11 minute episodes by mid-2023. Along with that, it is also co-producing *Zoonicorn*, the new 3D animated preschool series with *Zoonicorn*, the multiplatform animated preschool brand, which is all set to release in the global market by Toonz's distribution arm Imira Entertainment. The 3D animated series featuring a Zooniverse of enchanting characters debuts with 52 original



Kingdom of None

seven-minute episodes.

- Mumbai-based 88 Pictures animation studio has been working with Oscar-winning director Guillermo del Toro on *Trollhunters Trilogy*.

- A new studio that is establishing itself globally is Zebu Animation. Some of the projects the studio has worked on so far are *Lego: Masters of Flight*, *Chris Stapleton Lego Music Video*, *Lego Hidden*, *Rabbids: Bizarre Love*.

- Xentrix Studios, one of India's leading animation houses has expanded its wings to Australia with the launch of Xentrix Studios Australia in Melbourne and has also acquired Viskatoons, Victoria's longest running animation house.

- One of the localised IPs that has gone to become the number one most watched international release of 2019 in the US is Green Gold Animation's *Mighty Little Bheem*. The preschool animated character is the first Netflix Indian original animated series to be a huge hit globally and has long been rocking at the top position on Netflix's kids' category and saw new seasons and fresh episodes owing to its popularity amongst kids. It is the animated spin-off IP of the popular kids show, *Chhota Bheem*.

- Paperboat Design Studio's animated feature *Bombay Rose*, written and directed by Gitanjali Rao, which had its world premiere at International Critics Week at the 2019 Venice Film Festival was also released on Netflix later.

Indian animated shows are winning plaudits globally too.

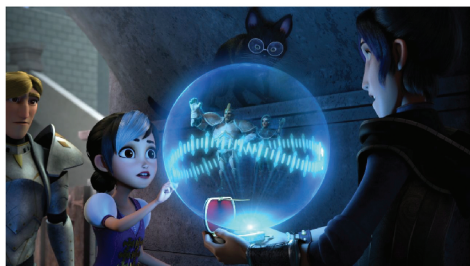
- Cartoon Network's *Lamput* which has been nominated for an International Kids Emmy and



Bombay Rose



Lamput



Trollhunters Trilogy

scooped an additional two Asian Academy Creative Awards. Produced by Mumbai based Vaibhav Studios and created/co-directed by the studios' founder Vaibhav Kumares, *Lamput* carved a special place in non-dialogue, slapstick chase comedy in India and across the globe.

- Studio Eeksaurus' *Kandittund* (Seen It) won the Satoshi Kon Award for excellence in animation at the Fantasia International Film Festival (FIFF) Awards 2021. The 12-minute Malayalam short film which features P.N.K Panicker and his super-natural encounters made ripples internationally.

- Kolkata-based Ghost Animation's Anney award winning animated short, *Wade* which is written and directed by Upamanyu Bhattacharyya and Kalp Sanghvi, secured a nomination in the prestigious Clermont Ferrand Short Film Festival, the world's largest film festival dedicated to short films. The studio also garnered appreciation in the Indian and International animation space with its climatic dystopia,

Wade, which only recently achieved a milestone of 75th official selection and played at Bogota Shorts Festival in Colombia. Not only that, it also won the Grand Prize at Festival de Animación Ajayu 2020 in Peru.

- Independent animator and IIT Bombay IDC student, Divakar Kuppan's animated short, *The Fox of the Palmgrove* won 'The Best Animation' award at Trame Independent 2020, Italy.

Across employment, investments, global partnerships and viewership, international recognition, the Indian animation scenario has witnessed a meteoric rise over the past year, making India the land of golden opportunities in the animation sphere indeed.

With content libraries swelling up, creative talent being nurtured and increasing appetite for this storytelling medium, India's animation sector is limbering at the sprinter's block and ready to strike it even bigger in the global market. ♦♦



Wade



Eena Meena Deeka

Green Gold Animation's journey from Hyderabad to Hollywood

Sadia Halima

Green Gold Animation - one of India's most successful animation studios headquartered in Hyderabad is considered India's animation pioneer. The studio started in 2001 with a vision to develop original IP content and is now creating wonders at the global market with its diversified animated content.

The two-decade-old studio led by Rajiv Chilaka has been a powerhouse of animated content, producing shows like *Bongo*, *Krishna, Krishna and Balram*, *Chhota Bheem*, *Vikram Betal*, *'Chorr Police*, *Mighty Raju*, *Luv Kushh*, *Arjun: The Prince of Bali*, *Super Bheem* - a 3D spin-off of *Chhota Bheem* and globally popular animated series - *The Mighty Little Bheem* for Netflix.

The studio has also been a trusted partner to many of the biggest media platforms such as Cartoon Network, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Discovery kids, Disney Channel, Hungama, MTV, Voot Viacom 18, and Pogo with an active viewership of over 60 million kids. It has also been involved in licensing and merchandising, movie production and distribution, digital business, retail stores, and events with offices in Hyderabad, Mumbai, and the US.

The studio is the biggest licensor when it comes to toon character - licensing not only in merchandise but also in events, mobile gaming, e-commerce, CSR initiatives, and more.



Rajiv Chilaka

Green Gold Animation, Founder & MD

Chhota Bheem has been one of the most successful original IPs created by Chilaka with a viewership of 40 million viewers in India and beyond. Bheem's journey from underdog to global phenomenon has proved to be game-changer for India's animation industry. The show is performing well in terms of licensing and merchandising and has been licensed by more than 150 brands. The brand itself is currently present in more than 12 countries and growing.

The studio has also inked a deal with Viacom 18's fast-growing and fun learning platform for children Voot Kids for digital exclusive 21 movies centered on *Chhota Bheem*. Apart from animation, some of its popular animated IPs are also good at podcasts. Green Gold Animation had partnered with music streaming app, Gaana to host its kids' content catalogue exclusively on its platform.



Mighty Little Bheem

With *Mighty Little Bheem* - a spin-off of *Chhota Bheem*, Chilaka was fulfilled his vision of creating a global IP and cracked India's massive entertainment market after joining hands with Netflix. The show based on a baby version of Chilaka's beloved superhero was also the first Indian animated spin-off IP and paved the way for more home-grown animated content striking a deal with streaming platforms. The Indian superhero's journey from Hyderabad to Hollywood created a history in the Indian animation industry.

The show remains a global hit even now with its giant fan base stretching from Washington to

Brazil, making it Netflix's most popular show for preschoolers. Launched in 2019 in the United States, the animated series has been seen by more than 27 million households so far.

Recently Netflix and UNESCO also came together to celebrate India's rich cultural heritage through *Mighty Little Bheem*. The platform is also planning to come up with series of fun short videos themed One Country, Incredible Diversity next year, which will shine a light on India's cultural journey, including monuments, living heritage, performing arts, social practices, rituals, and festivals such as Dussehra, Diwali, and Holi.

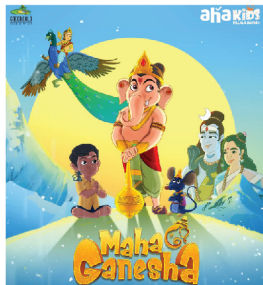
With the huge success of *Chotta Bheem* and other spin-off series and movies, Green Gold is looking forward to creating more global original IPs and universal stories.

Going regional, the studio has also tied a partnership with Telugu OTT platform Aha to launch a new animated show *Maha Ganesha*. This partnership will see aha launch six animated originals in the next 12 months and acquire 100 hours of content from the animation company.

To support the new content development, the animation studio is also planning to hire 500 more developers in the next 12-18 months. ♦♦



Mighty Raju



Maha Ganesha



Mighty Little Bheem

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Ssoftoons: A distinct studio with a passion for storytelling

Parth Kaushik

When the pandemic was giving hard times to the world, Ssoftoons' dedicated team at Kolkata was softening the blow with their animated content, beaver away on the software. Having carved a niche with their distinct animation style, Kolkata-based animation studio gave birth to one of India's top animated series, Sony YAY!'s *Paap-o-Meter*. So far, the studio has created more than 1,000 characters across all series, packing a whopping 50,000 minutes of content.

Talking about the studio's journey, Ssoftoons founder Sourav Mondal mentions that it all started when he wanted to fulfill his simple dream to create constructive animated content that people can resonate with. With a hobby of watching documentaries on animation in his free time, Sourav fondly recounts that it is his penchant for animated content that led him to lay the foundation for what has now become one of India's most loved animation studios.

Having grown up on a rich diet of Bengali literature and storytelling, it was his wish to turn those stories into reality. Sourav shares, "As a child, I loved listening to the stories my parents told me. In my mind, I was visualising them and I would wonder if those stories could somehow come to life. Well animation was the medium, I later realised."

And now, two decades later, the studio has set a fleet of benchmarks in the Indian animation ecosystem.

The studio has over 10.2 million subscribers on their YouTube channel, where they independently publish short animated stories drawing inspiration from the stories they heard as a kid.

For a long time, India's animated content has only served kids. Sourav endeavours to broaden the scope of animation to include older kids and adults as well. "We brought a revolution in the



Twinkle Sharma #0007

animation industry by serving education, fun, and quality content in local languages. Our first IP *Gopal Bhar* garnered views from over 150 countries,” shares Sourav.



Gopal Bhar

Coming to Sony YAY!'s flagship content *Paap-o-Meter*, it was dreamt at Ssoftoons office; an idea that Sourav later successfully pitched to the channel and continues to give life to. “I pitched it to Ronojoy at Sony YAY!’s office in Mumbai and they liked the concept and next thing we knew, it was one of the most watched cartoons in Indian animation,” he shares.

Before the digital proliferation, their distribution, he says, was mainly spread across television, CDs, and VCDs. “Time passed by and views, opinions & perspective of the society also equally got changed. Ssoftoons also didn't stop there. With the increasing demand for quality content on digital platforms, Ssoftoons brought its content on YouTube and Facebook, apart from the regular distribution channels. Needless to say, it marked and set a noteworthy record in viewership and it's still counting. Soon, our videos will be telecasted on our dedicated app and OTT platforms,” says Sourav who recently cut a sweet deal with Disney with one of his female-centric stories *Twinkle Sharma #0007*.

“We don't have many girls as protagonists, do we? And let me tell you, girls are on par with boys. Women are ace performers. They are dedicated, sharp and committed to the task given to them. I think it is about time we start

showing strong female protagonists,” he shared.

Over time, Ssoftoons Studios have earned a reputation for weaving storylines keeping their viewers' mindset in mind; integrating the cultural flavours with a blend of creativity, experience, and consistency. A few of their notable animated wonders range from *Gopal Bhar*, *Pandav Goyenda*, *Mollah Nasiruddin*, *Nonte Fonte*, *Lullu*, *Panchatantra* to *Thakumar Jhuli* and more.

“Although we are engaged mainly in our in-house productions, we offer complete production services for our clients; from script to screen,” Sourav says when asked about the studios' offerings.

From a humble beginning in Howrah, West Bengal, the company has expanded its footprint and distribution across India, with its branches in Kolkata and Mumbai as well.

“Our foundation is story-based animation and we are open to domestic as well as international alliances as long as the project is rooted in-depth and story instead of gags. Our hearts should be in it. We hope our content beams into every television set, laptop screen, and mobile phone screen across the globe someday. We don't like talking numbers and stats. What matters to us is the unquantifiable love that our content gets and how many smiles we can spread along the way,” Sourav sums up. ♦♦



Sourav Mondal
Ssoftoons, Founder

Charting the success story - Kids' Channels

Sadia Halima

The covid-19 pandemic has disrupted nearly every aspect of human existence and turned out to be disastrous even for the live-action sector. Kids have been home-bound and they solely depend on TV for their solace. Here animation stepped up as a saviour, paving the way for the industry professionals to come up with many original IPs and creative content across televisions, OTTs, and other digital platforms. The kid's content ecosystem is blooming vigorously as they depend on creative animated content for both education and entertainment. As per BARC, the two to 14 years age group showed a maximum increase in viewership from 60.3 billion viewing minutes in 2019 to 65.9 billion viewing minutes in 2020.

Kids entertainment channels like Nick, Disney, Cartoon Network, Pogo, Sony YAY!, Discovery Kids, are the biggest players in the Indian broadcasting sector catering to more than 200 million kids. In the past, the Indian kids were exposed to dubbed International cartoon shows, but thanks to the Indian animation studios like Cosmos-Maya, Green Gold Animation, Toonz Media, Reliance Animation, they gave birth to

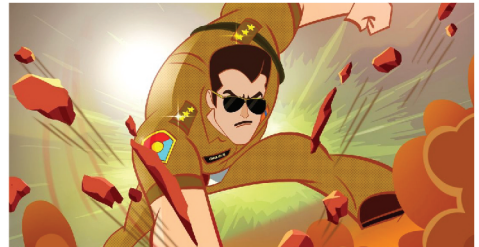


Lambu-G Tingu-G

more local original contents and IPs like *Chotta Bheem*, *Little Singham*, *Motu Patlu*, *LambuG TinguG*, *Shiva*, *Rudra*, *Golmaal*, *Pinaki & Happy* - *The Bhoot Bandhus* and many more.

Animated versions of Bollywood films have long been eyed by television broadcasters and streaming platforms as viable strategies to draw young viewers. Animated shows like *Dabangg*, *Smashing Simbha*, *Golmaal Jr*, *Fukrey Boyzz*, *Little Singham* are doing great and attracting huge family audiences with their desi and local tadka.

Some of the Indian shows are not just making it big in the Indian market, but are also creating waves in the international markets. Kids across the globe are consuming Indian content like never before.



Dabangg

Sony YAY! which is one of the leading Indian kids entertainment channels has produced six original shows including *Honey Bunny ka Jholmaal*, *Paap-O-Meter*, *KickO* and *Super Speedo*, *Guru Aur Bhole*, *Tarak Mehta ka Chotta Chashmah* and many more. Before the onset of Covid, viewership in the kids' category for Sony used to hover at 550 GRP (Gross Rating Points) which went as high as 700 GRP during the pandemic. The channel also acquired shows like *Oggy and the Cockroaches*, *Obocchama-Kun*, and *Haste Raho Henry*.

Sony Pictures Networks India kids' genre business head Leena Lele Dutta comments, "The current situation has transformed the content consumption pattern by creating

a growing demand for fresh and varied content. While Sony YAY! continues to serve them with new narratives around its homegrown content it has also further increased its content offerings by introducing a wide range of new shows, endearing characters, and engaging activities.”

Nickelodeon India has established itself as a thought leader by being the leading channel in the kids' category with a household availability in about 120+ million households. The franchise is home to the most legendary IPs and shows like *Motu Patlu*, *Rudra*, *Golmaal Jr*, *PakdamPak-dai*, *Pinaki & Happy* and *Shiva* on Nick and *Sonic*; and *Dora The Explorer*, *Paw Patrol*, *Peppa Pig* on Nick Jr and marquee international properties like *Kung Fu Panda*, *Avatar*, *Penguins of Madagascar* on Nick HD+.

Warner Media's Cartoon Network and POGO launched homegrown shows like *Titoo - Har Jawaab Ka Sawaal Hu*, *Smashing Simmba*, *Lambu-G Tingu-G* on POGO, and *Bandbudh Aur Budbak*, *Dabangg* and *Ekans: Ek Se Badhkar Snake* on Cartoon Network. POGO and Cartoon Network South Asia Network head Abhishek Dutta believes that homegrown content will continue to unlock new and exciting growth opportunities for Cartoon Network and POGO. Commenting on the growth of television content consumption during pandemic Dutta shares, “The year 2020 has already bolstered



Ekans - Ek Se Badhkar Snake

the growth of television content consumption in India, and the upward trend is likely to continue as people still prefer remaining indoors. This rising consumer demand paired with increasing ad revenues paints a promising picture for India's M&E sector, which is expected to witness

33.1 per cent growth in FY22 over F21 to reach Rs 1.86 trillion, according to KPMG India's Media and Entertainment Report 2020 – A Year off Script: Time for Resilience. With such hyper-growth on the horizon for the sector and all its subsets, especially digital media, we are looking at channels across genres bringing new content for the ever-growing audience base.”



Smashing Simmba

The Indian animation industry is growing and the growth graph looks pretty stable. Over the decade the industry has expanded very well trying its best to compete with the outside world. Definitely, we can say India is going to be a top hub for animation content very soon as it breaks free from the shackles of monotonous romance stories and mythologies. They have started venturing into the world of original intellectual properties and are focused on developing original and diversified content. The Indian animation industry has switched over its way from outsourcing to self-production and many international co-productions are also taking place, boosting the growth of the Indian animation industry. ♦♦



Taarak Mehta kka Chhota Chashmah

Understanding Indian kids as consumers and influencers

Swati Maskara

Children have become an important consideration set for marketers when they plan promotions for products/services meant for family consumption. Advertisers are more than aware that today's technically-savvy and highly-informed-internet-connected kids make decisions about purchases beyond things that are only meant for them. The little ones constitute a dominant target market segment and merit attention from a marketing perspective.

At AnimationXpress.com's KAM Summit 2021 (held earlier this year) market research firm Kantar senior executive director Puneet Avasthi presented what today's Indian children are all about and how do they connect with the world around them. He dived deep into what kind of idioms and personality types do they actually aspire for and how technology impacts their decision-making.

Avasthi went on to explain how Indian kids have evolved with the rapid digital push that India has made over the past few years. He mentioned that children are probably more tech-savvy than most of the other members of the house, hence a larger influence.

"Kids are the key pillars of growth for a variety of digital sectors, including entertainment, edutech, gaming and influence that extends well beyond," he emphasised.

Other trends, Avasthi highlighted include:

- One in three kids end up buying what they see in advertisements online or on television. Children have a strong influence on purchase of high value items for the household, besides the merchandise they need.

- 75 per cent of the time, the child's sanction and permission is non-negotiable when shopping for them. Parents today dare not pick anything for their children without their approval. In circumstances where something was picked up without the child's approval, they did not use the product at all in most cases.

- 33 per cent of the purchase decisions concerning buying cell phone handsets are taken by kids.

Similarly, in 33 per cent of the cases, the little munchkins end up influencing their family's decision to buy TV sets as well.

- Three in four children are likely to discuss an advertisement with their friends, if they find the advertisement interesting.

Overall, there is a growing market of children's products. There is increasing influence of children in purchases of goods and services across categories. And, there is a new trend of accepting and encouraging children as co-decision makers in the family.

So clearly, you - whether a content creator, broadcaster or brand custodian - cannot kid around with Indian kids. ♦♦



Puneet Avasthi
Kantar, Senior Executive Director

Toonz Media Group: 360-degree media powerhouse that caters to Animation, Gaming, and more

Sadia Halima

One of India's leading animation studios, Toonz Media Group, has been creating top-class animated content on various media platforms for kids and families across the globe. With a legacy of more than two decades, the Kerala-based Toonz has expertise in high-quality content creation, production, distribution, digital media exploitation, licensing and merchandising, gaming, AR/VR, and other emerging technologies.

Having partnered with major international studios, producers, broadcasters, and networks, Toonz currently produces over 10,000 minutes of 2D and 3D animated content every year. Toonz Animation emerged as one of the finest animation houses in the world with studio facilities spread across global locations like India, USA, Singapore, Spain (Imira Entertainment), Ireland (Telegael), New Zealand and Turkey.

It has become a formidable global player in the kids and family entertainment industry and has also signed many co-production deals with hugely popular studios like TVE, Hahn Film, Yellow Entertainment, and Neon creation, Rainbow Group, Ferly, Clan, and SMF.

Some of the notable international shows produced by the studio are *Wolverine and The X-men with Marvel*, *Speedracer Next Generation* with Lionsgate, *Mostly Ghostly* with Universal, *Playmobil* with Sony, *Dragonlance* with Paramount Pictures, *Freefonix* with BBC, *Gummy Bear and Friends*, and *Fruit Ninja* with Google and many more.

The media group has been co-producing various shows and Toonz Media Networks also specializes in the multi-channel distribution of kids' entertainment content over the digital ecosystem, including web, VOD, mobile, DTH, connected TV, and other digital platforms.

After a successful journey with YouTube where Toonz has an extraordinary bouquet of channels on YouTube with over 18 different channels,

15 million+ subscribers, and 350 million+ monthly viewership, the company launched its OTT platform My Toonz which is a digital stop where families and kids come together to enjoy over 2000 half hours of movies and episodic content across different genres. The MyToonz library is available on all leading VOD platforms as well as mobile play stores such as iOS, Android, Google Play, Roku, Apple, Amazon Fire TV, and Airtel.

Recently Toonz Media Group launched a brand new e-learning platform Ri8brain, an ed-tech initiative that is exclusively dedicated to creative learning. The platform offers courses in two segments: Ri8brain Explore for beginners and Ri8brain Excel for professionals and aspirants. Ri8brain Explore courses focus on discovering and honing the creative talents of children and young learners. The learning categories in this segment include courses in Storytelling, Arts and Crafts, Music, and Life Skills among others. Meanwhile, Ri8brain Excel courses are designed to groom professionals for the entertainment, media, and techno-creative industries. These include courses right from Script-Writing and Storyboarding to Production and Post-Production.



Gummy Bear and Friends



P. Jayakumar
Toonz Animation India, CEO

Talking about visual effects, Toonz's in-house visual effects team has worked on some international hits, including live-action films and series. Most notable among them are BBC Studio's super hit series *Jamillah and Aladdin*, the *Mostly Ghostly* film series, and a telemovie *Magic Beyond Words*.

Currently under production at Toonz are *Paddypaws* and *Pals* in partnership with celebrated creator Keith Chapman, JG & the BC Kids with renowned American actress Janet Hubert, Sunnyside Billy conceptualized by the legendary Olivier Jean-Marie and Pierre the Pigeon Hawk that features the star voice-cast of Whoopi Goldberg, Will.i.am, Jennifer Hudson and Snoop Dogg.

Undoubtedly Toonz is a 360-degree media powerhouse that believes in going that extra mile to 'Entertain the World'. ♦♦



Graphic India to bring ‘The Legend of Hanuman’ to viewers across Asia

Sadia Halima

Graphic India, the Bengaluru-based animation company is a hub of creative forces working towards bringing in a revolution in character entertainment in India. The company aspires to launch a new wave of enduring characters and mythic heroes to captivate the imagination of youth in India and around the world.

The animation studio led by media entrepreneur Sharad Devarajan develops new stories using digital comics and animation to target the 550 million Indian youth under the age of 25 and the 900 million mobile market. It released the first-ever Indian animated Hotstar Specials series *The Legend of Hanuman* - Season one and two on Disney+ Hotstar.

Produced by Graphic India and created by Devarajan, along with Jeevan J. Kang, and Charuvi P. Singhal, the mythological animation series has been designed using superior quality visuals mounted on a global scale- first-of-its-kind in India. Directed by Kang and Navin John, with lead writers Devarajan, Sarwat Chaddha, Ashwin Pande, and Arshad Syed, the series chronicles the perpetual war between the forces of good and evil; and how the immortal Hanuman became the ever-burning beacon of

hope amidst the harrowing darkness.

The Legend of Hanuman features the power of great storytelling combined with mythology and immersive animated visuals that make it an ideal watch for adults, children, and families across the country. Previous versions of Hanuman have told one of two basic stories; either tales of a mischievous young Hanuman as a boy; or fully grown up, as a God with his victories and full powers as depicted in the *Ramayana*. But Graphic India set out to explore Hanuman's journey of self-discovery to evoke and discover the God inside him.

The second season followed the success of its previous season and proved to be a classic masterpiece with advanced animation style and powerful contemporary storytelling that struck a chord with audiences across India. The animated series scored a 9.4 rating on IMDB, and 4.9 out of five on Google reviews, making it one of the highest audience-rated shows across all the Indian streaming originals.

Graphic India is currently exploring some interesting partnerships to launch the series in a few key Asian markets like Japan and Korea. ♦♦



The Legend of Hanuman

How states are pushing AVGC-XR in India

Ashish S Kulkarni

2020 was a year of unexpected turns, unforeseen challenges, uncertain situations, and even personal losses for many. It was a year that started with hope but quickly caved into sudden adversity that none of us were prepared for.

As the year 2020 progressed, unified efforts to design and create a great national AVGC-XR policy for India began, with an emphasis on building and evolving states-central collaboration to strengthen the AVGC-XR ecosystem in India, for India, and for the world.

This pre-draft policy will now go through deeper consultations and refinement before it is officially approved and released as a national policy document. This policy will set the ball rolling for India to emerge as a global AVGC -XR powerhouse.

Concurrently, the effective implementation of state-level AVGC policies in Telangana, Karnataka, and Maharashtra, helped the AVGC industry to find a way forward even through the pandemic. One of the most beautiful and iconic workspaces dedicated for use by the AVGC-XR sector, Image Towers, is finally coming up in Hyderabad, as a part of the Telangana AVGC policy promise.

In Maharashtra, the fourth IT- ITES 2015 policy is due for renewal in 2021. In addition, the state is also coming up with its first film, media, and entertainment policy this year. This comprehensive and well-crafted policy will be a game-changer.

Karnataka's second AVGC policy and Telangana's first-ever AVGC policy have a couple of more years to go for renewals.

In the state of Kerala, great minds have come together from all AVGC-XR institutions to form Saik (Society of Animation Institutions of Kerala). Saik successfully completed its first anniversary on 28 October 2020. Now the team is ready with a draft recommendation for the first Kerala AVGC-XR Policy.

The state of Tamil Nadu already has two associations of AVGC-XR stakeholders namely Vegas (Visual Effects – Gaming & Animation Society) and Agni. The leadership team at Vegas is working hard to put together an amazing draft for the Tamil Nadu AVGC-XR Policy.

The momentum to create AVGC-XR associations and policies in other states, and regions like Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, New Delhi (NCR), and Goa, and the complete northeast is strong.

In the states of Goa and West Bengal, AVGC is covered under the respective IT – ITES policies, but these policies will be due for renewal soon. In Kolkata, an active group has begun the formation of the West Bengal AVGC-XR Association. The core team has been working on creating a pre-draft policy framework for a new, suggestive West Bengal AVGC-XR Policy.

A small but very focused group of AVGC- XR warriors from Orissa have been religiously attending events all over India. Now we have an active group, working on the formation of the Orissa AVGC-XR association. Recently, the state of Orissa also created a film policy and we are now initiating the creation of the AVGC-XR policy.

A very dynamic and dedicated group of professionals from Madhya Pradesh, mostly from Indore and Bhopal are working closely to form a Madhya Pradesh AVGC-XR association. Notably, a few of these industry veterans met with Madhya Pradesh's chief minister and the ex-Lok Sabha speaker – briefing them about the emergence and growth of the AVGC-XR industry in the state.

In Punjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh, a very energetic and enthusiastic group of youngsters has got together, and are regularly interacting. We have a strong group of AVGC-XR professionals at Gurugram as well. As the states' opportunities define themselves, the Haryana AVGC policy framework is ready and has been

submitted to the government. While the state of Punjab has AVGC mostly covered under its IT – ITES policy, a team of actively invested professionals has started a conversation to establish a centre of excellence for the AVGC-XR industry. Although the AVGC – XR industry is very small in Punjab and Haryana at the moment, the traction in these states is very high and so is the level of skill in the AVGC-XR sectors.

The state of Gujarat had a humble beginning with a few, smaller studios designing comic books and then converting them into animation series. Today, we have a strong Gujarat state film policy in place. As the number of AVGC-XR studios and educational institutions is growing, in the year 2021 we are initiating the formation of the Gujarat State AVGC-XR association.

The states within the northeast have shown a very keen interest in nurturing the AVGC-XR industry. We have started skill development initiatives with several educational institutions and universities already. In over 11 institutions, where animation, VFX, and design are taught, we have over 900-plus active students. We are hopeful to have a critical skilled artist base of over 3000-plus professionals by 2022 in the North East where 10-12 small companies are already registered and operating. Given the natural creative abilities and interests within the younger generations from the entire northeast, we are very sure of a speedy establishment of the AVGC- XR industry in this region.



Ashish S Kulkarni

Punnaryug Artvision, Founder

The cost and talent arbitrage are the greatest advantages of establishing a sunrise industry like AVGC- XR in the northeast.

More states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, etc., are also slowly taking a deeper interest in AVGC-XR as well. Uttar Pradesh already has a film policy and has undertaken the great initiative of founding a state-of-the-art film city. It already had a great film city in Noida which housed many live-action and post-production studios including AVGC-XR ecosystem. Most of the private universities in Noida have animation, VFX, and design undergrad programs already, with a sizable number of students pursuing degree programs in AVGC disciplines. This has been assuring a steady flow of skilled talent.

Finally, we would like to propose a dedicated AVGC-XR policy for Uttar Pradesh as a state for its abundant potential.

It was truly amazing to see how AVGC-XR stakeholders and groups came together during 2020 to keep the collective energies going and spirits high. Sharing knowledge through digital platforms became the new mantra. It was remarkable to see how many professionals contributed to webinars logging in from various remote locations.

AVGC-XR associations and industry institutions like Animation Xpress, Ficci Leap, CII, Abai, SEPC, Tvaga, Vegas, Saik, Tasi, Ficci AVGC-XR forum, Ficci Fantasy Sports forum, India Game Developer Association – IGDA, The Rummy Federation (TRF), All India Gaming Federation (AIGF), Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports (FIFS), Esports development association of India (EDAI), Esports Federation of India (ESFI), Internet and mobile association of India (IMAI) – Gaming committee, Indian Digital Gaming Society (IDGS), Media and Entertainment Skills Council (MESC) – Vidyadaan Series and many more, kept up the momentum for the AVGC-XR communities that have evolved in India over the last two decades.

It is estimated that the present strength of active and direct AVGC-XR professionals in India is between 1,85,000 to 2,00,000. The manpower required by 2030, is estimated to be around 20,00,000 AVGC-XR professionals. Moreover, the total size of the AVGC-XR

industry share was just one per cent of the global market share in 2020. It is estimated that AVGC-XR will see exponential growth in the next few years and will have a five to seven per cent share of the global market by 2030. Within the universe of media and entertainment in India, the AVGC-XR sectors are estimated to have a 50 per cent share by 2030, which will be mostly dominated by gaming, esports, and XR verticals.

We have seen the prominent growth of fantasy gaming, esports, and more in the last decade. The very fact that we saw the Dream 11 and MPL

emerge as major sponsors for the Indian flagship cricket league, the IPL, clearly defines the positioning of a large audience connected to fantasy games.

I hope that we come out even stronger and ready for what it takes to make a difference in the coming years, laying a rock-solid foundation to emerge as a global AVGC-XR powerhouse by 2030!

(This article has been contributed by Punnaryug Artvision founder Ashish S Kulkarni and AnimationXpress doesn't necessarily subscribe to these views) ♦♦



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Here are the winners of the prestigious ANN Awards 2021

Swati Maskara

On 17 July, AnimationXpress concluded the second edition of Kids, Animation & More (KAM) Summit that successfully brought all the stakeholders of the animation space from all across the globe under one roof. The summit was followed by a grand award ceremony titled ANN Awards where the best talents in the world of animation were honoured and recognised for their artistry and creativity.

Animators, studios, and individuals from institutes participated across 66 categories, setting a benchmark in the animation space. Over 450 plus artists were judged by a well-qualified 10 member jury through an online mechanism. The jurors were Vidit Kundra, Shilpa Ranade, Yoshiya Ayugai, Sekhar Mukherjee, Joan Vogelesang, Indrajit Nattoji, Anil Wanvari, Vivek Ram, Jack Liang, Dhimant Vyas.

To honour the creative genius and champion of the Indian animation industry, the late Arnab Chaudhuri, AnimationXpress introduced a new recognition, 'The Arnab Chaudhuri Director's Award'. To select the winners, an Awards Committee was put in place that consisted of people who have been associated with Arnab and understood his philosophies- Vaibhav Kumaresh, Ashish Kulkarni, Pete Bishop, Orion Ross, P Jayakumar, Prakash Moorthy, Hari Varma, Anil Wanvari and Ashima Avasthi.

The winning student director under 'The Arnab Chaudhuri Young Ace Award - Short Form content' was awarded a cash prize of Rs 15,001 and the winner of 'The Arnab Chaudhuri Young Ace Award - Long form Form content' was awarded Rs 33,001. The cash prize was a joint contribution from Ashima Avasthi, Vaibhav Kumaresh, and AnimationXpress. The winners also received a digital tablet from our support partner HUION.

Here's the list of Ann Awards winners:

PROGRAMMING

Best Preschool Show

- *Mighty Little Bheem* episode - *A Royal Festival of Colors* (Green Gold Animation)

Best Channel Packaging

- Warner Media India - Pogo Festive Packaging

Best Promo

- *Kris Live Action Stationary* (Warner Media India - Pogo)

Best 2D Animated Series

- *Fukrey Boyzzz: Vanaar Sena* (Discovery Kids India)

Best 3D Animated Series

- *Bhoot Bandhus Family Tree & Bhoot Bandhus Magic Show* (Viacom18 - Nickelodeon)

Best Animated Film

- *Bheem In The City* (Green Gold Animation)
- *Little Singham : Kaal ki Shatir Chaal* (Discovery Kids India)

Best Animated Short Film

- *Lamput - Transfer Gun* (Warner Media India)

Best Music Composer

- *Kicko and Super Speedo vs Benaam Who* (Sony Pictures Networks India)

Best Remotely Produced Content

- *Momo and Tulus* (YoBoHo Digital Content)

DIGITAL/ OTT AWARDS

Best Animated Film

- *Bombay Rose* (Paperboat Design Studios)

- *Christmas Ident* (Warner Media India – Pogo)

Best Animated Digital Series

- *Gummy Bear & Friends* (Toonz Media Group)
- *Mighty Little Bheem* Episode – *Come Out and Play* (Green Gold Animation)

Best Animated Music Video

- *Titoo aisa kyun hain?* (Warner Media India)

Best Remotely Produced content

- *Toons ki barish* (Warner Media India – Cartoon Network)

Best Animated Social Media Brand

- Cosmos-Maya WowKidz

Best Reels

- Pixoury Media

TECHNICAL AWARDS

Best Title Design

- *Fukrey Boyzzz: Vaanar Sena* (Discovery Kids India)

Best Title Song

- *Hope Song – Phhir Dil Bolega YAY!* (Sony Pictures Networks India)

Best Editing in an Animated TV Series

- *Motu Patlu* (Cosmos-Maya)

Best Editing in an Animated Film

- *Fatak Patak – Sheru Aur Masti Ki Pathshala* (Nihodo Media)

Best Editing in an Animated Digital Series

- *Momo and Tulus* (YoBoHo Digital Content)
- *Ace2Three Rummy* (Skill Tool Studio)

Best Director of an Animated TV series

- Toonz Media Group
Chacha Chaudhary

TECHNICAL AWARDS

Best Director of an Animated Film

- *A THEOREM* (AK RAPOLU THEOREM) DHIRA

Best Director of a Digital Series

- Skill Tool Studio *Ace2Three Rummy*

Best Screenplay

- *Fatak Patak – Sheru Ban Gaya Champion* (Nihodo Media)

Best Character Design

- *Bapu* (Cosmos-Maya)

Best Character Animation

- One Take Media *Bablu Dablu: Monster Plan*

Best Voice Over Artist for a TV series – Male

- Sony Pictures Networks India *Honey Bunny Ka Jholmaal*

Best Voice Over Artist for a Digital series – Female

- YoBoHo Digital Content Build A Children's Playground

Best Technical Innovation

- *A THEOREM* (AK RAPOLU THEOREM) DHIRA

L&M (Licensing & Merchandising) Awards

Best Animated Character Merchandise

- *Chhota Bheem* Saregama Carvaan Mini (Green Gold Animation)

Best Animated Series Merchandise

- *Fatak Patak* (Nihodo Media)

Best Licensed Animated Character Programme

- *Chhota Bheem* (Green Gold Animation)

Best Licensed Animated Series Programme

- *Bablu Dablu: Snow Daze* (One Take Media)

Best Use of Leveraging a Character for Brand Marketing

- *Chhota Bheem* Jelimal Candies (Green Gold Animation)

MAM (Media, Advertising and Marketing) Awards Best Animated Brand Film

- *Air India Animated Brand Films* (ARTHA Animation)

Best Digital Campaign for an Animated Series

- *Fukrey Boyzzz* Launch (Discovery Kids India)

Best Use of Animated Character in a Brand TVC

- *Air India Animated Brand Advertisements* (ARTHA Animation)

Best Experiential Marketing

- School Contact Programme (Discovery Kids India)

Best Brand Collaboration

- *Fukrey Boyzzz* x Britannia Krunch (Discovery Kids India)

Best Innovative Campaign

- *SuperHero Academy* (Discovery Kids India)

Student Awards

Best Student 3D Film

- *BOOND* (MAAC Malad – Mumbai)

Best Student 2D Film

- *Story of a Beginning Balaram J* (National Institute of Design)

SPECIAL AWARDS

Best Animator – Female

- Meera Latkar (Warner Media India – POGO) *Bheega diya naa*

Best Animator – Male

- Mukund Bhaleghare (Skill Tool Studio) *ACE2THREE Rummy*

Best Indie Studio

- Paperboat Design Studios

Young Animator of the Year

- Balaram J (National Institute of Design) *Story of a Beginning*

Best Animated Music Video

- Jazyl Homavazir & Amandeep Singh *Homeless Homeboy Animated Opening*

Best Bollywood Inspired Animated IP

- *Fukrey Boyzzz* (Discovery Kids India)

Best Use of Animation in a Public Service Messge

- *Fukrey Boyzzz: Swag wali Diwali* (Discovery Kids India)

Best Syndicated Content

- *Bablu Dablu: Sunsational Summer* (One Take Media)

EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARDS

Best 3D Series Overall- TV and OTT

- Mondo Yan (Toonz Media Group)
- *Mighty Little Bheem* Episode – *A Flower For Mom* (Green Gold Animation)

Most Expansive Studio of the Year Cosmos-Maya

The Arnab Chaudhuri Director's Award

The Arnab Chaudhuri Young ACE Award – Short Form

- *Notun Fasal* (New Harvest)
Sovan Dutta (SRFTI)

The Arnab Chaudhuri Young ACE Award – Long Form

- *Story of a Beginning Balaram J* (National Institute of Design)

The Arnab Chaudhuri Animation ACE Award

- *Chandra's Cafe*
Krishna Chandran A. Nair

- "Thank you so much, ANN! Our team is very excited to win multiple awards. We are all screaming here," exhilarated Meera Latkar, producer of original productions, Warner Media India, on receiving the Best Promo award on behalf of the team. She went on to win the Best Animator Award (Female).

- "This is the first time we got Bheem out of Dholakpur and the credit for the idea goes to the Pogo team. We got Bheem to the city and we were excited. Thank you ANX and jury for the recognition," Green Gold Animation founder Rajiv Chilaka. *Bheem in the City* won the Best Animated Film award.

- "The series is fantastic and is created by Vaibhav Kumaresh. The content, which is slapstick comedy, worked throughout Asia," said Girish Joshi, Warner Media India, on receiving the Best Animated Short Film award for *Lamput - Transfer Gun*.

- "It was a great experience working with the director and the person who has created the show. Working on *Gummy Bear* has been amazing for me. The entire series and all the characters were designed with a lot of thought,"



said Hari Varma, representing Toonz Media who received the Best Animated Digital Series award for *Gummy Bear & Friends*.

- "Thanks a lot, I am quite glad to receive the award. I would like to thank Anish and the entire WowKidz team and every person of the Cosmos-Maya family who has been a part of the journey," said Sonia Nahar from Cosmos-Maya on winning the Best Animated Social Media Brand award.

- "We wanted to instill and inspire positivity and hope in the kids amidst the gloomy pandemic. So, to motivate them, we created the Hope Song," said Garima Pant, Sony Pictures India, on receiving the Best Title Song award on behalf of the entire team. *The Hope Song - Phhir Dil Bolega YAY!* is quite a hit!

- "Thank you so much! We are really glad to win this award. A lot of effort has gone into developing this IP - right from the design to the final animation and designing the toys as well," expressed the Nihodo Media team representative on winning the Best Animated Series Merchandise for *Fatak Patak*.

- "Because the story is inspired from my childhood memories, I wanted to reflect that in my creation. So, I chose to use the watercolor treatment since I used a lot of it as a kid," said Balaraj J on receiving the The Arnab Chaudhuri Young ACE Award - Long Form for *Story of a Beginning*.

~ Wasn't the list exciting? Well, the next edition of ANN Awards is scheduled to take place in August 2022 and you must join in to witness the fun and excellence! ♦♦





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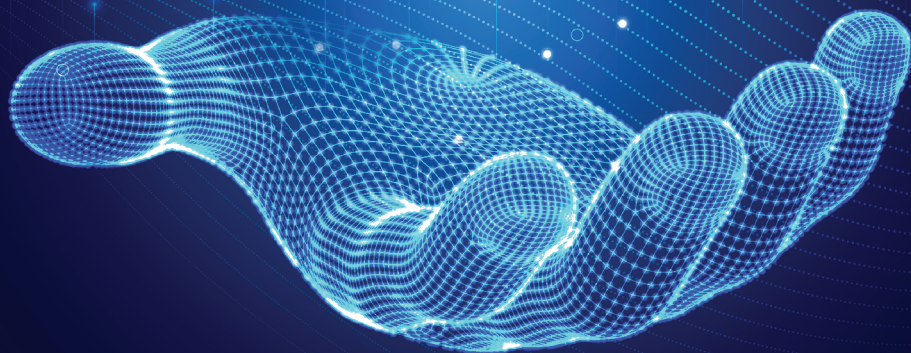
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