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A turbulent tale of toons

As studios collapse and technology rewrites the rules, the AVGC-XR sector is undergoing a painful — yet quietly promising — transformation

To call this a gut-wrenching moment for the animation, visual effects, gaming, comics, and extended reality (AVGC-XR) sector would be an understatement of the decade. The global terrain today resembles a graveyard of once-thriving creative studios, each casualty a symptom of a broader structural ailment rather than mere bad luck.

The studio shutdowns are not confined to India. From Europe to the United States, Asia to Africa, the obituary pages for animation and VFX houses have grown thicker. Economic disruption, amplified by nationalist rhetoric and protectionist turns in policy, has created an inhospitable climate for cross-border collaboration and creative trade. Layered atop this is a generational shift in consumption habits: as linear television steadily fades into oblivion, parents and children alike are turning to YouTube and Instagram Reels for their entertainment fixes. Classic characters like Tom & Jerry or Mickey Mouse now compete, often unsuccessfully, with rhyming algorithms and snackable digital content.

And then there is generative AI — the proverbial elephant in the storyboarding room. With the advent of text-to-animation tools, the power to create is no longer confined to studios laden with render farms and salaried teams. Instead, it lies in the hands of anyone with imagination and a half-decent grasp of prompts. Barriers to entry have all but vanished. And with them, the traditional gatekeepers of the industry — the commissioning executives of linear TV and OTT — are watching their control erode.

Yet, this is no obituary. Not quite.

From the ruins of legacy studios are emerging leaner, nimbler operations — built by creators, for creators. These boutique outfits, often founded by veterans of now-defunct firms, are managing to combine passion with prudence. They're unburdened by legacy overheads, and savvy enough to co-produce across geographies, balancing creative ambition with financial realism.

Meanwhile, well-managed incumbents — those that resisted the temptation of inflated salaries and bloated payrolls during boom times — are proving surprisingly resilient. They are investing wisely, building franchises with longevity, and finding partners in governments that offer meaningful incentives. India, for instance, has unveiled generous tax rebates and subsidies, making project breakeven far more achievable than in the past.

There are also reasons to celebrate. Annecy — the Cannes of the animation world — continues to be a beacon. This year's special edition of Spark Magazine from AnimationXpress captures that defiant spirit. It features Iranian filmmaker Pooya Afzali's *At Night*, Swati Agarwal's rendition of the *Hanuman Chalisa*, and Suresh Eriyat's charming *Desi Oon*, all testament to the fact that artistry thrives even in economic turbulence. The creative community has always had a knack for survival — and reinvention. Annecy celebrates that resilience, and it reminds us that while technology, economics and policy may shift the ground beneath their feet, storytellers will always find a way to build on it.

Come October, MIPCOM in Cannes will bring another checkpoint in this ongoing industry recalibration. Expect us there.

Until then, the show goes on.

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Bonjour Annecy!

Presenting a glimpse of leading Indian studios and their upcoming projects

Animation News Capsule

Catch the latest top headlines shaping the Indian animation industry

‘Shinchan’ films set for big screen debut in India

Shinchan The Spicy Kasukabe Dancers in India



Japan's TV Asahi has announced the theatrical release of two Shinchan movies in India—*Shinchan Our Dinosaur Diary* and *Shinchan The Spicy Kasukabe Dancers in India*. Marking a first for Indian cinemas, Shinchan films will soon be released on the big screen across the country. Distributed by PVR Inox Pictures, the films will be available in Japanese as well as in Indian languages Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu, with English subtitles.

TV Asahi head of animation sales and development Maiko Sumida said, “It has been our long-standing dream to release *Shinchan* movies in theatres in India. We are thrilled that children who are currently watching *Shinchan* on TV, as well as those who grew up watching it, will be able to enjoy Shinchan's adventures on the big screen.

Green Gold and TG Entertainment partner to introduce and expand ‘Tom Gates’ franchise in India

Rajiv Chilaka and Ken Anderson



Green Gold Animation, known for *Chhota Bheem* and *Mighty Little Bheem*, has partnered with UK-based TG Entertainment to introduce *The Brilliant World of Tom Gates* franchise to India. This partnership will expand the franchise in the areas of licensing, merchandising, series animation production. Under the MoU, both companies will collaborate to develop market opportunities in India and wider South Asian markets.

Green Gold CEO Rajiv Chilaka said that this partnership is a significant step in broadening his company's portfolio beyond homegrown properties. TG Entertainment CEO Ken Anderson expressed his delight in partnering with Green Gold who will now bring its expertise to *Tom Gates*.

Powerkids Entertainment reveals global co-production partners for new project ‘Adventures of Akira & Mowgli’

Powerkids Entertainment has collaborated with global companies to co-produce *Adventures of Akira & Mowgli*, the spin-off of its popular series *The Jungle Book*. Powerkids has partnered with industry leaders beIN Media Group, DeAPlaneta Entertainment, Telegael, Twelve P Animation, and Wall Peep to co-produce this series.

This brand-new spin off to Rudyard Kipling's timeless and famous classic is currently in fast-paced production, with a tentative completion date by the end of 2025. In anticipation of strong interest from broadcasters, the companies plan to initiate their presales during the Annecy International Animation Film Festival market.

For this animated series, Powerkids has brought Trevor Wall (*Puppy Dog Pals*) on board as the storyboard and animation director. Renowned writers Jeff Sager and Eric Steinhart are crafting the scripts.

Assemblage Entertainment welcomes Mikros India's core talent

Assemblage Entertainment has strengthened its creative leadership by welcoming the core team from Mikros India, following the closure of Technicolor Creative Services' Indian operations. The newly joined team, based in the Indian city of Bengaluru, includes industry veterans like creative director Sean Mullen, production technology head Siddharth Kumar, and several animation supervisors and leads. Their expertise has contributed to acclaimed projects such as *Paw Patrol*, *Orion and the Dark*, and *Ozi: Voice of the Forest*.

Having recently delivered animated features like *Sneaks* and *Wolf King*, the studio is actively shaping future releases including *Stitch Head* and a DreamWorks Animation theatrical feature.

Stitch Head



Prayan Animation partners with LA-based Moonstar

Prayan Animation Studio has partnered with Los Angeles-based Moonstar Animation, expanding its presence in the North American market. The collaboration focuses on content development and co-production opportunities. Prayan Animation CEO Vinayan V highlighted that with this partnership, the studio aims to bring its flagship preschool IP, *Shelly & Friends*, to a wider audience. The series promotes friendship and environmental awareness.

Moonstar, specialising in story development and pre-production, joins Prayan in advancing animation excellence. Alongside original projects, Prayan continues to work with global partners on animation services.

88 Pictures joins Gaumont Animation for Paul McCartney's 'High in the Clouds'



88 Pictures is the official partner for *High in the Clouds*, a 3D animated film inspired by the children's adventure book by Paul McCartney, Geoff Dunbar and Philip Ardagh. The film is being produced by Gaumont Animation, and 88 Pictures is in charge of its key animation elements.

The film's synopsis reads: *After he accidentally sparked a revolution against Gretsche, the bossy diva-owl who has banned all music from his town, a teenage squirrel named Wirral embarks on an extraordinary journey to set music free.*

High in the Clouds has already secured pre-sales in major global territories like the UK, Latin America, the Middle-East and South-East Asia.

Toonz Media Group partners with Japan's 1st Place and USA's Gummybear International

Toonz Media Group has partnered with Japanese creative production company 1st Place (*Clannad After Story*, *Angel Beats!*, *Mekakucity Actors*) to expand global anime production. The collaboration aims to offer high-quality, cost-effective solutions for anime and 3D CG creation, as well as bridge production gaps while maintaining artistic integrity. According to Toonz Media Group CEO P. Jayakumar, this move is a significant step toward strengthening India's role in anime, creating a sustainable pipeline for content across streaming, gaming and entertainment.

In another major development, Toonz and Gummybear International (GBI) are set to bring the Gummibär franchise to the big screen with *Gummibär and Friends: Operation Cotton Candy*, a 90-minute CGI animated spy spoof comedy. Acclaimed producer Robert Chandler joins the project alongside director Pete Dodd (*Corpse Bride*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*) and Bafta-winning writer Dan Berlinka.

Additionally, Toonz appointed Asiana Licensing as its official sub-agent for *Creepy Candy* merchandise in South Korea. Co-produced by Toonz and Leadbelly Productions, the animated series follows enchanted candies navigating mischievous adventures in a haunted library. Under this collaboration, Asiana Licensing will develop a dedicated product line featuring characters designed by Leadbelly Productions' Alan Summa.



Hymn for the stop-motion

In the stop-motion animated video 'Chalisa,' Swati Agarwal creates a musical rendition of 'Hanuman Chalisa,' a widely recited hymn across India

By Anshita Bhatt



Hanuman Chalisa is an Indian hymn dedicated to Hanuman, the Hindu God popularly known as the “Monkey God” outside India. This hymn, written by the Indian saint Tulsidas, is popular and widely sung in temples, at homes and during festivals in many parts of India. With 40 verses, the hymn has various renditions. One such rendition is *Chalisa*, a clay stop-motion animated musical by researcher, teacher and Indian animation filmmaker Swati Agarwal.

Since *Chalisa* is a music video, the process began with a soundtrack. “My friend Sudeep Shrivastava composed the music, reimagining *Chalisa* in a style that’s both playful and soulful,” says Agarwal. “The track weaves layers of electronic music with live Ghatam and flute. As the song progresses, the rhythm gradually intensifies and becomes more melodic.” For the vocals, Agarwal wanted a kid, which is how eight-year-old talented singer Mahika Singh became the voice of the hymn.

Chalking the film’s visual style

When she visited the historic Indian city Hampi in the south a few years ago, the idea for *Chalisa* was planted in Agarwal’s mind. After the birth of her son, she felt a strong calling to portray *Hanuman Chalisa* in a way

that is both visually powerful and uplifting. Hence, using clay was a conscious decision. “Children easily connect with clay. Many of us have played with our moms’ dough ducks and birds as children,” she explains.

Playing with clay

The focus of Agarwal’s team was to bring out Lord Hanuman’s attributes in this five-minute musical. Two of her team members studied each verse’s significance in addition to reading stories of Hanuman. They took references from Indian temple walls to create storyboards and animatics.

“To bring these ideas to life visually, we used clay on a sunboard to create raised designs inspired by temple murals. Our animated Hanuman character interacts with these carvings. For the more mystical parts of the hymn, we used clay on a glass table that is lit from below, to create a glowing, magical effect that stands out from the rest of the visuals,” she elaborates.

The backgrounds using clay – mixed with sand – were mainly handled by Reechik Banerjee, who drew inspiration from temples and Indian arts to create designs that balanced simplicity and detail.

“Since stop-motion doesn’t allow changes after a shot is captured, we ran



Swati Agarwal

several trials and tests before animating each one,” reveals Agarwal. “Most of the film was shot with a top down still camera. Our team member Palak Gupta parallelly composited the captured frames.”

Creative decisions and challenges

“To get the right look, we mixed sand into skin-coloured plasticine clay. Since the clay was getting hard, we used a hair dryer to soften it for easier carving. While designing Hanuman, we chose a minimal look instead of adding flowing hair and accessories; since the animation involved a lot of morphing,

Shooting the video with a top-down camera



For some parts of the video, the team used clay on a glass table that is lit from below. This was to create a glowing effect that stands out from other visuals



Swati Agarwal used clay on a sunboard to create raised designs, inspired by India's temple murals



complex details would have made it difficult,” Agarwal highlights.

“We also used laser cutting for a few shots, like the monkeys leaping in the mandala. We created and cut nine sunboard pieces, each showing a different monkey pose, to animate the movement smoothly.”

Instead of visually representing *Hanuman Chalisa* word by word, she wanted to convey the spirit of the hymn, making it kid-friendly at the same time. Striking a balance between being overly simplistic and overly sophisticated was a challenge that she eventually overcame.

Agarwal’s previous films *Gajar Ka Halwa* and *Lakshmi Aai Hai*, were both based on an elderly couple who looks for ways to enjoy life. “I like narrating stories that depict humour, warmth, and real-world observations. Because animation is a beautiful and tactile art form, it allows me to portray what’s within me,” she expresses.

Apart from filmmaking, she is passionate about teaching and regularly conducts stop motion animation workshops for people of all ages. She is currently pursuing a PhD in animation, during which she is exploring experimental techniques—some of which have the potential to evolve into compelling films in the near future. ■



Laser cutting to create multiple slides, each with different a monkey pose



Munjal Shroff

2024, a year of contrasts for AVGC-XR

In this exclusive column, FICCI AVGC-XR forum chairman Munjal Shroff offers his insights into the rapidly evolving landscape of the animation, visual effects, gaming, comics, and extended reality (AVGC-XR) industries.

The past year has been nothing short of fascinating for the AVGC-XR industries. It's been a year marked by notable developments - some exciting, others deeply challenging. What continues to make this industry so compelling is its vibrancy and its capacity to evolve. Regardless of any turbulence, this sector has always shown resilience, pushing forward with innovation and tenacity.

Shifting currents in India's entertainment Industry

In India, the entertainment ecosystem is currently navigating something that can be

described as a perfect storm. One of the most alarming trends of the past year has been the closure of several animation and VFX studios around the world. A significant driver of this shift is the substantial reduction in investments by OTT platforms, which once drove a wave of content creation across digital media.

Simultaneously, the traditional cable and satellite TV sector appears to have plateaued. With approximately 220 million homes already reached, the market is saturated. Subscriptions are beginning to decline as audiences migrate toward OTT services. However, a surprising area of growth is the Free Dish market, which has climbed from around 40 million to 43 million homes and is expected to reach 50 million in the coming years.

Bright spots: gaming and esports

Despite the headwinds, gaming continues to be a promising frontier. The Indian gaming market has shown amazing growth, with esports rapidly gaining popularity. Both sectors are attracting investment and talent, offering new career avenues and creative potential.

The XR space, while still in its nascent stage in India, is also showing promise – particularly in applications for museums and industrial training. XR and VR technologies are increasingly being recognised for their value in immersive learning environments, such as hazardous environment simulations or skill-based technical training.

Artificial intelligence (AI) disruption: a game-changer across the board

Undoubtedly, one of the most significant disruptors this year has been the explosion of AI. The AI “genie” is out of the bottle, and it is here to stay. Its impact is already being felt across all AVGC-XR sectors.

Artists, writers, and studios must now adapt to this reality. Learning AI tools and integrating them into creative and production workflows is no longer optional. AI is poised to streamline production pipelines, enhance efficiencies, and empower creators like never before. For instance, writers can now visualise characters, settings, and scenes with AI-generated visuals, while concept artists use AI for rapid ideation and reference gathering.



Krish, Trish & Baltiboy

AI's integration will reduce production timelines, increase efficiency, and potentially lower costs, though the infrastructure still comes at a price. While AI can accelerate output and assist in asset creation, the real differentiator will be originality. As AI becomes proficient in rehashing existing ideas, the demand for truly creative, novel, and unique content will rise. This is where talented artists and storytellers will shine.

Studios are already starting to adopt AI in meaningful ways across all roles, from animation production to asset design. The next frontier lies in mastering how to effectively and creatively make use of AI. As the tools improve rapidly, the quality and fidelity of AI-generated content is also rising. Every few months brings new models with better image quality and more intuitive outputs, making the creative process even more fluid.

Aglobal appetite for Indian stories

Looking beyond India, there's growing international interest in Indian content. Shows like *Mighty Little Bheem*, *Deepa & Anoop* have performed exceptionally well globally. Even culturally rich shows such as *Krish Trish and Baltiboy: Bharat Hain Hum*, which focuses on India's unsung freedom fighters, have made their mark on platforms like Netflix. It not only made it to the top 10 most watched shows in India but was also featured in the Netflix Global List of most watched shows worldwide for the period of July 2023 to Dec 2023.

This success signals a strong global appetite for authentic Indian narratives. As a result, there's a noticeable push to create more content rooted in Indian themes, not just in animation, but also in gaming. Several Indian-developed games currently in progress draw upon local mythology, history, and cultural stories, pointing to a promising future for 'Made in India' entertainment.

Embracing the future

The coming year holds immense potential for creators who are willing to evolve with the times. As AI, XR, and gaming technologies continue to redefine the AVGC-XR landscape, adaptability and creativity will be more critical than ever.

Whether it's leveraging AI to create, experimenting with immersive technologies, or telling uniquely Indian stories for a global audience - one thing is clear: innovation will remain the heartbeat of the industry and vital for growth. ■



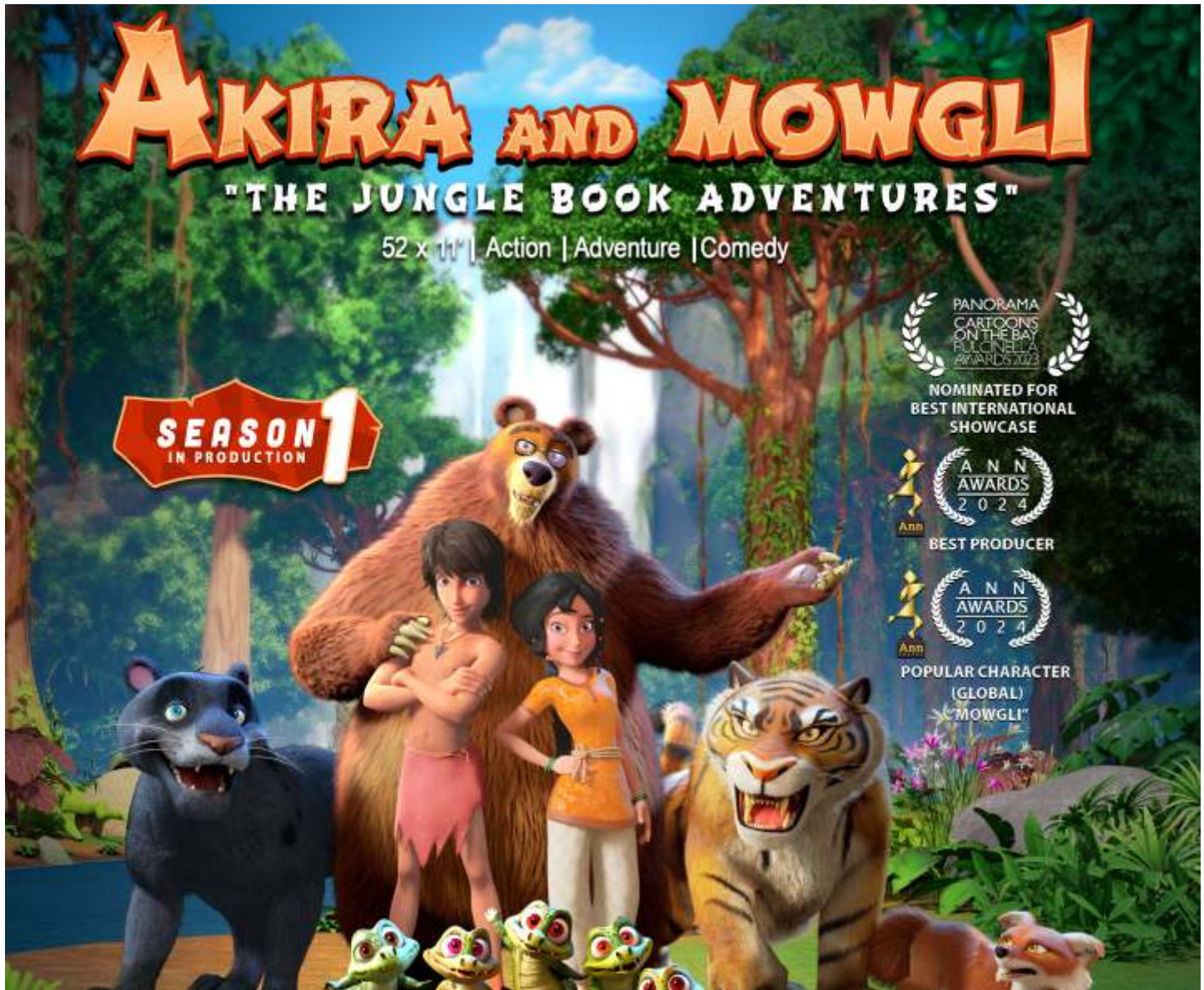
The Indian gaming market has shown brilliant growth, with esports rapidly gaining popularity. Additionally, XR and VR technologies are being recognised for their value in immersive learning environments.



New heroine roars in the jungle

Powerkids Entertainment anticipates strong interest from distributors and broadcasters at Annecy Film Festival for their latest venture 'Adventures of Akira & Mowgli'

By Binita Das & Anshita Bhatt



With *Adventures of Akira & Mowgli*, Powerkids Entertainment breathes new life into Rudyard Kipling's timeless world by introducing Akira—a strong, spirited female protagonist. Born from a desire to modernise *The Jungle Book* and meet the growing demand for inclusive storytelling, they have forged exciting collaboration with global partners.

Powerkids will co-produce the animated series with industry leaders: beIN Media Group, DeAPlaneta Entertainment, Telegael, Twelve P Animation, and Wall Peep. The show is currently in

fast-paced production, with a tentative completion date by the end of 2025.

As presales for this animated series begin at Annecy, Powerkids Entertainment CEO & managing director Manoj Mishra discusses collaboration, representation, and global ambitions in an interview with AnimationXpress:

***Adventures of Akira & Mowgli* introduces a new character, Akira, alongside the beloved Mowgli. What inspired the creation of Akira, and how does her character enhance the narrative of this spin-off?**



Manoj Mishra

Akira was born out of a desire to expand *The Jungle Book* universe with a fresh, dynamic perspective. She was introduced in response to industry demand for strong female leads. We wanted a character who could complement Mowgli's journey while adding depth to the adventure. Akira embodies resilience, curiosity, and a deep connection to the jungle, making her a perfect counterpart to Mowgli.

How do you balance staying true to the original *Jungle Book* essence while introducing fresh elements like Akira?

Staying true to *The Jungle Book*'s essence while introducing a bold new protagonist required careful storytelling. We maintained the rich, immersive world that audiences love while ensuring Akira's presence felt natural—an evolution rather than an intrusion. Her story intertwines with Mowgli's, exploring themes of unity, discovery, and courage.

The series is a collaborative effort with partners from Ireland, Spain, the UAE, and the Middle East. What unique perspectives do each of the co-producers bring to the project?

Despite coming from different regions, all our partners share a belief in modernising a classic tale. Their diverse experiences in storytelling, culture, and creativity enrich the project, helping us craft a narrative that feels globally resonant while staying true to its roots.

With the series set to launch presales at Annecy, what are your expectations from the festival?

Annecy is the perfect platform to showcase this series to a global audience. We anticipate strong interest from distributors and broadcasters looking for fresh, adventurous content with strong character-driven storytelling. Akira's presence adds a unique appeal, expanding the series' potential reach.

Could you delve into the creative process behind the series? How do the writers and animators collaborate to bring this world to life?

Writers and animators work hand in hand to breathe life into this project. Storyboarding sessions involve deep discussions about character arcs, visual aesthetics, and emotional beats. The animation team ensures fluid movement and expressive storytelling, making the jungle feel alive and immersive.

Diversity and inclusion are becoming central themes in children's content. How does Powerkids ensure these values are embedded in its storytelling and character development?

We actively ensure cultural sensitivity and meaningful character development in all our narratives. Powerkids is committed to embedding authentic representation in our stories. Akira's character is a testament to that, providing young viewers—especially

girls with a courageous, independent role model.

With a vast catalogue of titles, how does Powerkids decide on which stories to tell next? What criteria do you consider when greenlighting a new project?

Greenlighting a project involves evaluating its emotional impact, storytelling potential, and market demand. We prioritise stories that resonate across cultures and age groups, ensuring they offer valuable life lessons while delivering entertainment. *Adventures of Akira & Mowgli* was chosen for its ability to reimagine a classic in a fresh, compelling way.

Looking ahead, what are Powerkids Entertainment's goals for the next five years, and how do you plan to position the company in the global animation landscape?

Over the next five years, Powerkids Entertainment is committed to expanding its global reach through collaborations with like-minded partners, championing compelling narratives that redefine storytelling. Beyond leading in high-quality children's content across traditional and digital platforms, we aim to bring our beloved characters to life through merchandising, interactive apps, and immersive gaming experiences, ensuring our stories continue to inspire and entertain audiences worldwide. ■



Powerkids Entertainment portfolio

Indian stories take flight

Studio Jatayu welcomes B.S. Srinivas as strategic partner to drive India's original animation and comic IPs globally

India's Studio Jatayu, an animation studio dedicated to crafting culturally rooted stories with global appeal, has welcomed educationist and mediapreneur B.S. Srinivas as a strategic partner and business development director.

This collaboration can be seen as a turning point not only for the studio but also for India's growing creative-tech landscape. Srinivas brings over 25 years of pioneering leadership in the AVGC (animation, visual effects, gaming, comics) education space. He has been the force behind some leading institutions which include the recently launched Arena Animation mega centre and VedAtma College of Design, Technology & Management in Bengaluru. He will now bring his expertise to the world of IP creation.

Studio Jatayu founder Vishnuvardhan Reddy says, "Studio Jatayu was built with a singular vision, to craft stories that are deeply Indian in soul but global in scope. With B.S. Srinivas joining us at this pivotal moment, we're empowered to take our narratives from idea to international impact, with authenticity, innovation, and scale."

Studio Jatayu and Srinivas will debut their original IPs at two of the most prestigious global events: Annecy International Animation Film Festival and Mipcom Cannes. These launches will showcase storytelling rooted in Indian mythology, speculative fiction, and transformative character arcs developed in collaboration with the creators of India's Forbidden Verse Comics.

Studio Jatayu will soon launch the teaser of two of their flagship IPs: *Academy of Gods* and the animated series *Girl & the Monster*. *Academy of Gods* will launch as comics first, offering fans a transmedia experience that is both deep and visually striking.

The studio's co-founder and creative director Debalina Dasgupta shares, "We are mythmakers for the modern world. Whether it's through our comics or animation, we are building worlds that challenge the mainstream and celebrate Indian identity. With this partnership, we are ready to share these stories with the

world not as underdogs, but as pioneers."

The studio's chief strategy officer and Forbidden Verse Comics strategic partner Ajai Krishna adds, "This collaboration is about scale, vision, and purpose. Together as a team, we're building more than just launchpads, they are the first steps in a global creative movement."

The company has also announced the presale of its first original comic IP in June. This launch marks the official entry of Studio Jatayu into the global collector and fandom space, offering early access to premium editions, exclusive artwork, and behind-the-scenes creator content. ■



B.S. Srinivas



Vishnuvardhan Reddy



Academy of Gods is a high-concept mytho-fantasy series that reimagines ancient deities as young rivals in a celestial academy where divine lineage meets rebellion, power, and destiny.



Girl & the Monster is a gritty, emotionally rich fantasy that explores the fragile yet fierce bond between a girl and a legendary beast. In this whimsical tale, a young girl named Meenu visits her grandmother's village, where she has a strange encounter with Simhatala and forms an unexpected friendship. Together, they embark on a heartwarming adventure, facing dark forces and unraveling the mystery behind the village's curse. As they strive to stop people from fleeing, they must confront and defeat the evil that haunts the land.

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philmCGI clocks eleven

From a car conversation to the Cannes red carpet, Pune-based studio philmCGI celebrates 11 splendid years in animation and VFX

By Binita Das



A still from 'Black Warrant'
Photo: facebook/ApplauseSocial

What began as mere chatter during a car drive has revved up into a creative powerhouse. philmCGI, the Indian animation and visual effects maestro, is toasting 11 rollicking years in an industry often accused of being a bit... well, static. With over 80 projects for 50-plus clients and a hefty crew of 250 across Indian cities of Pune and Thrissur, this studio is clearly no flash in the pan.

Founders Anand Bhanushali and Arpan Gaglani didn't just stumble into success; they

drove there with a clear vision.

Their early cunning move?

Ditching the drudgery of mere outsourcing to become full-throttle storytelling partners in cinematic capers both homegrown and global. Their wizardry has graced the screens of high-profile productions like *Jubilee*, *Chamkila*, *Ctrl*, *Black Warrant* and *Inspector Rishi*, cementing their role in narratives that pack a punch.

Then came the *Homebound* moment. philmCGI's VFX artistry in the film garnered a

nine-minute standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival. Not just a pat on the back, mind you, but a thumping validation of their artistic grit and technical pizzazz.

"Witnessing the standing ovation was an unforgettable moment; it affirmed the hard work of our entire team," recalls Gaglani, who also served as VFX supervisor for the project.

Talk about a scene-stealer!

Scaling up has meant growing pains, but philmCGI has kept its core values firmly

Anand Bhanushali



Arpan Gaglani



bolted down: collaboration, quality, and innovation.

“Over the past 11 years, we have evolved immensely in terms of scale, creative direction, and technological capabilities,” chirps Gaglani. Bhanushali adds, “We have always worked closely with our clients, ensuring their vision is realised with excellence. At the same time, we have invested heavily in innovation to stay ahead of the curve.”

Good show, chaps!

Currently in the pipeline is *Heirloom*, directed by Upamanyu Bhattacharyya, produced by Mumbai's Odd & Even Pictures and Kolkata's Otter Studios. It's a poignant narrative set in the 1960s, exploring themes of tradition, progress, and familial bonds. This 2D animated feature selected for Annecy's WIP section – proves philmCGI isn't

just resting on its laurels, it's sketching out the future

“It's a blend of artistry and smart technology,” says Bhanushali, highlighting their knack for scalable, remote-friendly wizardry. From the gritty realism of *Qala* and *Kaala Paani* to the whimsical world of *Karate Sheep* and *Oggy Oggy*, philmCGI's portfolio is as varied as a box of assorted chocolates.

And their strategy?

“Early-stage involvement and cutting-edge tools,” according to Bhanushali, ensures both top-tier quality and nippy efficiency in today's rather demanding production schedules.

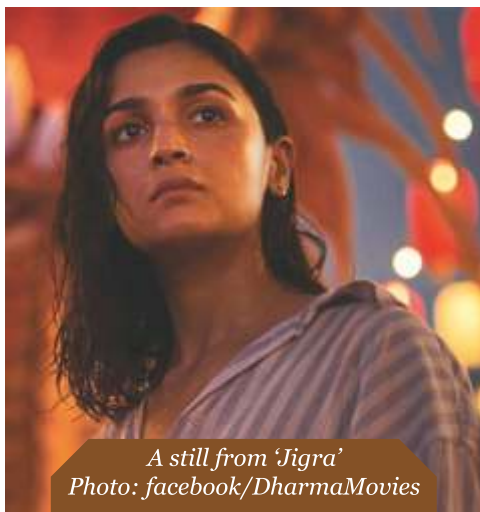
Looking ahead, philmCGI isn't just dabbling; it's diving headfirst into original intellectual properties (IPs).

“Our identity is that of a narrative-first studio,” beams Gaglani. “We combine Indian

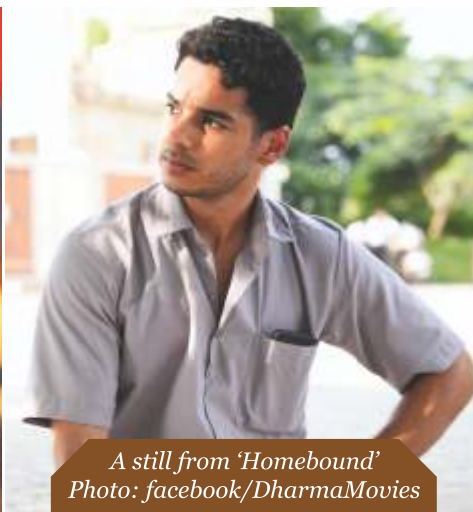
storytelling traditions with a global sensibility.” The aim is to craft stories with an India at Heart theme, ready to conquer the world stage. And guess who's invited to the party? AI, naturally, to streamline workflows and even spark creative ideas.

“Our vision is to use technology to amplify creativity; AI is becoming integral to that mission,” Bhanushali quips. With a growing presence at international gatherings like Kidscreen, MIPCOM, Annecy, and the film festival in Cannes, philmCGI isn't just showing up; it's making a statement: India's AVGC-XR sector means business. At 11 years young, philmCGI isn't just celebrating a milestone; it's laying down a legacy, one visually stunning frame at a time.

That's something worth doffing our hats to. Take a bow Anand and Arpan. ■



A still from 'Jigra'
Photo: facebook/DharmaMovies



A still from 'Homebound'
Photo: facebook/DharmaMovies

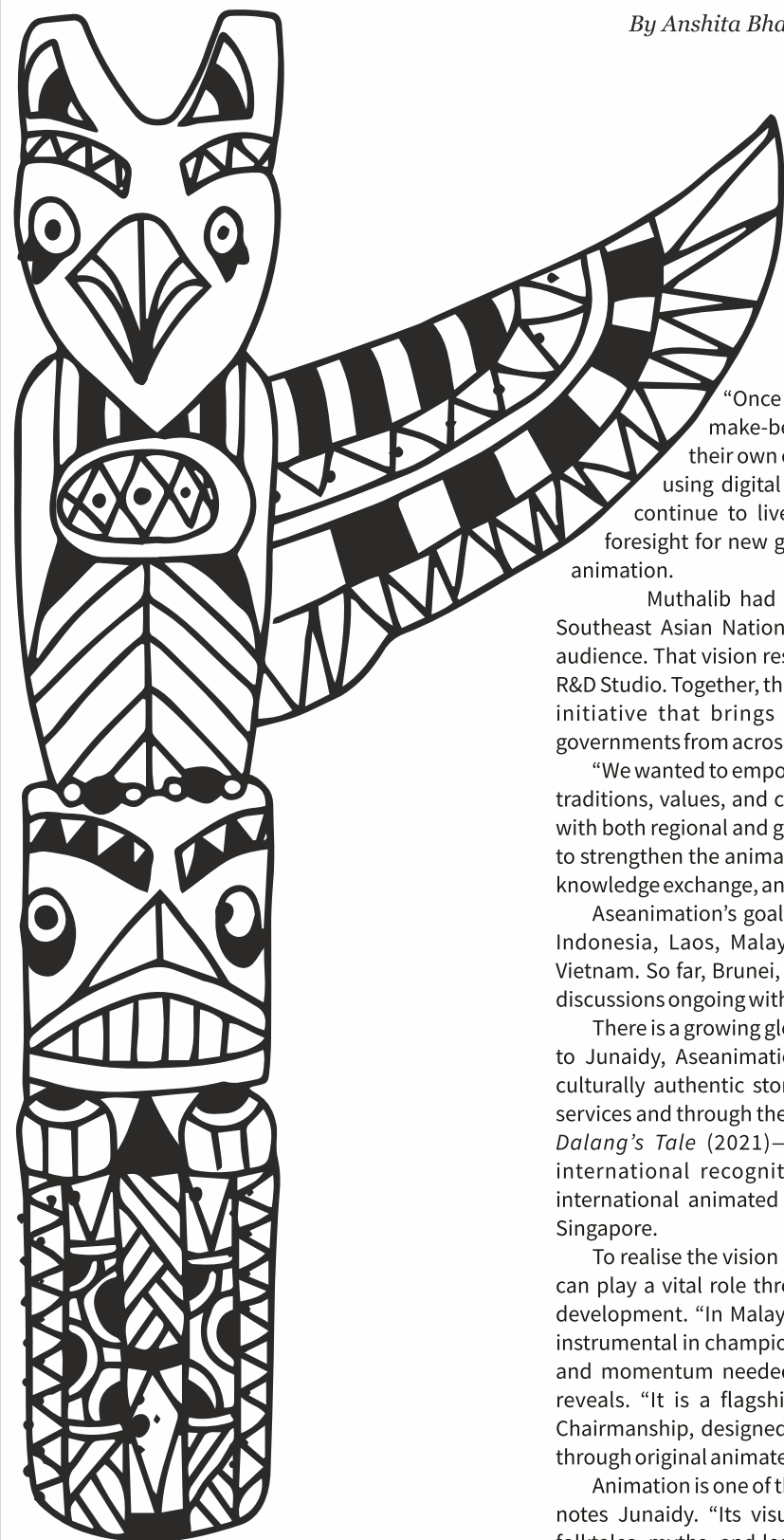


A still from 'Qala'
Photo: facebook/OfficialCSFilmz

Animating Asean's soul

Fuelled by a shared cultural legacy and animation, Southeast Asia's storytellers are coming together to revive ancient legends for the modern world

By Anshita Bhatt



“Once upon a time in cinema, stories of fantasy and legend were all make-believe. Today, Asian animation filmmakers are rediscovering their own country's legends and folktales, and turning them into content using digital technology. The stories, cultures and traditions of the past continue to live on in the present, imparting their timeless wisdom and foresight for new generations,” says Hassan Muthalib, the pioneer of Malaysian animation.

Muthalib had long envisioned a future where ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries would collaborate to create films for a global audience. That vision resonated with Irwan Junaidy, the co-founder of Malaysia's The R&D Studio. Together, they launched Aseanimation – an animated short film anthology initiative that brings together animators, storytellers, cultural experts, and governments from across Southeast Asia.

“We wanted to empower Asean voices to tell their own stories, rooted in our diverse traditions, values, and cultural identities, and to present them in ways that resonate with both regional and global audiences,” highlights Junaidy. “This initiative also aims to strengthen the animation ecosystem by encouraging international co-productions, knowledge exchange, and talent development across member states.”

Aseanimation's goal is to include all the ten Asean countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. So far, Brunei, Indonesia and Singapore have confirmed participation, with discussions ongoing with the remaining countries.

There is a growing global demand for fresh, culturally grounded content. According to Junaidy, Aseanimation has the potential to meet this demand by showcasing culturally authentic stories on international platforms like film festivals, streaming services and through theatrical releases. Junaidy's own films—*Batik Girl* (2018) and *The Dalang's Tale* (2021)—two culturally inspired animated shorts, have gained international recognition. *The Dalang's Tale* was part of Spectrum, the first international animated short film anthology co-production between Malaysia and Singapore.

To realise the vision of Aseanimation, Junaidy feels that key government agencies can play a vital role through policy frameworks, funding mechanisms, and industry development. “In Malaysia, MDEC (Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation) has been instrumental in championing digital content creation and providing the infrastructure and momentum needed to bring regional initiatives like Aseanimation to life,” he reveals. “It is a flagship cultural project launched under Malaysia's 2025 Asean Chairmanship, designed to showcase the rich heritage of Southeast Asian countries through original animated shorts.”

Animation is one of the most powerful formats for telling culturally inspired stories, notes Junaidy. “Its visual versatility makes it ideal for adapting and reimagining folktales, myths, and legends, as well as for developing original narratives rooted in



L to R: Irwan Junaidy, Michelle Sta Maria (MDEC), Anuar Fariz Fadzil (CEO of MDEC), Hassan Muthalib, Aik Wee (MDEC)

culture. Through abstraction, symbolism, and visual metaphor, animation can capture the richness of Asian traditions in ways that are emotionally resonant and accessible to global audiences. When approached with care and authenticity, animation becomes a bridge between generations and cultures, preserving heritage while encouraging creativity and innovation.”

Aseanimation has, in part, been inspired from global models like *Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire* on Disney+, which demonstrated the power of regional storytelling on a global stage. But for Junaidy, their initiative is more than just an anthology. “It’s a cultural movement,” he says.

“Aseanimation invites governments, studios, educators, and audiences to support and celebrate our shared heritage,” he says. “By investing in regional collaboration, we’re not just making films, we’re shaping the creative future of Asean. Let’s make history together, through animation!” ■



A hairy business

Through her animated film 'Hairy Legs,' Andrea Dorfman questions cultural practices and explores themes of free will, belonging and patriarchy

By Anshita Bhatt



A still from *Hairy Legs*

Andrea Dorfman is a self-taught animator. Her evolution as a filmmaker can be witnessed through the animation techniques she used in her films: stop-motion and time-lapse in *Flawed*, then evolving to puppet making and working with layers, and then to pen and ink/watercolour classical animation in *Big Mouth*. In her latest short *Hairy Legs*, which is also selected in the official competition of Annecy Film Festival, Dorfman incorporates various animation styles that she wanted to learn, but uses them creatively to tell different chapters of her story.

Hairy Legs is the story of a 13-year-old girl who refuses to shave her legs, and this small yet life-changing act of rebellion sets her on the road to womanhood and feminism. The film is a production of the National Film Board of Canada.

In an interview with AnimationXpress, Dorfman talks about *Hairy Legs*, as well as using art and animation to discover herself, to examine the world, and to interpret her experiences.

***Hairy Legs* is a deeply personal story. Was this an idea you've carried for a long time, or did it emerge organically at a particular moment in your filmmaking journey?**

Hairy Legs is a story I've wanted to tell for a long time. Removing hair is expensive, time consuming and sometimes painful, yet it's a practice that's come to be expected for most women. Who's asking us to do this? Do we actually have free will? Who's benefitting and profiting from women having to remove body hair? I question cultural practices like these and how, when it comes to gender, we often take these practices for granted despite the fact that they may not benefit us.

In your film, you categorise hairy legged women into three groups. To me, it talks about "belonging" and finding a place in society. Could you walk us through your writing process and how you shaped those themes?

I completely agree—belonging is essential to the human experience. When we don't belong, in a primal sense, we won't survive. But it's equally important to determine which practices of belonging are healthy and which aren't. It's important to question what we're asking of one another to belong, instead of blindly going along with an agenda someone else has determined for their benefit. Having hairy legs might not save the world, but the question of why we get rid of the hair on our legs might lead to



Andrea Dorfman

questioning other practices we engage in, to belong – practices that might be unhealthy for women, society or the planet.

You explore powerful themes such as gender, identity, capitalism, and patriarchy in *Hairy Legs*. How have these shaped your worldview?

As a teenager, I started to see how capitalism and patriarchy are the driving forces behind so much of our human experience. Understanding how they worked together was like a veil lifting. *Hairy Legs* might be a small personal story, but it helped me to

understand how we give up our freedoms in order to belong to a society that might not have our best interests at heart.

The film's blend of stop-motion puppetry and hand-painted classical animation is striking. Could you elaborate on these techniques?

Hairy Legs is told through different chapters, and I wanted each to have a different look/animation technique, reflecting the theme of that specific chapter in the trajectory of my life through the lens of gender (and whether or not to shave my legs). I had a lot of fun coming up with these different looks, beginning with more rigid puppetry and ending with watercolour 2D frame-by-frame animation that was more free and whimsical.

One aspect I love about animation is how using different techniques can help tell a story. I'm experimental and exploratory in creating and gathering tools for my animation toolbox as I evolve. Eventually, I draw on these tools on the next film(s). *Hairy Legs* is a culmination of all I've learned up until now.

***Hairy Legs* is part of the Annecy official selection - congratulations! What does this acknowledgment mean to you?**

I am thrilled and honoured to be a part of the Annecy Festival! This is the second time I've had a film at the festival but the first time I'll be attending. I'm so excited to see incredible animation from all over the world. I'm also grateful to be a part of the rich and beautiful body of work that the National Film Board creates. We're so lucky that we have the NFB in Canada and it helps us get the films we create out to the world.

What stories or projects are you excited to explore next?

Oh gosh, so many ideas and projects! I'm currently creating a commissioned animation that brings to life a body of research that Dalhousie University has compiled on youth and homelessness across Canada since the pandemic. I always have my own animation projects on the go and have begun working on a script for an animation about letter writing and friendship and how we learn to love. I'm also in the early stages of a graphic memoir about my complicated feelings about fashion. I never lack ideas, just the time I have to create everything I want to make! ■



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- Licensing, merchandising & cosplay culture
- Fandom zones & creator interactions
- Collaborations with Japanese IPs & platforms



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Wool, wonder and a walk with shepherds

Studio Eeksaurus' animated short 'Desi Oon' throws light on shepherds who dedicated their lives to preserving an Indian breed of sheep and its wool

By Binita Das



This year, *Desi Oon* (meaning traditional wool) stands out as the sole Indian official selection at the Annecy International Animation Festival—an exceptional honour that highlights a project deeply rooted in India's pastoral heritage. Directed by Suresh Eriyat and produced by Studio Eeksaurus, the film's inclusion in the world's most prestigious animation, showcase signals more than just creative validation. "It's a precious film to us—both in its intent and execution," says Eriyat. "For a story so deeply Indian to find space on a global platform means the world. It reaffirms that our rooted stories can have universal resonance."

The film tells the story of India's indigenous Deccani sheep and the wool they produce—a tale woven with care, quite literally, through the medium of wool itself. With *Desi Oon* reaching the global platform, Eriyat hopes it sparks international attention and support for the issues it highlights: reviving the wool economy, sustaining pastoralism, and preserving a traditional way of life that's quietly disappearing.

A year among shepherds: learning the language of wool

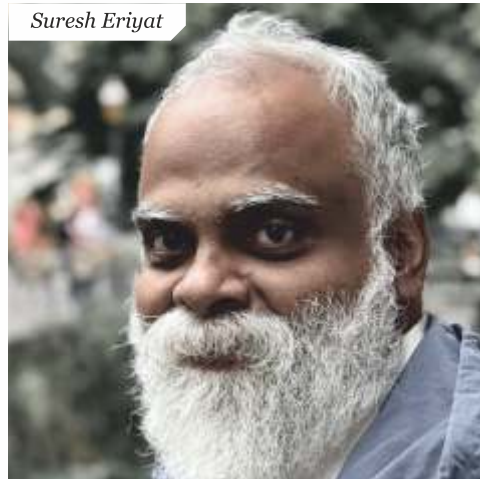
Why tell a story through wool? For Eriyat, it was both a poetic and purposeful decision. "India has 42 breeds of sheep—we're one of the world's top wool producers, yet the pastoral economy is vanishing quietly," he explains. The Deccani sheep, native to the Deccan plateau, became the ideal protagonist. "We wanted to speak directly to those who live with wool every day—so we used Deccani wool to animate the story. It gave the film texture, emotion, and authenticity."

The storytelling choice is also deeply symbolic. In *Desi Oon*, wool is not just material—it's the narrator, giving voice to the land, the sheep, and the shepherds.

The film's journey began in mid-2023 with months of research, leading to a deep collaboration with the Centre for Pastoralism. "By early 2024, I was walking with the flocks myself," Eriyat shares. He made the storyboard right after his personal journey with the flocks. He was in touch with members from Centre for Pastoralism and Samagata Foundation supported the cause.

These immersive experiences shaped the film's tone and visual identity. By August, the full team had joined the shepherds, and

Suresh Eriyat



production began in full swing. From ideation to completion, *Desi Oon* took a year. The actual stop-motion shoot, executed using real wool, was completed in just four months. "We worked across two parallel setups, something we are very proud of, given the material's complexity."

Crafting emotions in texture and sound

Studio Eeksaurus is in constant pursuit of what serves the story best—even if it means taking a path no one has walked before.

Working with wool in stop-motion posed significant challenges.

“None of us had ever done this before,” Eriyat admits. Yet those challenges brought unexpected creativity. “Though the wool was mostly grey and black, the team found ways to create depth and visual richness. It pushed everyone to think differently.”

The music and sound design played a vital role in amplifying the film’s emotional resonance. Lyricist Swanand Kirkire lent his voice to the wool-narrator, crafting folk-inspired verses that carried the story forward. National Film Award-winning composer Rajat Dholakia recorded live folk musicians in Mumbai to preserve cultural authenticity, while Oscar-winner Resul Pookutty’s sound design completed the immersive experience.

Adithi Krishnadas, a director from Studio Eeksaurus, crafted the animatics, while senior creative lead Nijin developed the visual tone. Stop-motion animator Aman Gupta led a team—many of whom were new to animation but brought an extraordinary level of creativity and dedication.

Honouring Balu Mama: a shepherd’s shepherd

At the heart of *Desi Oon* is Balu Mama, a real-life shepherd who dedicated his life to

preserving the genetic purity of Deccani sheep. Alongside his wife, Satyava, he resisted the tide of crossbreeding and helped sustain a traditional, symbiotic relationship between people, sheep, and land.

“Balu Mama’s story is a symbol of resilience and vision,” says Eriyat. “The Deccani sheep are not just livestock, they’re ecosystem engineers. Their existence supports soil health, biodiversity, and rural livelihoods.”

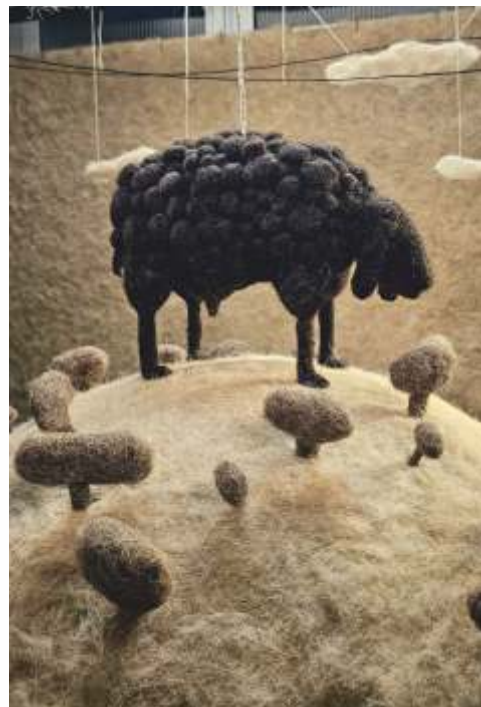
Story paves the way

Studio Eeksaurus has long been celebrated for its design-driven, story-first approach. “We never begin with a style,” says Eriyat. “We start with the story and let it decide its visual language.” This ethos, combined with fearless experimentation, has earned the studio several Annecy selections over the years – including a historic Cristal award in 2015. At Studio Eeksaurus and during his time at Famous Studios, he has witnessed 15 of his films being officially selected at the prestigious event.

For Eriyat and Studio Eeksaurus executive producer Nilima Eriyat, Annecy is more than just a festival. “It’s a global pulse of what animation can be,” he reflects. “Every year, it reminds us of the medium’s limitless potential.” With *Desi Oon*, that

potential is realised through an intimate and expansive story, a lyrical homage to a disappearing world told through the voice of wool itself.

In its gentle textures and powerful message, *Desi Oon* invites viewers not just to watch, but to feel and perhaps to act. ■



Love, war, peace and beyond

In his animated short 'At Night,' Iranian filmmaker Pooya Afzali places the ugliness of war in contrast with the beauty of peace

By Anshita Bhatt



In the midst of war, a man watches his beloved one by lighting the three matches he has left. Then, in the pitch darkness, a forest grows from their lovemaking and protects them from the war.

Years ago, Iranian animation filmmaker Pooya Afzali read *Paris at Night*, a poem by Jacques Prévert. He interpreted it this way: A lover—almost as if in a state of war—watches his beloved with the light of three matches. Afzali adds, “I asked myself: what could happen next? How could this poem, with its tension between love and war, become the foundation for a narrative in animation?” That idea gave birth to his animated short *At Night*, an Official selection at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival 2025.

“Being selected for Annecy—the most prestigious animation festival in the world—is truly an honour. For me, it feels like a meaningful reward for all the challenges and hardships I've faced over more than twenty years of working in animation,” shares Afzali, the writer, director and producer of *At Night*.

Afzali's generation in Iran opened its eyes to the world in the midst of the Iran-Iraq war.



In his opinion, there is no deep pain in the Iranian society that doesn't, in some way, trace back to war. “From childhood until now, not a single moment has passed without the shadow of war looming over us. With my film, I wanted to place the ugliness of war in contrast with the beauty of peace. Fantasy, as a powerful tool within the animation medium, has greatly helped me tell this story in a way that is both emotionally resonant and visually expressive.”

A major challenge was funding this independent film. “Since I financed the film myself, the biggest challenge was funding. Iran's economy—affected by sanctions and the continuous devaluation of the national currency—makes it extremely difficult to produce animation independently,” he explains. “Additionally, censorship under the Islamic Republic has led me to the conclusion that the only way to make the kind of film I truly want is to fund it myself. This independence, though challenging,

allows me to create work that is honest and uncompromised.”

Afzali fondly remembers the early years of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, when animated films were broadcast on national television. That era sparked his interest in the medium. “It planted the seed that eventually grew into a deeper passion for storytelling through animation and filmmaking,” he recalls.

Apart from making animated films, he

also writes poems. “At one point, I was trying to write poems that, when read, would create an animated image in the reader’s mind. Later, I rewrote some of those poems as scripts for animated content. For my next project, I plan to turn one of them into an animated film.”

At Night is being screened during the Annecy Film Festival taking place in France from 8 to 14 June 2025. ■



Pooya Afzali



Animating ‘At Night’: The Artistry of Hojjat Azampour

In the making of *At Night*, director Pooya Afzali’s other challenge was the animation. “I wanted it to be both realistic and dreamlike at the same time,” he mentions. “Achieving that balance wasn’t easy, but thanks to the artistry of Hojjat Azampour, it became possible.”

Azampour worked as the animator and character developer on *At Night*. He animated the scenes, shaped the personalities of the characters, and designed their layout and visual flow within each shot.

Elaborating on the animation technique, he says, “We used traditional 2D animation, fully executed with digital tools. While the process was hand-drawn, working digitally allowed us flexibility while retaining the handcrafted feel.”

For him, the project was rewarding and memorable. He shares, “One of the biggest challenges I encountered was animating human hands and facial expressions—elements that are always among the most complex aspects of 2D character animation. The film required a strong sense of realism, which added another layer of difficulty. While some suggested using rotoscoping to ease the process, I deliberately avoided that route in order to maintain the organic and expressive quality of the animation. Instead, I relied on multiple thumbnail passes and exploratory sketches to resolve the emotional and physical demands of each scene while keeping the animation cohesive and alive.”



Hojjat Azampour

Brewing sake and stories

In *'The Taste of Water,'* filmmaker Riki Ohkanda brews an evocative love letter to Japan's national drink, blending human touch with artificial intelligence

By Anshita Bhatt



It all started when historian and film director Riki Ohkanda moved to Japan. Her fascination with the Japanese alcoholic beverage sake led her to document the various labels she tried at restaurants. But everything changed when a friend invited her to a tasting fair for buyers in Akita, the northwest prefecture of the country. “I was hooked,” she recalls. “Why did three types of sake from the same brewery look the same? Why did they still taste so different?” Finding answers to questions like these led her to realise that sake is multifaceted, and this knowledge needed to be shared. Years later, that idea has materialised.



Ohkanda is directing a documentary feature *The Taste of Water*, which will take viewers through the basics of sake production, its history, its cultural impact and its current crises. “Through the protagonist Ohkado, I hope to show how fun sake is, not only as a drink, but also as a source of cultural inspiration,” she explains.

But what sets *The Taste of Water* apart is its inventive production pipeline: it combines live-action footage with 2D and 3D animation, enhanced by AI-driven rotoscoping techniques. Producer Nakajima Ryo reveals that AI has been baked into the creative process from the get-go. “The decision to move forward with AI was made after the director offered a compelling vision for how it could enhance the storytelling,” he says. “We began exploring generative AI in creative production as early as 2022 and developed this project with AI integration from the start.”

Ohkanda outlines the hybrid workflow: sketching a storyboard, filming live-action elements, applying a base rotoscope, expanding it with AI-generated visuals, and finally refining each frame with hand-drawn animation. “I see AI like clay,” she says. “It gives us a base, but the expressive,

imaginative touches must come from the human hand.”

One of the biggest advantages of using AI, Ryo notes, is that a small team can manage the production. But it hasn’t been without challenges. “Sometimes, AI won’t do what I want at all—it just goes in a completely different direction,” says Ohkanda. Ryo adds, “AI can be difficult to control.” To address this, the team developed proprietary control tools. “In terms of time, it’s roughly comparable to traditional animation—maybe slightly faster—but human-led corrections are still essential.”

While some creators rely entirely on AI from concept to final cut, Ohkanda sees its real potential in historical storytelling—where elaborate visuals and costumes might otherwise be cost-prohibitive—and in multilingual projects, where strong stories and performances often face linguistic limitations. “We see AI as a tool to support human expression,” says Ryo. “Human creativity must stay at the core.”

The Taste of Water will be released in five 20-minute chapters, with the first slated for release by the end of 2025. “We believe anticipation will grow as we near completion,” Ryo says. “Sake enthusiasts

and industry insiders are already helping spread the word.” By releasing the documentary in chapters and sharing its behind-the-scenes process, the team hopes to build ongoing engagement with the audience.

Produced by Supersub, the documentary is part of the Tokyo Pitch at Annecy Festival’s MIFA, and is presented by Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG), as part of the Tokyo Animation Business Acceleration Program (TABAP). “The TMG has been incredibly supportive,” Ryo shares. “They’re not just offering funding, but also helping unlock each project’s creative potential.”

The Tokyo Pitch at Mifa will take place on 10 June, 5:15 pm at the Impérial Palace Haendel. ■

Riki Ohkanda



Nakajima Ryo



(Images courtesy: © Supersub LLC)



Slightly uncomfortable truths

From repressed emotions to the pressure to conform, Calleen Koh's films dissect the human condition. In *'My Wonderful Life,'* she ventures into darker territory — the haunting spectre of existential dread

By Anshita Bhatt



Still from *'My Wonderful Life'*



Calleen Koh

In Singapore, “chao keng” describes the common act of pretending to be sick to skip work.

“The fact that we have an official term for this is both hilarious and mildly concerning,” says the Singaporean animation filmmaker Calleen Koh. “I wanted to tap into this cultural phenomenon and weave it into my film *My Wonderful Life*.” The animated short is the story of an overworked mom who collapses at work and gets admitted to a hospital where she finds newfound freedom as a patient.

With this film, Koh wanted to explore themes of existential dread, “because sometimes, the only real break from life’s chaos is in the unlikeliest of places,” she notes. In many ways, the film is inspired by

her mother.

In late 2023, Koh’s mother was hospitalised (she’s fine now). She somehow got upgraded to a private suite and was thrilled. “For someone who had been hospitalised, she was weirdly happy. She sent me pictures of herself grinning in a hospital gown. She posted photos of her meals on Facebook,” recalls Koh. “The hospital which felt like a vacation to her was this perfect blend of tragicomedy that sparked the idea for a film about an overworked mother who finally finds peace when she gets admitted to a hospital.”

In her earlier films like *Hot Buns*, *To Kill the Birds & the Bees* and *Sexy Sushi*, the worlds feel bigger than the characters and chaotic things just happen, she shares. Before her

mentor at California Institute of the Arts pointed this out, Koh was hesitant to delve into character-driven narratives. “But with *My Wonderful Life*, the story felt personal and grounded, with the character having more agency in a realistic world,” she reveals. “I loved exploring a character like the mother, who is unfiltered, flawed, and deeply relatable. It’s a shift in my filmmaking that I’m excited to keep exploring.”

My Wonderful Life has been selected in Annecy Film Festival’s official competition. “It’s surreal. I didn’t expect this to happen so early in my career, and it feels incredibly affirming,” she expresses.

Through her films, Koh loves to make people laugh before giving them a reality check. “While I use elements of surrealism and pop cultural chaos on the surface, underneath, I am exploring what it means to suppress desire, maintain appearances, or conform to expectations,” she notes. “Growing up in conservative Singapore, I was surrounded by a culture of repression. People did not talk about sex. Mothers were not allowed to rest. Even protests required a permit and were limited to a small park in the city. I never felt at home in that world, and my work has always been a way of breaking out of it. Animation lets me distort reality just enough to tell slightly uncomfortable truths. I am drawn to stories that are unhinged and personal, but also culturally critical.”

Koh has been fascinated with animation since she was 11 years old. While pursuing her MFA in Experimental Animation from California Institute of the Arts currently, she is also working on a horror-comedy short called *RIP Me, Lol* as well as developing an adult animated series titled *Down at Motel 629*, which won the Best Pitch Award at SXSW’s Series Fest Pitch-a-thon.

“Across my films, genre becomes a tool for exposing pressure points within culture,” she highlights. “I make films that are honest, empathetic, and audacious in their own way—because sometimes, laughing at your pain is the first step to healing from it.” ■



Zoom calls and sleepless nights

My Wonderful Life was created by a small production team of just four people, including Calleen Koh. “It was an ambitious undertaking given the scope of the project,” she says, “but I’m proud of the workflow I developed to keep things efficient and collaborative.”

Despite the size of the team, the production spanned multiple time zones. Koh worked from California, while her art assistant was based in Thailand, her animation assistants in Indonesia and Singapore, her composer in Paris, and her voice actors and producer also in Singapore. “Coordinating schedules was incredibly challenging,” she recalls. “My sleep cycle has probably been permanently affected. I even directed the voice recording session over Zoom at 5 am from my bathroom, trying not to wake my roommate — we were sharing a studio flat at the time.”

Working within a limited budget, Koh says she was mindful not to place excessive demands on her team. “I tried to accommodate their schedules and respect their time as much as possible, and I think that helped build a supportive working environment,” she explains. She also experimented with ways to make the production pipeline more flexible. “Everyone gave their best, regardless of their personal or professional circumstances — and that made all the difference.”

Namaste MIFA! - The incredible stories from India

By Jagruti Sardar

It is time for the Indian touch! At Namaste Mifa, six incredible projects will take centre stage during the prestigious India Partner Pitch, taking place at MIFA (International Animation Film Market), during the Annecy International Animation Film Festival. These projects emerged at the International Mifa Campus held at AniMela festival in Mumbai, India in partnership with Annecy Film Festival. Under the mentorship of experts like Reza Riahi, Johanna Goldschmidt, and Delphine Nicolini, eight artists prepared to showcase their work at Namaste Mifa.

Namaste Mifa will be held on 11 June, from 3:30 to 4:45 pm at Haendel Room, Impérial Palace Hotel. Below are the projects:

My First Kiss

By Shrobonika Dasgupta

• **Type of Project:** Short film, 2D digital animation, hand drawn paper animation

• **Credits:** Shrobonika Dasgupta

Synopsis: *My First Kiss* is a story of Little Rani whose art teacher touches her in ways no adult has touched before. This story is about navigating the confusion, fear, silence and trauma that a child goes through when sexually abused.

"I always wondered, why do most Indian families choose to not talk about child abuse, especially when the perpetrators are sometimes family members," exclaims Shrobonika Dasgupta.

Through her feature film, she intends to evoke conversations on good touch and bad touch and aims to raise awareness about the environments and individuals that surround children, with the hope of helping build a safer childhood.



Shrobonika Dasgupta



Daak

By Rahul Chakraborty

• **Type of Project:** Short film, 2D hand drawn animation

• **Credits:** Rahul Chakraborty, Gunjan and Akash Tapadar

Synopsis: *In the Sundarbans, 15-year-old Dukhe sets out to find rare honey to save his father but unwittingly endangers the forest's guardian, a shapeshifting tiger deity. Pulled into a mystical realm, Dukhe must harness newfound powers to save the deity—and the forest—from destruction.*

Daak is an attempt to highlight the importance of forest conservation, and at the same time, acknowledge the human need for resources, striving to balance consumption with sustainability. "Through extensive study of literature and films on the subject, I developed a perspective that moves beyond absolute distinctions, embracing the complexities of coexistence," says Rahul Chakraborty.



Rahul Chakraborty



Patangein

By Arya Pandey

• **Type of Project:** Short film, 2D digital animation

• **Credits:** Arya Pandey, Parth Kelkar and Studio Disco Jetpack (producer)

Synopsis: *Patangein* is the story of Zeeshan, a young barber in the Indian city of Lucknow, grappling with the loss of his brother Zubair. When a moment forces Zeeshan to confront his fears, he begins to see that healing lies not in forgetting, but in passing love forward.

Arya Pandey's short film is inspired by the bond his Nana (maternal grandfather) shared with his own elder brother. "*Patangein* is an attempt to encapsulate my Nana's childhood stories, but I also wish to dedicate the film to anyone who has lost a dear one," says Pandey.



Arya Pandey



Work in Progress

By Sneha Das and Subarna Dash

• **Type of Project:** Documentary feature, mixed media (Stop motion and 2D animation)

• **Credits:** Sneha Das, Subarna Dash and Mark D'Rozario (animator)

Synopsis: *From bleached underwear to mommy issues, Work in Progress is an animated documentary about the journey through the wonderfully messy world of womanhood. Over the course of 70 minutes, this film explores self-discovery, body image, and relationships.*

"The themes we explore in *Work in Progress* are taboo for many," says Sneha Das. "While India has certainly progressed in many ways, women speaking openly and unapologetically about their personal experiences can still be uncomfortable for a large section of the audience." Subarna Dash adds, "Mixed media animation, especially at a feature-length scale, is still relatively new in India, and not something that easily fits into conventional funding frameworks. A project like this requires both time and a significant budget, which can be difficult to mobilise."



Subarna Dash

Sneha Das



M.O.M. - Ma On a Mission

By Rituparna Sarkar and Sruti Menon

• **Type of Project:** Animated series, 2D animation

• **Credits:** Rituparna Sarkar, Sruti Menon, Joeanna Rebello Fernandes (story), Visual Sarkarm (producer), Sruti Menon, Rituparna Sarkar, Arnab Dhar, Riddhi Gad, Rucha Mayekar and Kalp Sanghvi (art and animation)

Synopsis: *M.O.M - Ma On a Mission follows Tara Menon, an overprotective mother with superpowers—and no desire to be a superhero. Married to a gadget-obsessed Malayali, she prefers using her powers at home to manage her teen and toddler. But when her abilities are accidentally exposed on social media, her quiet life unravels. After her son is kidnapped into an alternate digital dimension, Tara must confront her identity crisis and enter a world she's wholly unprepared for.*

Rituparna Sarkar and Sruti Menon wanted to tell a story about real and relatable urban Indian characters, the kind they grew up with. "The role of the modern Indian mother is a complex one, and one that popular Hindi cinema depiction often doesn't do justice to," notes Sarkar. They bridge this gap in *M.O.M - Ma On a Mission*, which takes inspiration from strong mother figures they have known.



Rituparna Sarkar



Sruti Menon



Penumbra

By Taher Kapadia

• **Type of Project:** Animated series, 2D animation

• **Credits:** Taher Kapadia and Tejaswat Kadam

Synopsis: *In the realm of Penumbra, superstitions are no mere tales; they manifest as tangible horrors, fueled by unyielding belief. As belief intensifies, these spectral entities awaken, transforming into embodiments of humanity's darkest fears. Fear spreads and strengthens the belief, giving birth to a self-perpetuating cycle. Until recently, these spirits lay dormant, their impact limited by their invisibility to common folk. But now, their powers surge exponentially, sowing widespread dread. An anonymous and malevolent group of people has learnt to wield these supernatural forces, manipulating them like puppeteers pulling strings of mass hysteria to serve their sinister desires. Amidst this impending doom, Manohar and his council of the spirit hunters need to capture and conceal these apparitions, shielding them from the public gaze.*

Kapadia mentions, "Giant monsters, bizarre demons, strange heroes there's something timelessly entertaining about that. And honestly, who doesn't want to see our heroes rise up and take them down? A major hurdle for us was to build a consistent story and connect the narrative threads in a way that is engaging. That is where the mentorship at AniMela helped."



Taher Kapadia

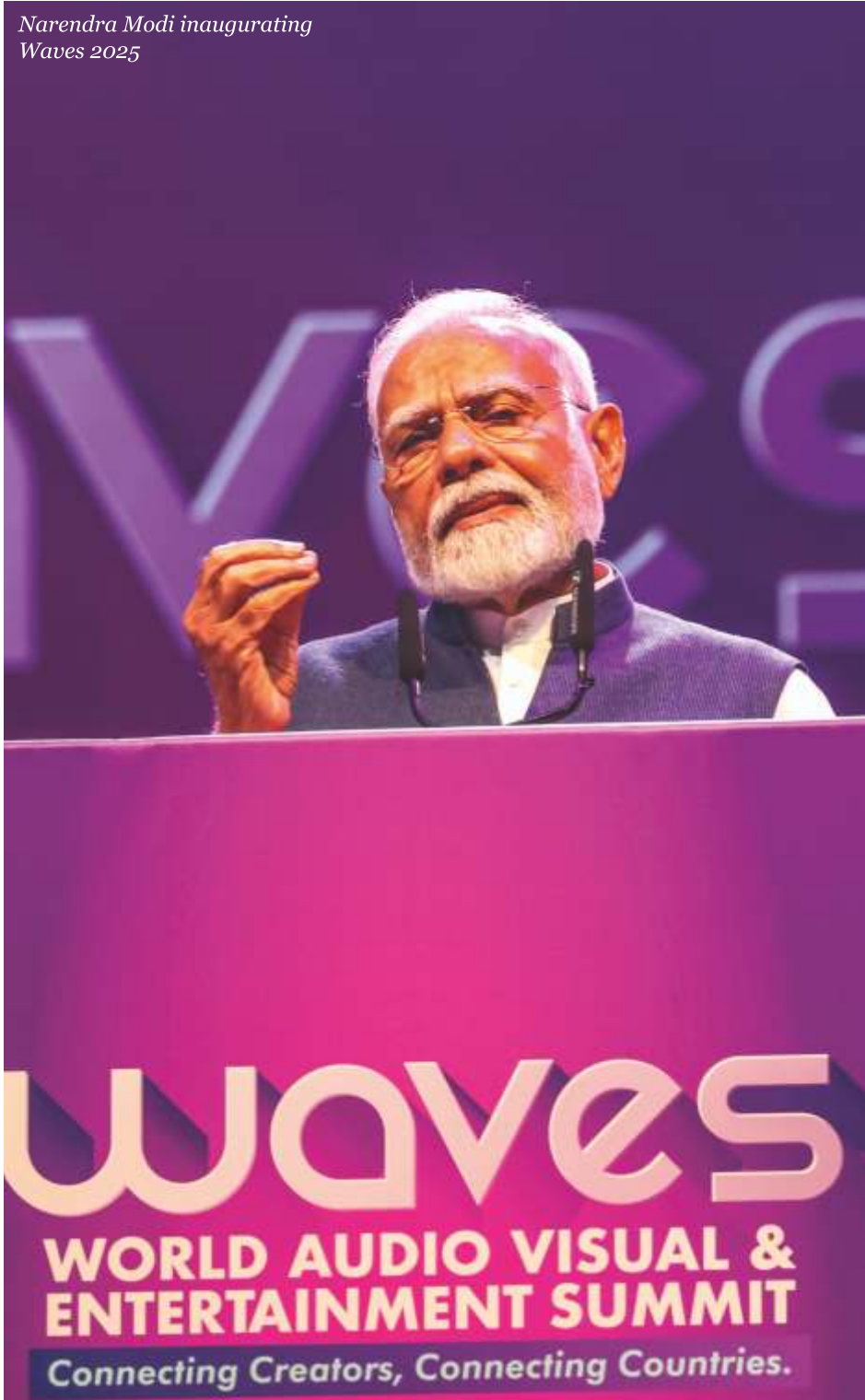


Waves 2025: India's call to create

Waves summit showcased the expansive world of films, music, gaming, animation, and storytelling, offering a global platform for artists and creators to connect and collaborate.

By Binita Das

*Narendra Modi inaugurating
Waves 2025*



India hosted the inaugural World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES), a landmark, first-of-its-kind global event at the Jio World Centre in Mumbai from 1 to 4 May, 2025. Spanning four days, the summit was inaugurated by prime minister Narendra Modi, who underscored the historic significance of the occasion.

In his address, the PM highlighted that artists, innovators, investors, and policymakers from over 100 countries had convened under one roof to shape the future of the global creative economy. He emphasised that Waves marks the beginning of a new era in international collaboration, aimed at building a robust, inclusive ecosystem of talent, innovation, and storytelling that transcends borders.

“Waves is not merely an acronym but a wave representing culture, creativity, and universal connectivity,” Modi remarked.

In a landmark initiative, the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT) launched a series of high-impact collaborations in the AVGC-XR sector with global industry leaders. These collaborations aim to strengthen India's position as a global hub in media, entertainment and immersive technologies. Union minister of



"The first-ever edition of Waves launched successfully with a participation of more than 1,00,000+ creators from over 90 countries. The Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT) have forged a series of high-impact collaborations in the AVGC-XR sector with global industry leaders. Waves Bazaar successfully conducted over 3900 one-on-one business and co-production meetings in four days of Waves conference. The marketplace generated over Rs 1300 crore in business discussions spanning multiple sectors, including films & TV, animation & VFX, XR & VR, live events, gaming, comics, and music & radio, from the M&E industry."

Ashish Kulkarni | Founder - Punaryug Artvision & Director - IICT

state for information, broadcasting and parliamentary affairs, Dr. L Murugan released five significant reports that collectively present a comprehensive overview of India's dynamic and rapidly evolving media and entertainment ecosystem.

The summit also held Waves Bazaar, a global marketplace for media & entertainment industry connections. The buyer-seller market emerged as the event's most successful vertical, facilitating over 3,300 B2B meetings and generating more than Rs 900 crore in business transactions. Almost hundred projects were showcased in the viewing room and 15 market screenings. Creators from around the world presented their intellectual properties, opening the door to fresh collaborations and establishing Waves Bazaar as a key hub for groundbreaking ideas and innovation.

Waves 2025 brought together stalwarts from various verticals of the media and entertainment industry. Some of them were Prime Video head of international & vice president Kelly Day, vice president Asia Pacific & Mena Gaurav Gandhi, Nontetra director & CEO Makoto Tezka, The Anime Times Company president Hideo Katsumata, Blue Rights CEO Makoto Kimura, Re Entertainment CEO & president Atsuo Nakayama, JioStar business head – kids entertainment and infotainment Anu Sikka, Netflix India content vice president Monika Shergill, JioStar chief product officer Bharath Ram, Sony Pictures Networks India MD & CEO Gaurav Banerjee, Hungama Digital Media Entertainment founder & CEO Neeraj Roy and many more. ■



Global firms, including Google, Meta and Microsoft, sign an MoU with the Indian Institute of Creative Technology (IICT)



Actors Shah Rukh Khan (centre) and Deepika Padukone (right) join film producer Karan Johar (left) for an unfiltered conversation, tracing their incredible journey

Power Talk: Animation, VFX & beyond

Leaders from the animation, VFX, and broadcast industries reflect on India's growing presence at Annecy International Animation Film Festival 2025—and the evolving future of the industry. From cutting-edge storytelling to global collaborations, they explore what's driving the momentum.

Biren Ghose | Chairman – CII National AVGC Committee & Ex MD – APAC Technicolor

Indian animation is leveling up with studios like Mikros Animation (ex Technicolor, now Rodeo FX), 88 Pictures, Digitoonz, and DNEG taking Indian talent and studios to global scale and significance! This shift is unlocking big-ticket opportunities for our creators, studios, and co-producers on the world stage. Annecy is the heart of all the legendary festival-meets-market where deals are made, careers are launched, and stories find global wings. With Animela taking a sharp, new generation of Indian creators into this arena, we're not just showing up — we're making a statement. No matter if you're a professional or a student, a creative or an executive — Annecy is the pilgrimage to renew your faith in the future of this medium.



Ambesh Tiwari | Business Head, Sony Kids and Animation

As content consumption continues to evolve, there's a growing opportunity for the industry to rethink how we engage audiences meaningfully. It's a timely moment for stakeholders to collaborate and innovate towards sustainable models that bring lasting value to both viewers and advertisers.



JETRO (Japan External Trade Organisation)

Jetro is dedicated to enhancing Japan's content industry, with a particular emphasis on fostering growth in the animation, gaming, music, and comic sectors. To this end, Jetro is undertaking initiatives to strengthen its B-2-B support system by leveraging its overseas offices and industry partnerships. Our objective is not only to promote the Japanese content industry in India but also to raise awareness of the Indian market among Japanese companies. This will be accomplished through the organisation of business development activities and the expansion of networks with Indian stakeholders.

ANIMATION XPRESS' ANIMATION & MORE SUMMIT 2025 RETURNS WITH ANIMATION CREATORS PITCH AND DEBUTS ANIME INDIA

AnimationXpress' highly anticipated annual animation conference, Animation & More (AM) Summit 2025, is set to return with an extraordinary addition: Anime India 2025, the nation's first dedicated anime convention. The AM Summit will unfold across three days, from 22 to 24 August 2025, at Nesco in Mumbai, India.

AM Summit 2025

The AM Summit, comprising panels and making-of sessions, will delve into critical industry themes such as broadcaster-brand partnerships, IP expansion, L&M, penetration into new markets, and monetisation avenues.

Animation Creators Pitch (ACP)

Returning for its third consecutive year, the ACP remains a cornerstone of the summit. This initiative connects creators with industry experts to pitch ideas, fostering innovation and diversity in animation storytelling. Interested participants can register on the AM Summit website (refer to pg.15), after which shortlisted pitches will undergo evaluation by a panel of industry veterans at the AM Summit. The winning

pitch will be revealed during the prestigious Ann Awards 2025.

Ann Awards

The Ann Awards ceremony on 23 August will recognise excellence and honour the most distinguished talents in the animation industry.

Anime India

Taking place on 23 and 24 August, Anime India is designed to engage aficionados of anime, manga, light novels, visual novels, Japanese video games, Vocaloid, J-Pop, and a myriad of other Japanese media and subcultures. With an estimated attendance of 20,000 individuals, the convention promises to feature exclusive screenings, panel discussions, Anime India concert, Anime India B2C expo, and much more.

Here's what to expect:

- **Flagship Anime Expo:** Experience an unprecedented gathering of leading broadcasters, streaming platforms, and anime studios, elevating the South Asian anime scene to new heights.
- **Merchandise Hub:** Browse and purchase

official anime merchandise, manga, books, collectibles, and more from licensed vendors and IP creators. Anime India upholds a strict zero-tolerance policy against counterfeit goods.

- **Creators' Alley:** Independent artists and cosplayers will get a dedicated space to showcase and sell their original works.

- **Immersive Experience Zones:** In collaboration with anime clubs and special interest groups, unique activities will offer fans hands-on engagement.

- **Japanese Culture Pavilion:** Delve into traditional Japanese arts and customs, including yukata try-ons, origami workshops, calligraphy, and sumi-e painting demonstrations. Additionally, enjoy exquisite Japanese and pan-Asian cuisine at the food court.

- **Gaming Arena:** Discover and play an eclectic selection of Japanese-origin video games, ranging from esports titles to casual pick-up-and-play experiences.

Other on-stage highlights:

- **Industry Announcements:** Gain exclusive insights into upcoming anime titles, IP launches, and major revelations from renowned Japanese studios and Indian distributors.

- **Competitions Galore:** Engage in contests such as the Anime Quiz and the Anime India Idol competition, culminating in the ultimate showdown of passionate anime fans from across the country.

- **Screenings + Q&A Sessions:** Attend exclusive anime premieres and curated screenings, followed by interactive discussions with special industry guests—either in person or via live streaming.

- **Anime India Concert:** The event's grand finale, the Anime India Concert, will showcase performances by distinguished Japanese artists, including South Asia's first-ever holographic Vocaloid concert.

With anime fandom in India experiencing a surge, boasting millions of dedicated viewers and rapidly growing communities, Anime India 2025 is poised to set new benchmarks in delivering an unparalleled fan experience at global standards. ■



7TH EDITION OF ANIMATION XPRESS' ANN AWARDS INVITES ENTRIES FROM ACROSS ASIA

AnimationXpress' esteemed Ann Awards is back for its seventh edition, reaffirming its commitment to recognising and honouring the finest creative minds in the animation industry. Entries are now officially open, with AnimationXpress expanding its reach this year to accept submissions from across Asia.

Dedicated to elevating industry standards and spotlighting remarkable talent, Ann Awards are hosted annually as part of AnimationXpress' Animation & More (AM) Summit. This year's summit will take place from 22 to 24 August 2025 at Nesco in Mumbai, India. The Ann Awards ceremony will be held on 23 August, the second day of the summit.

The awards will celebrate exceptional contributions, with categories spanning television, digital/OTT platforms, commercials, short films, feature films, independent and student work, as well as service work. Additionally, two prestigious accolades, the Ram Mohan Award and the Arnab Chaudhuri Award, will recognise outstanding achievements and innovation, ensuring every facet of the animation industry receives its well-deserved recognition.

Emerging directors and filmmakers are invited to submit their work for the Arnab Chaudhuri Director's Awards, which is divided into two distinct sub-categories. The **Arnab Chaudhuri Animation Ace Award** celebrates trailblazing directors whose boundary-pushing narratives and unique creative voices are shaping the future of animation. The **Arnab Chaudhuri Young Ace Award** is dedicated to student filmmakers who demonstrate exceptional ingenuity and originality, redefining the medium with their fresh perspectives.

The Ram Mohan Award recognises a true pioneer whose work has had a profound impact on the field. stands as a pinnacle of achievement within the animation industry. The recipient is nominated by AM Summit Advisory Board members and Ann Awards Jury members.

To qualify for the Ann Awards 2025, projects must have been publicly available for viewing between 1 August 2024 to 1 August 2025. Entries may include content in English or any other languages with English subtitles. For further details on the registration process, submission guidelines, and award categories, please visit the official Ann Awards website: annawards.com

Join us as we celebrate innovation, artistry, and the boundless potential of the animation industry at Ann Awards 2025, where creativity meets global recognition! ■



PRESENTING THE CATEGORIES FOR ANN AWARDS 2025

Programming

Best Preschool Show
Best Animated Full-Length Feature Film
Best 3D Animated Series
Best 2D Animated Series

Social Media

Best Animated Video on Social Media
Best Reel with the Use of Animation
Best Social Media Presence by an Animation Platform/Studio

Digital OTT

Best Animated Full-Length Feature Film
Best Animated Digital Series – 2D
Best Animated Digital Series – 3D
Best Use of Animation in a Music Video
Best Animated Short Film
Best Acquired Movie
Best Acquired Series
Best Localised Animated Show
Pre-School (Digital/OTT)

Technical Individual Achievement

Best Character Designer
Best Animator
Best Director in Animation
Best Music Composition
Best Screenplay Writer
Best Producer
Best Concept Artist
Best Dialogue Writer
Best Art Director
Best Modeller
Best Storyboard Artist
Best Layout Artist (Animation)
Best Composer
Best Lighting Artist

Technical

Best Title Song
Best Editing in Animation
Best Animated Project in Metaverse

MAM-Media Advertising and Marketing

Best Animated Brand Film
Best Digital Campaign for an Animated Series
Best Brand Collaboration
Best Experiential Marketing
Best Innovative Campaign
Best Use of Animated Character in a Brand TVC
Best Promo

Live Action for Kids

Best Live Action Kids Show

Technology

Best Technical Innovation
Best Software Used in Animation
Best Hardware Used in Animation
Best Use of AI

Partner/Services

Best Preschool Show
Best Animated Full-Length Feature Film
Best Animated Series
Best Animated TVC
Best Animated Digital Series
Best Partnered Animation Work
Best Character Design
Best Producer
Best Art Director
Best Storyboard Artist
Best Lighting Artist
Best Title Song
Best Animator – Male
Best Animator – Female

Animated Feature Film

National
International

Student-Short Film

Best Student 3D Film
Best Student 2D Film

L&M— Licensing and Merchandising

Best Animated Character Merchandise
Best Use of Leveraging a Character for Brand Marketing
Best Licensed Animated Series Programme
Best Animated Series Merchandise

Arnab Chaudhuri Awards

Arnab Chaudhuri Animation Ace Award (By Nomination Only)
Arnab Chaudhuri Young Ace Award

Special Awards

Young Animator of the Year
Best Use of Animation in a Public Service Message
Studio of the Year
Best Director of Animated Series
Best Syndicated Content
India's Most Loved Animated Character
Contribution to the Animation Industry
Popular Character (Global)
Best Indie Studio
Animation Personality of the Year

Bonjour Annecy!

Presenting a glimpse of leading Indian studios and their upcoming projects

By Binita Das

This year, Indian animation studios are making a vibrant mark at the prestigious Annecy International Animation Film Festival, bringing with them a diverse slate of projects that reflect the country's rich storytelling heritage and growing prowess in global animation. From culturally rooted narratives to cutting-edge visual styles, these studios are not only showcasing their creativity but also positioning India as a dynamic hub for original, globally resonant content.

Many of India's leading animation studios are long-time participants at Annecy, having established a strong presence over the years and forged valuable global partnerships through the festival. As the world's animation community converges in Annecy, India's presence promises fresh perspectives, unique voices, and a celebration of stories that are as imaginative as they are impactful.

Toonz Media Group

Projects: Toonz will be showcasing its slate of original titles: *Misfit Manor*, *Witch Detectives*, *CID Squad*, and *Isa's Edible Adventures*.

Details:

- ***CID Squad*** is a graphic novel-style action mystery series that brings stylised visual storytelling and layered intrigue to the screen.
- ***Misfit Manor*** is a high-energy screwball comedy packed with offbeat humour and unpredictable characters.
- ***Isa's Edible Adventures*** follows a gifted seven-year-old culinary prodigy who uses a dash of magic to transform wishes into unforgettable dishes. The story blends fantasy, food, and emotional storytelling.
- ***Witch Detectives***, a co-production with Mediawan, France, offers a unique twist on the magical girl genre, fusing mystery with themes of empowerment and friendship.

"We are proud to be participating once again in the Annecy International Animation Film Festival and Mifa. Toonz is sending a strong delegation this year, and I'm personally leading the team. Annecy remains one of the most prestigious gatherings in our industry – a global convergence point for creativity, innovation, and meaningful collaborations in animation," says Toonz Media Group CEO P Jayakumar.



Assemblage Entertainment

Project: World premiere of *Stitch Head*

Details: It is a CG comedy-adventure feature produced by Gringo Films, Fabrique d'Images, and others. The animation work has been done by Assemblage Entertainment. Directed by Steve Hudson and based on Guy Bass's beloved book, the film reimagines the Frankenstein mythos through a humorous and heartfelt lens. The voice cast includes Asa Butterfield, Joel Fry, and Tia Bannan.

"Assemblage Entertainment is participating in Annecy and Mifa 2025. We're proud to return this year as partners for Namaste Mifa by AniMela, an initiative spotlighting original Indian voices on a global platform," shares Assemblage Entertainment CEO Arjun Madhavan.

Vaibhav Studios

Project: Awaiting the theatrical release of the animated feature film *Return of the Jungle*.

Details:

Blending timeless tales from the beloved ancient fables of the *Panchatantra* with a quirky, modern twist, *Return of the Jungle* is set in contemporary India and follows a spirited group of junior school classmates as they band together to outsmart the biggest—and meanest—bully in school.

“The entire Indian animation ecosystem has been eagerly awaiting the release of *Return of the Jungle* for a long time. We hope to share some good news this year,” reveals Vaibhav Studios founder, director Vaibhav Kumaresh. He is not attending Annecy this year nor presenting any project, but feels glad to see team India at Annecy in full strength.



Prayan Animation

Upcoming project: *Run Dino Run*, *Bobby & Beta: Hero for Toys*, *Shelly & Friends*, *Norman and Fudgy*

Details: All the IPs are in the early stage of the development and the studio is currently looking for pre-buy, co-production partners and investments.

- ***Run Dino Run*** is a non-dialogue animated show. This is a fun-filled adventure about a clever and lovable baby Dino living on an isolated island. He keeps playfully peeking at Victoria, a fame-seeking palaeontologist, and her quirky team.

- ***Bobby & Beta: Hero for Toys***: When four-year-old Bobby and his loyal robot buddy Beta travel through a cool portal to an imaginative world of toys, they go from being a regular kid and his robot to amazing superheroes dedicated to helping toys in need. Their greatest superpower is the awesome might of their friendship!

- ***Shelly & Friends*** is about the adventures of a group of quirky underwater pals in their vibrant ocean home. Led by the optimistic Shelly, this diverse group of sea creatures navigates the challenges of friendship, problem-solving, and environmental stewardship.

- ***Norman and Fudgy***: Norman and his robot friend Fudgy run a toy repair shop where they provide physical and emotional therapy to broken toys... who comes to life!

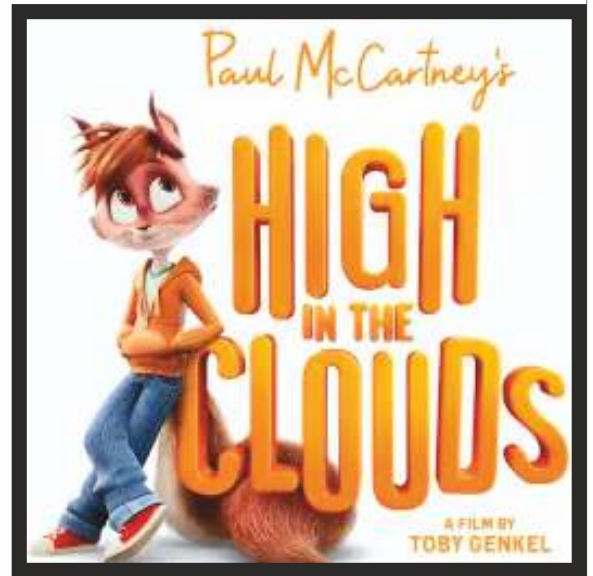
Prayan Animation Studio CEO Vinayan Vijayan and MD Remesh Ramachandran are looking forward to key aspects of the Annecy Festival like networking and collaborations, discovering new talent and trends, inspiration and learning and showcasing Indian animation.

88 Pictures

Upcoming project: *High In the Clouds*

Details: The film is an adaptation of the children's novel with the same name, written by Paul McCartney and Philip Ardagh. The film is being produced by Gaumont Animation, and 88 Pictures is in charge of its key animation elements. The voice cast for this project includes Celine Dion, Himesh Patel, Hannas Waddingham, Idris Elba, Lionel Richie, Ringo Starr, Jimmy Fallon, to name a few.

"Annecy is a great place to connect creative talent from all around the world. It's a unique gathering of people where you get to witness various creations from large studios to independent artists. We have been able to meet some great talents, many studios and people around the world with whom we didn't have connections in the past," highlights 88 Pictures founder & CEO Milind D Shinde.



Saffronic

Upcoming project: Disney's *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse+* for Disney Junior (currently in production)

Saffronic will be attending Mifa for the third year in a row. They have also just kicked off work on an exciting new, yet-to-be-announced project with DreamWorks Animation Television.

"Annecy is such a great forum to bring the industry together, so I am looking forward to seeing what everyone has been up to over the last year. I'm also looking forward to the opportunity to showcase all the great work that the Saffronic Team has been doing and to discuss future collaborations along with bringing people up to speed with our recent studio expansion in Bangalore," shares Saffronic business development SVP Kristy Scanlan.

(US-based Saffronic operates in India as a Tech Mahindra company.)

Kayra Animation

Upcoming project: A 2D animated series in collaboration with a US-based partner

Details: It is a meaningful project with social depth, and Kayra Animation will lead the animation and production for the show. At Mifa, the studio is engaging in conversations around co-production and service collaborations.

"Annecy is where ideas take flight. I'm especially looking forward to insightful, open-ended conversations with global creators, buyers, and producers—across formal meetings, casual encounters, and co-production forums. These interactions often shape our roadmap more than any single pitch or panel," notes Kayra Animation founder & CEO Arpit Dubey.



AN INITIATIVE BY

Animation
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MUMBAI
INDIA 

AUGUST
22 - 24

Mumbai transforms into a
multiverse of motion.

From AI-driven stories to
anime-tech crossovers,
Animation & More
Summit brings the future
to life.

The next wave of creative
innovation starts here.

Know More:

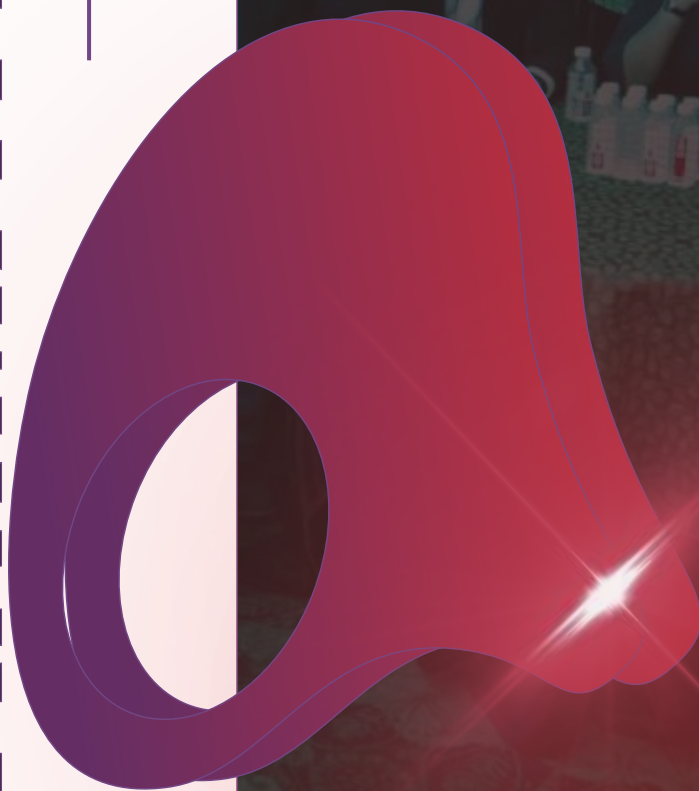


ANIMATION & MORE SUMMIT 2025

7th EDITION

**MOTION
MEETS
MAGIC**

- PANELS
- MASTERCLASSES
- TECH-ZONES
- COLLABS
- EXPO
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