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OCTOBER | 2024

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FROM THE EDITOR

India has developed as a prominent player in the global audiovisual sector, attracting the interest of companies throughout the world. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has persistently championed the “Design in India, Design for the World” goal, leading the country towards innovation and leadership in this field. The establishment of the National Centre of Excellence (NCoE), currently known as the Indian Institute of Creative Technology, is a significant step in this direction. Its goal is to foster a new ecosystem for the AVGC-XR (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comic-Extended Reality) industries, which have become the backbone of the audiovisual sector.

India’s rising leadership in Artificial Intelligence (AI), combined with strong technical skills, is accelerating the evolution of the AVGC-XR industries and establishing the groundwork for their future. Nearly a dozen Indian states have recognised the importance of this sector and are actively developing laws to promote its expansion. Platforms such as the WAVES Summit, which has been planned in New Delhi in February next year, are set to play a critical role in promoting India’s talent and knowledge on a global scale.

This year is the fifth edition of the Bharat Pavilion at MIPCOM 2024, which is organised by the Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) with cooperation from the Indian Government’s Ministries of Information and Broadcasting and Commerce and Industry. SEPC has also published the Indian Content Guide 2024, which lists content for sale and

co-production initiatives. With over 100 Indian firms and studios, as well as 225 attendees, India’s presence at MIPCOM continues to increase.

In this special MIPCOM 2024 edition of Pickle, we are excited to provide the most recent trends, insights, and possibilities in the media and entertainment (M&E) scene. MIPCOM is unquestionably one of the world’s best media events, where delegates can network with the sharpest business minds, discover emerging trends, and form collaborations that will define the industry’s future. It’s a must-attend event for executives trying to keep ahead of the fast changing media industry landscape.

Several notable Indian media and entertainment firms, including Zed Content Sales, IndiaCast, Green Gold, Powerkids, Toonz Animation Group, Shemaroo Entertainment, Klay Entertainment, DANGAL TV, and Ultra YoBoho, are regular attendees at MIPCOM. These companies have seen considerable benefits from exporting their content and services on a worldwide scale.

Looking ahead, our November issue will focus on the American Film Market and Location Expo. We also encourage you to attend the 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) and Film Bazaar in Goa this November.

Keep up with the ever-expanding Indian M&E industry!



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Pickle is an ad supported business guide tracking the filmed entertainment business in India.



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the content
year starts

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LUCKY #MYHERO

MIPCOM This Week



SPAIN: COUNTRY OF HONOUR AT MIPCOM 2024: The Country of Honour recognition comes with Spain’s content sector having experienced significant growth in recent years as a major international production hub, and as a proven provider of quality content to global audiences that consistently ranks amongst the most viewed worldwide. Spain currently sits second only to the UK in scripted TV commissions in Europe from global streaming platforms. Meanwhile, Spain’s entertainment sector, which includes OTT video services such as Netflix, Amazon, HBO, and Disney+, has been experiencing remarkable growth. According to the 2024 Spain AVS Hub report, the sector surged by an impressive 408% between 2018 and 2022, with a projected growth of 31.6% from 2023 to 2027.



Covering the area at the intersection of content, technology and changing audience behaviours, and housed in a new dedicated purpose-built space within the Palais des Festivals, The MIP INNOVATION LAB will host a daily curated programme with dedicated summits on FAST, AI, Streaming and Connected TV aimed at equipping companies with the latest insights and introductions to potential partners in these rapidly evolving sectors. Evan Shapiro to interview: David Eilenberg, Head of Content, Roku, Cédric Dufour, CEO & President, Rakuten TV, Olivier Jollet, EVP and International General Manager Pluto TV Claire Basini, Deputy General Manager in charge of BTOC, TF1

MEDIA MASTERMIND KEYNOTE - SPAIN: WHERE TALENT IGNITES. A fireside conversation with multiple award-winning Spanish Director and Showrunner J.A Bayona, (A Monster Calls, Society of the Snow) and Creative Producer Diego Betancor (Elite, Todas las veces que nos enamoram, Respira).

“The fastest developing areas that are shaping the future direction of the television industry are now at the heart of the Palais and of the market.” said Lucy Smith Director of MIPCOM CANNES and MIP LONDON. “We’ve built a destination with a ‘who’s who’ of key players speaking, a host of cutting-edge technology-led companies exhibiting and unrivalled matchmaking opportunities. Everything in the MIP INNOVATION LAB is geared to helping businesses adapt, identify opportunities, find potential partners and unlock further potential revenue streams. We expect it to be energising, prescient and highly productive.”

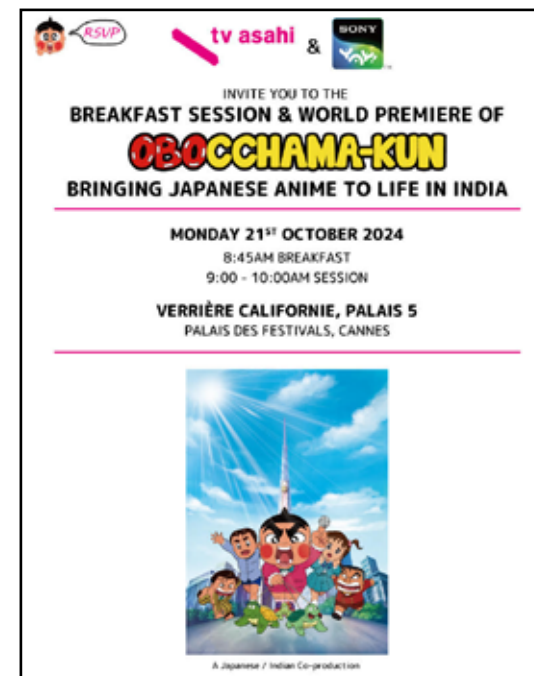
Must do things @ MIPCOM



WORLD PREMIERE SCREENING - ENA. LA REINA VICTORIA EUGENIA. Jury-selected from multiple submissions, RTVE’s highly anticipated royal period drama chronicling the era-defining life of Victoria Eugenia of Battenberg (Queen of Spain by marriage to Alfonso XIII and Granddaughter to Great Britain’s Queen Victoria) will premiere on the market’s first night on Monday 21 October from 18.00. Staged in the world-famous Grand Auditorium, main actors Kimberley Tell and Joan Amargós and Executive Producer Luis Hernández will be present in Cannes. The ambitious all-female-directed piece (6 x 60’) is produced by RTVE in collaboration with ‘Ena La Serie AIE’, ‘La Cometa TV’ and ‘Zona App’. It is set to air on RTVE’s channel LA1 in Spain with global distribution rights handled by the largest public audiovisual group in Spain, RTVE.

Celebrating
40 Years
of
MIPCOM

WHY YOUTUBE MATTERS: ENGAGING AUDIENCES & BOOSTING REVENUE – unmissable session featuring analysis of recent trends and emerging opportunities across the industry, including in depth case studies of success stories in driving viewership and revenues via the global platform with Neil Price, UK Film and TV Partnerships Lead, YouTube and Wayne Davison, Chief Revenue Officer, Little Dot Studios – on Wednesday 23 October at 14.00.



APPLIED AI SUMMIT – a full immersion day demonstrating the latest applications of AI across the industry including the areas of production and monetisation, along with an exploration of the latest thinking and precedents around ethical and legal challenges inherent to the technology. Leading contributing companies include Adventr, Aive, Alix Partners, Banijay Entertainment, BetaSeries, Calliope Networks, DLA Piper, FanTrust, Google, Largo.ai, TF1 Group, Newen Studios, Papercup, Runway, Social Department and Variety Intelligence Platform amongst others.



JAYESH RANJAN

Senior Government official from Telangana is at MIPCOM to engage global studios and invite them to do business at Hyderabad's newly built Image City.

STATE GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA



BIREN GHOSE

Industry veteran and ABAI President, at MIPCOM to support Karnataka's AVGC growth and accelerate startups.

TECHNICOLOUR GROUP AND ABAI

Veteran AVGC industry leader, seeking project partners and promoting Indian M&E tech companies at MIPCOM.

PUNNARYUG ARTVISION



ASHISH SK

Presenting Indiacast's distinctive content to potential buyers and expanding its global reach.

INDIACAST MEDIA DISTRIBUTION



GOVIND SHAHI



P. JAYAKUMAR

Veteran industry leader and India's most successful co-producer, pitching five new IPs at MIPCOM, actively pursuing animation service work and co-production opportunities to strengthen global partnerships.

TOONZ ANIMATION GROUP



MANJYOT SANDHU

Leading Zee Content Sales, bringing a slate of dramas, documentaries, web series, and films to MIPCOM.

ZEE CONTENT SALES

Creator and producer of India's most successful IP, Mighty Little Bheem, is at MIPCOM with new IPs, including Chotta Startup.

GREENGOLD ANIMATION



RAJIV CHILAKA

Heading Prasar Bharati, India's public broadcaster comprising Doordarshan TV and Akashvani (All India Radio), at MIPCOM to expand content reach.

PRASAR BHARATI



GAURAV DWIVEDI



MUNJAL SHROFF

Exploring co-production, co-development, and distribution opportunities for the new series Bharat Hain Hum (We Are India), part of the Krish, Trish, and Baltiboy franchise.

GRAPHITI MULTIMEDIA



DR. ABHAY SINHA

Director General of SEPC, leading the Bharat Pavilion with 90+ delegates from 60+ Indian companies at MIPCOM.

SERVICE EXPORTS PROMOTION COUNCIL



BEJOY ARPUTHARAJ

The rising star in VFX production, Phantom FX has contributed to several Hollywood films from its Chennai studio.

PHANTOM FX

A MIPCOM veteran with unmatched expertise in content, co-production, and global expansion. Now at MIPCOM in her new role as a consultant, pitching for co-production opportunities.

KARMAN UNLIMITED



SUNITA UCHIL



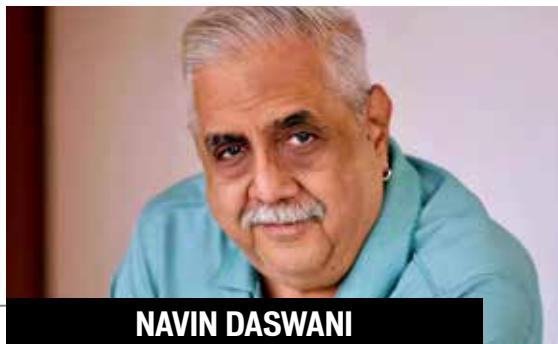
MANOJ MISHRA

India's largest animation content producer, at MIPCOM with titles ready for syndication and co-production.

POWERKIDS ENTERTAINMENT

A business-savvy content producer, at MIPCOM with fresh Indian documentaries ready for international buyers.

KLAY ENTERTAINMENT



NAVIN DASWANI

Industry veteran at MIPCOM with six feature films ready for global distribution.

MADHU ENTERTAINMENT



HIRACHAND DHAND



MADHAV 'MIKE' YATHAM REDDY

CEO of Rotomaker India, providing top-notch VFX post-production services, with over 525,000 VFX shots produced.

ROTOMAKER INDIA

At MIPCOM to license Reliance Animation's action-packed content for international markets.

RELIANCE ANIMATION



TEJONIDHI BHANDARE

Highly successful co-producer known for Gadget Gang in Outer Space, Mia and Me, and 100% Wolf.

STUDIO056



SRIRAM CHANDRASEKARAN

The go-to consultant for getting offshore animation projects executed with precision in India.

SHAMBO PHALKE



SHAMBO PHALKE

Head of NH Studioz, boasting the largest Bollywood content library, at MIPCOM for syndication deals.

NH STUDIOZ



SHREYANS HIRAWAT

INDIA STRENGTHENING GLOBAL FOOTPRINT AS A CONTENT HUB

As India cements its place as a global content hub, **Dr. Abhay Sinha**, Director General of SEPC, outlines India's pivotal role in the international audio-visual industry. Visit MIPCOM Stand P1.D1

India is emerging as a significant player in the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comic (AVGC) sector, establishing itself as a global content and service provider. This transformation is underscored by increased participation in esteemed international platforms like MIPCOM, which highlight India's creative potential and innovation.

Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) is instrumental in this progress, paving the way for Indian studios and creators to excel on the

global stage. India's role in the audio-visual industry underscores the need for strategic initiatives and support from the government to nurture talent and enhance infrastructure. By fostering a conducive environment for creativity and innovation, India can continue to thrive as a leading content hub, catering to the diverse tastes of audiences around the world.

Moreover, the importance of collaboration with international partners to harness new technologies and innovative storytelling methods



Dr Abhay Sinha
Director General, SEPC

is crucial. As the demand for localized content grows, partnerships with global players can help Indian companies expand their reach and influence in foreign markets.

Furthermore, the establishment of National Centres of Excellence (NCoE) for the AVGC sector will drive skill development and technological advancement, ensuring India remains competitive. SEPC's vision not only aims to help industry to produce world-class content but also to position India as a hub for co-productions and advancements in the AVGC sector. As India boldly strides toward becoming a global content powerhouse, SEPC's strategic direction is vital in unlocking the immense potential of this dynamic industry.

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

India is emerging as a content hub for the world. How do you see this evolution?

India has rapidly become a content powerhouse, creating diverse and rich content in multiple languages and

genres. We are not only producing content but also servicing the world. SEPC has been instrumental in positioning India on the global map, showcasing the capabilities of Indian companies at events like MIPCOM, further more events like; Waves would lead to more business opportunities. The transformation has been fuelled by the government's strong support, along with cutting-edge technology, services, and production facilities.

Since you spoke about the Waves Summit, can you elaborate further on why is it significant for the AVGC sector in India?

The Waves Summit, which is scheduled to take place in February next year, will be a pivotal event that will play a crucial role in shaping India's growing audio-visual ecosystem. It brings together industry leaders, creators, and innovators, including from the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comics (AVGC) sectors on a global platform. The summit will provide an excellent opportunity for Indian studios to collaborate with international players, particularly in areas like co-productions, outsourcing services, and technological advancements.

SEPC'S VISION NOT ONLY AIMS TO HELP INDUSTRY TO PRODUCE WORLD-CLASS CONTENT BUT ALSO TO POSITION INDIA AS A HUB FOR CO-PRODUCTIONS AND ADVANCEMENTS IN THE AVGC SECTOR. AS INDIA BOLDLY STRIDES TOWARD BECOMING A GLOBAL CONTENT POWERHOUSE, SEPC'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION IS VITAL IN UNLOCKING THE IMMENSE POTENTIAL OF THIS DYNAMIC INDUSTRY

Discussions at the event will centre around emerging industry trends, investment opportunities, and the latest innovations driving the sector forward.

Can you tell us about SEPC's presence at MIPCOM this year and how it supports Indian companies?

This year, we are bringing 90+ delegates from 60+ companies under the India Pavilion at MIPCOM. SEPC has been participating for the third time with the support of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, with the aim of helping Indian companies establish a global footprint. We're handholding small and medium enterprises, guiding them on best practices, and enabling them to showcase content properties, secure co-production deals, and sell their services. The Content Guide we've compiled lists over 200 Indian content properties being pitched globally at MIPCOM.

India is also becoming a hub for global service providers in the AVGC sector. How does SEPC support this?

India's strength as a service hub is undeniable. We provide top-notch post-production, animation, and visual effects services to global studios. SEPC is committed to helping Indian studios tap into these opportunities, enabling them to offer services that match international standards. We're also aiding the industry with securing

co-production deals that will offer Indian creators and studios the opportunity to collaborate with global players. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is also in the process of creation of National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) to strengthen the AVGC sector's infrastructure. This is a crucial part of India's strategy to ensure that the industry grows at par with international standards.

India has positioned itself in a globally advantageous position, particularly in the AVGC sector. What role does SEPC play in leveraging this?

India's AVGC sector is growing at an unprecedented pace, and SEPC is working with various stakeholders to capitalize on the global advantages India holds. The Wave Summit in February will be one of the platforms where we'll be discussing co-production opportunities and showcasing India's competitive edge. SEPC is helping to build partnerships, increase service opportunities, and strengthen the country's presence in international markets, ensuring that Indian studios can tap into the growing demand for high-quality content and services.

How does the Indian Content Guide play a role in expanding India's global reach?

The Indian Content Guide is an essential tool for both Indian and international companies. It lists over 200 Indian content properties,

showcasing the country's strengths in the audio-visual sector. This guide helps Indian companies find co-production partners, sales agents, and buyers, ultimately contributing to 'Make in India' and the global distribution of Indian content.

India is now wooing global studios. How is the country making itself more attractive for co-productions and service opportunities?

India has always been a prime location for international studios, but now, with enhanced incentives, the interest is higher than ever. The co-production incentives provide significant advantages for foreign studios. These incentives, along with India's vast talent pool and advanced infrastructure, make it an attractive destination for co-productions, film shootings, and other service opportunities. Events like MIPCOM offer additional platforms for Indian and global studios to come together, fostering creative collaborations that can lead to ground breaking content.

What incentives and opportunities are available for international studios?

India offers a range of incentives to global studios, especially in co-productions and foreign film shoots.

Incentives for foreign film production include a minimum qualifying production expenditure (QPE) of INR 30 million in India, a cashback incentive of 30% of QPE, a bonus incentive of 5% of QPE for employing at least 15% Indian labour, and an additional bonus incentive of 5% of QPE for Significant Indian Content, with a cap of INR 300 million (USD 3.6 million) per project.

Significant Indian content includes at least 25% of the total budget spent in India, having one of the lead characters played by an Indian actor, or showcasing positive perceptions of India and its cultural and tourist attractions.

These incentives, along with India's growing status as a service hub, provide substantial opportunities for international collaborations.



Zee Entertainment Enterprises will be screening their first Spanish Language Telenovela at MIPCOM, Cannes. It is the project. The first Co Production in the region inspired by an Indian format Aapki Antara.

“Valentina - My Special Love” is a poignant tale of love, resilience, and personal growth, demonstrating that living with autism does not diminish one's creativity, passion, or capacity for deep emotional connections. Valentina's journey is a testament to overcoming adversity and finding strength in vulnerability, capturing the hearts of viewers as she navigates the complexities of life and love.

Special screening at the Producer's Hub at 1630 on October 21! Or visit Booth P-1, E54.

INDIA ROLLS OUT ATTRACTIVE INCENTIVES FOR

GLOBAL FILM PRODUCTION

With unbeatable incentives, cutting-edge AVGC expertise, and a landscape of vibrant stories waiting to be told, India is rolling out the red carpet for global filmmakers.

As the filmmaking industry expands, India is quickly becoming the “it” place for global film and television production. With its brilliant mix of incentives, cutting-edge AVGC services, and a creative talent pool ready to create magic on film, it’s no surprise that international filmmakers are coming to India’s cinematic shores. Whether you want to record magnificent landscapes, immerse yourself in different cultural backdrops, or take advantage of India’s post-production studios, there’s something for everyone.

And the best part? India is spreading out the red carpet with offers of significant incentives. So, if you’re looking for the next blockbuster location or post-production partner, India has you covered. Simply say “Action,” and watch the magic happen.

Simplified Filming Process

The FFO (Film Facilitation Office) provides a single-window clearance system, enabling filmmakers to navigate the complex permissions landscape more efficiently. This centralized system cuts down on bureaucratic

red tape, offering timely approvals for location permits and other necessary documentation, significantly easing the process for filmmakers looking to shoot in India.

Substantial Financial Incentives

India offers some of the most competitive financial incentives in the global market. International filmmakers can claim up to 30% of Qualifying Production Expenditure (QPE) incurred in India, with a cap of INR 300 million (approximately USD 3.6 million) per project.

Bonus incentives include:

- An additional 5% bonus for projects employing at least 15% Indian labor.
- Another 5% bonus for productions featuring Significant Indian Content (SIC), making the maximum possible cashback up to 40% of QPE.

Eligibility and Formats

Eligible production formats include:

- Feature films with a minimum duration of 72 minutes.





- Commercial TV shows or series.
- Web shows, animation series, documentaries, and more.

Expanding Co-Production Opportunities

India has also broadened its co-production scope by entering into co-production agreements with 17 countries, including Canada, France, Germany, the UK, Australia, and others. These agreements foster financial collaboration, reduce risk, and open access to each partner country's incentives and subsidies. Through these agreements, filmmakers can benefit from a seamless cross-border production experience.

Official co-productions enjoy the same incentives as standalone productions, including up to 30% reimbursement on Qualifying Co-production Expenditure

(QCE). Additionally, filmmakers can apply for interim disbursements during the production phase, easing financial flow and enabling smoother project execution.

Incentives for Animation and Post-Production

India's post-production landscape offers world-class facilities for animation, visual effects, and gaming (AVGC) services. International filmmakers can also take advantage of the 30% reimbursement on qualifying post-production expenditure, with an extra 5% for projects integrating Significant Indian Content.

The country's rapidly expanding AVGC sector is gaining recognition globally, particularly in North America, where collaborations between Indian and foreign studios are on the rise. India's

highly skilled workforce, coupled with state-of-the-art technology, makes it an attractive destination for post-production and visual effects.

State-Level Incentives

In addition to central government incentives in India, various states offer attractive filming incentives to promote the film industry. For instance, Assam, Chhattisgarh, and Jammu and Kashmir provide a 25% rebate on Qualifying Production Expenditure (QPE), with financial caps of Rs 10 million, Rs 20 million, and Rs 20 million respectively. Delhi offers a tiered incentive ranging from 5% to 25% of QPE, with a maximum of Rs 30 million.

Other states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, and Kerala have introduced their own packages to attract international productions. These incentives range from cash rebates and tax exemptions to subsidized equipment rentals, further enhancing the financial viability of projects undertaken in India.

A Promising Future

India's growing reputation as a filmmaking hub is further solidified by its commitment to innovation,

talent, and collaborative opportunities. Whether for live shoots or post-production, India offers filmmakers from around the world unparalleled incentives, technical expertise, and a business-friendly environment.

As MIPCOM 2024 delegates explore production destinations, India stands ready to welcome filmmakers with open arms, offering a blend of rich cultural heritage, state-of-the-art facilities, and robust financial incentives.

Film Facilitation Office (FFO): A One-Stop Destination

The FFO's revamped website provides a comprehensive guide for international filmmakers. From location scouting to obtaining permits and applying for incentives, the portal simplifies the planning process and ensures that filmmakers can access all necessary resources in one place. India is poised to become a global leader in film production and post-production services, offering an ideal combination of financial incentives, streamlined processes, and technical expertise. With a commitment to fostering international collaborations and a growing pool of skilled professionals, India is setting the stage for a vibrant future in global filmmaking.

WWW.FFO.GOV.IN THE FFO'S REVAMPED WEBSITE PROVIDES A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL FILMMAKERS. FROM LOCATION SCOUTING TO OBTAINING PERMITS AND APPLYING FOR INCENTIVES, THE PORTAL SIMPLIFIES THE PLANNING PROCESS AND ENSURES THAT FILMMAKERS CAN ACCESS ALL NECESSARY RESOURCES IN ONE PLACE

INDIA TO HOST WORLD AUDIO VISUAL & ENTERTAINMENT SUMMIT IN FEB'25

India is all set to host the inaugural World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES) from 5th to 9th February 2025, promising to boost the country's Media & Entertainment (M&E) industry and amplify its global footprint. The summit is designed to be a premier platform for discussing innovation, technology, trade collaborations, and the future of the M&E sector, positioning India as a global leader in the creative industry



WAVES Summit: A Catalyst for Innovation and Collaboration

WAVES will cover the entire gamut of the M&E industry, marking a milestone in India's growth as a creative superpower. The summit will facilitate dialogue between industry leaders, technologists, and innovators to explore opportunities and solutions for the challenges facing the M&E sector.

The 'Create in India' Challenge: Unleashing Youth Creativity

To engage the youth and tap into India's vast creative talent pool, Season 1 of the 'Create in India' Challenge has been announced. The youth of the country will participate in 25 categories ranging from animation and game development to AI-driven art installations. These challenges aim to nurture creativity and offer participants unparalleled opportunities to present their work on a global stage, including prestigious events like the Annecy Animation Festival.

The Future of M&E: A Symbiotic Relationship with Technology

At the core of WAVES lies the fusion of technology and entertainment. The summit will focus on areas like AI in art, virtual production, animation, and gaming to showcase how technological advances are reshaping the media

landscape. WAVES will be a key platform for innovators, creators, and investors to connect, explore new tools, and push the boundaries of storytelling.

A Platform for Global Exposure: From Anime to Game Development

WAVES is not just a summit; it's a launchpad for Indian creators. Challenges such as The Battle of the Bands, The Symphony of India, Anime Challenge, and Game Jam are designed to bring India's creative potential to the forefront. Winners will have the chance to collaborate with global leaders, from animation houses to international gaming platforms, and secure their place on the world stage.

Tackling Industry Challenges: Piracy, Innovation, and Policy Support

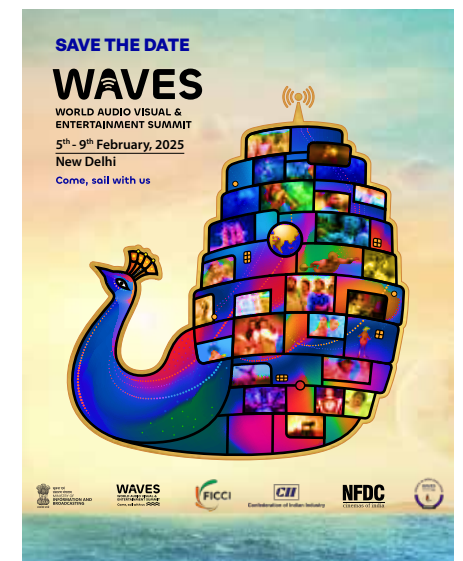
WAVES will address pressing industry issues, including piracy, and pledged support for film and gaming industry stakeholders. Government policies aimed at fostering innovation and curbing piracy will be a central topic at the summit, ensuring a secure and prosperous environment for creators.

WAVES 2024: A Journey into India's Rich Musical and Cultural Traditions

Through events like The Symphony of India and Battle of the Bands, WAVES will celebrate the fusion of modern music with India's traditional roots, while fostering a deep appreciation for the nation's classical arts. This creates a unique platform for both modern and classical artists to showcase their talent, preserving India's rich musical heritage while expanding its contemporary appeal.

Driving Growth in Animation, Comics, and Gaming: National Competitions

The Animation Filmmakers Competition and Comics Creator Championship are key highlights of WAVES, aimed at propelling India to the forefront of the global animation and comic book industries. With mentorship opportunities and collaborations with renowned studios, these events will provide emerging artists with the exposure and resources needed to make a significant impact internationally.



Educational Gaming and AI Art: Pioneering New Creative Frontiers

Competitions like the Handheld Educational Video Game Development challenge and the AI Art Installation Challenge will foster innovation at the intersection of creativity, technology, and education. These events highlight the potential of India's creative industries to not only entertain but also educate and inspire future generations.

A Vision for the Future: Establishing Centers of Excellence in AVGC-XR

The summit's various challenges will build a national talent pool for the National Centre of Excellence for Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality (AVGC-XR). With incubation and accelerator programs, India aims to cultivate a new generation of creators who will shape the future of the M&E industry.

The Grand Finale: WAVES as India's Global Media Showcase

As WAVES 2024 approaches, the summit is set to become a beacon for the global entertainment industry. It represents India's vision to lead in the creative economy, offering a robust platform for showcasing talent, forging international collaborations, and shaping the future of media and entertainment across the globe.

AUKAAT SE ZYADA



Breaking Limits

freshh
mint

SCAN ME



EPISODE 1



EPISODE 2



EPISODE 3



EPISODE 4



EPISODE 5



EPISODE 6



EPISODE 7



EPISODE 8



EPISODE 9



EPISODE 10



EPISODE 11



EPISODE 12



Freshh Mint has successfully tapped into India's largest video-sharing platform. Aukaat Se Zyada has captivated its 48.2% 18-to-24-year-old audience. The series is popular with adolescents and young adults, as 36.5% of viewers are 25-34-year-olds. Interestingly, 65% of the channel's viewers are women, demonstrating the show's wide appeal and ability to connect with women

BREAKING LIMITS WHEN DREAMS GO AUKAAT SE ZYADA

Freshh Mint, a youth-oriented YouTube channel from Inspire Films, debuts its flagship series Aukaat Se Zyada—a gripping tale of ambition, betrayal, and love that strikes a chord with India's young adults.

With over 35 hit TV series and 6,000 hours of award-winning content, Yash A Patnaik's Inspire Films Ltd. has ventured into the digital world. Their new YouTube channel, Freshh Mint, targets India's young and is making headlines with its first series *Aukaat Se Zyada* (Breaking Limits). This 12-episode youth drama has swiftly garnered popularity, bringing fresh narratives to a generation that's hungry for stories that resonate with their realities.

Freshh Mint, as a platform, is designed to reflect India's young people's energy, problems, and goals. It mixes long-form and short-form web series with quick-hit content called "Mint Shots," catering to an audience that craves both depth and instant engagement. *Aukaat Se Zyada* encapsulates this spirit, providing a powerful storyline of ambition, love, betrayal, and the pursuit of breaking societal limits.

Capturing the Pulse of India's Youth

With over 700 million under-35s in India, Freshh Mint hopes to attract

them with its unique content. Freshh Mint's basic yet ambitious purpose is to tell fresh stories about young people's current struggles and ambitions. *Aukaat Se Zyada* tells relevant tales about metropolitan life and rural fortitude.

Aukaat Se Zyada follows a diverse group of students at the fictitious Mumbai Institute of Technology and Engineering (MITE). Adarsh, an extrovert, and Vihaan, an introvert, drive the story. The drama depicts youth's struggles and successes via friendship, competition, and tragedy. Instead of romance or drama, it depicts the challenges young people face—societal expectations and personal problems.

The narrative centres on Adarsh and Vihaan, a typical opposites-attract story. Their fraternity, one-upmanship, and ultimate friendship develop alongside their complicated relationships with other pupils. The series depicts young adulthood's emotional highs and lows, from betrayals and heartbreaks to success and joy. It's an honest look at this generation's clashing values and goals.

FRESHH MINT

Freshh Mint is not just a channel, it's the first-of-its-kind YouTube sensation capturing the pulse of India's evolving youth culture.

- **Platform** : A dedicated YouTube Channel for Young Adults
- **Mission** : Empowering Bharat's Youth
- **Vision** : Authentic Stories That Echo Young India
- **Content Blend** : Inspiration, Aspiration, and Real-Life Experiences
- **Impact** : A Cultural Movement Shaping India's Youth.

Why Freshh Mint?

- Authentic Representation
- Tough Questions on Relationships
- Inspirational Content
- Breaking Stereotypes
- Relatable Narratives
- Intergenerational Understanding
- Youngsters Stepping Out
- Localized Content



Breaking Limits—Multiple Ways

Aukaat Se Zyada is more than a coming-of-age narrative; it explores pushing limits. It explores how young people handle society, family, and self-imposed pressures. Its protagonists live like many Indians, dealing with sorrow, friendships, and future choices.

As a platform, Freshh Mint represents a significant leap forward for Inspire Films. Owning the intellectual property rights of their work helps them to convert these tales into numerous languages for varied audiences in India and abroad. This ability to cater to various regions strengthens Freshh Mint's mission to create universally relatable yet distinctly Indian stories.

With *Aukaat Se Zyada* leading the way, Freshh Mint is poised to become an Indian youth entertainment staple. With its sympathetic characters and riveting plots, the series is only the beginning. As Freshh Mint pushes creative limits and explores new storylines, it will have a lasting influence on digital entertainment, particularly among India's varied young.

A Platform for Fresh Perspectives

YouTube dominates India's video-sharing business with 476 million active users, and Freshh Mint has successfully tapped into the country's largest video-sharing platform.

Aukaat Se Zyada has captivated its 48.2% 18-to-24-year-old audience. The series is popular with adolescents and young adults, as 36.5% of viewers are 25-34-year-olds. Interestingly, 65% of the channel's viewers are women, demonstrating the show's wide appeal and ability to connect with women.

Yash A Patnaik, Inspire Films' Managing Director, said Freshh Mint is more than a content channel. "The introduction of Freshh Mint represents an exciting new chapter for us as we serve India's lively youth with dynamic and innovative content. We hope our material will rejuvenate our viewers as fresh mint does," he says.

"Our vision is to craft stories that entertain, inspire, and provoke thought, providing a platform where young adults can see their experiences reflected and their voices heard," he adds.

FRESHH MINT CRAFTING STORIES FOR A NEW BHARAT

Excerpts from the interview



Yash A Patnaik

Founder and Managing Director of Inspire Films Ltd

Inspire Films Ltd, a powerhouse in Indian television and digital content creation, has ventured into a new territory with its YouTube channel Freshh Mint. Pickle sits down with Yash A Patnaik, Founder and Managing Director of Inspire Films Ltd, to discuss his latest project, his approach to storytelling, and what lies ahead for Freshh Mint.

The name Freshh Mint is intriguing. Could you explain its premise and what makes this channel unique?

Freshh Mint delivers engaging tales for young adults. We needed a name to reflect their energy. At a time when most webseries are plot-driven, we strive to create character-driven narratives with multiple seasons of 12-24 episodes each. Our primary audience is aged 18 to 24, and we see this channel as a platform that engages, amuses, and reflects their real-world struggles.

We've noticed a niche for storytelling in Heartland India, a region filled with

young people but underserved in terms of relatable content. Our goal is to fill that gap by sharing engaging tales about critical problems. All our stories are either based on insights or issues or both which impacts the youths of today. This approach is seen in our debut series, Aukaat Se Zyada (Breaking Limits), about young people reimagining their potential.

How does Freshh Mint address real-world challenges in its stories?

A plot we're creating involves human/manual scavenging, which is illegal

in India, like many other countries. However, you will find local contractors using poor workers manually clean gutters, which is a huge health hazard for them. In India, there are over 200K human scavengers, illegally cleaning gutters, out of which more than 25 per cent are from Maharashtra. One of Aukaat Se Zyada's key characters' father cleaned drains and scavenged. He aspires of attending an engineering college with a robotic department despite societal exclusion after his father's death. He creates a robotic drain cleaner called 'Eagle' to replace human scavengers. It is a gripping narrative with a social message, but more significantly, it represents today's youth's aspirations—those who refuse to let their past define them.

This sounds powerful. What does Freshh Mint's content say about young Indians' dreams?

Youth nowadays are ambitious. Earlier, a middle-class child was expected to continue in that class for life. That no longer applies. Indian youngsters nowadays desire to break boundaries and decide their destiny. Freshh Mint tells tales about this new Bharat. Stories of entrepreneurship, creativity, and personal development.

One of our characters aspires to be a professional gamer, but his parents fear he plays mobile games too much. They are unaware that he produces a popular game under the moniker "Shadow," which has millions of fans. He's a champion online despite emotional breakdowns and parental neglect. Youth aspire to manage their own fate. This sentiment is shared by many.

Freshh Mint tells relevant tales. Does this information resonate globally?

Absolutely. No matter their place, youth face similar obstacles. They have goals,

but also confront social pressures and stigmas. These are universal experiences. We plan to expand Freshh Mint's content into multiple languages, starting with Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Bengali, so that our stories can reach and resonate with a wider audience. Local stories will be told in local languages, but the themes will remain universal.

How does YouTube affect Freshh Mint's strategy?

YouTube is great because we can interact with our fans live. Feedback is immediate. We wrote 100 Aukaat Se Zyada episodes, but after releasing 12 episodes we're collecting fan inputs before releasing more. We can manage our content and audience on YouTube without a broadcaster. We can tell the stories we want to tell.

It sounds like Freshh Mint is also a platform for new talent. Can you elaborate on that?

Yes, we are actively encouraging young writers, directors, and actors to come and work with us. We're building a universe of characters and stories that will span various genres, including sports fiction. Our goal is to create a space where new talent can thrive, and young creators can tell the stories that matter to them.

What's next for Freshh Mint?

We have exciting plans. In addition to regional languages, we wish to explore youth-relevant subjects. We are writing about delivery boys young entrepreneurs/sportsmen/Women, and body-shaming survivors who succeeded. Our goal is to continue empowering the youth through fiction, while reflecting the realities they face.

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All our stories are either based on insights or issues or both which impacts the youths of today

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COLLABORATION IS THE SECRET SAUCE FOR TRUE LEADERSHIP IN AVGC-XR

Thought Leader

Ashish SK, the Founder of Punnaryug Artvision and Screenyug Creation, and Chairman of FICCI AVGC-XR Forum, shares his vision for India's future in the digital content economy.

What is your objective at MIPCOM this year, and how does it align with India's media and entertainment ambitions?

I have a series of original content from India and will be engaging with producers from the UK, Canada, France and Australia. The objective is to ensure that projects are green lit, and we would like to use the Co-Production treaties as a tool. Secondly, I can see certain technologies that are going to be there. We would like to bring those technologies into our museums. We are also taking Indian media

and entertainment technology companies like DCT to MIPCOM to show the world their M&E tech solutions. DCT is a company that works with Verizon in the US and is known for making OTT services. They create platforms for streaming of live events.



Ashish SK
The Founder of Punnaryug Artvision and Screenyug Creation

“ India is emerging as a leader not only in content creation but also in media and entertainment technology, driven by innovative startups and international collaborations ”

realise they need complete tools and technology for content consumption, creation, automation, AI tools, production management systems, and more. This is occurring today because our startup ecosystem is booming, and India will become a key participant in content and media and entertainment technology development. People, particularly those who invest in convincing the government to commission initiatives that would improve public information dissemination and experiences, have made this feasible.

India is building over 148 museums, all of which incorporate technology to make visitors feel engaged. When you utilise technology in a new manner, you'll find that each place you visit has at least one or two light and sound shows and particular spaces to consume content. People visiting religious places, tourist attractions, or jungle adventures now have a variety of technological tools to learn what occurred, where, how, and the history of a tree, stone, or location. I think the whole content generation process affects them.

What impact have co-production treaties, incentives and skilling initiatives had on India's media industry?

In the past, India didn't have co-production treaties, and this hindered international studios from working with us. But now, with systems and processes in place, studios from across the globe are seeing India as a prime destination

Do you see Indian media and entertainment (M&E) tech companies having a significant opportunity in the global market?

Absolutely. But what's important is that media and entertainment technology will be at an all-time high as startups and existing companies

HOW ARE INDIAN ANIMATION STUDIOS ADAPTING TO CHANGING GLOBAL BUSINESS TRENDS, AND WHAT ROLE DOES INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION PLAY IN THEIR GROWTH STRATEGY OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

Indian animation studios are adapting to the changing global business trends by recalibrating their business plans to optimize productivity and meet international demands. As the industry evolves, many Indian studios are increasingly exploring global markets and forming collaborations with foreign studios. This trend is expected to accelerate in the next five years, with more Indian animation, VFX, and gaming companies expanding their presence globally.

International collaborations are becoming crucial for Indian studios. Countries like the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Russia, Australia, and Korea are recognizing the value of partnering with Indian talent. These partnerships are not only opening new markets but also enabling Indian studios to access advanced technologies, skill sets, and creative opportunities, helping them scale their operations and enhance their global competitiveness. The consolidation between Indian and foreign studios is ushering in a new era of growth for the Indian animation industry.

for co-productions. These treaties, combined with the right funding mechanisms (incentives to the tune of \$3.6 billion), are allowing international projects to be shot and created in India. This shift is a game changer, enabling India to showcase its talent and production capabilities on a global stage. So, how do you collaborate with other nations to build an ecosystem? You need to sign additional Co-production treaties and collaborate with like-minded nations to create content. You start cross-pollinating content production across cultures and nations. You'll see the environment altering automatically. But with

The National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) for AVGC-XR will act as a global hub for co-production, skilling, and technological advancements, positioning India as a powerhouse in the sector.

these announcements, people are noticing that capacity building and skilling and upskilling programs are gaining momentum in India, so they want to come. I was talking to a global CEO recently, and he told me there is no other country in the world where I can start a studio so easily as a foreign direct investment and scale to 500 to 1,000 people in a year or year and a half. 500 individuals would take me four to five years in any other nation. India is the only place where I can grow to 1,000+ individuals annually.

How is AVGC-XR shaping careers and international partnerships?

AVGC-XR (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality) has become a cornerstone of India's creative ecosystem. The skill sets required for these domains overlap, which opens a broad spectrum of career opportunities. Learning animation, for instance, enables professionals to work across visual effects, gaming, and XR.

When our Prime Minister spoke about "Create in India for the world," it was a call to focus on IP creation, and the global market is taking note. Even in his brief address to the media, our honourable minister of

MeitY, railroads, and investment talked highly of establishing Indian IP. So, in all of our proposals, we prioritise IP development. We want IP ownership to stay in India because we know it has a longer shelf life.

The landscape of international co-production is shifting, with top countries now increasingly interested in collaborating on Indian IP. For instance, if you are co-producing IP from countries like the UK, Canada, Italy, France, or Brazil, you might receive around 30% in financial returns. However, commissioning Indian-based IP could yield as much as 40%. This is the type of change we want to see, and it forms the basis of our recommendations to the government.

As the AVGC sector continues to evolve, we advocate for the establishment of multiple platforms, including public broadcasting and streaming services. These would create new monetization opportunities for Indian content creators in AVGC. Furthermore, we envision a collaborative framework where the co-production ecosystem can engage with these public channels, ensuring that producers retain their rights.

Our proposals emphasize that funding should primarily support the AVGC-XR sectors, which have become widely recognized as essential. The term "AVGC-XR" is now familiar, as people acknowledge the similar skill sets required across these fields. If you study animation, for instance, you have career pathways available in visual effects, gaming, comics, XR (extended reality), and even live-action film. Unfortunately, the reverse is not true; those trained in live action may not find the same versatility.

Interestingly, other countries are starting to take notice. Recently, a delegation from Korea visited India, equipped with specialized presentation slides highlighting their interest in collaboration. They acknowledged India's established AVGC and XR policies as key factors in their decision. Similar sentiments

How are Indian states contributing to the growth of the AVGC-XR industry?

States are now actively competing to become hubs for the AVGC-XR industry. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa, and Rajasthan, to name a few, have launched progressive policies to attract studios and startups. For instance, Rajasthan has built a state-of-the-art incubator offering free space for AVGC companies. This state-level push is crucial because job creation will largely happen in these regional centers, and states that invest in infrastructure and education will reap the benefits. I foresee major studios setting up branches in multiple states, and even state-to-state co-productions becoming a norm.

are echoed by the United Kingdom, Canada, France, and Italy. These nations are now viewing India through a new lens.

Can you tell us more about the National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) for AVGC-XR?

The NCoE is designed to be a one-stop facilitation center for all stakeholders in the AVGC-XR sector. Whether you want to co-produce content, access funding, or set up operations, the NCoE will guide you. It's akin to an IIT for the media industry, offering curriculum development, partnerships, and experiential learning. With this institution in place, international players will have a clear point of entry into India's thriving creative economy, and Indian talent will benefit from world-class training and opportunities.

MY HERO

BRIDGING CULTURES AND BREAKING BARRIERS IN CINEMA

The highly anticipated film My Hero, which deals with universal issues like empathy and the triumph over prejudice. Is an innovative fusion of Hollywood and Kannada talent.

Directed by Avinash Vijaykumar, My Hero is an emotionally powerful tale of human connection, perseverance, and redemption that tackles delicate societal themes, including racism and caste injustice. With stars such as Eric Roberts and Djilali Rez Kallah sharing screen space with celebrated Kannada actors, My Hero offers a fresh take on both storytelling and cross-cultural collaboration.

The film tells the story of a young man from an oppressed tribe in Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh, who works as a tour guide while enduring the trauma of his family's history. He is estranged from his family and society after being banished from his Karnataka hamlet for disobeying caste customs.

When the youngster meets an old American man on a spiritual pilgrimage to India, his narrative of estrangement and injustice takes a different course. The guy is mourning the death of his son. The American is moved by the boy's story of perseverance and decides to assist him in regaining his position in society.

They go back to the boy's hometown as a team, and the American confronts the systemic caste prejudice that drove the youngster from his home. They try to bridge the gap between tradition and humanity by having a kind and honest conversation with the locals.

The youngster and the American both receive the healing and closure they need when the villagers embrace him back into their fold. Beyond the simple narrative of a boy's return home, My Hero is an extended meditation on the transformative potential of empathy, second chances, and genuine human connection.

Stars from both Hollywood and Kannada come together in an intriguing way in My Hero. Hollywood actor Djilali Rez Kallah and Julia Roberts' brother Eric provide an international flare to the film, while renowned Kannada actors Prakash Belawadi, Dattatreya, and Ankita Amar contribute their local talent. The inclusion of both international and local talent enhances the storyline of the film, which deals with universal issues like empathy and the triumph over prejudice.



Avinash Vijaykumar
Director of film My Hero



The director, Avinash Vijaykumar, has infused the film with personal and global elements, blending two distinct real-life incidents. As he explains, "My Hero is a powerful reflection on caste discrimination and racism that resonates with today's world." With this film, Avinash aims to craft a narrative that is both socially relevant and commercially appealing, breaking boundaries of caste, religion, and community to present a universal message.

Avinash's journey into filmmaking began with his participation in theatre and culminated with a diploma from the San Francisco Film School in 2022. His deep love for cinema shines through in this debut, where he challenges the audience to reflect on what true heroism means. In his words, "the hero could be the resilient boy, the American fighting

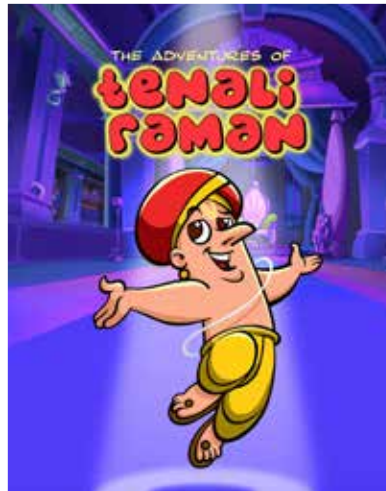
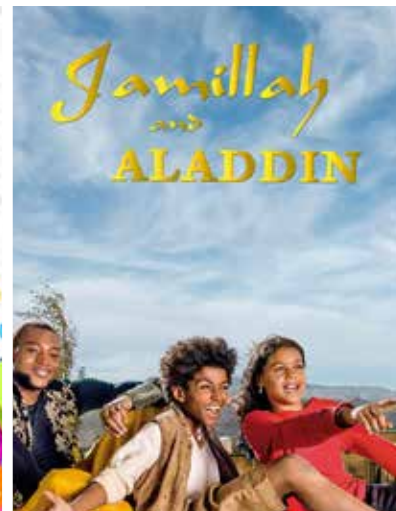
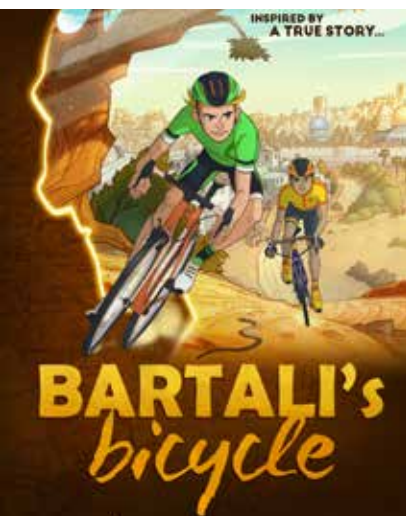
for justice, or perhaps the message of the film itself—a call to recognize our shared humanity and reject the forces of discrimination and greed".

Born in Bengaluru, Avinash Vijaykumar developed his passion for cinema during his teenage years, when his mother produced a film. His experiences in theatre and filmmaking across India further honed his skills. After completing a diploma in acting from Actor Prepares in Mumbai, Avinash continued his cinematic education in the U.S., earning a filmmaking diploma from the prestigious San Francisco Film School in 2022.

Now, with My Hero, Avinash has brought his rich experiences and creative vision to life in a project that is as poignant as it is entertaining.



On Toonz Media Group's 25th anniversary, P. Jayakumar, CEO, discusses the unique strategies that spurred the company's ambition to not only stay afloat but also thrive, with some of the most memorable projects under its belt.



INSPIRED TO CREATE CONTENT THAT RESONATES GLOBALLY

P. JAYAKUMAR

Toonz Media Group has established itself as a global leader in animation, consistently pushing the boundaries of storytelling and design for over two decades. As Toonz marks 25 years, Pickle chats with P. Jayakumar, the CEO, to reflect on the company's journey, its resilience, and what the future holds.

Toonz has shown remarkable resilience over the years, navigating challenges in the ever-evolving media landscape. What would you say has been the key to staying ahead?

Our resilience stems from staying true to what we excel at—creating compelling stories and top-quality animation. We've

consistently adapted by integrating new techniques, exploring diverse content, and embracing global partnerships. We've worked with leading names like Mediawan, Kindle Entertainment, and Exodus, while always fostering internal talent that can troubleshoot and overcome challenges. Our decision to venture into international markets early on helped us build a strong global reputation. These strategies have ensured our ability to not only survive but thrive, even in the face of adversity.

- ▶ **The Adventures of Tenali Raman** – Our first animated series and one of India’s pioneering works in the field.
- ▶ **Hanuman Returns** – Our entry into feature films, marking the production of India’s first animated feature.
- ▶ Collaborations with international giants like Marvel, BBC, and Lionsgate on projects such as Wolverine and the X-Men, which helped cement our reputation globally.
- ▶ Venturing into live-action adaptations with notable titles such as Magic Beyond Words (based on J.K. Rowling’s life), Mostly Ghostly, and Zombie Town.
- ▶ The adoption of Toon Boom animation software, which set a new benchmark for production quality in India.
- ▶ Establishing our distribution channel in Ireland, giving us more control over content distribution.
- ▶ The acquisition of Telegael in Ireland, significantly boosting our global capabilities.
- ▶ The Gummy Bear Show – Our first YouTube-funded animated series, marking our success on digital platforms.
- ▶ Growing our YouTube ecosystem to over 25 million subscribers globally.

Looking back, what are some of the key milestones and iconic projects from Toonz’s 25-year journey that you are particularly proud of?

We’ve always been forward-thinking, particularly in terms of diversification and strategic growth. Early on, we recognized the importance of digital media and expanded into creating original content for platforms like YouTube. Our exploration into immersive and interactive media is also a significant leap forward. A few notable projects include:

These milestones reflect our pioneering role in Indian animation and our continuous innovation across the industry.

You’ve spent the prime of your career with Toonz. What has motivated you to devote so many years to the company?

Looking back on my journey, I transitioned from a secure government role in finance to leading one of the most dynamic media companies. My background in finance gave me strong analytical skills, but my passion for entertainment drove me to make this career shift. I’ve always been motivated by the potential to create content that resonates globally, and seeing our work spark joy in audiences of all ages is immensely fulfilling.

Toonz started its journey in Trivandrum. How do you reflect on that decision today, and what does it mean for the state’s emerging AVGC ecosystem?

Starting in Trivandrum was met with skepticism at the time, but it turned out to be one of our wisest decisions. Technopark provided the perfect environment for a creative venture like ours, offering both a tech-savvy infrastructure and a laid-back atmosphere conducive to creativity. Trivandrum’s cultural richness and the strong networking culture also played a significant role in our early success. Now, with the state focusing on creating a future-ready AVGC ecosystem, I see tremendous potential for growth and innovation in this space.

The Indian government has recently rolled out \$3.6 million in incentives for co-productions and animation services. What impact do you see this having on the industry?

This is a significant development. The incentives will undoubtedly improve production quality and foster stronger ties with international studios. It’s also poised to create more jobs and develop a highly skilled workforce. Overall, this move will encourage innovation and contribute to the sustainable growth of the animation industry in India.

Post-pandemic, how do you view the state of the global animation industry, especially in Europe and the US?

While the US and European markets have bounced back from the pandemic, there are still challenges, particularly with the decline in the traditional TV sector. Streaming platforms now dominate content distribution, which changes the landscape significantly. However, I’m confident that Toonz will continue to navigate these disruptions and maintain strong relationships with Western industries.

Prime Minister Modi’s vision of “Make in India” and “Design in India” has set the stage for growth in industries like animation. How can the industry best execute this vision?

To realize the PM’s vision, we need a clear policy framework that simplifies regulations and offers incentives for startups. Initiatives like the National Centre of Excellence (Indian Institute of Creative Technologies) in Mumbai will help produce top-tier content, attract foreign investment, and boost the industry. It’s a vision that aligns perfectly with our goals.

Co-production treaties have historically been underutilized. Do you see the evolving landscape benefiting India in this regard?

In the past, India didn’t have enough to offer in co-production deals. Now, with new incentives in place, India is positioned as an attractive co-production partner, allowing studios to reduce costs while still delivering high-quality, globally appealing content.

Intellectual property (IP) creation is evolving rapidly. How does Toonz approach IP creation in today’s fast-paced environment?

IP creation today requires flexibility across platforms, a focus on audience engagement, and cultural relevance. We

IP CREATION TODAY REQUIRES FLEXIBILITY ACROSS PLATFORMS, A FOCUS ON AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT, AND CULTURAL RELEVANCE. WE LEVERAGE DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS TO GUIDE CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING

leverage data-driven insights to guide both content development and marketing, while exploring new revenue models like merchandising and subscriptions. This approach ensures our IPs remain dynamic and adaptable, keeping pace with changing audience preferences.

The recent Netflix Engagement Report highlighted the success of animated films like Mario, Minions, and Boss Baby, which have millions of viewers globally. What’s your take on this trend?

These figures are proof that animation is no longer just a niche medium—it has become a dominant form of storytelling that transcends age and culture. Technological advancements in AI and VR have made it possible to create deeply immersive experiences, connecting audiences on a personal and emotional level.

Technology has played a significant role in shaping Toonz’s growth. How has it impacted your work?

Technology has been transformative. Tools like motion capture, AI, and advanced animation software such as Maya and Toon Boom Harmony have enhanced the quality of our productions. They streamline processes and enable global collaboration, allowing us to bring in diverse talent and perspectives. This blend of technology and creativity continues to drive our innovation and ensures we remain at the forefront of the industry.

2024 HAS BEEN A REWARDING YEAR FOR POWERKIDS ENTERTAINMENT

In an interview with Pickle, Manoj Mishra, CEO, Powerkids Entertainment highlights the studio's ambitious projects, strategic goals for MIPCOM, and the growing influence of Powerkids Entertainment in the global animation industry. Meet them at MIPCOM Booth P-1.M.20

What are Powerkids Entertainment's major goals for MIPCOM this year?

For finished and in-production projects, we would look for acquisitions and pre-buys from broadcasters, OTT platforms, and distributors. For the programs under development at Powerkids, we will seek out anchor broadcasters and like-minded production organisations to explore co-production options.

Could you share details about the major projects Powerkids will be focusing on at MIPCOM?

At MIPCOM, Powerkids Entertainment will be focusing on a diverse slate of exciting projects that span both completed works and those still in production or development. Among the key titles is Adventures of Akira and Mowgli - The Jungle Book Adventures, which is currently in production, as well as Young Achievers Academy, also in production.

Additionally, Itah, The Snow Keeper and Little Mowgli: Untold Adventures of the Jungle Book are under development, showcasing the studio's commitment to bringing fresh stories to life. Powerkids will also highlight completed projects such as Dragonero: The Tales of Paladins and the much-anticipated The Jungle Book Season 4, ready for distribution.

Could you give us an insight into the scale and collaboration behind Powerkids producing animation content in India for the global audience?

Powerkids Entertainment is India's leading producer of animation content for the global market. Along with our strong and experienced core in-house team of over 30 colleagues, we work with over 400 outstanding artists via our partner studios to contribute to our current projects, guaranteeing a diversified and dynamic production environment.



Manoj Mishra
CEO, Powerkids Entertainment

How has 2024 turned out for Powerkids as a content producer?

So far 2024 has been really rewarding for us as we greenlit two new shows i.e. Adventures of Akira and Mowgli - The Jungle Book Adventures and Young Achievers Academy along with the second season of Dragonero-The Tales of Paladins. All these shows are currently in fast paced production at Powerkids, and we are slated for commencing deliveries around early 2025. During the year we also established some great partnerships in FAST sphere by collaborating with esteemed platforms of JioTV/ Jio TV + and Samsung TV Plus.

In terms of Awards and recognitions, early this year, Powerkids Entertainment has been honoured by Asia Business Outlook magazine as one of the top 10 most promising animation design companies in Asia. Also, at the recently concluded ANN Awards 2024, Powerkids bagged 10 awards in different categories including the prestigious Studio of the Year award.

How have your newly launched FAST channels been performing on platforms like JioTV, JioTV+, and OTTPlay? What are your expectations from this relatively new space?

Since we have recently launched our FAST channels, we need couple of more quarters to review their performance and analytics. However, we are quite optimistic to reap benefits of early movers in this space.

What are your thoughts on the impact of AI in the animation industry?

We firmly believe that while modern AI has advanced significantly and can assist with the technical aspects of animation, it still falls short in capturing the distinctive creative touch and emotional richness that only humans bring can produce.

What are some of Powerkids' shows in global networks?

Our portfolio consists some of the most iconic shows including our flagship franchise The Jungle Book, which has been sold in more than 160+ countries across the globe. Other Popular shows include The New Adventures of Peter Pan, Robin Hood: Mischief in Sherwood, The Psammy Show, Dragonero-Tales of Paladins.

Are there any projects in development at Powerkids?

We are working on couple of concepts but currently those are in very nascent stage.

At MIPCOM 2024, what are the three main goals you hope to achieve in terms of expanding Powerkids' footprint and securing new opportunities?

At MIPCOM 2024, we plan to look for buyers for our completed/in-production shows, anchor broadcasters/co-producers for our in-development series, and new partners that match our vision and improve our talents, all while keeping solid relationships with our present partners.

SPARKING THE AVGC-XR REVOLUTION IN INDIA WITH ABAI

Karnataka at MIPCOM



Biren Ghose

President of ABAI and Managing Director of Technicolor Group for APAC

In this interview with Pickle, Biren Ghose, President of ABAI and Managing Director of Technicolor Group for APAC, in his trade body avatar discusses how Karnataka's AVGC-XR sector is poised for global growth, and how the state's pioneering efforts in IP and innovation, is being taken to markets as an outreach to help the state create strategic tie up internationally and for start-ups and participants to leverage the policy initiatives and develop contacts at the important MIPCOM 2024 market.

Pickle: The Indian audio-visual is buzzing with activity. AVGC-XR is a popular trend that has spread from India to the world. The Indian Prime Minister is spearheading this effort. What are your views on this?

Biren Ghose: The Indian AVGC-XR sector is an industry whose time has come! The acronym for Animation, VFX, Games and Comics [AVGC] is fact of Karnataka origin, and the state has seen industry grow over the past 25 years, from its infancy to its status as a graduate, poised

to build a future more potent than any other vertical in the Indian entertainment industry. It's also the first entertainment sector after Bollywood movies to demonstrate both global reach and this has been achieved because of the rapid scaling of Indian talent driven services in markets with massive volumes and high-end deal flows. This services success story, is providing the fuel and momentum to drive revenues, create jobs, and exert storytelling, soft power & influence. VFX and animation will add

amazing value and production potency to Indian film and TV content, bolstering the development of story universes and brand franchises with distinctly Indian DNA from our cultural vault. **From the Prime Minister's clarion call; to the Union Government's approval of a visionary Centre of Excellence; to a finalised policy for the digital creative industries, the country is poised to establish a national AVGC-XR mission and unleash a slew of initiatives.** I am proud to represent CII in this endeavour. ABAI and Karnataka have partnered to enhance Bengaluru's national positioning and beyond.

Pickle: The National Centre of Excellence for AVGC-XR has brought in a lot of feel-good for the sector. How is it going to benefit the sector? How does your role as NCoE CEO benefit the Indian audiovisual ecosystem?

Biren Ghose: The idea of a National COE [NCOE] dates back 20 years when our industry was considerably smaller. Much of the heavy lifting in scaling talent has been done by production studios across India. However, **with the global market share available and the reputation India has already gained for delivering world-class titles, the aim is to create a centre focused on talent growth, technology and storytelling innovation, syndicated & shared infrastructure, and solutions across marketing and financing India's AVGC XR sector, all masterminded and executed at this NCOE.**

As deep technologies reshape this talent led crafts industry, the NCOE shall continuously adapt to stay competitive. **Collaborations and alliances with world leaders will ensure that skilling, reskilling, and upskilling including in**

the new era of the "AI factory stack" will be masterminded here.

"When you find an idea that you can't stop thinking about, that's likely a beneficial one to pursue." That is what we, as a group, have consistently focused on. As one of the 3 interim pro bono CEOs working to establish the curtain raising 1st phase, I can confirm that the community has come together as one to make this a reality in the next few months.

Innovation, whether in IP or technology, requires fresh approaches every 3-5 years. A hub-and-spoke model will drive ideas, with the NCOE launching soon. Bengaluru will serve as the most visible test case for our achievements, and the ABAI AVGC COE 2.0 has now been approved by the Government of Karnataka for an extension of the project to reach Beyond Bengaluru. This means that the state will already have its own 'hub and spoke' demonstrating the effect of how Tier 2 cities can also see a greater permeation of the industry as a successful distributed model vis a vis skills and new technology.

Pickle: Where do you see various Indian states aligning with this approach?

Biren Ghose: The states play a key role in implementing the All-India charter to drive most industries, and their influence is increasing over time.

States should leverage their unique strengths by tapping into their cultural heritage to create growth platforms with a traditional touch, similar to how each state's distinct culture is showcased in its cuisine and hospitality, which have gained national and global recognition. Governments must streamline internal protocols, offer sup-

“Karnataka stands out by providing services like CoE incubation, ELEVATE grants, KITVEN IV equity investment, and coproduction incentives”

port, and promote seed funding to boost the ecosystem. State leaders should trust, respect, and empower local industries, allowing them to take bold steps, learn from failure, and drive long-term success through academia and industry.

States such as Karnataka have experienced these cycles, and industries such as the IT sector, aerospace, and biotechnology have already demonstrated the necessary steps for a partnership between academia, industry, and the state. We first introduced the AVGC-XR policy here,

Pickle: What are the three benefits Karnataka hopes to gain from MIPCOM?

Biren: ABAI will continue to support Karnataka in achieving three key goals:

1. **Maintain Karnataka's position as India's top location for the AVGC-XR industry.**
2. **Attract global recognition for IP offerings, co-productions, service offerings, and establish production studios and technology centres.** Karnataka shall be the 1st state to establish collaborations in AI and cybersecurity, with a \$1.25 million investment in establishing a Centre of Excellence (CoE) announced by the government.
3. **Strengthen national partnerships via the government's GIA program, spotlighting the "Bangalore Tech Summit" <https://www.bengalurutechsummit.com/> and promoting the 20-year-old "Bangalore GAFX" event for the AVGC-XR industry (<https://gafx.in/>).**

We will assist participants in MIPCOM with these key strategies:

1. Master your product—**be exceptional at what you offer.**
2. Know your customer—**target those with a need** or opportunity.
3. Build relationships—**success follows strong connections.**

and we continue to learn how its implementation can yield greater global influence. The policies pertaining to AI, GCC, start-ups, and data centres, among others, will significantly impact and enhance the effectiveness of the state's AVGC-XR program. Other states will follow suit. Nearly ten states are in the initial stages of this journey, with Telangana being the only one to have executed someone over the age of five.

Pickle: Karnataka already stands out significantly from other states in terms of AVGC. Now they have a 3.0 policy. How does Karnataka reward the startup ecosystem in the AVGC space?

Biren Ghose: Passion and perseverance are key factors that separate successful entrepreneurs, and the same applies to companies and their leadership. Karnataka has nurtured growth sectors through state and private programs aimed at economic and social outcomes. Key growth drivers include skills, IP creation, and start-ups, with the state offering incentives to companies like Technicolor for future growth.

The Department of ITBT's K-Tech agenda has supported the creative tech sector for 15 years. Karnataka stands out by providing services like COE incubation, ELEVATE grants, KITVEN IV equity investment, and coproduction incentives through state and MOIB/Invest India funds. Bengaluru has been the home for the world's largest brand across VFX, Animation and Games with Technicolor. [MPC for VFX, Mikros for Animation and The Mill for experiential and brand communications]. Separately, Karnataka is India's leading startup ecosystem, housing 45+ unicorns, with 400 of the Fortune 500 companies operating in the state across all industries.

Pickle: What are Karnataka's goals at MIPCOM?

Biren Ghose: Karnataka has responded to what ABAI [its nodal industry body for steering and enabling the state's AVGC-XR industry implementation] had recommended. MIPCOM 2024 is just one of those market recommendations. This follows a very successful Anancy participation in 2024.

Like a fire needs heat, fuel, and oxygen, the AVGC-XR sector requires similar elements to thrive: Here's how:

- ▶ **Heat:** The work to be presented to the delegation and participants is defined by the genres and segments where there is market growth in terms of "what consumers and distributors want"—what they are buying or commissioning. At Cannes, it's about "what's hot" in Animation and VFX.
- ▶ **Oxygen:** Industry thrives on revenues and skills, while the state reaps benefits from taxes and jobs. Therefore, the success of markets hinges on the ability to secure projects for services or intellectual property, as well as their production and delivery. Here, **the market serves as a vital source of oxygen, enabling visitors to breathe new life into local industry.**
- ▶ **Fuel:** It refers to the financial and human resources required for scaling up. Markets also attract investors and funds from various countries, and this coproduction model has turbo-charged most of the Animation and VFX-driven production for decades. **Markets serve as a platform for initiating or concluding deals, thereby refuelling the order book.**

What determines success is ultimately "user experience." No matter how savvy the entrepreneur or company is, it's mostly about the user experience.

Markets provide an opportunity to observe the exchange of goods and services. All the pavilions and stalls show their latest country and company offerings.

Buyers and co-pro seekers from around the world will provide insights into the latest consumer preferences. Generally, emerging markets have undervalued and underinvested in user experience. India's IP development will be substantially augmented as this expertise matures.

I recommend that delegates study user-centered design if they lack expertise in it. Hire people who know it. Obsess over it. Live and breathe it. Get your whole company or content IP aligned with it. That's why we visit markets, and **strive to help our delegations and participants understand the advantages of enhanced design and design thinking.**

KARNATAKA AT MIPCOM



Pickle: You are leading numerous Accelerate programs and new efforts to drive innovation and startups in the AVGC sector, what is your vision?

Biren: Karnataka's AVGC COE 1.0 has offered significant support to startups through its incubation program. Likewise, ABAI has played a key role in the ELEVATE grant program, curating a discerning jury and now tracking milestones for awardees. **In 2025, ABAI will launch an accelerator to further harness available funds and infrastructure under the new policy. The mantra I remind new entrants: "Chase the vision, not the money; the money will follow."**

Karnataka's unicorns and soonicorns (unicorns of tomorrow) in games and allied industries prove that success doesn't require genius—just a dream, support, and a scalable business model.

Pickle: What is your perspective on IP development in today's AVGC economy?

Biren Ghose: There is a tried-and-tested formula. The AVGC XR industry knows exactly where the money is and where the distribution will pay for their IP. Recognizing that an IP or product offering will succeed if it connects customers to the future, rather than merely catching up or requiring a significant leap, is crucial when designing offerings.

As we become more open to developing content for a wider audience, co-production opportunities will also spring, benefiting the industry and enhancing cultural representation on a global scale

Sunita Uchil, Founder & CEO of Karman Unlimited, shares her vision of creating premium content with Indian roots that resonates globally, focusing on quality over quantity.



Sunita Uchil
Founder and CEO of Karman Unlimited

Sunita Uchil, Founder and CEO of Karman Unlimited, is a dynamic leader and visionary with over 30 years of media expertise. Her last position was Chief Business Officer and Head of International Co-productions at Zee Plus, Zee Entertainment Enterprises' co-production arm. Uchil has pioneered content creation, format development, licensing, advertising, and brand activities in television, radio, and print.

Uchil loves new challenges and finding new income streams in the ever-changing media industry. Her achievement has come from cooperation and trust.

Recognized globally, Uchil is one of The Hollywood Reporter's Most Powerful Women in Global Television (2016), FRAPA's advisory board member, and a jury member for the International Emmys and World Trailer Awards. Her groundbreaking films *The Lion's Last Roar* and *The Life of Earth from Space* have earned worldwide notice, cementing her name as a content creator and co-producer.

Congratulations on your new role leading Karman Unlimited. What does "unlimited" mean?

It's a reminder for ourselves to never lose the ability to dream—to know that we can do anything and do it really

well. Besides that, our vision is to serve as a consultant to our clients, not limiting ourselves to our expertise, but always available to assist them in connecting the gaps.

What is the focus of Karman Unlimited?

We produce premium content with Indian roots that resonates with global audiences. Besides this, we also consult on all related activities corresponding to the development, production, and promotion of content.

M&E has grown rapidly across all media verticals during the past 30 years. The previous 15 years have seen us lead the world in content development, formats, licensing, and co-productions. As the global content hub, where are we going?

Yes, it has been a fantastic journey. I have had the privilege of witnessing the significant transformations in the print, radio, and television industries. We truly are an incredible country making huge strides in filmmaking, adapting various forms of story-telling, and constantly improving the tech so that all of these can reach audiences across the world. We have a large captive audience at home, and we produce content that addresses the needs and reflects the mood of this audience.

India differs significantly from the rest of the world in factors that influence content development, such as culture, traditions, festivals, way of life, values, and overall outlook. Most of our home networks have a huge footprint internationally, in no small part thanks to the wonderful 35 million+ diaspora around the globe. As we continue to grow economically and expand our horizons socially, the fabulous content we make at home will find more audiences around the world, steadily growing the appetite within mainstream global audiences.

Instead of competing to be the "content hub of the world," I'd rather be on the list of the best content in any genre. That would be a fine testament to the work we are doing here.

We have been observing your participation at MIPCOM for over a decade. It is familiar territory to you. What are your objectives for MIPCOM 2024?

Yes, I have been at MIPCOM for many years, experiencing many great moments and, in the process, making many good

friends and associates. This year holds great significance as it marks the first time I am here on my own, representing my company, Karman Unlimited. This year at MIPCOM, my team and I arrive with a fresh perspective, eager to collaborate and work with the finest. Our expertise and work have revolved around co-productions across genres, be it drama series or factual content in the lifestyle, wildlife, travel, food, and science spaces. We would also like to help develop more stories that feature India and, at the same time, resonate universally.

FRAPA has inducted you into its advisory board. How important is that role?

With the wings that content development has now adorned in India, the number of creatives entering this field is larger than ever before. FRAPA is an industry-recognised association dedicated to the recognition and protection of entertainment formats. By registering our formats with FRAPA, we not only acknowledge our ownership but also actively promote and protect the intellectual property. A mechanism such as FRAPA promotes good business practices and fosters a culture of trust and friendship among all those involved in the international trade of formats. As we continue to integrate ourselves more into the international community and reassert our creative disposition, being a part of FRAPA will be instrumental in paving the way to success for an ethically focused global community.

India offers \$3.6 million in incentives for live TV, film, and documentary production. Your research and practice on Indian content have increased India's global presence in numerous areas. How do you see content development, co-production, and Indian storytelling from India to the world?

As I mentioned earlier, we have a wealth of talent in India, be it creative or technical. We have an unparalleled thirst for knowledge and self-development. That also applies to the media and entertainment industries. These incentives and treaties will create a more favourable environment for foreign companies to consider India for their production requirements. As we become more open to developing content for a wider audience, co-production opportunities will also spring, benefiting the industry and enhancing cultural representation on a global scale.

TIME IS RIPE FOR INDIA

MUNJAL SHROFF ON CO-PRODUCTIONS AND **GLOBALISING INDIAN IPS**

Munjal Shroff,
Director & COO of
Graphiti Multimedia
Pvt. Ltd. discusses
India's animation
potential, the
success of *Bharat
Hain Hum*, and
the future of global
collaborations at
MIPCOM 2024.



Munjal Shroff
Director & COO of Graphiti Multimedia Pvt. Ltd

Munjal Shroff, Director & COO of Graphiti Multimedia Pvt. Ltd, is a seasoned veteran with nearly three decades of experience in the animation industry. As he approaches his 30-year milestone early next year, Shroff reflects on India's burgeoning potential to create compelling global content, highlighted by the immense success of *Deepa & Anoop* and the groundbreaking new series *Bharat Hain Hum*. In a recent conversation with **Pickle**, he shares his insights on the upcom-

ing MIPCOM 2024, the expanding opportunities for Indian intellectual properties, and the ambitious journey of *Bharat Hain Hum*, a series that aims to resonate not just in India, but around the world.

What is your objective at MIPCOM 2024?

We are exploring opportunities for co-production and co-development, as well as investing in new shows or established IPs that are transitioning into new seasons.

Netflix and Amazon Prime Video simultaneously launched *Bharat Hain Hum* Series in 150+ countries worldwide. This is a global first!

We are also seeking distribution for our new series *Bharat Hain Hum* (We Are India), part of the *Krish*, *Trish*, and *Baltiboy* franchise.

Apart from this, we have two other shows in our catalogues for which we are seeking distribution: *Yom*, an action adventure series based on an animal-inspired yoga avatar, and the award-winning movie series *Krish*, *Trish*, and *Baltiboy*, which are exquisitely animated and based on folk stories and folk paintings.

To ensure the success of Made in India Show the World, we must establish a system for our intellectual property (IP) that originates from India. Is time ripe for India now?

Yes, absolutely!! The timing cannot be better. India has now established a co-production fund that allows shows to receive up to 30% of their budget from the country. Further Indian studios have a proven track record of delivering high-quality animation for some of the best shows that we see around the world. Graphiti has been working with other international partners for over two decades. We have developed and successfully produced shows with Cartoon Network, Disney, Nickelodeon, Discovery, Honest Entertainment, SABC, and more recently with Mattel and Netflix.

I believe that when international co-producers look at Indian studios just as a service partner, they are not exploiting the full potential of that relationship.

Graphiti has been an innovator with *Deepa & Anoop*, creating and designing products from India to the world. Now this tagline is taking off...

Our Netflix Original *Deepa and Anoop* that was produced with Mattel is a strong testament to that belief—Create in India for the World. I am deeply humbled by the fact that Season 1 of the show was nominated alongside shows like *Sesame Street* and *Ada Twist, Scientist* at *Kidscreen 2023*, and for us to win not one but four *Kidscreen Awards* (Best New Show, Best Inclusivity, Best Music, and Best Voices) was unbelievable! *Deepa and Anoop Season 2* received another nomination for Best Show in 2024. I believe you will see more such success come out of India.

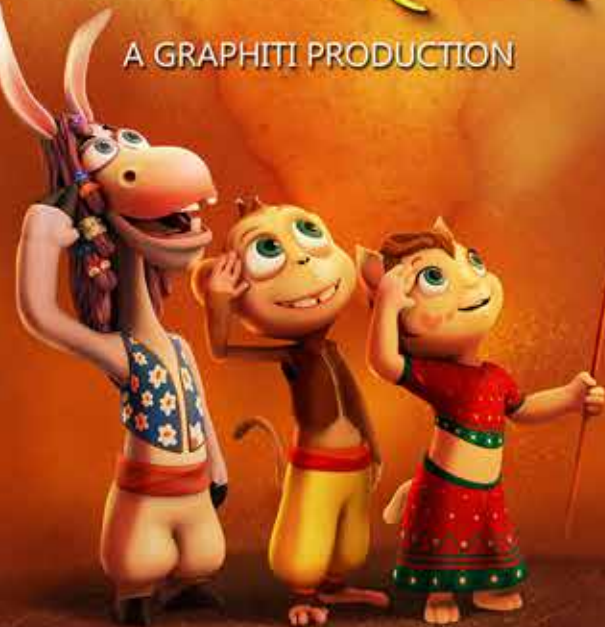
Tell us about the making of *Bharat Hai Hum*. Is it the most unique IP from India?

Bharat Hain Hum has been our most ambitious production. The story of India's 400-year freedom struggle is a glorious story with thousands of people sacrificing their youth, their wealth, their dreams, and laying

CBC PRESENTS

BHARAT HAI HUM

A GRAPHITI PRODUCTION



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down their lives to free India. A team of dedicated research scholars led the series, conducting exhaustive research. We setup a team of passionate writers who took this exhaustive research and crafted each episode with a very crisp telling. We also conducted thorough research on the show's artistic elements. Our pre-production team did extensive research on costumes, architecture, weapons, armor, flora, and fauna. The pre-production level for each

episode significantly surpasses that of a typical 52-part series. Over 700 characters and more than 3,000 backgrounds were created for the show. As you can see, the production schedule is quite extensive.

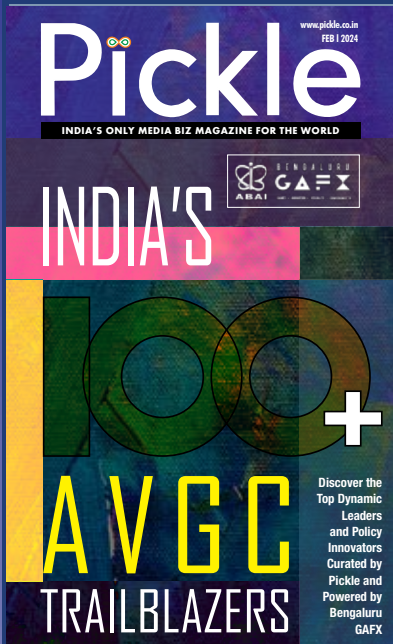
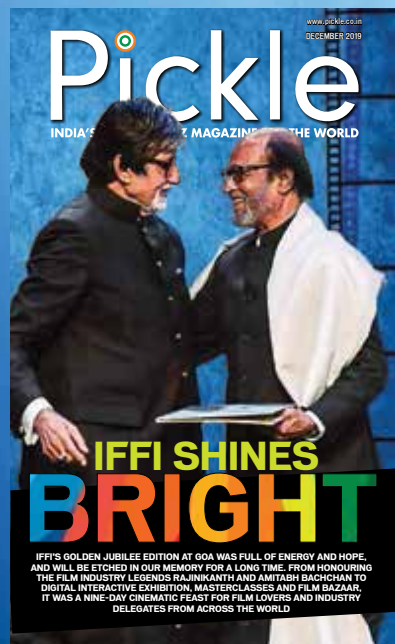
The show has had a tremendous launch! It is India's largest multi-platform and multi-lingual release. Netflix and Amazon Prime Video simultaneously launched the series in 150+ countries worldwide. This is a global first! It is an inspiring series based on

heroes of the Indian Freedom Struggle. It's a 52-part series of 11-minute episodes and is available in 19 languages: English, Spanish, French, German, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, and Korean. In the first week, the series ranked among the top 10 shows on Netflix. Doordarshan's 28 channels nationwide broadcasted the series on Sunday morning prime time. The series delivered strong ratings on these channels and is currently being rerun.

When will the new season of Bharat Hai Hum launch?

We plan to launch Season 2 in November. I am happy to share that all our partners for Season 1—Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and the 28 channels—will continue to be our partners. We will be announcing additional partners and new platforms soon, so stay tuned.

India's only media biz magazine for the world markets



Congratulations to MIPCOM on 40 years and a special shout-out to Toonz Media Group on 25 years of creativity and success!

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