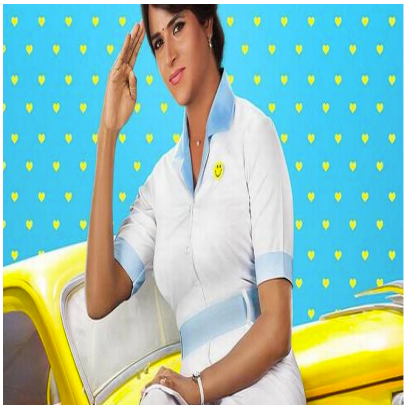

A new dawn in Kollywood?

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

By Sreedhair Pillai

Kollywood is looking for a bright and better 2017, as the industry has undergone a sea change in 2016. All aspects of Tamil film making â??funding, distribution, marketing, exhibition, promotions and political climate â?? have gone through a metamorphosis. Demonetisation and the resulting lack of finance is making producers uneasy.

Last week, the single biggest deal was made for a forthcoming festival filmâ??s most lucrative distribution territory. The deal between the distributor and the production house was done through their bank accounts via RTGS (Real Time Gross Settlement) instead of the usual practice of paying cash. The distributor had told theatres willing to pay advance, and in some cases MGs (Minimum Guarantee), for this big hero film, to route it via banks, and made it clear that he will not accept cash payments. The deal went off smoothly, with the distributor bragging that he didnâ??t even visit the producerâ??s office to transfer the amount.

A leading financier says, â??Demonetisation and the number of raids that followed have ensured that producers settle their financiers in cashless transactions via cheques, RTGS, NEFT etc. Now, financiers are wary of funding films based on its negative rights. We need to know their financial background and if they will be able to pay via banks at the time of settlement before going forward.â•

One of the lessons Kollywood learnt in 2016 is the importance of marketing and promotions in the success of a film. Films which were torn apart by critics, like *Kabali, Remo* and others, went on to become hits, based on their marketing, with influential local distributors getting them wide releases.

Today, top stars visit popular screens in suburbs and small towns at the time of their filmâ??s release. Dhanushâ??s visit to Tirunelveli Ram Muthuram for *Kodi* promotions resulted in huge collections for the film at that screen, and it featured at number four among the theatreâ??s top 10 collecting films of 2016.

The number of shows a screen allocates to a film too has become a barometer. At the same time, more than half the films suffer as theatres donâ??t give prime slots. The trouble is that theatres in the State have found alternative content, which is far more lucrative than Tamil films. Last year, the Tamil dubbed versions of *The Jungle Book, The Conjuring 2, M.S.Dhoni: The Untold Story* and *Dangal* did better business than certain straight Tamil hits. These four dubbed films will easily walk into the top ten collecting films of 2016 from Tamil Nadu theatricals based on ROI.

Last week, some screens in Chengalpet area on Monday cut down the number of shows of new Tamil films released for Christmas on Friday and replaced them with *Dangal*!

It is clear that Tamil films that donâ??t open well during the weekend are today dumped, without even informing the distributor. Earlier, even if a film flops, it would survive a week, with the same number of shows given at the time of release. Theatres across Tamil Nadu are now finding it better to go for online ticketing, which brings them extra money via service charges. This has created a situation where online booking, especially in Chennai city and Chengalpet areas, will determine the number of shows allotted for a film.

The myth of so-called â??low-class masala entertainersâ?• performing better in B and C markets has also been blown away. 2017 will see a more unified box-office performance market across the State, which means that producers canâ??t make meaningless potboilers and say it is meant for a particular

section of the audience. Non-big hero films are now in a process of cost-cutting, with production managers being pulled up and asked to reduce the number of shooting days. Directors, especially newcomers, have been told to bring down the number of scenes, with the final edited copy not exceeding 140 minutes.

As satellite prices are no longer attractive for small and medium films, producers are trying to explore digital platforms. The new team, which will take over the Tamil Film Producers Council in the first week of February, has their job cut out. A lot has been written about piracy eating into collections as technology improves, with many new films being uploaded on Facebook on the release day itself. Hence, the window between a theatrical and digital release will have to come down drastically this year. Tamil cinema producers and actors should realise that budget is the key to box-office success. The Tamil Nadu government should also implement the High Court order to increase ticket prices, which have not been modified for the last 10 years. Hopefully, Kollywood will see a new beginning this year.

(Source: thehindu.com)

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