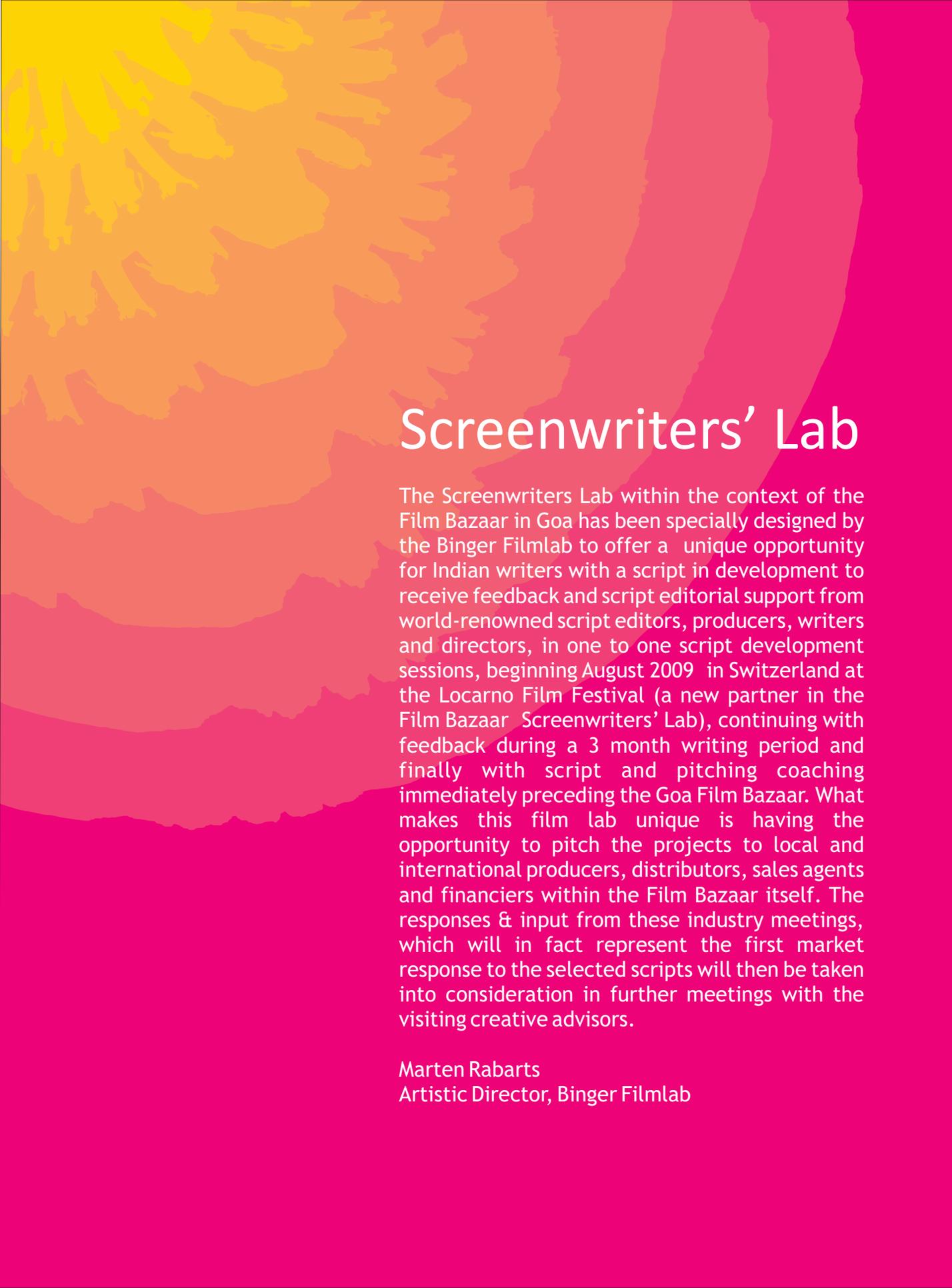


**Film
Bazaar**
India' 09

Catalogue

November 24-26, 2009



Screenwriters' Lab

The Screenwriters Lab within the context of the Film Bazaar in Goa has been specially designed by the Binger Filmlab to offer a unique opportunity for Indian writers with a script in development to receive feedback and script editorial support from world-renowned script editors, producers, writers and directors, in one to one script development sessions, beginning August 2009 in Switzerland at the Locarno Film Festival (a new partner in the Film Bazaar Screenwriters' Lab), continuing with feedback during a 3 month writing period and finally with script and pitching coaching immediately preceding the Goa Film Bazaar. What makes this film lab unique is having the opportunity to pitch the projects to local and international producers, distributors, sales agents and financiers within the Film Bazaar itself. The responses & input from these industry meetings, which will in fact represent the first market response to the selected scripts will then be taken into consideration in further meetings with the visiting creative advisors.

Marten Rabarts
Artistic Director, Binger Filmlab

DUETS IN VIOLENCE When Combat Is Art

Writer & Director: Vinod Veera

Language: Tamil

Budget (INR): 26 Million

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Attending Film Bazaar

Vinod Veera



Writer - Director's Profile

Vinod, an engineer by education, was always interested in cinema - he made his career change and entered filmmaking as an actor. He played the male lead in his first (Tamil) film that was released in 2008.

He has also worked as an assistant director and is currently doing his Advanced Screen Direction training at the Central Film School London.

Duets In Violence is the first script written by him, based on his research and interest in (Indian) martial arts.

The script was selected by the NFDC (National Film Development Corporation of India) for its Screenwriters' Lab 2009 and is now in development, in association with Binger Filmlab, Amsterdam.

Synopsis

A present day story of a unique relationship between two friends, of which one is a transgender.

The ancient Indian martial arts of kalaripayattu and varma kalai form the backdrop of the story. The influence of one's sexuality on intimate relationships, and the consequences of prejudice are explored.

A Special Forces commando, Arjun, is found in a coma, after an ambush operation on an assassin. All the other commandos are dead and there is no sign of the target. The doctors find the coma very mysterious, and are unable to understand the causes.

Arjun's girlfriend, Puja, a journalist who had met Arjun while working on a documentary on an ancient martial art form, goes back to the remote village (where he is from) to find Arjun's estranged family.

A bosom friendship, which was born between two kids, growing up in a remote Indian village is unraveled.

The bond between the two kids which grew in spite of and beyond the differences in social status, age, and nature was bridged by their love for an ancient martial art form. Later, social prejudices complicate the already complex relationship between a man and his transgender friend and the two friends went separate ways.

Each one is forced to take their own path, far removed from their roots, and both are lead to very different - but equally violent lives.

They are destined to confront one another, being on opposite sides of the law - one is Arjun, the Special Forces commando and the other is Ishwar, a notorious assassin.

What is at stake is not just survival but - friendship, love, honor... and the legacy of an art form.

Director's Statement

As a lover of (well made) action films I was well aware of several martial arts. As a martial art practitioner myself, I was introduced to an ancient indigenous martial art form in India.

Later, I found that this art form is considered the mother of several other globally popular art forms of today. Yet, this visually interesting and historically important art form has never been properly presented or explored in cinema.

During my research I also came across an interesting fact that ancient Indian kings had transgender warriors as their personal guards. They were the last rung of self-defense, for some kings, due to their incredible strength and because they were thought to be sexually invulnerable.

These facts greatly interested me, and as I was also practicing the martial art, the visual quality, the interplay of violence and sexuality, kept working in the back of my mind.

Throughout the scripting process I was aware of the scope for making a visually captivating film that is inherent in this script.

I want to present the action as complementary to the emotional drama, which is often absent in most action films. The action is an extension of the conflict, sown between the main characters by circumstances and prejudices.

Moreover, the martial art that forms the backdrop of the story, provides us with an art form to explore cinematically. I want to capture the use of the body and the physical language

Duets in Violence

peculiar to this art form, and highlight the sexuality and violence associated with it.

Using modern visual technology (motion capture / 3D reconstruction) to illustrate the physicality of the art and the action, will lead to novel visuals that enhance the audience experience.

The 'USP' and intention is to leave the audience with memorable visuals and universally resonating emotions - having experienced a little known culture and lifestyle.

Writer & Director
Aparna Pednekar

Language: Hindi

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Attending Film Bazaar
Aparna Pednekar



Writer - Director's Profile

I'm a journalist and scriptwriter. I'm a graduate in English Literature with a qualification in Journalism and Communication. I've worked as an entertainment reporter with Plus Channel in Mumbai and later as a advertising and media correspondent with The Brief, Mid-Day. I've also freelanced and continue to do so for travel and lifestyle publications like Travel Plus, Vogue (India), GQ (India), Verve, Femina, Spice Route and Jetwings International.

F20 is my first feature film screenplay. I'm currently working on writing and directing a short film, a black comedy in English, set in a village in India.

I also moonlight as a jeweler. I'm trained in gemology, jewelry design, diamond grading and have showed my designs in New York, California and Switzerland.

Synopsis

On a humdrum Mumbai morning, Srinidhi Rao, 34, Creative Director at a high profile advertising agency stands at the large French windows of her living room, talking shop with her colleague, before she leaves home for office. Nothing could be more commonplace.....until the massive pane of her window crashes in surreal slow motion, sending Srinidhi reeling to the floor!

Following the crash, Srinidhi experiences another 'freak attack' on her life, a flying knife missing her by hair's breadth. These bizarre phenomena are not revealed to her inner circle - loving husband Ajay and best friend and colleague Nina. Her behavior at home and at work becomes increasingly disturbed and volatile. As a creative person, she is no longer living on the edge of her imagination, she's apparently falling off it!

The third surreal accident - a car chasing her, phantom-like through Mumbai's bustling streets - ends in Srinidhi face-to-face with her nemesis - an aristocratic 50-plus gentleman with a sleek, sharp tongue and a modern GQ-inspired wardrobe. Having cornered Srinidhi in a dead-end alley after an exciting chase, the gentleman informs that he is Yama - God of Death, an iconic figure in Hindu and Oriental mythology. This divinely dour presence obviously means that her time on earth is up!

Out of breath, Srinidhi is enraged, and almost amused. She lets him know her professional status and announces that she'd fire any of her writers on the spot if he came up with this C-grade remake of a miserable Bollywood cliché! Her belligerence has no effect on him, and he continued to haunt her till her appointed day of death, which happens to be the day after they meet.

Meanwhile, Srinidhi's psychiatrist is exasperated that she's not visiting, and switching off her cellphone, ostensibly to avoid him.

Already unhinged, Srinidhi is rocked by the death of a young child in her building and seeing Yama at the spot is like the deathly awakening. Suddenly 'God-of-Death-in-Gucci-comes-to-Earth' isn't just a cliché, it's her reality. 10 hours to her death time, Srinidhi finds herself traveling on a highway with Yama, bickering with him about the game he's playing with her. She also gets to meet Yama's dashing 20-something male accountant Chitragupt (with whom she strikes an instant chemistry) and two fresh-off-the-oven ghosts. Affable Chitragupt goes the extra mile for his boss and explains to Srinidhi that Yama isn't just the God of Death, but the 'Controller' of our universe and the reason he's been 'playing games' with her is because he was trying to save her from killing herself. Srinidhi is suicidal. Worse still, she's pregnant.

Srinidhi, who's finally accepted Yama for what he is, doesn't take too well to his autocracy. She gets support from an unexpected ally. United by a common factor - addiction to dark, anti-depressing chocolate - Srinidhi and Chitragupt further bond over their relationship with Yama, one new, the other old, but both volatile. Srinidhi has five hours to her appointed death and Chitragupt grabs this opportunity to launch a rebellion against his authoritarian boss and a job he secretly resents.

The climax brings together real and surreal worlds - the worlds of two creative persons who also happen to be a grieving father and compulsively worried mother-to-be, come to terms with their guilt and fear respectively.

Writer - Director's Statement

Sharp, witty dialogues are the mainstay of the screenplay, which flows in conversational existentialist style. Along with that, there is a strong element of action/violence. The film opens with Srini's window crashing and her getting hurt. Consequentially, she injures other parts of her body. Yama also carries a gun (instead of a mace, which the mythological God carried) A scene towards half of the film, has a big trailer truck blowing up near Srini.

The physical action exists to visually represent the emotional intensity and volatility that the characters go through. My characters talk funny, but they aren't comedians, they're intense, sexy people! The action also flows well because the humour is sharp and sarcastic, as opposed to being warm and cuddly. With the humor and action, the film moves at a fast speed, despite the scenes - like the ones between Srini and Ajay - that are purely conversational.

The film is like jigsaw puzzle and all the pieces are brought together only in the climax. This isn't a linear story. But that doesn't mean that a viewer will go through the movie trying to piece the puzzle in his mind and get all confused and irritated. It is the interaction, the chemistry between the characters that grabs you and keeps you entertained. There's this 50-plus man, 34-year old woman and 20-something boy...all strangers. Add to the motley crew, two 'ghosts'.

The chemistry is crackling! I'm a big fan of man-woman interactions that don't involve sex... it's a new-generation thing and it's very exciting. There is a scene (after Yama confronts Srini) when she's in bed with her husband and they almost make love. In the moonlight, she sees Yama's face instead of Ajay's and screams. This is the only brief sexual thing she shares with

Yama, and it's more psychotic than sexy!

When I started writing this story, I didn't set out with any desire or design to write about parenthood. The idea was to write about depression, woven into these two volatile characters, Srini and Yama. (Chitragupt was a later addition but has worked out to be the most irresistibly attractive character, especially since he arrives in the second half of the film.) The parenthood angle crept in unawares, which is why it is so much fun and is not didactic or mushy. I'm neither married nor a parent. But I share a difficult relationship with my mother, who I love and respect most in the world. So I have strong feelings on parenthood. It's the only relationship in life that you're tied to; you can't divorce your parents! It's the most important, yet most frustrating relationship of your life. Also, parenting - to me- is more an attitude than a relationship. A lot of parenting happens in husband-wife / teacher-student relationships too. All this flows in the background in my screenplay.

I see the world through humor. And the best humor comes from the deepest tragedies, which is the core of black comedy. My favorite definition of Humor is that it's 'something that keeps you from jumping off the cliff', which is why I believe Death and Humor make great bedfellows.

GANGOObAI

Writer & Director
Priya Krishnaswamy

Language: Hindi

Budget (INR): 60 Million

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Attending Film Bazaar
Priya Krishnaswamy



Writer - Director's Profile

Having graduated from the Film & TV Institute of India (FTII) in Pune with a (post-graduate) Diploma in Film Editing in 1987, Priya Krishnaswamy began her career as a feature film editor with *Om Dar-b-Dar*, (winner of the Filmfare Critics' Award, India, 1988), and *Percy*, (winner of the National Award, India, 1989, and the Silver Bear, Mannheim Film Festival, Germany, 1989), and later edited *Bombay Boys* (1998) which became a sleeper hit when released worldwide.

Her other editing experience includes short films, tele-films, TV serials, talk shows, and award-winning documentaries for Channel 4 TV, Ford Foundation, and Indian television.

In 1998, after more than a decade's experience as editor, Priya Krishnaswamy began to direct her own films.

Her second documentary, *The Seduction of Dr. Loya* (35mm / English-Hindi / 2000), a powerful minimalist work, has been internationally acknowledged as one of the best films made about the Union Carbide Gas Disaster in Bhopal in 1984.

Her third film, *The Eye of the Fish - the Kalaris of Kerala* (35 mm / English / 2003), a personal journey through the martial art of Kalarippayuttu, won the National Award for Best Arts/Cultural Film in India in 2003.

Priya Krishnaswamy has made 12 documentaries on both 35 mm film and video, and is currently putting together her feature film, *Gangoobai*.

Synopsis

Overworked and underpaid, Ganga is a Maharashtrian bai, or cleaning lady, who works in Matheran, a beautiful colonial era hill-station only four hours from Mumbai, but a whole world apart.

Although she wakes every day in her humble shack to a million-dollar view of mountains and lush valleys, she spends her days cleaning in a world of dust and dirty dishes for a variety of employers or 'madams', caring for their beautiful homes, furniture and precious objects as if they were her own.

However, Gangoobai has her daydreams, and an unexpected, yet passionate appreciation of beauty. And from the moment that she sees her madam Mrs. Hodiwala's two daughters modeling magnificent designer gara saris, she has but one idea - to buy one for herself; not to wear, just to own something so exquisite, for once in her life.

So begins a new chapter in Gangoo's life, one of scrimping and saving and giving up her few 'luxuries' in order to save the money for the gara.

Finally, four years later, Gangoo has saved the magic sum of fifty thousand rupees and sets off for Mumbai.

However, at the fashion house she encounters Daksha, the manager, who mistakes her for a servant and rudely turns her away.

Despair at the thought of being denied her dream lends wings to Gangoo's words, and her eloquence moves the hearts of Daksha, Jamshyd Mistry, an aristocratic old gentleman, Monisha, the star model of the fashion house, Waman, the accountant who is hopelessly in love with Monisha, and even of the Fashion Designer, the

reigning god of India's fashion elite, who insists Gangoo must stay in Mumbai for a month of fittings before she can take delivery of her dream sari and blouse.

This month spent among her new acquaintances sees Gangoo at first struggle to find her feet in an alien world and then slowly her presence and loving interference in the affairs of all these people transforms each of them so their lives will never be the same again, thanks to the spirit of Gangoobai.

Gangoo returns to Matheran, her precious gara in hand, only to have her dream destroyed when she loans the unique couture sari to her self-absorbed madam Santripti, who ruins the garment, leaving it in a burned and sodden heap after a party accident.

Gangoobai is wholly defeated, until the harvest of the love she gave and found in Mumbai comes to her in Matheran.

And those whose lives she transformed now in turn transform Gangoo's humble circumstances so she need never be known as 'bai' again.

Writer - Director's Statement

It is said that talent creates its own opportunities. But sometimes, intense desire can create not only its own opportunities, but also its own talents...

All my life has been about the ability to dream.

There was nothing in my background to suggest that I could one day aspire to filmmaking, a world so alien to my academic parents that it boggled the mind, and that too in Mumbai, a city where just the rent could kill you - but for the fact that dreams often fuel themselves - and pay off in surprising ways.

However, my life and career over two decades in Mumbai would not have been possible without the aid of a variety of Gangoobais - hardworking, dependable and honest women who form a stratum of Indian society that enables the other layers - indeed, the whole city - to exist.

To me, in their generosity, enthusiasm, joy, dignity, and passion, and with their herculean ability to rise above their circumstances, they are like love letters to life.

I wondered what would happen if one of these women, with hardly anything to her name, dared to dream a dream that led her into the heart of a highly exclusive and expensive world like the fashion industry in Mumbai, not as a maid but as a client - and so *Gangoobai* was born.

The idea was quite simple, to suggest that if you can dream it, you can do it, no matter who you are or where you come from or how improbable your dream is, and life, despite all its curious twists, turns and heartbreaks, will aid you and reward your courage in ways that you would never have thought of...

Gangoobai is a coming of age story in a very different sense; a poignant, warm, humorous, heart-warming story about life, loss and wisdom - lived and learnt.

Production Design

The narrative is of a journey, an exploration and several discoveries, both within Gangoo and without.

Gangoo comes from the wild, rustic, beautiful old colonial hill-station of Matheran with its gorges and valleys cut into the lush green range of the Sahyadri mountains to the urban chaos and architectural beauty of the megapolis of

Mumbai, within which the luxurious world of high fashion nestles like a pearl in an oyster, glowing luminously. Once here, Gangoo experiences a variety of Mumbais - the stylized world of fashion in South Mumbai, the old bungalow belonging to the wealthy Jamshyd Mistry, the minimalist 21st century ambience of the apartment in which Monisha the model lives, and the lower middle-class housing society with wooden rafters and common bathrooms that is the unassuming accountant Waman's home - and through it all Gangoo comes to realize that the city that she arrived in with such distrust and trepidation is nothing if not a generous ode to the human spirit.

Consequently, while a small, detailed and intensely personal journey is at the heart of the story, there is a certain grandeur and scale to the settings and production values.

The landscape in Matheran is majestic. The homes are warm and golden.

The fashion world is gleaming luxury with silks and brocades, muted lighting and sparkling diamonds, while the streets of Mumbai are rich and vibrant with color and noise, almost like lively jazz.

The film will be shot mostly on actual locations, both to evoke the city and to keep expensive sets to a minimum.

There is a great deal of music in the film, some situational and some background. The voice that sings of Gangoo's pains and joys is irresistible - smoky, heavy, sensuous, and pregnant with life.

SYNCHRONICITY

Writers

Sidharth Singh & Lalit Ajgaonkar

Language: Hindi/English

Producer & Director

Lalit Ajgaonkar

Production Company

Procam Mediatel

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Attending Film Bazaar

Lalit Ajgaonkar

Sidharth Singh



Writers' Profiles

Sidharth Singh studied English Literature at Delhi University before deciding to jump headfirst into the turbulent waters of the Mumbai film industry, better known as 'Bollywood'. Since 2004, he has worked as an Assistant Director on feature films, television commercials, music videos and documentaries.

Singh began his writing career in 2007 and is now an up-and-coming scriptwriter with four of his screenplays, *Synchronicity*, *Yug*, *Kaala* and *The Andaman Affair* in varying stages of development. In 2008 he directed his first short film *The private life of Albert Pinto* which has shown at festivals in New Delhi, New York, Washington DC, Tokyo and Frankfurt. Singh has also directed a corporate documentary film for non-profit organization Mission for Vision. He lives and works in Mumbai.

Lalit Ajgaonkar has been working in the world of film, television and advertising since 1988. He started work with Viveck Vaswani at Theatrematix Productions where he was involved in the production of a fiction television series called *Nai Dishayen* and a Hindi Feature Film, *Gawahi*. He joined advertising soon after with Lintas and then Rediffusion DY&R in their film departments till 1995.

Soon after he took over the running of Durga Khote Productions where he directed a number of advertising films for India, UAE as well as East and South Africa. While he was at Durga Khote Productions he was also the Executive Producer on *Wagle Ki Nayi Duniya* as well as a number of other television serials for BITV.

He then set up his own advertising film production house to continue work on the production of advertising films and documentary shorts. His commercials in particular have won a number of awards including a New York Festivals finalist in

2004. His documentary *To Live* for a Nigerian based NGO - The Tulsi Chanrai Foundation won the IDPA Gold for Best Documentary in 2007

He has just completed a script for a children's film that is slated to go under production in end-2009. It is called *Shyam's Secret* and stars Ayush Mahesh Khedekar - the youngest Jamal from *Slumdog Millionaire*.

Synopsis

Kennedy Bardez is the quasi derelict owner of The Last Resort, a rundown bar in suburban Mumbai. Unwilling to maintain relations with his moneyed father in Goa, Kennedy spends all his time looking after the twenty odd patrons who wash up at his bar every day and bets on the races to keep the excitement alive. A much sought after daily feature in his scheme of things is the evening drink with childhood buddy Rocky Lalwani who also happens to be an equal partner in The Last Resort. Rocky is a tight fisted Sindhi businessman but he looks up to Kennedy as a man's man and takes vicarious pleasure in listening to the Old Stud recount tales of his sexual exploits from back in the day. It is on one such regular evening in their lives that they innocuously set into motion a cataclysmic series of events which will not only come back to haunt them but will also change the lives of hundreds of people across the globe.

Kennedy owes a local gangster some money that he had borrowed to bet on the races; which of course he lost. Unable to repay the loan in time, he is roughed up one evening by some thugs who give him an ultimatum to repay the money within a week or else. Rocky is miffed when he learns that Kennedy has also been gambling with the bar money and warns him to not try this again. Some friction develops between the friends at this point and this is when a stranger straggles in and demands the most expensive

whiskey; which he begins downing at an alarming speed.

Kennedy and Rocky who are distracted by a bizarre television story in the meanwhile are suddenly faced with the drunk who complains about his adulterous wife in the vilest manner. Irritated at having his evening further ruined by the drunk, Rocky, in a vindictive moment, tells him to go home and shoot his wife if she really is that unfaithful. The stranger, who goes by the name of Deepak Kothari, actually goes home and does that...he shoots his wife and himself.

This murder sets off a chain reaction which leads us through the lives of ACP Dinkar Sawant, who while investigating the Kothari double murders unearths an international human trafficking racket and rescues the young Laila Ben Hassi, of Moroccan parentage but a resident of London. This incident not only helps Sawant find redemption but ironically also liberates Laila.

In the meanwhile Kennedy manages to convince Rocky to make the dreaded trip to Goa and fetch the money from Kennedy's mother. Rocky reluctantly agrees but toughens his stance in the partnership by giving Kennedy a final warning and threatening to pull the plug if he repeats his mistake.

The news of the international human trafficking expose reaches the tube stations of London where an innocuous remark made by perpetual dreamer Allan Craig to his Muslim friend Zaid results in a horrific crime. The story takes us further into the murky world of drugs and homosexuality in Goa where we meet Mario Dacunha and Roger Fairchild who share a stormy and parasitic sexual relationship that ends in Fairchild's murder in a crime of passion; aboard the same train that was bringing Rocky Lalwani back to Mumbai with the money from Kennedy's mother.

Director's Statement

Synchronicity is a film that delves into seemingly innocuous moments in the lives of ordinary people who may be completely unaware of the effect that their words or actions could have on the lives of people across the globe. The film touches upon the concept of 'six degrees of separation' which believes that we are all interconnected in one way or another in an eternal interplay of causality.

We believe that a film like this should get made as it touches upon the undercurrents of destiny or that glutinous force that binds us and all our actions together.

Production Company Profile

Procam Mediatel is a Mumbai based production house whose scope of activities covers advertising film production, music video, documentaries, live sport & entertainment television, film production and film production services for international projects.

Lalit Ajgaonkar, who has over 15 years experience in the film and television production business, runs it. He has produced over 200 commercials for clients both Indian and International. Some of the important international productions have been for clients as diverse as Sony(UAE), Bresse Bleu Cheese(France) and Vodacom(Tanzania), amongst many others. His commercials for East Africa in particular have won a number of awards including a New York Festivals finalist in 2004.

Procam Mediatel is the only company in South Asia to have produced for live television some of the most important road races to have been run in this part of the world. These include Asia's largest Marathon the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon, the IAAF World Half Marathon

2004 - New Delhi, the Delhi Half Marathon
2005/2006/2007/2008 - The World's Richest Half Marathon, and the Sunfeast Bangalore World 10K
- 2008/2009 - The World's Official 10K Road Race.

THE DEATHS OF RAY

Writer & Director
Pratim D. Gupta

Language: Bengali

Production Company
Cinemawalla

Budget (INR): 9.5 million

Finance in place(INR): 3 million

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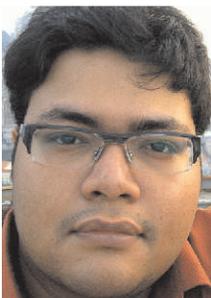
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Attending Film Bazaar
Pratim D. Gupta



Writer - Director's Profile

Born in Calcutta in 1981, Pratim D. Gupta graduated from St. Xavier's College, Calcutta with a degree in Mass Communication and Film Studies in 2003. In his second year in college, Gupta wrote and directed a short called *Justuju* (The Quest) that was screened at the International Video Festival in Poitiers, France.

After a brief stint with The Times of India, Pratim D. Gupta went on to join The Telegraph newspaper in Calcutta, one of the largest selling English dailies in the country, as a film journalist in 2004. In these five years, Gupta has become the entertainment in-charge as well as the film critic of the prestigious publication.

Earlier this year, Gupta co-wrote a feature film screenplay with internationally acclaimed filmmaker Rituparno Ghosh titled *Anya Nayak* (The Other Hero). Ghosh plans to direct the film in the near future.

The Deaths of Ray is Pratim D. Gupta's first solo feature film as writer-director. The screenplay was selected by the National Film Development Corporation of India for the Screenwriters' Lab conducted by the Binger Filmlab of the Netherlands at the 62nd Locarno International Film Festival in August 2009.

Synopsis

A city where only accidents could kill people, Calcutta is not used to murders. So when four people get killed in a span of six months, the city is shaken and its police department stirred. They are not even sure whether it's the doing of one man or just random murders. After all, what could possibly link the victims, ranging from a fake godman to a corrupt politician, from a street singer to a wealthy music connoisseur?

The commissioner of police, Ranjan Roy Chowdhury, goes to his one-time star protégé Siddhartha Roy requesting him to take up the case. But unable to negotiate with the horrors of the night when his wife was killed in a deal gone wrong, Siddhartha sends Ranjan back. Turned into a complete recluse, Siddhartha drowns himself daily with alcohol, his singing job at a seedy central Calcutta bar being his ticket to the bottle.

But Riya, Ranjan's criminal-psychology-graduate daughter, has other ideas. Having grown up watching her favourite 'Sid' in action alongside her father, Riya has almost a magical hold on him. She visits the bar and lashes out at him, in front of a room full of men in various stages of inebriation. Perhaps it's the public pasting or the fact that he got fired that very evening for his drunken singing, Siddhartha does make a comeback.

Thus comes together an old hand and a fresh thinker. Siddhartha and Riya embark upon a long and arduous journey of tracking a mind so twisted that his only signature is the goriness of his murders. Every scene of crime is a meticulously set up *mise en scene*, the only visible ritual of the serial killer. More people are eliminated – a stock broker stuffed with stones and a housewife nailed like an idol in the frame of a goddess.

As the detective duo struggles to find a lead, Riya gets estranged from her boyfriend Abhinav Bose, the reigning superstar of the Bengali movie industry. Abhinav cannot stand the fact that Riya has veered into a completely different world, a world where she spends most of her time with another man.

As the horrific images of the murdered victims sweep through the mindscape of Siddhartha, he chances upon a streetside billboard of a Satyajit Ray film festival, punctuated with the posters of his movies. It all becomes clear to him. The killer is using the films of the great director as his *modus operandi*, killing prototypes of the characters from his movies in settings befitting the cinematic gems.

But how does one catch him? 'In the act' is the only option. The killer performs his murders only on the original release dates of the films. So it has to be *Charulata* (*The Lonely Wife*) next. The lonely wife is found, throwing a big party on the D-Day. The lights suddenly go off, Siddhartha chases a shadow in the dark but the Ray Killer gets the better of Mr Detective, hitting him from behind. Siddhartha can only hear him as the two play Ray's famous *Memory Game*, recalling the director's movie titles one after the other. The mouse finally leaves the cat and also leaves behind his victim, the dead woman sitting on the swing.

The murders started on May 7 last year. It's May 6 today. One film left, one murder to go. Ray's *Nayak* (*The Hero*) was set entirely on the *Rajdhani Express* traveling from Calcutta to Delhi. Siddhartha and Riya board the train and so does Abhinav, to woo Riya back. But the hero doesn't know that he is the killer's last victim, put deliberately on the train as the bait.

Siddhartha finds his man, but does he save Riya's man? And what could Ray have possibly done to a

The Deaths of Ray

man for him to wreak such a murderous mayhem?

The Deaths of Ray is a whydunit thriller celebrating the cinema of the great Satyajit Ray.

Director's Statement

Bengali cinema has become an endangered species. There's no longer a sizeable audience out there who would pay to watch a Bengali film at a theatre. They would rather spend a little more to watch the new Bollywood releases in town. In fact, a Bengali film today gets such a limited release that even if it runs for a few weeks at the Calcutta cinemas, it's difficult to get back the production costs. Some Bengali films continue to make it to festivals across the world but they don't even get the theatrical release back home in Bengal.

And we are talking about the sixth most popular language in the world. We are talking about the cinema that first showed the world that we make films in India. Yes, it was Satyajit Ray's Bengali film *Pather Panchali* back in 1955 which first represented Indian cinema in the West. Big bright Bollywood may have become a staple now in cinema chains in the US and the UK, but Ray's Bengali films were the first ones from India to get theatrical distribution all over Europe and America.

So where did we go wrong? Forget the away appeal, how did we drive away the home audience?

Being introduced to cinema by my parents in the 1990s, I was spelt out only one name – Satyajit Ray. And I figured out I was not the only one. Despite the fact that the Oscar-winning master filmmaker made most of his 29 feature films between the 1950s and 1970s, we were made to

believe that no other director deserved a watch well after his death. He was our pride, his films our Bible.

In actuality, the Bengali obsession with Ray brought Bengali cinema to a standstill. Everyone who made films thereafter wanted to make films like him and everyone who watched films thereafter wanted to watch a Ray kind of film. Directors stopped having fun and all they were doing was emulate a certain kind of storytelling, eventually alienating the audience who were being constantly robbed of a complete cinematic experience.

And that's where the germ of *The Deaths of Ray* came from. I wanted to celebrate Ray, a director I have grown up with, and yet wanted to bring Bengali cinema out of his huge shadow. I wanted to make a fast-paced thriller, a genre that has become completely alien to Bengali cinema in the last couple of decades, around Ray's masterpieces.

According to me, two things that defined Ray's cinema were his characters and his *mise en scene*. By conceptualising the story of a serial killer who murders people resembling Ray's characters in settings inspired from his films, I am trying to unleash the master's magic all over again but set to my storytelling. It's like playing a familiar tune with a new musical instrument.

Visually too, I want to bring out that blending of the two worlds. While the film itself would have a very contemporary and pacy visual language with rapid cuts and split-screen shots, the murder sites and murder victims would belong to the old world. The music too would range from strains of Indian classical music to today's world music.

With *The Deaths of Ray*, I want to make a film which would bring the Bengali back to the

theatre and then seamlessly draw viewers from all over the world. Just what a Ray film used to be!

Production Company Profile

Cinemawalla is a US-based company located in Houston, Texas with branches in Argentina, Brazil, and India with operations throughout the world. The mission of Cinemawalla is to create and produce quality movies with a vision of high cinematic quality and commercial viability. In the past, the company has produced films like Rituparno Ghosh's *Utsab* (2000), which won the National Award in India for Best Director apart from winning the V. Shantaram Silver Award for Best Film. Cinemawalla also produced *Titli* (2002), *Bow Barracks Forever* (2004) and *Morning Walk* (2009).

THE PROMPTER'S SON

Writer: Somen Mishra

Director: Vasan Bala

Language: Hindi/Bengali

Budget (INR): 35 Million

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Attending Film Bazaar

Somen Mishra



Writer's Profile

Somen Mishra (1980) is a graduate in Physics Honors from University Of Calcutta & has a PG degree in Mass Communication. Since last seven years, he has been working as a film journalist across various TV networks. He is currently working as a Senior Correspondent with CNN- IBN, an english news channel.

Somen started out by making short films and winning awards at online film competitions like filamaka.com, promoted by Deepak Nayar. In the last few years, he has produced and directed music videos with artists like Shantanu Moitra, Swanand Kirkire, Kailash Kher, Amit Trivedi & Shilpa Rao for India Rocks series on Network18.

70mm Myth - a feature show produced & reported by him bagged the Ramnath Goenka Journalism Award for Film & TV last year. His first script *Sacchimucchi* was selected for Mahindra's Sankalan ScriptLab and he is working on its final development stage. He has also written the screenplay & dialogues for painter-turned-filmmaker Owais Husain's directorial debut *Punjab*. It's produced by M F Husain, shot by Santosh Sivan and is currently in post-production stage.

The Prompter's Son is his latest script which has been selected by NFDC for the ScriptLab at Locarno International Film Festival organized by the Amsterdam based feature film development centre Binger FilmLab.

Director's Profile

Vasan Bala is a techie-turned-filmmaker who started out by making short films. Since last few years he has been working with acclaimed filmmaker Anurag Kashyap. Vasan has worked as an assistant director on films like *Dev D*, *Gulaal* & *Aamir* (Rajkumar Gupta). He is currently working on Kashyap's new film *That Girl In Yellow Boots*. He is also developing the script of *Bombay Velvet* for Kashyap and Rajkumar Gupta's next film.

Synopsis

32 year old mathematics professor Partho Sarathi has a phobia. Password Phobia. He feels he can't remember passwords or pin numbers, which are required for day to day activities. For checking mails, withdrawing money from Bank ATM's, chatting on the net, number locks, phone locks, credit cards and online transactions. Every time he is asked to type his password or pin number, he feels uneasy and fears that he will type something wrong.

Partho consults a psychologist Dr. Sur who has never heard of such phobia. She starts interacting with Partho and gets to know about Partho's father Tilopada and his amazing journey.

Tilopada (or Tilo) was an illiterate man but had an amazing memory. Almost like a tape recorder. He would hear anything once and could recite it back completely. Tilopada and his family realize his talent only when he starts going for jatra. He realizes soon that he could remember the complete jatra, line by line. Because of his memory, he gets hired as a prompter for jatra companies. Slowly Tilo becomes popular because of his skill and he starts getting offers of

various kinds, like to prompt the Landlord's son during the Law exams with the answers, to prompt the speech of a political leader who has stage fright. But not many know that he can't read or write. Someone has to recite everything to him first and then only Tilo can recite the same thing again. Tilo starts making good money out of it and soon gets a marriage proposal from the Landlord for his daughter Sona.

Before marriage, Sona doesn't know that Tilo is illiterate. After marriage, she gets to know about it, feels cheated, and one day she runs away with a jatra-actor Sudipto Sen leaving her young son Partho with her husband, Tilo. Frustrated with his wife running away, Tilo decides to read, write, learn, and starts going to school on Partho's suggestion. Tilo and Partho both excel in exams. But Tilo soon realises that he has lost his memory power. He can read and write now but he can't remember anything. With his memory gone, Tilo's life and career goes for a toss as it was his only means for survival. His son Partho holds himself responsible for his father's condition and he runs away from home.

After hearing Tilo's story and spending time with Partho, Dr. Sur discovers that Partho is insecure about his memories. Insecure about losing people whom he loves and incidents that he doesn't want to forget. Because he has seen his father losing everything when he lost his memory, Partho has locked his life's precious memories in the passwords. Partho feels threatened by Dr Sur as she is able to crack his problem and is making him face the truth. Partho starts avoiding her but she slowly becomes obsessive with Partho's case.

Looking for other solutions, Partho discovers a memory bank where human beings can deposit their memory safely and make their memory slate blank to start fresh. Partho admits himself in the Memory Lab where he meets his father

The Prompter's Son

Tilo. The two meet like strangers as Tilo doesn't know how his grown up son looks like and Partho can't remember his father as he has deposited his memory. Tilo is hired as Partho's prompter in the Lab and eventually they get close to each other as they help each other in dealing with their problems.

Director's Statement

To do an online bank transaction, I typed my password, thrice, and every time I got the same message. The password is wrong. I was sure about the password because it was the name of a person whom I like. And so, it was impossible for me to type it wrong. Later on, I realized that a key on the keyboard was not working and so the wrong password. My memory wasn't wrong.

This thought triggered the idea of a story about remembering so many passwords or pin numbers which we use for various transactions daily and which holds the key to our assets. How does our memory work? What we remember and what we don't? Why we choose a specific word or number as our password? And what will happen if suddenly I wake up one morning and realize that I don't remember any password or pin number. Will my life be the same again? Or will it be better like it used to be in good old days where there was no concept of password or pin numbers.

The Prompter's Son's story begins on a similar note where the lead protagonist (Partho) has a phobia of losing his passwords and pin numbers. He can't rely on his memory anymore. As Partho tries to tackle the problem, we realize that like his unique problem, his father (Tilo) had a unique talent.

It's the story of a father and son; one had an amazing memory and the other who is slowly

losing it. Tilo's memory power makes him famous and he experiences an adventurous journey because of the same.

Having exposed to jatra (Bengali folk theatre) at a young age, I have vivid memories of the days and nights spent discussing, dissecting and watching various aspects of plays. Tilo's story is set in a village and starts in a similar colorful world, where he is hired as a prompter for a local folk theatre company. His job is to sit close to the stage and prompt the actors' dialogues. In case anyone forgets his/her line, it's Tilo's responsibility to make sure that the play goes on smoothly.

The world of Partho is exactly the opposite. It's in an urban setting and he has set up his own make-believe world without realizing it. He is desperately looking for a solution to his memory problems but is not sure how and where to go about it. The two worlds finally meet together in a surreal place where human memory is tangible.

The Prompter's Son looks at the bright and dark side of human memory, the joy & frustration of rural and urban life and the way our world is changing every day. It's an emotional story of a father & son, their problems and how they redeem themselves. Its magic realism meets modern day tale.

The treatment & tone of the film varies from dark humor to comic. Since the problems of both the characters are unique, it lends itself to many situations which are bizarre but extremely funny.

