BGSTARS, BUT

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his has been a fairly unexciting and nondescript year for the Hindi film industry. Two-and-ahalf quarters have rolled by, a long line-up of films have hit cinemas, yet, the Box Office appears pale and prose. There are a few highlights and defining moments, but the success rate of most big films that released between January and August has been shockingly low. Reason? It's not that people aren't keen to watch films any more.

The fact is, they aren't motivated enough to venture out to the theatres. While the industry is driven by stars, the box office, apparently, is not. If the trend in the past eight months is any indication, filmmakers need to pause, and play out the year as it unfolded on the silver screen. The big stars, barring Akshay Kumar, haven't been able to bring in the moolah. Instead, not the stars or their stardom, but good stories have scored; good content have captured the interest of the audience.

Films mounted on a lavish canvas, with what we consider 'saleable stars', have made quiet exits from theatres, while films driven purely by content have taken a bow and stolen the thunder. So yes, it's been a rough ride for Bollywood, but this is probably a sign that the industry can't turn its

DRIVER: CONTENT SOUL: STORY

It's been observed that successful movies were also the ones that impressed critics. Distributor Aditya Chowksey says, "The foundation of a successful film is a strong story. *Hindi Medium* (sleeper hit of the year) and *Bareilly Ki* Barfi prove that. Also, films with an Indian soul have worked.

Salman Khan's *Tubelight* and Shah Rukh Khan's *Jab Harry Met Sejal* left fans disappointed. Akshay, on the other hand, scored big with Jolly LLB 2 and Toilet: Ek Prem Katha. Akshay had told us, "I can't bear to see myself doing the same thing repeatedly. Yes, there is risk involved, but

Even as content-driven films are the apparent mantra for success, producers can't ignore risks. Director-producer Neeraj Pandey (known for films like *A Wednesday* and *Baby*) differs, "If I had to customise everything according to the industry, it would get really difficult for me."

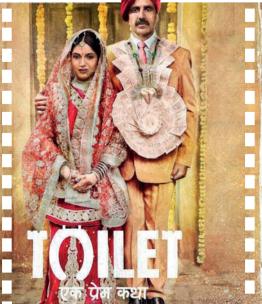
MOVE OVER STARS AND BIG BUDGETS

to nurture writers, one hasn't seen words translate into action. The Bahubali franchise amply proves that channelising passion and energy in the 'write' direction can really do wonders

"Big budgets and stars don't guarantee success. Hollywood releases are registering better results than our films because of their content," says a distributor on condition of anonymity, adding,

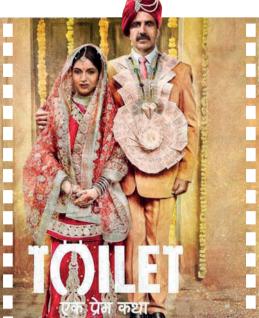
"Producers don't realise that the audience nowadays doesn't rush to see big-ticket films. People wait for reviews. *Hindi* Medium, Lipstick Under My Burkha and Bareilly Ki Barfi registered an increase in numbers after the first few days, purely because of word-ofmouth. You can't have huge names leading a film and get away with below-average

content.' S a k Chaudhary, who helmed *Hindi* Medium, says, "It was a much smaller film than some others, which also



While the industry asserts the need reduced the expectations and pressures. Such films give you opportu-

nities to act freely on content. However, that is not to say that the big-star films won't work at all. As Delhi-based distributor Sanjay Ghai points out, "If an actor known for heroic roles experiments, it won't be easy for the audience to digest it. If a big star wants to experiment, it should be with a ₹10-crorefilm, not sold to distributors at high rates like his commercial films.



CONTENT CREATES STARS

Plenty of actors have made a mark by backing content-laden films. Irrfan told us, "Every person has a story and is special. That's why I play roles where I can portray a person who is heroic in his

The parents who will do anyth get their children into the right school

Nawazuddin Siddiqui adds, "The term 'hero' typecasts actors. Even if he has a range, no one cares. If I have a chance to offer variety, why would I let that go?

Ayushmann Khurrana, who debuted playing a sperm donor, says, "That was a radical move. A lot of stars had turned the film down. It was unconventional. That's the path I want to tread.'

Actresses, too, are walking off the beaten path. Konkona Sen Sharma's debut as a director, Death In The Gunj, impressed critics and the aam janta. Bhumi Pednekar is turning out to be another unconventional heroine. She says, "My sensibilities veer towards such films. The credit goes to writers and filmmakers. An actor like me is surviving because of content-driven cinema.

BREAKING MONOTONY

Bollywood celebrates song-and-dance that decorate a love story but the audience seeks something more. Lipstick Under My Burkha, for instance, found takers since its content looked compelling. Stating that the

concept of Bollywood itself is changing, Daddy's director Ashim Ahluwalia, says, "Even the most traditional producer might call you today, and say, 'I want something dif-

Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, who helmed Bareilly Ki Barfi, produced by Junglee Pictures and BR Studios, explains,

"Bareilly Ki Barfi worked on word of mouth. The title created a sentiment of being *hatke*. Apart from making films look good, it's important to keep the audience hooked on. We have a lot of content to compete with, so we have to be at par. And a movie doesn't have to be slice-of-life; it should simply make the audience happy.

Turning the lens on exotic locales

graphics can save the day, a ew filmmakers still like to go hunting for exotic, virgin locales to shoot that perfect romantic moment, an action sequence or a song. And **Rengarajan Jaiprakash** aka JP helps those filmmakers weave magic onscreen, working behind the scenes. That's the reason the makers of Paisa Vasool thought of enlisting his help for the Portugal leg of the film's shoot.

Along with members of his company, All Around Globe, he scouts for breathtaking locations and they cart the cast, crew and equipment there. Besides looking into their stay, the team also takes care of the visas, travel logistics and other nitty gritty, including food to suit taste buds of the film unit.

Language barriers, adverse weather conditions and food are a few hurdles that they face from time to time, but they strive to think on their feet and ensure the shoot isn't affected. Anand Prasad of Bhavya Creations says, "JP is like family and I have immense faith that he and his team will always deliver. We worked with JP for Loukyam and Soukyam in Switzerland and he was our obvious choice for Paisa Vasool as well. It has been a great experience working with him in



PORTUGAL IS GOD'S GIFT TO MANKIND, WHICH IS WHY WE THOUGHT OF INTRODUCING IT TO FILMMAKERS HERE

- RANGARAJAN JAIPRAKASH, All Around Globe

Portugal this time round. We are excited to see the audience's reaction to the stunning

locations we have shot in." Says JP, "Portugal is god's gift to mankind, which is why

we thought of introducing it to filmmakers here and the audience from various parts of the world. The country has such a spectacular landscape, warm and friendly people and such amazing food to offer that everyone should take a trip here at some point in their life or at least enjoy the locales and culture through the lens of a



film's music forms an important part of its narrative. Director Ashim Ahluwalia's Daddy, based on gangster-politician Arun Gawli, is not any different. Set in the late '80s and '90s, the film, which releases on September 8, features an eclectic mix of songs synonymous with the period

We hear, Ashim and **Arjun Rampal**, who plays the title role, took special interest in the film's music.

The makers have not only tried to be true to the era with the score, but have also kept Arun Gawli's musical taste in mind. Since Gawli celebrated Ganesh Chaturthi and Eid with the same fervour, his biopic also features a song each -Aala Re Aala Ganesha and Eid Mubarak, both composed by Sajid Wajid — for the festivals.

The film, produced by Wave Cinemas' Ponty Chadha in association with Raju Chadha, and presented by Karta Entertainment and Kundalini Entertainment, also features a recreated version of the 1987 song Zindagi Meri Dance Dance, which was originally meant for Mithun Chakraborty's Dance Dance. Arjun says, "I wanted to stay true to the era and have a song from the '80s, which is part of a scene that takes place in Caesar Palace. Zindagi Meri Dance Dance instantly clicked with all of us.'



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KONNECT WITH CELEBS



Brad Pitt apologises to Jennifer

Brad Pitt has reportedly apologised to **Jennifer Aniston** for being an "absentee husband" and leaving her for Angelina Jolie

Jolie filed for divorce from Pitt last September. The Hollywood megastars had been married for two years and were a couple since 2004. They share six children.

'He's been determined to apologise for everything he put her through, and that's exactly what he did. It was the most intimate conversation Brad and Jen have ever had," a source said.

When Pitt apologised, the source says it brought back a lot of that old hurt. Jen was overcome with emotion. All the hurt feelings and resentment she had suppressed for years came flooding to

the surface, and she broke down." Aniston, who is now married to actor JustinTheroux. accepted Pitt's apology.



ZAYN-GIGI CELEBRATE EID AL-ADHA TOGETHER



model Gigi Hadid, rang in Eid al-Adha together.

The couple was joined by Gigi's mother Yolanda Hadid and Zayn's mother, Trisha Malik.

Yolanda shared on Instagram a group picture of them celebrating the day. They all flashed smiles to the camera.

"Eid Mubarak to everyone celebrating.....," Yolanda wrote in the caption. Trisha re-posted the picture on her own Instagram page. "Eid Mubarak to everyone... #BlessedDay," she wrote. Gigi, 22, and Zayn, 24, started dating in 2015.