

SRK's production 'Darlings', starring Alia Bhatt, to go on floors

THE Shah Rukh Khan production Darlings, starring Alia Bhatt, is set to go on floors soon. The makers plan to release the film later this year, it was revealed on Monday. An official announcement on the project will be made soon.

Darlings is pitched as a quirky story about a mother-daughter duo. While Alia plays the daughter, actress Shefali Shah is cast as the mother. Other actors on board are Vijay Varma and Roshan Mathew.

"The film is set in Mumbai against the backdrop of a middle-class family and traces the lives of two women, as they find courage and love in exceptional circumstances. In fact, the movie is gearing up for a release this year itself. The pre-production work is going on full swing, and the team is all ready to take it on floors very soon in Mumbai," a source reveals.

The film, directed by Jasmeet K. Reen, will be officially announced soon. "An official announcement is expected this week and, according to the source, Darlings will go on the floors as early as the first



quarter of 2021," says the source.

This is the second time Alia and Shah Rukh have collaborated. They worked together in Gauri Shinde's 2016 film Dear Zindagi, though as co-stars.

Besides Darlings, Shah Rukh is also backing Love Hostel featuring Bobby Deol, Vikrant Massey and Sanya Malhotra. The film is all set

to go on floors. He also produces Bob Biswas starring Abhishek Bachchan. The project is in post-production stage and gearing up for a Summer 2021 opening.

SRK is also currently busy shooting for his next starrer, Pathan. The film will mark his return to screen for the first time since his 2018 release Zero. (IANS)

1962: THE WAR IN THE HILLS

When 125 Indian soldiers fought a 3,000-strong Chinese army

THE upcoming war drama web series 1962: The War In The Hills offers a glimpse into the lives of the soldiers who stood rock solid against Chinese troops dedicating their lives for the security of the nation. A trailer of the 10-episode series was launched on Monday.

Talking about the series, director Mahesh Manjrekar shared: "1962: The War In The Hills is the result of a life-long dream of bringing alive a part of history that has been long forgotten. The journey of these 125 soldiers, while inspired by true events, is a story that needed to be told."

"This project has been monumental in every sense -- from shooting in real locations, to recreating the 1962 era through setups, costumes and more. But this story is not limited only to the battleground, it takes us beyond into the lives of these soldiers as they grapple with love, longing and loss," the filmmaker added.

The series casts Abhay Deol as Major Suraj Singh, the charismatic leader of a small battalion called C Company. "To me, it feels like a personal responsibility to deliver the strength of Major Suraj Singh, to showcase his brave exterior as he leads his troop in a battle to the last stand, while also dealing with life as a father and husband. It's an extraordinary story about courage that is relatable to everyone, no matter which community or culture they belong to," said Deol.

The series is based on the story of 125 Indian soldiers who fought against 3,000 Chinese in a historic battle, and it also features an ensemble cast including Akash Thosar, Sumeet Vyas, Rohan Gandotra, Anup Soni, Meiyang Chang, Mahie Gill, Rochelle Rao and Hemal Ingole in key roles.

The Mahesh Manjrekar directorial has been written



by Charudutt Acharya. 1962: The War in the Hills will stream on Disney + Hotstar VIP and Disney + Hotstar Premium from February 26. (IANS)

'Roohi' in theatres on March 11

ACTORS Rajkumar Rao and Janhvi Kapoor starrer horror comedy Roohi is set for a theatrical release on March 11.

Rajkumar posted the motion poster for the film on Instagram on Monday. He captioned it: "Dulhan ki tarah sajenge Theatres. Magar Dulha le jaegi #Roohi! Iss Bhootiya Shaadi mein aapka swagat hai! #MagicOfCinemaReturns; movie releases 11th March.

Janhvi shared the same motion poster and wrote: "Iss Bhootiya Shaadi mein aapka swagat hai! #MagicOfCinemaReturns; movie releases 11th March."

The film also features actor Varun Sharma, who wrote: "Saal ki sabse bhootiya wedding ke liye theatres bhi hain ready! #MagicOfCinemaReturns; Movie releases 11th March. #Roohi." The film is directed by debutant Hardik Mehta, and produced by Dinesh Vijan and Mrighdeep Singh Lamba. It is Rajkumar's third collaboration with Dinesh Vijan after Stree and Made In China. (IANS)



YASHIKA MATHUR

ACTOR Suniel Shetty is aware about the continuous discussion around star kids, their lifestyles and involvement of drugs in the film industry. While he is confident that his children actor Athiya Shetty and son Ahan are safe, he does worry about the

So, no judgement," shares the actor.

While daughter Athiya is already three films old in the Hindi film industry, Ahan will soon make his Bollywood debut in the Hindi remake of Telugu blockbuster "RX100".

"I think my image will be affected by him because he is so damn good. Even if he does ac-

tion, people will say, 'how come the father was not so good? Father was average but the son is superb.' He is far more sincere. He has a golden heart," claims the actor.

Ahan was recently spotted playing cricket in Mumbai with his friends. Suniel says, his son is an outdoor person. "He doesn't know anything other than

outdoors and sports. He is coming to the close of his film. He is happy, excited. He is not that way. He is too simple, the cameramen are his friends. He plays his cricket, his football, he likes to travel, he is a deep sea diver. He is an adventure," says Suniel, who was recently in town at an event of Zeco's O2Cure. (IANS)

Suniel Shetty: I worry for my kids in the industry in general

wrong perception people have around 'star kids'.

"I don't worry for my kids," he tells IANS, adding: "(I am) worried about my kids in the industry in general. Every industry kid is called a 'druggie'. No, we are not, we are good people. We are socially placed and we do our CSR and I am very vocal about it. What I support is a clean, good, friendly environment."

The actor also believes in the concept of live and let live. "Failure has never come my way. I am Suniel Shetty even after five flops. You cannot tell me how to walk and talk. You can say about me, 'he is a flop actor' but where are you in life? Who are you to question? These are the questions I would ask if you get personal. Otherwise you are living your life and I am living my life."



'Bollywood a huge inspiration for Nigerian film industry'

Writer-director Hamisha Daryani Ahuja's film Namaste Wahala is a love story between an Indian man and a Nigerian woman, and she says Bollywood has had a strong impact on Nollywood, or the Nigerian film industry.

"Nigerians have grown up watching and loving Bollywood films. Names like Amitabh Bachchan, Hema Malini and Shah Rukh Khan are household names in many parts. Many of my Nigerian friends have watched Hindi movies growing up and can even quote famous Hindi lines. Nollywood is the second-largest film industry in the world in terms of output, second only to Bollywood. So Bollywood serves as a huge inspiration for us and I can't wait to see how this new genre unfolds," said Ahuja.

Namaste Wahala highlights the differences as well as colorful similarities between Indian and Nigerian cultures. The film stars Indian actor Ruslaan Mumtaz with Nigerian actress Ini Dima-Okojie. The film dropped on Netflix on Valentine's Day. (IANS)

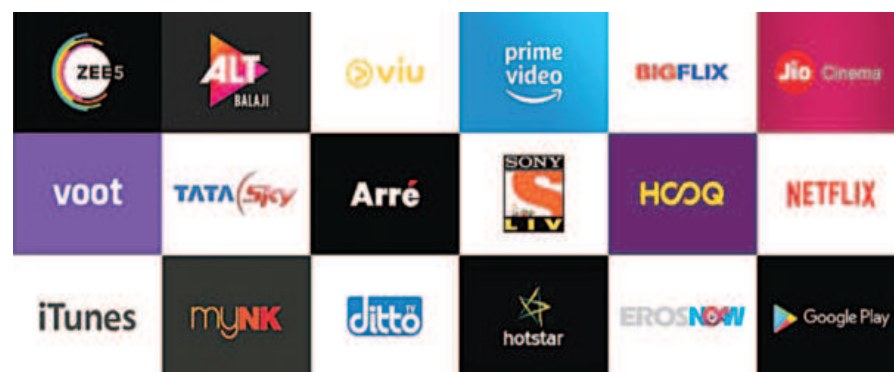
70% OTT users say threats to artistes, directors worrying

SEVENTY per cent OTT users do not approve of threats of intimidation, violence and death issued to artists, directors and producers of movies and shows. As per a LocalCircles survey, there have been a spate of cases of threats of intimidation, violence and death issued to artists, directors and producers of movies and shows.

Recently, one of the artists, Richa Chadha received violence and death threat for allegedly stereotyping Dalits in the movie, "Madam Chief Minister". When OTT users were asked that "Recently threats of intimidation, violence and death have been issued against artists, directors and producers of OTT content. As a citizen of India and consumer of OTT content, does this worry you?" The majority of 58 per cent OTT users said "Yes, quite a bit", and 15 per cent said "Yes, somewhat". Further breaking down the poll, 12 per cent users said "No, doesn't affect me much", while 15 per cent said "Not at all", and 3 per cent couldn't say.

Many of the members who participated in the discussion on the subject said that such threats should have no place in the society and if they are not acted upon sternly and swiftly by law enforcement agencies, they will only increase over time. According to many OTT users, the concern or grievance of an individual or a group of individuals or an organisation must be raised through appropriate pre-defined Government channels, LocalCircles said.

OTT platforms in 2020 have been a sought-after source of entertainment for many as people stayed home and multiplexes and cinemas stayed closed for most of the year. The con-



sumers use OTT platforms for the choice, convenience and high-quality content and amongst OTT users, majority have subscription to two or more platforms. However, as the industry evolves and common standards are created, OTT users demand better definition and display of the minimum age requirement and rating certification so they can make informed choices of what they want to watch.

Also, consumers are keen that the code of regulation whatever approved by the Government is shared with them and made easily accessible on the platforms. Finally, majority of the Indian OTT users are concerned about the various violence and death threats being issued to artists, directors and producers and want that effective grievance channels must be created to address concerns of individuals or groups but such threats should not be tolerated and stern and swift action must be taken by law enforcement agencies against those issuing such threats

As people observed social distancing and stayed home amid the COVID-19 outbreak, the on-demand over-the-top (OTT) video streaming platforms for many became a primary source of entertainment. As more users were logging on to OTTs, many film and series producers also chose these platforms for launch of their series and films. International OTT players, mainly Netflix and Amazon's Prime Video together provided approximately 30 original titles while Indian OTT players like Hotstar, Zee5, Sony Liv, MX Player also released many titles and provided entertainment to people on their fingertips.

With the rise of OTT's popularity in India, there has also been many consumer discussions on LocalCircles in the last 12 months enabling consumers to share both the pros and cons of OTT platforms. The pros largely have centered around giving consumers increased content choices as compared to pre-OTT and the convenience to watch content when they

want to watch. Consumers concerns on the other hand have been on rating information display by some platforms, age gating and on content that can hurt the sentiments of some communities.

Amid these developments, LocalCircles conducted its OTT survey 2021 to better understand users' pulse on how they used OTT in 2020, what working well along with any concerns. The survey received over 50,000 responses from OTT users located in 311 districts of India.

The first question asked consumers about their primary source of video-based entertainment in 2020, 46 per cent said "television channels via DTH, cable or app", 41 per cent said "OTT platforms such as Youtube, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar", and 8 per cent said "social media platforms such as Tiktok, Instagram, Whatsapp". There were also 3 per cent who said "videos downloaded from the Internet", and 2 per cent said "others". Interestingly, there weren't any vote casted for DVDs and VCDs, which suggests that the once popular medium of entertainment has vanished from the modern living room.

There are currently more than 40 OTT video streaming platforms in India. KPMG estimates that OTT revenue climbed 26 per cent and subscriptions, either ad-based or paid, surged 47 per cent, with close to 325 million Indians today streaming the favorite OTTs.

To better understand the number of platforms, OTT users are typically subscribed to, LocalCircles asked the question and in response, 30 per cent said four or more, 20 per cent said three, 26 per cent said two, 18 per

cent said one. There were only 6 per cent of 7,834 OTT users who said that they don't have not subscribed with any OTT platforms currently but they take them on an as needed basis. Some platforms offer trial subscriptions while some also offer subscription for a single show or movie.

The next question tried to understand the primary reasons for consumers to use OTT platforms. The majority of 50 per cent said "choice and convenience", while 31 per cent said "high-quality content". Further breaking down the poll, 10 per cent of consumers said "lower cost than other entertainment channels", and 9 per cent voted for other reasons.

The Government of India late last year brought OTT video streaming platforms under the ambit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Recently 17 OTT players have adopted a self-regulation code that was introduced in September. These providers include Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, Disney-Hotstar, SonyLiv, MX Player, Jio Cinema, Eros Now, Viacom (Voot), Alt Balaji, Arre, HoiChoi, Hungama, Shemaroo, Discovery Plus, Aha and Lionsgate Play.

Consumers however currently seem to have little understanding of the OTT code of regulation and when asked if they would like more information about the OTT code of conduct, majority of them i.e. 78 per cent said "Yes," 14 per cent said "No", and 8 per cent couldn't say. OTT platforms must enable this on and off platforms such that the common OTT user knows what to expect and what is a deviation from the code. (IANS)