



Bollywood revels in digital boom

Bharati Dubey & Meena Iyer | TNN

Mumbai: With digital cinema getting a firm foothold in Bollywood, everybody's got reason to rejoice. For the producer, there's a huge saving on print costs. For those who're anti-piracy, there's no chance of the print being copied. For urban viewers, there's excellent picture quality. And for the film buff in remote areas, there's the thrill of being part of a day-date release. And with the recent liquidity crunch hitting Bollywood as well, going digital makes business sense too.

"When it comes to ordering that one extra print at a cost of Rs 60,000, shifting to the digital format is the smarter option," says a trade insider. It isn't surprising, then, that UFO Moviez—pioneers of the digital cinema format—has seen a 300% increase in the distribution business. Says Sanjay Gaikwad, MD, UFO Moviez, "We have 1,350 digital screens. Our digital cinemas have contributed 140 million ticket sales from

Prominent digital releases

Singh is Kinng	522 theatres
Race	494 theatres
Jodhaa Akbar	422 theatres
Sarkar Raaj	418 theatres
Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na	335 theatres

April to November 2008. That makes for almost 20% of Bollywood revenues in this period. If you look at recent blockbusters, we have contributed to 40% of their revenue."

Take *Ghajini* for instance. "Assuming that *Ghajini*'s opening weekend revenue as estimated by industry sources is Rs 40 crore from box-office collections in India, digital cinema is estimated to have contributed nearly Rs 16 crore—40% of the total box office collection." UFO has 1,350 digital screens and have released

486 movies in 19 languages in 2008.

Earlier this year, Yashraj's *Rab Ne Bana De Jodi* was released in more than 400 theatres digitally as against 500 physical prints. "The digital release of both these big films makes it clear that the future belongs to digital cinema, potentially doubling or trebling revenues in future," says an industry source. No surprise, then, that the makers of *Chandni Chowk To China*, *Billoo Barber*, *De Dana Dan* and *Three Idiots* are already looking to increase the number of digital cinemas across India.

The continuing economic slowdown has made digital cinema the preferred medium. Atul Goel, managing director of E City ventures, is a happy man. Their digital business has seen an 80% increase in the last one year. A big plus for E City is that they're venturing into video cinemas. These are video parlours where films will be screened in the digital format for those who cannot afford going to multiplexes.