

## In The News

### MEDIA

# IPL's Big Screen Bonanza

**Movie hall owners and sponsors are betting big on IPL's debut in theatres**

**BIG DISPLAY:**  
The IPL is expected to be screened in 1,000 theatres in the country

THE THIRD SEASON OF THE INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE (IPL) is all set for a grand theatrical release this March. Digital film distributor UFO Moviez, along with IPL distribution rights holder Crown Infotainment, is aiming to showcase advertisement-free cricket action in high definition (HD) format on 1,000 screens in the country. UFO Moviez claims that it has already signed up 550 screens, including 200 multiplex screens, across 350 cities and towns. The IPL season, which starts on 12 March, will have 60 matches played over 45 days.

The worldwide movie hall distribution rights of IPL for 10 years was initially acquired — in November 2009 — for Rs 330 crore by Entertainment and Sports Direct (ESD), promoted by DAR Capital group, an investment advisory and private equity firm. UFO Moviez, which spe-

cialises in digital distribution and co-promoted by Sanjay Gaikwad and Apollo International, was contracted for setting up the techno-distribution arrangements. Later Gaikwad, Valuable Group's managing director (MD), bought the distribution rights for India from ESD through his firm Crown Infotainment for 10 years till 2019. Though tight-lipped about the exact consideration he paid ESD for the rights, Gaikwad told *BW*: "We have to pay a graded minimum guarantee to ESD every year. Though ESD still holds the non-India rights, India is the biggest draw and we will end up paying most of what ESD paid for the IPL rights."

UFO Moviez, which has over 1,700 digital screens across India, has made an initial investment of Rs 30-40 crore, including costs of technical support, equipment and marketing. The investors aim to break even in the next two-three years. "The ticket prices will be as much as any regular weekend price for a movie ticket," says Kapil Aggarwal, joint MD of UFO Moviez.

Offering another branding opportunity, theatre owners will be inviting sponsors to fund the entire season. Sponsorship opportunities would include branding at venue, merchandise, standees and in-house advertisements. With each theatre paying minimum Rs 10 lakh for the entire season, movie halls will be offering marketing and entertainment activities such as food stalls, cheerleaders and celebrity appearances, to the sponsors. Advertisers will get a window of about 10-15 minutes prior to match, two slots in the middle and at the end of the match. While advertising rates are yet to be decided, high premium on advertisements during the finals is anticipated. Expected revenue generated through advertisements could be Rs 10-15 crore, sources say.

Theatre revenues potential is projected to be around Rs 70 crore, which will be retained 50:50 between theatre owners and the rights holder. PVR Cinemas, with all of its 27 properties under the deal, is optimistic. "Depending on the demand, we might shift the screenings to two halls simultaneously," says Amitabh Vardhan, CEO of PVR Cinemas. At present, only one hall is scheduled for each match.

Ashish Saxena, chief operating officer of Big Cinemas (West and South), is however, sceptical: "It is a challenge for our marketing team to ensure footfall during all matches." The company has set aside 30-35 screens for IPL.

With everyone betting big on the game, sponsors continue to pump in money to ensure maximum leverage. But with the opportunities doubling by the minute, IPL continues to squeeze every penny out of aspirational marketeers.

Suneera Tandon

