

COMPANY

Assemblage Entertainment Pvt. Ltd.

LOCATION

Mumbai, India

SOFTWARE

Autodesk®Maya®

Assemblage Ent.: From Start Up to Feature Films

Powered by Autodesk, delivers 2 animation feature films in record time

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— **A K Madhavan**

Founder & CEO
Assemblage Entertainment



(From left) Upen Desai, A K Madhavan, Milind Shinde and Arjun Madhavan from the core team at Assemblage

Driven by the able leadership of A K Madhavan, erstwhile CEO of Crest Animation Studio, Assemblage Entertainment is accelerating on the road to success at an impressive speed. Only 20 months old, the studio has 2 international animation feature films under its belt – ‘Blinky Bill’ and ‘Norm of the North’.

An Australian feature film, ‘Blinky Bill - The Movie’ is produced by Flying Bark Productions (Australia) and co produced by Assemblage Entertainment and Telegael Teoranta (Ireland). The movie, distributed by Studio Canal, is based on an iconic Australian children’s character and released on 17th September 2015 in the Australian and European markets with its UK and other territory release due to follow soon. And an even bigger release is ‘Norm of the North’, a family genre animated feature film, co-production between Splash, Lionsgate, Assemblage and Telegael. With a distributor such as Lionsgate, the film is slated to have a wide theatrical release on 15th January, 2016 with a special screening of it scheduled on the first night of American Film Market (AFM) this November.

Gaining the contract to make an animated feature films is not an easy task even for a big studio but the same is not even dreamt of by a young studio. But Assemblage not only won the

contract, but also delivered both the movies in the record time of 12-13 months. Apart from this, the studio has also managed to get front credits as a co-producer for ‘Blinky Bill’ and ‘Norm of the North’. So, how did this super start up manage it?

Starting up!

After leaving Crest in 2013, Madhavan (or Madmax as he’s fondly called) felt the need to start something of his own. The challenging part of course was the investment needed. But instead of focusing on the funding, Madhavan leveraged his relationships which he had built over 15 years in the US and global film and media industry. Receiving strong support from his Clients, he received contracts for two international feature films. The contracts brought with them the required investments into Assemblage and thus the studio was born.

Not ready to let go of the quality standards, Madhavan wanted to use the best when it came to human resources as well as technology. Madhavan concentrated on establishing the technology pipeline and the set up required to deliver quality animation features. Upen Desai, Co-founder and CTO was tasked with the mammoth challenge of setting up this infrastructure in the most cost efficient way. Assemblage approached Autodesk to be a key technology partner and provide customized solutions that would fit its needs.

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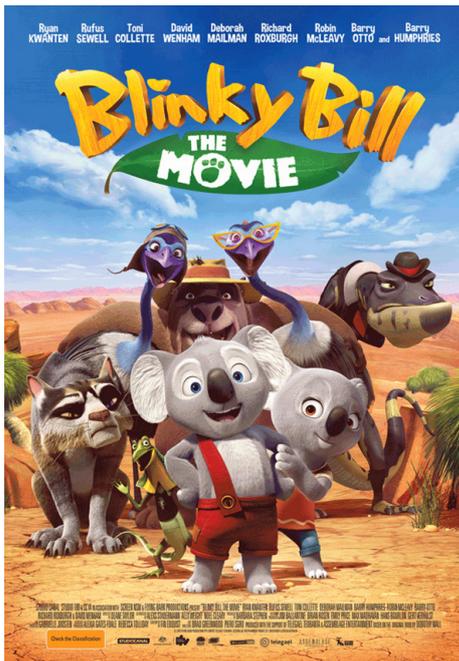


Image courtesy of Assemblage Entertainment

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People

Assemblage with its unique vision of producing only feature films has attracted talent from all quarters. The start up is a bubbling pot of talented people. Milind D Shinde, an industry veteran, joined in the capacity of a partner, as the chief operating officer and a member of the company's board. Prior to joining Assemblage, Milind D Shinde was part of the core team of the India unit of DreamWorks Animation, Bangalore and Oriental DreamWorks, China. He has an extensive executive-level experience of animation production and has also worked on several Oscar nominated feature film projects.

Another brilliant talent holding the reins of Assemblage is CTO, Upen Desai who played a key role in setting up the IT infrastructure. Upen is a technocrat who has worked with Prime Focus and Crest Animation studios in the past. With so many loyalists of Madhavan coming to Assemblage, how could the family stay behind? Madhavan's son, Arjun Madhavan, left a comfortable job of an Investment Banker in London to come back to India and support his father in his ambitious endeavors. And these are not the only ones, many people trusting in

Madhavan's vision joined him and did not look back. More recently, Assemblage has hired some top talent from DreamWorks and other leading studios to head the various CGI functions.

"Even though Assemblage is a young studio with only 20 months of existence, it has years and years of experience brought by the talented and hardworking people working at the studio. And I'm happy that it has attracted such seasoned people. We're constantly looking out for top talent to join us. Our endeavor is to create a studio culture where creativity is harnessed and talent is given the opportunity to work on world-class projects. Prospering together is the foundation of our value system."

Partnering with Autodesk

"Autodesk software are licensed for use across the industry and it goes without saying that our complete pipeline is mostly based on Autodesk Maya. And it's a known fact that all the studios in the animation and VFX industry use Autodesk Maya and other Autodesk products. But for a young company like Assemblage, it has more to do with the guidance offered in the initial days by this big technology company that gives someone like us a chance to grow and flourish".

"Honestly, if you'll ask me, the guys here are pretty much experts when it comes to using Maya. Because people here use the tool and make it perform. We use the tool to create things, which seem impossible to most. And Autodesk helps us to do that. Not just by providing the tools but also customizing the offering to fit our budgets. Assemblage couldn't have delivered without such a strong technology partner."

Growth Strategy

So far Assemblage has made its journey self-funded without bringing in any external investors. The studio has cut corners and ensured optimization wherever they could. "Even the hardware at the studio is on rent as we wanted to avoid upfront capital expenditure. We have also bled a lot on our first few projects as we quoted a very small price as a market entry strategy to get the contract," says Madhavan. But everything was part of the plan that was aimed at showing the world that they could deliver quality animation feature film content.

Madhavan gives the complete credit of Assemblage's success to its supporters, "No other start up would be able to pull something like this off, but we did it because of the support of the team and our vendors. Our landlords, software and hardware vendors, suppliers, everyone was guiding us to let us grow. This is a good year for Assemblage because we were able to send a good message out there with our content deliveries."

Accessibility

With the technology and content moving to the

Cloud, a lot has come into the grasps of smaller companies. According to Madhavan, technology price points have now become affordable and start-up friendly with Cloud solutions and rental licenses for software. And all of this has played an important role in making the current deliveries possible for the studio. Owing to this evolution in technology and support from the ecosystem, Assemblage, which started with the total of 20 employees, now boasts of employee strength of more than 200 and is growing.

And preparing for its next release, Norm of the North, Assemblage Entertainment is looking forward to some exciting projects in 2016 with the enthusiasm of a start up backed with wisdom of its experienced leadership.

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