

## Is Yash Raj Films formula floundering?

The boom time for the [Mumbai](#) film industry is not translating into windfalls for top Bollywood production house Yash Raj Films (YRF), with its first offering of 2008, 'Tashan', failing to live up to the hype.

While in 2007, YRF's tally of flops outweighed that of hits, their first release this year has failed to charm critics and the audience response to 'Tashan' has not been too heartening.

Though heavy on formula and style, the film starring the reigning star of the box-office, Akshay Kumar, and media's favourite star couple, Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor, has no story to tell. Seems that writer-director Vijay Krishna Acharya was so busy packaging egos that he forgot what he wanted to say in 'Tashan'.

The fact that 'Tashan' did not release in several multiplexes due to a long-standing tiff with cinema hall owners over sharing of revenues has been a major dampener. The country's top production house has been trying to get multiplex owners to agree on a new revenue sharing formula.

Their offer of keeping 55 percent of the box-office collections in the first week was rejected by exhibitors.

According to news reports, the first day's collection of 'Tashan', which opened only in single-screen theatres on Friday, stood at 70 percent to 80 percent in Mumbai. Given that the film has not met expectations of both critics as well as audiences, the collections are likely to dip in the days ahead.

Its releasing in single-screen theatres is economically less profitable as fewer number of shows can be screened each day and the cost of tickets is much lower than in multiplexes.

Trade weekly said the film had a 70 percent start, but there were reports of business sliding downwards as day progressed. The reports are negative and the biggie is not likely to sustain in the days to come, according to trade analyst Taran Adarsh.

For YRF, the third highest spender in Bollywood at the moment after Reliance Entertainment and Indian Films, the fate of 'Tashan' will serve as a cautioner.

The illustrious production house will be pumping in Rs.3.5 billion over the next 15 months into the industry and cannot afford to leave their audiences feeling unsatisfied.

Reliance Entertainment and Indian Films, which will be investing Rs.5 billion and Rs.4.4 billion in the industry over the next year-and-a-half respectively, are the biggest moneybags of the industry at the moment. But among the seasoned banners, it is YRF that leads the pack. They have both the talents as well as enjoy faith of the audiences.

The Rs.120 billion strong Mumbai-based Hindi film industry is inundated with public and private investment. Entry of corporate bigwigs has shaken up traditional production houses.

This year, YRF, is releasing as many as five films across genres - thriller, comedy, romance and animation, starring some of the top actors and directors. Though the number is small in comparison

to other banners, the banner is not known to churn out so many in a single year.

Known as the czars of Bollywood, YRF have been going through a bad patch ever since the average performance of 'Ta Ra Rum Pum' and debacle of mega-starrer 'Jhoom Barabar Jhoom' last year.

Though they tried to do things differently by taking up women-oriented scripts, they could not make things work in other releases of last year -- 'Laaga Chunari Mein Daag' and 'Aaja Nach Le'. The only saving grace was 'Chak De! India'.

The lesson that content is king is still to get embedded in the core of filmmaking in India. But with production houses like UTV Motion Pictures planning to roll out 18-20 films this year and the Indian Film Company readying 12-13 films, it is a lesson that needs to be internalised at the earliest.

UTV, Indian Films and YRF will produce some of the most awaited releases of the year like Aditya Chopra's 'Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi' starring Shah Rukh Khan, Rakesh Omprakash Mehra's 'Dilli 6', Akshay Kumar starrer 'Singh is Kinng', which is being directed by Anees Bazmee, and 'Ghajini', which has Aamir Khan in the main lead.

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