

Condoms a huge hit with action directors

What on earth do condoms have to do with action movies? Plenty!

Condoms are used in large quantities while shooting action scenes showing the villain or the hero with blood oozing out of their 'wounds' after being fired at. While canning such scenes, 'blood' filled condoms are strapped around the bodies of the stuntmen with tiny crackers attached to them through invisible wires.

When the hero 'fires' at the villain, the action director's assistants who follow the performers from the periphery press a remote control button. The crackers burst, the condoms tear and the 'blood' comes spilling out.

The scene may last only a few seconds on the screen, but prior to shooting, the stuntmen have to rehearse it a number of times to ensure proper synchronisation between the firing of the gun and the pressing of the remote.

Most Bollywood action coordinators prefer imported condoms because they do not get accidentally ruptured when the individual being shot at has to jump, tumble or roll down as the situation demands.

According to Gurbachan Singh, who assisted much sought after action director Veeru Devgan in the 1980s-90s, villains carried switches in their pockets before the advent of remotes and manually worked these when fired at.

'It was a clumsy affair, and most often, the desired effect could not be achieved. Therefore, audiences could detect how fake the scenes were,' Singh told IANS.

He revealed that before condoms came on the scene, tiny balloons were used during action sequences.

'But the balloons used to breach at unlikely moments, calling for repeated re-takes. I do not know who introduced condoms for action scenes, but they have proved to be good substitutes for balloons,' Singh said.

Mohan Baggad, who began his career as Devgan's assistant and later became an independent action director, said: 'Though the technology now used in Bollywood is far improved from what it was a decade ago, make-shift devices innovated by action directors still come in handy while shooting fights and other thriller scenes.

'Computer graphics cannot replicate everything. Of course, the sequence of blood spilling out of an injured man can be projected through computer graphics, but the end result looks artificial.

'The use of condoms in such scenes is a tested practice. Here again, only an expert cinematographer and editor can make such scenes look real on the screen,' Baggad told IANS.

While taking part in action scenes, don't stuntmen get injured when the crackers burst on their bodies?

'Only small crackers are used and so nobody gets seriously injured. There may be little abrasions, but those are tolerable, or one can say, they are the hazards of the trade. And it is a minor hazards when compared against other hazards stuntmen face while shooting,' Singh said.

'Yes, sometime accidents do occur. In such cases, apart from the producers, the association of the stuntmen bear the medical expenses,' he added.

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