

Is Yash Raj banner's magic waning?

Big banner, big movies, big stars and big money were the intrinsic features of Yash Raj Films but the box office performance of their last two movies - 'Ta Ra Rum Pum' and 'Jhoom Barabar Jhoom' - failed to attain big success.

Though both the films got good openings, thanks to the pre-release hype that projected them as box office sure things, the films couldn't sustain the success in the following weeks.

Out of the two, 'Jhoom...' was the worst. Critics felt that gloss got precedence over story in the film. Directed by Shaad Ali, the film boasts of style but lacks a good story and strong script.

The young director's earlier films were dramatically rich, energetic and engrossing.

He made an impressive start with 'Saathiya', which had Rani Mukerji and Viveik Oberoi in key roles, in 2002. The film caught the attention of moviegoers and became a huge success. It also gave a new lease of life to Rani's career. Later, in 2005, the director once again conquered Bollywood with the blockbuster 'Bunty Aur Babli'.

After delivering two back-to-back hits Ali became one of the most dependable directors in Bollywood and that's why the expectations were so high from his third film.

Sadly, in 'Jhoom...' Ali adopted the familiar premise that he used in 'Bunty Aur Babli' and recycled the same tactics. The repetition failed to add verve and vigour to the film as a result it didn't work.

While critics panned 'Jhoom...' saying the film is all gloss and no substance, others criticised saying it is a contrived, half-witted offering. The presence of heavy weights like Amitabh and Abhishek Bachchan, Preity Zinta and Bobby Deol couldn't save it either.

However, the distributors have a different story to tell.

'If the film had been made by some other banner, it would have been declared a hit. Business wise the film has done well,' said Sanjay Mehta a Delhi based distributor.

'But every time you can't expect them to produce super hits. Whenever Sachin Tendulkar is batting, people expect him to hit a century. But it is not possible. Same goes with the Chopras,' added Mehta.

'The marketing strategy of 'Jhoom Barabar Jhoom' was fantastic and the first look of the film was excellent. But the story was bad and people didn't enjoy watching it,' said Saurabh Varma, the vice president - programming and amp; distribution of Inox Leisure Ltd.

On the other hand 'Ta Ra Rum Pum', another Yash Raj banner production, was an old wine in a new bottle. It was more commercially viable as compared to 'Jhoom...' but not as good as last year's blockbuster 'Dhoom 2'.

The major drawback of the movie, starring hit pair Saif Ali Khan and Rani Mukerji, was that it was too preachy and dull. Contrary to perky 'Salaam Namaste', the first film Anand helmed, 'Ta Ra...'

was a disappointment.

'Yes, it didn't meet the Yash Raj standards mainly because the story was predictable and songs were not so catchy but 'Ta Ra Rum Pum' wasn't a flop. It did well at the ticket window,' said Varma.

Mehta feels that it is unfair to pass judgment on the Chopras for the recent flops because neither Yash nor Aditya Chopra directed the films.

'They just produced the films. So you can't blame them. Earlier they used to make romantic films and that too after a gap of two to three years. But now they are making too many films in a year so this kind of thing is bound to happen. Some will work, some won't. What's the big deal?' Mehta asked.

Both Mehta and Varma feels that the performance of these two films are not going to mar the Yash Raj banner's forthcoming releases - Shah Rukh Khan starrer 'Chak De India', director Pradeep Sarkar's 'Laaga Chunir Mein Daag' and Madhuri Dixit's comeback film 'Aaja Nach Le'.

However, Mehta is a little apprehensive about 'Chak De India' because sports form the premise of the film.

'Sports genre is not a very popular genre. The film is not a typical romantic film or a family drama. It is based on a hockey coach and hockey is not a popular sport in our country,' said Mehta.

Directed by Shimit Amin of 'Ab Tak Chhappan' fame, the film will release August 10. This is Shah Rukh's first release in 2007 hence all eyes are set on it.

Varma sounds confident. 'Shah Rukh and Yash Raj combination is something to watch out for,' he said.

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