



BEFORE



AFTER

## FROM 'THE RED SHOES' TO 'ROJA', PRASAD EFX HAS DIGITALLY RESTORED CLASSICS AND BOX-OFFICE HITS



# THE ORIGINAL TOUCH

Priya M Menon | TNN

When Hollywood director Martin Scorsese saw the 1940s classic 'The Red Shoes' for the first time as a child, the "swirl of colour and light and sound" were burned into his mind. Years later, as the founder of The Film Foundation, which works to preserve films, he decided to restore the classic to its full glory.

But restoring the vivid reds and deep blues, the vibrant yellows and rich blacks which made it a sensuous viewing was tough. The film reels were embedded with dirt, had scratches and become mouldy. To digitally restore the film, the

**CLEAN UP ACT:** (clockwise) EFX began film restoration with the 1957 Dilip Kumar and Vyjayanthimala Bali-starrer 'Naya Daur'; technicians removed dust, scratches and stains from the digital images of the 1940s Hollywood classic 'The Red Shoes' to restore the vivid look of the movie; the negatives of 'Ek Duuje Ke Liye' had tears that had been taped together

foundation roped in not just top-notch companies like Warner Bros. Motion Picture Imaging but Prasad Corporation Ltd in Chennai.

"Technicians from Prasad EFX worked to remove dust, scratches, stains and marks," says Kavita Prasad, director of



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the Corporation. A pleased Scorsese wrote, "Their commitment to the highest standards of quality was essential in bringing the film back to its original 3-strip Technicolor glory."

It's not just Scorsese who has approached EFX, the first facility in India to offer digital film restoration. The compa-

ny has worked on 28 Academy Award winning films, 17 Golden Globe award winners and more than 33 films nominated for these honours.

A lot of international clients are looking towards Indian facilities like EFX for film restoration. The cost involved is a major factor. "It can take from 5,000 hours to 40,000 hours to restore a film, depending on its condition," says Kavita. The cost can range from Rs 2 or 3 lakhs to Rs 3 crore for a film, depending on the time and work involved. "In US, it would cost 60 to 70% more," she says.

EFX began dabbling in film restoration in 2005. "We started with titles like the Hindi movie 'Naya Daur'," says Kavita. The producers of the 1957 Dilip Kumar and Vyjayanthimala Bali-starrer wanted to re-release the film fully restored in 2007. 'The Three Stooges', released in the 1960s and 'The Sand Pebbles' starring Steve McQueen were the other early projects.

"The condition of the film would have deteriorated over the years. Since people want to preserve old classics and hits, they are keen to restore and preserve them," says Kavita.

The negatives are scanned and converted to digital images. "But before scanning you have to do a lot of cleaning," she says. "You have to fix the physical damages as there will be tears, blotches and even fungus." After they have been scanned, specks of embedded dust, scratches and oil marks are digitally removed.

"Abroad, the master negative is not touched. They make dupes and work with it," says Kavita. "In India, the master negative is used to make prints, so the more successful the film, the more battered the negative."

With the growth of satellite television, digital film restoration has received a boost. "More rights holders in India are realising the potential of fresh revenue streams from old content which are in huge demand from TV channels and home video market," says Kavita. So, there is a need to restore old negatives to provide the movie in any format required — high definition TV, DVD, film, digital print, mobile content.

In India, the demand is catching on. "We work for the National Film Development Corporation archives and are restoring about 15 titles," says Kavita. The films that they are currently working on include 'Gumraah', 'Kabhie Khushi Kabhie Gham', 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai', 'Kal Ho Naa Ho' and 'Dostana'.

Today, the EFX team, which has grown from five to 300, works round the clock. At any time, the long, dimly lit room lined with computers is filled with 100 technicians, all working to meet deadlines. "We have clientele in Hollywood, Europe, the Middle East and the Far East," says Kavita.

She says that India is a big draw for international clients as digital restoration is a labour-intensive job. "Each frame has to be worked on. We also understand film, as India has a number of movie industries," says Kavita. "And we also speak English, which works in our favour."

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### MOVIE MAGIC

▶ Digital film restoration is the process of repairing damaged films, whether in celluloid film or video tape, both by physical and digital processes

▶ The negatives are first cleaned. Physical damages like tears, blotches

and fungus are fixed

▶ Negatives are then scanned and converted to digital images

▶ Specks of embedded dust, scratches and oil marks are digitally removed

### PAST GLORY (EFX'S COMPLETED PROJECTS)

**International**

- ▶ The Three Stooges
- ▶ The Red Shoes
- ▶ How The West Was Won
- ▶ The Sand Pebbles
- ▶ Young and Innocent

**Indian**

- ▶ Kabhie Kabhie
- ▶ Naya daur
- ▶ Ek Duuje Ke Liye
- ▶ Khilona
- ▶ Roja & Dombay