

Bhuvan Gowda: 'Bigger than the KGF franchise'

The cinematographer of *Salaar* opens up on his lighting and framing techniques for the two-part film, shooting action sequences, and his working chemistry with Prashanth Neel



Vivek MV

Ever since the teaser of *Salaar: Part 1 - Ceasefire* dropped virtually in July, the period action drama has drawn comparison with *KGF*. *Salaar* is from the makers of *KGF*: Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, hence natural for people to find similarities between the movies. But, an outright comparison is unfair, says the film's cinematographer Bhuvan Gowda.

"It is too early to say *Salaar* looks like *KGF*. We shot *KGF: Chapter 1*, with a limited budget. But for *Salaar*, there were no budget restrictions. So, our first aim was to increase the scale of the film; we have made it bigger than the *KGF* franchise," says Bhuvan.

Salaar, directed by Prashanth Neel, produced by Hombale Films, released worldwide on December 22. Starring Prabhas and Prithviraj Sukumaran in the lead, the film is a tale of friendship set in the fictional empire of Khansaar. Bhuvan explains how they created the world of Khansaar.

"Prashanth and I do not emphasise much on CGI. After listening to his narration, I sat down with the production designer to get the designs on paper. We bought a 100-acre space at the Ramoji Film City and named it Ramoji 2,



and the entire film was shot there. Once we created the geography as per Prashanth's vision, we built the sets," he shares.

The film's lighting resembles *KGF* for its distinctive tone and set-up, and in some scenes, the use of colour seems motivated by popular epic movies like *Dune* or *Mad Max: Fury Road*. "If you feel the tone is similar to *KGF*, then it means it is my signature," says Bhuvan.

"In an intense or raw scene, I opt for contrast lighting. I do not care for the crores spent on the sets. I will highlight my subject (the main performers) and ensure that people's attention does not go to the background, and remains firmly on the actor." *Salaar* has big action set

pieces and Bhuvan agrees saying, "I love fights when they look natural on-screen, but fans also want to see people flying in the air in action sequences. So we have to cater to that and yet hold on to realism in fights."

He reveals that the interval fight sequence was the toughest to shoot in *Salaar*. "This scene involved 200 people. When a hero takes on so many people, it has to stand out from the rest of the fights. It was physically draining to shoot the massive sequence in hot conditions. I shot it completely handheld. At times, I would get irritated when the director would call for multiple takes," says Bhuvan with a chuckle. "We took 10 days to complete it," he adds.



Lens view (Clockwise from top) Bhuvan Gowda on the sets of 'Salaar', with friend/mentor Prashanth Neel and a still from the movie. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Salaar is a 'mass' film, and the main ingredient to shoot a mass scene is to capture the charisma of your lead star, points out Bhuvan. "The second most important thing is framing. Ever since my photography days, I wanted my frames to stand out from the rest. Even in my films, the elevation and 'mass' scenes are propelled by my unique framing."

Bhuvan thanks Prashanth for playing a massive role in his journey so far. Having come to Bengaluru from a small village in Mandya, Bhuvan did odd jobs before picking up photography. Working as a still photographer in Prashanth's debut *Ugramm* (2014) was the turning point for the cinematographer, who had lost hopes of surviving in the industry.

"Ravi Varman (*Ponniyin Selvan, Indian 2*) was the cinematographer, but he walked out of the project midway due to some reasons. Impressed with my work, Prashanth asked if I could do the cinematography for the film. I was taken aback and asked him if he was sure about it. Our friendship began with a similar taste for lighting and framing. We both learnt filmmaking as we made *Ugramm*. In a way, *Ugramm* was like a school that taught us the tricks of the trade. Prashanth is a democratic director. Anybody on the sets has the right to suggest a change. He will consider it if it convinces him; that is my favourite quality in him."



Unravelling the past The talk will delve into our rich heritage. PTI

Tales from a temple

Staff Reporter

The mystical and historically significant Padmanabha Swamy Temple, which has been a crucial part of Thiruvananthapuram's cultural heritage, will take centerstage at a talk hosted by the Bangalore International Centre on December 26, at 7.30pm.

Aswathi Gouri Lakshmi Bai, a poet and author, and Githa U Badikillaya, a researcher, educator, and founder-trustee of Destination Heritage, will lead the discussion.

The talk, organised in collaboration with Destination Heritage, aims to shed light on the temple's lesser-known aspects, including the historical bondage of the royals as Dasas, the legal proceedings surrounding the temple, and the aftermath of the Supreme Court verdict.

Destination Heritage has been contributing to the cause through local history walks, talks, and educational programs.

The organisation has conducted 68 webinars over the past 20 months, fostering awareness of India's heritage.

Aswathi, with her roots in the Travancore royal family, has authored 13 books and presented numerous papers on the temple's history.

"Sree Padmanabhaswamy, the Deity of the Travancore dynasty for centuries, was revered by successive monarchs as the sole cause for all the prosperity and good fortune that came by their land. The etymology of this ancient city has all along been closely associated with the Temple as the different names like Syaannandoorapuri, Aanandapuri, Ananthapuri, Ananthasayana Nagari, Thiruvananthapuram and so on.

"It is significant that Sree Padmanabhaswamy was not just the Sthala Devatha (place deity) of Thiruvananthapuram but was accepted as the supreme sovereign of the entire State of Travancore from 1750 onwards.

"Even previously, along with being recognised as a 'mahakshetram,' it appears a claimant to ongoing royal connections," she wrote in *The Hindu* in 2020.

Githa, a multifaceted individual with a PhD in Jaina folklore, brings her expertise as the Founder-Trustee of Destination Heritage and a seasoned researcher. The talk promises to be a journey into the heart of Thiruvananthapuram's cultural tapestry.

For more information and RSVP, visit bangaloreinternationalcentre.org.

Nut and soy-free tea and coffee

Shilpa Nair Anand

As part of her job as a plant-based nutritionist, Shalu Nijhawan helps people transition to a vegan lifestyle. Coaching them, she learnt that "people were willing to quit eating everything non-vegan but not their *chai* or coffee, which invariably would include dairy. When presented with vegan options such as soy milk or nut-based milk, they said 'it does not give the feel' of *chai*!" It was this common complaint which led the Bengaluru-based vegan to research alternatives for soy and milk extracted from nuts.

Six months of research and development later, she launched Plantyum! soy and nut-free tea and coffee premixes. "I formulated the recipes out of simple ingredients such as coconut, rice, oats and millets used as a milk-replacement. The beverages are



rich, creamy and have no artificial additives or preservatives," says the 31-year-old management graduate. If stored properly, the premix can stay for a year.

Her husband's autoimmune disease diagnosis seven years ago turned the family toward veganism. The family was informed that his condition was not curable, and that he would have to live with the disease. The medication, a combination of steroids and painkillers, left the then 31-year-old IT profes-

sional obese. Reading up and researching more about it, she learnt that a vegan diet might help manage the condition better. "I researched more, and we converted to veganism. Within a year, my husband lost weight, and his other medical conditions came under control," she says.

Since she was already in the food business, she had been running Cake Cafe in Bengaluru, delving into food was not difficult. She sold her five-year-old business and immersed herself in learning more about the vegan lifestyle and plant-based nutrition. "People do not realise the power of food and nutrition," she adds. Preparing the beverages (tea and coffee) is as simple as emptying the contents of a sachet into a cup, and adding hot water.

The tea premixes were the first products to be launched by Plantyum, in September, 2023. It is available in four variants - gin-

ger, cardamom, fennel and *masala*. The coffee premix was launched in October, and she is looking forward to bringing out hot chocolate and strawberry milkshake premixes. "For the lat-

ter, I have used rice and jowar as milk replacements. This is the first time I have used a millet for this purpose, also this is the In-

ternational Year of the Millets."

The premixes is available on Amazon, and other e-commerce platforms, besides on www.plantyum.in. Prices range between ₹229-₹959.

Seeking healthy alternatives Shalu Nijhawan and her products. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



CITYBEATS



Berry bites

ONGOING

Conçu, a pâtisserie and café, has unveiled a seasonal line-up of strawberry specials. The menu includes strawberry and cream triflez, strawberry tarts, strawberry choux buns and chocolate dipped strawberries. Available at Conçu, Indiranagar for online orders visit concu.in/



Seasonal specials

ONGOING

Dig into these Burmese treats like *baya kyaw hin gyo* (crispy Burmese falafel soup), *ohn-no kauk swe* (Burmese chicken soup), *chin baung chat* (a mix of gongura leaves, dried shrimp, and bamboo shoot) and *bazun hin* (king prawns with tomato *masala*, asparagus) to name a few. ₹1700 for two. On at Societe Rangoon. Call 22273820 for details.



New Year binge

ONGOING

Called the NYE Party, Niro, the city's rooftop bar, announces an extravagant New Year's Eve celebration. The package is priced at ₹6000+ taxes for couples and offers you a party ambience with an unlimited beverage selection and cuisine. Early bird discount is offered.