

# The dog tales

**DIRECTOR'S CUT** Jugal Hansraj on 'Roadside Romeo', his debut directorial venture and the hard work behind it all. **SONAM JAIN**

It's a dog's world...or so it is in Jugal Hansraj's directorial debut 'Roadside Romeo'. But why choose animation for making a debut? Jugal tells NXg just why...

"I am an animation movie buff. I absolutely love them and have seen them all. Aditya Chopra, an old friend, also wanted to produce an animation movie for the Indian audience, comparable to international movies, for a very long time. He asked me to come up with some ideas."

## A bright idea

"The concept of 'Roadside Romeo' came to me while I was stuck in a traffic jam, and you know how long traffic jams in Mumbai can be!! Anyway, I looked out of the window and saw stray dogs playing on the street, oblivious to all that was happening around them. They are a common sight in almost every city in India, and everyone can relate to stray dogs in the background. And then it struck me — what if you flip the equation...What if you see it from a dog's point of view and have humans in the background. It seemed like an interesting idea, and I took off from there."

It took Jugal five to six months to write the script, but once done, Aditya Chopra loved it in the first go. With Jugal being the brain be-

hind the concept and the script, Aditya encouraged him to direct the movie too. And so, from an actor, Jugal made the transition to doing the story, screenplay, dialogues and direction for 'Roadside Romeo'.

"This was a risky venture, but there is always risk and excitement involved in making something new. It was a great learning experience, and Walt Disney gave us a lot of technical support."

## The plot

'Roadside Romeo' is the story of how Romeo, a pet dog in an affluent household, becomes a stray overnight when the family decides to shift out. Pampered all his life, Romeo feels helpless on the streets till he falls for Laila, a canine beauty, and then fights the bully Anna Charlie. The voiceover is given by Saif Ali Khan, Kareena Kapoor and Javed Jaffrey. With Yashraj Films producing the movie, Jugal has roped in a big banner for his debut film.

"While writing the script, I had Saif, Kareena and Javed in mind. All three have worked with Aditya previously, and he asked them to hear me out. The minute I told them animation, they had a smile on their faces and immediately agreed after hearing the story. They showed so much enthusiasm

that I was really touched. Javed in fact came for six script readings and acted out his parts and improvised."

It took three years and a crew of 150 to make the film. Two to three songs have given it the Bollywood *tadka* that the Indian audience so looks forward to! "We had a great time every minute of the way. It was a lot of hard work and fun, especially if you get a team of crazy enough people to work with!! We are all very proud of the film we made".

"The movie is simple and pure fun, and all age groups will be able to enjoy it. We want families to come, watch the movie, have popcorn and ice-cream, and walk out of the theatre with a smile on their faces."

