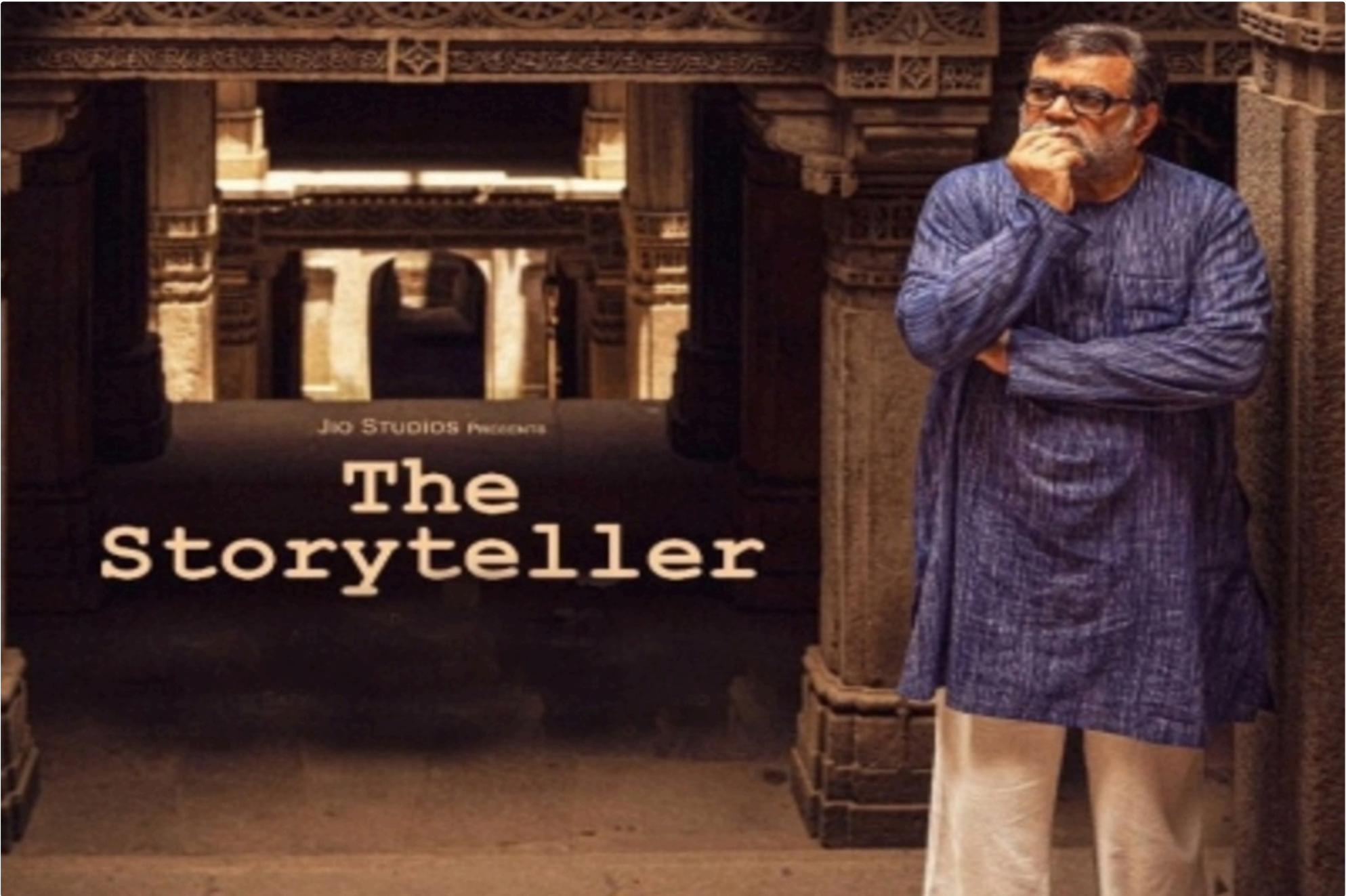


Entertainment

The Storyteller: Ananth Mahadevan tells a fascinating tale

Ananth Narayan Mahadevan’s latest foray into the world of movies, The Storyteller, is a haunting ode to motion pictures.

Gautaman Bhaskaran | February 1, 2025 3:35 pm



(IANS Photos) Indian film 'The Storyteller' selected to be screened at IFFK

നിങ്ങളുടെ കുട്ടികൾക്ക്
ഈ ലോകത്തെ പ്രേരിപ്പിക്കുക
(Inspire Your Child)

There is a popular misconception in the world of cinema. Only that which is racy and pacy with the frames flitting by in a flash can grip our attention and mesmerise us. Wrong. Even that which takes the leisurely lanes can be as exciting. Some of Godard’s and Truffaut’s films were unhurried and yet so captivating. Ananth Narayan Mahadevan’s latest foray into the world of movies, The Storyteller, is a haunting ode to motion pictures.

Premiering at the Busan International Film Festival in 2022, it travelled to other such events before landing three years later on the Disney + Hotstar streaming site. This is so telling about how laid back we are in getting good films to viewers.



Rich in content, and equally so in performances, The Storyteller has two brilliant actors – Paresh Rawal and Adil Hussain — carrying the narrative forward without any hiccups. Even the minor characters like Revathy and Tannishtha Chatterjee are impressive in a natural sort of way.

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It is smooth sailing all the way from the start to the finish. Yes, Mahadevan started with a plus point : he could get Satyajit Ray’s short story Golpo Boliye Tarini Khuro,to weave movie through.

With a novel subject like insomnia (have not heard about it in cinema), Mahadevan takes us to a palatial though rather decrepit “rajbhari” in what was then Calcutta. The city – almost a character – is seen with its ambling, rambling tramcars, hand-pulled rickshaws and the majestic Howrah Bridge over the Hooghly at a kissing distance from the railway station painted in bright red. Then there is the Durga Puja (but of course), there is “maach or fish that is like pulse and breath for Bengalis...I can go on about a city that Job Charnock founded accidentally on a hot and humid August afternoon, a city which also holds great memories for me having grown up there. Seen through the lens of Alphonse Roy, once the Second City of the Empire glows in all its resplendent glory.

Although the crux of the plot unfolds in Ahmedabad, the film shows more of Calcutta, and it is here that Tarini Bandhopadhyay (Paresh Rawal) lives till he gets a job in Gujarat. Adil Hussain’s Ratan Gharodia, all suited and booted, owns a cotton mill in Ahmedabad, Bandhopadhyay plays a man with the gift of the gab. When Gharodia cannot sleep at night (three years I have not slept, he says), he takes the help of Bandhopadhyay. Like our grandmothers lulled us to sleep with fascinating fairy tales, Bandhopadhyay puts the businessman to sleep with stories. The storyteller lights up his cigarette and with the smoke rings swirling around, he tells tales on myriad subjects – soothing Gharodia into a slumber. All this works fine till Bandhopadhyay’s son calls him over to the US, and he decides to go, leaving behind the sweet nostalgia of fiction interspersed with fact.

The acting is uniformly impressive, with even secondary characters –Revathy as Gharodia’s lover and Tannishtha Chatterjee as a librarian – producing moments of magic.Paresh is delightfully easy as a Bengali with his obsession over fish, and Hussain is charming and restrained. Together they are just wonderful.

The Storyteller is a must watch, and yes, don’t miss the twist at the end!

The writer is a senior film critic and author

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