

Sivaji: The Boss takes Tamil cinema to new heights

Director of Photography
KV Anand, ISC

Film stocks
KODAK VISION2 50D 5201, KODAK VISION2 250D 5205, KODAK VISION2 500T 5218

With an estimated budget of over US\$20 million, Tamil language film, *Sivaji: The Boss* is the most expensive film in the history of Indian cinema. Following its June 15 release, the regional film caused an enthusiastic frenzy that made Bollywood sit up and take notice. Produced by M. S. Guhan and M. Saravanan of AVM Productions and written and directed by S. Shankar, the film, described by Shankar as a "social thriller", stars the Indian-renowned acting talents of Rajinikanth, Shriya, Vivek and Suman and is Rajinikanth's 100th Tamil movie.

The visually stunning piece was shot by Director of Photography, KV Anand, ISC, in the Super 35mm format using ARRIflex 435 cameras and tells the story of a rich software systems architect who returns home from the United States to Tamil Nadu only to discover various failings in the education system accompanied by widespread poverty. Faced with obstacles and challenges from government bureaucracy he valiantly attempts to correct the situation.

Principal photography commenced in December 2005 and with a focus on achieving outstanding image quality, Anand and Shankar worked with Kodak Cinelabs Mumbai for processing and scanning. It is the first film in India to scan at 4K resolution using the Spirit 4K scanner at Prasad EFX, with color timing by Ken Metzger.

Selecting the appropriate film stocks was an easy choice for Anand. "My favourite stock is the fine grain KODAK VISION2 50D 5201," he enthuses. "India is very sunny and the film had lots of exterior day scenes and I used this stock in almost 35% of the film." The 50D was also used for the opening 'Ballelekhā' song, which was shot in Bilbao, Spain. "Another sunny country, with blue sky, on a seashore or lake with a polarizing filter and the KODAK VISION2 50D 5201, it was really magic," he recalls. "You just can't achieve the same look as naturally with digital photography or digital colour enhancement. It just tends to look 'plastic'."



The production showcases breathtaking sets by Thotta Tharani; in particular the palace and the three buildings that made up the glass set. "For all day interiors I chose the KODAK VISION2 250D 5205, another lovely daylight film," recalls Anand. "I also used it for the 'Vaji' song shot in the huge palace set with overall soft ambient light and strong xenon beams from above."

Night exteriors employed a third stock, the high-speed KODAK VISION2 500T 5218. "Normally I rate 5218 at the recommended EI of 500," he says. "With *Sivaji* going through a digital intermediate I wanted more options to open or crush the blacks in the shadow areas so I overexposed by around one third of a stop at EI 400, or below, to get more shadow detail." It was recorded out using the ARRI Laser Recorder and boasts the largest number of prints ever produced in India for a single release. Reportedly delivered to up to 1,000 theatres worldwide, *Sivaji: The Boss* has also found a following overseas.

"Shankar's movies are costly ventures with relatively high budgets," comments Anand. "Together we aim for a consistent style that creates mass appeal through a combination of excellent image quality achieved through collaboration with the art director and costume designer, vibrant colours in the costumes and stunning sets. These all photograph beautifully and attract an audience from a vast cross section of the population. They entertain the man in the street and the most elite alike."

- 1 The palace featuring Shriya and girls.
- 2 View of the glass set from above.