

Indian wolves tear into animation Oscars

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In a momentous turn for the Indian animation industry, a film made in Mumbai has made it to the top 15 in the animated feature films category of the Oscars for this year.

Alpha and Omega, a 3D stereoscopic animated film created and produced by Mumbai-based Crest Animation Studios Ltd, has been shortlisted for the 83rd Academy Awards, to be given away on February 27, 2011. It is co-produced by US-based Lionsgate.

The film is pitted against blockbusters like How to Train Your Dragon and Shrek Forever After by Dreamworks, Toy Story 3 by Disney Pixar, among other films yet to be released in India.

Under the nomination norms of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, only 3 of the 15 films will make it to the final list.

Alpha and Omega is already making waves in the US, UK and other European markets, said AK Madhavan, chief executive officer, Crest Animation Studios Ltd. "In the US, where it was released in 2,625 theatres and is into its 11th week, the film is still running in over 200 screens."

The film revolves around two wolves completely opposite in nature. One is Humphrey, a lowly Omega wolf in his pack, who falls in love with Kate, the stunning and skilled Alpha female.

"We will soon be releasing the film in Australia, Germany and Spain and expect similar responses," said Madhavan. But he isn't as excited about the film's prospects in India, where it is slated for release on January 26, 2011. Crest Animation is currently negotiating with two big banner distributors and is in discussions to finalise the promotional plans and the number of screens it will be targeting.

A Netscribes India report says India is an outsourcing hub for animation, with a number of international media companies entering into joint ventures with animation studios here. The market, which was worth \$460 million in 2008, is expected to reach \$1,192 million by 2012. A 2009 Nasscom study too says that India offers significant cost advantages in the area over other outsourcing destinations such as Taiwan and South Korea.

However, a lack of skilled professionals is impeding faster growth.

Madhavan hopes the response received by Alpha and Omega in the West would help catalyse the industry's growth in India.