



Meet the woman who helped shape Colombo's contemporary movie-going culture



In conversation with **Shihaam Hassanali**
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Daniella F Nobile, Co-Founder/ Chief Operating Officer of Skyline Entertainment & Consultancy is not your ordinary boss lady. Since her first advance screening event in 2017 for *King Arthur: Legend Of The Sword*, she has been slaying the game. It is thanks to her and her teams' efforts, Colombo now gets to enjoy blockbusters on the same day it is released, sometimes, even earlier! But the road to get here wasn't an easy one. Here she shares how it all began and where they're headed.

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Q What's the story behind Skyline Entertainment & Consultancy's beginnings?

A Distribution was something my partner and I always wanted to pursue. We needed to find the right time and knew it would be a long road for our current studios to accept the terms we wanted. It took 5 years for us to plan. We took the leap in 2015, and now in 2020, Skyline turns 5 years old.

Q What motivated you to look to Sri Lanka to distribute movies?

A I was asked by a former employer in Greece to look into Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives for some titles they were distributing back in late 2010. I did a visibility study about the region's industry and was sent on a two-week trip in 2011 to explore. I fell in love with the people, the potential of the region and their love of movies. However, there was much work to be done. As of now, our only focus is South Asia. Formally, I have distributed to South East Asia in countries such as Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines (limited titles).

Q Watching a blockbuster at the same time it released in the US (let alone watching one at an advanced screening) was completely unheard of until a few years ago. How did you navigate all the red tape both here and at home?

A Well, that, until this day, still requires a lot of convincing. We basically told our studios we wanted to give Sri Lanka and surrounding countries in South Asia the same opportunities other cities have to premiere films. We follow a strict set of guidelines for each title. It was sort of first we try, then we trust situation.... So far so good!

Q The culture of going to the movies and sharing the experience with friends and strangers blew up after *King Arthur*. What were some of the challenges you faced (and continue to face) bringing down experiences like this? And, what's the most rewarding part of it?

A All studios are scared of piracy. The continued challenge we face is to convince them it won't happen from our side, which we do. The most rewarding part is seeing the movie goers so incredibly happy after our event. Without them, we are nothing. They are

my number one priority. I constantly ask myself, 'How do we continue to make them happy? How do we make it more interesting?'

Q You work very closely with TNL Now (Chassy, in particular) and Scope Cinemas. How did these collaborations start?

A Chassy and her team at TNL attended a workshop I conducted in regards to film partnerships in 2017. It was to inform local and international brands how to partner with films through proper standards, and its benefits. Out of 29 people, Chassy was one of the only people who understood the workshop's value and from that point on, we began working together. The concepts the TNL team has brought to life and amount of hours Chassy has put into learning the process remains endless to this day. Last year, Sri Lanka attended our first press junket and Chassy interviewed Tom Holland, Chris Hemsworth and John Cohen in Bali, Indonesia. A true milestone for the market.

As for Scope Cinemas, they are currently our exhibition partner. They were the first bold exhibitor in the market to completely change the movie-going experience and invest with Skyline to make these changes come to life. We value the partnership and keep wondering how we will top the last thing we did!

Q With Netflix revolutionising the way we watch films (and with new streaming services by Apple, Disney, Warner Bros etc), do you think there will a future in cinemas for movies that are not major blockbusters?

A That's a good question, but yes I absolutely do. So do the streaming services. There will always be a window for the "first run" of a title in the cinema. *Bohemian Rhapsody* is a great example... it's one of the longest running films in Sri Lanka (23 weeks!). There were multiple ticket purchases from the same patrons. There are many stories still to be told on the big screen. The experience of going to a cinema is still something you cannot have at home—the big screen, the concession, the sound, the effects and that experience with your friends and loved ones. I remember



the end of this past summer, and watching *Spiderman: Far From Home* with everyone in Sri Lanka when the end credit scenes rolled, people were screaming in amazement, up out of their seats, cheering and saying, 'WHAT JUST HAPPENED HERE?'

Q I know you do a fair amount of travel, but what does an average week look like for you?

A I have a lot of passion for films and this region's growth, so my average week is never the same. I wake up at 6 AM

and work until my territories close their offices. That's when I'm not traveling. At least three nights a week, I wait for Los Angeles to wake up to go through the necessary approval process for our use of movie assets and all the other planning that comes with our events. My days can be anywhere from an average 8 hours to a maximum of 14. I have just recently learned how to stop and smell the roses.

Q Is there anything exciting coming up in 2020 for you?

A There are many exciting things coming up for Skyline and South Asia for 2020. We are coming in bigger, better and expanding. That's all I can say for now. ©

