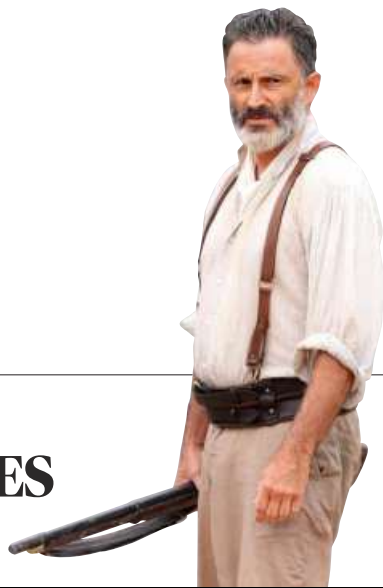




# metroPLUS

THE HINDU



## Go down memory lane at Chennai's Good Shepherd Convent as it turns 100 P2

## DANIEL CALTAGIRONE RAVES ABOUT THANGALAAN P4

From movies by the sea, to gags about Chennai's many quirks and an exhibit of rare archival photographs, here's a guide to *The Hindu's* Made of Chennai celebration, which marks 385 years of the metropolis we call home

# A city in motion

Team MetroPlus

### Madras on wheels

On March 5, 1939, the then-Governor of Madras, Lord Erskine and his wife, Lady Marjorie Erskine made a dramatic entrance at the Madras Park Fair on horse-drawn carriages in the company of a mighty contingent. Lending a watchful eye from afar stood the looming clock tower of the Madras Central Railway Station teeming with local commuters. This frame that toggles two kinds of motion, tangible and otherwise, is so characteristic of a time that Lady Erskine's ornate parasol and the crisp uniform worn by soldiers show no traces of Madras as we know it today. Yet it shows that movement – in the form of transport, commute and transit – remains central to the evolution of the 385-year-old city.

In an archival exhibit titled Nagarum Nam Nagaram: Our Changing and Moving City, *The Hindu* premises will hold many markers of the ever-changing landscape of the city through the lens of movement, transport and commute. With 150 photographs and over 200 digital images from *The Hindu* archives that date between 1930s and 1980s, the display takes one through the waterways, tramways, rail tracks and roadways of the city.

Madras has had its many firsts.

Not only was Tamil Nadu the first State to ban hand pulled rickshaws, Chennai was also where the first electric train of the South Indian Railway suburban service plied. Says curator Thirupurasundari Sevel, "[The Hindu] Archive is a huge inspiration. The narrative is based on movement, but when we think of movement, we think of it being momentary. For the movement to materialise, we need people." And so, the display also trains a light on the people that make this movement happen and this does not just mean commuters or passengers, but the many hands that contribute to the infrastructural development of the city. For instance, one of the photographs depicts a group of women who station themselves on the hinges of the Egmore Railway Station and sell packed lunches in huge baskets.

This time around, viewers can also take a piece of *The Hindu* Archive home in the form of postcards, which can be stamped and posted from outside the premises. On view from August 9 to September 5 at The Hindu office, Central, Guindy, Vadapalani, Koyambedu and Airport metro stations, and Kathipara Urban Square.



### City beats

While no major city in India can completely claim ownership over being the centre of musical genius, Chennai comes close to staking sizeable claim to this identity. This is after all, the land of Ilaiyaraaja and AR Rahman.

Though cinema and Carnatic music continue to be the mainstay, the city's soundscape today brims with the beats of the parai, rap, EDM and mellifluous gaana. A two-day food and music festival aims to capture Chennai's new rhythm. Performances by Haricharan and D Kumaran Collective; Motta Maadi Music and Maalavika Sundar, are part of the line up at Island Grounds. To accompany the music, 40 iconic food establishments from Chennai will bring their finest delicacies. The event promises to be slice of life, not just bun-butter-jam-wise.

"I firmly believe that for a format like Motta Maadi Music (MMM) to succeed, a city like Chennai is essential," says Badhri Seshadri, frontman of MMM, an initiative that



hosts among the city's most engaging concerts. Today, he is an active proponent of the axiom *vandharai vazha vaikkum Chennai*. "I think that more people should live in this city," he says. Singer Haricharan passionately says that Chennai balances hustle and bustle with a steady stream of culture. To exist in the company of other musicians in this city is a delight, he says. "I travel a lot but I wait to come back to Chennai. The culture quotient of the capital is unmatched. We may speak ill of the weather but it is what makes the city it is," he says. His set list will include some of the singer's biggest hits, crowd favourites and an interesting mix of Carnatic fusion. It is the edge he wishes to bring to the event. Badhri on the other hand, promises two hours of 'jolly'. "Come and dance with us," he says.

The Hindu Food and Music Festival will be held on September 14 and 15 in Island Grounds at 4pm.

### Moonlight cinema

With a myriad options for us to enjoy movies of yesteryear, looking back on our childhood favourites has become easier in this day and age. But if you want to re-watch them by the beaches of Chennai, join us at *The Hindu's* Moonlight Cinema. Hoot along with your friends and family this Madras month.

The movies will be screened by the city's beaches on weekends until August 31.

### Photo contest

Capturing the unique essence of Chennai is an art. Each of us has a unique perspective. If your photographs can express your emotions for the city, participate in a photo contest in collaboration with the Madras Photo Bloggers starting today. Click and upload pictures following the theme Life in a day of Chennai, and win prizes. Log on to [madeofchennai.thehindu.com](http://madeofchennai.thehindu.com) to register.

### Heritage walks

Explore the city through seven unique heritage walks that will take you through the history of the city. Take a stroll through Egmore with the Photo Bloggers, explore Pondy Bazar and Chintadripet's architecture at night. Sign up for a walk through the AVM Studios on August 11. Register on [madeofchennai.thehindu.com](http://madeofchennai.thehindu.com).

### Chennai run

Instead of driving past heritage buildings, take a moment to run by them on September 8. Join the Made of Chennai Run in collaboration with Chennai Runners. Choose between a five or 10-kilometre run.



Scan the QR code to register.

Festival of Chennai is done in partnership with Greater Chennai Corporation, Chennai Metro Rail Limited, Tamilnadu Tourism Development Corporation and Mark Metro.

Knowledge and expert partners: Nam Veedu Nam Oor Nam Kadhai and Madras Photo Bloggers. Happiness partner: On The Streets of Chennai

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For 30 editions since 1994, a hush has fallen over the audience at The Music Academy seconds before Dr Navin Jayakumar's first question at the annual Independence Day (formerly Landmark, now the Zifo Open) quiz.

If it is an easy crack, teams have worn a certain arrogant confidence. If not, some jitters have taken control. This first question has hence been crucial in setting the tone in the city.

With one week to go for the event, Dr Navin says that he is yet to figure out what this year's first question is going to be. He is, however, 'excited to stump the audience that tends to be a sea of interesting, enthusiastic faces'. "I have a lovely first question for the finals though," he adds.

Back this year for its 31st edition, and its second under Zifo's banner, the quiz promises large-scale participation and trivia to the audience, which has an abiding love for quizzing.

Dr Navin, a seasoned quizzier himself who began the Quiz Foundation of India (QFI), says that over the years, walking



## Hands on the buzzer

The Independence Day quiz turns 31 this year. Quiz master Navin Jayakumar tells everyone to brace themselves for question 1

onto stage and peering into the crowd has been a favourite part of the event. "Everyone is aware of the fact that only eight teams make it to the finals but 392 teams come back year after year and participate, watching the competition as a competition. It is why I have set 30% of the questions for the audience during the finals," he says.

Hosting 30 editions of a quiz requires setting interesting

questions with a steady balance between easy and tough, while also making it contemporary.

Today, Dr Navin is assisted by Siddhanth Rao, his co-quiz master, to ensure that the quiz format is not fossilised. "I do not know much about memes and other such pop culture trends. The funny thing though is that I ended up setting all the questions revolving around social media while he set the

classical questions on World War II," he says.

Raj Prakash, CEO of Zifo, the company that has now taken over the sponsorship of the quiz, is a firm believer of two approaches to tradition. "Some need to be retired as they are no longer relevant. Others need to be embraced and nurtured. This quiz in Chennai is an identity of the city. We are a curiosity driven company. This is why we

**Tie breaker** At the previous edition of the quiz, SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

jumped at the opportunity to host the event," he says. He adds that last year, people from all over the world travelled to take part. To ensure that they have a great time without having to lug around their bags, a small check-in facility is being arranged at the venue.

This year, prizes over ₹5 lakh will be distributed to the winners and also for best team name, college team, corporate team, senior citizen team and family team. Zifo had organised a preliminary event at about 20 schools in Chennai. The top three teams from each school will compete in the event, although in a separate category for the 'best school team' title.

The event promises an evening of cerebral entertainment, nostalgia and a crack at several audience prizes.

Zifo Open Quiz will be held on August 15 at 1.15pm at The Music Academy, TTK Road. To register, log on to [zifoopenquiz.com](http://zifoopenquiz.com) or contact 8754569948.



### Catch 'em quick

The curvy shoreline of Kovalam is once again prepping for the annual Covelong Classic Surf Championship where surfers from around the country chase after the biggest waves. After the heart-pounding action at sea, catch some sonic relief at the after party in Surf Turf, featuring acts by BLWR and DJ Sreeni, and The Medium Rare. A Next Gen Musical Showdown also invites school and college musicians for an informal contest on the last day. An all-access pass lets one in on the surf action, the after party while offering breakfast, lunch and dinner for a day.

On August 9 and 10, from 7am to 10pm at Surf Turf, Kovalam. BLWR and DJ Sreeni will perform on August 9 from 4pm to 8.30pm. The Medium Rare will perform on August 10, 8pm. Get your all-day access pass for ₹2,500 at 9150007078.

### Honouring the brave

The Radiant Wellness Conclave 2024 will commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Kargil War. Among the esteemed guests will be General VP Malik (retired), then Chief of Army Staff, other retired armed forces officers, Member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor, film producer Shabbir Boxwala and journalist Barkha Dutt. Honorary Captain Sanjay Kumar, recipient of the Param Vir Chakra, will receive the Radiant National Icon Award. The conclave will emphasise the importance of physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

For details, visit [radiantwellnessconclave.com](http://radiantwellnessconclave.com). On August 10, 9am onwards, Taj Coromandel.



# That old school tie

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As I turn into the gate on College Road, with a signboard that reads Good Shepherd Higher Secondary School, my adult life vanishes. Small, lucid details come to mind – the silver grille enclosure where girls used to lounge after school; the junior school helmed in by oleander bushes; opposite, the auditorium. At the end of the drive stood a statue of the Good Shepherd painted silver; at its base, magenta table roses bloomed and set with the sun. Further, were the sports fields where many a student was taught that ‘she who sweats, wins’. Now, the school band keeps the beat as students (fondly called girlies) practise for the upcoming sports day. Some girls lie star-fished and exhausted under the copper-pod trees.

The high-pillared portico of the convent has changed. Superior and correspondent, Sister Aruna George, pulls out an old photo album. “The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd that runs the school was founded by Saint Mary Euphrasia Pelletier in France around 1829 to provide shelter to marginalised women. By the late 19th Century, its nuns travelled across continents establishing schools and houses for girls. In India, they landed in Pondicherry and travelled by bullock cart to Bangalore to establish the Sacred Heart School in 1854. On November 21, 1924, six nuns came to Madras to start the

As Good Shepherd Convent celebrates its centenary with a legacy gala this weekend, ‘girlies’ remember their school days and their unique red tie and badge

school we know today, with a first-day enrollment of three students. The community here now has 20 nuns and 2,300 students. As part of the centennial, we have also started an ICSE school,” says Sr Aruna.

**Looking ahead**  
Other events include The Legacy Gala on August 10 with Member of Parliament MK Kanimozhi as the chief guest. It will also feature notable past students such as Carnatic vocalist Sudha Ragunathan, singer Shwetha Mohan, stand-up comic Anu Menon (ex-Lola Kutty), a video by filmmaker Latha Menon and entertainment, including a mystery trail across the 16-acre campus.

According to records, the school first began in Luz in a nondescript building before it shifted to the

Cloisters in Teynampet in 1925. Later, it moved to Somerford in Adyar. The school supported itself by opening a small laundry. Every Monday, a cart would bring 150 labelled bundles of boys’ clothes from St Bede’s and clean, mended clothes were sent back on Saturday. In October 1929, the sisters occupied the present campus, part of Moorat’s Gardens, with no compound wall and only a large house dating from East India Company days. This became the convent. Till 1973, boys were part of the junior classes. After a gap of 50 years they are back in the ICSE school.

Over the years, the school saw a cosmopolitan mix of students who excelled in academia, sport, medicine, law and civil service. Says Sheeba Ninan, president of the alumni association



**Blast from the past**  
(Clockwise from top) A class photograph outside Eccleston; sports day; dramatics day; and students outside the high school. S SHIVA RAJ AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

says, “The auditorium was the place where many talents were discovered and nurtured. There was a place on stage for everyone. Miss Vipula and Mrs Erevelles helped us get over stage fear in plays like *The Dear Departed*. The house system helped raise the bar, and though the competition was stiff, there was no animosity.”

Several additions have been made to the school. The infirmary where the girls came howling with grazed knees has become part of the office, the old canteen with its plastic strips of pepsicola is now a garage, and the window where the twin-tailed drongo used to sit, minutes before recess, is now tree-less. The one constant that has remained is the readings from the *Koran*, the *Gita* and the *Bible* at every important event.

Jancy Malathy has been associated with the school since 1970 – as a student, parent, a high school teacher and now a colleague of her daughter who has also joined the teaching staff. “I’m grateful to Mrs Nalini Karunakaran; her teaching has led to a lifetime in the social sciences,” she says.

June Beale joined the school in 1974 as one of many Anglo-Indian teachers who taught the junior classes reading, diction and recitation. “Our free hours always involved a fun game of tombola. There was time to foster long-lasting bonds,” she says.

Where once there used to be shamianas for sports day there is now gallery seating. Groundsmen lay out the tracks with chalk dust. As I leave, I can still hear the drummer’s beat despite the loud traffic outside. And high on the wall, emblazoned in the school colours of red and white is the school motto, Age Quod Agis – Do Well All That You Do, a solid survival from the best years of our lives.

*The Legacy Gala is on August 10, 4pm onwards. For details, call 8438197919 or email secretary@goodshepherdalumni.org*

# A bite of Japan and a sip of Italy

If you are in Express Avenue and are craving a cocktail, look for silver deer and the sign ‘I <3 Noci’

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At Express Avenue in Royapettah, where the popular Social once was, there now stands Noci Adante. Everything about the venue spells mystery. For instance, the statue of a bright silver deer and two sets of bright white flowers stand at the entrance. Is it a whimsical, winter-wonderland?

The founders play into this idea of mystery to draw people in. “*Noci* in Japanese means ‘a way of life’ and *adante* in Italian is a specific way of playing an instrument slowly. Our mission is to give the people a space where they can have a fine-dining experience, which, after 10pm will evolve into a party-space,” says one of the founders Avnish Sistla. He began this venture with K Balachandar and Dinesh Jaganathan.

Inside, the restaurant which can seat 110 guests, is swaddled in dark tones of browns and teal. While the name is borrowed from Japanese and Italian, the theme of the restaurant is rather vague. The menu also reflects this confusion with a mix of dishes from Indian, South Indian, tandoori, Indo-Chinese and western cuisines. Although it is not cohesive, there are several tasty options.



**Arigato** The spread at Noci Adante. THAMODHARAN B

We start with the Konar kari dosaai tartlet. The dosa batter forms a crunchy tart, holding melt-in-the-mouth mutton chukka with serva, soft kalakki, a dollop of cream cheese, and olive dust. It is a delightful bite. “We went to Madurai and tried the Konar kari dosaai and were trying to find a way to incorporate it into the menu. Kalakki is inseparable from kari dosaai but to add a Noci twist, we also added cream cheese and olive dust,” explains Chef Gopinath G. Vegetarians can try a jackfruit version. The

chimichurri rubbed grilled chicken is flavourful, though slightly dry while the vegan-friendly idichakka cutlet with jackfruit, is a well-executed starter.

Chef Gopinath emphasises that Noci Adante is about mindful eating. “We won’t be serving French fries or nachos like we usually find in mall-restobars. We’ll see how the dishes sell for 45 days and then work on an edit,” he explains.

For the main course, the hand-rolled ravioli stands out. If you happen to have a heavier appetite, roll up your sleeves and dig into the mutton pottlam rice. When you open the mantharai leaf packet, there is a steaming heap of fluffy seeraga samba ghee rice with a juicy topping of Chettiyar mutton thokku.

The cocktails are designed to complement the food. The Charred Pineapple Plamo, a rum-based drink with a Cajun-spiced rim and freshly charred pineapple, is as addictive as it is painfully spicy. To cool down, try the wild berry cheesecake or the chocolate salami Baci Da Ma, a rich 70% dark chocolate roulade.

It remains to be seen if this ‘competitively-priced fine-dining resto-bar’ will attract the mall’s casual diners.

*Noci Adante is at E Hotel, Express Avenue, Royapettah. Open between 11am and midnight, a meal for two costs ₹2,500. For reservations contact 9514000622.*



**Raise a toast** (Left) The patio at the new resto bar; (below) kunafa prawns. THAMODHARAN B

At The Madras Taproom, dive into small plates, and take on a challenge to demolish fiery chicken wings or a mammoth slice of cake

# Hops and dreams

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For a month and a half now, a jali work facade on Montieth Road has been the object of much intrigue. Morning walkers and residents of the locality have popped their heads in to find out what it encloses. This is The Madras Taproom, a new addition to the growing list of resto bars in Chennai.

Started by Vinodh MV, the taproom is spread across two floors and over 17,000 square feet. As soon as you enter, a cafe welcomes you. This is open all day and admits all age groups. The space then segues into a lounge setting with a bar, couches, a DJ console and a life-size floor-to-ceiling beer barrel with a tap and the words The Madras Taproom. The first floor also has an alfresco area called the Sky Deck, and indoor seating. The resto bar has quite a few private dining room options.

“The idea is to bring a Bengaluru kind of ambience to Chennai and make it a place where people can hang out regularly rather than just weekends. Other than beer, we will also have a cocktail on tap,” says Vinodh, adding that they will be serving alcohol shortly. “We wanted a place where you can meet and have great food without worrying about the price,” says Chef Koushik Shankar, consultant chef, adding that prices start at ₹99.

The menu features 100 dishes, 45 beverages and five desserts. It is a diverse mix of cuisines – while on one hand it has spanakopita with sour cream and parsley oil, and kung pao chicken on the other, there are local flavours like batter fried muttai 65 and avakkai urulai. The avakkai urulai is delicious with a tangy flavour. The potatoes are smoked and cooked with avakka. Since they do small plates here, we overestimate ourselves and order a number of starters.



We start with the very 80s-style cheese, cherry, pineapple for a hit of nostalgia. Our other favourites are the Kundapur ghee roast mushrooms, seasoned with Byadagi chilli, coriander, and cooked in organic ghee; beef ularthiyadu, and roasted chilli pork. Meanwhile it would do the lotus stem good if it lets go of its overly sweet disposition. Despite the herbs, onions, parsley, micro greens, garlic and olive oil, the Spanish mushrooms lack flavour.

Nearly every dish on the menu has a story. For example, the wings come in six varieties, each a degree hotter than the other, says the chef. These are ranked from one to six, with the latter. “For number four we use bhoot jhalokia, so you can imagine how spicy number six would be,” he says, adding, “Not many would be able to handle it. I finished a piece and then had to have half a litre of milk.” The thought alone makes us take refuge in the Karonda Colada, a mocktail sweet with coconut milk, pineapple, and berries.

Our main course arrives in the form of a chunky burger bursting with beef patty, caramelised onions and cheese, which we quite enjoy. The flavourful red Thai curry redolent with galangal and kaffir lime is also a winner.

“Are you ready for dessert?” he then asks with a gleam in his eye. Out comes the Wall of Chocolate, a 450 gram slice of cake. It measures around seven inches and has eight layers of chocolate – white, milk, and dark – and ganache, soaked in espresso to offset the sweetness. “The idea behind this dessert was to see how much of it one could go through in a session,” laughs the chef. Now, if that is a challenge you are ready to accept, you know where to head to.

*The Madras Taproom is located at 37, Red Cross Road (Montieth Road), Egmore. A meal for two costs ₹2,000.*

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**Across**

1 Epitomise (6)  
4 Treeless plain of eastern Russia and Siberia (6)  
9 (Musically) fast (7)  
10 Clinically overweight (5)  
11 Colour lightly (5)  
12 Gift (informal) (7)  
13 Green (3-8)  
18 Move mouth to fit a soundtrack (3-4)  
20 Bladed cleaner? (5)  
22 Bee pack (5)  
23 Eating away of rock, say (7)  
24 How to produce patterned colour on cloth – eyed it (anag) (3-3)  
25 Capital of North Macedonia (6)

**Down**

1 Nicely warm (6)  
2 English actor – former US vicepresidential candidate (5)  
3 Cover for something embarrassing (3,4)  
5 Figure of speech (5)  
6 Knot-shaped glazed and salted biscuit (7)

To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.



7 Cricket side? (6)  
8 Source of food for the deprived (4,7)  
14 Small iced confection in a paper case (7)  
15 Chrysler Building city (3,4)  
16 Secret – covert (6)  
17 A founding member of the European Economic Community (6)  
19 Delicious (informal) (5)  
21 Groom carefully (5)

Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated August 15, 2024.

**Solution No. 13596**

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**Hound Dog days** The cast and crew of *Grease: The Musical*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

*Grease* all over again. When I decided to direct, I wanted to go with the play script because of how the characters are written. The movie focussed on John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John's characters but in the play, each character is important."

Fifty-two years since its premiere, iconic songs like 'Greased Lightning', 'Summer Nights', 'You Are The One That I Want' and 'Sandy' are still earworms. "Somehow, 'Greased Lightning' always ends up being the crowd and cast favourite," Denver says, adding that everyone comes for the songs and not so much for the story. The 38-member strong ensemble – vocally coached by Amrita Fredrick – has a six-member choir and a four-piece band, apart from cameos and interludes from actors, dancers and recognisable faces from Chennai's theatre fraternity: Yohan Chacko, Sandeep John, Sangita Santosham and Shan Katari to name a few.

However iconic, *Grease* narrates a story deeply rooted in the place and time it's set in: 1950s Chicago. So, the language and ideologies that the characters share may not be in resonance to a cast that falls largely between the ages of 18 and 35. "We have had very long discussions and debates about this during rehearsals. I also learned a lot from them. It's important to set the context for such works for art," adds Denver.

Today, everyone is keen to perform, says Denver. "We are also in a space where most of the theatre happening in Chennai is 10 and 15-minutes long. There are hardly any full-length plays being performed. So the cast is very enthusiastic about a full-length musical where they can sing, dance and act all they want. And *Grease* is simply, a lot of fun," says Denver.

*Grease: The Musical will be staged on August 17, 7pm at The Music Academy, Main Hall. Tickets can be purchased from allevents.in*

walking to the temple, bun butter jam at Mount Road Bilal, and more.

Shiva says that he felt the need to create memorabilia on Chennai since he was leaving the city to pursue higher education.

"Some part of me wanted to retain a connect to the city. I wanted to keep these memories," he says, adding that he has been painting since the age of four by imitating and being inspired by his mother's Tanjore paintings. "My parents have been my source of support, inspiration and my best critics."

The prints have been left on transformer boxes and walls for anybody to take home. "I'm not keen on selling prints, because I'm still finding my style," he says, adding that his next series, titled *Thozhil*, will be on display at the Art Kin Centre, Alwarpet, on August 18 as part of the Essence of Madras exhibition, which will also have the works of other artists.

# Summer nights in Chicago

A 38-member ensemble from Chennai is set to perform the popular 1970s musical *Grease*, this month

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**“W**hy *Grease*? Because it's *Grease*!” quips Denver Anthony Nicholas. There is no better way to start this conversation.

Premiered in Broadway in 1972, *Grease* tells the story of an American working class youth subculture, and follows teenagers of 1950s Chicago as they duel between the personal and political. It quickly rooted itself into popular culture when the play was adapted in 1978 into a movie starring John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John in the lead. The songs, to this day, are



an alluring reminder of the time.

Some 20-odd years ago, Chennai saw its first-ever musical production of *Grease*, which opened to packed audiences – Denver debuted as a choreographer then, for the play produced by StageFright Productions. Ever since, he has been wanting to resurrect the production as a director. This time as *Grease: The Musical* by Poochus Productions.

"We grew up with that music!" says Denver adding, "Ten years back, I had found the play script and fell in love with

# Chennai on display

With vibrant posters capturing the essence of Chennai's everyday life, artist Shiva Ravishankar transforms city walls into living canvases



**Narrative in colour** (Left) A poster from the series by Shiva Ravishankar; (below) the artist. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

capture them in his own way with wholesome one-liners written in Tamil and English. "I grew up around Marina Beach, and have always had a fondness for the sea. I was fascinated with the Labour statue, which inspired my first poster," he says, referring to the bright blue and red poster of the bronze Triumph of Labour statue situated on Marina Beach. The subsequent posters feature an auto ride, a filter coffee vendor, an elderly couple



"I wanted to make my art more accessible to people. Not only to those who know how to study and appreciate art, but also to common people," he adds.

A city's essence is captured by not only the big monuments, heritage buildings, and tourist spots, but also by smaller intricate details that are overlooked. A roadside tea shop, autos in traffic, vendors by the beach, late night eateries buzzing with excitement – these make up the core personality of Chennai, and Shiva manages to



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or cracker canapés. It is also used in crepe's, pancakes, granola, cookies, brownies, and breakfast dishes.

**FUN FACT - ELVIS SANDWICHES**

Elvis Presley's favourite sandwich had a filling of peanut spread and sliced or mashed banana. Jelly or honey is sometimes added to the Elvis Sandwich. The sandwich is made with toasted bread or is frequently cooked in a pan or on a griddle before serving.



## Kalaripayattu connect

Explore the ancient martial artform of kalaripayattu through a workshop by Subhashree Parthasarathy, which will introduce participants to basic movement, vocabulary, and breathing patterns. The workshop aims to help channel your energy through concentrated focus and enhancing awareness of oneself and the surroundings. @Hibiscus, ECR, Injambakkam on August 10 at 11am. For registrations, contact 9884137070.



## Ushering in festivities

The 19th edition of The Armoire's pop up is back to usher in the festive season. The Big Fat Festive Edit brings together over 45 brands from across the country, with the majority of the collection priced under ₹30,000. Aseem Kapoor, Devnaagri, Raji Ramniq, Prisho, The NEH Store, Graine, Parul & Preyanka, Twenty Nine, Nouria, Studio Rigu and Anaash will be among the designer brands on showcase. @WelcomHotel by ITC, Cathedral Road, August 9, 11am to 7.30pm. Entry free. For details, call 9884960336.

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**“S**tick no bills” is a common phrase painted on many walls around the city. Despite the friendly warning, numerous posters show up. Some announce political agenda or the release of new films; some advertise products or services; while yet others share news of birth, death and weddings. No wall or transformer box is immune.

But they add a charm to the city. "In some sense, I found that people resonate more with posters than they do with paintings. Posters are more accessible," says 18-year-old Shiva Ravishankar. In the last month, he has painted a series of 14 posters titled Chennai in Posters, inspired by his love for the city.

After creating these posters, and uploading the process to his Instagram, the posters have found a home on the walls of the city, among the numerous others.

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**Egmore:** Guild Of Service, 18, Casa Major Road - 600008

**Anna Nagar:** D. K. Kalyana Mandapam, W-114, 3rd Avenue, Near Round Thana - 600040

**Ashok Nagar:** Lakshmi Hall, 50/40, 100 Feet Rd, Near Ashok Pillar, Opp. CSI Church - 600083

**OMR Sholinganallur:** K.V.L Kalyana Mahal, 161, Opp. Accenture, Opp.Bharat Petroleum - 600019

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# The world of Minmini

Director Halitha Shameem and composer Khatija Rahman on their passion project, which hits screens this week



**Bhuvanesh Chandar**  
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To dream is effortless. Imagine holding onto that dream for nearly a decade and giving your everything to see the other end of the tunnel. To realise her dream, her sophomore directorial *Minmini*, filmmaker Halitha Shameem has been on one such journey. The passion project that began a little after the release of her debut film, *Poovarasam Peepee*, was intentionally put on hold for the child actors of the film – Esther Anil, Praveen Kishore and Gaurav Kaalai – to age and reprise the adult versions of their characters. Now, *Minmini* is finally set to hit screens this Friday. Excerpts from a chat with Halitha and the film's composer, Khatija Rahman:

**Question:** *Khatija, the songs of Minimini are soul-stirring, especially 'Iru Perum Nadhiga'. What did Halitha's story speak to you when she narrated it?*  
**Answer:** The emotions. The story is a rollercoaster ride of emotions and that was my catch. I just wanted my music to be true to those emotions.

**Q:** Halitha, it seems like your films are attempts at understanding grief. Be it *Aelay*, *Sillu Karupatti*, *Loners*, or even *Minmini*, which deals with survivor's guilt...  
**A:** I am glad you said that because people usually don't read behind the 'feel good' factor of my films. I understand why they look at it that way but I have explored grief as well. *Minmini* mainly talks about grief and suffering.



**Emotional appeal**  
Halitha Shameem and Khatija Rahman; (below) Esther Anil. THAMODHARAN B

**Q:** *Khatija, did you watch any other titles to understand what was required of you?*  
**A:** Yes. Halitha showed me *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* and *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*. She also made me explore the work of Rachel Portman, the first female composer to win an Oscar. I also watched Hans Zimmer's masterclass. However, we have also tried to break the mould; for instance, we used a specific instrument native to Turkey in a couple of songs, which was quite interesting.

**Q:** *Be it in music composition or people management, at which point do you turn to your father, AR Rahman, for guidance?*  
**A:** My father offered some advice in general – not necessarily film-centric – which I tried to implement in *Minmini*. When you have such a treasure of knowledge in your home, you obviously take in whatever you can from it.

**Q:** Halitha, you have completed 10 years as a filmmaker. What has changed the most about you?  
**A:** I used to be a bit insecure those days. I used to replay the scenes and anxiously wonder if they would hold the attention of the audience. I used to obsess over the elements that would make the scenes more pulsating. Now, for better or worse, I am just trusting myself and doing what I believe in.

**Minmini releases in theatres on August 9**

## What is British actor Daniel Caltagirone doing in Vikram's upcoming Tamil film Thangalaan?

**Gopinath Rajendran**  
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When British actor Daniel Caltagirone got on board *Thangalaan*, Pa Ranjith's film also starring Vikram, Malavika Mohanan and Parvathy Thiruvothu, it was supposedly for a three-month project. "Then it became a bigger vision for Ranjith and I just kept going along for the ride," says Daniel, who spent close to a year in India for its shoot.

"I know Ranjith was a bit discombobulated about getting a British actor because of the process of venturing into new territory to scout for good actors and whether they would put up with the conditions the shoot requires. I was the first person he approached and we had a long chat," says the actor. "He realised I was an adrenaline junkie and he had also seen my CV which showed the big Hollywood, award-winning films I have worked in. I realised it was not the kind of role white actors living in India and working in Bollywood films would do. I also learnt that my part was almost the parallel lead to Vikram."

Though this is Daniel's first Indian film, it is not his first time working with an Indian director. "I did Hollywood films with Shekhar Kapur (*The Four Feathers*) and Tarsem Singh (*The Fall*). I'm not an expert on Indian cinema, but every time I tuned in to an Indian film and there was a British actor, I would laugh out loud because of the bad acting or how the role would be so cliched that it was awful," says Daniel.

Homework started even before reaching the shores of India for Daniel. "I was told that my character was loosely based on someone who I cannot name right now but it's of an ex-army soldier who went to the goldfields to discover gold. Ranjith wanted me to keep that aspect of my role in the back of my head. There was a lot of research and I learnt a lot about colonialism and the effect it has to this day. I didn't want it to be again that cliched British officer. So I tried to make him rough around the edges. Fundamentally, he's not a bad person. He's a good man who wants to do well for his family; he and *Thangalaan* are different sides of the same coin. Recently, Vikram was telling me how



season of *Bigg Boss Tamil*." Kamal Haasan has hosted *Bigg Boss Tamil* ever since its first edition in 2017. In 2021, the reality show attracted most eyeballs on Disney+ Hotstar in Tamil Nadu, and gained the highest viewership for any show on the streaming platform. The actor, who was last seen in Shankar's *Indian 2*, also played Supreme Yaskin in Nag Ashwin's *Kalki 2898 AD*. He is currently shooting for Mani Ratnam's *Thug Life* and is also set to do the second part of *Kalki* and collaborate with stunt choreographer duo Anbariv.

# Going for gold

there are no good people in this film. We're all bad and that was really interesting," says the actor who chooses the words "controlled chaos" to define an Indian film production. "I was blown away by the respect they gave me and the way they made me feel at home. In the West, it's more about big actors; it's more like 'Oh, Brad Pitt is coming'. But here, they really believe in the actor's artistry. They were asking me about *The Pianist* and not about working with Angelina Jolie (*laughs*). In the rest of the world, they would ask me about the *F.R.I.E.N.D.S* cast or working with Jennifer Aniston or Leonardo DiCaprio. I think there's a lovely sensibility here."

The actor, who has worked with filmmakers like Danny Boyle and Roman Polanski, says the Indian film industry is at the cusp of its most exciting era. "Indian cinema is about

to become the most powerful film industry in the world. You've got amazing talent, amazing directors, great storylines and it's vivid, colourful and exciting," says Daniel, who feels that Indian films miss an international feel. "The moment India becomes international, Hollywood will be in trouble because we've lost our cinema there. We rely on streaming mainly while you have



**Indian cinema is about to become the most powerful film industry in the world. There is amazing talent, great storylines. It's vivid, colourful and exciting.**

DANIEL CALTAGIRONE



**New territory**  
Daniel Caltagirone; (below) with director Pa Ranjith on the sets of *Thangalaan*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



cinema and as long as that's retained, it can turn into a powerful industry no one can match."

Circling back to *Thangalaan*, which is slated to hit screens next week, Daniel says he was lucky to have amazing co-stars like Vikram, Pasupathy, Parvathy and Malavika. "Apart from having a great working relationship, they were also able to guide me and help me because of the different methodologies," says Daniel who, to know more about Ranjith, had watched *Madras* and *Sarpatta Paramparai*. "I was blown away by the social commentary of *Madras* and for a fleeting moment, I was reminded of Spike Lee's works. While watching *Sarpatta*, I again got reminded of Lee as well as Quentin Tarantino. When I finally spoke to Ranjith about western filmmakers, the first name he said was Spike Lee. As an artiste, I found that fascinating."



### Sardar yet again

Ashika Ranganath has joined the cast of *Sardar 2*. The film, directed by PS Mithran, stars Karthi in the lead role. *Sardar 2* is a sequel to the hit 2022 Tamil film and also stars Malavika Mohanan and SJ Suryah. The film went on floors in mid-July. Ashika is also part of *Vishwambhara*, starring Chiranjeevi and Siddharth's romantic drama *Miss You*. Ashika, who rose up the ranks in Kannada cinema, first ventured out of Sandalwood with the film *Pattathu Arasan* (2022), the Tamil film starring Atharvaa. She was also part of the Nagarjuna film, *Naa Saami Ranga* (2023). In Kannada, she was last seen in *O2*, a medical thriller.



FARNAZ