

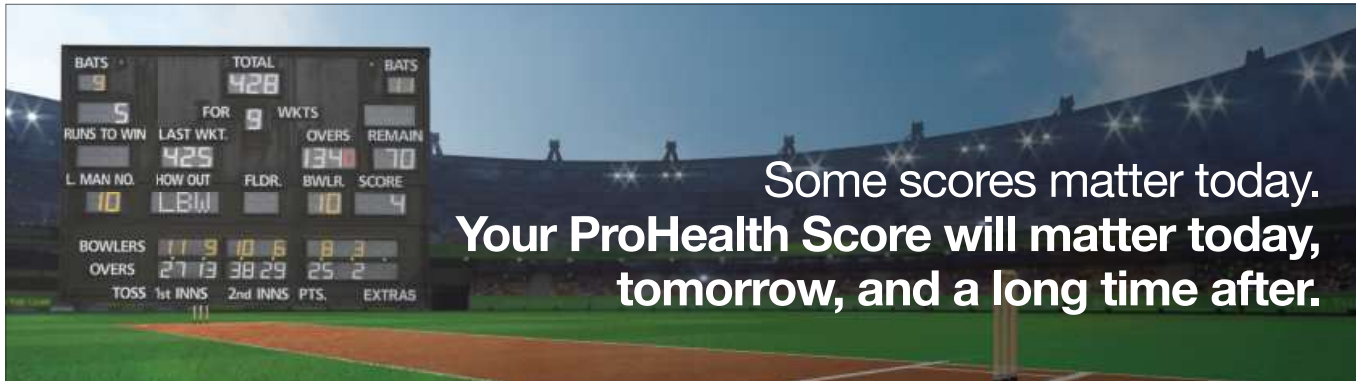
metroPLUS

THE HINDU

Chennai headbangs to a new sound as the metal music scene in the city evolves **P2**

VIJAY'S *GHILLI* RE-RELEASE IS A CELEBRATION **P4**





Some scores matter today. Your ProHealth Score will matter today, tomorrow, and a long time after.

Presenting

ProHealth

SCORE

A score that really counts

Get your ProHealth Score today. It will be your starting point to a brighter, healthier, and happier tomorrow.



Scan the QR Code for your **FREE ProHealth Score**

Ciclo Cafe

While Ciclo cafe is a name Chennaites are already familiar with, Scoops by Ciclo is new. Sanjana Ramesh, the brand's production head now doubles up as an ice cream maker.

There are 12 flavours that can be enjoyed in the Kotturpuram outlet. "I had almost 55 flavours to begin with and after multiple trials, reached here. To our surprise, the cookie dough ice cream, which was the last flavour we added, has become our best seller," shares Sanjana. It is creamy with chunks of chocolate and buttery dough.

"We have masala chai, coffee, and tiramisu flavours, all of which are Ciclo favourites. The tiramisu is one of our most popular desserts here so it was a no-brainer to include it," she adds. The masala chai ice cream is bold and has a punch, and comes doused in crumbly Parle G biscuits.

"We make our ice creams in small batches to keep things fresh. The ingredients we use to make the ice cream are of very good quality. The churner is from an Italian company



called Carpigiani which produces very small ice crystals that lends a smooth and creamy feel in the mouth," shares Sanjana. Watch out for their new launch: a decadent mango sorbet.

Ciclo Cafe is at 47, Gandhi Mandapam Road, Chitra Nagar, Kotturpuram. A scoop of ice cream costs ₹175



Here's the scoop

From bun-butter-jam ice cream to lemon and cheese popsicles, Chennai's frozen dessert makers are at their most creative in summer

Ananyaa Desikan
ananyaa.d@thehindu.co.in



Shraddha Lulla Gourmet Desserts

Shraddha Lulla developed her product and business during the pandemic. But from the first ice cream cake she made for her mother-in-law's birthday back in 2019 to now, she has not had the chance to taste her creations. As her staff layer the mango ice cream cakes in 500ml tubs, Shraddha inspects her personal churner where a sugar-free dessert is in the making. "As a diabetic, I gave up sugar eight years back. I like desserts though. So for me and others like me, I am working on this sugar-free range," she shares.

Although she started the business with her double chocolate, her biggest hits have been lotus biscoff and ecstasy ice



cream cake made with chocolate, caramel and nuts. "Ice cream cakes were popular dine-in desserts but selling them in boxes was unheard of. This novelty helped us along with the quality of ingredients we use and the consistency of our product," says Shraddha. We try her saffron and khawa ice cream, which is a tribute to her recent trips to Kashmir. It is subtly sweet with bold notes of refreshing khawa.

She currently makes ice cream cakes in 11 flavours. Her frozen desserts can currently be ordered online or from the cart stationed at Phoenix MarketCity where scoops of ice cream are served on buttery brown cones. "Cones are a fun way to enjoy the ice cream but they have to be eaten at once. The ice creams can be ordered on Swiggy or Zomato or as a takeaway in these baubles. They are reminiscent of the ball-shaped ice cream containers we used to have back in the day," she says.

For Shraddha, transportation of her ice cream has been a key problem. A Fine Arts graduate, Shraddha has used her design thinking abilities to perfect temperature-controlled boxes that can keep the ice cream cake cold for up to 12 hours.

With efficient packing methods, Shraddha hopes her desserts can soon be enjoyed throughout the country. "The next ice cream cart will be at Express Avenue. I can't wait to place these carts in every city," she says.

Shraddha Lulla's ice cream cart is at Phoenix MarketCity. Orders are taken on 9884087089. The 500ml tubs cost ₹715 each.



The Nakku Popsicles

At The Nakku Popsicles in Anna Nagar, sale begins only at 7pm and goes on beyond 1am. Tapping into nostalgia, this bright and colourful ice cream cart has become a popular spot. It is run by Gorikapudi Surya, who worked in the port as a crane operator, then discovered his passion for making frozen desserts last year.

"When you think of ice creams, it is always a scoop over a cone or in a cup. If not this, you have popsicles that are water-based. I saw this gap in the market as a great opportunity to become an entrepreneur. I wanted it to be a cart rather than a dine-in so found this design online," shares Surya.

We try their popular favourites, lemon cheese and triple choco. They are vibrant even without the use of colourants. While the lemon-flavoured stick is bright, creamy and subtly sour, the triple chocolate is smooth made with Belgian dark chocolate. These desserts are stored at -22 degrees Celsius and are torched before they are served. "The torching is not a gimmick although that is something our customers enjoy filming. When it is too cold, you can't taste anything. We bring the temperature down a bit so that you get a burst of flavour in the first lick itself," Surya says.

Toppings are sold separately and the crevices on the surface of the treat improve the cling factor.

The Nakku Popsicles is at 10th Main Road, Anna Nagar. They are priced between ₹70 and ₹150

Strictly Desserts

Not too far away, Snehithi Jambulingam who is the chef and owner of Strictly Desserts waits for her mango trees to be ready for harvest. "We started the business because of these two trees. One is of the Banganapalle variant and the other is senthura," Snehithi shares.

She believes that nostalgia sells. "Our mango sticky rice pudding ice cream with coconut is based on my travels to Thailand. The kamarkattu ice cream is a tribute to my mother who made sure



we enjoyed the things she loved to eat as a child. She was thrilled when I decided to add it to the menu," she shares.

Sneha picks popular local flavours to appeal to a wide range of customers of all ages. Her bun butter jam ice cream made with caramelised brioche buns, browned butter and mixed fruit jam has remained the reigning champion.

Strictly Desserts is at D16, 8th Street, 2nd Avenue Extension, Annanagar East. Between ₹130 and ₹150 for a single serve.



To the beat of the parai

An all-girls parai group from a school in Besant Nagar drums up a beat that is impossible to resist

Sanjana Ganesh
sanjana.g@thehindu.co.in

Sanjana Ganesh
sanjana.g@thehindu.co.in

Sanjana Ganesh
sanjana.g@thehindu.co.in

Moving to the rhythm Parai attam performers from Avvai Home TVR Girls School. S SHIVA RAJ

The school has meticulously groomed a group of 20 young women to form the only regularly performing all-girls parai attam group in Chennai. For two days a week between 3pm and 5pm, the foray of this school resembles a concert venue.

N Deepan, their parai aatam teacher, says that three such teams of 'Avvai Home Girls' have graduated from the school. The current crew is relatively new and had most recently played at the Urur Olcott Kuppam Vizha in January this year. "Don't buy their shy demeanour. They are all *vaiaadis* (chatterboxes)," he says.

Deepan, who runs the popular Nanbargal Gramiya Kalai Kuzhu out of Korukkupet says that he has seen this group blossom over time. The instrument, for the longest time, was only played by men. More recently, mixed groups of men and women play together.

However, it is rare to see a team entirely of girls.

"Adding a cultural programme to their education has increased their confidence significantly. You should see the number of cups they have won over the years," he says.

Sangeetha Shivakumar, part of the core team organising the Urur Olcott Kuppam Vizha, says that the parai attam programme began at Avvai Home in 2016 as part of the Vizha's cultural outreach. An extensive selection process ensued when an announcement regarding parai training was made.

She adds that they performed at the festival in 2017. "It was envisioned as a programme for that year alone but on the day of the festival one of the girls looked terribly sad and asked me 'Avlo dhana?' ('Is this it?'). That is when we decided to keep the programme going," she says.

Charulatha, a student of Class XII has been playing the parai

since Class VII. "I've learnt over time, so much so that I have blisters from playing the instrument. I wear them with pride," she says.

Students from the group have gone on to play at a number of events organised by the Department of Arts and Culture of the Tamil Nadu Government. R Monika, a student of Class VIII says that her favourite performances has been at the Urur Kuppam Vizha, where there were hundreds of onlookers, disco lights and a gentle sea breeze.

Charulatha says that she is leaving school soon and the opportunities to play the parai will significantly diminish. Does this mean she will have to give up playing the instrument? "I have already booked a spot with Deepan *anna's* group. We create a ruckus during meal time here despite the scolding. The beat is a part of us. It isn't going anywhere," she says.



A little metal in Madras

In popular pubs across Chennai, an underground metal scene swaddled in black makes a comeback

Poulomi Deb

Most of the 100 people gathered around The Spotted Deer pub in The Palomar hotel in ECR early in April were in black T-shirts, while others wore distinctive white shirts and lungis. Shreyaa Lakshmi Narayanan, one among the few managing the crowd, had never heard a metal song before this sold-out gig. But she has been bobbing her head to heavy music ever since. The genre is making noise again in Chennai. And there is no better proof than the recent Metal Munnetra Kazhagam, a cover gig by musicians across the city in tribute to globally legendary bands Slipknot and Rage Against the Machine. “It wasn’t just a concert... it felt like a turning point, a hope for even greater collaboration

and creativity in the community,” said Aditya Rao, frontman of Mangas and the Mango Men, a metal band born in 2022. Formed with a sly spin on Tamil Nadu’s distinctive political party suffix, the gig featured members of Chennai’s loudest homegrown bands, like Mangas, Moral Putrefaction, Frankendriver and Godia, teaming up with each other to roar and get roared at. “We

wanted to change attitudes towards metal, and mix bands to give people new to Chennai a chance,” smiled Manu Krishnan, one of the organisers. This year has been more than a revival for metal in Chennai. It has also been a reinvention: in embracing Tamil culture as a brand, who gets to play on stage,

accessibility, and in the very heart of what it means to love the heaviest sounds of Chennai. Armaan, Manu and Srikanth Natarajan founded Metal Chennai in 2018 to change the idea of “metal being an expensive hobby,” in Manu’s words. Metalheads in Chennai have for generations been fighting tooth and nail to keep the volatile pulse of the scene alive: finding scream-friendly venues and trying to build a community that is safe and enticing for everyone, while still tough and edgy enough for the brand.

The Palomar hotel began operations just last month, and talks are ongoing for future events. The craze for metal in fact dates back to at least the Sixties, according to Eddie Prithviraj, who joined in the early Nineties. He has been organising live music gigs across genres like jazz and pop in Chennai for 30 years, but back then, he had just founded a metal band called Bone Saw, and another called Blood Covenant in 2004. Issues with venues date back to even his time, when he had to close one himself. “It’s never been in the mainstream. But it was there. Guys recorded extreme death metal on cassettes in 1996. It was something to be cherished. It isn’t anymore.”

Between 2015 and 2018, Chennai’s metal scene had once again “died,” as recalled by Armaan, Mickey and Isaiah Anderson, vocalist of progressive metalcore band Godia. Mickey has convinced some of his bands to change their names and album art styles to make them fiercer because “branding matters in a commercial music

space”. In Chennai and India at large, he argues, bands usually start in universities and they do not think about branding then.

On varied issues Chennai has seen a rise in more explicitly defined subjects in metal lyrics, with subjects spanning from genocide, the “rot” in society and rights for the queer community for Moral Putrefaction to mental health and depression for Godia. This, Shivamoorthy of Moral Putrefaction says, also goes against the tide of “aggression”, sometimes tinged with right-wing politics, in metal.

As a culmination of all the trends in this genre in Chennai, the attendance at Metal Munnetra Kazhagam is what Beeto Jerrin from Moral Putrefaction describes as a “decent” crowd by the standards of 2023.

Armaan, points out that so far in India, there have been barriers of privilege in language, caste, gender and capital that restrict possibilities for both bands and audiences. One way this plays out in Chennai is women being sidelined in the metal scene. This is something that Armaan, as an organiser, admits to still navigating.

The gig also comes at the heels of a brand new college student-run platform MoshLit Events, the youngest group to organise metal and hard rock events, securing venues like 10 Downing Street and Steams n Whistles bar in GRT Grand. The technicality of sound is an issue here, according to Sivaramakrishnan, bassist for Frankendriver, but his bandmate Teeto Jerrin feels the energy at their gigs is sky high.

Through it all, metalheads keep grooving. Inside the toughness, Manu says, “we’re all teddy bears.” As Aditya puts it, “supporting each other will carry us forward.”



The perfect blend



Meet Coimbatore’s Coffee Club, whose love for coffee and conversation has held them together since 1997

Over a davana Members of the Coffee Club during a morning meet-up. S SIVA SARAVANAN

Akila Kannadasan
akila.k@thehindu.co.in

It is 7.30am and Coimbatore’s Annappoorna branch near the District Court is filled with early morning walkers and joggers who have come for breakfast. The ambience is warm and relaxed, as many customers know each other, exchange smiles, and a friendly word. One table though, is particularly lively. They have just finished walking at Race Course, and have stopped for coffee: a morning ritual that has remained unchanged since 1997. The day has just begun for members of Coimbatore’s Coffee Club, all aged over 65. For them, these 20 minutes are sacrosanct. “We meet, go for a walk, gather here for coffee, and disperse,” shares K Loganathan, one of the oldest members. Many of them who once lead active lives, have transitioned into retirement. Loganathan, who has brought a packet of sundal, distributes them among the waiters, many of whom he has known for years. “This is something I do every day,” he says. The first member of the Coffee Club, which has 20 members, was V Balasundaram, who is now no more. “I got acquainted with him during one of my morning walks, and gradually, our group grew bigger,” says D Anguraj. The members



have seen each other’s children grow, finish school, college, get married, and eventually, become grandfathers themselves. Every year, they organise a trip around Pongal, travelling to places across India, and on occasions, abroad as well. Over the years, they have explored the region’s food scene extensively, and have a list of places they head to for treats such as mutton curry and naatu kozhi fry. “Our Sundays are for a non-vegetarian breakfast,” says Loganathan. SV Indra Kumar and VS Dhanraj add that they also frequent places such as Udumalpet and Karanampettai to eat at their regular haunts. But it is not just love for food and coffee that holds the club together. “It is the fact that we’ve known each other for years, and can talk just about anything when we are together,” says Loganathan. “At this age, such friendships are rare.” R Dhandabani adds, “That we have each other’s company to look forward to every morning is something that drives us.” Members of the Coffee Club have a WhatsApp group they are part of, but they rely on good old, direct communication when it comes to keeping in touch. Perhaps that is why they continue to be a unit. “We have no expectations from one another,” Indra Kumar says. The Coffee Club does not have a registration fee or rules of any sort. There is one rule though: they must have coffee together every morning.



Meaty delights (Clockwise from left) Steaks on the menu; a view of the steakhouse; and bone marrow toast. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Time for a steak-out

Chennai’s newest steakhouse, Meating Room, has an array of imported meats as well as a delectable vegetarian menu

S Poorvaja
poorvaja.sundar@thehindu.co.in

A cheery playlist of all the songs popular on Instagram reels plays at Meating Room on TTK Road as the first few diners trickle in. The space is warm and cosy, complete with brick walls and cheeky messages scrawled across – steak and meat puns obviously. This intimate setting is completely by design, says Arunima Karmakar, a partner at Chennai’s newest steakhouse. “We are open only in the evenings, from 6.30pm and can seat around 24 diners at a time. We want them to walk in, and have an intimate, comfortable dining experience where the focus is on the food,” she says. Our conversation is punctuated by sounds from the pre-service flurry of kitchen activity, most of which is visible thanks to glass separating the seating area from the kitchen. There is a traditional menu, but



we would much rather take our pick from the chalkboard hung on the wall, detailing the cuts and the quantity available. Their highlights are the imported meats, listed under premium cuts. “The steaks are sold per gram, and the availability of both the premium and grade A domestic cuts change based on availability every day,” says Arunima,

picking the Wagyu tenderloin, as a favourite. The meat is slow-cooked sous vide, and then pan seared before being served, she adds. We begin by diving into their well-conceived appetisers and salad menu. The long homemade fries are crisp and warm, but the flaky goat cheese and onion jam phyllo makes for a more interesting start to the meal. Chef Babu Perumal, who helms the kitchen at



Meating Room, waxes eloquent on their efforts to ensure that the vegetarian diners are not neglected, and the proof is in their salads. The grilled pears, whipped goat cheese and almond salad is ideal for the summer – sweet, savoury and full of flavour in every bite. The standout dish here however, is the char grilled napa cabbage in a coconut curry sauce and chilli oil. The long cabbage leaves have just the right amount of smokiness, and the flavoursome sauce also makes for a great accompaniment to your meat main course. For the crown jewel of the meal, we try a grade A cut fillet mignon, cooked medium rare and drenched in a creamy mushroom sauce. The meat is soft, tender, and cooked to perfection – definitely the best pick if you are a diner who wants a smaller yet satisfying meal. The green peppercorn jus and the surf and turf sauce (creamy and dotted with pieces of shrimp) that we also sample on the side, are better picks from their sauce options. For diners in larger groups, the restaurant recommends trying the bigger cuts – a T bone steak or the sirloin. Apart from the beef, there are chicken, pork and lamb options to choose from, as well as grilled sea bass, jumbo prawns, and Norwegian salmon. Given the number of imported meats on offer, quality is a priority for the restaurant and their prices are reflective of the same, the team says. True to its name, the restaurant has its priorities right with the meat it puts on the table, but it is refreshing to see the vegetarian side of things put up a strong fight, effortlessly making its presence felt in a steakhouse. Meating Room is at YASS Tower TTK Road, Alwarpet, and is open from 6.30pm to 10.30pm. A meal for two costs ₹2,200. For details, contact 8220159933.

THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13582

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
					8	
9						
					10	
11	12	13		14		
15				16		
			18	19		
		20				
21					22	23
		24				
25						
		26				

© GUARDIAN NEWS AND MEDIA LTD., 2016

Across

- 1 Unwavering (9)
- 8 Not bad (4)
- 9 Beekeepers (9)
- 10 Norse god of war, husband of Frigg (4)
- 13 Verdant (5)
- 15 Worthless (2,4)
- 16 Compelled (6)
- 17 Spectres (6)
- 19 Distant (6)
- 20 Bobbin (5)
- 21 Greek hero in the Trojan war (4)
- 24 Going for a song (4,5)
- 25 Unit of length (4)
- 26 Exclusion from a group (9)

Down

- 2 Misprint (4)
- 3 Pursuer of Moby Dick (4)
- 4 Thwarted (6)
- 5 Start on a journey (3,3)
- 6 Ratlike Australian marsupial

- obtain cod (anag) (9)
- 7 Soldier — in red gear (anag) (9)
- 11 Mysterious (9)
- 12 Lack of knowledge (9)
- 13 Yobs (5)
- 14 Uncultured person (5)
- 18 Ill-gotten gains (6)
- 19 Dirty dog (informal) (6)
- 22 Smart (4)
- 23 Roman god of war, father of Romulus and Remus (4)

Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated May 2, 2024.

Solution No. 13581

H	O	B	S	O	N	S	C	H	O	I	C	E
I	U	N	Q	A	N	S						
T	O	R	T	O	U	R	N	E	D	O	S	
C	Y	H	I	G	E	A						
H	O	S	T	E	L	R	Y	S	T	A	Y	
T	S	E	N	E								
M	E	E	K	L	Y	H	O	R	R	I	D	
I	D	E	Y	C	N	M						
N	U	M	B	H	A	S	S	L	I	N	G	
I	U	T	S	E	N							
C	O	N	D	I	T	I	O	N	A	M	I	
A	D	E	N	S	T	E						
B	E	S	I	D	E	O	N	E	S	E	L	F

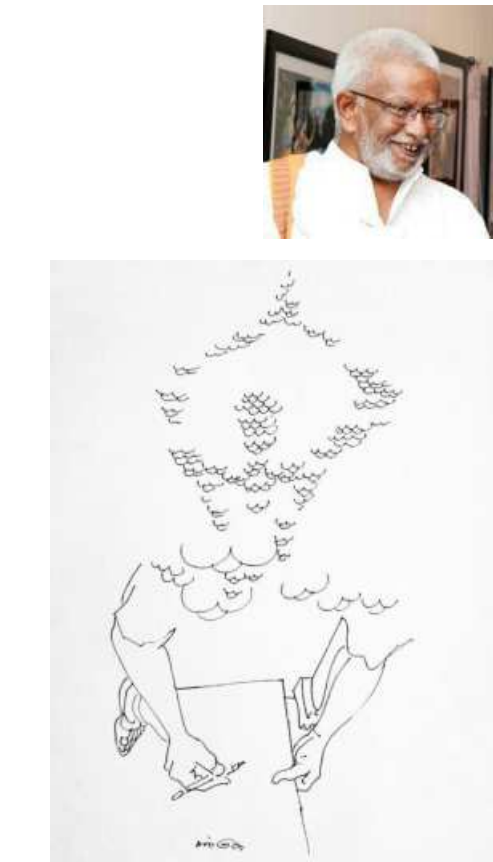
To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.



Frozen memories

This weekend, choose your favourite photograph and talk about the memory behind it. You can also tell a story, share a poem or simply share the inspiration that stems from that photograph. Visual Stories: a Photograph + Spoken-word Open Mic, provides a platform to share a memory close to the heart, or portraits of everyday life. It is not just about the images, it is about the journey. @Backyard, Adyar. April 27, 6.30pm to 7.30pm. Tickets are priced at ₹200. For details, call 7358458117.





Dialogue in colour (Clockwise from left) An untitled artwork by K Nataraj; a sculpture by Maria Anthony Raj; sketch by Chandrasekaran Gurusamy; and the artist. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Vignettes of life
Prasanna Ramaswamy and her team stage the fourth edition of theatre performances based on Sahitya Akademi-winner Imayam's short stories in Tamil. Adapted and directed by her, the play will be for 80 minutes without an interval. New stories will be performed in this edition, and one from the older edition will also be staged.
@Medai, Alwarpet. April 27, 7pm onwards. Tickets are available on bookmyshow. For details, call 9094038623.

Canvas of resistance

A display of Dalit art and aesthetics by 30 artists from the country takes over Lalit Kala Akademi

Gowri S
gowri.s@thehindu.co.in

What is the month of April synonymous with apart from the scorching summer? Resistance. For the last three years, Pa Ranjith's Neelam Cultural Centre has honoured the birth month of BR Ambedkar with unbridled celebration. The month-long

Vaanam Art Festival includes talks, panel discussions, art exhibits, performances and film screenings that champion the cause of Dalit resistance and social justice. This year, the walls of Lalit Kala Akademi showcase the works of 30 artists in an exhibition

titled Curve, as we approach the end of the festival.

"We as artists have been continuously working on an art camp with a focus on Dalit atrocities, and environmental issues that we have been hearing of late. For the last three years, Neelam joined hands with us to bring Dalit art and aesthetics to the mainstream," says artist Nataraj K, curator of the show.

"Our politics is centered around marginalised communities and the adversities they face. The artists whose works will be on display, though not necessarily from the margins, share the same politics. That was the only requirement when the works were curated," adds Nataraj.

Multiple works of all 30 artists will take over the gallery – both senior and



upcoming artists from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry and Maharashtra are showcasing their work through different mediums including paintings, sculptures, and even podcasts.

"This year, we are also felicitating senior artist Chandrasekaran Gurusamy with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Over 50 drawings and sketches of his from the 1980s and 1990s are a highlight of the display," adds Nataraj. A veteran sculptor who hails from Ambasamudram, Tirunelveli, he has constructed an open-air art museum on the banks of river Thamirabarani. He has researched, catalogued and erected over 600 sculptures of scholars who have dedicated their life and work to humanity, and Tamil arts and culture.

Each artist displays two to three works each, and the underlying thread is their politics and ideologies. And so, artworks that speak about the aesthetics of sustainable living and of living in harmony with Nature will be on display, along with those that speak about compassion in Buddhism and the temperance it offers.

"We think it is our responsibility to educate upcoming talent about what we intend to convey, and so age was never a criterion for this curation," says Nataraj. Works of senior artists like Maria Anthony Raj from Chola Mandal Artists' Village and Purushothaman T will be on display, apart from known names like B Venkatesan, Anthoni Guruz D, Puviyarasu Kannadasan, and V Selvakumar among others.

Curve will be on display at Lalit Kala Akademi, Grems Road, Egmore until April 30.



Beat the heat with India's favorite summer drink!

As the scorching summer sun bears down, Amul Masti Buttermilk stands tall as India's ultimate thirst-quenching champion.

What makes Amul Masti Buttermilk the ideal summer companion?

A delightfully zingy blend of spices, Masti is far more than just a delicious beverage. While buttermilk has been a trusted cooler since time immemorial, Amul has made it accessible and affordable for everyone to beat the heat with this Desi Refresher.

With a shelf life of nine months, it's ready to drink straight from the pack - no need for refrigeration or preparation. Priced at just Rs 15 for a 200ml pack, it is the widest

distributed buttermilk brand in the country (source: Nielsen Retail Audit Q4 2023) and is available in shops and Amul parlors near you.

If you're on road braving the sun, then there can't be a better drink than Amul Masti to keep yourself hydrated, even

more so as it packs only 57 calories in a 200ml serving. Can there be a tastier and functionally fitting beverage? Difficult. Buttermilk is also a perfect companion with meals so why do the prep work when you can have it easy with an Amul Masti Buttermilk family pack of 1litre! Masti ensures you're never far from a refreshing pick-me-up.

As temperature soars, keep it close at hand - at home, in the car or wherever summer takes you as it is the quintessential Indian refreshment for surviving and thriving through the hottest months.

"CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE"

Game on This first of its kind arcade gaming festival will take place on May 19 at the IIT Madras Research park. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT.



Pixels and power ups

Relive arcade nostalgia at the Versus Festival, a day-long extravaganza with esports tournaments, art, anime, and workshops

Sangita Rajan
sangitarajan.pb@thehindu.co.in

For those of us who grew up in the late 1990s and early Noughties, going to an arcade gaming parlour to play racing and fighting games was a fun pastime.

Gaming parlours of late have become more sophisticated with the advent of technology. The parlours often lack the charm of the old parlours, as do the games.

This is where the Versus Festival comes into play. A day-long celebration of gaming, art, and anime, the festival aims at expanding the fighting game tournament culture in India. Fighting games are a genre of video games where players directly control characters who engage in hand-to-hand combat against one another.

Adhithya Mahesh, senior member IndianFGC, and the founder of Versus Festival says, "The fighting games community is pretty old. We've been playing since 2007-08. But in the last five years, we started noticing that there are a lot of sub communities popping up."

The festival aims at providing a

platform to sub-communities that have a similar DNA such as cosplay and anime enthusiasts. Founded and presented by esports banner Daijoubu, the Versus Festival is being organised by artist community Sunshine House, indie music community Circle of Love, The Chennai Scene, Indian FGC (fighting game community) and SSB India (Super Smash Bros community).

"We (gaming communities) conduct weekly meets and plays, and it was during these meetings

The festival will feature a free arcade gaming zone, panel discussions, quizzes, food, art, and shopping stalls

that we discovered that the Tamil Nadu Government is actively trying to back these kinds of efforts. One of our biggest backers is the ESAT federation of Tamil Nadu," he says. The Electronic Sports Authority of Tamil Nadu is an apex body of esports that recognises gaming seriously, ever since the Asian Games added this as a category.

"Many micro communities like the cosplaying, artists and the

quizzing communities are coming together. For example, there is going to be a group of people who play this obscure Japanese card game," he says, adding that The Board Room, one of Chennai's earliest boarding game cafés, will be participating as well.

"When you buy a ticket for the Versus Festival, you will be able to compete in two tournaments. One is for Street Fighter 6 and the other is for Smash," he says.

This edition of the festival will see competitors from six different states and a few international participants from West Asia and Bangladesh as well. The tournament winners will receive cash prizes up to ₹1 lakh.

Apart from this, the festival also features a free arcade gaming zone, panel discussions, quizzes, food, art, and shopping stalls. Also on the agenda are workshops for prop-making by Adithya Ashok, an anime-themed art workshop by Derek D'Souza, and even a sushi making class.

The Versus Festival will be held at the IIT Madras Research Park, Chennai on May 19 from 10am to 9pm. Tickets are on skillboxes.com at ₹763. Find them on Instagram @theversusfestival



EPIONE
Center for Pain Relief & Beyond
Pain, Neurology & Regenerative Clinics

SAY GOODBYE TO PAIN SAY HELLO TO PRP FOR RELIEF



Experience a surgery-free transformation with PRP therapy -precision injections harness your body's healing power, offering an innovative and accessible approach to wellness



- WORLD CLASS EQUIPMENT
- 20-30 MIN PROCEDURE
- 25K SMILES - PAINFREE
- SHORT RECOVERY TIME
- NO SURGERY

In the Indian Book of Records for treating 20,000+ patients with chronic pain using PRP therapy, all without surgery



DR. SUDHEER DARA
MBBS, MD, FIAPM
Founder & Director,
Chief of Pain Medicine
Founder of Plasma Therapy



DR. CHETANA CHETAN
MBBS, MD, FIPM
Clinical Head of Epione,
Chief Consultant Pain Physician
& Interventionist

Dr. Sudheer Dara is available for consultation on second Thursday of every month.



DR. SUDHEER DARA
MBBS, MD, FIAPM
Founder & Director,
Chief of Pain Medicine
Founder of Plasma Therapy



DR. CHETANA CHETAN
MBBS, MD, FIPM
Clinical Head of Epione,
Chief Consultant Pain Physician
& Interventionist

76313 76313 / 99781 71819

Hyderabad : 87587 58751 | Bengaluru : 74167 12626



Chennai
28 Old No.126, Marshalls Road, Rukmani Lakshmiipathi Salai,
Egmore, Chennai - 600 008. Tamil Nadu.



pain_fix



www.epionepainandspine.com/chennai/



Let's Start!

All smiles Vijay and Trisha in a still from *Ghilli*; (below) director Dharani. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND JOHAN SATHYADAS

Why a 20-year-old film starring Vijay is being celebrated by Tamil cinema fans today

Ghilli, once more

Srinivasa Ramanujam
srinivasa.r@thehindu.co.in

One of Chennai's important landmarks is the Gemini flyover. Very close to this landmark is the Little Flower School for the Blind and the Deaf – which was the venue in 2004 for the audio cassette release of Tamil film *Ghilli* starring Vijay, Trisha and Prakash Raj.

It was here that the tunes of 'Appadi Podu' and 'Arjunar Villu' played for the first time, and subsequently, echoed in cinema halls when the film released to a



rapturous reception in April 2004. Cut to April 2024, these tunes are still playing as the film's re-release has crowds thronging theatres, despite the IPL buzz. Why is a 20-year-old Tamil film still being celebrated? Director Dharani has the answers.

Question: We last met 20 years ago and spoke about the same film, and here, we are, speaking about it yet again...
Dharani: When I heard about the re-release, I imagined that it would be a one-day celebration, like a Vidyasagar concert or an AR Rahman concert. I never imagined

that it would become such a celebration. People in the theatres are literally completing the dialogues. The film and its content has remained alive till now, and I'm grateful to the media and fans for celebrating it that way.

Q: Why do you think *Ghilli*, which has been played multiple times on television, is still being celebrated?
Dharani: I think it is because of the emotion behind the lead actor, who played a 'good boy', and for that, I am indebted to writer Gunasekar who helmed the Telugu original, *Okkadu*, which we remade as *Ghilli*. It has a naughty protagonist, who



S Gopinath, cinematographer

I'm thrilled about the re-release hype, and I still fondly recall shooting at the massive seven-acre set, which was conceived by art director Maniraj, where all the lighthouse and beach sequences were shot. I was injured during its shooting and had to take a small break while recuperating; so, while I shot the entire film, I requested KV Anand (the late cinematographer) to step in to shoot the 'Appadi Podu' song sequence alone.



AM Rathnam, producer

Ghilli was – and is still – a success because it treats its protagonist not as a hero but as a normal boy. We are very happy that its re-release is doing well in cinema halls and that audiences are lapping it up. There is a general craze for part-2 films now; *Baahubali 2* and *Gaddar 2* were hits. We are planning a *7G Rainbow Colony 2* currently and similarly, I will try taking steps to create *Ghilli 2*.

quarrels with his sister and has a strict father. All these aspects are very relatable to family audiences, then and now. Plus, all the actors in the film – Vijay, Trisha and Prakash Raj – are still very relevant today.

Q: Take us back to 2004, and tell us how you managed to pitch the idea of *Ghilli* to Vijay and producer AM Rathnam...
Dharani: I had finished *Dhool*, starring Vikram, and my assistants and I just wanted to go watch a film. Telugu film *Okkadu* had released, and we watched it in Midland Cinemas. It was gripping from the first scene, but I became very anxious as the film proceeded. I had a story idea based on a kabaddi player, another storyline on a romance between a guy who hid his girl in a lighthouse, and another road film idea. *Okkadu* had all these

three elements in them. We immediately met producer AM Rathnam, requested him to get its remake rights and make it in Tamil with Vijay.

Q: *Ghilli* remains one of Vijay's most rewatchable films. How did his presence add to the storyline you had in mind?
Dharani: Vijay had till then not attempted so much humour in his films. In *Ghilli*, we were determined to get that sense of humour out. I would usually act and showcase what I wanted, and Vijay would immediately deliver that effortlessly in front of the camera; he was almost like an AI model replicating exactly what we had in mind. His comedy timing was excellent, and all the family sequences involving him, Ashish Vidyarthi, Janaki Sabesh and Jennifer were a hoot.

Q: You have a long-standing equation with music composer Vidyasagar, whose tunes in *Ghilli* have audiences dancing in theatres even today...
Dharani: During every composing session, we have a *thagaraaru* (argument), but it was always an *anbaana thagaraaru* (friendly argument). He insisted on having melody tunes, and I used to tell him, in a friendly way, to give those tracks to directors like Radhamohan and Viji (*smiles*). For this film's template and speed, I wanted slightly fast-paced numbers, and he delivered in a big way.

Q: Finally, can we look forward to a *Ghilli 2* sometime?
Dharani: *Ghilli* getting a re-release now is the second part (*laughs*). I don't know if we would have got such a reception even if we made a *Ghilli 2!*

The chase is on

What director Hari offers in *Rathnam*, starring Vishal and Priya Bhavani Shankar



Gopinath Rajendran
gopinath.raj@thehindu.co.in

Director Hari is an interviewer's delight; he loves to share interesting anecdotes about his films – some of which are cult classics today – and gets excited when you point out a deft filmmaking touch past the Sumo car chases and fast cuts he has become synonymous with.

His upcoming *Rathnam* sees him collaborating for the third time with Vishal after *Thaamirabharani* (2007) and *Poojai* (2014). Excerpts from an interview:

Question: In our previous interview, you had said that you don't write scripts but narrate them for it to be written by your assistant directors. How does that work?
Answer: I don't write scripts, I narrate the story and it keeps getting recorded, which is then turned into written content by my ADs. I don't have paperwork for the screenplay at all; scene construction

Shot at fame Vishal and Priya Bhavani Shankar in *Rathnam*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

happens, which doubles as the screenplay, and from there, I jump to dialogue writing. At that point, I ask them to tell me what they have written while I come up with the lines for those scenes. Once that's done, then comes the paperwork, but even then, I don't write anything though it's been 17 films (*laughs*). Improvisation happens until the day before the shoot.

Q: ...And this unorthodox style, I heard, spills over during the shoot and post-production as well?
A: I don't use precise technical terms to describe a scene to my technicians; I just explain how I want it to be. If I'm going to use editing terms with an editor, he might get irritated after a point. When they're specialists in those streams, you leave it to them about

how it's done. Not only does this increase their confidence it also makes them feel comfortable to work with us again. Contrary to my discussion space, my shooting spots buzz with activity. There, I aim to do a minimum of two shifts a day.

Q: Your films have always concentrated on male protagonists but Rathnam seems to revolve around the female lead character.
A: You've guessed it right; Priya Bhavani Shankar's role in this film is of utmost importance. Apart from her character, Priya, as an artiste, also had a lot of challenges in this film. She pulled off a single-shot scene, 300 feet in film length, involving a lot of movement and filled with dialogue brilliantly. Positioning, especially in such long shots, is of much importance, and the actor should be talented enough to pull it off. The fact that Priya can do all of that and knows the language makes it perfect.

Q: It's been 17 years since you first collaborated with Vishal. How do you think the two of you have evolved?
A: I think I've been the same (*smiles*) and I'm glad that I'm getting work – which I believe I've been doing well. It's nice to see the growth of Vishal, both business-wise and how he has gained an audience even in the North. He is easy to work with, and likes to keep everyone happy.

Q: For a filmmaker known for fast cuts, having single-shot sequences, toning down action sequences are some examples of change we spotted in your last film *Yaanai*. Is that you evolving as a filmmaker?
A: My move comes from needing challenges while making a film; the *Yaanai* interval shot, for example, runs for around 350 feet. As far as the other changes are concerned, I see films made by my friends and that could probably influence my work as well. In *Rathnam*, I've pulled off a five-minute single shot, without any stitching, where there are vehicle tracking shots, an action sequence involving rope work, and a chase sequence involving blasts and vehicles toppling.

Rathnam is scheduled to release on April 26

