Televiews: 25 Years And Beyond



Inspired by a Betamax player and a vision for success, Sunil Ratnayake who stepped into the television production industry in the early 1980s is today a veteran in the multimedia entertainment sector, and Televiews his brainchild is celebrating its 25th year in the field.

Speaking of his humble beginnings and the 25-year journey Ratnayake, the Chairman of Televiews reveals that his interest in video only began as a hobby while working as a civil engineer at the Highways Department. It was during this time that a documentary he had created on the Badulla district called Badulu Siriya had caught the attention of the then Prime Minster Ranasinghe Premadasa and got him hired as a videographer, later leading to his first teledramas Ran Doratu and the more popular Bhagya.

Teleview was officially started in 1986 as a television programme production house with only 8 staff members primarily involved in teledrama production. “Today we are a multimedia production house having expanded to Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), international production and marketing, training academies, TV commercials, home entertainment, rural marketing and event management,” recounts Sunil Ratnayake.

Furthermore, he has produced the highest number of teledramas in Sri Lanka and Teleview is today the oldest surviving production house in the country. Apart from the production of Dandubasna Manaya which won the most number of awards in the Sri Lankan teledrama industry, Teleview is also the creator of Sri Lanka’s first ever 3D television commercial which also won gold, the longest running commercial running for ten years and Sri Lanka’s first ever science fiction teledrama Bhavathra, taking the local teledrama industry to the next level.

The company was further revived after 2004 when the founder was sent to Japan on a scholarship offered by Japan’s Ministry of International Trade and Industry. From Japan he brought into Teleview management concepts such as Lean Management and 5S, and soon received the Entrepreneur of the Year award, Business Excellence award and the Achievers award. “When I returned from Japan I transformed the company into a business model by incorporating the Japanese systems and became the only person in the entertainment industry to receive both creative and business awards,” explains Ratnayake. As a result, he is currently the president of a committee appointed by Minister Basil Rajapaksa to take the 5S concept into schools, factories, other institutions and households and is in the process of producing a teledrama to take the message through.

Projecting the future of Teleview and portraying the company’s journey beyond the 25th year, Sunil Ratnayake states that his next goal is proceeding to the international market and getting into joint productions with international studios and producers. “We should go beyond the country, we must retain the money that goes out; if Sri Lankan TV is to ever compete in the international arena, it has to seriously rethink its strategy,” he highlights pointing out that Sri Lanka is home to a host of traditional folktales and anecdotes such as the Jathaka katha that can be

brought into life on screen and in turn taken into the global arena. “We have the talent, and the resources we just need to use it and do something for our country,” he concludes.