

# The (new) Jungle Book movie isn't kind to its tiger

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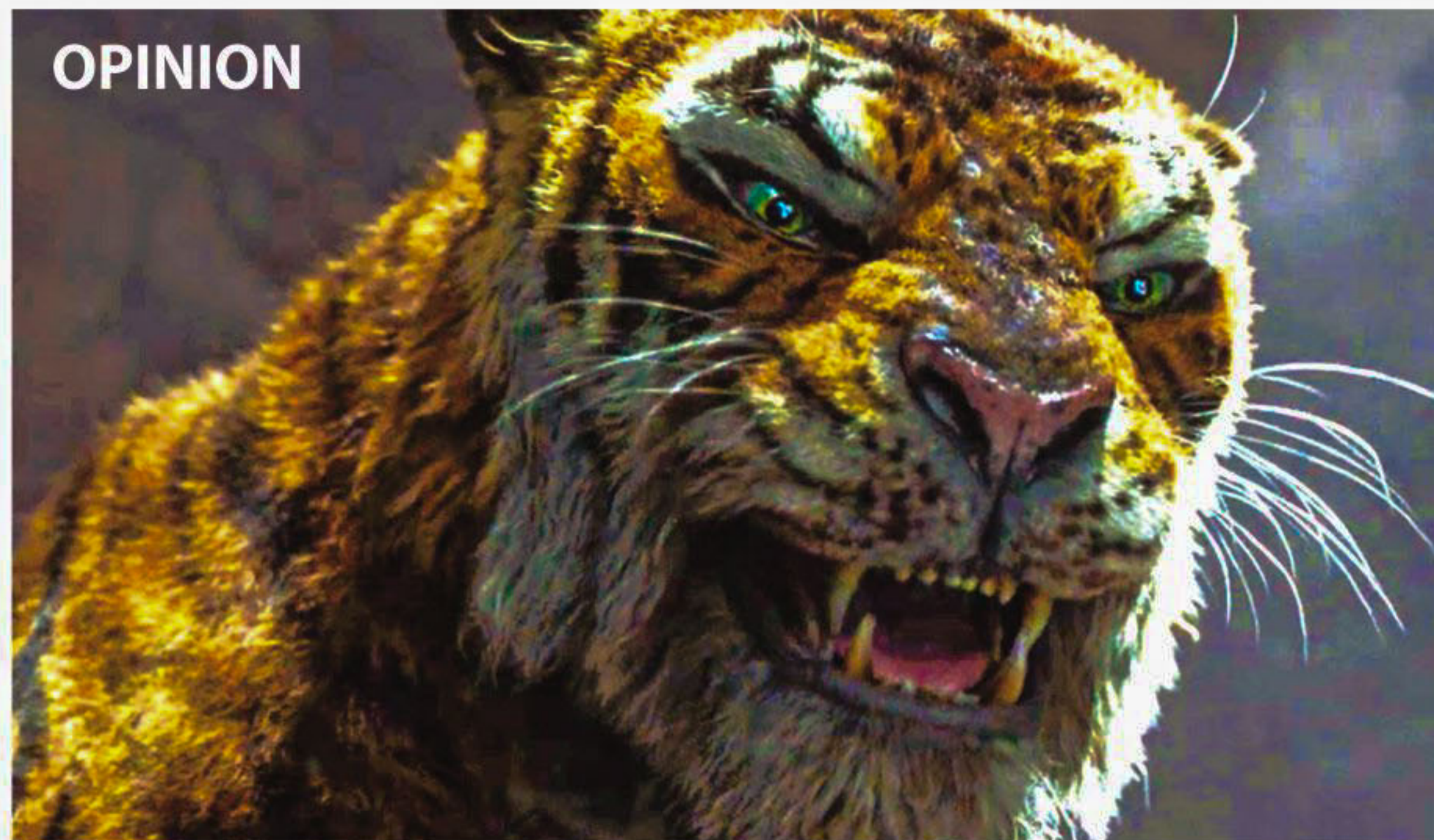
*Disclaimer: Contains spoilers.*

I was beaming when the word "Mowgli" floated up. Partly because I didn't know the remake had been in the works and so I didn't have to wait for the release; partly because it had ties with *The Jungle Book*. But I wasn't doing the same when it ended.

Don't proceed if you haven't watched the film already.

Bagheera and Baloo, like all other animals in the film, have human-like facial features. The CGI wasn't great — it is an embarrassing rendition of the animals' basic facial characteristics. It was as though Bagheera had been a man with the skin and features of a big cat, its humanness caged but visible. The internet is filled with how unhappy everyone is over the bad CGI, so I'm going to get to my point now.

As if the CGI brutality wasn't enough, the tiger, Shere Khan, is "killed" by the joint efforts of Mowgli and his wild pals. Although the movie was set in an India under the clutches of the colonial rule and tigers had been abundant in the forests back then, it doesn't really send out an important message as per the current scenario. The tiger population is dwindling with ignorance on the rise; they



## OPINION

now inhabit about 7 percent of their historical range as modern theories imply. Those who hold power are told to do anything they can to take steps for their conservation. And at a time like this, the remake decides to convey a wrong message—Shere Khan must be killed because he is inviting disharmony in the jungle. Basically, he was being himself. I mean, isn't a tiger supposed to be menacing to the other creatures? Should it really be killed just because it feeds on other animals and livestock belonging to the villagers close to the jungle?

The original version of *The Jungle Book* shows Shere Khan being intimidated by Mowgli so that he doesn't create disturbance in the jungle and frighten people living close by. He was led to a different area from where he wouldn't be able to bother Mowgli's friends. Yes, he definitely is the villain so it's Shere Khan versus the jungle, and I'm completely okay with the idea of depicting the tiger as a villain. But in a film, where issues like poaching and the invasion of humans which brings the animals closer to threats and risks are cruelly and convincingly

presented, the idea of killing a tiger doesn't adjust well within the theme's bones.

In one scene, the juggernaut elephant with moss patches on its skin, bearing one and half of its trunks, kills the ruthless British hunter responsible for the loss of the halftrunk. In the very next scene, Mowgli cries like a wolf and the pack emerges; a mob of elephants emerges too. They ambush the tiger, beat it up and several minutes of growling, roaring, and chasing later, Shere Khan is no more.

I would love the remake if Shere Khan were portrayed only as the necessary fictional villain rather than an icon that could gather loathing (for tigers) from a portion of the audience (kids, for example) and his death wasn't an aftermath of hypocrisy. And of course, if the CGI weren't so embarrassing.

When the death of Shere Khan put me in a black mood, I thought writing about the wrongness of his death would be foolish since it's a film with a tiger as the villain. But still, I decided to carry on as it is set against the crucial backdrop of the endangerment of wild animals. Why should the tiger be left out?

*Shah Tazrian Ashrafi wants the perils of his life to be like stormtroopers: always missing easy kill shots. Send him prayers at tazrian1234@gmail.com*

# YouTube animation on the rise

DEEPARGHYA DUTTA BARUA

Having grounded its roots in the early 2000s, the web animation phenomenon has managed to excavate its way through the endless arcade of web content.

Despite having a decline in viewership in the early 2010s, slight alterations in the web animation formula has resurrected the scene through YouTube, resulting in a bombardment of such channels in the last two years.

The web animation scene itself isn't anything new. In fact, it has been around since the dial-up days of internet, dating back to the 90s. While making such content wasn't a concern for the animators even on limited resources, finding a medium for distribution was, since the format was never suitable for broadcast. Newgrounds, the American online entertainment and social media website and company, had bridged the gap back in the early 2000s but the animators eventually shifted to YouTube, which offered a scope for monetisation based on views. In 2012, YouTube drastically changed their monetisation algorithm based on watch time, instead of rewarding content creators for the number of views they gain. That heavily affected animators who made short two to five-minute videos since those were no longer a viable option for monetisation as they generated meagre watch time values.

*Domics* and *sWooZie* were the first channels to bring a change to comply

with the algorithm shift. The animation got stripped down to lesser details, but the length of the videos was increased in average. This format was coined as "animatics", although there's a debate surrounding that since the original use of the word implies something different. The videos started to follow a story-based arrangement, often involving the personal lives of their creators. *Jaiden Animations* and *TheOdd1sOut* followed suit and eventually, within a few years, these channels were topping the Trending charts in YouTube. The outburst of such channels was clearly evident in 2017,

with most of the newer channels having registered in that year.

Now what is it that sets them apart from all the other YouTube channels featuring actual footage of people vlogging their personal experiences or fabricating stories (Yes, I'm looking at you, Tana Mongeau) to build an audience? The animators are not necessarily homogenous in terms of their personalities; channels like *sWooZie* and *Tabbes* seem to lean on one end of the spectrum while channels such as *Jaiden Animations* and *Domics* weigh on the opposite end. However, most of them do

seem to offer a sense of honesty and maintain a very personal touch unlike content creators who obnoxiously scream for 156 seconds to buy their merch. Moreover, a number of channels push informative content related to mental health and history in the form of simple animatics.

The animation quality might seem like a mixed bag. While the more dedicated channels tend to put out smoother and more detailed animation, others seem to leave out certain complicated and time-consuming procedures such as lip-syncing or in some cases, proper animation. The result is a disturbing amount of content that look like PowerPoint presentations edited on Windows Movie Maker with stories of doing the laundry penned by a 12-year old.

Regardless of the tendency to push inferior content by some of the animators, the YouTube animation scene is thriving at the moment with high viewership. Animation is quite a hectic pursuit in its own merits. And while YouTube isn't exactly optimised for profiting off of animation, it certainly is a tangible option for those who are yet to break into the high-budget industry and broadcasting networks.

*Deeparghya Dutta Barua likes to feel apprehensive whenever there are more than two people around. Help him in finding new ways of butchering his name at deeparghya@rantages.com*

