

## Press Clippings

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# Pyasa in Venice

The restored version of Guru Dutt's *Pyasa* will have a world premiere in the competition section of the 72nd Venice Film Festival

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1957. In cinema halls across the country, audiences watched a poet's unsuccessful attempt at making a reconciliation with the times. *Pyasa*, Guru Dutt's magnum opus was not just cinema at its finest, it was also a distinctive example of the balance between art and entertainment, with Sahir Ludhianvi's poetry and SD Burman's iconic tunes lending it a timeless soundtrack. *Pyasa*, referred to as one of India's best and included in *Time* magazine's "100 best movies", had been languishing at Pune's National Film Archive of India vaults, with weather affecting the negatives. While some of the authentic material was lost, whatever was available came with dirt, lines, scratches, warps, jitters and green patches. Now, after a frame by frame restoration by Mumbai-based Ultra Media and Entertainment Pvt Ltd, the film has entered the "Venice Classics" competition of the 72nd Venice Film Festival and will compete with 19 other classics for the coveted prize.

"Venice Classics" is a significant section at the festival, which premieres restored classics and awards the best. *Pyasa* will compete with Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *A Matter of Life and Death*, *The Power and the Glory* by William K Howard and Akira Kurosawa's *Akahige* (*Red Beard*), among others from various countries.

BEFORE



AFTER

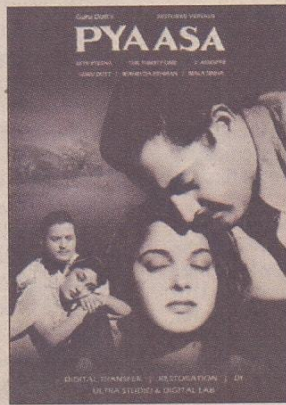


Mala Sinha and Guru Dutt in *Pyasa* before and after restoration; film's poster

"We acquired the negative rights of all Guru Dutt films sometime back. We thought of restoring *Pyasa*, which is acclaimed worldwide. It was a massive challenge to restore this film for theatres as the job is harder when the file sizes are very big. It's relatively easy when a film is being restored for a television screening. Forty-five staff members have worked day and night to bring this film to life again," said Sushilkumar Agarwal, CEO, Ultra Media in a conversation from Venice. He added that the restoration process took four

months, apart from time spent in the preliminary process of digitising the film. "The problems with the negatives were way too many. All old negatives suffer because of our country's climatic conditions," says Agarwal adding that the repair process used a specialised film content mending and defect removal mechanism. The soundtrack of the film has also been completely remastered, since the original was full of static and clicks.

Agarwal will re-release *Pyasa* worldwide early next year. "I hope we can find distributors for it because we don't have more money for distributing it after the expensive restoration process," said Agarwal. In the past, Ultra Media has restored films such as the Raj Kapoor-starrer *Chori Chori* and Kishore Kumar's *Half Ticket*.



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