

Dubbing in Iran

60 Years On

> By Atefeh Rezvan-Nia

The Iranian animation market has become heated in recent years.

Attractive animations released in the domestic market not only appeal to children and young adults, but are also popular among grownups.

Foreign animations such as 'Finding Nemo', 'Shrek', 'Monsters Inc.' and lately 'Ratatouille', 'Horton Hears a Who' and 'Kung Fu Panda', which have been huge successes worldwide, have entered the Iranian market concurrent with their entry in European and American markets.

State-run organizations have also made educational animations that received positive responses. For instance, those made by Energy Optimization Organization (on optimizing fuel consumption), Traffic Police (teaching driving laws), National Iranian Gas Company (safety considerations) and Tehran Municipality's Transport Organization as well as the Police have been received enthusiastically.

However, what has made these animations, which indeed have very interesting plots, popular to the extent that some key words and phrases used by them immediately enter people's everyday conversations, is their unique dubbing.

Therefore, it is interesting to know the experts involved in dubbing these animations as well as the global standing of the domestic dubbing industry.

In order to shed light on these and related issues, Iran Daily interviewed Mehrdad Raeesi, the head of Young Voice Actors Association. Raeesi, 29, has graduated in computer science with specialization in software. Excerpts follow:

> IRAN DAILY: Please tell us about the history of dubbing in Iran as well as the body in charge.

RAEISI: For the first time, Iranians dubbed a French film into Persian in Istanbul in 1946. A few months later, dubbing was launched in Iran. The golden era of dubbing in Iran pertains to the 1960s and 1970s during which eminent masters like Ali Kasmaei and Iraj Nazarian and other towering figures, to whom the domestic dubbing industry is indebted, dubbed top international films into Persian.

The Iranian Society of Young Voice Actors was established in 2005 upon the authorization of Labor Ministry. It was established to generate new jobs and upgrade the level of dubbing in line with international standards.

The society initially continued its activities under the name of 'Glory' and produced animations like 'Finding Nemo', 'Monsters Inc.' and 'Shrek' hit the market. Later, the name was changed into the Iranian Association of Young Voice Actors. Within a year of its establishment, the association dubbed over 200 interna-

tionally-renowned animations, most of which were also aired on the national TV.

> Why did you opt for dubbing animations?

At the beginning, we thought that it is a simple genre. Later, we realized that it was a mistake and dubbing is more challenging for animations than for films. At any rate, despite all the difficulties involved, we continued dubbing animations and won public approval. I must also say that Iran ranks first in the world in terms of dubbing animations.

> Your works have been received enthusiastically by the people. What makes your works superior to those of other dubbing institutions?

One such difference is in the use of latest technological advances in dubbing. When I founded the association, there was a great vacuum in dubbing. What discouraged people from buying dubbed animations was the absence of tone, which marked the works of 1960s and 1970s, in the new productions. We tried to revive that tone and the people liked it very much.

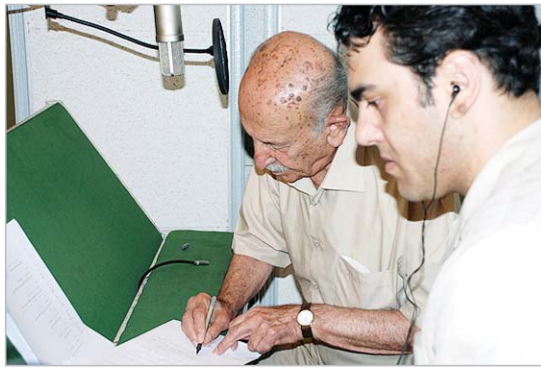
Another difference between the association's works and those of others is that we spend at least three days for dubbing each project while others do it in one day. It is not right to dub a film or an animation, which is the product of months of painstaking endeavors, in a day.

Another point is that only one dubber is involved in recording at any given time, but in other institutions recording is done in the traditional manner and in group.

One of the important issues that we focus on is recording of reactions, such as reaction to fear or surprise. This approach helps improve the quality of work. But, since this process is time-consuming, details of the kind, which are indeed very important, are not heeded by other institutions.

One thing that we have done for improving the quality of dubbing is that we have obligated dubbing managers to write a one-page weekly report on the know-how they have acquired in a week.

One of the secrets of success in the dubbing industry is having a high level of general knowledge. We also dub all the lyrics of animations and write music for them before the recording starts. This is, in fact, an effort for reviving musical dubbing, which has produced masterpieces of Iranian dubbing. The number of such works before the victory of the



Dubbing veteran Morteza Ahmadi (l) and Mehrdad Raeesi.

Islamic Revolution was four or five, but now we do musical dubbing in all our works and the people also like it very much.

> Name some of the films whose dubbing was directed by you.

'Monsters Inc.', 'Wallace & Gromit', 'Garfield 2', 'Pinocchio 3000', 'North Pole Express', 'Ice Age', 'Ice Age: The Meltdown', 'Dead Bride', 'The Emperor's New Groove' and 'Incredible' are some of my projects.

> Many people are opposed to dubbing and believe that using subtitles is a better approach, as dubbing harms the originality of the work.

If you want to watch a film with subtitles, then it is no fun, because you have to rewind several times and read the subtitles. In some cases, the cost of dubbing may be very high and hence subtitles are used. Some critics think dubbing may harm the original acting. I must say this may indeed be true, but dubbing does not harm loyalty to the original text. For example, if we can have a dubber who can act like Robert De Niro, then we can also claim that we have a Robert De Niro in Iran. So, it is obvious that dubbers cannot act like actors. But the story is different in the case of animation and there are no worries about harming the acting of professional actors. As I mentioned earlier, dubbing animations in Iran is even of a higher quality in the US.

> Can dubbing help preserve a language?

A specialized conference could be held to discuss what dubbing can do for preserving languages. Dubbing can certainly help preserve idiomatic or colloquial expressions of a language. In a meeting recently held in Sistan about Iran's dialects, it was highlighted that we have lost many of our dialects and currently we only

have some 300 dialects nationwide. Dubbing can also help preserve dialects.

> Have efforts been made for preserving dialects?

Very much. Recently, we issued a bylaw obliging all dubbing directors to use proverbs and correct street talk as much as possible in all dubbing works.

> Are you happy with the translations made currently?

Not really. A person who translates the dialogue of a film should be very dexterous in using the vocabulary to fit every personality of the flick perfectly. Unfortunately, at present, translations are poor. Of course, if the translator cannot do this, the dubbing director should be knowledgeable enough to do this and compensate for the translator's shortfall.

> Has the association been awarded so far?

Yes. Two years ago, TV's Channel 5 gave us a plaque of honor. In fact, it was very kind of them to honor me in the presence of masters like Abolhasan Tahami and Ahmad Rasoulzadeh.

> Tell us about other activities of the association.

The society intends to found an international society of voice. We have held talks with related organizations. In fact, we intend to arrange annual conferences by establishing this society and exchange information with different countries regarding all genres of voice such as radio anchorman, dubbing and so on. We have also officially registered a magazine called 'Doubleh' (meaning dubbing) which will hit the newsstands very soon.

I have also authored a book called 'Dubbing Management, Secrets of Successful Dubbing'. This is, in fact, the first specialized book written on dubbing. It will hit the market in the next couple of months.

News in Brief

Venezuela Teams Up On University Plan

Venezuela and Iran agreed to start a new university program in the South American country with a focus on teaching socialist principles.

The Venezuelan government says it plans to establish the University of Civilizations under accords recently signed with Iran, AP reported.

Deputy Minister for Academic Development Tibisay Hung says the program will begin in Caracas at the tuition-free Bolivarian University.

Hung told the state-run Bolivarian News Agency that the aim is to promote discussion of "21st century socialism".

Venezuela announced the program on Monday. President Hugo Chavez is promising to lead Venezuela toward socialism, and in recent years has built increasingly close ties with Iran.

Americans Oppose Hollywood Values

A majority of Americans believe Hollywood goes against their religious and moral values, a Martilla Communications Group poll finds.

Commissioned by Anti-Defamation League, the "American Attitudes on Religion, Moral Values and Hollywood" poll surveyed 1,000 adults throughout the US, Reuters reported.

The results showed that 61 percent of participants believe religious values are "under attack" in America and 59 percent agreed that "the people running TV networks and major movie studios do not share the religious and moral values of most Americans".

"The belief that religion is under attack underlies the drive to incorporate more religion into American public life. Disturbingly, 43 percent of Americans believe there is an organized campaign by Hollywood and the national media to weaken the influence of religious values in this country," said ADL national director, Abraham H. Foxman.

Nearly 40 percent of Americans agree that "dangerous ideas should be banned from public school libraries", and about the same number do not believe that "censoring books is an old-fashioned idea".

Some 49 percent believe that the United States is becoming "too tolerant in its acceptance of different ideas and lifestyles".

The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percent.

Israeli Soldier Jailed for Yawning

An Israeli soldier was sentenced to 21 days in prison for yawning during a ceremony marking the death of former premier Yitzhak Rabin.

According to the soldier's mother, her son was "yawning without covering his mouth" during a speech marking the assassination of Rabin, when he was spotted by the commander of his air force base, PressTV reported.

He was immediately ordered to spend three weeks in jail for committing a "disrespectful act".

The soldier's mother who was disgruntled with the military order said her son was only tired not disrespectful.

Israel considers Rabin a hero and has hosted many services, speeches and events in honor of the former prime minister.

He was gunned down by a Jewish extremist who was against the peace process with the Palestinians in 1995.

Prehistoric Nuclear Family Discovered

A 4,600-year-old grave in Germany containing the remains of two adults and their children provides the earliest evidence that even prehistoric tribes attached importance to the family unit, researchers said on Monday.

The researchers used DNA analysis and other techniques to determine that the group buried facing each other—an unusual practice in Neolithic culture—consisted of a mother, father and their two sons aged 8-9 and 4-5 years, Reuters reported.

"By establishing the genetic links between the two adults and two children buried together in one grave, we have established the presence of the classic nuclear family in a prehistoric context in Central Europe—to our knowledge the oldest authentic molecular genetic evidence so far," Wolfgang Haak of the University of Adelaide said in a statement.

"Their unity in death suggests a unity in life." The remains were found in graves that held a total of 13 people, all of whom had been interred simultaneously, Haak and colleagues reported in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Several were buried face-to-face, with arms and hands interlinked in many cases. The remains included children ranging from newborns up to 10 years of age, and adults of around 30 years or older.

Tests showed that many had suffered massive injuries, suggesting they were victims of a violent raid. One female had a stone projectile point embedded in her back and another had skull fractures.

Britons Fear Children

About half the adult British public believe that children behave like animals and pose an increasing danger to themselves and others, according to a poll released on Monday.

A report by charity Barnardo's, which commissioned the survey, said the findings were shocking and showed a disturbing intolerance of children.

"It is appalling that words like 'animal', 'feral' and 'vermin' are used daily in reference to children," said Martin Narey, Barnardo's chief executive, Reuters reported.

"These are not references to a small minority of children but represent the public view of all children."

Concern about children's behavior has become an

increasingly political issue in recent years following incidents of youngsters' involvement in violent crime or antisocial behavior.

In one of the most shocking cases, three teenagers were found guilty in January of murdering Garry Newlove, a father-of-three, whom they beat to death after he confronted them outside his house about vandalism they had caused.

Meanwhile, the number of teenagers being murdered or committing murder has risen, with 28 young people dying violently on the streets of London alone this year.

The Barnardo's survey found 49 percent of the 2,021 people surveyed thought children now posed more of a danger to their peers and to adults, while 43

percent said something had to be done to protect them from youngsters.

The poll showed 54 percent thought children were beginning to behave like animals and 45 percent agreed that people referred to kids as feral because they behaved that way.

The charity said the British Crime Survey, which produces crime figures based on interviews with the public, showed that Britons thought that young people committed up to a half of all crimes. In fact they are responsible for just 12 percent.

"The real crime is that this sort of talk and attitude does nothing to help those young people who are difficult, unruly or badly behaved to change their ways," Narey said.

