

Article

Apurbajyoti Tanti

AI in Modern Filmmaking



Imagine waking up to find the story that you once poured your heart into, written, performed, directed, and released into the world with trembling hands has now quietly shifted in its sleep. Not a reboot. Not a sequel. Not even a remix. The same film. But with a different heartbeat. Different final breath. Different meaning.

This is not science fiction. This is not even a Black Mirror episode. This is *Raanjhanaa* in 2025.

In what was once a sobering portrait of love, loss, and the cost of devotion, audiences in Tamil Nadu now saw *Ambikapathy*, an AI-generated revision of the original film, where the lead character (Kundan) survives.

Hollywood has been imagining Artificial Intelligence (AI) for decades, often projecting societal hopes and fears onto fictional machines. To name a few: *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Blade Runner* (1982), *The Matrix* (1999), *Her* (2013) and *Ex Machina* (2014).

But things are different now. AI is no longer a distant sci-fi trope, it's shaping the very fabric of modern cinema. From scriptwriting to CGI, marketing to audio enhancement, AI intertwines with creative workflows, raising both efficiency and ethical dilemmas. Drawing from a myriad of recent industry cases from blockbuster de-aging to re-released Bollywood classics, this article

attempts to understand AI's evolving role in the film industry, its transformative potential, and the burning controversies that surround its usage.



How AI is being used

AI is being leveraged to analyze and even compose scripts. Platforms like ScriptBook (Sony) and Cinelytic (Warner Bros.) assess storylines, genre patterns, and demographics to forecast box office success. These tools provide data-driven insights that augment risky production decisions. It simplifies tasks like scheduling shoots or scouting locations. By parsing scene descriptions, it can suggest ideal filming spots. Casting is also evolving: audition footage and facial-emotion data help AI overlay digital faces or de-age actors. AI accelerates editing, object removal, and scene stabilization. Tools like IBM Watson are already producing trailers by isolating emotional or high-action sequences, as seen with the film *Morgan*. AI is also used to de-age stars like Tom Hanks and Robin Wright in *Here*, or generate synthetic voices like Anthony Bourdain's in *Roadrunner*. AI-generated scores are emerging, such as Sony's Flow Machines creating Beatles-style compositions. Promotional strategies also lean on AI to tailor campaigns to global audiences, 20th Century Fox used Merlin

Video neural network and IBM's supercomputing for *Morgan*'s trailer.

Entire films are being created using AI. The short sci-fi *Zone Out* was produced in just 48 hours using Benjamin AI and creative inputs from Ross Goodwin, underscoring AI's experimental potential.

Debates over authenticity

AI-generated archival photos, used when real ones are unavailable, raise concerns about historical accuracy. Documentary professionals formed the Archival Producers Alliance, advocating for transparency and ethical use of generative AI in factual storytelling. Some urge filmmakers to label AI usage clearly to prevent "muddying the historical record".

The rise of AI threatens to devalue traditional crafts, including dubbing and visual effects. Industry professionals worry about job displacement and the erosion of craftsmanship. Highly visible uses of AI, like de-aging and synthetic voices, often draw public scrutiny. Projects like *Here*, *Late Night with the Devil*, and *Roadrunner* spotlight how AI can subtly, and controversially reshape narrative delivery. Critics argue that AI often lacks the nuanced judgment a human artist brings to storytelling.

Some examples of AI making waves

Many film professionals are now using AI in tasks like editing, casting, and scriptwriting, showing growing acceptance of its utility even as debates continue.

Many studios limit AI use to assistive functions, storyboarding, pre-visualization, and de-aging while retaining a clear human-guided workflow. The streaming giant

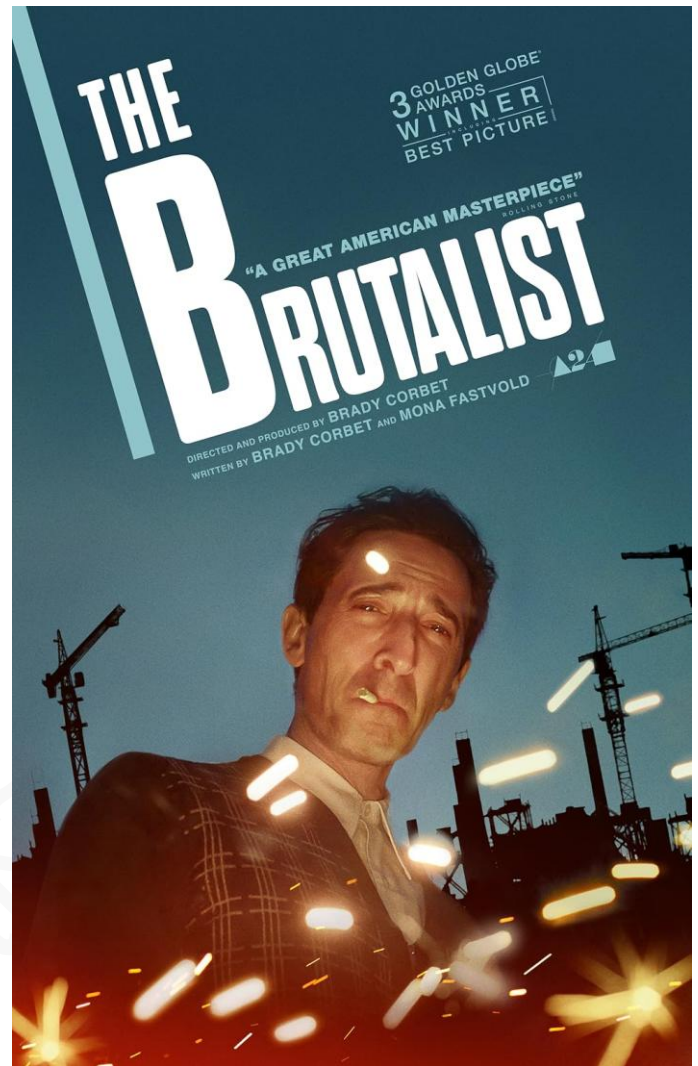
Netflix's co-chief executive Ted Sarandos said AI, which produces videos and images based on prompts, was used to create a scene of a building collapsing in the Argentine science fiction show, *The Eternaut*. He said the technology allowed the production team to complete sequences faster and at a lower cost.

The announcement by Prime Focus Technologies at Waves 2025 that the upcoming *Ramayana* would employ AI-driven lip-sync for global release reflects another powerful application. This technology adjusts the actors' mouth movements to match dubbed dialogue in any language, preserving the illusion of native speech.

In Switzerland's groundbreaking 2024 feature *The Last Screenwriter*, the entire script was generated using ChatGPT, with the director Peter Luisi contributing only minimal editing and prompt guidance. The film explores themes of self-relevance and creativity in the age of AI both in its narrative and through its very conception as an AI-authored work. The film is among the first English-language features written by AI. Its production process and resulting narrative pose fundamental questions about authorship, originality, and the boundaries between creator and tool.

In *The Brutalist*, an Oscar-contending film, AI tool Respeecher was used to polish actors Adrien Brody and Felicity Jones's Hungarian accents by blending in the voice of a native speaker to perfect nuanced pronunciation. Despite the technical rationale, the move sparked ethical debate. Editor Dávid Jancsó confirmed the AI usage in dialogue enhancement, and director Brady

Corbet emphasized the actors' performances remained authentic at their core.



In 2024, Lionsgate teamed up with AI studio Runway, granting access to its archives to build a custom AI platform for pre- and post-production tasks like storyboarding and visual effects. The partnership aligns with union protections such as requiring actor consent for digital likenesses. Both studios framed the AI as a collaborative assistant not a replacement.

The 2025 AI Film Festival, powered by Runway, showcased rapid creative shifts from 300 submissions in 2023 to 6,000 in 2025. Finalist shorts like *Total Pixel Space* and *Jailbird* displayed entirely or partially AI-generated visuals, pointing to a growing

appetite for AI-enabled storytelling—just as industry unions call for protective guidelines.

Resistance and Regulations

Hollywood's creative ecosystem is gradually being framed by robust, enforceable standards. Both the U.S. and Germany have enacted AI-specific agreements covering performer rights:

The U.S. SAG-AFTRA contract mandates explicit signed consent for digital replicas or modifications of actors, distinguishing between background artists and principal performers. It also codifies consent protocols for post-mortem use and establishes a system of regular reviews, slated for early 2026. Germany's BFFS Agreement similarly enshrines consent, delineates exceptions for common post-production editing or dubbing, and underscores that using digital replicas in new productions require fresh compensation unless contractual terms allow otherwise. The ELVIS Act in Tennessee, and broader California laws support actor control over digital likeness, even posthumously a legal foundation Robert Downey Jr. invoked when he publicly vowed to sue anyone using his AI-generated likeness without approval.

The EU AI Act, in force since August 2024, uses a risk-based model to regulate AI deployment broadly across sectors including media requiring transparency and auditing in high-risk applications.

The G7's voluntary Code of Conduct (adopted October 2023) urges guidelines like adversarial testing, risk assessment, and content traceability potentially informing future film-related AI standards.

Big players are defending their content fiercely:

In a watershed suit, Disney and Universal sued AI image generator Midjourney (June 2025), arguing it had illegally trained on their copyrighted material setting a critical precedent for content rights enforcement amid generative AI. In the UK, the British Film Institute (BFI) cautioned against AI models trained on over 130,000 scripts, warning this could devastate the £125 billion screen sector calling for licensing frameworks and investment in inclusive, rights-respecting AI tools.

The case of *Raanjhanaa*

When an AI-generated alternate ending surfaced twelve years later, one where Kundan awakens and life continues, it wasn't just a change of plot. It came at a cost: artistic consent. Director Aanand L Rai had not approved it. Actor Dhanush publicly condemned it. Writers, lyricists, technicians watched from the sidelines as the work they had once co-created was pulled apart and reassembled, and released by a studio wielding legal ownership like a sword. Eros International, the producer of the film, justified its actions under Indian copyright law. After all, in the eyes of the law, the producer is the author. Reducing the creative contributors as mere passengers in the train. But what's at stake was not simply a climax. It's a question of authorship in the age of algorithms. If the director's vision can be rewritten, if the actor's performance can be recontextualized, if the emotional scaffolding of a story can be removed and replaced, then let me ask some questions: what is cinema? Is it merely IP, like a house that can be

renovated by any future tenant? Or is it something sacred? A shared act of vulnerability and trust between creator and audience?

Conclusion

“Why A.I. Isn’t Going to Make Art” by Ted Chiang makes a point that art isn’t just about well-formed output. It’s about intention. It’s about the sequence of individual, meaningful choices the creator makes, or chooses not to make. Artificial Intelligence is not inherently evil. In many ways, it’s already embedded in our cinematic bloodstream. AI helps restore old films. It cleans audio, reconstructs missing frames, and so much more. But the line is crossed when AI becomes not a tool but a voice, an author, an editor-in-chief. Here the equation shifts. AI can mimic. It can reproduce patterns. It can guess what something works statistically. But it does not understand why a sigh is longer than a sentence. Why silence matters more than speech in grief. Why a glance can say what

pages cannot. Hence, the essence of AI is efficiency, not creativity.

AI can change the ending. But it cannot change the experience. It cannot change the feeling that rippled through a theatre, or a living room, or a lonely late-night viewing. Imagine a world in which iconic films from the past are quietly changed to suit modern sensitivities or global markets.

Because at the end of the day, the soul of cinema is not stored in pixels or code. It’s stored in people.

And people remember. They remember the pauses, the imperfections, the accidents that became art. They remember the context in which a film was born, the politics, the emotions, the personal struggles of its creators. Strip that away, and you strip away cinema’s memory. AI may help us tell stories faster, but without human vulnerability, those stories risk becoming lifeless echoes. The challenge now is not to reject AI, but to insist that it remains a collaborator, not the storyteller.

References

1. AP News. (2025, March 13). AI Film Festival draws record entries as Hollywood grapples with artificial intelligence. <https://apnews.com/article/3b5d40e4c2e20f7a4d34f1f5d4907ba7>
2. BBC News. (2024, August 13). The Brutalist: AI and the future of cinema. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce303x19dwgo>
3. BBC News. (2024, July 23). How AI is changing the movie industry. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c36xy6r91kwo>
4. Brookings Institution. (2024, October 3). Hollywood writers went on strike to protect their livelihoods from generative AI — their remarkable victory matters for all workers.

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/hollywood-writers-went-on-strike-to-protect-their-livelihoods-from-generative-ai-their-remarkable-victory-matters-for-all-workers/>

5. Chiang, T. (2023, February 11). Why A.I. isn't going to make art. The New Yorker. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-weekend-essay/why-ai-isnt-going-to-make-art>
6. Easterneye.biz. (2024, August 1). Ramayana: Namit Malhotra goes global with AI. <https://www.easterneye.biz/ramayana-namit-malhotra-global-ai/>
7. India Today. (2025, August 6). Raanjhanaa and the AI controversy explained: Who owns creative freedom?. <https://www.indiatoday.in/movies/bollywood/story/raanjhanaa-and-the-ai-controversy-explained-who-owns-creative-freedom-2767144-2025-08-06>
8. Los Angeles Times. (2025, July 31). What happens to film production crews as AI expands Hollywood tomorrow. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/movies/story/2025-07-31/what-happens-to-film-production-crews-as-ai-expands-hollywood-tomorrow>
9. The Guardian. (2024, July 27). Artificial intelligence and the future of movies. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/article/2024/jul/27/artificial-intelligence-movies>
10. The Guardian. (2025, July 27). Indian film company to re-release romantic drama with AI happy ending. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jul/27/indian-film-company-to-re-release-romantic-drama-with-ai-happy-ending-raanjhaana-ambikapathy>
11. The Week. (2024, August 14). The Brutalist, AI, and the future of cinema. <https://theweek.com/culture-life/film/the-brutalist-ai-and-the-future-of-cinema>
12. Washington.edu. (2025, February 25). UW expert on AI in films and Oscars. <https://www.washington.edu/news/2025/02/25/ai-film-oscars-strike/>
13. Wired. (2024, August 8). Lionsgate's new deal is a test of Hollywood's relationship with AI. <https://www.wired.com/story/lionsgates-new-deal-is-a-test-of-hollywoods-relationship-with-ai/>