

PRINCESS OF ATHIRAPALLY

Press kit · status as of 4 September 2026

A 15-minute fully CG period action-drama · Unreal Engine 5 · Western Ghats, India, 1799
princessofathirapally.com · @princessofathirapally_thefilm

One-line summary

A 15-minute fully CG period action-drama authored entirely in Unreal Engine 5, built on an agentic (MCP-driven) production pipeline and Gaussian-splat-captured Western Ghats environments, going into motion capture November 7–9, 2026.

Logline

Ponni, a fifteen-year-old heir who has never known her father, is being hardened for a war she doesn't understand by her mother Raajamma — the widowed queen of a kingdom in hiding. When Alice, an Irish orphan enslaved to the British officer who killed Ponni's father, is forced to lead his soldiers to the hidden village, the two girls end up on the same side of a night battle beneath the Athirapally waterfall — and Ponni has to become the leader her mother has been demanding.

Synopsis

Western Ghats, India, 1799. Ponni is fifteen, the heir to a kingdom in hiding, and she has never known her father. Her mother, Raajamma, the widowed queen, is hardening her for a war Ponni does not understand.

Alice is thirteen, an Irish orphan, enslaved to the British officer who killed Ponni's father. She is forced to lead his soldiers to the hidden village.

What follows is a night battle beneath the Athirapally waterfall: around a hundred villagers against around a hundred British soldiers, muskets and torches in the dark. Lightning strikes a tree. It burns, crashes into the arena and splits the field with a wall of fire. Young warriors leap through the flames.

The two girls end up on the same side of it. And Ponni has to become the leader her mother has been demanding.

Key facts

Title	Princess of Athirapally
Format	15-minute narrative short · fully CG · period action-drama
Engine	Unreal Engine 5; every frame rendered in-engine (final pixel)
Setting	Western Ghats, India, 1799; the Athirapally waterfall
Lead characters	4 — Ponni (15), Alice (13), Raajamma (32), Isaac (47)
Crowd	~200 crowd combatants (~100 villagers vs ~100 British soldiers)
Writer · Director · Editor · VFX Supervisor	Sibi Naayagam
Producers	Alessia Cruci, David Hemphill
Production company	Astralforge Creative LLC
Technology partner	Vega Entertainment
Status (as of 4 Sep 2026)	Pre-production 72%, milestone-weighted. Production is fully funded and scheduled. Post-production funding is being sought.
Motion capture	November 7–9, 2026
Director's Cut	December 15, 2026
DCP mastered	March 31, 2027
Festival circuit	From April 2027
Public tool release	Q2 2027
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Formerly titled Ponni; a 2020 thesis film under that name won an Epic MegaGrant.

Cast

Ponni (15), the heir	Pragathi Guruprasad
Alice (13), Irish orphan	June Schreiner
Raajamma (32), Ponni's mother, the widowed queen	name to be announced
Isaac (47), the British officer	auditions underway

Crew

Sibi Naayagam — Writer · Director · Editor · VFX Supervisor (Los Angeles; Astralforge Creative LLC)
Alessia Cruci, David Hemphill — Producers
Vijey Adithya — Director of Photography (cinematographer and DI colorist; *Air*, 2023)
Sydney Ponice — Production Designer (Virtual Art Department Supervisor, *Mufasa: The Lion King*; *Joker: Folie à Deux*)
Poornima Ramaswamy — Costume Designer (National Film Award for Best Costume Design, *Paradesi*; *Soorai Pottu*; *Nerkonda Paarvai*)
Sean Roldan — Music Composer (*Jai Bhim*, *Joker*, *Pa Paandi*)
Kunal Rajan — Sound Designer (*Jawan*, highest-grossing Indian film of 2023; *Vishwaroopam*; *Jem and the Holograms*)
Benjamin Cunis — Stunt Coordinator (Helen Hayes Awards for movement and choreography, Syntetic Theater)
Jonathan "Panthera" Wallace, Ilyana Eberhardt, Harkin Smith — Stunt Performers
Technology partner: Vega Entertainment — Movie Collab platform

Pipeline

- Environments: Gaussian splats scanned on location in the Athirapally forest and the surrounding Western Ghats; hero foliage captured individually; PCG for village, jungle and British camp; Nanite foliage; DLSS.
- Characters: MetaHumans with fully scanned digital doubles of the cast; a PBR + video-projection lookdev workflow developed on this production; wardrobe in Marvelous Designer, textures in Substance Painter; only base geometry authored outside Unreal.
- Performance and camera: OptiTrack for dialogue, Vicon and Giant for stunts, MetaHuman Animator for facial; all cinematography shot live with VCAM against versioned layouts.
- FX and render: waterfall, fire, the burning tree, blood and dust simulated in Houdini and EmberGen, lit and rendered in Unreal via Movie Render Queue; every frame final-pixel in-engine.
- Operation and delivery: MCP skills built with Vega Entertainment operate the engine; Perforce; four append-only ledgers tracing capture take » VCAM take » shot version; DaVinci Resolve edit and grade; Dolby Atmos mix; DCP master. Tools released to the community, target Q2 2027.

Status

As of 4 September 2026. Pre-production (Jun–Oct 2026): 72%, milestone-weighted. Production (Nov 7–9, 2026): scheduled and fully funded. Post-production (Nov 2026–Mar 2027): not started; funding being sought. Epic MegaGrants application submitted 4 September 2026.

Roadmap

Sep–Oct 2026	Layout, boards, asset finaling, splat capture, Isaac cast
Nov 7–9, 2026	Motion capture, dialogue and stunts
Dec 15, 2026	Director's Cut
Dec 2026–Feb 2027	Animation, FX, lighting, render, comp
Mar 15, 2027	Score and Atmos mix complete
Mar 31, 2027	DCP mastered
From Apr 2027	Festival circuit
Q2 2027	Public release of MCP skills, board pipeline, workflow documentation

Contact

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