

clutter. Just a few episodes down and we have got great feedback," says Mini Mathur, the host of *Sports Ka Superstar*, who fails to understand how this format even disappeared. "When we were growing up quiz shows were considered 'entertainment'. I find it a relief that they are back," she adds.

Following *KBC*'s success, Indian television saw a whole lot of other shows with higher prize money like *Jeeto Chappar Phaad Ke*, *Sawaal Dus Crore Ka* and *Kya Aap Panchvi Pass Se Tez Hain* made it to the prime time slot. "Everyone tried to ape *KBC*. Celebrities were roped in to make these shows successful. But when each of them failed, the format went out of vogue, although audiences still had the inherent love for quiz shows," says Nikhil Madhok, programming head, Imagine TV.

The reverence of quiz shows is not new in India. Shows like *Quiz Time* conducted by Sidhartha Basu, *Inside Edge* by Harsha Bhogle and *Bournvita Quiz Contest* by Derek O'Brien, lured audiences into setting aside their household chores and switching on their television sets. "It was family time for us. And in the bargain it was an enriching experience as it increased our general knowledge," says Sudha Rao, a housewife who encouraged her children to watch these shows. And when *KBC* was on air, Indian viewers were a happy lot. Not only did they enrich their knowledge, they got coveted time with their favourite superstar and also an opportunity to earn big bucks. But Basu, who is the brain behind *KBC*, feels, "It wasn't so much about the money, as it was about the novelty of seeing Amitabh Bachchan on the small screen and the format of the show, which was a fresh concept then."

With the fiction sagas and reality programmes garnering high TRPs and even higher earnings, one wouldn't blame the general entertainment channels for seeking solace in them. "For a long time reality shows clicked for us," says Madhok. Although *Big Money* will test the person's current affairs knowledge, the questions will be based on programmes that appear on TV. "We will have the whole family involved in the show. With questions ranging from topics such as mythology, cricket, soap operas and cartoon characters, each member of the family can put his expertise into play," says Madhok. Money-wise channels may have raised the bar, but quiz shows will always gain audiences. "*BQC* did not have a huge prize. But the fact that we beat somebody is what made it worth it," says Mihika Shankar, a participant on the show.

With at least a few channels making an effort to bring back quiz shows, Mathur is grateful that "programmes will soon have a solid base and good content".

Brain teasers

It isn't the big bucks anymore, it is the quest for knowledge that has got quiz shows back in vogue

PRIYANKA PEREIRA

IT'S official. After Shah Rukh Khan failed to garner the big TRPs in its third season, *Kaun Banega Crorepati* has been lobbed back to Amitabh Bachchan — the man who turned around his own fortunes and revolutionised Indian television in 2000 as the host of what was India's most watched TV show. With Bachchan getting ready to take over the reins of *KBC*, this time on Sony, one wonders if the show will be as



Bachchan at the announcement of *KBC*'s return to the small screen



On *Big Money*, Madhavan quizzes families about television

big a hit as it was in the first season.

Over the years, the prize money on game shows has risen well over a crore and the formats have changed with intelligence and general knowledge playing little or no role in shows like these. With the increasing number of dance and song based reality shows, one would only assume that the quiz show format is almost dead. "It is not about the money. It is the presence of Amitabh Bachchan that will make the show click once more. Besides, Rs 1 crore is still a huge amount and it can transform an individual's life," says Ajit Thakur, EVP and business head, Sony. "We conducted a survey across India, where we questioned housewives on which show they wanted to see make a comeback, and the 100 per cent result was *Kaun Banega Crorepati*," he adds.

The resurgence of *KBC*, along with *Big Money* on Imagine TV and *Sports Ka Superstar* on Doordarshan, seems to indicate that the format is making a comeback of sorts. But this time it is for a more specific audience. While *Big Money* is for TV buffs, *SKS* will catch the attention of sports enthusiasts. "Anything that's different beats the