

By: Kavita Trivedi

JODHA AKBAAR

Dir: *Ashutosh Gowariker* **Cast:** *Hrithik Roshan, Aishwarya Rai.*

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After receiving critical acclaim for both the 2001 smash and Oscar entry *Lagaan* and the 2004 *Shah Rukh Khan* starrer *Swades*, director *Ashutosh Gowariker* returns with his next highly anticipated release.

Set in the sixteenth century, the story focuses on the great Muslim emperor Akbar (*Roshan*) and his Hindu wife Jodha, the Rajput princess (*Rai*) and how their relationship finally gave birth to true love.

Akbar's success as a conqueror continued to soar after securing the Hindukush, where he was able to extend his empire from Afghanistan to the Godavari River. After shrewd tolerance and force, Akbar eventually won over the Rajputs – the most quarrelsome part of the Hindus.

After marrying the fiery princess Jodha to strengthen relations, not even the great emperor could have foreseen that his quest for continuous success would turn into a desire for true love. The aggressive Jodha rejects him and resents the fact that she was used as a mere political pawn in this alliance. Akbar promptly embarks on a journey in which he faces his toughest challenge yet - to demolish Jodha's hatred and prejudice, and ultimately, to win her love.

Bollywood superstars *Hrithik Roshan* and *Aishwarya Rai* sizzled on screen in the 2006 slick and sexy smash *Dhoom 2* and are set to rekindle that flame in this grand epic.

Aishwarya wowed audiences with stellar performances in period dramas like *Devdas* (2002), *Guru* (2006) and *Umrao Jaan* (2007) and is set to dazzle again in her upcoming lead role in this movie. *Jodha Akbar* marks *Hrithik Roshan's* first period film.

Overall, a stunning historical epic of love, war and victory.

Highly recommended.

WELCOME

Dir: *Aneez Bazmee* **Cast:** *Akshay Kumar, Katrina Kaif, Feroz Khan, Anil Kapoor, Nana Patekar & Paresh Rawal.*

Brothers Uday Shetty (*Patekar*) and Majnu (*Kapoor*) and their boss Sikander (*Khan*) are Hong Kong based gangsters.

Despite their gloomy professions, they are keen to get their sister, Sanjana (*Kaif*) married into a respectable family. After Uday's encounter with a handsome bachelor Rajiv (*Kumar*), he becomes convinced that Rajiv is the right man for his sister. However, Rajiv's uncle Dr. Ghungaroo, (*Rawal*) disapproves of his nephew's alliance with such a questionable family.

Meanwhile, oblivious to her brother's plans, Sanjana unexpectedly meets Rajiv on a cruise and the pair fall in love. After their whirlwind romance enters a new phase, Sanjana is immediately accepted by Dr. Ghungaroo, who is unaware that she is related to the members of the mafia gang.



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When he eventually finds out about Sanjana's true identity, a hilarious journey of thrills unfolds as the brothers try to get a reluctant Ghungaroo to agree to the proposal. Their plans are thwarted by the unexpected arrival of the stunning Ishika (*Sherawat*) who claims to be Rajiv's fiancé.

The story takes a comical turn as all characters try to out-do each other in order to please Rajiv's uncle.

Akshay Kumar and *Katrina Kaif* proved to be a hit pair in the 2006 romance movie, *Namaste London*. *Akshay* reunites with the producers of *Hera Pheri* and *Phir Hera Pheri* in this comedy caper.

With its lavish sets and cinematography and chart busting music by *Himesh Reshammiya*, *Anand Raj Anand* and *Sajid Wajid*, *Welcome* is set to crash into the New Year with flare and style.

Overall, a fun fuelled wholesome entertainer for all to enjoy.

Worth a watch.

HALLA BOL

Dir: *Rajkumar Santoshi* **Cast:** *Ajay Devgan, Vidya Balan, Pankaj Kapur.*



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Ashfaque (*Devgan*) is a small town boy who has dreamt of being a Bollywood star all his life. After joining a street theatre group run by reformed criminal, Sidhu (*Kapur*), Ashfaque struggles to discover the actor in him and to give his characters that 'creative edge.'

Not one to give up on his dreams, determined Ashfaque's hard work pays off when he finally receives his big break in Bollywood. He adopts Sameer Khan as his new screen name and with patience, starts to get better roles and eventually establishes himself as a huge Bollywood star.

Amidst all the awards, applause and adulation, Ashfaque slowly loses his identity in the seedy world of Bollywood as he forgets his own self.

He starts to take on the disturbing form of the various characters he has played on screen and becomes consumed by corruption, alienating himself from his loved ones-including his wife, Sneha (*Balan*).

A shocking incident at a party changes everything and throws Sameer Khan's life into turmoil as he struggles between his 'true self' and the tainted image of the Bollywood superstar he has become. Will he be able to rid himself of corruption and come to his senses?

Ajay Devgan is outstanding as the main lead in this film and his amazing transition from small town boy Ashfaque to that of a corrupted star Sameer Khan is impressive to watch. *Vidya Balan* excels in her supporting role but is overshadowed by *Devgan's* powerhouse performance.

The music score has been provided by singer turned composer *Sukhwinder Singh* with *Is Pal* and *Jab Tak* being the most popular.

Overall, an intense drama about stardom and destruction that rests solely on the talent of *Ajay Devgan*— **Worth a watch.**