

bollywood comes alive

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Many people confuse the terms Hollywood and Bollywood. The perception is that Bollywood has its origin from Hollywood, but in fact the only thing the two names have in common is that both have to do with the film industry. Hollywood is a place and Bollywood is Indian cinema. Although Bollywood used to be mainly shown in India, more and more western countries have shown interest in this cinema genre. In my opinion, Bollywood plots are a little melodramatic with themes of love-triangles, kidnapping, corrupt politicians and angry parents and, yes, it also features beautiful actors. The Western Cape Provincial Library Service decided to incorporate a few Bollywood DVDs into the core collection to test its popularity amongst library users. Following are reviews of three of the films: **Salaam Namaste**, **Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham** and **Tashan**.

Salaam Namaste / directed by Siddharth Raj Anand; produced by Aditya Chopra

'A seed of **Nine months** blooms in culturally mixed soil in **Salaam Namaste**, which



combines a comedy about Indians Down Under with a dramedy about a yuppie facing up to fatherhood. With two of the brightest young stars of Hindi cinema, Saif Ali Khan and Preity Zinta in Hugh Grant and Julianne Moore roles, plus the comforting realisation

that, this being a Yash Raj production, family values will eventually triumph, the film serves up a bonny, bouncing two-and-a-half hours of dialogue-driven entertainment.

'Khan, who since **Hum tum** is proving to be a real leading man, plays Nikhil 'Nick' Arora, a failed architecture student turned chef who is a minor celebrity in Melbourne. Zinta, the most substantial actress among the younger Bollywood group, plays the role of Ambar Malhotra, a medical student from Bangalore who moonlights at a local radio station, **Salaam Namaste**, to pay for her education. In typical romantic-comedy style, the two self-obsessed leads get off on the wrong foot when Nikhil is late for an interview on Ambar's radio show.

'The meat of the film is in the second half, and the excellent chemistry between the two thespians pays dividends. First-time director Siddharth Raj Anand's script, and Khan and Zinta's acting, avoids mushiness. Both actors show the ability to spin on a dime between comedy and drama. And in the final reel, when most Bollywood pictures are moving into high melodrama, Anand turns the tables with a delivery-room sequence (featuring Abhishek Bachchan as an absent-minded obstetrician) that is the highlight of the movie's comic-ensemble.' (Review: Derek Elley.)



Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham / directed by Karan Johar

'Karan Johar, Yash Johar and **Kuch Kuch Hota Hai**, one of the biggest blockbusters of our recent decades, two names and a title Bollywood itself won't forget any time soon.



'Let's face it, **Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham** may not be a superb film with an intense flawless backbone, but for all that, the film delivers on its promises.

'**Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham** has its fair share of flaws as well as some excellent attributes. For fans, the positive aspects undoubtedly outweigh the negative. The plot is relatively simple. The script is not intense and surely not original.

'Certain scenes in the film will remain in your memory for their emotive qualities long after the film is over.

'The technical aspects of the film *a la* Sharmishta Roy are all first-rate and at times mind-blowing, ranging from Kiran Deohan's lush camerawork to the exquisite sets and impressive costumes. However, all this beauty may alienate the poor and middle-class audience. Rich families have been depicted in films before, but none of them have shown off or been so *ghamandi* about their riches like the Raichands.

'The choreography by Farah Khan is indeed enjoyable, and the videos for the songs are all wow! From *Suraj Hua Maddham* to *Bole Chudiyen* the songs are all boasted up adding to the extrinsic look of the film.' (Review: Rakesh Budhu.)

Tashan (2008) / directed by Vijay Krishna Acharya; produced by Aditya Chopra and Yash Chopra

'With the arrival of the comically exuberant action-adventure-romance **Tashan** in theatres, the Great Bollywood Bikini Question of 2008 - will she or won't she wear one? - was finally answered. Readers, she did! For months the Bollywood blogosphere has been buzzing about the slimmed-down Kareena Kapoor. Is she anorexic? (Not to my American eyes.) Will she marry her "Tashan" co-star Saif Ali Khan? (Signs point to probably.) And how much of that svelte body would she show off in the movie? The itsy-bitsy (green, no polka dots) bikini comes

in a song-and-dance routine.

'The wonderful costumes featured in the film are by Aki Narula.

'Vijay Krishna Acharya, an accomplished screenwriter making his directing debut, seems eager to show that he can deliver a movie in the high style - bright, pop and technically sophisticated - to which Bollywood has become accustomed. Basically he succeeds. The giddy camera work and busy visual effects would be exhausting if their excess didn't fit so well with the movie's tongue-in-cheek tone.

'The story concerns Mumbai yuppie Jimmy Cliff (Mr Khan), hired to teach English to a gangster (Anil Kapoor), who loves it that Jimmy sounds "just like George Bush". Stolen money and Hindi-movie complications put Jimmy on the road with Pooja (Ms Kapoor) and an illiterate thug, Bachchan (Akshay Kumar; in the film's best performance). Jimmy and Bachchan, a homage to Amitabh Bachchan, Hindi cinema's biggest star, are like a snapshot of modernising India: one English-speaking, foreign-influenced and affluent; the other desi, or traditional. If the film addresses the issue, it's this: Can these two just get along?' (Review: Rachel Saltz.)

