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Fighter (2024 film)

Fighter is a 2024 Indian Hindi-language action film directed by Siddharth Anand, based on a story he wrote with Ramon Chibb. Produced under Viacom18 Studios and Marflix Pictures, the film stars Hrithik Roshan, Deepika Padukone and Anil Kapoor, and serves as the first installment in a planned aerial action franchise.^{[4][5]}

The film was announced on 10 January 2021. The pre-production was delayed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Principal photography finally began in November 2022 with filming proceeding in various schedules across Assam, Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir and Mumbai, and wrapped in late-October. Real life Indian Air Force cadets worked for the film.^[6] The film has references to 2019 Pulwama attack, 2019 Balakot airstrike and 2019 India–Pakistan border skirmishes.^{[7][8]} The film seems to be inspired quite a bit by the *Top Gun* movie, although creating enough difference for Indian audiences.^[9] The film's soundtrack album composed by Vishal–Shekhar consists of five songs. Satchith Paulose serves as the film's cinematographer. The visual effects are handled by DNEG.

Fighter was originally scheduled for a theatrical release on 30 September 2023 but production delays caused the release date to slip to 25 January 2024, coinciding with the Republic Day weekend. The film received mixed reviews and has grossed ₹337.2 crore (US\$42 million) worldwide to rank as the highest-grossing Indian film of 2024.^[3]

Plot

In Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, a terrorist organization led by Azhar Akhtar, plan to attack India, targeting the Srinagar Air Force Station base of the Indian Air Force.

Group captain Rakesh "Rocky" Jai Singh is assigned to counter the threat and forms a team called "Air Dragons" consisting of skilled fighter pilots. The team includes Squadron Leaders Shamsheer "Patty" Pathania, Minal "Minni" Rathore, Sartaj "Taj" Gill, Basheer "Bash" Khan, and Sukhdeep "Sukhi" Singh. During training, the team members bond, and Minni develops

Fighter	
	
Theatrical release poster	
Directed by	Siddharth Anand
Story by	Ramon Chibb Siddharth Anand
Screenplay by	Ramon Chibb
Dialogues by	Hussain Dalal Abbas Dalal Biswapati Sarkar
Produced by	Mamta Anand Ajit Andhare Anku Pande Ramon Chibb Kevin Vaz
Starring	Hrithik Roshan Deepika Padukone Anil Kapoor
Cinematography	Satchith Paulose
Edited by	Aarif Sheikh
Music by	Score:

romantic feelings for Patty. However, Patty is haunted by his past after he lost his fiancée in a previous mission. The team learn of an attack on CRPF soldiers in Pulwama, organized by Akhtar.

In response, the Indian Air Force, along with RAW agent Zarina Begum, plan a counterattack on Akhtar's base in Balakot. Despite succeeding in the mission, the aftermath causes conflict between India and Pakistan. The Pakistani Air Force launch a retaliatory attack on Indian base as a result. Despite Rocky's orders, Patty, Taj, and Bash cross the Indo-Pakistan border. Taj and Bash's plane is shot down by Pakistani pilots leading to them getting captured. Patty is suspended from the Air Dragons for disobeying orders and is placed as a flying instructor at the Air Force Academy in Hyderabad. It is revealed to Minni by Rocky that he holds a grudge against Patty for letting his fiancée, Naina Jai Singh (revealed to be Rocky's younger sister), die in a previous rescue mission.

The Pakistani government announce that they will be escorting Taj and Bash safely back to India. However, as the team wait for them to arrive, Sukhi tells Patty that Bash was brutally murdered by Akhtar and have imprisoned a badly injured Taj. Determined to rescue him, Patty defies orders and joins a covert mission. The team successfully infiltrate the enemy territory and Patty is able to rescue Taj and kill Akhtar. In the end, Minni and Patty embrace, celebrating their victory.

	<u>Sanchit Balhara and Ankit Balhara</u> Songs: <u>Vishal–Shekhar</u>
Production companies	<u>Viacom18 Studios</u> Marflix Pictures
Distributed by	Viacom18 Studios
Release date	25 January 2024
Running time	166 minutes ^[1]
Country	India
Language	Hindi
Budget	₹250 crore ^[2]
Box office	₹337.2 crore ^[3]

Cast

- Hrithik Roshan as Squadron Leader Shamsheer "Patty" Pathania (Shammi)^[10]
- Deepika Padukone as Squadron Leader Minal "Minni" Rathore^[11]
- Anil Kapoor as Group Captain Rakesh "Rocky" Jaisingh^[12]
- Karan Singh Grover as Squadron Leader Sartaj "Taj" Gill^[13]
- Akshay Oberoi as Squadron Leader Basheer "Bash" Khan^[14]
- Rishabh Sawhney as Azhar Akhtar
- Sanjeeda Sheikh as Saanchi Gill, Taj's wife
- Ashutosh Rana as Abhijeet Rathore, Minni's father (special appearance)
- Geeta Agrawal as Usha Rathore, Minni's mother
- Talat Aziz as Mr. Pathania, Patty's father
- Sharib Hashmi as Wing Commander Varthaman (character inspired from Abhinandan Varthaman)
- Sanjeev Jaiswal as Majeed Khan
- Baveen Singh as Squadron Leader Sukhdeep "Sukhi" Singh
- Mahesh Shetty as Squadron Leader Rajan "Unni" Unnithan
- Seerat Mast as Squadron Leader Naina "Enjay" Jaisingh, Rocky's sister and Patty's ex-fiancée
- Nishan Khanduja as Flying Officer Manoj "Birdie" Bhardwaj
- Chandan K Anand as Wing Commander Harish "Nauty" Nautiyal

- Mushtaq Kak as Maqsood Abrar
- Vinay Varma as Air Commodore Debyajyoti "Debu" Biswas
- Harish Khatri as Prime Minister of India
- Ramon Chibb as Air Commodore Abhijeet "Abhi" Bali, IAF Academy Chief Instructor
- Chandra Shekhar Dutta as RAW agent Zarina Begum
- Samvedna Suwalka as Bella Khan, Bash's wife
- Geeta Sodhi as Mrs. Khan, Bash's mother
- Gurmeet Chawla as Chief of the Air Staff

Production

Development

Siddharth Anand narrated the idea of making a big-budget action thriller against the backdrop of fighter jets while shooting the film War (2019). Hrithik Roshan loved the basic premise of the story. During COVID-19 lockdown in India, Anand worked on developing the story further and narrated it to Roshan, who later confirmed for the film. In December 2020, it was reported that Siddharth Anand and Hrithik Roshan are going to reunite for a film after War (2019).^[15]

Fighter was officially announced on 10 January 2021, on the occasion of Hrithik Roshan's birthday.^[16] The film is the India's first aerial action film.^[17] It is the first installment in its franchise.^[18] The film is produced by Siddharth Anand, Jyoti Deshpande, Ajit Andhare, Mamta Anand, Ramon Chibb and Anku Pande under banners Viacom18 Studios and Marflix Pictures.^{[19][20]} The film was made on a budget of ₹250 crore.^{[21][22]}



Fighter director Siddharth Anand in 2016

The film is designed for a global audience, and would involve the use of latest technology and filming techniques.^[23]

Pre-production

Ramon Chibb, an ex-army officer and writer, wrote the story with help of Siddharth Anand.^[24] Later, Anand and his team of writers developed a screenplay of the film in the lockdown under the supervision of Hrithik Roshan.^[25] Akshay Oberoi said that the film has "much heavier" action scenes than Pathaan (2023).^[26] Anand further retained most of his norm technicians including cinematographer Satchith Paulose, editor Aarif Sheikh, stunt choreographer SeYeong Oh, and action director Sunil Rodrigues.^{[27][28]} Raj Khatri designed posters of the film.^[29]

In September 2022, Roshan started taking workshops and had continued 12-week simulator training and learned the nuances of playing a fighter jet pilot.^[30] His training was supervised by Kris Gethin, developing his abdominal muscles and losing weight.^[31] In November, he visited air base and the Air Force training academy in Telangana, and also spent time with the pilots and cadets to observe their demeanour and understand the way that they function.^[32]

Real-life Indian Air Force cadets have worked for the film. They were flown in from the air force headquarters in Delhi and Dundigal Air Force Academy near Hyderabad.^[33]

Casting

In January 2021, Deepika Padukone and Hrithik Roshan were officially announced as the leads marking their maiden film together.^[34] Roshan portrays Patty, an air force officer.^[35] Roshan revealed his character as "young, spontaneous and short-tempered".^[36] Padukone also plays an air force officer and has several action sequences in the film.^{[37][38]} Both Padukone and Roshan took martial arts training for their roles.^[39] Anil Kapoor joined the cast in December 2021.^[40] Karan Singh Grover and Akshay Oberoi were roped in by November 2022.^[41] In March 2023, Talat Aziz joined the cast to play role of Patty's father in the film.^[42] In May 2023, Sanjeeda Sheikh was confirmed to play a key role.^[43]

Filming



Part of the film was shot at Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir.

Principal photography began on 14 November 2022 in Assam.^[44] Roshan, Padukone, and Kapoor joined in the schedule, that took place in Tezpur Air Force Station.^[45] The team returned to Mumbai on 28 November 2022 after wrapping the 10-day first schedule in Assam.^{[46][47]}

For the second schedule, the team moved to Jammu and Kashmir on 6 February 2023. Akshay Oberoi also joined this schedule.^[48] The team returned to Mumbai on 12 February, after filming at Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir, where a song and few action sequences choreographed by Sunil Rodrigues, were shot.^[28]

The third schedule was held at Dundigal Air Force Academy in Hyderabad, to shoot Roshan's character, as an Air Force cadet undergoing training.^[49] The third schedule was wrapped in Hyderabad on 6 March.^{[50][51]}

On 19 March, Roshan began filming in a Chembur bungalow for the fourth schedule, in Mumbai. In this schedule, Talat Aziz joined and a few emotional scenes were shot.^[52] It was reported that the month long schedule would end on 24 April.^[53] Kapoor, via Instagram, shared a behind-the-scenes video of his workout in -110 degrees Celsius for the schedule.^[54] The team also shot a 25-minute long climactic scene that includes an action sequence,^[55] which reportedly took 120 hours (5 days) to shoot.^[56]

For the next schedule, production designer Rajat Poddarr and his team built an expansive set that housed the interiors of an air force base, classrooms, and offices at Yash Raj Studios, in Mumbai.^[57] On 14 May, the next schedule was started with Padukone, Roshan, Kapoor and Grover joining the schedule.^[58] On 19 May, the team shot combination scenes of Padukone and Kapoor at Mysore Colony, Chembur over 3 days.^[59] From 22 May, emotional scenes between Padukone and Roshan were shot in Chandivali, with only 20–30 extras to avoid the film's footage leaks online.^[60]

The Mumbai schedule was completed in mid-June.^[60] Roshan shot inside an Sukhoi Su-30MKI for over 12 days.^{[61][62]} Dramatic scenes between Roshan and Kapoor was shot in late August in Mumbai.^[63] In early September, a song featuring Roshan, Padukone, along with the entire cast, choreographed by the duo

Bosco–Caesar, was shot at Yash Raj Studios.^[64] Later in early October, the team wrapped two songs in Sardinia, Italy.^[65] Principal photography wrapped by 30 October 2023 at Yash Raj Studios, with filming having lasted 87 working days.^[66]

Post-production

Post-production for the film begin by early-June 2023, once the film completed its shooting and was going for six months as the film involved extensive computer graphics and visual effects.^[67] The VFX work of the film was done by DNEG.^[68]

Soundtrack

The original songs for the film were composed by Vishal-Shekhar whereas the original score was written by Sanchit Balhara and Ankit Balhara.^[69] The album consists of six songs, including one emotional song.^[70] The music rights are bagged by T-Series. The first single titled "Sher Khul Gaye" was released on 15 December 2023.^[71] The second single titled "Ishq Jaisa Kuch" was released on 22 December 2023.^[72] The third single titled "Heer Aasmani" was released on 8 January 2023.^[73]

Marketing and release

The teaser of the film was released on 8 December 2023.^[74] The official trailer of the film was released on 15 January 2024.^[75]

Fighter was released on 25 January 2024, coinciding with the Republic Day.^[76] Earlier in January 2021, it was announced that the film was going to release on 30 September 2022.^[77] In October 2022, the release date was announced as 25 January 2024.^[78] The film was banned across the countries of the GCC.^{[79][80]}



Roshan and Padukone promoting the film in 2024

Home media

The film premiered on Netflix on 21 March 2024.^[81]

Reception

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 33% of 24 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5.4/10.^[82]

India Today gave the film 4/5 stars and praised the action and performances.^[83] *The Times of India* gave the film 3.5/5 stars praising the performances and technical aspects.^[84] NDTV.com gave the film 2.5/5 stars praising the technical aspects but criticized the cliched storyline.^[85] *Hindustan Times* wrote "Watch *Fighter* for a pure paisa vasool experience, good looking performances and some gravity defying aerial action that

won't give you a headache but leave you with a sense of pride."^[86] *The Indian Express* gave the film 2.5/5 stars and criticized the film's excessive jingoism.^[87] *Film Companion* gave a negative review criticising the storyline and dialogues.^[88]

Box office

As of 8 March 2024, *Fighter* has grossed ₹237.44 crore (US\$30 million) in India, with a further ₹99.76 crore (US\$12 million) in overseas, for a worldwide total of ₹337.2 crore (US\$42 million).^[3]

On its opening weekend, it topped the global box-office with a gross of \$25 million, including debuting at the top-spot at the *New Zealand box-office*.^{[89][90]}

Future

While writing the script, makers decided to make it a franchise.^[91] In May 2023, it was reported that production of the sequel film *Fighter 2* would begin after Anand finished shooting *Tiger vs Pathaan*.^[92]

See also

- *Operation Valentine*, another 2024 Indian film with a similar theme.^[93]

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