

Khufiya

Khufiya (transl. Secret) is a 2023 Hindi-language spy thriller film written, produced and directed by Vishal Bhardwaj.^[1] The film is based on Amar Bhushan's espionage novel *Escape to Nowhere*. It stars Tabu, Ali Fazal, and Wamiqa Gabbi.^{[2][3]} The film was released on 5 October 2023 on Netflix.^[4]

Plot

During the post-Kargil War period, Heena Rehman, who is a Bangladeshi woman supposed to be working for ISI, is killed by Bangladeshi defense minister Mirza at a party held at his house, after Mirza receives some information over the phone.

In India, Krishna "KM" Mehra, who is an operative at the Research & Analysis Wing is devastated to know of Heena's death because she used to be her lover for a brief time, and Heena was in fact working for R&AW, and she attempted to kill Mirza for R&AW. KM's boss Jeev tells her that there is a mole in R&AW office who leaked the information leading to Heena's death. KM is assigned to track down this mole selling India's defense secrets. She establishes that R&AW employee Ravi, whose lavish lifestyle does not match his income, must be the mole and suspects his wife Charu to be his partner in delivering secrets. KM and Jeev obtain permission to have Ravi's house electronically bugged. After some surveillance, they discover that Ravi is working for the CIA at his money-hungry mother's insistence, and that Charu is innocent.

In the meantime, Jeev discovers that Heena's death was caused not just due to Ravi leaking information to the CIA (who in turn leaked it to Mirza), but because the Minister of Home Affairs had to reveal that information to CIA to prevent the USA from cancelling its nuclear deal with India. Despite being appalled that his boss let one of his assets die for keeping the nuclear deal, Jeev decides keep this a secret to avoid further complications.

Meanwhile Ravi discovers the cameras in his house and tries to flee along with his family. Charu is appalled to discover that Ravi is a double agent and refuses to accompany him and refuses to let him take away her son. Ravi's mother shoots Charu in the process but Charu survives as KM's team reaches there on time and gets her to the hospital. When Charu recovers, she understands that Ravi has taken their son with him and along with his mother, has

Khufiya



Official release poster

Directed by	<u>Vishal Bhardwaj</u>
Written by	Rohan Narula Vishal Bhardwaj
Based on	<i>Escape to Nowhere</i> by Amar Bhushan
Produced by	Vishal Bhardwaj <u>Rekha Bhardwaj</u>
Starring	<u>Tabu</u> <u>Ali Fazal</u> <u>Wamiqa Gabbi</u> <u>Azmeri Haque</u> <u>Badhon</u>
Cinematography	Farhad Ahmed Dehlvi
Edited by	<u>A. Sreekar Prasad</u>

sought refuge in the US. Charu begs KM to get her son back for her. KM trains Charu and sends her to the US. Charu discovers Ravi, his mother, and her son, and starts to blend back in to the family and make Ravi and his mother believe that she just wants to be with them.

In the past, KM finds herself getting drawn to Heena (Azmeri Haque Bandhon) but distances herself after discovering her true identity of a double agent, working for ISI while working for R&AW. When confronted by KM, Heena says she joined with ISI only to extract information for R&AW. KM doesn't believe her and feels she betrayed KM's love and trust. To prove her love, Heena accepts a suicide mission from Jeev to kill Brigadier Mirza, the Bangladeshi defence minister. But Heena's plan is compromised when Ravi reveals it to CIA and CIA reveals it to Mirza. Heena gets killed by Brigadier Mirza after he finds out there was poison in the perfume bottle she gifted him.

Ravi & his family, who are now living poor as refugees in the U.S. state of South Dakota, are given the opportunity by KM to return to India as heroes if they kill Brigadier Mirza. While Mirza is on a friendly visit to Ravi's home, Ravi, Charu, and Ravi's mother attempt to poison and kill him. But he senses a ploy and kills Ravi's mother. An angry Ravi hits Mirza's head against the wall and renders him unconscious. KM coerces the CIA's undercover psychiatric doctor who was acting as Ravi's handler, and Mirza's death is staged as an accidental death from a head injury caused by slipping in the bathtub of his hotel. Ravi and family is deported to India and they begin anew. At Charu's advice, KM calls her estranged teenage son to reveal the reason for her divorce from his father – because she is a lesbian.

Music by	Vishal Bhardwaj
Production company	VB Films Production
Distributed by	<u>Netflix</u>
Release date	5 October 2023
Running time	157 minutes
Country	India
Language	Hindi

Cast

- Tabu as Krishna Mehra alias *Ms.KM*
- Ali Fazal as Capt Ravi Devilal Mohan, son of the late Lt.Col.Devilal Kantilal Mohan, an ex-Indian army man
- Wamiqa Gabbi as Charu Ravi Mohan, Ravi's wife
- Ashish Vidyarthi as Jeev Bonda, Krishna's boss
- Atul Kulkarni as Shashank Kantilal Mehra, Krishna's ex-husband
- Navnindra Behl as Lalita Devilal Mohan, Ravi's mother
- Shataf Figar as Brigadier Saqlain Mirza, 9th artillery brigade, Savar, Bangladesh Army
- Azmeri Haque Badhon as Heena Papon Rehman alias "Octopus" (Krishna's protégé)
- Alexx O'Neil as Dr. David White
- Lalit Parimoo as Home Minister Narendra Devendra Mishra
- Rahul Vohra as Wasan Tumuk Shet
- Disney James as Kutty George
- Jan Graveson as Rachel McClane
- Meet Vohra as Vikram Shashank Mehra, Krishna's son
- Shashi Bhushan as Michael Michaels
- Monica Rae as Dr. David White's wife
- Rosabelle Folk as Rose White, Dr. David White's daughter

- Rahul Ram as His Holiness Adhunik Sant Shri. Yāra Baba aka Yāra Ji

Production

The film was officially announced in September 2021. Tabu, Ali Fazal and Wamiqa Gabbi were cast in primarily roles, with Bangladeshi actress Azmeri Haque Badhon making her Hindi film debut.^{[5][6]} Principal photography began in October 2021 with a schedule in Delhi.^{[7][8]} The film final schedule commenced from April 2022 in Canada.^{[9][10][11]}

Soundtrack

The music of the film is composed by Vishal Bhardwaj, with lyrics by Bhardwaj, Gulzar, Sant Rahim and Sant Kabir.^{[12][13]}

No.	Title	Lyrics	Singer(s)	Length
1.	"Dil Dushman"	<u>Gulzar</u>	<u>Arijit Singh</u>	3:22
2.	"Mat Aana"	<u>Vishal Bhardwaj</u>	<u>Rekha Bhardwaj</u> , <u>Nilandri Kumar</u>	4:46
3.	"Na Hosh Chale, Pt. 1"	<u>Gulzar</u>	<u>Arijit Singh</u>	3:57
4.	"Bujhee Bujhee"	Sant Rahim	<u>Rahul Ram</u> , <u>Jyoti Nooran</u>	5:00
5.	"Tanhai"	<u>Gulzar</u>	<u>Vishal Bhardwaj</u> , <u>Kiran</u> , <u>Nivi</u>	4:51
6.	"Mann Na Rangaave"	Sant Kabir	<u>Rahul Ram</u>	3:19
7.	"Dil Dushman (Female)"	<u>Gulzar</u>	<u>Sunidhi Chauhan</u>	3:00
8.	"Tanhai (Female)"	<u>Gulzar</u>	<u>Sunidhi Chauhan</u>	3:17
9.	"Na Hosh Chale, Pt. 2"	<u>Gulzar</u>	<u>Vishal Bhardwaj</u>	4:01
			Total length:	35:00

<i>Khufiya</i>	
Soundtrack album by <u>Vishal Bhardwaj</u>	
Released	September 26, 2023
Genre	<u>Feature film soundtrack</u>
Length	35:00
Language	Hindi
Label	VB Music

Marketing and release

In September 2021, a short clip of the film was released from Netflix Tudum: A Global Fan Event.^[14] The film was released on 5 October 2023 on Netflix.^[4]

The story has an eerie resemblance to a real life spy Rabinder Singh of R&AW and his shifting to New Jersey in early 2010s. Rabinder Singh died in a road accident after spending all his monies and not having a job.^[15]

Reception

Saibal Chatterjee of NDTV Gave 3.5 stars out of 5 and write in his reviews that Khufiya doesn't include anything that is especially or purposefully obscure. Still, with little suspense left, Netflix espionage thriller created and produced by Vishal Bhardwaj depends on the hidden, private aspects of the lives of three alluring women and a cunning man as they navigate the geopolitical whirlwind that is the aftermath of the Kargil War. Therefore, it is only to be anticipated that Khufiya would use well-established storytelling principles to create a movie that is as interested in exploring character features as it is in juggling plot details to create tension and suspense. The assured movie, which was superbly performed in and directed with a noteworthy light touch, succeeds on every level without drawing attention to its outstanding technical accomplishments. ^[16]

Dhaval Roy of The Times of India gave 4 stars out of 5 and said "The writer-director Vishal Bhardwaj is a master of telling stories, and one of his specialties is delivering up tense and cutting narratives. And he doesn't disappoint in his most recent work, which is partially based on Amar Bhushan's novel *Escape to Nowhere* from 2012. The fictitious tale, which takes place in the early 2000s, just after the Kargil War, contains all the essential components of an espionage thriller. A fascinating story about Krishna Mehra, or KM (Tabu), who is on a mission to apprehend traitor agent Ravi (Ali Fazal), who is accountable for her asset's death in Dhaka, Bangladesh, flawlessly transitions from the beautiful start." ^[17]

Anuj Kumar writes in The Hindu that "There are sections in Khufiya that will give anyone interested in geopolitics chills, especially given that they come at a time when India and Canada are embroiled in a diplomatic dispute and the role of American intelligence services is once again under scrutiny." But because Vishal enjoys moving from an exterior to an inward inquiry, Khufiya is more than simply a cat-and-mouse game played in South Block and the alleyways of Delhi and Dhaka. The Urdu word for "secret" refers to more than just the effort that intelligence organizations put into maintaining tabs on their targets. It is about the secrets we keep in our hearts and the masks we wear to hide who we are. ^[18]

Sukanya Verma of Rediff.com said Khufiya is unified by a shared goal where a mother's trip, a lover's vengeance, and a nation's mission converge and show the essence of the espionage industry amid geopolitical instability, warped patriotism, and moral disengagement. And it's everything from glamorous. Their greatest weapon is patience since they operate covertly. The workaholic spies in Khufiya are just like 9-to-5 office workers; they become upset when a leave is shortened and are constantly late for family events. You can count on Bhardwaj to depict the banal particulars of their daily lives with his distinct humour. ^[19]

Lachmi Deb Roy of Firstpost wrote about the film praised the film and said "Vishal Bhardwaj, a brilliant director, made his Netflix debut with Khufiya. The movie is on the convoluted dual lives of spies and is based on the book "*Escape To Nowhere*" by Amar Bhushan, the former head of counter-espionage of India's foreign intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). Known for turning novels into films, Bhardwaj did a fantastic job this time." ^[20]

Prannay Pathak of Hindustan Times criticises the film and writes Vishal Bhardwaj's most recent spy thriller falls flat despite an always engaging Tabu. Espionage drama is one of the genres that draw viewers in the quickest, but it's also one of the most challenging to do well. The next film from Vishal Bhardwaj, Khufiya, which is inspired on the novel *Escape to Nowhere* by former R&AW employee Amar Bhushan, never quite fits. ^[21]

Shubhra Gupta of Indian Express criticized the film and wrote that "We needed more Tabu in this film. We needed more of the older Vishal Bhardwaj who used to make things sing." She rated the movie 2 stars out of 5 and ended the review saying "We needed more of the older Bhardwaj who makes things sing."^[22]

Umesh Punwani from Koimoi gave the film a 3 out of 5 and said "All said and done, yes, there are flaws, but they won't completely stop you from immersing yourself into this till the last moment, only if you don't really mind the VB-styled slow burners".^[23]

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External links

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