

Neeraj Pandey

Neeraj Pandey (born 17 December 1973) is an Indian film director, producer and screenwriter who works in Hindi cinema. Pandey made his directoral debut in *A Wednesday!*, which was largely praised by critics and which later became a recipient of many accolades.^[1] His second film was *Special 26* (2013), which was followed by *Baby* (2015), both of them received critical acclaim and became commercial success. He served as a producer in *Rustom* (2016). Pandey returned to directing in 2016 helming the biopic movie *M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story* based on Indian cricketer M.S.Dhoni which fared well critically and commercially. Besides being a filmmaker, Pandey is also a writer and has written a novel named *Ghalib Danger* in 2013.^[2]

In 2016, his production house Friday Filmworks entered into a joint venture with Reliance Entertainment and formed Plan C Studios.

He has also directed a Web Short 'Ouch' with Manoj Bajpayee and Pooja Chopra which is nominated for Filmfare Short Film Award 2017. He was the co-producer of the film *Toilet- Ek Prem Katha*. His next release was *Aiyaary* which starred Sidharth Malhotra and Manoj Bajpayee and was both critically and commercially unsuccessful, becoming his first failed venture.

In March 2020, Neeraj Pandey presented and directed his first web series *Special Ops* on Hotstar.^{[3][4][5]} The eight episode series, the first production of Friday Storytellers, the digital arm of Friday Filmworks, was extremely well received by the critics. He is currently working on his next feature film *Chanakya*.^[6]

Neeraj Pandey



Pandey in 2020

Born	17 December 1973 <div>Howrah, West Bengal</div>
Occupations	<u>Director</u> · <u>writer</u> · <u>producer</u>
Years active	2008-present
Notable work	<u>A Wednesday</u> · <u>Special 26</u> · <u>Baby</u> · <u>M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story</u>

Early life and education

Pandey was born and brought up in Howrah, West Bengal.^[7] His father is originally from Arrah, Bihar but worked for Bosch in Calcutta.^[8] He did his schooling from St. Aloysius High School, Howrah (till Class X) and then St. Thomas' High School, Dasnagar, Howrah (Class XI and XII).^[9] Pandey moved to New Delhi, where he graduated in English from Sri Aurobindo College, a constituent of University of New Delhi.^[10]

Career

Pandey started his career working with Delhi-based 'Legacy Entertainment', a company started by the Dalmia Group to make television programs.

In 2000, he moved to Mumbai, where a friend got a grant to produce a documentary, and offered him the project.^[11] Soon he started making documentaries and ad films. Thereafter, he formed a production company 'Quarter Inch Productions', along with his colleague Shital Bhatia which specialized in making television programmes, ad films and documentaries. In 2008, Neeraj and Shital Bhatia formed a production house named Friday Filmworks, which was the original producer of his debut film, *A Wednesday!*. The film's script was inspired by the 11 July 2006 Mumbai train bombings.^[12]

In 2011, Pandey produced the film *Taryanche Bait*.

After directing his first movie in 2008, Pandey directed his second movie Special 26 in 2013, starring Akshay Kumar and Kajal Aggarwal. Neeraj is very fluent in Bengali and also produced a Bengali film, *The Royal Bengal Tiger* in 2014. In the same year he also produced the film *Total Siyappa* starring Yami Gautam and Ali Zafar. In 2015, he directed the movie *Baby* starring Akshay Kumar.^[13] In 2016, he produced the film *Saat Uchakkey* which was a comedy film starring Manoj Bajpayee, Kay Kay Menon and Aditi Sharma.

In 2016, Anil Ambani-owned Reliance Entertainment announced a joint venture with Pandey and Friday Filmworks to form Plan C studios for production of films. Akshay Kumar starrer *Rustom* was the first film for the company. It is an equal partnership joint venture between the two.

Pandey has also written his debut novel titled *Ghalib Danger* which was launched on 6 December 2013. The novel is soon going to be made into a motion picture.

In 2017, having co-produced *Toilet- Ek Prem Katha*, a satirical take on the open defecation scenario in India went on to become a critically acclaimed movie.

He has also directed the short film *Ouch* with Manoj Bajpayee and Pooja Chopra which is nominated for the Filmfare Short Film Award 2017.

His next release was *Aiyaary* which starred Sidharth Malhotra and Manoj Bajpayee and was both critically and commercially flop emerging as his first failure. This film was written, directed by himself and produced under the banner of Plan C Studios, the film was an action thriller on the Indian borders. Malhotra and Bajpayee played the lead characters Jai Bakshi and Abhay Singh respectively. Naseeruddin Shah reunited with the filmmaker after their first venture, *A Wednesday!*. The film was based on true incidents, a theme seen in several of his previous films as well.

In March 2020, Pandey presented and directed his first web series *Special Ops* on *Hotstar*. The eight episode series, the first production of Friday Storytellers, the digital arm of Friday Filmworks, was extremely well received by the critics.

Currently, he is working on his next film, a full length feature film, Chanakya. This will be his first association with Ajay Devgn.^[6]

Filmography

Year	Title	Director	Producer	Writer
2008	<u>A Wednesday</u>	✓	✓	✓
2011	<u>Taryanche Bait</u>		✓	
2013	<u>Special 26</u>	✓		✓
2014	<u>The Royal Bengal Tiger</u>		✓	✓
	<u>Total Siyapaa</u>		✓	✓
2015	<u>Baby</u>	✓		✓
2016	<u>Rustom</u>		✓	
	<u>M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story</u>	✓		✓
	<u>Saat Uchakkey</u>		✓	
2017	<u>Naam Shabana</u>		✓	✓
	<u>Toilet: Ek Prem Katha</u>		✓	
2018	<u>Aiyaary</u>	✓	✓	✓
	<u>Missing</u>		✓	
2022	<u>Operation Romeo</u>		✓	
	<u>Vikram Vedha</u>		✓	✓
2023	<u>Chengiz</u>			✓

Television

Year	Title	Creator	Director	Producer	Writer	Notes
2020–present	<u>Special OPS</u>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2021	<u>Secrets of Sinauli</u>			✓		Documentary
	<u>Special Ops 1.5: The Himmat Story</u>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2022	<u>Secrets of the Kohinoor</u>	✓				Documentary
	<u>Bando Me Tha Dum</u>		✓			
	<u>Khakee: The Bihar Chapter</u>	✓			✓	
2023	<u>The Freelancer</u>	✓			✓	
2024	<u>Khakee: The Bengal Chapter</u>	✓			✓	

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Awards and nominations

Film	Award Name	Year	Status	Notes
<i>A Wednesday!</i>	National Film Awards - Best First Film of a Director	2008	Won	[14]
	54th Filmfare Awards - Best Director	2009	Nominated	
	Star Screen Awards - Best Film, Best Story, Best Director, Most Promising Debut Director		Won	
	Star Screen Awards - Best Screenplay, Best Dialogue		Nominated	
	IIFA Awards - Best Story, Best Dialogue		Won	
<i>Rustom</i>	Zee Cine Awards - Best Film	2017	Nominated	
	Stardust Awards - Best Film of the Year		Nominated	
<i>Special Ops</i> ^[15]	Filmfare OTT Awards - Best Director	2020	Nominated	

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