

Dunki (film)

Dunki^[b] is a 2023 Indian Hindi-language comedy drama film based on the illegal immigration technique called "donkey flight". The film is co-written, co-produced, edited and directed by Rajkumar Hirani, under Rajkumar Hirani Films, along with Jio Studios and Red Chillies Entertainment. It stars Shah Rukh Khan, Taapsee Pannu, Vicky Kaushal (billed as a special appearance) and Boman Irani.

The film was officially announced in April 2022. Principal photography began the same month and occurred sporadically in several legs. It wrapped by late-April 2023, and filming locations included Mumbai, Jabalpur, Kashmir, Budapest, London, Jeddah and Neom. The film has music composed by Pritam and Shekhar Ravjiani, background score composed by Aman Pant, cinematography handled by C. K. Muraleedharan, Manush Nandan, Amit Roy, and editing by the director Rajkumar Hirani.

Dunki was theatrically released worldwide on 21 December 2023. it received mixed-to-positive reviews from both critics and audiences, alike. It has grossed around ₹470.6 crore worldwide against a production and marketing budget of ₹120 crore (US\$15 million), emerging as the fifth highest-grossing Hindi film of 2023 and the ninth highest-grossing Indian film of 2023. At the 69th Filmfare Awards, the film received nine nominations, and won Best Supporting Actor for Kaushal. [6]

Plot

In 2020, an elderly Manu Randhawa runs away from a <u>hospital</u> in <u>London</u> (UK) and meets immigration lawyer Puru Patel. Puru connects her with her ex-lover Hardayal "Hardy" Singh Dhillon in <u>Laltu</u>, <u>Punjab</u>. Hardy is ecstatic to receive her call after 25 years. She asks him to meet her in <u>Dubai</u> (UAE) so he can bring her back to India through the <u>Dunki</u> route as she is unable to get an Indian visa.

In 1995, Manu and her friends Buggu and Balli, live in Laltu and yearn to immigrate to London for a better life. Poor and uneducated, they are unable to procure a <u>visa</u> until Hardy, a former Soldier, arrives in their village. Manu's brother Mahinder

Dunki



Theatrical release poster

Theatrical release poster		
Directed by	Rajkumar Hirani	
Written by	Rajkumar Hirani	
	Abhijat Joshi	
	Kanika Dhillon	
Produced by	Jyoti Deshpande	
	Gauri Khan	
	Gaurav Verma	
	Rajkumar Hirani	
Starring	Shah Rukh Khan	
	Taapsee Pannu ^[1]	
	Boman Irani	
	Anil Grover	
	Vikram Kochhar	
	Vicky Kaushal	
Narrated by	Vikram Kochhar	
Cinematography	<u>C. K.</u>	
	Muraleedharan	
	Manush Nandan	
	Amit Roy	
Edited by	Rajkumar Hirani	

had saved his life in combat but has since died in an accident, leaving Manu and her family in a poor financial situation. Hardy promises to help Manu reach London in return for her brother's kindness. Learning that passing the <u>IELTS</u> test makes it easier to get a UK student visa, they enroll in a coaching class handled by Geetu Gulati, where they meet Sukhi Singh. Sukhi wants to travel to London to save his ex-girlfriend, Jassi. She was married off to an <u>NRI</u> man who <u>physically abuses</u> her. Balli clears the exams but the rest fail.

Once in London, Balli tells Sukhi that Jassi has died by suicide due to which Sukhi <u>immolates himself</u>. Traumatised by his death, Hardy resolves to take Manu and Buggu to London himself through the *Dunki* route. After a treacherous journey through <u>Pakistan</u>, <u>Afghanistan</u>, <u>Iran</u> and <u>Turkey</u> during which three of their cohorts are killed, they reach London, where they meet Balli working as a <u>living statue</u>. They realise that Balli had lied to them about making it big in the UK; in reality, he is poor and lives with other illegal immigrants.

Lawyer Puru Patel advises Manu to do a <u>sham marriage</u> as an easy way to get UK citizenship. She reluctantly agrees to marry

Music by	Songs: Pritam Shekhar Ravjiani Background Score: Aman Pant	
Production companies	Jio Studios Red Chillies Entertainment Rajkumar Hirani Films	
Distributed by	see below	
Release date	21 December 2023	
Running time	161 minutes ^[2]	
Country	India	
Language	Hindi	
Budget	₹120 <u>crore^[a]</u>	
Box office	<u>est.</u> ₹470.6 crore ^[4]	

a drug addict. During the wedding, Hardy is enraged by the addict's attempt to kiss her, and they fight, resulting in their arrest. In court, Puru advises them to seek <u>right of asylum</u> to stay in the country by claiming that their lives are under threat in India. As an ex-army soldier, Hardy refuses to betray his country, but the rest agree to get asylum and settle in <u>England</u>. Hardy is deported to India while the rest become British citizens.

Back in 2020, Manu tells Hardy that she wants to go back home as she is dying of a <u>brain tumor</u>. They try to leave for India via <u>cargo containers</u> and fool immigration officials into believing they are Indian citizens traveling illegally to London and steal the identity of the cohorts that died during their trip to London; they are thus <u>deported</u> to India. Once in Laltu, Manu is shocked to learn that Hardy never married out of love for her. Moments after he proposes, she dies from her ailment. Heartbroken, he puts the <u>engagement ring</u> in her hands and hugs her. After a few months, Hardy, Balli, and Buggu meet an agent who offers them to go to London through the Dunki route. Hardy throws him down on the ground and then all three of them walk away.

Cast

- Shah Rukh Khan as Hardayal "Hardy" Singh Dhillon
- Taapsee Pannu as Manu Randhawa
- Vicky Kaushal as Sukhi Singh
- Boman Irani as Geetendar "Geetu" Gulati
- Vikram Kochhar as Balindar "Buggu" Lakhanpal
- Anil Grover as Balli Kakkad
- Jyoti Subhash as Santosh Lakhanpal, Buggu's grandmother
- Deven Bhojani as Advocate Puru Patel

- Manoj Kant as Manu's father
 - Arun Bali as Manu's older father
- Amardeep Jha as Manu's mother
- Suhail Zargar as Mahinder Randhawa, Manu's brother
- Jaanvi Sangwan as Mahinder's wife
- Vishnu Kaushal as Gulab Nagra
- Komal Sachdeva as Chameli Nagra
- Diwanshu Gambhir as Parminder "Pumpi" Dingra
- Rohitashv Gour as a Fake Visa Agent at Laltu
- Piyush Raina as Owner of Bobby dhaba
- Jitendra Hooda as an Indian Dunki Agent
- Mushari Alatawi as an Iranian Dunki agent
- Shahid Latief as Bakir, a Saudi Arabian Dunki Agent
- Mahavir Bhullar as Buggu's father
- Sapna Sand as Buggu's mother
- Jatinder Kaur as Balli's mother
- Jeremy Wheeler as a British Judge
- Jay Miller as Church Priest
- Arpa Attila as Buggu's manager in London
- Richard B. Klein as IELTS Examiner
- Daniel Short as a Junkie groom
- Nikhil Ratnaparkhi as a thief at Laltu Railway Station
- Karim Saidi as Officer Omar Abbassi
- Ranjha Vikram Singh as a Shop purchaser
- Gurpreet Ghuggi as a Co-passenger at Laltu Railway Station
- Vijayant Kohli as the Man whom Hardy wrongly assumes as Chaddha
- Vivek Sharma as Dunki Agent in last scene

Production

Development

In late November 2020, <u>Rajkumar Hirani</u>, who had previously approached <u>Shah Rukh Khan</u> for the roles in the films <u>Munna Bhai M.B.B.S.</u> (2003) and <u>3 Idiots</u> (2009), which were rejected by Khan, was reported to join hands with the latter for his next directorial. Hirani narrated the story to Khan during the <u>COVID-19 lockdown</u> in 2020. The film marks Khan's first collaboration with Hirani. By August 2021, the screenplay was completed and the film was announced in April 2022. Hirani co-wrote the film with <u>Abhijat Joshi</u> and <u>Kanika Dhillon</u>. Cinematographer Amit Roy was chosen first, but he left the film due to creative differences with Hirani and was replaced by <u>C. K. Muraleedharan</u>. This marks his fourth collaboration with Hirani after <u>Lage Raho Munna Bhai</u> (2006), 3 Idiots and <u>PK</u> (2014). As per reports Manush Nandan, Amit Roy and Kumar Pankaj also worked on the film as cinematographers.

Casting

<u>Mukesh Chhabra</u> was the casting director. <u>[14]</u> <u>Taapsee Pannu</u> was cast as the female lead in January 2021 marking her first onscreen collaboration with Khan. Khan's Red Chillies Entertainment produced her film <u>Badla</u> (2019). <u>[15][16]</u> Vicky Kaushal was announced to be playing a significant role in the film. <u>[17]</u> <u>Boman</u> Irani joined the cast in October 2022. <u>[18]</u>

Filming

Principal photography commenced in April 2022 in Mumbai. [19][20] The Mumbai schedule ended in June 2022 and the international schedules commenced in July 2022. [21] Filming took place in Budapest and London in July 2022, [22] and was completed a month later. [23] A bike sequence featuring Khan was filmed in Mumbai in October 2022. [24] A 12-day schedule took place in November 2022 in Saudi Arabia, [25][26][27] which included the locations Jeddah and Neom. [28][29] A three-day schedule happened in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh in December 2022. [30] In January 2023, the underwater sequence featuring Khan was filmed in Mumbai. [31] Meanwhile, Khan who was also working on another project Jawan finished his shooting in April 2023. [32] The same month, the team moved to Kashmir for a four-day schedule that took place in Srinagar, Pampore, Sonamarg including Thajwas glacier and Pulwama. [33][34] A song sequence was shot in Kashmir choreographed by Ganesh Acharya. [35] The filming was wrapped up in Sonamarg, Kashmir by April 2023. [36] The film was shot over 75 days out of which Khan shot for 60 days. The film is reportedly budgeted at ₹120 crore, including the marketing cost. [3][37]

Soundtrack

The soundtrack is composed by <u>Pritam</u> and <u>Shekhar Ravjiani</u>, while background score is composed by Aman Pant. The first single titled "Lutt Putt Gaya" was released on 22 November 2023. The second single titled "Nikle The Kabhi Hum Ghar Se" was released on 1 December 2023. The third single titled "O Maahi" was released on 11 December 2023. The fourth single titled "Banda" was released on 18 December 2023. The <u>soundtrack album</u> featuring eight songs was released by <u>T-Series</u> on 18 December 2023.

Marketing

The film's teaser titled "*Dunki*: Drop 1" was released on 2 November 2023 coinciding with Khan's 58th birthday. In all, 8 "Drops" were released one after another. Drop 2 was released on 22 November as the song "Lutt Putt Gaya". Drop 3 was released on 1 December as the song "Nikle The Kabhi Hum Ghar Se". The film's trailer titled "*Dunki*: Drop 4" was released on 5 December 2023. Drop 5 was released on 11 December as the song "O Maahi". A promotional event was held in <u>Dubai</u> on 17 December. Drop 6 was released on 18 December as the song "Banda". Drop 7" was released on 27 December as the song "Main Tera Rasta Dekhunga". Drop 8" was released on 4 January 2024 as the song "Chal ve Watna".

Release

Theatrical

Distribution

<u>Pen Studios</u> acquired the theatrical rights for <u>North India</u> and <u>West India</u> under the <u>Pen Marudhar Entertainment</u> banner. Sree Gokulam Movies acquired theatrical distribution rights of the film in <u>Tamil Nadu</u> and <u>Kerala</u>, <u>Bajshri Pictures</u> distributed it in <u>Andhra Pradesh</u> and <u>Telangana</u>. Mysore territory rights was acquired by Panorama Studios. SVF acquired the theatrical rights for West Bengal.

The overseas distribution rights were sold to $\underline{\text{Yash Raj Films}}$. Home Screen Entertainment bought Singapore distribution rights of the film, while Lighthouse Distribution acquired the distribution rights for Spain. Action Cut Entertainment distributed the film in Bangladesh.

Home media

The combined value of the digital, satellite, and music rights of the film was ₹230 crore. [64] The film was premiered on Netflix on 15 February 2024. [65]

Reception

Critical response

On the <u>review aggregator</u> website <u>Rotten Tomatoes</u>, 48% of 23 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 6/10. The website's consensus reads: "*Dunki*'s got good intentions and no shortage of heart, but its uneven tonal blend and shallow treatment of serious themes undermines the intended effect." [66]

Tushar Joshi of $\underline{India\ Today}$ gave 4/5 stars and wrote " \underline{Dunki} might not be Hirani's best work in comparison to $\underline{3\ Idiots}$ or \underline{PK} , but it still entertains and leaves you with a warm and fuzzy feeling". Sreeparna Sengupta of $\underline{The\ Times\ of\ India}$ also gave 4/5 stars and wrote, " \underline{Dunki} 's story is an emotional one - rolling in friendship, romance, heart-wrenching and heart-warming moments all into one. And in trademark Hirani style, there are dollops of comedy which is laced with satire to make it an entertaining ride, along with the strong message the film brings forth". A reviewer for $\underline{Pinkvilla}$ considered it "a modern-day classic", but was critical of the film's pace. A reviewer from $\underline{Bollywood\ Hungama}$ awarded the film 3.5/5 stars and wrote " \underline{Dunki} bears the Rajkumar Hirani stamp of filmmaking with the right message and emotions as a backdrop. However, it is not as outstanding as his previous films as the writing plays spoilsport to a great extent." Devesh Sharma was pleased by the film's messaging of "a world beyond borders", and praised the performances of Khan and Pannu. Monika Rawal Kukreja of $\underline{Hindustan\ Times}$ labelled it a "heartwarming tale that's high on emotions", but despite praising the performances of Khan and Pannu, she was displeased with their chemistry. Proma Khosla of $\underline{IndieWire}$ rated the film C+ and wrote "In the end, Dunki undermines its own messaging, sandwiching a series of informative cards about donkey flights between a rushed conclusion and comedic coda."

<u>NDTV</u>'s <u>Saibal Chatterjee</u> believed that the film's strength lay in its ability to not be in service of Khan's stardom, instead allowing the supporting cast to shine, particularly Vicky Kaushal. A reviewer for <u>Film Companion</u> also believed that Kaushal's special appearance had enhanced the "simplistic" film. Writing for <u>The Hindu</u>, Anuj Kumar considered *Dunki* "not the best of Hirani but has just about enough to make

you chuckle and churn". $\frac{[76]}{Mint\ Lounge}$'s Uday Bhatia compared it negatively to $\frac{The\ Dupes}{Mint\ Lounge}$ (1973), a Syrian film about border crossing, writing that unlike that film, Dunki "is only interested in illegal immigration and the refugee crisis to the extent that it allows Hirani and Khan to grandstand". $\frac{[77]}{Mint\ Lounge}$

<u>Sukanya Verma</u> of <u>Rediff.com</u> rated the film 2.5/5 and opined, "*Dunki* is high on ambition but its flimsy premise renders this nearly three hours long journey into farfetched adventures hard to believe, harder to buy into". Nandini Ramnath of <u>Scroll.in</u> dismissed the film as "flat and unfunny", adding that the "strangely anodyne film is briefly enlivened by Khan's dimpled charm and spirited turns by Taapsee Pannu, Vikram Kocchar and Anil Grover". Shubhra Gupta of *The Indian Express* gave 1.5/5 stars and criticised it as a "crashing bore" and considered it Hirani's weakest film.

Internationally, Manjusha Radhakrishnan of $\underline{Gulf\ News}$ rated the film 4/5 and wrote "Illegal immigration and unauthorised cross-border migrant crossings are grim issues, but director Rajkumar Hirani humanized them with an emotionally engaging tale". David Tusing of $\underline{The\ National}$ wrote "With Dunki, Khan takes on a poignant immigration tale with a whole lot of heart that's bound to strike a chord with audiences". $\underline{^{[82]}}$

Box office

Dunki had the 13th-biggest advance booking of all time for a Hindi film. [83] On its opening day, it collected a <u>net</u> total of ₹28 crore (US\$3.5 million) in India and ₹58 crore (US\$7.3 million) worldwide. [84][85] It had net domestic collections of ₹20 crore (US\$2.5 million) and ₹24.5 crore (US\$3.1 million) on its second and third day, respectively. [4][86][87] On its fourth day, the film collected ₹32 crore (US\$4.0 million) in India and crossed the ₹100 crore mark domestically. It also crossed the ₹200 crore mark worldwide on the same day. [88] After 7 days of its run, the film collected ₹300 crore worldwide, making Shah Rukh Khan the first Indian actor to give a cumulative worldwide gross of ₹2500 crore with films in a single year. [89] On its thirteenth day, *Dunki* collected ₹3.85 crore (US\$480,000) net in India and crossed the ₹200 crore mark domestically, and the ₹400 crore (US\$50 million) mark worldwide. [90]

As of 7 February 2024, *Dunki* has grossed ₹262.25 crore (US\$33 million) in India, with a further ₹196.68 crore (US\$25 million) in overseas, for a worldwide total of ₹458.93 crore (US\$57 million). [91]

Accolades

Award	Ceremony date	Category	Recipients	Result	Ref.
Filmfare Awards 28 January 2024		Best Actor	Shah Rukh Khan	Nominated	-
		Best Actress	Taapsee Pannu	Nominated	
		Best Supporting Actor	Vicky Kaushal	Won	
	Best Music Director	Pritam	Nominated		
		Post Institut	Javed Akhtar for "Nikle The Kabhi Hum Ghar Se"	Nominated	[92][93]
	Best Lyricist	Swanand Kirkire and IP Singh for "Lutt Putt Gaya"	Nominated		
		Best Male Playback Singer	Arijit Singh for "Lutt Putt Gaya"	Nominated	
			Sonu Nigam for "Nikle The Kabhi Hum Ghar Se"	Nominated	
		Best Choreography	Ganesh Acharya for "Lutt Putt Gaya"	Nominated	

Notes

- a. According to <u>Pinkvilla</u>, the combined cost of producing and marketing the film was ₹120 crore. [3]
- b. "Dunki" loosely translates from Punjabi to English to mean "to hop from place to place". [5]

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