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DESIGNER'S DIARY

Why did costume designer Carlos Rosario take 16 months to curate drapes for web series Shōgun? **P3**

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See you at the safari

Private safaris, bush dinners, and forest spas... step into a place that time forgot. Here is how to experience India's wildlife in style



Evolve Back, Kabini

Approximately four hours from Bengaluru, after you drive past Coorg, lies Kabini and its forests, teeming with a range of flora, tigers, leopards and elephants, among other wild beasts. The property is bordered on two sides by the Kabini River which separates the Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks, and in turn is part of the larger Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. And to experience the natural wilderness, the resort offers safaris via vehicles, boats, and even a coracle ride. "All safaris are by the Jungle Lodges and Resorts which are operated by the Karnataka Government," explains Jose Ramapuram, director of Marketing at Evolve Back, adding that safaris begin at the Kabini river lodge. Trained guides are provided by the resort, and the safaris (morning and evening) are "organised and well-managed" to balance the carrying capacity. "The parks are divided into different sections, and limited vehicles are permitted in each section." As for the boat safari, it begins from the property and guests are taken in the backwaters upstream. "With

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It is that time of the year again when the scorching sun is upon us, as is the much-awaited summer holidays. If planning a trip abroad or a break in the hills is not on your list this year, may we suggest exploring India's wild side. Experts say this is the ideal season to holiday in the forests, and get up close with their teeming wildlife. With tailor-made safari experiences to spot tigers, a crocodile safari by boat, and trails on a cycle, we bring you a low down of the country's popular National parks and the hospitality players offering luxury experiences in the wild.



Season: All-year
Price: ₹35,000 per night, per couple, inclusive of breakfast, dinner, select activities and all taxes.



Nagarhole and Bandipur on either side, this zone is rich in wildlife. Between January and April, the forest dries out, and animals come to the reservoir from far away. There is ample grass that attracts herbivores, who in turn attract the carnivores," says Jose, who adds that the light is very different in a boat safari as compared to a land safari. "One can see crocodiles, water birds, geese, etc. that fly in from as far as Europe and Siberia. The animals you see are different, and it is a varied experience." There are also Nature walks along the banks of the Kabini River, and for the more adventurous traveller, night trails that explore the region's nocturnal insects, amphibians and reptiles. The resort is also home to the Kabini Interpretation Centre, an Insect Interpretation Centre, a small Kuruba Tribal Museum and a two-acre wilderness insect/butterfly sanctuary within the resort premises. Jose explains how there has been a rise in occupancy over the past few years that he attributes to the pandemic, and how people preferred the property as the area is "relatively isolated". Jose further explains that the market is now reverting to pre-pandemic levels, and how "there is an increased interest in wildlife, probably due to more awareness being generated during the pandemic."



The Ultimate Travelling Camp (TUTC), Bandhavgarh and Ranthambore National Park

The hospitality venture – known for its luxury nomadic camps – is India's latest safari experience. Launched in December 2023, Sawai Shivir Ranthambore, offers a luxury camping experience in the Ranthambore forest. At the break of dawn, guests are greeted by the song of birds, and the jeep safari that follows takes you on the National park's rugged terrain. Guided by seasoned naturalists, a typical safari experience's popular sightings include royal Bengal tigers, leopards, sloth bears, wild boars, the Indian gazelle and spotted deer, among others. "Guests also have the opportunity to go for river safaris on the Chambal river and spot gharials and crocodiles," says Rajnish Rai, chief operating officer and founder-member of Ultra Resorts and Hotels.

Season: October to June
Price: Ranthambore: Luxury tent at ₹80,000 + tax, Presidential tent at ₹1,00,000 + tax, Bandhavgarh: Executive tent at ₹35,000 + tax, luxury tent at ₹45,000 + tax



At Bandhavgarh, the camping site is situated at Tala village, opposite the Khitauli core zone. "There is only a 12 feet road that separates the property from the forest area," says Rajnish, explaining how their Kenyan-inspired canvas tents are placed on a 4.5 feet stilt to ensure a great view, and also enable wildlife movement between the core jungle zones. The tents, he adds, are put up during the season time and packed away by June. Here too, private and shared vehicle safaris take guests on a three-hour ride into the wild. "Bookings are done on the Government website, and a Government guide accompanies our naturalist Yeshwant Shekhawat on the trail," says Rajnish. Other offerings include a birding trail to spot the over 150 bird species in the region, Nature walks, cycling trails, and sundowners with bird watching. "We also have a tented spa with two treatment rooms," he adds. In recent times, Indian tourists have experienced a remarkable shift in their travel preferences, increasingly gravitating towards immersive wildlife encounters, he explains. "Our foray into wildlife experiences at Ranthambore and Bandhavgarh, after our flagship properties in Chamba Camp in Thiksey and Ladakh's Nubra Valley, Kohima Camp during the Hornbill festival encapsulates this trend," he concludes.

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Coachella 2024: The 23rd Coachella Festival, slated for April 12–14 and April 19–21, at the Empire Polo Club in Indio, California, will have performances by Indian-origin musicians AP Dhillon and Sid Sriram. The event features nearly 140 artistes, including Doja Cat, Lana Del Ray, No Doubt and more. @coachella.com



Talkingpoint

Meenakari Museum: The Museum of Meenakari Heritage by jeweller Sunita Shekhawat puts the spotlight on the ancient enamelling technique of meenakari. Housed in a red-stone haveli, the Jaipur-based museum displays images, miniature paintings, also jewellery dating back to the 15th Century.



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Here is something for music aficionados and motorheads to look forward to. Come April second weekend, Mumbai's MMRDA R2 Ground in BKC will play host to BMW Joytown – a two-day fest that brings music, dance, automobiles, and food under one roof. In its second edition, the festival will stage performances by electro-pop act The Chainsmokers and popstar Diljit Dosanjh. Attendees will also have access to a curated line-up of BMW cars and bikes, coupled with driving sessions and expert stuntmen will showcase their drifting skills.

“The brand held India's first motoring, music and lifestyle festival in Delhi in December

Music and motors

Musicians The Chainsmokers and Diljit Dosanjh will perform at BMW Joytown, where the automobile giant will showcase its cars, bikes and more

2022, and Mumbai and Bengaluru in January 2023,” says Vikram Pawah, president, BMW Group India, adding that Joytown's maiden edition was attended by nearly 19,000 people. “It had performances by 27 artistes, and dishes by 60



Punjabi popstar Diljit Dosanjh

event has eight prominent artistes, and 20 culinary and gourmet food brands, including Lil Gamby Pizza Shop & Bar, I'm Wholesome, Sage and Olio, Bademiya and Nara Thai India. Over 10,000 tickets have already been sold,” informs Vikram.

This edition showcases BMW, Mini and BMW Motorrad range across different zones. “The

BMW zone has dedicated display areas for the brand's cars, like city circuit for sedans, adventure trail for BMW X range, adrenaline alley for BMW M cars and BMW electric zone for BMW i electric vehicles,” says Vikram.

He shares that the Mini zone will feature two iconic Mini models: Mini Countryman and Mini Three-Door Hatch. “This zone will also host activities like spray painting a Mini, caricature-making, tattoo art and face painting,” he adds. For biking enthusiasts, The Motorrad Garage at BMW Motorrad zone displays the full range of the automobile giant's bikes, including revered vintage models. “It also has an array of high-quality gear and fashionable apparel for the discerning riders. The zone will also have a Beer Garden and jaw-dropping stunts and drifts by expert stuntmen,” he states.

BMW Joytown will be held at Mumbai's MMRDA R2 Ground in BKC on April 12 and 13. Tickets start at ₹6,999 on in.bookmyshow.com.



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Limited edition

The Manero Tourbillon Double Peripheral watches by **Carl F. Bucherer**, limited to 18 pieces each of the three variants, have baguette-cut diamonds, sapphires and amethysts on dials. carl-f-bucherer.com/en; \$152,000. Moving on to eye candy, Outhouse Jewellery x John Jacobs's gender-fluid eyewear, starting ₹6,000, has **Cyber Run**, a limited edition pair with bronzite temples. outhouse-jewellery.com.



Dream team

H&M and **Rokh**, a brand by Korean designer **Rok Hwang**, are collaborating for a capsule that offers detachable-hem dresses, corset pieces and more on hm.com from April 18. Meanwhile, PUMA and Gurugram-based Clothes Box Foundation's **Steppin '24** lets customers donate pre-loved apparel and shoes, at PUMA's Steppin box. Donors will receive PUMA shopping vouchers. On till March 31.



Easter brunch

The Easter Sunday brunch buffet at **Cappella**, The Palomar by Crossway, Chennai, has dishes like roasted carrot, cheesy walnut cigars, crusted mahi mahi fish and more. Tomorrow, 12pm to 4pm; ₹1,999. Those looking for sweet Easter pie, Easter deviled eggs and Italian Easter bread could visit **The Westin Chennai** Velachery, which is also hosting activities like egg-hunting tomorrow. ₹2,550 per person.



Sound therapy

Auroville-based sound healer **Prakash** will host a **sound therapy** session at IDAM, Chennai, on April 6 at 4pm. ₹1,499; in.bookmyshow.com. City's **gospel music** lovers could head to Museum Theatre where Tambaram SDA Choir, Rolling Tone Choir and Lutheran Men's Voice will perform songs from the book of Psalms in the Bible on April 7, 6.30pm. ₹100; in.bookmyshow.com.



Funny bone!

Shraddha Jain of **Aiyyo Shraddha** fame is touring India with her new comic act **So Mini Things**, which arrives in Chennai on April 6 at Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall at 5pm and 7.30pm. ₹799; in.bookmyshow.com. Speaking of comedy, Jaspreet Singh will also stage a gig, **With Love, Jaspreet!**, at Chennai's Music Academy on April 7 at 7pm. Tickets: ₹499; in.bookmyshow.com.



House proud

Looking for eco-conscious art? **Escape by Creatomy's** décor collection of abstract and figurative artworks are made with discarded wooden pieces and blocks; shop on escapebycreatomy.com. To brighten up your home, try **Poldina lamps** by Zafferano at Innovative Design Studio (IDS). They come with touch control, allowing you to adjust brightness and choose from three colour temperatures.



Armed with glory

A play, titled **Birth of Bangladesh**, based on the 1971 Indo-Pak War, will be staged at Guru Nanak College Auditorium, Velachery, Chennai, tomorrow. Entry is free. Be seated before 5.30pm. Colours of Glory hosts a drone show at Youth Hostel, Adyar, tomorrow at 2pm, as part of the **Mini Troopers Carnival** with aero modelling, storytelling and activities for kids. For details, 9444643852.

(Clockwise from below) Designer Urvashi Kaur; she strikes a pose with celebrities and models during her show at Lakmé Fashion Week; a model wearing Urvashi's designs at the fashion gala. PERFECT SHADOWS, FDCI X LAKME FASHION WEEK AND RISE WORLDWIDE



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In 2008, when Urvashi Kaur started her label, after working with fashion designer Neeta Paul and completing a fashion course in Paris, she made her debut in the Indian fashion industry with Lakmé Fashion Week. This year marks her 15th year at the bi-annual gala.

Her showcase, Voices of Urvashi Kaur, echoes the brand's subversion of societal constructs and commitment to being democratic, what she calls a creative disruption of sorts. “As an Army kid, I grew up in the remotest places of India, and even in Algeria for some time. So, I interacted with Nature, diverse communities, tribal people and their culture. My parents have adopted and fostered two children – a Christian boy from Nagaland and



Fabricating inclusivity

Couturier Urvashi Kaur celebrates 15 years in fashion at the recently-concluded Lakmé Fashion Week

Hindu boy from Kashmir. All these influences of inclusivity have shaped my sensibilities,” says the Delhi-based couturier.

She outlines the bridal and trousseau fashion that dominated Indian runways in the '90s, stating that she wanted her garments to be minimalist while championing textured textiles with craft details that focussed on assimilation rather than standing out as statement

pieces. This defines the core of her designs, including the latest collection Prana (on which she started working in June last year), which was displayed among her older edits at the recently held fashion week. “Japanese aesthetics sat well with me when I was interning at the Paris Fashion Week back in 1996-97. So, my designs are focussed on functionality and comfort while exploring



different yarns, heirloom textiles and age-old techniques of dyeing, block-printing and weaving,” she says.

To Urvashi, textiles are meant to tell stories of cultures. She likes to add modern spins to traditional textiles and techniques. For instance, she brings a geometric arch to block-printing. “In Prana, I worked with tissue and metallic yarn woven in Chanderi, and merged it with jamdani. On the ramp, the collections celebrated lehariya with kota doriya, a sheer tent dress with chaap silai, metallic block prints, hand-woven denims, Kutch weaves with kala cotton and Maheshwari weaves; you will also find a lot of micro-pleating with kantha stitch,” she adds of the designs sported on the ramp by celebrities such as Ratna Pathak Shah, Rasika Duggal, Tilotama Shome, and more.

Urvashi also explores textile revival, and started zero-waste practices with Renew Project in 2021. The garments made at the time were exhibited on the Lakmé Fashion Week ramp too. “I collect old Benarasi saris, which have the *suchha* zari (pure silver and gold threads). In these worn-out saris, I find patches which are intact. I cut and paste these patchworks to make trench coats, blazers and overlays etc. while accentuating them with stitch-line work, reinforcing textiles,” she shares.

Apart from archival textiles, Urvashi also uses leftover lehariya, zari gotas and tissues to make an ensemble. For now, she is ready to launch her new edit next month. “Soon, we will add a digital ID to enhance the transparency of the garment, giving the buyer access to the source of textiles used,” she says.



Ready for summer

The 18th edition of the Armoire's Ultimate Summer Edit is back in Chennai. It brings together nearly 45 designers from New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Amritsar and metros, out of which about 22 designers are visiting the city for the first time for this pop up. The show will present a mix of western, resort, Indian and indo-western wear, curated especially for the summer season, travelling and destination weddings. The designers exhibiting their creations for the first time in the city are Nouria, Calling June, NOIB, Inching India, Studio 22, Juhi Bengani, Anatina and more. Popular designers, such as Archana Shah, House of Soi, Tasha, Mohammed Mazhar and The Cai Store, are also returning with their latest wares. The pop up caters to the affordable luxury segment, with the majority of the collection priced between ₹5,000 to ₹25,000.

@The Armoire's Pop up is on April 3, 11 am to 8 pm, at WelcomHotel by ITC, Cathedral Road. For more details, call: 9884960336.



Happy feet

Fizzy Goblet's Spring Summer '24 collection Scoops of Summer, inspired by childhood memories, offers, 10 easy-to-wear styles. In soft creamy pastels to fruity popsicle hues, the designs feature macramé, crochet, scallops and ruffles. Among the top picks of the edit are the mint chocolate bomba sliders adorned with a Gingham bow and berry sundae mules featuring a cone-inspired silhouette.

Starting price: ₹3,690; fizzygoblet.com.

The costume designer for the lavishly mounted adaptation of the James Clavell novel set in 17th Century Japan, chooses his favourite looks from the show



Back in time for shōgun

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Shōgun, the 10-episode adaptation of the first of James Clavell's Asian Saga novels, has been praised across the board for its sumptuous visuals. Costume designer Carlos Rosario can take some credit for that. The gorgeous costumes are the result of rigorous research. "I worked on the project for 16 months," says Carlos on a video call from Los Angeles.

"It was a complicated show, set in a complicated period, with characters of different ranks. We needed to study the language of the clothing of that period, in order to design the costumes and portray those characters as accurately as possible," he shares.

Deep dive
Carlos, who loves India, (he lived in Puducherry for seven months and went for an Ayurvedic retreat in Kerala) says the team looked at museum websites from around the world as part of the show's research. "We looked at period armour and costumes. We bought a lot of books, and were also supported and guided by historians, experts and consultants, who helped us understand the Sengoku Period, which is the time frame of the show."

Paintings were an important resource, says Carlos, who was born in France to Spanish parents. "We analysed and



dissected the paintings of that period, the patterns and colours, because there are no photographs then, right (laughs)?"

Edward L McDonnell, one of the executive producers on the series introduced Carlos to Justin Marks, who created Shōgun with Rachel Kondo. "I



(Top) Stills from Shōgun; (Right) Anna Sawai as Toda Mariko; costume designer Carlos Rosario. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

supportive. I'm so glad they gave me the budget to import those fabrics."

Such a long journey
Picking a favourite look in Shōgun is hard, Carlos says. "They're all my babies. Each one of the costumes has a back-story and a meaning. It was a long, creative process to create every costume but I do love some of the outfits that Lady Ochiba (played by Fumi Nikaido) wore. I also like two of the jinbaori Lord Toranaga (Hiroyuki Sanada) wears."

The jinbaori, Carlos explains is a surcoat worn on top of the armour. "One of Lord Toranaga's jinbaori is made of hundreds of hand-stitched peacock feathers. The other is a jinbaori as an armour. We cut hundreds of little wood and metal pieces, which were attached with cording of different colours."

Big versus small screen
Having designed costumes for movies (Don't Breathe, The Girl in the Spider's Web), Carlos says the main difference between the two is speed. "Television goes way faster (laughs). Shōgun is 10 episodes that look like 10 movies, and you don't have much prep time. A movie is more linear with a beginning, middle and end."

Having dressed actors from Reese Witherspoon and Joaquin Phoenix (Walk the Line) to Claire Foy, Carlos says he would love to work with Meryl Streep. "She is the greatest and the best. I would also love to work with Jane Fonda. I had the chance to work with Robin Williams before he passed away. I designed the costumes for his last movie (Boulevard). It was an incredible memory."

Gone with the Wind is Carlos' favourite classic movie and One of the reasons Carlos entered the field, the other reason being his grandmother who was a patternmaker. "I watched her work, putting fabric on the table. I remember her sewing and stitching and I was intrigued. That was my gateway into this world."

Shōgun is currently streaming on Disney+ Hotstar with fresh episodes dropping every Tuesday till April 23, 2024



Waste not, wear haute

How two organisations have come together to convert Bengaluru's textile waste into felt apparel and accessories

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Late last month, as industry experts presented their offerings at Bharat Tex – one of the world's largest textile events – two organisations from Bengaluru marked their presence with a rather unique offering: felt apparel, and accessories. The project is a collaboration between Hasiru Batte (an initiative by Bengaluru-based Hasiru Dala Trust that works with waste pickers) and The Good Felt (TGF), a project by Netherlands-based Enviu, an organisation that helps companies that turn waste into value.

Ina Bahuguna, programme manager for Recycling, Livelihood and Green Jobs at Hasiru Dala, explains how they sent 250 kgs of old clothes (from the city's JP Nagar and Domlur facilities) to the Netherlands in August 2022 to be converted into felt material. "This was a pilot to test if Indian post-consumer textile waste is good enough to be made into felt material. The pilot was successful, and Enviu started looking for partners in India who could make felt and the search ended in Panipat," says Ina, adding that Hasiru Batte's role is to collect textile waste from households and sort it according to TGF's requirements (all whites, for instance) and send it to their partner recycling facility at Panipat to be made into felt material.

But why felt? Anurag Jain, CEO of TGF, that launched in September 2023, says that felt aka a non-woven material "stands out as one of the most versatile yet underrated materials in the textile industry". He says it demands minimal infrastructure, and is highly recyclable. "Through our manufacturing of felt, we have the capability to process a wide array of discarded textile waste, regardless of its composition or quality," he says.

Since the inception of TGF, the team has diverted over two tonnes of textile waste. "The applications are endless but at present we are focussing more on fashion and lifestyle accessories," says Anurag, who has also collaborated with brands such as Gurugram-based Jaggery Bags and Can of Juice, a design studio in Bengaluru.

Anurag aims to divert 5,000 tonnes of textile waste from going to the landfills in the next five years. "The aim is to find a solution to the large volume of textile waste that goes into landfills and the living conditions of waste collectors in India," explains the NIFT and Parsons School of



(Clockwise from left) Textile waste from households; a bag from The Good Felt X Jaggery Bags collab; apparel crafted at The Good Felt. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Design (New York) graduate.

As far as procurement goes, one of the primary challenges lies in the lack of understanding the importance of segregating their waste. "Contaminated clothes pose a substantial obstacle for textile recyclers," explains Anurag, adding that there are challenges on the purchasing side too. "There remains a lingering taboo surrounding recycled clothing. Many consumers still view wearing recycled clothes as demeaning and hesitate to embrace the practice of purchasing used materials. However, there is a shifting tide as awareness grows."

Anurag plans to set up a textile waste recycling centre "to monitor all the textile waste that comes to us which can help us develop even better non-woven materials."

Ina elaborates on how, after a decade, textile waste has increased as the fast fashion impact can be seen in landfills. "People are not conscious buyers. What colour will suit them is a priority before what material they are wearing. Mixed material is a threat to the environment and humans," she says, adding that there are very few policies related to textile waste management.

"We don't see responsible brands and manufacturers. There is a great responsibility on this generation to pass on a cleaner environment to the next generation," concludes Ina, who is now planning to establish an aggregation centre (textile recovery facility) in Bengaluru, and a repurpose project wherein women from the waste picker community can make items out of textile waste such as key chains, bags and jewellery.



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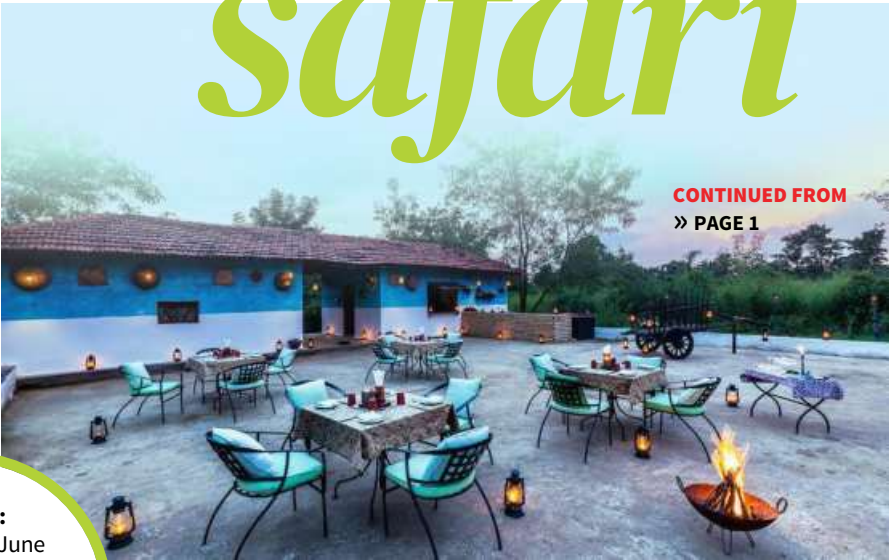
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A silhouette of a safari vehicle, possibly a Land Rover, parked on a grassy hill. Two people are standing next to the vehicle, looking at a map. The scene is set against a bright, hazy sunset sky.



Hindi

Sara Ali Khan leads this fancy dress show



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When Congress leadership was incarcerated, an intrepid, young Usha Mehta (Sara Ali Khan) came up with the idea of a covert radio station to reignite the Quit India Movement. This unsung but important strand of the Indian freedom movement is undone by heavy-handed treatment in Kannan Iyer’s *Ae Watan Mere Watan*.

The film’s emotional notes sound either superficial or a little too earnest for a large part. Instead of taking us to the period, the well-meaning venture unspools like a fancy dress show where actors seemingly read out their character sketches from cue cards. In an attempt to connect with the digital generation, it loses the veracity of the time it seeks to recreate.

The start is particularly stagy where Usha, shackled by the love of her father (Sachin Khedekar), a judge devoted to the Raj, is struggling to choose between her family and motherland. The two talk in the affected tone of a television commercial, so much that when Usha laments to her friend that she did not know that doing the right thing would hurt so much, one wonders why saying the right thing would demand such decoration.

In her bid to portray the earnestness of the character, Sara resorts to chipmunkish behaviour. Here, it is reflected in her expressions and body language. However, gradually, in the company of Sparsh Srivastav, playing a freedom fighter with polio, named Fahad, she settles into the role and, more importantly, the period. Towards the end, they create a heart-tugging scene where the incompleteness of a woman in our society is linked to that of a disabled person.

The writing of Darab Farooqui and Kannan is not without potential. When the film talks about how the British government controlled the big media and how the radio spread lies, it rings a bell. So does the need for *sach ki ghutti* (potion of truth) when opium is being fed.

Without pandering to an agenda, the film underscores that much before the current regime took on Jawaharlal Nehru’s idea of India, there was his comrade Dr Ram Manohar Lohia (Emraan Hashmi) who stood up against blind devotion and obeisance. Emraan, in an extended guest appearance, brings alive the honest demeanour of the leader.

The problem is that the text is not engaging and rousing enough and the subtext comes through like bullet points in an essay writing competition. Historical pieces need to be sparse and contemplative but our period films are turning the past into an objective exercise.

In this Karan Johar production, gloss overrides the moment’s truth, making the period piece feel made up.

Ae Watan Mere Watan is currently streaming on Prime Video



Frisky comedy finds heart in excess

Kunal Kemmu’s debut directorial is a fun, freewheeling ride, occasionally hobbled by slapstick excess

English

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In one of the funniest scenes in *Dil Chahta Hai*, besotted rich kid Sameer Mulchandani (Saif Ali Khan) gets a taste of real Goa. Christine, a fair-faced minx who caught his fancy on the shores, robs him blind and scoots. In a flashback, we see Sameer squirming on the floor of his hotel room, gagged and naked save for his cherry-dotted shorts. Before she leaves, Christine plants a quick peck on his cheek.

One imagines Kunal Kemmu watching this scene as a young man and responding to its comic payoff. His debut directorial, *Madgaon Express*, is indebted to *Dil Chahta Hai* – literally, with Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani as his producers. Yet it’s equally Kemmu’s ambition to deflate the dreamy cult of *Dil Chahta Hai*. To risk your heart, his film winks, is also to risk your clothes.

Whether he realises that ambition is a topic for later. Pinku (Pratik Gandhi), Ayush (Avinash Tiwary) and Dodo (Divyenndu Sharma) have been friends since school. As with so many young folks in India, hamstrung by budgets and domineering parents, their Goa plans have remained unfulfilled, and once Pinku and Ayush move abroad, it’s completely out of the picture. Dodo, who’s left behind (geographically as well as on the social ladder), keeps in touch via social media, faking a persona to impress

Madgaon Express

Director: Kunal Kemmu

Cast: Pratik Gandhi, Divyenndu, Avinash Tiwary, Nora Fatehi, Remo D’Souza, Upendra Limaye

Storyline: Three 30-somethings embark on a long-deferred Goa trip and get caught in a crime plot

his well-to-do friends. His photoshop-aided charades stand to be exposed when Pinku and Ayush announce they are coming to Mumbai. Scared, Dodo suggests their long-deferred Goa trip as an alternative.

At the railway station – Dodo, who could not afford flights, tries to dress it up as the ‘real deal’ – there’s an accidental swapping of bags. It signals the barrage of comic hi-jinks to come: binges, cocaine, guns, criminals, cops. Marathi stalwarts Upendra Limaye and Chhaya Kadam are hilarious as a pair of rival gangsters with a past. It’s standard crime-comedy fare, but Kemmu – who has also written the screenplay and dialogue – keeps an eye out for mundane details, like exorbitant carfare in the coastal tourist state. My

favourite scene is Pinku, jacked up on coke, pouring his heart out to Ayush, telling him about his inter-faith relationship; it’s just two friends sitting on nondescript chairs on a heat-hazed beach, the kind of scene that would end up on the cutting room floor of a more expensive film.

There are times when the easygoing rhythm of *Madgaon Express* is derailed by slapstick excess. A belated gunfight followed by a climactic standoff needed the wit and precision of early Priyadarshan. Kemmu, a sworn cinephile, pays homage to every corner of popular cinema, from his own cult zom-com *Go Goa Gone* to *The Hangover* movies and *The Godfather Part I*. Like many first-time directors, he succumbs to the need to accentuate every moment. Some of the visual ideas fall flat – the atrociously choreographed fantasy numbers come to mind.

It is tempting to hail *Madgaon Express* as a revisionist, drug-addled *Dil Chahta Hai*. But it’s.... not. Farhan Akhtar’s film was a beautifully calibrated drama, steadfast in its exploration of male adult friendships over a long period of time. *Madgaon*, despite its pockets of genuine pathos and heart, is largely a frisky comedy in the Todd Phillips mould. Its characters are funnily drawn and act strike a suitably spiky bonhomie, but emotional engagement is perhaps a bridge too far. This film is a party, not a trip.

Madgaon Express is currently playing in theatres



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A politically-charged story let down by shoddy filmmaking

Tamil

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Nikesh RS’ *Rebel*, which has an intriguing plot, is said to be based on true events making it all the more crucial for it to be told. But whether it translates well into a competent film is a different question.

At its core, *Rebel* has a brilliant plot: Set in the 1980s, it is about the plight of Tamil labourers in the plantation estates of Munnar, Kerala. As education is the only key that will get them out of this hell hole, Kathir (GV Prakash Kumar) and his friends get placed in a college in Chittur, Palakkad, only to find that the oppression their family faced in the estate has taken a new manifestation here. Controlled by two student groups that are an extension of the State’s political parties, its members take turns to humiliate Kathir and company in multiple ways.



A filmmaking challenge we often look past is how accidents and incidents that happen without any reasoning in real life need causation in the make-believe world of cinema. The insults and vicious insinuations Kathir and his friends endure are hard-hitting and difficult to digest and considering it is based on true events, they would have probably happened, but they do not “feel” real. This boils down to the treatment of the film and is not a

contention to the claims of what transpired in those days. Unlike contemporary films on despotism, which are based on issues many are aware of, a period flick on the same begs for a certain degree of credibility – something that *Rebel* misses by a mile.

In *Rebel*, the Tamil students, on the first day, are shown a huge, multi-storeyed, well-maintained building as a hostel only for them to be escorted to ‘B Hostel’ which is

single-storeyed and dilapidated. It makes you wonder if our neighbours were so cartoonishly discriminatory a few decades ago or if it is the filmmaker flexing his cinematic liberties. It is difficult to fit ourselves into this world where every Malayali is an agenda-driven one-dimensional baddie who would happily have a Tamilian’s life for breakfast.

There are scenes featuring boys ganging up on one person in the restroom, groups of students fighting it out and gruesome custodial violence by corrupt cops. Irrespective of their gender, Tamil students are stripped, ragged, beaten mercilessly, called names and even killed. But it has no repercussions until our story’s hero takes it upon himself and starts a new faction to protect his folks.

Even if you keep aside the logical question of how easily the institution and cops brush these under the carpet, the rise of our revolutionaries is not particularly entertaining either. Like every story of the underdog, Kathir and his friends stop running and start retaliating against the injustice meted to them but the

happenings do not really make you want to root for them.

There’s a scene where Kathir and his friends are stripped of their veshti because they are not “supposed” to wear it and the professor who stops the brawl retorts with a “ragging is normal” comment which became an unintentionally funny moment. Despite the film’s attempt to not make its plot look one-sided, it fails miserably on that front and constant lines about how Malayalam was

derived from Tamil.

Initially, the technical aspects of *Rebel* popped out as its saving grace; the music, though loud, is quite good and the camera movements were quite interesting. The sets, old buildings and the slew of yesteryear bikes add authenticity to the period. But the same technical aspects get indulgent after a while. There are some interesting ideas – like explaining why their new faction’s flag has both red and black colours and how parties forget and act against the very tenets they were formed on – but none of it translates into interesting scenes the film desperately needed. A sense of connection is paramount to films that want us to stand by the side of the victims and make us feel elated when they rise against the odds. Without that sense of connection, *Rebel* feels like an excuse to come up with a slew of disturbing scenes so they can tug at your heartstrings, making this film a rebel without a cause.

Rebel is currently running in theatres

Road House

Director: Doug Liman

Cast: Jake Gyllenhaal, Daniela Melchior, Conor McGregor, Billy Magnussen

Storyline: An ex-UFC fighter takes on the job of a bouncer in a roadhouse in the Florida Keys, where things take a serious turn



Action tapers into silliness

English

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Jake Gyllenhaal’s latest action outing, *Road House*, is a film meant to tickle your memories of watching old school action films; it wastes no time in conveying how serious it will take itself when minutes into the film, a character asks Gyllenhaal’s character if his situation seems more like a plot of a Western movie, “in which local townsfolk send for a hero to help clean up the rowdy saloon”.

And that is just the plot of *Road*

House, the 1989 Patrick Swayze-starring B action film, which in its own way paid tribute to Western movies, and gained a cult following in the years to come. Gyllenhaal’s remake, directed by Doug Liman, retains all of the original film’s popular tropes but has tremendous fun, at least initially.

Everything is done to be a little extra. For instance, unlike Swayze’s James Dalton, Gyllenhaal’s Elwood Dalton is not a mystery man from New York City; this guy is an ex-UFC fighter from the Florida Keys who goes from cute to psycho in the blink of an eye. This problematic quality gets him a job in the small town of Glass Key to protect a roadhouse owned by Frankie (Jessica Williams) named Road House. After scaring off Post Malone’s fiery boxer Carter and treating a stab wound like a toothpick prick, we see Dalton hit the brake on an impulsive suicide attempt on a railway track, and you know that a flashback on his trauma is waiting to come.

You feel a certain contrivance and urgency in how the other lead characters are introduced and fleshed out throughout the film. Billy Magnussen plays Ben Brandt, the rich brat who is the real reason behind all the troubles at Road House. Conor McGregor plays Knox, a maniac sent to sweeten things up for Ben, and the details of his entrance are so outlandish

it is better left unrevealed.

Together, these three edgy men do mad, mad things, while a forced love track between Dalton and a doctor, Ellie (Daniela Melchior), comes and goes. The cherry on the top is the inclusion of Charlie (Hannah Love Lanier), an innocent young girl minding her father’s bookstore. Everything is so tailor-made and perfectly arranged that you can see the twists from a mile away.

To the film’s credit, there is ample comedic relief to break the bore, but when the plot tapers into utter silliness, you are left confused about its motivations. One begins to wonder if this is a film that banks solely on a purported shtick of nostalgia baiting the fans of the original. And while Elwood’s characterisation inadvertently makes you curious, Gyllenhaal comes across as a misfit, especially after Conor’s entry. For all the backstory and hype Elwood gets, you hardly feel the lunacy in the action sequences. In fact, Conan, as this seemingly coked-up menace, lights up the screen much more in his later scenes.

Road House is a popcorn film with some genuinely fun ideas, but it loses control of the narrative.

Road House is currently streaming on Prime Video

Snippets



AR Rahman and Prabhu Deva reunite for a film after 25 years

Actor-director Prabhu Deva and Oscar-winning composer AR Rahman are reuniting for a project after 25 years. The duo will work on a film that will be directed by Manoj NS, founder and CEO of Behindwoods. The film is Behindwood’s first feature film production, which is touted to be a dance musical. “The director’s unique vision is to make the theaters the happiest place for two hours, by celebrating music, dance, comedy and visuals,” said the film team in a release. A R Rahman said, “A particular idea had been on my mind for quite some time, but I had set it aside. However, this project rediscovered it and captured my attention once again.”



Nivin Pauly’s Malayalee From India gets a release date

Nivin Pauly’s upcoming film, *Malayalee From India*, directed by Dijo Jose Antony, will hit the screens on May 1. Dijo has written the film’s script with Sharis Mohammed. The director-writer duo had earlier worked for *Queen* (2018) and *Jana Gana Mana* (2022). *Malayalee From India* is bankrolled by Nivin’s Pauly Jr Pictures and Magic Frames helmed by Listin Stephen. The film also stars Anaswara Rajan, Dhyan Sreenivasan, Manju Pillai, Shine Tom Chacko, Salim Kumar, and Vijayakumar. Sudeep Elamon is the cinematographer while Sreejith Sarang is the editor. Jakes Bejoy has composed the music for the movie.



Anushka Shetty and Krish Jagarlamudi team up again for Ghaati

Anushka Shetty has joined hands with director Krish Jagarlamudi for her next project. The new film’s title is *Ghaati*. The makers released the film’s first-look poster, in which Anushka is seen walking in a saree with her faced covered with a shawl. Chintakindi Srinivas Rao, Krish and Burra Sai Madhav have written the film. Vamshi Krishna Reddy, and Rajiv Reddy are producing the film under the banners UV Creations and First Frame Entertainments respectively. Anushka was last seen in *Miss Shetty and Mr Polishetty*.



Liu Cixin’s hard science fiction epic

Fans of the *Remembrance of Earth’s Past* trilogy might be disappointed with the simplification and changes, but this adaptation is good-looking and bingeable

English, Chinese

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While that other famous hard sci-fi epic, *Foundation*, is keeping viewers mesmerised with the flashing eyes and floating hair of a wandering psycho-historian, *3 Body Problem* (the sub-editor in me is itching to put a hyphen) comes roaring in like a psychedelic train of thought. In their first project after the hectically successful *Game of Thrones*, David Benioff and DB Weiss have attacked Liu Cixin’s *The Three-Body Problem* with spellbinding audacity. The 2008 novel is the first in Cixin’s *Remembrance of Earth’s Past* trilogy.

3 Body Problem opens during the Cultural Revolution in China where Ye Wenjie (Zine Tseng), a student of Astrophysics, sees her academican father beaten to death. The scene shifts to London in 2024 where a detective, Da Shi (Benedict Wong), tries to make sense of the violent death of a physicist, piped to win the Nobel Prize.

Another physicist, Vera Yee (Vedette Lim), tells researcher Saul (Jovan Adepo) their lab is being shut down. She asks him if he believes in God before killing herself. Vera’s students, the Oxford Five – Saul, Jin (Jess Hong), Auggie (Eiza González), Jack (John Bradley) and Will (Alex Sharp) – are persons of interest to Da Shi.

Auggie is doing cutting-edge research in nano-tech, Jin is working on particle accelerators, Jack dropped out of Oxford to create a snack empire while Will is a teacher. All over the world, physics seems to be broken and a strange countdown appears before Auggie’s eyes. And all of

3 Body Problem

Creators: David Benioff, DB Weiss, Alexander Woo

Cast: Benedict Wong, Jess Hong, Jovan Adepo, Eiza González, John Bradley, Alex Sharp, Rosalind Chao, Zine Tseng, Jonathan Pryce

Episodes: 8

Storyline: Theoretical physicists are dying all over the world and it is left to a group of five fabulous physicists and one dogged detective to mount the resistance

this happens halfway through the first episode.

We are simultaneously shown Wenjie’s life in Mongolia where she is first doing hard labour and then joins the Red Coast, a military project tracking spy satellites and also secretly trying to communicate with alien life forms. Wenjie makes a breakthrough and is able to send a message to the aliens. Her choice at that moment has horrific repercussions in the present.

Jin finds a sophisticated virtual reality game Vera was playing before she died. The game-world ricochets between stable and chaotic weather systems and the objective is to be able to predict the switches. Characters dressed as scientists and thinkers from history including Galileo, Isaac Newton, Alan Turing and Aristotle feature in the game positing their theories.

In the shadows are the rich, radical environmentalist Mike Evans (Jonathan Pryce) who seems to be following the present-day events with great interest and Wade (Liam Cunningham), who is some sort of top-secret government official. There is of course an impending alien invasion to prepare for and it is all hands on deck for the earthlings.

Thanks to Chris Nolan and Cillian Murphy, physicists are suddenly the coolest dudes on the planet and the fabulous five is empirical proof of that theory. If only that geek god, Jeff Goldblum, could have popped by to play chess or say oops!

3 Body Problem works spectacularly well in parts – that human abacus scene was sheer jaw-drop quality as were the dehydrate/rehydrate cycles. Scenes of cold beauty jostle for space with those of heart-wrenching terror– the scene where the repurposed oil tanker, the Judgment Day, comes up against the nanoweb is the stuff of nightmares. The scenes in China and Mongolia featuring a young Wenjie are moving. Ramin Djawadi’s music is spookily spectacular.

Where *3 Body Problem* falters is in its awkward love story, sappy sentimentality and shoehorning of inclusivity (‘*tum keede ho*’, the aliens beam helpfully on an Indian street). Some of the dialogue could have used by some scissor work by script doctors. The series also suffers from an unseemly haste as in its desire for pace, it jams high concepts into cardboard philosophy.

Despite these flaws, *3 Body Problem* moves smoothly, not asking much of the viewer but to luxuriate in the wonderful visuals as beautiful people tentatively spout quantum theory. While Jin pouts at her Naval officer boyfriend, Raj (Saamer Usmani), and Will pines for his unspoken love, one can always pass the time looking for *Game of Thrones* connections. Apart from Djawadi, Bradley, Cunningham, Pryce and Kevin Eldon (as Sir Thomas More) are *GoT* alum. Incidentally, George RR Martin championed Liu Cixin’s novel. For those upset with playing fast and loose with Hugo Award-winning epic, the books will always be there.

3 Body Problem is streaming on Netflix