

A MOST VIOLENT YEAR

Director: J.C. Chandor

Writers: J.C. Chandor

Stars: Oscar Isaac, Jessica Chastain, David Oyelowo

Strength: Script, acting and character development

Weakness: Very slow plot development

Runtime: 125 minutes

Rating: 3/5

PLOT: In New York City 1981, an ambitious immigrant fights to protect his business and family during the most dangerous year in the city's history.

REVIEW: Oscar Isaac doesn't retrieve a gun from behind a toilet cistern in this tightly coiled crime flick. But his character has so much else in common with The Godfather's Michael Corleone, that you will find it difficult to not think of him as a gangster. Like Pacino's Michael, Isaac's Abel Morales is an ambitious immigrant trying to erase the last traces of criminality from the family business. It's the winter of 1981 and New York is freezing. As he runs a successful heating oil company, the tills should be ringing. But powerful and unknown forces are pushing Morales back to the gun, stealing large amounts of oil from his delivery trucks right off the street.

His drivers often get left battered and bleeding in the snow, leading to worries over security. Abel's wife, business partner and mobster's daughter Anna (excellently portrayed by Jessica Chastain) wants to use her family connections to hit back. But with a crunch deal for a new storage facility imminent, Abel is determined to not go back to gangster means to resolve the problem at hand. To make matters worse, the assistant D.A. decides to launch an investigation into the industry. The only issue is the low level of action scenes in the movie – there are good buildups but the audience is always left wanting more. But the director seems interested in lower octane thrills. At its core, this atmospheric film is a study of two steely characters who are trying to keep their hands clean in a very dirty business. It's definitely not for the average audience who is drawn to the film because of the word 'violence' in the title. The story is great and the acting is spectacular, but yes, it can get quite slow at times. But, that does not make it any less great as what it was intended to be - a fascinating character study of an "honorable man" trying to retain his honor in a corrupt business and political environment.

Reviewed by **Mohammad Haque**



DUM LAGA KE HAISHA

Director: Sharat Katariya

Writer: Sharat Katariya

Stars: Ayushmann Khurrana, Sanjay Mishra, Bhumi Pednekar

Strength: Story, Acting

Weakness: Editing, Predictable Climax

Runtime: 111 minutes

Rating: 4/5

PLOT: It tells the story of a marriage arranged between a slim guy and an overweight girl and the challenges each face in their relationship.

REVIEW: The film is set in mid 1990s Haridwar, where school dropout Prem Prakash Tiwari (Ayushmann Khurana) is weighed down by life in more ways than one. The young man's burden increases manifold when his family forces him to marry Sandhya Verma (Bhumi Pednekar), an overweight girl who has nothing in common with him. Sandhya is educated and aspires to be a school teacher; Prem is a dullard who is pushed around by his father and friends. Sparks fly as their relationship lurches from one messy dead-end

to another until a door opens, magically, to show Prem that both beauty and happiness are always more than skin deep.

Dum Laga Ke Haisha, written and directed by Sharat Katariya, is worth its weight in gold. It consists of wonderfully written scenes that flow seamlessly into each other, eventually culminating in a heart-warming climax. The film plays primarily with emotions but not for a moment does it stray anywhere near what might be deemed excessive. Produced by Band Baaja Baaraat director Maneesh Sharma and presented by YRF's Aditya Chopra, the film tells a slice-of-life love story that is exceptionally unconventional, and not simply because of the heroine's body type.

In short, Dum Laga Ke Haisha is more than just a must-watch. It should be held up as an example of what a mainstream Bollywood banner can achieve when it lends its clout to an out-of-the-box idea executed by a director who clearly knows how to display his prowess.

Reviewed by **S.M. Intisab Shabriyar**

CLASSIC REVIEW

LA NOTTE (1961)

Director: Michelangelo Antonioni

Writers: Michelangelo Antonioni, Ennio Flaiano

Stars: Jeanne Moreau, Marcello Mastroianni, Monica Vitti

Runtime: 115 minutes

PLOT: A day in the life of an unfaithful married couple and their steadily deteriorating relationship.

REVIEW: Unfolding over the course of a single day and the titular night, La Notte opens with a pointed reminder of mortality, as Giovanni and Lidia visit a terminally ill friend in the hospital. Their respective body language in the poor fellow's room makes it abundantly clear that communication between them is shaky at best; it's no surprise when Lidia excuses herself, crying alone outside, or when Giovanni allows himself to be briefly seduced by a female patient with apparent mental problems. After an interlude apart, during which Lidia wanders the streets by herself and visits their old neighborhood, the two head out for a night on the town—first stopping by a local nightclub to watch the risqué floor show, then hitting a ritzy party being held by a wealthy businessman who Giovanni, a celebrated author, knows slightly. At the party, they again mostly go their separate ways, though the dawn will see them having to make tough decisions that will shape both their futures.

La Notte is the middle film in Italian director Michelangelo

Antonioni's loose trilogy on relationship ennui. What Antonioni conveys is inseparable from the ways in which he does it. On its face, La Notte is a simple day-in-the-life of an emotionally cold marriage between Giovanni, a successful writer played with suave aloofness by Marcello Mastroianni, and his wife Lidia, whose passionate yet mysterious beauty could only be realized by French legend Jeanne Moreau. Though the film is "old", there's nothing dated about its beguiling inspection of love and modernity, proof that the best art can be both timeless and a recognizable document of time and place.

Reviewed by **S.M. Intisab Shabriyar**

