

MOVIES 

# All We Imagine as Light carves out tenderness in the harshest of spaces

ABIR HOSSAIN

*All We Imagine as Light* follows the story of Prabha and Anu, roommates who also work at the same hospital. While the two quite literally share the same space, both at a personal and professional capacity, the plights plaguing each character are vastly different.

Nurse Prabha is thrown into a daze after receiving an unexpected present (a rice cooker), presumably from her husband, whom she has not spoken to in over a year. In contrast, Anu wishes nothing more than to seek a safe space, away from the prying eyes of the city, to spend some time with her partner, Shiaz.

Despite the obvious contrasts between Prabha and Anu, they are both in a state of delirium. It is through their differences, however, that Payal Kapadia, the director and writer of the film, underscores the impact of the city on its inhabitants. In dense places with compact spaces, we may be ripped apart and left all alone, or fortunate enough to find someone in the nooks and crannies that we've been pushed to. This sentiment is echoed through Parvaty, who also works at the same hospital as Anu and Prabha. She is forced out of the house she has lived in for decades as the



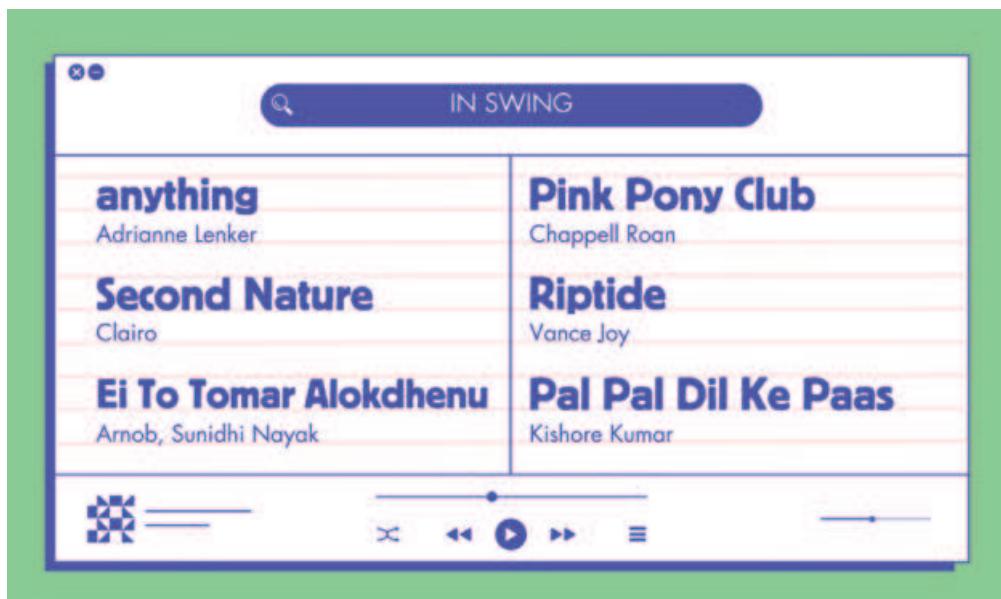
plot has been occupied by a real estate developer.

The first hour of the movie is set in Mumbai, with each character's delirious state of mind portrayed through a hazy, soft, and almost dreamlike look. Most of the movie looks luminous, giving the visuals a visceral feel. This quality also extends to the sound design and soundtrack. The two work together in harmony to capture the essence of the film's settings.

Such prowess is not only merely limited to the technicalities. In fact, I thought that

the writing was the film's strongest quality. Payal Kapadia has crafted scenes that unite the characters in small moments of respite, only to then snatch it away. At no point does she rush the pacing.

*All We Imagine As Light* is a refined film, complete with technical mastery, controlled storytelling, and a lot of heart. It perfectly encapsulates the essence of a city like Mumbai, where even amidst cramped spaces, we manage to steal glances, long for familiarity, and curse the selfish desires of its inhabitants.



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