

'Oye Lucky!...' - a joyous, bumpy crime caper

Film: 'Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!'; Director: Dibakar Banerjee; Cast: Abhay Deol, Paresh Rawal, Neetu Chandra; Rating: ***

This is one helluva film about a lucky thief named Lucky who nonchalantly enters Delhi's well-to-do homes, picks up television sets and sound systems, and walks out in broad daylight.

'Oye Lucky...' is a sly, shimmering mirror of a dysfunctional society always craving for more... not knowing where the greed to be upwardly mobile finally ends.

You could look for parallels to Banerjee's aggressively-original vision in crime capers ranging from Arthur Penn's Bonnie and Clyde to Shaad Ali's 'Bunty Aur Babli'. You may also discern enchanting elements from the quirky crime capers of Quentin Tarantino and the Coen Brothers in the relationship between thief Abhay Deol and his mentor Paresh Rawal.

But finally the all-consuming impulses of the Indian middle-class, their craving to be seen on television and their desire to be heard above the daily din is used really well by Banerjee.

The narration is miraculously liberated from the claustrophobia of middle-class ambitions to take us on a joyous bumpy caper ride. Not for a second do we feel the weight of the morality tale that lurks under the crowded front of the middleclass need and greed.

Delhi's lower middle-class suburbs are used to create a famished environment for our adolescent hero Lucky to be born in a state of abject wanting and craving. By the time Lucky grows up, so does the narrative.

Director Banerjee steers diametrically away from the format he adopted in his first film 'Khosla Ka Ghosla'. There's no room for patience or explanations here.

The director cleverly and wisely reserves all judgement. Lucky's life on the run is neither glamorous nor too much fun. Nor is it squalid. This detachment from the scenes of the crime is what sets 'Oye Lucky...' apart from other crime capers.

Then there's the casting. Faces that you might or might not have seen before blend into the bristling brew of laughter, lies and betrayal. Take the girl who plays Neetu Chandra's embittered, excitable sister. She can be anybody or nobody and therefore special to the requirement of the film about trying to stand out in a crowd.

Archana Puransingh and Paresh Rawal as an unctuous Punjabi couple sweet-talking Lucky into investing for a restaurant project are great. Rawal in fact gives three wonderful performances as three different characters who play a part in shaping Lucky's destiny.

Abhay Deol's act is constantly laced with a streak of mean wickedness. He doesn't act. He just lets his character be. Deol isn't afraid of being embarrassed. Watch how he slobbers all over his kid-brother during a holiday with his girlfriend.

Neetu Chandra, superb earlier as the street hawker in Madhur Bhandarkar's 'Traffic Signal', gets the

point completely. She stays underplayed in an underwritten part.

The bigger picture clearly lies in the honest detailing in this tongue-in-cheek caper about coveting the good things of life.

'Oye Lucky...' gets savagely funny at times. Check out the sequence where Lucky tows a stolen television into a wayward politician's son's home, only to find every large corner occupied by television sets.

Look closely into 'Oye Lucky...' and you can see where our society took the wrong turn.

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