

'Traffic Signal' not very engrossing, but Bhandarkar undaunted

For those who have seen any of acclaimed filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar's highly engrossing movies such as 'Chandni Bar', 'Page 3' or 'Corporate', his latest 'Traffic Signal' does not quite make the mark. The director seems to have failed to get to the bottom of the subject.

While in his earlier films the storyline had been consistently strong, in 'Traffic Signal' Bhandarkar seems to skim over the subject, leaving the audience with an incomplete feeling. In fact, there is very little content in the film for the audience to explore.

Many felt that his earlier films were engrossing even while causing the people to squirm with the stark depiction of reality. But in 'Traffic Signal', despite the director's attention to detail as well as the slice of reality that it conveys, the audience doesn't feel drawn towards any of the characters.

But Bhandarkar refuses to accept it.

He argues: 'People should not forget that I am a hardcore experimental filmmaker. I am not a commercial filmmaker. I always try to experiment with different subjects - be it 'Chandni Bar', 'Satta', 'Page 3', 'Corporate' or 'Traffic Signal'.

'I made it within a stipulated budget and it's more than enough for me that the movie is earning more than the money invested. 'Corporate' earned three times more. My films fetch good profits for my producers and distributors.'

The director says he is not upset with the criticism as he is 'used to this kind of response'.

'All my movies have opened to mixed responses. When I made 'Chandni Bar' people told me there was no solution in the film, it's a bleak and depressing film. But some really liked it. So, there was a mixed reaction.

'For me, it's important that the people for whom I'm making the film should accept the movie. I'm happy that the audience has accepted 'Traffic Signal'.'

Bhandarkar's films are reality based and often touch a chord with the audience. 'Traffic Signal' too revolves around the lives of people living on traffic signals, begging or selling small items. Though it fails to penetrate into the life of any character, it is a worthwhile watch and Bhandarkar is happy with this.

'I am a filmmaker who tries to get into the underbelly of different kinds of genre of cinema and different topics. That's all! My movies are not very fast paced or of the arty type. People say Bhandarkar's cinema is middle-of-the-road. I have managed to achieve what people take several years to establish, so I am happy.'

He says the second half of his movies are always stronger.

'My story always starts in the second half. For instance, in 'Page 3' the second half was strong. In 'Chandni Bar', the last 45 minutes were strong. I am happy with the kind of cinema I make.'

Apart from the subject matter of 'Traffic Signal', Bhandarkar has also experimented by roping in Sudhir Mishra, a director who pioneers in making off-beat hard hitting dramas, to play a don in the film.

'I needed a character who has unusual screen presence. I was also looking for a different kind of look. I didn't want to take any typical don character from the industry. I find Sudhir Mishra interesting because of the way he talks, his voice.'

Mishra, unfortunately, looks a complete misfit.

Bhandarkar has moved on and is busy scripting his next venture 'Fashion', which will focus on the fashion industry and what happens behind the stage.

'It's too early to talk. For me the script is the hero, and right now I'm scripting the film. Therefore, it's too premature to say anything.'

Asked about his plans to direct a potboiler with big stars, Bhandarkar said he was not averse to stars, but was waiting for the right script.

'I will make a film with a big star cast but it will depend on a good script. If I have one, I will have no issues in working with big stars.'

Bhandarkar has created a niche for himself in Bollywood and expectations are very high from his films. Here's hoping his next film lives up to the expectations from such an accomplished director.

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