



FILM WALLAHS

Mr. India

Mr. India

Director: Shekhar Kapur
Production Company: Narsimha Enterprises
Producer: Boney Kapoor
Screenplay: Salim-Javed
Photography: Baba Azmi
Editors: Waman Bhonsle, Gurudutt Shirali
Set Designer: Bijon Dasgupta
Music: Laxmikant-Pyarelal
Lyrics: Javed Akhtar
Choreographer: Saroj Khan
Cast:
Anil Kapoor (*Arun Verma / Mr. India*)
Sridevi (*Seema Sohni*)
Amrish Puri (*Mogambo*)
Satish Kaushik (*Calendar*)
Annu Kapoor (*Mr Gaitonde*)
Ajit Vachani (*Teja*)
Sharat Saxena (*Daaga*)
Ashok Kumar (*Professor Sinha*)
Bob Christo (*Mr Wolcott*)
Ramesh Deo (*police inspector*)
India 1987
179 mins
Digital

Special Thanks to Zee Studios Ltd /
Narsimha Enterprise/Boney Kapoor

Contains the use of 'blackface' which some
viewers may find offensive



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+ Q&A with producer Mr Boney Kapoor

Mr. India is the only real 'Bollywood' film made by Shekhar Kapur, whose earlier film *Masoom* was more in the style of the parallel Hindi cinema, while his later works, *Bandit Queen* and *Elizabeth* (1998), are made in a western style. This was the last film that [writers] Salim-Javed ever worked on together, and featured their usual mix of social issues (food adulteration), populism (the moment where Mr. India removes the groaning table of the decadent rich to give it to the beggars on the street) and pastiche of, and quotes from, other Hindi films, notably in a song medley.

Anil Kapoor and Sridevi were well cast in their roles in the film. Anil Kapoor is excellent as Arun, the son out to avenge his father's death at the hands of the evil Mogambo (Amrish Puri in a very silly blond wig, with plenty of gadgets, a pink acid pit and a great catchphrase: 'Mogambo khush hua!/Mobambo is pleased!'), who is hell-bent on taking over the world. Arun's father has left him a wristband that makes him invisible and allows him to carry out heroic acts as 'Mr. India'. His chaotic life includes running a small orphanage from his house. Into this world comes Seema (Sridevi), an investigative journalist, who falls in love with the invisible Mr. India, finding out later that it is the man she knows.

The songs by Laxmikant-Pyarelal (lyrics by Javed Akhtar) are among the film's high spots. The famous 'Hawa hawaii' song, quoted in Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay!* (1988), is a pastiche of all nightclub songs, as Sridevi dons a bewildering change of costumes to divert the gang's attention, while she dances and performs comic turns to nonsense and silly lyrics. 'Kaate nahi katate' is one of the defining 'wet sari' sequences of Hindi cinema, when Sridevi's now iconic blue chiffon sari is soaked during an erotic encounter with an invisible man. The songs pulsating chorus 'I love you' was also much imitated on the streets. Alongside the children's performance of a medley of songs, 'Karte hai hum pyaar Mr. India se' affectionately mocks film-style romance and marriage.

During this period, Sridevi was one of the few female stars whose name was a box-office attraction. After her early days in south Indian films, she soon became a major star in Hindi films, where her sexy dancing, acting skills and comic turns made her one of the last great divas. She became a Yash Chopra heroine in *Chandni* (1991) and *Lamhe*, repeating her star pairing with Anil Kapoor in the latter.

Shekhar Kapur made *Mr. India* perhaps as a knowing pastiche of Hollywood and the Hindi movie. There is much in this film for the cinephile, with its many references to Hollywood films, as Arun/Mr. India, blends the Invisible Man with Indiana Jones, in his struggle against a villain worthy of a Bond movie, in this blend of fantasy and detective film with *The Sound of Music*. The heroine even appears as Charlie Chaplin and performs a cabaret number when not working as a journalist on the local rag. The full *masala*, or spice, of the Hindi movie is also present throughout the film, in its narrative, song and dance. After several disastrous attempts from outside India to make pastiches or tributes to Hindi cinema, this is a reminder that it takes great skill to make this kind of film.

Rachel Dwyer, *100 Bollywood Films* (BFI Screen Guides, 2005)

REGULAR PROGRAMME

Relaxed Screening: A Year in a Field + intro

Mon 18 Dec 18:10

Restored: Distant Thunder (Ashani Sanket) +

pre-recorded intro by Sangeeta Datta (UK Premiere of 4K Restoration)

Tue 19 Dec 18:00

Member Picks: The Thin Red Line

Sat 30 Dec 19:40

Woman with a Movie Camera: Strange Days

Sat 30 Dec 20:00

Seniors' Free Matinee: Sunset Boulevard + intro

Mon 8 Jan 14:00

Art in the Making: Fields of the Senses + intro by

Steven Foxon, Curator of Non-Fiction, BFI National Archive

Tue 9 Jan 18:30

Projecting the Archive: The Street Singer aka

Interval for Romance + intro by writer Ming Ho

Tue 16 Jan 18:20

African Odyssey: West Indies + intro by archivist

Annabelle Aventurin + Q&A with film programmer

Abiba Coulibaly, Jonathan Ali of The Twelve30

Collective and filmmaker, curator and DJ, Rabz

Lansiquot

Sat 20 Jan 16:30

Experimenta: Do It Yourself: Women Artist

Filmmakers and Punk + Christine Binnie, Anne

Robinson and Jill Westwood in conversation with

Rachel Garfield

Wed 24 Jan 18:15

Silent Cinema: Lady Windermere's Fan + intro by

Bryony Dixon, BFI National Archive curator

Sun 28 Jan 15:20

Relaxed Screening: The Enigma of Kaspar

Hauser Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle + intro &

discussion

Mon 29 Jan 18:20

Restored: Spellbound

Tue 30 Jan 18:00

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Boney Kapoor started his career working under legends like Shakti Samanta. The most famous film produced by him remains the Shekhar Kapur directed *Mr. India*, starring his brother Anil Kapoor and his future wife Sridevi. It was the second biggest hit of 1987 and remains a cult classic in India. *Mr. India* has often been featured in lists of top Bollywood films. On the centenary of Indian cinema, it was declared one of the 100 Greatest Indian Films of All Time.

His other early productions include *Hum Paanch*, which played a key role in establishing actors like Mithun Chakraborty and Amrish Puri in Bollywood. Kapoor also launched many big stars of the Hindi film industry. His production *Woh Saat Din* launched brother Anil Kapoor, *Prem* launched younger brother Sanjay Kapoor and Tabu, and *Koi Mere Dil Se Poochhe* launched actress Esha Deol. He produced one of the most expensive films in the history of Hindi cinema: *Roop Ki Rani Choron Ka Raja* in 1993. In 1997, he produced the box office hit *Judai* starring Sridevi and Anil together yet again with Urmila Matondkar.

Kapoor was managing brother Anil's career well until 1999 and in 2000 he produced *Pukar*. The film won two National Film Awards, including the Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration and the National Film Award for Best Actor for Anil Kapoor's performance.

In 2002, he produced *Company*, directed by Ram Gopal Varma. The film received positive reviews from critics as well as audiences and won six out of the eleven awards it was nominated for at the Filmfare Awards. The film received critical acclaim at the 2004 Austin Film Festival and New York Asian Film Festival. It is the second film in the *Gangster* series and a sequel to the film *Satya*. It was followed by a sequel, *D*. Film critic Rajeev Masand has labelled it (along with its prequel *Satya*) one of the 'most influential movies of the past ten years.' *Company* marked the introduction of a new genre of film making, a variation of film noir that has been called *Mumbai noir*.

His 2004 film *Run*, starring Abhishek Bachchan, has since achieved a cult status for its comedy scenes, especially the 'Kauwa Biryani' scene starring Vijay Raaz. Following this, he produced the comedy film *No Entry* that became Bollywood's biggest hit of 2005.

In 2009, Kapoor produced *Wanted* starring Salman Khan. The film broke many records at the box office upon release, due to Khan's comeback. He acquired the Tamil and Telugu remake rights of 2016 Hindi film *Pink*. He produced the Tamil version of the film in 2019 as *Nerkonda Paarvai*, which became a critical and commercial success. Later in 2021, he produced the Telugu version of the film, along with Dil Raju, as *Vakeel Saab*. The film is the highest opener in India following the COVID-19 pandemic. Both the films are his debuts into Tamil and Telugu cinema respectively. In 2023, he made his film acting debut in *Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar*, playing the supporting role of Ranbir Kapoor's father.

Mike McCahill (host) has written on film and TV for *The Telegraph* since 2003, for *The Guardian* since 2012, and for *Reader's Digest* since 2016. In the intervening years, he has appeared on Radio 4's *Today* programme and – with a degree of randomness befitting the man – BBC2's *Working Lunch*. He has also contributed to the home-viewing reference guide *The DVD Stack* (Canongate, 2006; second edition 2007), Halliwell's *The Movies That Matter* (HarperCollins, 2008) and *The Little White Lies Movie Quiz Book* (Laurence King, 2019).