

Agent Vinod - bade araam se!

Written by Sharad Vatss
Friday, 23 March 2012 18:30



Agent Vinod is one of those spy thrillers that could have been better executed.

I am sure you all must have seen Saif in an ad for a undergarment brand, where in one version he wins a race and in another blows off all the goons by a move of his finger - *bade araam se!*

In Agent Vinod, Saif continues in the same spirit and everything happens 'bade araam se' for our desi James Bond slash Ethan Hunt slash Col Thomas Devoe or even our very own super hero Rajini sir.

Hindi film industry's attempts at a super spy dates back to Farz (1967; Jeetendra), Spy in Rome (1968; Dev Kumar), Yakeen (1969; Dharmendra), Surakksha (1979; Mithun Chakraborty), Bond 303 (1985; Jeetendra), Mr Bond (1992; Akshay Kumar), Baadshan (1999; Shah Rukh Khan), The Hero (2003; Sunny Deol). But the hunt for an original Indian spy, who could fit into the shoes of James Bond continued.

In 1977, a film on a secret agent called Agent Vinod, starring Mahendra Sandhu, did prove a surprise hit. Three-and-a-half decades later, director Sriram Raghavan (Ek Haseena thi and Johny Gaddar) makes a similar attempt, retaining the title but goes in for a new plot line.

Ok so the story first. Story??!! It starts in Afghanistan, goes through South Africa, England, Pakistan, Russia, Morocco, Riga, Latvia, Uzbekistan, Somaliya, all the way to India. Quite a journey!

An Indian spy named Agent Vinod starts chasing an international crook who killed his friend.

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The friend gave him a code as he lay dying. Agent Vinod travels the world as he goes about unlocking the code. His hunt ends in *saddi* Delhi and also involves Greater Noida's Pari Chowk. In his quest he meets many bad guys, whom he handles bade araam se. He romances, shoots about a hundred people without letting one touch him not even by rocket launchers, drives all types of vehicles, changes countries faster than he changes his underwear, can go in any place, and seems to know everything. And he does all this bade araam se!

The opening sequence reminds you of James Bond movies, an action packed sequence to introduce the protagonist and the film's credits. But in no time, the stretched sequences starts making you restless. The story moves slower than Agent Vinod. At some point, you really question the need to travel to so many countries, with no strong connection to the story, just for a few shots.

I waited for the intermission in between. In fact I overheard some people saying, "Oh no! Khatam karo," when Vinod's journey to another countries continues even after the climax. The dialogues miss the crux and are at best routine. The plot moves from country to country at such a speed that it makes you disoriented after a while. This country-hopper of a thriller is a maze, which starts from a terrorist den in Afghanistan's 'desert of death' (dasht-e-margoh) and ends at a family restaurant in Connaught Place in Delhi. The transitions of scenes is not smooth and affects the flow of the movie.

The flimsy story backed by an average script adds to the film woes.

On the positive side, director Sriram Raghavan doesn't make his spy a clone of either Bond or Bourne. For one, this spy doesn't smoke or drink or charm hotties to bed.

The screenplay is good but could have been better for such a thriller.

Saif and Kareena couldn't do much justice to their roles. Kareena fails to impress in both her *mujra* as well as her ISI agent, *avatar*. Her mujra mate Maryam Zakaria is not just a better dancer but well toned too.

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Aadil Hussain (Vidya Balan's husband in Ishqiya) as the villain is good and so is Ram Kapoor, who looks really ugly with that wig. Prem Chopra, Shahbaz Khan, Gulshan Grover have nothing new to offer. Zakir Hussain is a talented actor but is being wasted after his best in Sarkar.

The editing by Pooja Ladha Surti is good overall but could've been better during the mid session. The stunts are extremely well executed. In fact, the stunts, chase and action scenes (by Peter Heins; additional action by Parvez Khan) are truly exciting.

Pritam comes up with another striking score. *Pyaar ki Pungi* is, of course, a runaway hit, but its placement in the movie is not justified. Raabta is imaginatively filmed amidst gunshots and tension. It reminds you of the climax of Arjun Pandit. The mujra, *Dil mera muft ka*, is equally catchy. Muraleedharan C.K.'s cinematography is a treat and has an international feel to it.

If only the likes of slick action, globetrotting, stunning VFX, swanky cars, nuclear weapons, suave hero, sensuous heroine and stone-eyed-villains would have been sufficient for an uncomplicated and thrilling plot, it might pass off as a stylish Hollywood flick, but missing the depth needed for a spy thriller, it seems Raghavan couldn't balance well while dishing out a mass entertainer without lacking sensibility.

If you have not yet seen Pan Singh Tomar or Kahaani, watch them first. If Yes, then try The Artist. And if you still have time then go and watch Agent Vinod but zara araam se.

(Rating: 2.5 stars out of 5 for me.)

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