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Mayank Shekhar, Hindustan Times

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Sure, this has been a poor year at the pictures. This, the gents at the movie business will tell you, and they obviously have only themselves to blame for it. You waste AR Rahman's finest soundtrack on *Delhi 6*, and claim our undivided attention over *Chandni Chowk To China*, the complaint should be the audience's.

That's not because such hype is generated around such tripe, but more because the relentless marketing of the big, but bad films, often drowns out the better ones.

Very few then would've even heard this year of pure but puny gems like Sooni Taraporewala's *Little Zizou* (zo zweet), or Pankaj Advani's *Sankat City* (an underbelly laugh), or Mazhar Kamran's *Mohandas* (over-sincere, but at least sincere). It's never too late of course. Movies do survive beyond their first weekend, tell the moneybag that. They're meant to entertain you forever. Some

stay with you only for those couple of hours, like that Ajay Devgn Diwali gig *All The Best*: The only way to judge comedy is if you can hear yourself crack up more than once in a while. You would. For the rest, as the hilarious trucker in the flick points out, "You wouldn't care a Bhakra Nangal Damn!"

It wasn't easy sitting through most movies in 2009 (many of course weren't movies at all). It's harder still to list the best. There are of course more than a few good, and a few, truly great. From here on, I suspect, it can only get better.

Show (you) must go on

Luck By Chance

Director: Zoya Akhtar

Farhan Akhtar's wonderfully under-stated Vikram, and his girlfriend Sonu (Konkona Sensharma), both wish to make it in Bollywood: a confusing playground, where quality is subjective; morality, relative. Performances cannot be measured.

Fate of a few eventually takes all; barriers to entry are unreachably high.

The boy makes it, and breaks some. In the final scene, Konkona's Sonu neatly wraps up her ambition to bury it forever.

Her taxi moves on. The story of Andheri still continues.

Luck By Chance is that rare, personalised film you chance upon only once in a while. It speaks at once of the dazzling scope of a showbiz dream, and the shallow, sickeningly schizophrenic nature of its flip side. It still cheers on the innocent free-spiritedness that's made Mumbai a charming city of crackpots and creators over decades.

This looks in parts a parody. Except, everything is as true as they get. Bollywood is a running spoof of its own. No Hindi film has possibly touched something so close this delicately.

Pass on this joint

Dev D

Director: Anurag Kashyap

Self-devastating Dev appears a male-chauvinist son of a gun. Yet, it's the two strong, sharp-tongued women in his life who eventually put him in place: A prostitute Chanda (Kalki) he barely loved. A childhood sweetheart Paro he never quite had, and who finally decoded his narcissism, "You're incapable of falling in love. You should go out with your own mirror image."

The rough premise of this picture has been known since 1917, and a dozen movies thereafter. The writer-director in top form hence can play with subtext better. It ranges from straight puns to stray profundity, and reveals the hollowness you

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can confront, were you to "intoxicate yourself to a point, where you love the feeling so much, that everything else begins to pale in comparison." Amit Trivedi's entrancing musical spread punches into this intimate story a rock-operatic quality. Strobe and neon lights of *Pahar Ganj* and coloured interiors do their own sweet, hazy thing. Abhay's the man. Three cheers and more

3 Idiots

Director: Raju Hirani

It's a lovely, warm genre Raju Hirani, and his co-writer Abhijat Joshi have cracked: to keep it simple, and to keep up the smile quotient. The film makes urgent points on an examination system that passes off for an education system in this country. Yet, it retains the lightness of being another *Munnabhai* movie: there are in fact two Circuits (Sharman Joshi, Madhavan) in place of one. And Aamir's Aamir, of course. We're compelled to think, and laugh at the aisles still.

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