



Uri : The Surgical Strike – Kaushal is the best fit in the story which switches quickly from facts to fiction

War films, in Hindi cinema, are fuelled by strong patriotic vehemence rather than an assemblage of true facts for a subtle, edge-of-seat thriller. We have examples of excellent war films, which have stood the test of time; May it be Terrence Mallick's Thin Red Line or Oliver Stone's Platoon, films on armed forces are expected to plunge into the psychological, emotional as well as physical realms of the men in uniform and keep the audience's psyche hooked to theirs. However, in Indian cinema, patriotic dialogues are thrown at higher decibels than required, to create high spirits and a sense of thrill. As the character Major Vikram Shergill asks his commandos in Uri: the Surgical Strike - "How's the josh". The answer is pretty much 'high', for both the people on the screen as well as the ones sitting in the audience. Uri: the Surgical Strike had all the ingredients for a crisp procedural, but it follows a more mainstream and a banal approach. Vicky Kaushal is the strong muscle of the film and he fits in the role like an electric plug into a socket. He is convincing as Major Vikram Shergill, a tall muscular man with guts of steel and having the requisite tactical skills, as we meet him on his first mission, on the Indo Myanmar border, as he leads the operation, to wipe off the terrorists. He is the character, audiences could strongly root for.

Uri: the Surgical Strike oscillates continuously from facts to fiction. There is a hunger for revenge, amongst the protagonist, the protagonist is given two fist fight scenes (something which Bollywood is not ready to shed off) and punchy dialogues. These are elements which make up almost every Hindi film and Uri was not an exception. However, it could easily have been one taking into consideration the inspirations it draws. Major Vihaan Shergill takes up a desk job, so that he can take care of his mother, afflicted by Alzheimer. He realises his true calling – going back to the battlefield, when a relative gets killed in a terrorist attack; a concept of vengeance which has been twisted & turned and thrown back at audience many a

times in the past. Pakistani terrorists enter the army barracks and shoot the officers in their sleep; an attack which charges up the Ministry to resort to extreme measures of a surgical strike. The film draws strong impressions from Zero Dark Thirty and Hurt Locker (both helmed by Oscar winning director Kathryn Bigelow). Paresh Rawal plays Govind sir whose character has resemblance to National Security Advisor - Ajit Doval. He leads the operation from the Ministry and he is completely convincing. Director of photography - Mithesh Mirchandani has done a fantastic job with scouting appropriate locations, to add visually to the film. However, the film lacks immensely at the scripting stage. The flow is unnecessarily divided into chapters, which remain far from being dichotomous. They share a similar tone, which itself negates the purpose of creating a chapter wise execution. The makers have done a terrific job, with the action making it slick and ruthless. With predictable outcomes, there is still a sense of dread, as we see executions and explosions in night vision, as men on mission go systematically from one safe house to another, gunning down the terrorists.

Kirti Kulhari and Yami Gautam do not have much of the heavy lifting to do as they serve to be mere cardboard characters. The factual information is clearly distorted and at points even narrative feels a bit bizarre. We see an intern in a DRDO who has a lion's share to play in the surgical strike when Govind sir discards the DRDO approved gadgets over his bird-like surveillance drone (something which is hard to digest if we take into account the massive planning that actually went in for the surgical strike). The film is a treat for a mainstream audience which wishes to go in for another strong dose of patriotism. However, for someone who wants to actually delve into the specifics and facts of a surgical strike, a documentary would suffice.

2.5 on 5 stars

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