

## Blu-Ray Review: 'Kites' Excites in Hollywood, Bollywood Versions

Submitted by [mattmovieman](#) [1] on March 2, 2011 - 12:05pm

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CHICAGO – The more Bollywood pictures I see, the more I understand the odd appeal of a film like Baz Luhrmann's "Moulin Rouge," which remains near the top of my Greatest Guilty Pleasures list. Why guilty? Because even I can understand why many people hate it. The picture is loud, chaotic, stupendously over the top, and staggeringly drunk on the sheer movieness of movies. That may be why I love it.

"Rouge" might as well have been made in Bollywood, considering how effortlessly it blended genres, fusing operatic melodrama and screwball farce with shamelessly indulgent spectacle. As for its characters, they followed a formula as old as the hills. There's the scrappy, starry-eyed protagonist trying to make a living for himself. There's his revered object of desire who falls in love with him at first or second glance. And then there's the girl's villainous suitor, whose massive wealth has caused him to believe he can buy love as if it were a fashionable accessory.



Blu-Ray Rating: **3.5/5.0**

That just about describes the plot of Anurag Basu's "Kites," a tour de force of escapist filmmaking that can easily be enjoyed for its enticing yet resoundingly shallow pleasures. Hrithik Roshan stars as Jay, a loner who's part con-man, part Calvin Klein underwear model. Though he initially resists the advances of the smitten Gina (Kangana Ranaut), he pursues her once he discovers that her father's loaded. Then he encounters the fiancé of Gina's evil brother, Tony (Nicholas Brown). The fiancé turns out to be Natasha (Bárbara Mori), the last of the eleven illegal immigrants Jay married in order to help them obtain their green card. To look for an explanation of why Jay and Natasha instantly fall for one another is to miss the point. In a Bollywood picture, the style IS the explanation. We are to naturally assume that the characters are dizzy if the camera is swirling around them.



Bárbara Mori stars in Anurag Basu's Kites.

*Photo credit: Image Entertainment*

The film opens with a stunning dance sequence in which time itself seems to move to the pulsating rhythm of the music. Ayananka Bose's cinematography forges a kinetic duet with Aki Aki's editing, as the two lovers soon become wanted fugitives, fleeing from one photogenic set-piece to the next. It's interesting to see how heavily influenced the filmmakers are by American pictures. Basu pays homage to everything from "The Searchers" and "Thelma and Louise" to "Jerry Maguire." There's even a shot evocative of Luhrmann's "Romeo and Juliet," as Jay observes Natasha through the dreamy lens of a fish tank. The characters are likable in a superficial sort of way—they certainly have the sunniest smiles of anyone else in the film. Some sequences reach inspired levels of lunacy, such as when Jay hops aboard a truck carrying cars, and releases each vehicle one by one in order to halt the cops hot on his tail. As for the dialogue, it consists of the sort of hokum that can somehow be taken more seriously when read rather than heard. Sample line: "Every time I lose someone, it rains in Vegas."



Kites was released on Blu-Ray and DVD on Feb. 15, 2011.

Photo credit: Image Entertainment

"Kites" is presented in 1080p High Definition (with a 2.35:1 aspect ratio), and includes the "Remix" version made for American audiences and falsely advertised on the packaging as "edgier and sexier" than the original. It's basically the same film with a few key changes, some better than others. Viewers troubled by the opening credit stating, "A Brett Ratner Presentation," can rest assured that Basu's vision is still very much intact, though his dialogue has been somewhat condensed and simplified in the English translation by co-writer Akarsh Khurana. There's still a great deal of subtitled dialogue that thankfully preserves the actor's original voices.

At 92 minutes, the American version runs a full thirty minutes shorter than the Bollywood cut. Abbreviated sequences are most noticeable toward the beginning, since Jay's relationship with Gina is edited down to a brief montage that obscures the film's single great dance number. Gone are the lines where Jay bluntly professes that he loved Gina solely "for her wealth," or where Natasha admits that she's with Tony because she loves "his money." Those segments of dialogue painted the characters as heartlessly cruel and undeserving of sympathy. Though Jay and Natasha clearly still harbor those feelings in the American cut, their refusal to articulate them somehow makes a big difference, resulting in a more accessible film.

Many of the movie's musical montages are cut down primarily because they're no longer set to the tune of Hindi pop songs. The Ratner touch is clearly seen in some of the alternate musical choices, including a remixed version of "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," memorably used in Tarantino's "Kill Bill: Vol. 1." An added scene taking place on Natasha's childhood porch further humanizes her character, while giving the film some necessary breathing room before its next major action sequence. Yet Ratner inexplicably cuts the scene where Jay commits an uncharacteristically selfless act by secretly deciding to give himself up while delivering Natasha to safety. She responds by slapping him in the face and saying that they're together for good. So, in the final analysis, "Kites: The Remix" has several improvements, but it makes the unforgivable error of cutting out the most romantic moment in the picture.

*'Kites' is released by Image Entertainment and stars Hrithik Roshan, Bárbara Mori, Nicholas Brown, Kabir Bedi, Anand Tiwari, Kangana Ranaut and Yuri Suri. It was written by Anurag Basu, Robin Bhatt and Akarsh Khurana and directed by Anurag Basu. It was released on Feb. 15, 2011. It is not rated.*



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