

Love Story of 'Kites' Soars as a Marvel of Modern Moviemaking

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- [Action Movie](#) [2]
- [Bárbara Mori](#) [3]
- [Bollywood](#) [4]
- [Brett Ratner](#) [5]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [6]
- [Hrithik Roshan](#) [7]
- [Kangana Ranaut](#) [8]
- [Kites](#) [9]
- [Las Vegas](#) [10]
- [Love Story](#) [11]
- [Mexico](#) [12]
- [Movie Review](#) [13]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [14]



Rating: **4.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – One of the most provocative and unusual films this year, or any year, is an amazing production from India entitled “Kites.” American director Brett Ratner (“Rush Hour”) was so taken by this film, that he agreed to edit the original (or remix) for the U.S. presentation. Both versions will be in the marketplace for a limited release.

And what a release it is. Combining elements of the traditional Bollywood soap operas– including the songs and dance associated with genre – with astounding and inventive action sequences, Kites is an awesome movie experience that true love can conquer all, including Las Vegas.

The film opens with a train. Several Mexican workers surround it, to begin the day labor of unloading the hay from its cars. When they open the door, an unconscious and injured man rolls out. His name is Jay (Hrithik Roshan), and he is about to tell his story.

In flashbacks, there is Jay as a Hindi immigrant seeking the American Dream in Las Vegas. He is a jack-of-all-trades, a hustler of several jobs, including dance instructor and groom-for-hire (he marries women immigrants so they can score a green card). It is in dance class that he meets Gina (Kangana Ranaut), daughter of one the most ruthless and powerful casino owners (Kabir Bedi) in Sin City. Gina falls hard for Jay, and in that relationship he sees an opportunity for upward mobility.



Let Us Be Lovers: Bárbara Mori as Natasha and Hrithik Roshan as Jay in 'Kites'
Photo Credit: © 2010 Reliance Big Pictures

While luxuriating on a yacht with Gina in his rich new lifestyle, Jay recognizes Natasha (Bárbara Mori), a Mexican immigrant who was the last of his green card marriages. It turns out she is engaged to Gina's brother Tony (Nicholas Brown), and is also indulging in her new found wealth. But the spark that was generated between Jay and Natasha during their marriage charade is suddenly ignited to flame. The star-crossed lovers are about to give up everything they ever dreamed of to simply be together, which results in Jay's slack body falling out of a hay car, and continues toward a destiny that neither of them anticipated.

Now that's a story! The scope of this ambitious project is mind boggling. Anurag Basu, the director and writer (along with Robin Bhatt), is taking on not only the love story, but the intrigue of seductive hip-hop dance, blazing escapes that rival any action picture and a wonderful tour into everything that is passionate about being at the movies. This is the movie of movies.

Take for example the hip-hop contest that wins the heart of the heiress Gina and her father Bob. It is a dazzling array of moves and counter-moves, thumping like a heartbeat, generating a pure excitement that would seduce anyone. It is a remarkable sequence, a combination of Rocky and Saturday Night Fever, to reference another couple of "movie movies."

The action parts are made more alluring through the edge-of-the-seat escapes that the lovers must endure. These jaw dropping and imaginative scenes simultaneously breaks new ground and pays homage to the movie action from which it gets the inspiration. Can a Quentin Tarantino-esque gun stand-off in a "tourist town" western saloon work? Why not.

And to top everything off the film is beautifully shot and revels in simple but poignant symbolism. The use of water as metaphor and modifier is as delicate as a Jane Austin adaptation. It both baptizes and cleanses the victims who stand beneath and within it.



Conquering All: Bárbara Mori as Natasha in 'Kites'
Photo Credit: © 2010 Reliance Big Pictures

The story of the lovers, teetering on corny, might not be for all tastes. But it also serves its purpose, to emphasize the machinations of star-crossed love. The vibration of that impossible love dream has the power to render destiny into a whole different type of celebration, swapping the easy path of material comfort for the rocky passion of true love.

Kites is unapologetic in its superior standard of action, music, movement and in the end, humanity. If movies are the ultimate escape as entertainment, then we are as lucky to experience this escape as the lovers whose fate and fortune play before us on the silver screen.

"Kites" opens in a limited release, including Chicago, on May 21st. Check local listings for showtimes. Featuring Hrithik Roshan, Bárbara Mori, Kangana Ranaut and Nicholas Brown, written by Anurag Basu and Robin Bhatt, directed by Anurag Basu. Not Rated.



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- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/b-bara-mori>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/bollywood>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/brett-ratner>
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- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/kangana-ranaut>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/kites>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/las-vegas>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/love-story>
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