

# Film Review: Bollywood Venetian escapade loses plot in the city of romance



CHENNAI: Director Anand Surapur's Bollywood film "The Fakir of Venice" has a great theme, a magical location and two fantastic actors in Farhan Akhtar and Annu Kapoor.

Yet the movie's short 98-minute run time feels stretched, mainly due to the script's poor development of the main characters.

Based on a true story, the film premiered at the Venice Film Festival back in 2009 but, strangely, only hit the theatrical circuit last week. Sadly, Surapur's work has not aged well.

Set in one of the most romantic cities in the world, Adi Contractor (Akhtar) and Sattar (Kapoor) arrive in Venice as tourists of sorts, but with the motive of making quick

money.

Akhtar, playing his debut role, is perfectly cast as an Anglo-Indian trickster and movie production fixer, who gets the chance of a lifetime when a Venetian gallery commissions him to find an Indian fakir (religious ascetic who lives on alms) to pep up its installation art exhibition.

After a fruitless search for a holy man, Adi finds one, but a fake, in his own backyard in Mumbai. He is Sattar, who has spent most of his poverty-stricken life scratching a living by entertaining passersby by burying himself in sand.

Adi drags Sattar to Venice, where the man is touted as a sage with divine powers. However, Adi's deception starts to unravel when Sattar becomes unwilling to cooperate with the con trick and turns to drink.

To pull off their plan, the two men must learn to shed layers of deceit and move toward understanding themselves, and each other.

The story has a message that cannot be ignored, but there is still a tendency to view it as mere exotica.

The film is poorly shot, despite the dream location, and with Rajesh Devraj's shoddy screenplay reducing the lead parts to caricatures, the narrative gets lost in the multitude of waterways and alleys of Venice.

It is quite possible that Akhtar and Kapoor would now be embarrassed to admit they were once part of this Venetian escapade.

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