

‘Race 3’ — Salman Khan fails to step on the gas as franchise stalls



CHENNAI: It's tough keeping a movie franchise up and running unless a fresh perspective is introduced regularly. So it's no real surprise that the "Race" franchise has had a complete overhaul in its third outing. What is surprising is just how badly that's worked out.

New director Remo D'Souza takes charge, and with him comes a new lead actor — Bollywood 'bad boy' Salman Khan. The latter choice, in particular, seems misguided, given Saif Ali Khan's mightily impressive showing in the first two editions.

Salman doesn't fare well in comparison — his ability to get fans swooning is most often a result of taking off his shirt. (Which he does, of course, in "Race 3," for no apparent reason.) And Salman seems tired — his voice heavy and labored. It's just as exhausting watching him.

The plot, such as it is, revolves around a dysfunctional family: Salman's Sikandar — introduced as the nephew of villainous weapons dealer, Shamsheer (Anil Kapoor); Shamsheer's twin children Sandana and Suraj (Daisy Shah and Saqib Saleem); and his bodyguard, Yash (Bobby Deol). Romantic interest comes from Jacqueline Fernandez's Jessica, who stirs up tension between Sikander and Yash.



The film presents dual storylines: one focused on internal family drama caused by a dispute over inheritance, the other on a political scam run by Shamsheer with the help of Sikandar. There is an attempt to bring the two stories together, but it's not a very good one.

And “Race 3” is long. Punishingly long. The film clocks in at 160 minutes — plenty of which would probably have been cut had D’Souza not been so besotted with his lead. Yes, Salman remains one of India’s biggest stars, but his performance here doesn’t come close to justifying the screen time he’s granted by D’Souza’s indulgence, and his presence barely keeps the film afloat. The only bright spot, acting-wise, is Kapoor’s performance

Worst of all, though, “Race 3” doesn’t even feel like fun. There are the obligatory adrenalin-pumping car chases (and crashes), catfights and gun battles, but none of them offers any substance to this soulless turkey.

The scenery, at least, is impressive. Much of the film was shot in the UAE capital, Abu Dhabi, and the majestic Emirates Palace lights up the screen. But there’s none of the light-heartedness of the first two episodes, stylishly helmed by brothers Abbas and Mustan Burmawalla, who must be sharing a laugh at the mess “Race 3” has turned out to be.
