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Shantaram Review: A Messy Take on a Foreigner's Exploits in India

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News18.com

Last Updated: OCTOBER 14, 2022, 12:47 IST

Chennai, India



Shantaram U/A

1.5/5

WATCH TRAILER

14 October 2022 | English

NaN mins | Action, Crime, Adventure

Starring: Charlie Hunnam, Fayssal Bazzi, Antonia Desplat, Elektra Kilkby, Shubham Saraf

Director: Steve Lightfoot, Eric Warren Singer

Music:

Shantaram has been adapted from Gregory David Roberts 2003 novel (a bit of it is biographical), which at one time was a hugely popular read.

Apple TV's series, Shantaram, makes it a point to show the seedy, dark side of the country, more specifically the 1980s Bombay.

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Much like Dany Boyle's 2008 Slumdog Millionaire – which the late Greek director, Theo Angelopoulos, described as a vulgar celebration of India's poverty – Apple TV's series, Shantaram, makes it a point to show the seedy, dark side of the country, more specifically the 1980s Bombay (which is now Mumbai). Though Boyle's film went on to clinch several Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Music (AR Rahman), it appeared as a classic example of a foreigner's obsession with an [India](#) where much of it is sheer despair.

Shantaram has been adapted from Gregory David Roberts 2003 novel (a bit of it is biographical), which at one time was a hugely popular read. It beats me why! For, though I have not read the novel (mercifully so, I would now think after watching three episodes of the Apple TV + series), the screen version is so gloomy and pretentious that it is hardly worth a watch. And so much of what happens in it seems so disbelieving.

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A story about a white saviour, a guy on the run from the law, it pushes him into a self-seeking adventure,

which looks and sounds terribly phoney. It is one of those series that Apple TV +, given to presenting some superbly brilliant stuff (Coda, Bad Sisters), must truly be ashamed of.

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Anyway, this is how the plot, largely set in the underbelly of Bombay's crime and prostitution, runs. Dale Conti (Charlie Hunnam) is an Australian para-medic, who gets involved in a murder and drug racket. Jailed without any chance of reprieve, he escapes in what appears like a kid's play. With a false passport from New Zealand and name, Lindsay Ford (or Lin), lands in Bombay, where he befriends a tour guide, Prabhu (Shubham Saraf, A Suitable Boy), and begins visiting a local bar frequented by expats and local crime lords. Some are seeking wealth, some "nirvana" and some hoping to disappear into the teeming millions of the city. Lin hopes for that as well.

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But with people like wily fixer Didier (Vincent Perez), angry prostitute and junkie Lisa (Elektra Kilkenny), and the enigmatic Karla (Antonia Desplat) – who merely pretend to be Lin's friends – it does not seem that he would be able to get rid of his past, especially with an Australian detective bent on capturing the fugitive. A romance with Lin falling for Karla and an association with gangster Kader Khan (Alexander Siddig), Shantaram is a messy take on a story with so many plots and sub-plots that one feels as lost as our hero. Comical accents and below average performances merely pull down the series. Hunnam's



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Quite like the novel, which, I am told, most people never finished reading, the television series will take a great deal of effort to sit through.

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About the Author

GAUTAMAN BHASKARAN Gautaman Bhaskaran is a movie critic, commentator and an author, who penned the first ever biography of Adoor Gopalakrishnan, and has been covering ma... [Read More](#)

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First Published: OCTOBER 14, 2022, 12:47 IST

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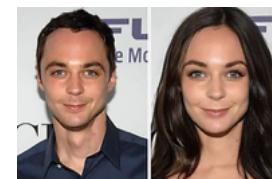
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