

ARQUE

Phir Aayi Hasseen Dillruba: An ode to love peppered with murder & mystery



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Often sequels are not very interesting. But *Phir Aayi Hasseen Dillruba* is as gripping as *Hasseen Dillruba* was. Released in 2021, helmed by Vinil Mathew and penned by Kanika Dhillon, it plotted a romantic murder mystery of two men and one woman. Obviously, one had to go, and he went after being hit by a solid goat leg. Vikrant Massey, who plays Taapsee Pannu's lover, disappears. Or, so we were told, only to emerge in the sequel, finding himself again as part of a troublesome triangle. Sorry, there is a fourth as well, a physically challenged woman, but she is more like a painting on the wall, a needless distraction.

The sequel, now on Netflix, has the same writer but a new director, Jayprad Desai, who has a string of works like *Kaun Pravin Tambe*, *New Bombay Cafe* and *Nagarik*. These came and went without much ado, and I think it is the *Hasseen* titles that have pushed Desai into the limelight. Interestingly, the lead pair of Massey and Pannu are firmly saddled in the second part as well, with Sunny Kaushal essaying the "other man" Abhimanyu. Another notable addition here is Jimmy Sheirgill as Mrityunjay, who dons the khaki and impresses, much in the same way he did in *A Wednesday*, *Special 26*, *Tanu Weds Manu* and *Sahib Biwi Aur Gangster*. In a way, he stole the show from Madhavan in *Tanu Weds Manu* — especially as he utters the film's last lines! These have

remained etched in my memory.

Phir Aayi Hasseen Dillruba takes off from where the first lets us go, and we know Massey's character lives. The couple, still deeply in love, are trying to evade the cops, led by Inspector Kishore Rawat (Aditya Srivastava). Rani and Rishab survive on the precipice of fear and uncertainty. Dhillon and Desai manage to keep our eyeballs firmly on the small screen with short scenes and tricky twists.

The climax here is far more exciting, though not unexpected — as we know that Rani and Rishab will live and love, maybe head towards another part, another plot. Supposed to be adapted from "Dinesh Pandit's" novel (who himself is fictional and part of homage to all those pulp writers whose stories were read surreptitiously because of their subjects), *Phir Aayi Hasseen Dillruba* also flies because its leads captivate us. Massey and Pannu are exceptional with their timing and subtlety. While Massey is cool and calculating, Pannu is a bundle of nerves, not quite sure how their romance would end.

Yes, the movie has a small town feel (having been set in Agra with the Taj Mahal in the background, perhaps as an ode to love). It is a love story all right, but the murder and mystery give it an extra zing. Photographed with sparkling colours (a lot of red contrasted with black), Agra has been given a touch of thrill.

The writer is a senior film critic

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