

## Pakistani Films of 2019



Kaf Kangana

2019 saw close to thirty Pakistani films. Young new directors, producers, screenwriters and actors were seen making their impressions and others fading out into oblivion. The newcomers in every discipline entered film industry and that itself is encouraging, good omen for 2020. TV production houses were behind many of them and that is the need of the hour. Let us begin with Geo Films' *Laal Kabootar* released in March 2019 on Eid, directed by Kamal Khan with Ahmed Ali and Mansha Pasha. Based on street crime in Karachi, it played modestly well at the box office and is now entering many film festivals abroad.

The next Eid release was good for the box office with director Yasir Nawaz giving sequel *Wrong Number 2*, this time with Sami Khan. The summer brought Meera's *Baaji*, directed by Saqib Malik who is a shining name in TV commercials but prefers to keep a low profile. *Baaji* scripted by Irfan Urfi, was the

fateful account of yesteryear's actress making a comeback, threatened by youngsters. *Baaji* too played not only moderately well at the box office but also received good critical reviews.

Director Ehteshashamuddin's *Superstar* too revolved around the dark side of showbiz with Maira Khan in lead, supported by heart throb Bilal Ashraf (now selling biscuits to a princess on small screen). In working for TV commercials, you do end up doing several intriguing assignments, notwithstanding selling tea, real estate and shampoo. We moved on to two hits *Heer Maan ja* and *Parey Hut Love*, directed by Azfar Jafri and Asim Raza respectively. These light-hearted comic romances carried big names in contemporary stardom with Mahira Khan in a brief glamorous role as guest artist. The low-budget *Daal Chawal*, perhaps the only Urdu film from Lahore, funded by Punjab Police, talked on rising unemployment and courageous role of people who take care of law and order. No-

table TV writer Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar's *Kaff Kangana* again with Sami Khan, saw him as a hero bitten by love bug who carried away her girl from across the border. It was a good attempt with rich production effects. Babar Ali's return on big screen in *Betabiyen* was an utter shame and disappointment. He should be more careful in accepting film assignments in his mid-career.

was dropped out. Seems like he was not comfortable with 'All in the family' reunion here. Like most of our films (read: every film), *Sacch* is loaded with romance. Several locales for love songs give you picture postcard rich lush green scenery of Scotland. In fact, the entire film has been lensed there. The story is spread over more than two decades, based on a love triangle with riches and poverty. It also takes care of struggling of three mothers, now



Lal Kabootar

The year ended up with director Zulfiqar's *Sacch*, filmed entirely in Scotland, a family production directed by husband, produced by wife with debuting lead by their daughter. Reads nepotism right and left. Film *Sacch* opened nationwide. Produced by Zulfiqar Shaikh and Tasmina Sheikh, directed by Zulfiqar Shaikh and female lead played by their daughter Elysee. Could there be more 'family collaboration' in a film! I doubt it.

Zulfiqar Shaikh enjoys credit for several TV productions. Film and TV heartthrob Danish Taimoor, now busy in distributing prizes on TV competition shows, was earlier signed and even publicized on posters as the lead,

showing their strength, resilience and some family loyalty.

With British technology coming handy, *Sacch* stands above average in good camerawork, production design and sound. Even the rich interiors have been chosen with good taste and class. Scriptwriter Khalil-ur-Rehman Qamar has a bag full of smash hit TV serials he can be contended with. The titles vary from *Landa Bazar* and *Pyarey Afzal* to *Bota from Toba Tek Singh*, *Mei Mar Gai* and many more, including box office winner *Punjab Nahi Jaon Gi*. It was time for him now to venture into film making not just as a scriptwriter, but to go into production, direction and even as

songwriter (lyricist).



Superstar

His debut venture Kaf Kangan took years in making but it is here now. The film opened nationwide recently. Being a writer himself, the film maker has come up with an intense love story across the borders. A friend told him to listen to a producer who had an idea

of leading man coming from across the border and getting his girl from the Prime Minister's House (sounds weird!). Khalil rejected that outrageous concept, turned the tables and went for a hero who gets his girl from across the border. Of course, no other place than PM's office (what a coincidence!). He was particular about screenplay (read: dialogue) and casting. It may be of interest to note that many changes were made in casting several times over the months but selection of Sami Khan as lead remained intact. The director considers Sami Khan as 'director's actor'. As for leading lady Eshal Fayyaz, once she was on board, she never looked back, nor did the director. Khalil never ever allowed anyone to make any change in the script. He expected all his actors to deliver each and every line exactly what he had written word by word.

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