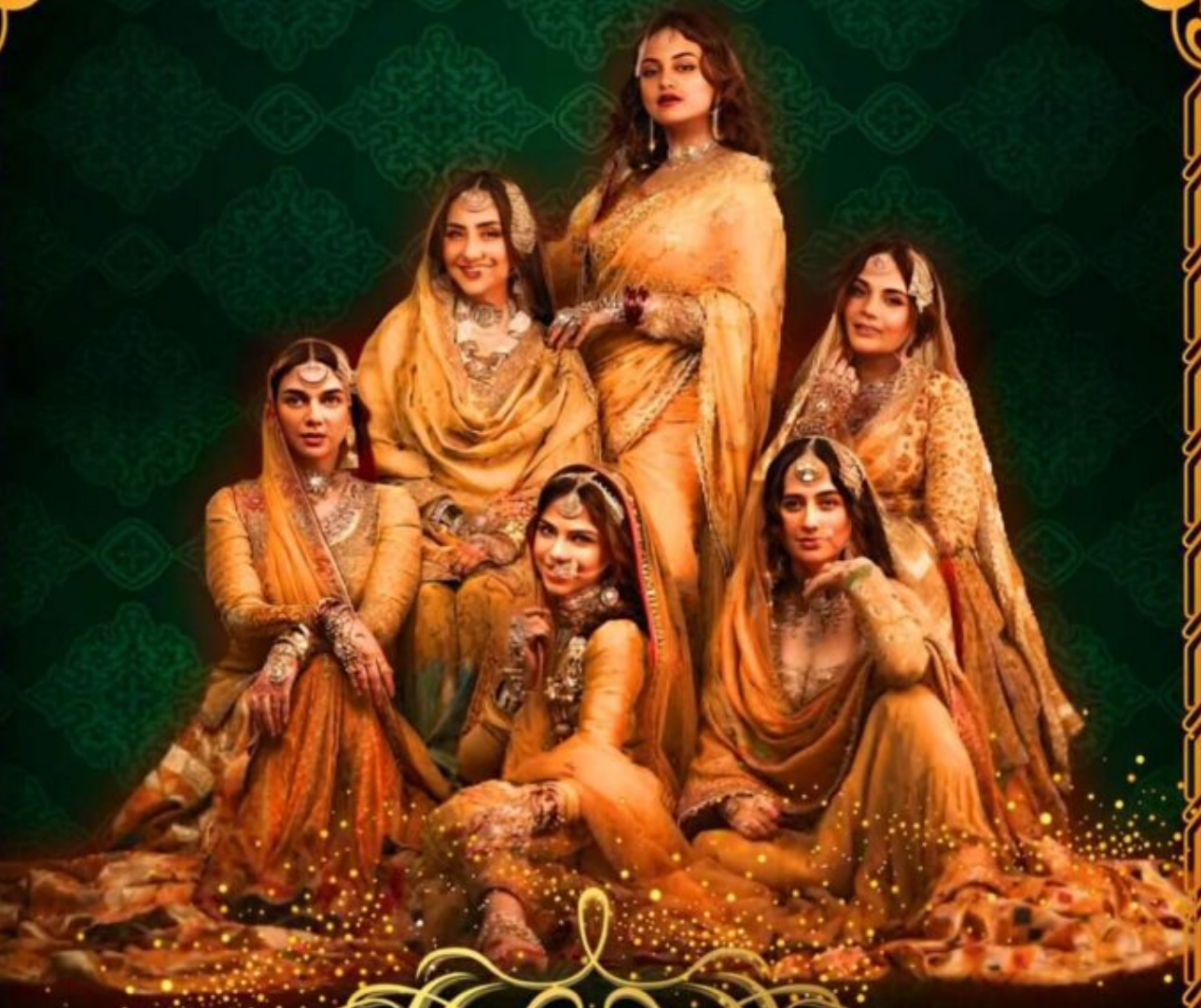


Heeramandi: A Spectacle of Grandeur

A review by Sanjiva Sahai

NETFLIX

Presents



Heeramandi

If you're into drowning in grandeur and have a lifetime to spare, indulge in this 8-hour-and-a-half spectacle called `□□□□□□□□` where the set design gets more screen time than the plot itself.

Who needs historical accuracy when we can have a jolly good `□□□□□□` spin in all the recently released movies? Who cares about facts anyway when we've got the glitz and glamour of a Bhansali extravaganza to distract us?

Indeed, amidst the narrative, several performances shine with profound depth. Manisha Koirala, Sonakshi Sinha, Aditi Rao Hydari, Richa Chadha and the entire female ensemble deliver commendable portrayals, leaving a lasting impression. Additionally, the music, both vocal and instrumental, stands as a formidable asset.

Ah, if only Bhansali had a knack for precision! A concise 2-hour 15-minute film instead of this drawn-out series would have spared us all a lot of eye-rolling and tea breaks.

— Sanjiva Sahai

Sunil Grover, the outrageously, irrepressible match to Kapil Sharma

By Sunil Sarpal



Sunil Grover is the most versatile comedian to have graced The Kapil Sharma Show. There is a Hindi song which depicts his aura:

"TERE CHAHRE SE NAZAR NAHIN HAT TI, NAZARE HUM KYA DEKHEN..."

When he is on view, all other actors hide behind him. The eyes are glued to him till the time he departs.

He brings about such a charismatic approach that his aura becomes larger than life. On the Kapil Sharma Show, the most revered actor was Sunil Grover. In his presence, sometimes, even Kapil Sharma took a back seat.

How a meaningless spat between Kapil Sharma and Sunil Grover, on a flight back from Australia resulted in Sunil withdrawing from the show. His absence from the show was then felt by the audience. His replacement, Krushna, was nowhere near a match to his talent.

On the Kapil Sharma show, Sunil first played the character of Guthi and then Dr Mashoor Gulati. His portrayal of both the characters was unique and audience realised his comic potential. His acting brings in new flavour to the audience.

His sense of comic timing, dialogue delivery, attire and the pregnant pauses that he takes, before delivering the punch line, makes him a very special comedian. He simply tickles the funny bone of the audience. Sunil has portrayed the characters of Amitabh Bachchan, Kapil Dev, and Sidhu with distinction. He also played many a characters with a style of his own and left the audience in splits. Sunil is also capable of copying the voice patterns of a number of actors. He is simply a gifted pro.

When Amitabh Bachchan was first launched as an actor, he was tagged as an *Angry Young Man*. The writers then used to write scripts to suit his image and movies were made where Amitabh invariably played the character of the Angry Man. Amitabh's success story on big screen was possible with his image. Similarly, now scripts have to be written keeping in mind Sunil Grover as a comedy actor. His extra ordinary comedy skills could be given further boost so that Sunil's potential is harnessed fully. Watch one more of his charades below:

Charlie Chopra & The Mystery Of Solang Valley



A Review by **Sanjiva Sahai**

Charlie Chopra

& The Mystery Of Solang Valley

(The latest Hindi web series in 6 episodes on Sony Liv)

□□Directed by Vishal Bharadwaj the show opens with an innovative musical score and hilariously clever lyrics that reveal the protagonist's (Wamiqa) home address. These elements stand out as commendable highlights in the series. However, while the music and the stunning snow-capped setting deserve praise, the adaptation of Agatha Christie's classic Sittaford Mystery falls short of delivering a believable, relatable, and engaging narrative.

□□Charlie's sporadic fourth-wall-breaking moments, where she addresses the camera and talks to the viewers, leave much to be desired. This is a well-known technique in theatre, film, TV, and literature but here it's executed with a lack of finesse, often descending into gimmickry and absurdity. Wamiqa Gabbi's reactions serve as mere punctuation to these instances, highlighting their shallowness. It raises the question of whether delving into a detective's psyche is

justified when the true pleasure lies in external observation and deciphering their actions.

□□While Agatha's novel sparkled like a well-polished diamond, the adaptation and cast's performances were more like deflated party balloons. It's as if they were handed a *Rogan Josh* recipe but decided to cook instant noodles instead. The characters needed emotional depth, but the actors served up emotional flatlines. Wamiqa Gabbi, a radiant presence, struggles to carry the show solo, hampered by a lack of versatility, rendering her lengthy role predictably dull. Naseeruddin Shah, oddly out of place, delivers a superficial performance. Neena Gupta, however, shines as the sole beacon of spontaneity and precision. Gulshan Grover repeats himself. The ensemble cast- including the entire Shah family (Ratna Pathak – Heeba – Vivaan – Imaad), Lara Dutta, Chandan Roy Sanyal, Paoli Dam, and Ashique Hussain, adds their bit to the mix.

□□It leaves viewers hoping that future adaptations by Vishal will capture the essence of Christie's work more effectively.

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2/5

_ Sanjiva Sahai

OTT Series: Aranyak on Netflix / Sanjiva Sahay

Aranyak

The brand new Hindi webseries on Netflix



□□ Welcome to the world of murder mystery that has the deceptive appearance of a folklore. This character- □□ □□□□□□-imaginary or real, would hammer your brain across 8 episodes. Since a fresh killing and rape of a girl , the sleepy town of Himachal Pradesh is jolted again. The police station, uncountable natives ...complete with an influential politician and a high status business family. The probe begins, so does your journey into a narrative which is thrilling in the beginning and a big disappointment after 3 episodes. Lengthy, tedious and long drawn.

□□ Casting is almost perfect. Parambrata excels as Angad Mallik, the investigating police officer. Surprisingly, Raveena as the SHO on leave, Kasturi Dogra, manages to get into the character effortlessly. Then we have actors like Ashutosh Rana, Zakir Husain, Meghna Malik among others who try earnestly to lift a dull screenplay. All remain stereotypes with some clichéd, overdramatic dialogues. The hangover of the

forgotten era of the '80s.

□ A mixed bag indeed. Average direction and writing, above average performances (better than Candy at least), effective background score. O yes, watch the series on faster speed for the breathtaking and picturesque locations. The climax has been shot in thick snowfall all over and looks phenomenal.

□ Nothing less, nothing more.

As tributes pour in on Surekha Sikri's demise listen to her Swan Songs

As a fitting tribute to the great performer she was we will listen to her mellifluous recitations of Hindi and Urdu Poetry. But before that, here are some of the tributes which poured in on social media and otherwise from her millions of admirers, and eminent people whom she knew, including actors and directors from film, television and theatre.