

News | Portfolio | Fashion | Sports | People | Infotech | India 2.0 | e-Cards | Horoscope

Sections

[GOSSIP](#)
[WALLPAPERS](#)
[INTERVIEWS](#)
[TRADENEWS](#)
[FEATURES](#)
[CURTAIN RAISER](#)
[HOLLYWOOD](#)
[SPOOF](#)
[NOSTALGIA](#)

Join Bollywood Quiz!

WIN PRIZES!!

Vote for STAR OF
THE FORTNIGHT

JOKES

[Ajit](#)

[Sholay](#)

STAR POWER

[Hot couples](#)

[Tall claims](#)

TALKIES

[cliches](#)

[hero's mom](#)

[hero's father](#)

[hero's sister](#)

[heroine](#)

[villain](#)

[villain's cronies](#)

[doctors](#)

[actor's special](#)

[laws](#)

[Quotes](#)

REVIEWS

HOME

SPLIT WIDE OPEN

Stars: **Rahul Bose, Laila Rouass, Shivaji Satham, Ayesha Dharkar, Farida Haider Mulla**

Music: **Nitin Sawhney**

Direction: **Dev Benegal**



Director **Dev Benegal** returns with his new offering *Split Wide Open* and, to say the least, there's a taste of something different here. For, Benegal, one of the pioneers of the *Hinglish* cinema, takes off once again where he left with *English, August*.

The cutting edge of humour is very much intact as Benegal explores the viscera of cosmopolitan Mumbai this time, bringing to fore an intriguing plethora hitherto undisclosed.

At the centre of Benegal's Mumbai is Kut Price, a.k.a KP (**Rahul Bose**), who wants to carve a place for himself at the lowest rung of the city's water mafia. He sells tanker water at premium rates to slumdweller. KP has adapted a 10-year-old street urchin, Didi (**Farida Haider Mulla**), as a younger sister and the girl makes a living selling flowers at the city crossroads.

But underworld big boss Altaf *bhai* (**Veerendra Saxena**) is none too pleased with KP's dreams to make a quick buck on the sly by selling imported bottled water to foreigners. Bashed up soundly in Altaf's den, KP finds his life gone haywire when he returns home one day to discover Didi



is missing. As a frenetic KP searches for Didi, he will come close to Nandita Mehta (**Laila Rouass**), an expatriate from London and hostess of the popular TV show, *Split Wide Open*.

Nandita's show invites people to confess about their secret sex lives, withholding, of course, their identity. Oscillating in time circles between past and present, Benegal uses the talk show to reveal some real visages of middle class Mumbai's sexual lifestyle. This is a hornet's nest prised open — it is the confession of the guy next door who has sex with his mother-in-law for a change, the middle-aged man who is stumped to discover that his



legal and illegal wives, on finding out his bigamous status, become the best of friends and are actually having an affair among themselves now. It is the platform where the traumatized newly-wed voices her plight over being constantly raped by her father-in-law, because her husband is impotent and the family needs an heir.

Benegal draws up a tableaux that is provoking yet weirdly identifiable at the same time. In a way, Nandita's talk show becomes a manifestation of all things ironical — inciting and puzzling, regressed and liberated — that

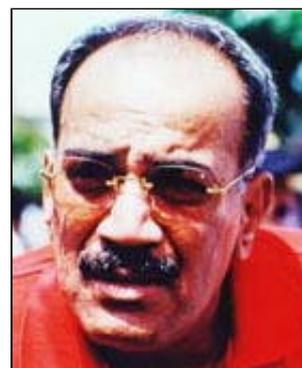
cosmopolitan India engages in under the wraps of genteel sobriety. If Benegal's attempt was to expose hypocrisy of the Indian psyche vis-a-vis sexuality, he has certainly driven home his point. At another level, the film draws up the glaring gap between the roadside world where KP and Didi survive and the glistening world in which Nandita lives. Nandita's talk show becomes an unconscious link between the two worlds — KP will realize while watching the show one day

that the 10-year-old girl whom Leela (**Ayesha Dharker**)'s affluent paedophile father (**Shivaji Satham**) has 'kept' is indeed Didi.

The ironical split between the two worlds becomes all the more evident when KP locates Didi and asks her to return home. The girl would rather stay with the 50-something paedophile — he piles her with imported chocolates and clothes, after all — than return to the impoverished milieu of KP's slum dwelling.

Rahul Bose as KP essays his role effortlessly but the problem is that he looks too sophisticated to be a roadside tough. Gloss over that bit and you'll like him in the film. Laila Rouass fits Nandita perfectly, she's only doing what she does for a living in real life - play a TV-show VJ. Ayesha Dharker and Shivaji Satham don their garbs well.

Watch ***Split Wide Open*** if non-conformist kicks is your buzzword.



Vinayak Chakravorty

Archives

Reviews of Hollywood movies