



# The magic of Guzaarish

The colour palette in director Sanjay Leela Bhansali's latest big-budget feature *Guzaarish* represents a new venture for Hindi films. The subject is also a departure from mainstream Indian cinema. "We've taken Hrithik Roshan, a superb dancer and action man and one of India's biggest stars, and turned him into Ethan, a quadriplegic and former magician," says director of photography Sudeep Chatterjee (*Chak De India*, *Kaalpurush*, *Jaan-E-Mann*, *Dor*, *Iqbal*). "But with its theme of triumph over disability, the film is vibrant and lively and there is a strong, though unconventional romantic thread," he adds.

"Ethan is battling with hopelessness beyond imagination; helplessly immobile in a physical sense, yet he radiates a sense of joy. *Guzaarish* needed to capture the strange dichotomy of his life and provide the audience with an honest depiction that was both dark and beautiful." Chatterjee and Bhansali spent three months exploring references and talking to disabled people and those who care for them in an attempt to understand their world. "The vibes slowly seeped into us and started affecting our decisions, making us realise that the film should be as simple and realistic as possible."

Another real challenge was that much of the film was set in the confined space of Ethan's bedroom. "I thought hard about the lighting: how much we should use and how we needed to balance it," continues Chatterjee. "The scenes needed to be bathed in light with different looks, so we lit for various times of the day and evening, and used rain for visual variety."

"In order to emphasise Ethan's incapacity and instil a sense of magic, there needed to be a constant sense of movement" says Chatterjee, who utilised blowing curtains, a fish in a bowl and flickering flames. In a symbolic 15-minute sequence, Ethan is about to tell an enthusiastic young boy about his famous magic candle act when there is a power cut and Sophie, his nurse (played by Aishwarya Rai), brings candles to light the room. "I wanted a moody and magical scene instead of the usual high contrast candle effect, so I aimed for a beautiful velvety darkness, in which everything is visible. Apart from the candles, I only used Chinese lanterns, 150w and 300w lights and Dedos on a flicker box. I was apprehensive underexposing by three to four stops,

but KODAK VISION3 500T Color Negative Film 5219 held on really well and the shots look very nice."

"The film's timeless classical quality with its slightly desaturated look was achieved primarily through the period set design and costumes," says Chatterjee. "It was important that the director and I were involved in those aspects in the very early stages and I had the privilege of collaborating with two extremely talented artistes: production designer Sumit Basu and costume designer Sabyasachi Mukherjee. Together we created a colour palette that tells our story in the right way."

"Sanjay Leela Bhansali is a cinematographer's dream. We did everything together and he welcomed involvement in each aspect of the film. He challenged me to do my creative best on subjects that made me reflect deeply on my own perspectives in life."

Chatterjee has shot all his 15 films on Kodak stock. "I don't use anything else. No other medium was even considered for *Guzaarish* as no other format can capture the image in the way film does. Moreover, we'd like future generations to see our images exactly the way we've shot them. Hence film!"

*Guzaarish* was processed at KODAK Cinelabs Mumbai, an IMAGECARE PROGRAM Accredited Lab. "Ever since I processed *Chak De India* at KODAK Cinelabs, I have not processed my negatives in any other lab," notes Chatterjee. He also wishes to acknowledge the substantial contributions of his chief assistant Anirban Chatterjee; gaffer Kamlesh Sandrani; key grip Sumit Ghosh; and focus-puller Rafique Ansari.

## Key Data at a glance

Director	Sanjay Leela Bhansali
Cinematographer	Sudeep Chatterjee
Film stock	KODAK VISION3 500T Color Negative Film 5219
Processing	KODAK Cinelabs Mumbai