

# 'Mowgli...': Why The Need For Another Weak Jungle Book?

By Subhash K. Jha

Film: "Mowgli: Legend Of The Jungle"; Director: Andy Serkis; Cast: Rohan Chand, Freida Pinto, Christian Bale, Andy Serkis, Benedict Cumberbatch and Cate Blanchett, Rating: \*\*

Netflix's big-screen experience of Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book" is here shrunken in size. And it's not just the size of the screen that's diminished. This adaptation, coming just two years after Jon Favreau's fabulous take on the timeless tale of animals and human beings, is feeble, redundant and deplorably downsized, often resorting to trite ploys and tested gimmicks to get our attention.

The film is not only irrelevant in the light of the earlier adaptation, it is also far bloodier with deep bloody wounds playing a large hand in making us feel the sinisterness of jungle life.

Got the gore. But where is the enigma of the jungle? Those familiar with the Kipling saga (and



who is not!) would know how the film adaptations work.

The characters are all talking animals, while little Mowgli has to be a bright animal-like creature of the dark. Tragically, little Roshan Chand doesn't measure up. He is eager to make Mowgli come alive, sometimes way too eager.

Director Any Serkis needed to exercise more control over the proceedings. The narration seems to run all over the place. And the episode where Mowgli is sent to a village to be humanised looks as

strenuously off-key as the institution in the recent Hollywood film "Boy Erased" where the young gay protagonist is sent to "think straight".

There is nothing more self-conscious than a community committed to conformity.

The "Indian" village seems straight out of a fairytale book with pop out pictures, with Freida Pinto doing a Hollywood equivalent of village 'nautanki', bovine smile quivering lips and all.

Freida speaks Hindi as if she had just picked it up from watch-

ing "English Vinglish" in a loop. Little dark Indian boys in loin-cloths (with their skin coloured to look suitably non-Caucasian) scamper around frolicking with not a care in the world.

Agreed, Kipling's vision subsumed an aspirational fantasy. But updating a classic is all about keeping the faith alive by renewal. This adaptation of Kipling seems frozen in time, occasionally casting aside its mantel of stagnancy to reveal a heart that actually beats.

Most of these moments are ac-

rued in the scenes featuring the voice of Christian Bale as the wise compassionate panther Bagheera.

I have seldom seen an actor do a more effective voiceover. When Bale speaks, we listen.

The rest of the animals are also voiced expertly. However, Benedict Cumberbatch's Sher Khan is no match to his counterpart Idris Elba in the 2016 adaptation.

Staring at the disappointing take on the Kipling classic, I wondered why the brains behind this whitewashed homage to the animal kingdom needed to put their mind into making this limp leafy drama in the first place.

There is a sequence, ostensibly poignant, where Mowgli is confined in a wooden cage by villagers. Bagheera comes visiting. Mowgli screws up his face and pleads to be taken away. Bagheera refuses and walks away.

At that moment, I felt exactly like Mowgli. Trapped in a situation I didn't appreciate. Luckily, Netflix gives us the option of the 'off' button.

## Reid Suing For \$100 M Kirk Douglas Is 102

LOS ANGELES: Actress Tara Reid is taking the Sharknado producers to court.

Reid has accused the producers of the films of misappropriating her likeness and image "for a commercial purpose without her consent," including slot machines and alcoholic beverages, according to court documents filed on December 6 and obtained by The Blast, reports people.com.

She is now suing Asylum Entertainment and SYFY Media Productions for \$100 million in damages.

A representative for Reid did not immediately respond to PEOPLE's request for comment.

The documents state that "(Reid) alleges that defendants and each of them without her knowledge and prior written con-

sent misappropriated her likeness for the commercial purpose of endorsing by implication gambling products and alcoholic beverages."

The suit claims that the defendants "wrongfully licensed the rights to use Tara Reid's likeness (which they do not own) to manufacturers of slot machines, gambling products, and beer makers, who in turn have marketed their products with her likeness, and continue to wrongfully trade and profit therefrom."

As a result, Reid, who stars as April Wexler in the films, alleges that the defendants made "millions of dollars in profits - from the marketing, sale, lease, and distribution of "Sharknado" slot machines bearing the likeness of Plaintiff Tara Reid."



LOS ANGELES: Actor Kirk Douglas got to celebrate his 102nd birthday with a special video message from his daughter-in-law.

Catherine Zeta-Jones shared a sweet tribute in an Instagram video Sunday. The actress and wife of Michael Douglas wrote, "Happy 102nd birthday to the most beautiful man. We love you Kirk."

The video featured photos of Douglas throughout his movie career and with family members.

## Jana Slams Shamers

LOS ANGELES: Actress-singer Jana Kramer is frustrated with hateful comments directed towards her over her body, just over a week after she welcomed son Jace Joseph, her second child with husband Mike Caussin.

Kramer of "One Tree Hill" fame had posted a photo in which she wore form-fitting clothing, and was at the receiving end of some nasty comments.

"A few things because honestly I'm so frustrated and I need to vent this," Kramer, 35, wrote on Instagram alongside a cropped image of the star lifting her shirt to reveal her stomach.

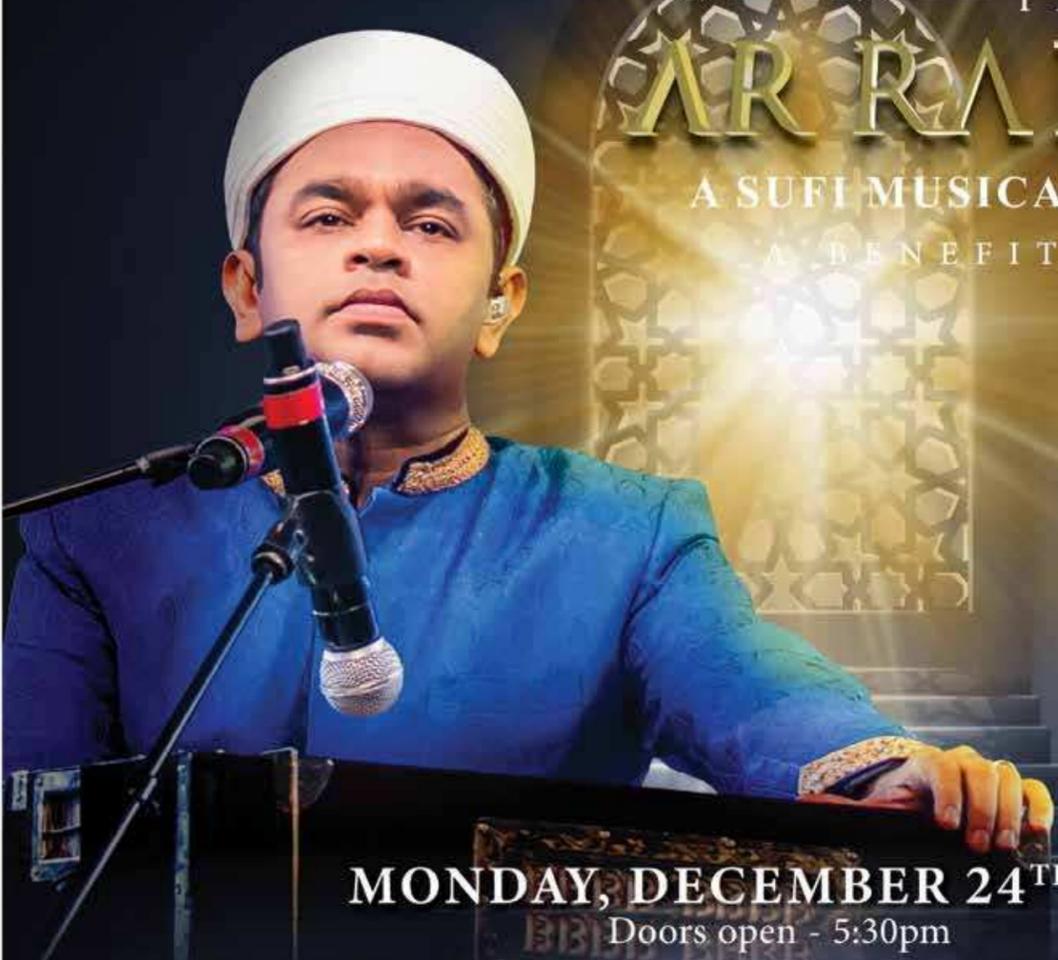
"I wanted to post this photo (showing my stomach) because I wanted to show my journey back to healthy and my goodness I'm so glad I didn't which is why this



photo is now cropped. It's amazing the comments and how rude some people be."

"Why do we women have to compare ourselves to each other and then shame? Our bodies are all beautiful and created differently, they heal different, they react different, they simply look different. Why do we need to shame someone?"

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