

The Good, the Bad and the Sholay (2015), Review

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Review

Changes and the Things We Return To

The glib phrase, “change is the only constant,” is supposedly meant to encourage a stoic attitude in others. More often than not, it disregards the personal struggles of the individual in their search to find their place in the world again.

For Raghav — amidst the technological changes, eroding traditions, and distant friendships — the hit Bollywood movie, *Sholay*, is his anchor. It reminds him of childhood games and the intermittent power failures that give him reprieve from homework. Even when he leaves Ambala to study at the National University of Singapore, the show is the only thing that he shares in common with other Indian students who hail from parts of India he has never heard of. And it is from this starting point, that he observes the changes around him, struggles with these changes, and finds his way back again.

In this coming-of-age story, playwright Shiv Tandan weaves scenes from *Sholay* and Raghav’s reminiscences (which are largely autobiographical), into a hilarious yet thoughtful play.

The ensemble rewards the audience with a brilliant performance that brings out the child in us. They display a strong synergy in their display of robust physicality in recreating scenes from bicycle races to the improbable gunfight scenes in *Sholay*. The ensemble’s versatility and keen sense of comic timing hit the audiences at all the right spots as we laugh at their various exaggerations of Bollywood stock types that we have come to love.

That said, there are some things that need to be dealt with: some scenes from *Sholay* should be shortened, actors must learn to cope with audience’s laughter, and sound effects created by the ensemble should not drown out the actor narrating the scene.

With the original production receiving nominations for Best Original Script, Best Director, and Production of the Year at the 2012 Straits Times Life! Theatre Award, this restaging deserves the same nominations and Best Ensemble should be added to the list.