



slumdog millionaire

Spring
Season
2009

120 minutes, 2008, UK

Director: Danny Boyle

Cast: Dev Patel, Irrfan Khan, Anil Kapoor, Madhur Mittal

Synopsis: Jamal Malik (Dev Patel) is a street kid (or "slumdog") who has landed an appearance on India's version of the hit TV game show *Who wants to be a Millionaire*. Jamal exceeds expectations on the show, and the producers alert the police after they become suspicious of his methods. The young contestant is subsequently arrested and is interrogated at the hands of a nameless police inspector. As the interrogation proceeds, Boyle tells Jamal's story through harrowing flashbacks that both show the terrible poverty of Mumbai and help explain how he knew the answers to the questions. The contrast between Jamal's upbringing and his chance of escaping it on the show are adeptly juxtaposed. Mumbai is portrayed as a place of terrifying poverty and unforgettable brutality, and Jamal and his brother get into a never-ending succession of challenging situations.

Review: Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian

Dev Patel plays Jamal Malik, a former Mumbai street-kid who astonishes all of India by entering the show as a contestant and triumphantly getting question after question right. Is he a fraud? A savant genius? Or is something weird going on? He has to come back the next evening for the final big-money question and overnight he is brutally interrogated by Mumbai cops convinced he is a cheat. They take him through each of the questions he got right, and Jamal's life story unfolds in flashback as our hero reveals that each question, has a special significance. His tale involves crime, drama, knockabout comedy and romance. Various characters determine his fate: his gangster brother Salim (Madhur Mittal), the love of his life Latika (Freida Pinto) and Prem (Anil Kapoor), the creepy quizmaster himself, who has his own interest in Jamal's staggering success.

Slumdog Millionaire is co-produced by Celador Films, owners of the rights to the original TV show, and so it functions as a feature-length product placement for the programme. In this film, poor Jamal is, simply on suspicion of wrongdoing, beaten to a pulp by the police. But afterwards he makes it into the studio as fresh as a daisy. What the Mumbai police make of their unflattering portrayal, I can't imagine.

Despite the extravagant drama and some demonstrations of the savagery meted out to India's street children, this is a cheerfully undemanding and unreflective film with a vision of India that, if not touristy exactly, is certainly an outsider's view; it depends for its full enjoyment on not being taken too seriously.

Interestingly, the co-creator of *Millionaire*, Steven Knight, is himself a screenwriter who has scripted far more serious films than this: Stephen Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things* (also co-produced by Celador) and David Cronenberg's *Eastern Promises*. *Slumdog Millionaire* really is gentle compared with, say, Robert Redford's satire *Quiz Show* and softcore compared with Danny Boyle's famous movies, *Trainspotting* and *Shallow Grave*. In fact, it's more of a kids' yarn, like his wacky caper *Millions*.

Well, for all this, it's got punch and narrative pizzazz: a strong, clear, instantly graspable storyline that doesn't encumber itself with character complexity, and the cinematography by Anthony Dod Mantle is tremendous. It's definitely got that quirky-underdog twinkle and the silverware glint of awards can't be far away