

# Film reviews



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by Ivika

*Blinded by the Light* is a low-budget indie film directed by Gurinder Chadha. There's a big focus on Bruce Springsteen's songs as we see the story through Javed Khan, a 16-year-old Pakistani boy living in Luton, England. This boy happens to discover Springsteen's songs through an encounter with Roops, a Greek boy soon to become his new best friend, who happened to give Javed two cassette tapes, which had two of Bruce's many songs on there, which is where Javed's need of independence from his dad got fuelled off of. The songs are a perfect way to display the frustration caused by unfairness while the intriguing costumes helped create the timeline.

The film used 12 Bruce Springsteen's songs in total, all of them shown on the screen in a specific order to help tell Javed's tale. The songs were displayed during touchy, emotional moments or in the end of a temper tantrum, as those were the times when Javed himself started listening to the songs. The songs were able to give off the needed atmosphere during these moments, but also showed the viewers Javed's feelings and thoughts.

The role of the antagonist was played by Javed's dad, who forced his ways onto his son and controlled his life plans (the reason being that it's a custom in their religion). This is the main place where the balance between power is shown out. It even goes to a point where Javed's dad, Malik, is willing to throw him out of the house and disown him if the poor kid happens to want to choose his own course in life.

What caught my eye in this film were the costumes actually, which is unusual for me. The clothes the Pakistani family wore were these exotic Asian clothes (especially during the wedding scene), which fit the scene very well. The people shown all throughout the film had an older-style type of clothing on, truly proving that the film definitely doesn't take place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I ended up enjoying this short film and the powerful message it was trying to get across was moving. Despite it being an indie film, it didn't scream "low-budget" at all. It's a film perfect for people around the ages of 15-17, but the film is able to make adults think deep as well.



by Sander

The movie talks about a character named Javed, who falls in love with Bruce Springsteen's creations. It's a British comedy-drama movie, that was directed by Gurinder Chadha and was released in 2019. The movie is based on Manzoor's 2007 memoir *Greetings from Bury Park: Race, Religion and Rock N' Roll*. The film is about a Pakistani family, who have moved to England in hopes of leading a better life. They soon find out that their life didn't turn out as well as they hoped it would. This movie is a good story about people succeeding despite the odds because it showcases Javed's ups and downs in life.

UK citizens with Pakistani background were treated harshly in the 90's. They were told to go back to where they came from and they would even get beaten occasionally. Knowing this, we can only assume how hard their life must've been and how hard it was for them to achieve anything great. Nevertheless, Javed succeeded and became a successful writer, just like he wanted.

Three of the biggest ups in his life I think were Bruce Springsteen's songs, finding the person he loved and unknowingly winning a tournament. Springsteen's music was the very thing that motivated to pursue his dreams. It was the thing that made him belong somewhere. It was the thing that ultimately put him on the right track. Javed's girlfriend, Eliza, enabled him to write good lyrics for his best friend. Thanks to her, both Javed and Matt ended up happier than ever. Unknowingly participating and winning a tournament had a huge impact Javed's life. He got the opportunity of a lifetime. Javed got a chance to visit the US and go to college there.

One of Javed's biggest downs but also ups turned out to be a conflict between him and his dad. It was a conflict regarding Javed's trip to the US. Malik was used to their traditional way of parenting, which was him telling everyone exactly what they could and what they should do. After Javed disobeyed his father's wishes it turned ugly really quick. Javed was told to not return home. After the conflict Javed's family were forced to come to their son's speech at the school, which led to Javed expressing what he truly felt. Him being able to tell about everything really changed the way Javed's father looked at him. Malik finally understood that his son can be successful in his own way, by doing what he loves.

I think that people needing some motivation should definitely see this movie. It showcases the hard path towards success through hard work and dedication.



by Hanna Helena

*Blinded by the Light* is a 2019 British comedy-drama directed by Gurinder Chadha. The script was co-written by her, Paul Mayeda Berges and Sarfraz Manzoor. It is based on Manzoor's life and tells the story of Javed, a British-Pakistani teen, who struggles with his family life and growing up. The teen's life is changed when he discovers Bruce Springsteen's music, and his music plays a large role in the film. It is a film that creatively uses its soundtrack, is littered with propaganda and aims high, even if not always succeeding.

The music of Bruce Springsteen plays an integral part in the film. It is a big part of Javed growing up and a catalyst for many of the film's plots. So it is no surprise that there are many Springsteen songs in the film, what does come as a surprise, is how large of a role they play and how well integrated they are. Every song is built into a scene, increasing its emotion and fleshing it out. While it gives us some incredible moments, it also falls into its own trap, as some scenes feel like they were only written into the film so a specific song could be used. Nevertheless, overall it fits the story and adds a wonderful element to the film.

*Blinded by the Light*, while being a feel-good coming of age movie, is littered with propaganda. While all films always convey messages and ideas, this film has some strict political propaganda etched into it. Taking place in 1987 Britain, Thatcherism is unavoidable. The movie usually blends in with its political messaging, but at some points falls into the same problems it has faced before. Not trusting the viewer and being too on the nose with the message it wants to convey. Here I am referencing the long shot of the main character looking at the camera, with a Margaret Thatcher billboard in the background. While usually not that on the nose, propaganda is always present in the film.

The acting in this movie is good. Especially considering it was Viveik Kalra first big acting part. He carries the film, and there are great performances from his co-stars. A real standout for me was Javid's father, played by Kulvinder Ghir, who brought such a real and raw emotion to his character. Especially considering some script parts were not the most stellar, it speaks waves to how amicable the acting was.

Overall, *Blinded by the Light* is a good time. It reaches far and aims for high goals even if it does not succeed in every scene, it does not way down the movie as a whole and is a pleasurable viewing experience. I would recommend this film to anyone a fan of Springsteen's music, coming of age tales or anyone looking for a nice and good time.



by Laura Eva Helena

It's a comedy-drama released in 2019 and directed by Gurinder Chadha. It tells us a story about a young man who lives in England with his parents who migrated from Pakistan. He experiences hatred from the locals. He discovers Bruce Springsteen, and starts to write more after being encouraged by his teacher. I think that this movie isn't about Bruce Springsteen's songs, but they were used to help us understand the character, and it was to support the character's journey.

The role of Bruce Springsteen's songs to get the message across is relating the lyrics with story. Javed is relating his life with Springsteen's lyrics, and listens to his songs when he wants to escape. He gets inspiration for writing and he chooses the way he wants to live through Springsteen's songs. They relate perfectly with some scenes in the film, too.

You may find *Blinded by the light* a propaganda film. It shows how native English people were more racist back then. Moreover, you can see hatred towards Muslim people, and there's criticism towards the society back in the 1980s. You see how cruel people can be, and that the age doesn't matter if you are kind or not. Javed's girlfriend wants her parents to see that difference doesn't matter. The film's message is that people need to be less judgemental and more kind and caring.

What makes this film rather memorable is its plot and themes. Still, the ending is mostly predictable, and some people may find it cheesy. Javed grew into songs of Bruce Springsteen, and in the end, he understands the true meaning behind the lyrics. The use of Springsteen's lyrics makes the themes more personalized for the main character. Not only is this a story about a young man who wants to leave his home, and make his dreams come true, but it also shows the issues in society, which are still relevant. You may find scenes, which are neutral, and showing actions, but the other scenes show character emotions.

Everyone who likes films based on a true story, are discriminated, or are just trying to find themselves should watch that film. This film is based on a true story, and the man whose story is inspired the whole film. When you are a fan of Bruce Springsteen, you'll enjoy the music. When you're being discriminated, it may help you accept yourself, and find hope and support from this movie. When you want to know who you are, it helps you to understand that past is also important, and there are ways to find your thing. So this film does help you stay motivated and ever give up.



by Richard Miikael

*Blinded by the Light* is a drama film released in 2019. It is a coming-of-age film about an Asian teenager called Javed, who wants to become a writer. He is certain that he needs to have a good education to get a better life, but he soon will find himself to be wrong. Bruce Springsteen's songs are used to make the main character realize his potential and to inspire him, which is quite cheesy most of the time. The film is heavily liberal, showing hate towards Pakistanis in 1980's England, and showing how one got far, propagating the fact that we are all equal. Lighting used in the film really helped to build a mood, which I really enjoyed.

Springsteen and his songs play a big role in the movie, maybe even too big. They are constantly the focus of the plot. Often the film gets too hooked to Springsteen's songs. The film feels less like a film about a Pakistani teenager trying to survive in 1980's England and trying to find his voice, and more like an ad to Bruce Springsteen and his songs. The film loses its point due to the heavy focus on the songs and less on the growth of Javed.

One of the main plot points in *Blinded by the Light* is the discrimination against the Pakistani Britons in 80's England. It is the main obstacle for Javed and his pal Roops to do anything. This film is trying to give off a liberal message of anti-racism by showing racism from the 1980's and how bad it was back then. I don't find it to be a good approach, because things were way different 30 years back and it magnifies the problems of Western society, creating an even bigger divide between people.

The lighting is one of the best things in the film, from building character to the mood. During the sadder scenes you can clearly see more blue in the environment, but during the happier scenes there are warmer and redder colours. There are multiple serious and angry scenes, also, where the light with the environment takes a more dramatic and grey turn. The lighting is the best part of the film, though it still can't save the plot.

The film would be perfect for those who like the musical score of the film more than the plot, and who don't mind certain messages shoved down their throats. The film has a great musical score, which is at the cost of the film's plot. It also has a real strong liberal anti-racism message embedded in it, which can get quite heavy while watching the film. I didn't personally enjoy the film, but I would be happy to recommend it to someone who would.



by Leiki-Maria

*Blinded by the Light* (also known as *Music of My Life*) is a 2019 British comedy-drama film directed by Gurinder Chadha. It was inspired by the life of journalist Sarfraz Manzoor and his love of the works of Bruce Springsteen. This film stars Viveik Kalra, Kulvinder Ghir, Meera Ganatra, Nell Williams, Aaron Phagura and Dean-Charles Chapman. *Blinded by the Light* is a film about a Pakistani migrant family's son, Javed Khan, who wants to break the family's traditional life by consuming his own hopes and dreams. But on the other hand, his dad doesn't support it.

Bruce Springsteen's songs are put in some scenes of the film whether the scene is happy, angry, sad or just miserable. Springsteen's songs have many meanings: it's the listener's job to understand them. At first, Javed only focuses on one of the messages, but later, he notices that it's just a surface. There is so much more that meets the eye. He understood that you can't succeed if you have to work alone.

The hatred towards Pakistan migrants. The thought that we have to be torn apart because of our beliefs and ethnicities. The hopelessness that we can't live up to our dreams because people think we are different. We are all put in a box. People might think that some of us are bad and we are trying to pressure them with our own traditions. We're just here to live a better life. Give more to the people we love. In the film, Pakistan people are being bullied and beaten up with no mercy.

The acting made it memorable for me. I have to say, it was nothing what I expected. I know that this film wasn't top tier film, but I could definitely tell which actors were just new to the film industry and who weren't. The acting was alright in all, but not my favorite. It seemed way too forced by some of the actors, which didn't seem natural. I loved the dad though, a true Pakistani!

I recommend this film to teenagers and maybe young-adults who are struggling to be accepted. I guess this film gives us the main reason why we need to listen to our loved ones in our life and why we still need to set our own goals.



by Enriko

*Blinded by the Light* is a 2019 British comedy-drama film directed by Gurinder Chadha. It was inspired by the life of journalist Sarfraz Manzoor and his love of the works of Bruce Springsteen. But who was Javid? Why was that time really hard for his family? So what is the point of this film, actually?

Javid is a teen Pakistani boy in a typical Pakistani family. His father has moved to the UK for a better life. Javid is the only son in the family, but he has the biggest dreams among his family members. Javid wants to be a writer. I think that it is a great dream because he would have been the only Pakistani writer in the UK at the time he was growing up. I am really happy that he fights for his dreams even though his dad is against them.

His family has a harsh life in this film, and it gets harsher all the time. The film is based on the time when the conservative Margaret Thatcher ruled Great Britain. It was a bad time for foreigners because many local people hated them and ruined their lives mentally. For example, Javid's dad loses his job and does not get a new one either. Poor little fellow, I would say.

I think that the point of the films is that you need to follow your dreams and not let anyone, even your family, ruin it for you. Just do things as you want.

I recommend this film to people who like to see other films besides Hollywood films.

