

# Cash Cows

## Comedy Condensed

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### ABSTRACT

Originally written for my second-year film studies class at KPU, this is my film review of Shubham Chhabra's *Cash Cows* (2023). It establishes how *Cash Cows* is a compelling black comedy that captures the essence of the genre and sheds light on the treatment of immigrants, all within a limited runtime.

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Tragedy plus timing equals comedy, but what if the run time is only ten minutes? Then you get *Cash Cows* (2023), directed by Shubham Chhabra and produced by Honeywagon Media. Black comedy can be a hard genre to pull off while still bringing awareness to the issues being poked fun at, so how does a ten-minute short do its content justice? *Cash Cows* demonstrates that a compelling black comedy can be pulled off in a limited runtime while capturing the essence of the genre and shedding light on the issues of immigration and worker exploitation that are important to the film.

*Cash Cows* is a short film about our protagonist, Rohit (Dikshant Joshi), taking up a questionable security job to fund his Permanent Residency (PR) card. Filmed in just three days, the runtime was purposely limited to ten minutes for the film to qualify for Sundar Prize Film Festival. Due to this, Chhabra mentioned full scenes being removed to make the final cut, meaning that every shot and every scene must effectively convey the film's message, tone, and genre in less time than a standard-length film. The film captures the turbulence of our current 2020's zeitgeist with

immigration being the clear topic of the short. Immigration, especially from South Asia, is one of the most hotly contested topics in Canada with it being keystone in political debates between Liberals and Conservatives, the latter claiming that too many immigrants have been let in (Tasker). Yet South Asian immigrants already in Canada are faced with unjust public hostility paired with exploitation in the workforce through unsafe working conditions and inadequate, possibly illegally low, pay. Rohit's eventual job is that of night security at a car dealership where he is ill-equipped, improperly trained, and poorly treated by his boss, Jaspreet (Ranjit Samra), who finds every possible way out of paying Rohit. These conditions mirror that of reality where South Asian immigrants are given physically demanding jobs that they unfortunately must take in order to make enough to scrape by. This exploitation is not just by pre-existing Canadian residents but also other South Asian immigrants who are trying to gain a higher position in Canada's social ladder. This is exemplified in the short by Jaspreet also being South Asian but still exploiting Rohit to save more money.



**Fig. 2** | Rohit fights The Vandal, 00:07:16. Honeywagon Media, 2023.

In the film's climax, the Vandal (Vesh Kadlec), who has been breaking car windows throughout the short, decides to escalate his crimes by attacking Rohit with a machete. Faced with the unsafe situation, Rohit must defend himself with a pylon in order to live as showcased in Figure 1.

Although this scene is amplified for comedic purposes, instances of unprovoked attacks on immigrants have happened on multiple occasions without public sympathy or uproar. The film's setting of Surrey, British Columbia is the perfect location for this issue as the city contains a high population of South Asian immigrants. A lot of injustices seen in *Cash Cows* commonly occur in Surrey and the film's message could really resonate with the residents. Rohit needing to use family connections to find simple work and having the "Canadian" life over sold to him are both issues faced by South Asian immigrants who have had the deck stacked against them. As one of the first films to tackle this subject, it could easily become a rallying point for all those who feel like Rohit, which is a high accomplishment for a film only 10

minutes long. The message is clearly conveyed in every scene and leaves the audience with a new perspective.

To support this message, made this film a black comedy instead of a drama. Black comedy focuses on topics deemed "too dark" or "taboo" and tries to bring awareness to them through comedy to make the topics feel more approachable and remove stigmas. Black comedies crossed the line of social acceptability and leave it to the audience to decide how far is too far. *Cash Cows* adds its own taboo with its comedic takedown of immigrant exploitation and employers' choice to capitalize off them. This topic is often overlooked by the public and swept under the rug by the companies exploiting them. These current issues are taken to their extreme to hammer home the message as well as keep the audience entertained and engaged. Rohit's cousin, Ash (Shivam Arora), is made out to be a cartoonish version of an immigrant who made it in a way that pays homage to the lavish lifestyle of Jordan Belfort (Leonardo DiCaprio) in Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013). Ash is always seen with women dancing around him and drives an expensive car with the license plate "\$1200-MNTH" to brag about how much money he makes. Besides Ash, Rohit's security shack is just boards nailed together, and his boss is the stereotypical horrible boss. Even the fight with the Vandal is exaggerated by giving The Vandal a machete instead of a more common knife or bat, which is then made funnier by Rohit successfully fighting him off with the traffic pylon.

In just ten minutes, *Cash Cows* delivers a combination of relevant social issues and exaggerated black comedy in every scene which leaves the audience engaged through both laughing and learning. *Cash Cows* is worth watching and proves that a compelling black comedy can be pulled off in a limited runtime while ensuring spectators receive the film's core message. ■

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## WORKS CITED

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- Tasker, John Paul. "Poilievre Says He Would Cut Population Growth after Liberals Signal Immigration Changes Coming | CBC News." *CBCnews*, CBC/Radio Canada, 29 Aug. 2024, [www.cbc.ca/news/politics/poilievre-immigration-cut-population-growth-1.7308184](http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/poilievre-immigration-cut-population-growth-1.7308184).

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