DANCE, DRAMA AND DESI PRIDE



‘Best of the Best’ stars Ankur Rathee, Priyanka Kedia, Maitreyi Ramakrishnan and Chaneil Kular pose for paparazzi at the New York premier.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @CELEBRITYKIND ON INSTAGRAM

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This past Friday saw the release of a new competitive dance movie, “Best of the Best.” Featuring “Never Have I Ever” star Matreyi Ramakrishnan and Priyanka Kedia debuting in her first major film, the two play Maya and Anjali. Maya signs them both up for the school’s competitive Bollywood-fusion dance team, UCLA Agni, named after the Hindu god of fire. You’ll watch them juggle friendships, love lives, academics, and intense drama as the team competes to be the best of the best.

College is stereotypically a coming-of-age period, where we learn what kind of people we want to be, and who we want in our lives. Co-writers Prashanth Venkataramanujam and Hasan Minhaj wanted to demonstrate this not only with Maya and Anjali, who experience hardship and almost lose their lifelong friendship, but also with dance teams specifically. Venkataramanujam and Minhaj were both on Bollywood-fusion dance teams at their respective schools and wanted to share this passion that is not only a creative outlet for so many South Asian students, outside of their complex majors, but also a source of community building and cultural connection.

If you’ve already watched this and thought it reminded you of some other popular competitive dance movies, you wouldn’t be the first. It’s been compared to “Step Up 2” and “Bring It On” by Cosmopolitan and Ramakrishnan herself. But what specifically makes these movies so similar, and what makes them different? To start, each of these three movies has a sort of halfway point, which ends up with them at the bottom, then the championship, where they come out on top.

After this halfway point, they make championships on a technicality, so they must come up with a new routine that will give them a shot at winning. And of course, they all feature some sort of rivalry. As for differences, the main one is the style of dance. “Bring It On” deals with a cheer competition, “Step Up 2” deals with street dance, and, like already mentioned, “Best of the Best” features Bollywood-fusion: a combination of hip-hop, Indian classical, contemporary, and theatrical dance. Another big difference between these films is the level of these competitions. While “Bring It On” and “Step Up 2” deal mostly with high schoolers, one at an official competition, the other at an illegal dance ring, Best of the Best deals with college students.

After watching “Best of the Best,” I’m not only grateful the writers did so much research, as two men writing two female leads, but I also came out of my watch with a newfound appreciation for Bollywood dance, and the amount of work it takes. In an interview with Cosmopolitan, Ramakrishnan and Kedia explained how they had to attend a four-month dance camp, with four to five hour classes, often averaging 40-hour weeks. What stood out to me the most with this movie was how accurately it portrayed the transition from high school to college. Anjali got into UCLA off the waitlist, and was struggling with the coursework, eventually getting put on academic probation. Meanwhile, Maya excels in school, setting the curve in one of the classes we see, as well as the dance team, but is pushed away for rejecting what she labels “predictable,” explaining that to win, they need to stand out. The stress of classes, the urge to try new things and put yourself out there, can cause even lifelong friendships to break, as you discover who you truly are as a person. After watching this film, I decided to look into whether we have a Bollywood dance team here at The University of Connecticut, and discovered UConn Surya, named after the Hindu solar deity. They compete in the Desi Dance Network (DDN), getting first place at Taaza in 2024, with a Mulan-inspired routine.

Overall, being new to Bollywood-fusion as a whole, this movie did a fantastic job at introducing the style in a way that’s easy to digest, because it’s already so familiar to us due to competitive dance films being so common. I can easily say that this is one of my top movies of the year, getting a 5/5 from me. Not only because of how accurate they made the transition from high school to college, but also the amazing cast, costumes and set. I highly recommend watching this film, whether you have knowledge of Bollywood dance or not.



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CREGGER HITS AGAIN WITH RESIDENT EVIL ADAPTATION

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Director Zach Cregger’s new film “Resident Evil” was released this weekend in theaters. Cregger’s run to start the decade has been nothing short of fantastic; he released one of the best horror films of 2022 with “Barbarian,” and 2025 with “Weapons.” Now, only a year removed from the latter, Cregger is back with a film adaptation of the video game series “Resident Evil.” Cregger has said in interviews that the film takes place in the universe of the game but doesn’t follow a set story or character from the game. Cregger told Entertainment Weekly, “It’s an entirely original story — When you watch it, you’ll be like, ‘This is very Zach.’ It’s just it takes place in the Resident Evil world. I don’t think fans of the games are gonna be bummed.” So how does Cregger treat the world of Resident Evil? Let’s Dig In.

First and foremost, we must begin with Austin Abrams’s performance; the film is centered around him, and if he didn’t deliver, the film wouldn’t be able to operate. Abrams is great in the film; he feels real and layered. How he reacts to everything that unfolds around him is so real; the character is well written, and Abrams brings him to life so well. He feels like how any of us would be in this situation. The things he is going through outside the film’s narrative make the stakes and the ending feel so much more impactful. Abrams plays him with such relatability, and Abrams’s performance helps capture that. Cregger called himself an Abrams “fanatic,” telling Deadline, “I was like, ‘This is it, dude. This is my guy.’ And so, when it was time to put Resident Evil together, there was not even a second choice.” The 29-year-old Abrams had previously worked with Cregger in “Weapons.”

Moreover, the film is shot very well. There are many interesting shots, some that pay homage to the games the film is adapting. One shot uses sound design as if it were x-ray seeing through walls. Another shot of a field, that is just menacing; it also shows the scale of the film, seeing previous scenes from another. It makes the movie feel more put together and like a video game; it can feel like going from one level to another at times.

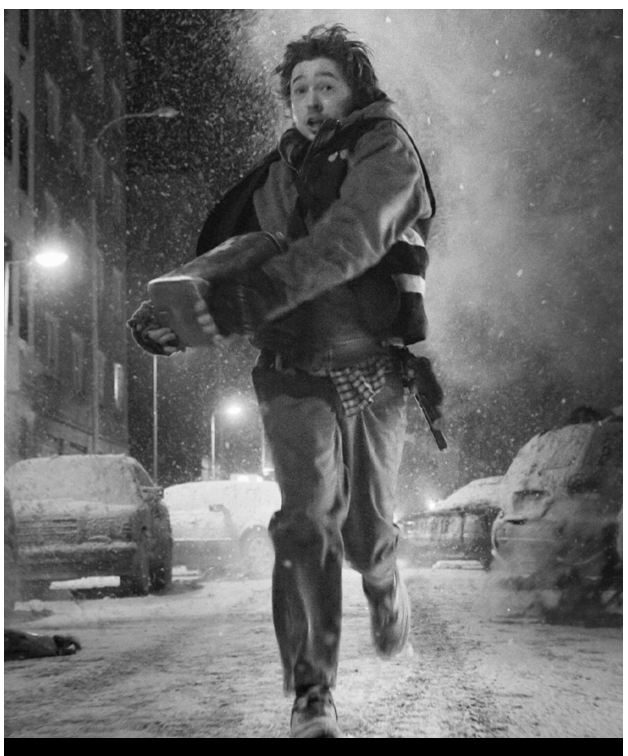
The film is scary. The first half has more tension and an eeriness about it, but the whole movie is scary, something many horror films fail at. The sound design, cinematography and the atmosphere are what lead to the overall feeling of stress and terror this film portrays, rather than just a jump scare here or there. But this movie is no stranger to a good old jump scare; it includes a few great diegetic jump scares.

Something unexpected was how funny the film was. The film is a horror comedy, after all. It doesn’t take itself too seriously the entire time. There are some great jokes and funny moments; it comes through with relatability, or as a coping mechanism for our protagonist. Seeing all this chaos, the only way I could get through it is by joking around a bit.

My only other gripe with the film is the monster; I felt like they showed off the monster a bit early, and a bit much. The biggest fear in horror movies can be the unknown, so when they show off the odd-looking creature our protagonist faces so early, it hinders it a little. However, the monster is very intimidating — but overall, I feel it would have benefited from it being in the shadows more.

Overall, it is a great movie with an ending that serves it perfectly well. I cannot wait to see what Cregger does next, as this solidifies three great horror films in a row for him.

Rating: 4.5/5



The film “Resident Evil,” based off the video game, was released this weekend in theaters. Zach Cregger’s survival horror film is a 2026 reboot following the success of the 2021 film.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @RESIDENTEVIL ON INSTAGRAM

SUBOG Weekly Events:

September 27th - October 4th

Homecoming Parade – 9.27 @ 1:30 PM along Hillside Road

Homecoming Carnival – 9.27 @ 2 PM at Founders Green

Homecoming Pageant – 9.28 @ 6 PM in the Student Union Theater

SUBOG x USG Voter Registration – 10.1 @ 11 AM at the SU Mall

Coffee House – 10.1 @ 4:30 PM at the Benton

Homecoming Lip Sync – 10.1 @ 7 PM in the Jorgensen Theater

Fan Fest Friday – 10.2 @ 1 PM at the SU Mall

Any questions? Email subog@uconn.edu and check out @subogatuconn on Instagram for updates on our events!