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Shah Rukh Khan

The Badshah of Bollywood, an international icon in every right, talks about stardom, fans and his latest release, *Fan*



MADHURI DIXIT
Reminisces her life in Denver, US

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Stars dazzle at National Film Awards



Actor Kangana Ranaut with Amitabh Bachchan; Filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj and Director Sanjay Leela Bhansali receiving their awards; Baahubali: The Beginning was named the Best Feature Film

At the 63rd National Film Awards ceremony held on May 3 at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi, President of India, Pranab Mukherjee presented the honor to the cinema icons. Among the actors who received the prestigious trophy were Amitabh Bachchan (Best Actor for *Piku*) and Kangana Ranaut (Best Actress for *Tanu Weds Manu Returns*), who sat beside each other and shared a camaraderie throughout the event.

Filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali won the Best Director award for the third time for his epic saga *Bajirao Mastani* after *Black* and *Devdas*, while the Southern magnum opus *Baahubali: The Beginning*, which scripted box office history in 2015 was named the Best Feature Film.

The multi-faceted Vishal Bhardwaj was jubilant upon bagging the Best Screenplay Writer (adapted) award for

Talvar. While he has earlier won six National Awards, he says what makes this one "truly special" is that it is his first for screenplay.

Bajirangi Bhaijaan which promoted bonhomie between people in India and Pakistan was named best popular film of 2015. "It's one of the greatest films of its time. It spoke a lot about humanity, love, support and integrity. So, I'm very proud to be part of it. It was great working with Kabir (Khan) and Salman (Khan), who actually believed in the script and made it happen," said Kareena Kapoor.

President Mukherjee expressed his gratefulness to the Indian cinema and its doyens from the past to the present, who are contributing in making "Indian films truly reflective of Indian character of unity amidst diversity". He also conferred the Dada Saheb Phalke Award on veteran

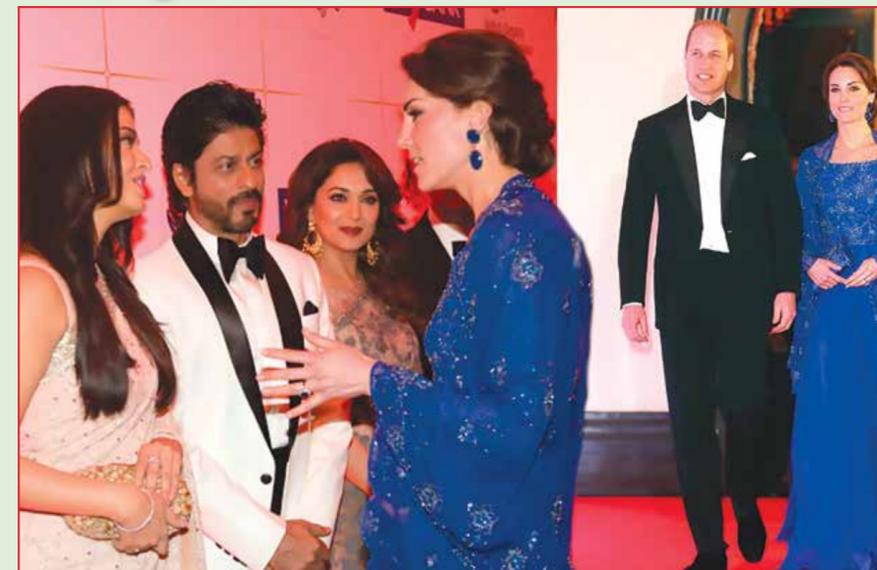
actor Manoj Kumar.

President Mukherjee referred to Amitabh Bachchan as "a living legend", urging the Bollywood icon to express his gratitude on Twitter. "Truly touched, deeply humbled, and honored by the President's mention of me in his speech..." Big B was accompanied by his wife Jaya, son Abhishek, daughter Shweta Nanda and daughter-in-law Aishwarya Rai Bachchan for the award event. Later, he also expressed his admiration for Kangana Ranaut, whom he congratulated with a warm hug at the venue. Bachchan said, "I am a big admirer of Kangana Ranaut. She is a wonderful actor."

The *Queen* star attended the ceremony with her father, mother, sister and brother. Kangana's father Amardeep Ranaut said it was a proud moment for him to see his daughter receive her third National Award from the President.

B-town's Royal Rendezvous

On their maiden visit to India the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge—Prince William and Kate Middleton—tasted the true flavor of Bollywood at a meet-and-greet gala dinner at The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai on April 10. The monarchs of B-town lined up to shake hands with the royal couple at the event organized to raise funds for Childline India, Magic Bus and Door Step School. Among those who extended a warm welcome to the royal couple at the event were Neetu and Rishi Kapoor, Madhuri and Dr. Sriram Nene, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Karan Johar, Anil Kapoor and daughter Sonam, Shiamak Davar, Alia Bhatt, Aditi Rao Hydari, Parineeti Chopra, Shilpa and Raj Kundra, Farhan Akhtar, Jacqueline Fernandez, Huma Qureshi, Anjali and Sachin Tendulkar. Most actors turned up in Manish Malhotra outfits, but the Duchess of Cambridge—who is known for her style—floored the biggest names of Bollywood, dressed in a blue evening gown by British fashion designer Jenny Packham with bead embroidery done in India and a pair of blue earrings from Indian brand Amrapali. When Prince William and Kate expressed their desire, through the British Embassy, to experience the famous Bollywood song and dance culture, singer-composer Shankar Mahadevan and eminent choreographer Shaimak Davar delivered exhilarating impromptu performances. The British Royals were left spellbound by Shankar and son Siddharth's jugalbandi rendition of the exceptionally popular *Breathless* performance, apart from the eclectic medley of Shankar's compositions—right from the soulful *Taare Zameen Par* to *Zinda* from *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*. The royal couple was particularly charmed by the host for the evening, Shah Rukh, who looked dapper in a cream tuxedo and a bow-tie. The trio was spotted interacting on various occasions before the traditional



Bollywood stars with Prince William and Kate Middleton at a meet-and-greet gala dinner at the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai

sit down Indian *thali*-style dinner. The stars could not resist sharing snapshots of their meeting with the royal couple. Shah Rukh later tweeted, "The royal couple was so gracious and full of poise. Tonight, as I said, is the night of the King, the Queen and the Knights. Wish all nights were same."

Madhuri, who looked ethereal in a Shyamal & Bhumika saree at the event, tweeted, "It was a pleasure meeting their highnesses, William and Kate. Very gracious and down to earth."

BWI

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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear Readers,

We named our publication **Bollywood Insider** because we are actually inside Bollywood each day monitoring the happenings in the movie capital of India. Our content writers are renowned journalists who keep their ears to the ground in tinsel town for any unfolding scoops and interviews of leading stars of the film industry. Last month, we had exclusive interviews with Kareena Kapoor, Arjun Kapoor and Kalki Koechlin. Our May issue proudly brings you exclusives with the King of Bollywood Shah Rukh Khan, the evergreen dancing diva Madhuri Dixit, the alpha male of Bollywood, Randeep Hooda, as well as *Rocky Handsome* John Abraham.

Each month we continually get inspired with positive feedback from our readers. A lady called to compliment the quality of content in our publication but complained that Bollywood Insider gets picked up so fast that she went to the stores twice in the past month, only to find no copies left. We are trying to remedy this situation by distributing additional copies each week instead of dispensing the entire month's supply in one week.

We hope you will enjoy the May issue and are able to pick your copy before the entire supply is gone!



Varinder K. Bhalla
Chairman & Publisher

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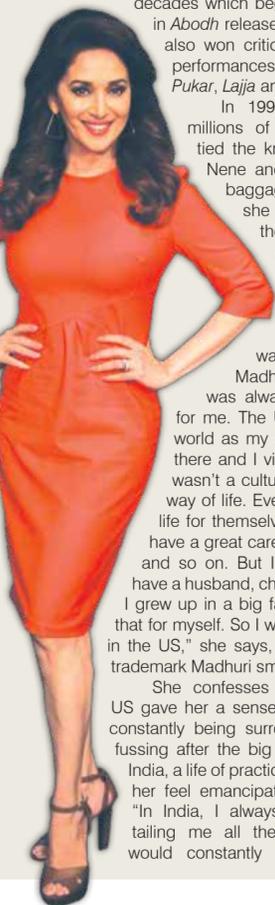
I was living the dream in the US

Dancing diva and actress par excellence **MADHURI DIXIT-NENE** reminisces her life in Denver, US, in a candid conversation with **Bollywood Insider** and talks about her passion for acting as she turns judge for her latest dance reality show—*So you Think You can Dance*—*Ab India Ki Baari*



BY **DHAVAL ROY**

Peans are sung every time Madhuri Dixit-Nene makes an appearance on the screen or off it. From being the dancing diva to owning a million dollar dazzling smile, Bollywood's sweetheart can really make hearts thump, rightly earning her the moniker *dhak-dhak* girl (her popular song from the 1992 film, *Beta*). With a number of super hit films to her credit such as *Tezaab*, *Ram Lakhan*, *Parinda*, *Khalnayak*, *Beta*, *Dil*, *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun*, *Dil To Pagal Hai* and *Devdas*, Mads—as she is fondly called—has ruled the roost in Bollywood in her career spanning three decades which began with her debut in *Aaboh* released in 1984. She has also won critical acclaim for her performances in *Mrityudand*, *Pukar*, *Lajja* and many more.



MADHURI'S MESSAGE FOR HER FANS IN THE US

“Thank you for all the love and support and still loving me even though I am thousands of miles away. We can always keep in touch on Twitter and Facebook.”

wahan nahi jaana,” she says. But at Uncle Sam's it was just her car and her, doing things that she had never done in India. “I remember the first time I had to drive myself to the supermarket, my heart was pounding because I had never stepped out alone. Not even to buy grocery! It gave me a sense of achievement that ‘I did it on my own’,” Madhuri says with a laugh. Thereafter the actress, who was used to having a battery of staff members around her all the time, was doing everything on her own, including raising her kids—Raayan and Arin—now aged 13 and 11. She says, “It was nothing short of emancipation for me.”

Falling in love with her life in the US did not take too long. She recalls the picturesque locales in Denver. She admits that witnessing four changing seasons in their complete glory won her over. “It's like living in a hill station. But it was my privacy there that was the best part. I could raise my kids like a regular parent does. There was no one constantly judging me or the media covering every step of what I was doing. I created my own little world there and was thoroughly enjoying it,” says the actress.

Needless to say, Madhuri had her own fan following there—Indians and Americans alike—as Bollywood films were already popular when she moved to the US. Madhuri says, “Everyone was extremely courteous. They would come and say hello to me at the grocery store and tell me how much they liked my work. But no one would follow me. No one clamored or encroached my personal space.”

Since Madhuri moved back to India, it's her friends in the US who miss her the most for her impromptu travel plans to explore the mountains or seas. Madhuri says, “They constantly complain that ever since I left, no one makes such spontaneous plans.” While she loves being back in India and Mumbai, among her family and friends and getting back to work full steam, it's the open spaces

of the US that she misses the most. “I really miss the beauty and my friends the most. Otherwise, for me, there is a lot more here to do.”

After her 10-year-long sabbatical with only one release in the interim (*Aaja Nach Le* in 2007), Madhuri was last seen on the big screen in 2014 in *Dedh Ishqiya* and *Gulaab Gang*, on her return to India in 2011. Her performances in both films won accolades as always. However, now it's mostly television that keeps her busy. She has judged four seasons of the celebrity dance reality show *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa*. The actress is now all set for her latest television outing with the *desi* franchise of the extremely popular international dance show *So You Think You Can Dance*. Madhuri will judge the debut season of one of the biggest dance reality shows alongside star choreographers and reality show judges Terence Lewis and Bosco Martis.

Madhuri says, she is waiting for the right script. “Bollywood is my first love and I would always want to do a film. But now I want to only take up scripts that I would like to do.” And she would rather do something fun and easygoing after a serious *Gulaab Gang* and the black comedy *Dedh Ishqiya*. About doing more television than films, she says, “I'm as passionate about dancing as I am about films so I am still doing what I love by judging these awesome dance reality shows.”

About *SYTYCD India*, she says, “There is so much talent in the nooks and crannies of the country and these are all passionate dancers who have made a lot of sacrifices just to be a dancer. The show will have those dancers.” The trained Kathak dancer also has her own online dance academy *Dance with Madhuri* that has dance lessons from the likes of Birju Ji Maharaj, Terence Lewis, Remo D'souza and Saroj Khan. While the dancers from her online academy missed the bus this time as auditions were underway by the time they approached Madhuri, she is hoping for the next season to see her students participating.

Till date, Madhuri's graceful dance moves have remained unmatched in Bollywood. She possesses the skill for carrying off a *mujra* like *Maar Dala* in *Devdas* as well as dance numbers like *Ek Do Teen* from *Tezaab*, at the same time.

Madhuri says she is primarily a stage dancer but has a bit of street dancing in her as well. “I have stage (dancing) in me because I learned Kathak which is a stage thing. But there is a bit of street (dancing) in me also because when you do Bollywood dancing it is an amalgamation of all styles.” About her favourite dancers from the two forms, she says, “On stage, there are so many. There are classical dancers like Birju Maharaj. I think Terence Lewis is a wonderful stage dancer while Bosco and Govinda are fabulous street dancers. Hrithik (Roshan) is a lovely stage dancer and can do any kind of dance.”



Dilip Kumar, accompanied by wife **Saira Banu**, leaves from Lilavati Hospital in Mumbai on April 21. The thespian was hospitalized on April 16.



Shah Rukh Khan promotes his film *Fan* in New Delhi on April 12.



Shilpa Shetty inaugurated a jewellery store in New Delhi on April 10.



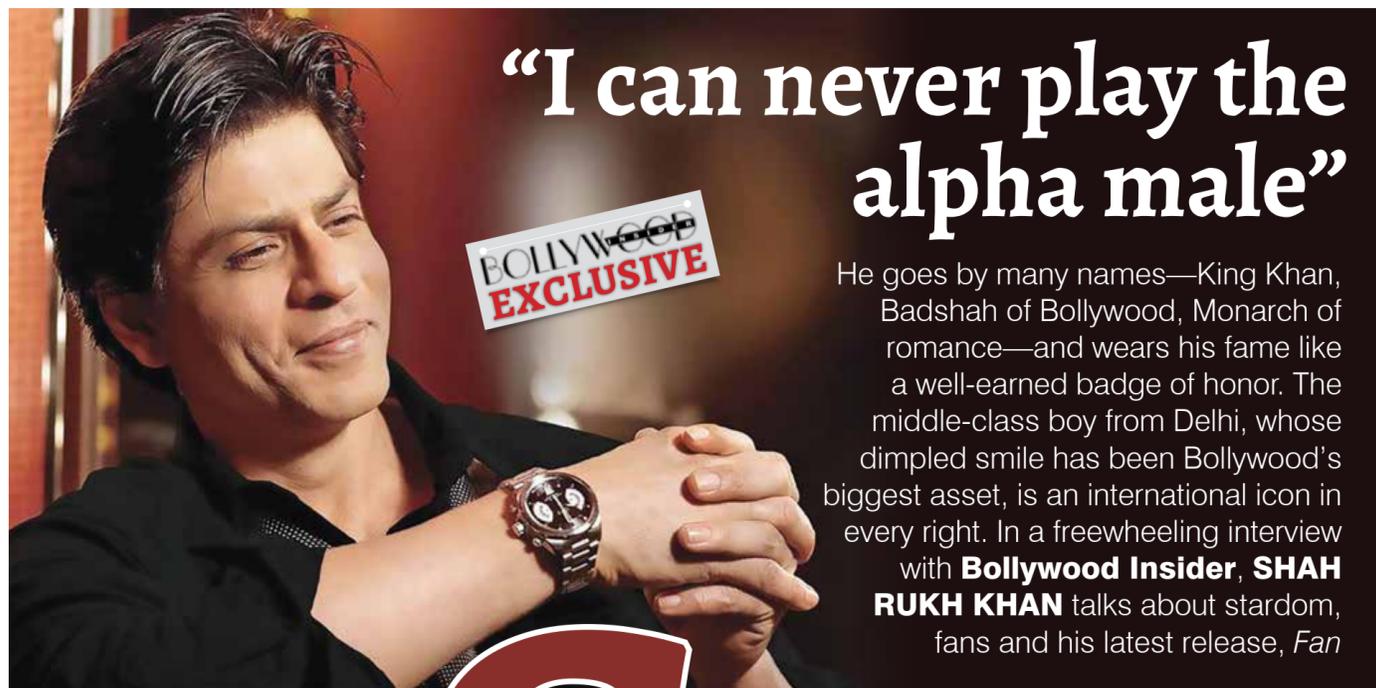
Aamir Khan and Governor of Maharashtra, **C Vidyasagar Rao**, present the prestigious Hridaynath Award to Indian Chess Grandmaster **Viswanathan Anand** in Mumbai on April 12.



Farhan Akhtar joins a music band at Radio Bar in Mumbai on April 17.

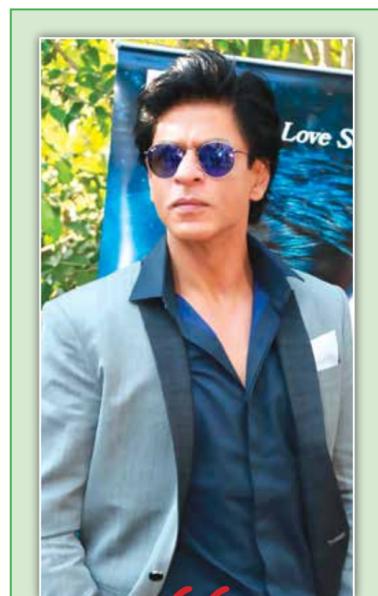


Arjun Kapoor visited a theater to gauge audience reaction to his film *Ki and Ka* in Mumbai on April 2.



“I can never play the alpha male”

He goes by many names—King Khan, Badshah of Bollywood, Monarch of romance—and wears his fame like a well-earned badge of honor. The middle-class boy from Delhi, whose dimpled smile has been Bollywood’s biggest asset, is an international icon in every right. In a freewheeling interview with **Bollywood Insider**, **SHAH RUKH KHAN** talks about stardom, fans and his latest release, *Fan*



“The audience in the US is discerning. We are making great films and there is a huge shift. They have started liking different kinds of films and business there is fantastic. I feel *Fan* is the right film for the US. They will show off the film with a lot of pride that an Indian film of this kind has released there.”

SHAH RUKH KHAN

S

BY JANHAVI SAMANT

Shah Rukh Khan has left his mark on his latest release, *Fan*—a comeback from dreary scripts. The film saw an opening weekend collection of Rs 52.35 crores. Despite rocketing in the first week, *Fan* ended its run at Rs 79.25 crore—failing to enter the illustrious ‘Rs 100-crore club’—falling short of being called a ‘Super-hit’. The best that the film has been able to do is enter the list of Bollywood’s top 20 overseas grosser of all time list—at the 20th spot with Rs 174.29 crores.

As an individual in the Maneesh Sharma directorial, Shah Rukh Khan played his two characters to perfection. The 50-year-old says he is trying his best to pick different roles. Shah Rukh says, “In the last four or five years, I have heard so many people telling me that I am doing the same stuff that I actually started believing that I do the same stuff. I just know what I can do and what I am offered, within that I try to be different.”

Fan has been challenging, like most other films. “Every film is a challenge. But there is nothing like the challenge of doing something new every five or six years. It is tough lying to self, otherwise. Fantasy films like *Happy New Year* or *Chennai Express* are much easier. But in real films like *Swades*, *Chak De! India*, *My Name is Khan* or *Veer Zaara*, it is demanding. I remember... in *Veer Zaara*, it was tough to call Rani ‘beti’. We kept laughing and took ten retakes. She kept saying, ‘You can’t call me beti.’ Yashji got angry with us. But, in a real film, she wouldn’t be my beti. *Raees* (his next release, which is a biopic of a notorious Gujarati bootlegger, Abdul Latif, is also realistically set that way.”

Despite achieving the stardom that he has, Shah Rukh says getting into the character of a 24-year-old youngster in *Fan*, mentally, was easy. “For this role, I had changed my walk a little. From the beginning I am boy-like. I can never be the alpha male. My mindset is that of a youngster as I am around my children, who feel I have done it well. But, Gaurav’s role was tough from the prosthetics part of it. Until today, prosthetics have not been used to make someone young. They are typically used for a vampire or a Mrs. Doubtfire kind of makeup. We didn’t like the first look we tried as Gaurav looked like a witch. We made his eyes big because our lids shrink with age; eyebrows straightened; nose shortened and mouth differently shaped.”

Shah Rukh says that the team worked with special technology to capture Gaurav’s scenes. “We shot Gaurav’s scenes with a new technology from the US—a huge ball

with thousands of lights. They cover 200 expressions in a second in HD. One camera picks up my smile and wrinkles and another something else. They match each and every expression and make a picture recreate the scenes. It was very lengthy. It took 7 to 8 days to see the first shot. This technique has been used for *Captain America* and *Ant-Man*.”

His other character of superstar Aryan Khanna—inspired by his own journey in Bollywood—is unlike him, he insists. “Aryan Khanna is a responsible guy and he does not have a sense of humor. They have shown my house and my old films but only that which is archival. I play the role but I am not me in the film. However, I knew I had the responsibility of maintaining the dignity of a star.”

Shah Rukh says that the film has helped him understand the unconditional love of fans for their idols. “The word fan is a derivative of fanatic. The fan loves me from a distance and it becomes unconditional love, unlike that with a family or girlfriend. How obsessive this love can be will depend on situations that the fan is in. You can’t tell a fan to do this or that. They have a unique psyche and you can’t tell them what to do. I only tell them to not hurt themselves. After *Darr*, people harmed themselves with a knife. I feel bad and I don’t want them to do that, especially the girls.”

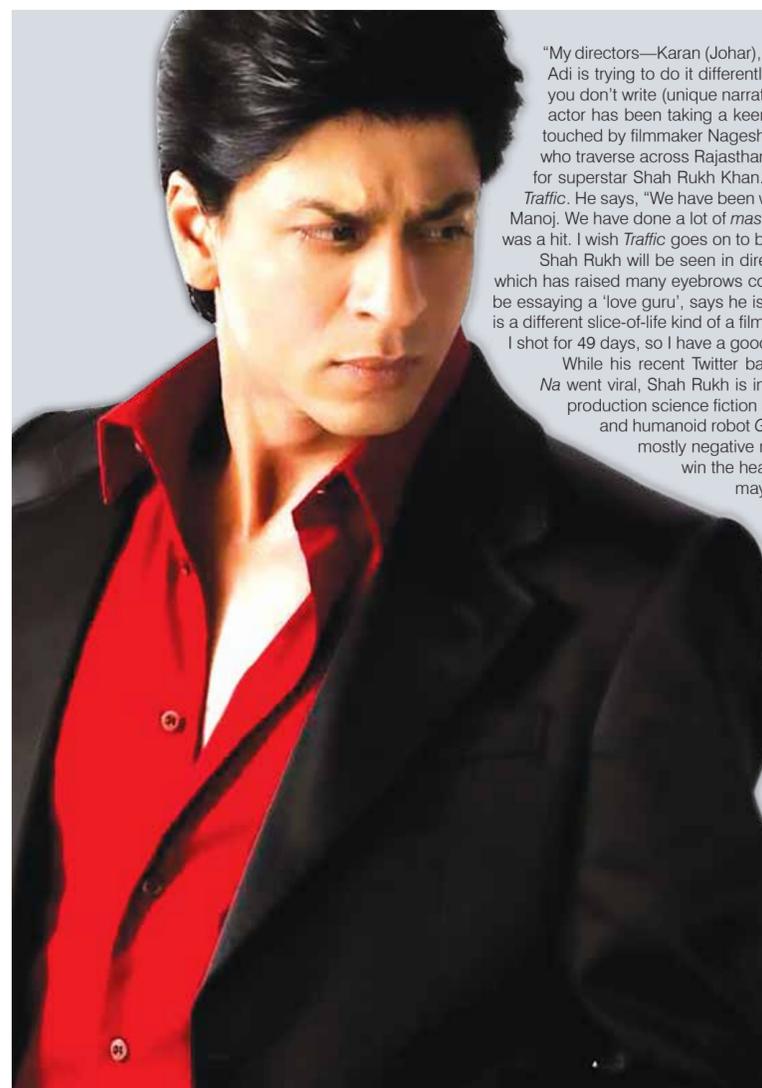
According to a recent online film survey, Shah Rukh and Kajol starrer cinematic milestone *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995) is the most evergreen love story made in the Hindi film industry. Of course, Shah Rukh Khan is aware that the film turned him into every woman’s dream man. He says that girls often fall for his eyes. “My eyes are bedroom eyes. They are supposed to be sexy. They are not tired. Girls love these eyes.” Talking about his kohl-eyed look from upcoming *Raees*, SRK says, “There is kohl in my eyes, which everyone tells me is very scary. I also feel that I look a little mean. There are many co-actors in the industry, who say that I look mean in kohl.”

He has tasted success as an actor and producer but fears to tread the path as a film director. Shah Rukh says, “I find it to be a very lonely job. I think if I have to direct, I need to gain confidence in the next five years. As of now, I just feel scared as I don’t know when to say, ‘Okay, cut’. I plan to take some course to see how exciting it would be to tell a story. I don’t know if I can call the shots,” he says, adding, “Maneesh had this idea (of *Fan*) seven years ago, but Adi (producer Aditya Chopra) felt Maneesh is not ready to do a film with me because there is a responsibility to work with a star. Adi knows me well. I am very sensitive and I cannot just be called to work. I like to be treated well and be nice too. Maybe Maneesh was too young to be in that space.”

Speaking of the directors he has worked with, Shah Rukh says that his potential is yet to be tapped.



Shah Rukh says that *Fan* has helped him understand the unconditional love of fans for their idols. Getting into the character of a 24-year-old youngster, mentally, was easy but the prosthetics part of it was tough.



“My directors—Karan (Johar), Adi, and Sanjay Leela Bhansali—feel that my potential has not been tapped. Adi is trying to do it differently now in the commercial space. When you are bound by commercial stuff, you don’t write (unique narratives) and so I can’t explore. There are not those many scripts around.” The actor has been taking a keen interest in atypical films in the pipeline. He recently tweeted about being touched by filmmaker Nagesh Kukunoor’s *Dhanak*—the story of a brother and sister, aged eight and ten, who traverse across Rajasthan to fulfill a promise the elder sister made to her blind little brother to search for superstar Shah Rukh Khan. He is also rooting for the success of ‘childhood friend’ Manoj Bajpayee’s *Traffic*. He says, “We have been working together since childhood in theater and I have got to learn a lot from Manoj. We have done a lot of *masti*. I feel the proudest, and I’m not being patronizing, that his last film *Aligarh* was a hit. I wish *Traffic* goes on to become a big hit too.”

Shah Rukh will be seen in director Gauri Shinde’s (of *English Vinglish* fame) untitled next with Alia Bhatt, which has raised many eyebrows considering the age gap between the two actors. The actor, who is tipped to be essaying a ‘love guru’, says he is not romancing the young actress. “Most of my scenes are with Alia. But it is a different slice-of-life kind of a film. It is unique for me because it’s not a typical lead hero-heroine type of film. I shot for 49 days, so I have a good role,” he says. The film is the actor’s joint production with Karan Johar.

While his recent Twitter banter with Farah Khan about making a sequel to the superhit *Main Hoon Na* went viral, Shah Rukh is in fact “adamant and stubborn” about making a sequel to his 2011 home-production science fiction superhero film *Ra.One* that featured him as scientist Shekhar Subramanium and humanoid robot G. One. Although the film was a major letdown at the box office and received mostly negative reviews from critics, Shah Rukh says, “I would like to give it another shot to win the hearts. I thought as a team it was a step forward in filmmaking. A lot of people may not think so, but I know filmmaking. Though there is no storyline as such in my mind, we have VFX for sure. Since I am adamant and stubborn, I will make another *Ra.One* if we can get a good mix and blow your mind, like when you see a *Spider-Man*. I hope we can do something like that in India.”

Bollywood has discovered its fondness for biopics but Shah Rukh says his life is not colorful enough for celluloid like cricketers MS Dhoni, Sachin Tendulkar or Mohammed Azharuddin. He says, “All these are wonderful, colorful lives. I really don’t think my life is good enough to be made into a biopic. If you ask me who should play my role, then I feel AbRam and Aryan could be a good choice.”

While rumors have it that Karan is launching Aryan in the sequel to *Student of the Year*, doting father Shah Rukh says it is not true. The actor says, “Strangely, people would expect the star kids to be spoiled, but they are more sorted than I am. They like films. But, none of them has jumped the bandwagon and said that they want to start acting. Aryan and Suhana come to my sets to understand what filmmaking is about because it’s time for them to get interested. If they get interested, then good; but if they don’t, that’s even better. Both of them have to finish their graduation. Aryan is studying a film and TV course while Suhana will complete schooling and then graduation from London or US. I keep hearing Karan is launching Aryan, but that’s not true.”

For now, the actor rules out a sequel to *Fan*. “The fan in the film is dead. I don’t think there is any sequel to this movie. But Maneesh and I are doing another film with a very different story. We will start working on it by next year,” he says. For now, the actor is planning a celebration for his team of *Fan*. He says, “We spent long hours to make this film. So in a few days, I will call for a get-together.”

Indian cinema is changing to rustic real stories

RANDEEP HOODA chats with **Bollywood Insider** about endurance, his proud affair with films and finding peace in his equestrian expeditions.



MESSAGE FOR US FANS

Bollywood has changed a lot in the last decade. Indian filmmakers are making more interesting films these days that reflect the change in our country. We keep cribbing about why Bollywood can't make the Hollywood kind of films. I request Indians in the US to support the different Indian cinema. It is the only thing that will encourage new age filmmakers to make films that India can be proud of.

Be it *Sarabjit* or *Rang Rasiya* or *Main Aur Charles*, Randeep's roles have been distinct.

BY **JANHAVI SAMANT**

Randeep Hooda's transformation from a struggling actor to an enviable alpha male of Bollywood has been noteworthy. Far from being a honey-dipped actor, Randeep has managed to earn the tag of being one of the most quintessential stars today. Be it as the gritty ACP Agnel Wilson in *Once Upon A Time in Mumbai*, the bold Mahabir Bhati in *Highway* or the charming Charles in *Main Aur Charles*, Randeep's career in tinsel town has been a journey of varied characters. His April release *Laal Rang* has received much praise. In his upcoming release, Omung Kumar's *Sarabjit*, Randeep has pulled off the emaciated look for the title role of the Indian farmer convicted in Pakistan with an extreme weight loss of 18 kilograms in 28 days. The actor recently collapsed from an attack of appendicitis on the sets of *Sultan* where he plays coach to Salman Khan and had to gain weight to play his part. Randeep confesses that playing *Sarabjit* has left him "gloomy" like never before.

Today, you are called one of the 'most bankable' actors. Does it feel special?

I do feel that I have achieved the success of a certain level, but I don't really consider myself as successful just yet. I have failed several times in the past, but I have become brave enough to carry on with enthusiasm. My stubbornness to succeed spells victory for me because I enjoy my work.

Tell us about your Bollywood journey.

I came from the small town of Rohtak in Haryana to make it big in Mumbai. My struggling days were difficult. Initially, I stayed at a friend's home in Mumbai and slept at the back of the couch in their living room. I would wake up before the family and leave to search for work around the city. There were days when I survived only on bananas and Aarey milk (Mumbai's milk cooperative brand). Eventually, I landed my first job as a model but I was not up to be just a clotheshorse. Things started looking here for me when I got the opportunity to act in *Monsoon*

Wedding (2001) with my idol Naseeruddin Shah, who inspired and enlightened me with his immense knowledge.

Laal Rang is an interesting title. Tell us more.

Laal Rang represents the illegal trade of blood. The film is based in Karnal with a good dose of dark Haryanvi humour, an engaging story, and an emotional friendship. People do not want to donate blood as silly myths and superstitions prevail that blood donation would make them weak or spread illness. However, they don't mind buying blood in emergency cases. Middlemen or touts exploit such situations and the poor sell blood for very little money. Many farmers in Maharashtra are selling their blood because of crop losses! This is a very grave situation and we wanted to highlight it. It is unfortunate how deprivation can lead people to do such things.

You have been lauded for your look in Sarabjit. How difficult was it?

In *Sarabjit* too, I play a stylish but very intense character. To put on muscles, have a six-pack and increase weight is not really difficult. But for *Sarabjit*, I had to lose everything and don an absolutely no makeup look. Trust me, it wasn't easy.

What was your journey as Sarabjit like?

Somewhere, it has affected me. There is a certain sense of gloom that has come about since this movie. I have to keep reminding myself, "Look, you did not go through 23 years of your life in prison. You did not go through all that hardship. You did not go through solitary confinement." We decided that I should lose weight so that his plight could come out better. I also started learning Punjabi. A tooth decay mould was imported from Canada. Omung provided me with *Sarabjit*'s letters, pictures, and video footage. I went through the letters and I made his thoughts mine. I made his words mine. I used to sit at home, chained for a long time and write letters to Omung, as if he were my sister. I wrote many letters, which I will never share because when I read them I think they are too personal.

How do you manage to pull off a unique and distinct character with each film?

Be it *Highway*, *Main Aur Charles* or *Saheb Biwi or Heroine*,

each of my roles has been distinct from the others. I take the effort to interpret every character differently. The director's vision and the script help shape the character into something believable and unique. It's easier in a biopic because one has tangible references for body language and mannerisms. But in a fictional story, it is more challenging. For *Laal Rang*, I tried to model my character on the lines of how our director Syed Ahmed Fazal talks and behaves.

Have success and fame made you a choosy actor?

I have no aspiration for any particular kind of roles. I just want characters that make me lose myself in them and be sleepless. I always look for work that is distinctively me and for directors who understand this. Why take up a role that anybody else can do?

Is it a conscious choice of scripts that most of your films have a native flavor and represent a traditional India?

For many years, Bollywood films represented expensive taste. But now things are changing. Indian cinema is bringing some real rustic stories to the theatres and I am happy that I am getting such interesting projects. May be because I come from a small town, such roles come to me more naturally. The language, setting, story and cast may change with every film but I can understand all those characters because my knowledge is not just limited to fast paced Mumbai.

Girls swoon over your looks. What does it mean to be conferred with titles as the 'sexiest' or 'handsomest' man?

I didn't bathe for days when I was shooting *Highway*, yet girls called me sexy (Laughs). These titles are casual. I don't look at myself in the mirror and feel proud that I am sexy or handsome. These titles are momentary. They make you feel good but at the end of the day, you are who you are. I still don't know what my strengths are. Whenever I feel low, I go to the village or spend time with horses, trying to find myself. It keeps me positive.



Priyanka wins her 'best award'

Bestowed with the Indian civilian honor of Padma Shri, Priyanka Chopra says her success belongs "solely" to her

Johnson and Zac Efron. On April 13, Priyanka especially flew down from Los Angeles to receive her Padma Shri honor from President Pranab Mukherjee at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. Dressed for the

ceremonial occasion in an elegant lemon yellow saree and a pearl *rani haar*, Priyanka said, "This is the best award I have ever received. Thank you so much. I am grateful."

BY **SHEETAL RODRIGUES**

At 33, Priyanka Chopra has conquered the zenith of global success. This year, she became the first South Asian actress to win the People's Choice Awards in the US, was bestowed with India's civilian honor of Padma Shri, and found herself included in the *Time* magazine's list of 100 most influential people. Calling the Padma Shri her "best award", Priyanka asserts that the credit for her success goes "solely" to her and nobody else.

Priyanka says, "I feel I am destiny's favorite child. I have made sure that whatever opportunity comes my way, I give my heart and soul to it. So the credit of my work goes only and solely to me because I am the one, who stands in front of the camera between action and cuts and nobody else does."

The actress is now a globally recognized face with her stint in the American TV series *Quantico*. She will soon be seen in Hollywood flick *Baywatch* alongside Dwayne

Known for her stand on gender sensitivity, she feels people do not acknowledge the success of hard working women. "People take credit away from working girls by giving it to somebody else, saying, '*Isko toh banaya hai*' (her success has been made by others). But my question is, '*Koi aur kyu nahi bana abhi tak*' (Why someone else hasn't made it yet)."

Priyanka began her illustrious showbiz journey young, at 17, being crowned Miss World. She made her Bollywood debut in 2003 with *The Hero: Love Story of a Spy* with Sunny Deol, followed by *Andaaz* with Akshay Kumar and Lara Dutta in the same year—she won the Filmfare award for best debut. There was no looking back with a streak of hits with *Aitraaz* (2005), *Mujhse Shaadi Karogi* (2004), *Krish* (2006), *Fashion* (2008), *Kaminey* (2009), *Saat Khoon Maaf* (2011), *Baari* (2012), *Mary Kom* (2014) and *Bajirao Mastani* (2015).

With big international projects under her belt, Priyanka

calls it "fun" for her to have another part of the world discover her. The actress says, "What I am enjoying is people discovering me and saying, 'What is the fuss around this girl, why are people standing outside to see her shooting in Montreal. Let's go and Google her'. And then they Google me and find out who I am. In most places I go to or the films that I do, they know I am a big star from another part of the world."

Priyanka feels that the definition of stardom is different in the West than in India because of the fans. "Stars are not different, but the fans are. It's beautiful to see how much a fan loves Indian cinema and the actors. It's so satisfying to have someone applaud your work and love you. I am just a girl, but the kind of love and affection I receive, it gives me support. I don't think any other star in any part of the world will ever experience what an Indian does," Priyanka says.

Priyanka also attended the annual White House Correspondents Dinner with US President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama on May 1, along with some of Hollywood's biggest names like Bradley Cooper, Lucy Liu, Jane Fonda and Gladys Knight. Priyanka pumped up the glamour quotient at the dinner, turning up in a showy deep-cut, black and sheer-stripe gown. Later, she shared a photograph of her with the US President and Michelle Obama with a captioned that read, "Lovely to meet the very funny and charming Barack Obama and the beautiful Michelle Obama. Thank you for a lovely evening... cannot wait to start working on your girls' education program."

Deepika stands up against depression



After coming out openly about suffering from depression last year, actress Deepika Padukone announced a year-long Mental Health Campaign titled "You are not Alone" on March 23, to help drive away depression. Deepika, who is currently shooting for her Hollywood debut with XXX: *The Return of Xander Cage*, will cover over 200 schools as part of her campaign to raise awareness, sensitize students and teachers as well as enable them to identify signs of anxiety and depression. The actress had launched an NGO, Live Love Laugh Foundation, in October last year, to fight against depression.

Deepika, 30, had revealed her personal struggle with depression in a 2015 interview, expressing concern about a lack of awareness and the attached social stigma. Deepika said, "Last year, I spoke about my own fight with depression as I felt I could not just sit by and watch people going through what I had gone through. We decided to launch 'You Are Not Alone' with an idea to raise awareness."

Starting with her own school in Bengaluru (formerly Bangalore), Sophia's High School, Deepika's awareness campaign is set to break the taboo associated with mental disorder. She says,

"We believe that schools can be the first line of defense for emotional and mental health disorders in our youth. We could also help connect the schools to counseling organizations and independent counselors if they need such help." The programme is lined up for June when the new academic sessions begin in India.

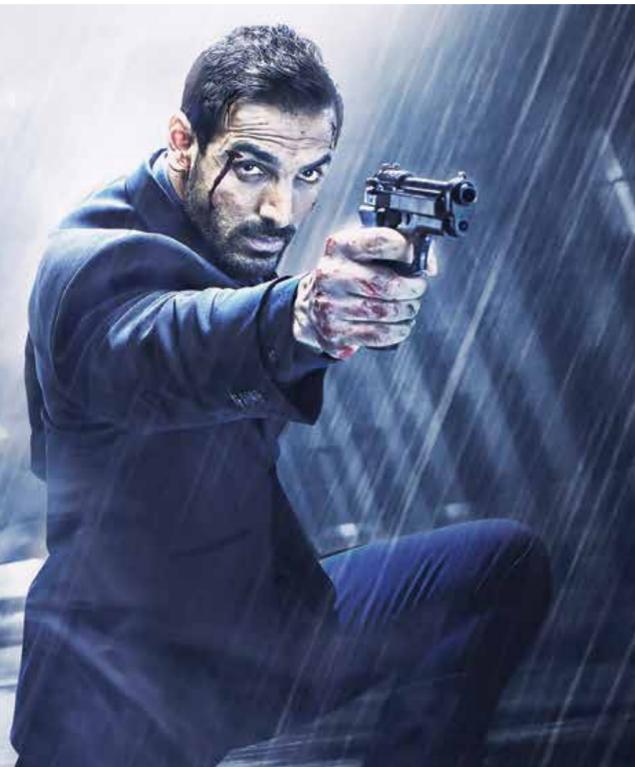
The actress aims to expand her initiative to the most vulnerable group of 15 years to 29 years. "The above-15 demographic is an important segment. Our aim is to make the issue of mental health a subject of drawing room conversations instead of being spoken of in hushed tones," said the actor who has admitted to taking medication and counseling. Deepika eventually also plans to extend the awareness campaign to colleges and the corporate world.

Deepika's organization will also create a comprehensive national database of mental health care professionals. "We are committed to on-ground activities such as training doctors, creating a national database of mental health care professionals for easy access, fund raising for expansion, partnering with NGOs and establishing links with mental health institutes," she said.

Besides launching the school-based awareness programme, Deepika has also partnered with Guinness World Record holding mountaineer David Liano, who will scale the peaks of Mount Everest with a flag of Deepika's Live Love Laugh Foundation to support people fighting depression and spread the message of mental health.

I don't want to be a flash in the pan

For someone who was written off as just a more-brawn-than-brain toy boy in his debut film *Jism*, **JOHN ABRAHAM** has managed to carve a niche for himself in Bollywood with a career spanning over 13 years. In a candid chat with **Bollywood Insider**, the actor-producer talks about his films, principles, and future plans.



BY JANHAVI SAMANT

John Abraham's co-production *Rocky Handsome* got off to a decent start after its March 25 release. The film received mixed reactions from audiences, but John impressed with his action-packed performance in the film. The title of the film is partly inspired by the actor's living idol, American actor Sylvester Stallone. Calling it a "clean, honest, commercial film", John says, "We actually wanted *Johnny Handsome* but it's an American

character and we didn't get the title. So we decided on *Rocky*. I am a big fan of Stallone and if he sees the film, I will be happy. I watched *Rocky 4* when I was about 17 or 18. I bought 12 Bananas and I thought I would develop my body like Rocky! We have made a film that's truly international."

He admits that USP of the film is its action. "I have created poetry in motion and every movement is like a dance form. I trained for a month in Thailand and when I returned (director) Nishikant Kamat commented that it seemed like I had grown up practicing martial arts. Having said that, the action did not involve any bloodshed and we made sure that it is palatable to women. My name as the producer is important so I have to make a credible film with good content. I don't want to be a flash in the pan. My company, J. A. Films, will last forever."

This is John's second outing with Kamat after the successful action film *Force*. But in *Rocky Handsome*, Kamat also played the villain. John says, "I always feel that the villain should be intelligent, someone like Stephen Hawking. In fact, someone once asked Stephen Hawking what his dream was and he said, 'I would like to be a villain in a James Bond film.' Earlier, Nishikant's friend was to play the villain but he developed cold feet. Then, Nishikant just walked out of the van with his head tonsured and I said, 'Oh my God!' He's got an edge and he's sharp."

Rocky Handsome ran into a conflict with the Censor Board in India that awarded it an 'A' certificate due to the violence and flesh trade depicted in the narrative, thereby limiting the audience. Although disappointed, John had been confident that the film would run well at the box-office. It grossed Rs 24 crores (About USD 4 mn) during its run; not enough to be declared a 'hit'. John does not think much about the fact that box-office collections are discussed to consider the value or success of a film. He says, "Most of the collections cannot be tampered with. I believe, all in all, they are very fair. But I have my doubt whether collections can aptly show the artistic value of a film made." About the censor board, he says, "I respect the decision of the censor board but I don't attach much importance to the certification these days. As an actor-producer, I prefer that my film has no nudity, no sexual content or double meaning and no bloodshed. Most of the audience, especially the parents, can relate to the child and her emotions. The response has been fantastic. The biggest compliment that I have received is that this is your best film till date. People have said they have not seen this kind of action sequence on Indian screens."

His unwavering life principles have earned him the title of Bollywood's 'gentleman' after John sincerely accepted court conviction in a 2006 case of rash and negligent driving—he had rammed his Hayabusa bike into a cycle, injuring two youngsters. The court released him on probation

instead of 15 days in jail, taking a lenient view. Known to extend his image to social causes, much like actor-producer Aamir Khan, John says, "I have my principles that I will not compromise on. I don't pay bribes, I don't cheat, and I do realize that I face many problems because of this like difficulty in getting permissions. As an actor, I don't dance at weddings. I don't mean to say that those who do are wrong. It is just that I don't believe in it and I won't do it. Similarly, I don't attend award functions. Perhaps, I don't deserve awards. I have survived in the industry for 14 years without them. At the same time, I think that someone like Ranveer Singh does deserve an award and he must enjoy this proud moment. Ideally, I would prefer it if they would have a felicitation ceremony rather than an award ceremony."

John has just wrapped shooting for the action-adventure *Dhishoom*, starring Varun Dhawan and Jacqueline Fernandez. The film is directed by Varun's elder brother Rohit and releases in July. His comedy film *Phir Hera Pheri 3* with Abhishek Bachchan and Paresh Rawal releases in August. John feels that *Dhishoom* has the scope of becoming the biggest franchise. "After I heard the story of *Dhishoom*, I felt this could be the youngest and the biggest film franchise in India. For a film that has two popular actors, Jacqueline Fernandez and Varun Dhawan, a talented young director, Rohit Dhawan, and producer Sajid Nadiadwala, the results are fantastic."

The 43-year-old actor is shooting for *Force 2* with Sonakshi and Tahir Raj Bhasin. He feels proud that his co-star Sonakshi performs challenging stunts fearlessly. John says, "Sonakshi is sweet and a fantastic co-star—one of my best so far. The action that she has performed is commendable. This girl has absolutely no fear. For one scene, I asked Sonakshi if she was sure about jumping from the second floor and she said, 'I am sure I will jump'. And, she jumped."

Although he has carved a niche in the acting genre, John is open to romantic films. He says, "Jism was a romantic film. I want to do romantic films but it has to be romance with an edge. If my character is to have negativity or be sensual, people will like it. There is no competition with anyone when it comes to action. With *Force 2*, I will try something different. The idea is to entertain the audience with new stuff."

Known for placing his trust in young actors and fighting nepotism in the industry, John is charting out production plans—unaffected by box-office lows—for the next decade. John says, "I only live my life by the highs. That's because I learn and grow through the lows. The next ten years are going to be most defining and I am going to be stronger, faster and more flexible. I am going to hit out now! I want to make films with Varun Dhawan and Tiger Shroff because I have faith in them. And then, I want to work with Akshay Kumar because I am close to him."



ASH'S EMOTIONAL BOND

At the April trailer launch of her upcoming film *Sarabjit*, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan could not fight back tears as she led the audience into a "one-minute silence" to pay respect to Sarabjit and others, who recently lost their lives. She said, "Before we start, let us maintain a minute of silence as a mark of respect for Sarabjit. We often do get affected and disturbed, but we cannot possibly take a minute out to experience how one incident can change the dynamics of a family." Aishwarya remained teary-eyed throughout the evening and thanked the entire team for sharing the story of Sarabjit with the world with apparent grief in her voice.

MELINDA'S MESSAGE TO KALKI

Kalki Koechlin is on cloud nine after getting a letter from Melinda Gates, co-founder of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, praising her for her 'thought provoking' poem about media, society and their approach towards women and crimes against them. Kalki, who has bagged the Special Jury Award (National Film Award) for *Margarita with a Straw*, featured in Culture Machine's *Unblushed* series for the women's lifestyle channel Blush. In the five-minute-long video *Printing Machine*, the actress is seen reciting a monologue she penned down on society and media. The actress shared Melinda's letter on photo-sharing site Instagram and said, "Culture Machine taking The Printing Machine as far as Melinda Gates' personal computer, is social media machinery at its best. I just want to say, the magic of my director Akanksha (Seda) should be held highly responsible," Kalki said in a statement.

Melinda's letter reads, "Dear Ms Koechlin: I appreciate your taking the time to join me in a discussion on empowering women and girls in India. Your video poem *The Printing Machine* was powerful and thought provoking. Thank you for bringing attention to violence and discrimination against women. Your voice helps bring much needed attention and support to these issues. I am grateful for your efforts. It was a pleasure meeting you during my visit."



ANUSHKA'S AKHADA PROWESS

Anushka Sharma, who has been speaking of completing the 'Khan-circle' after working with all three Khans of Bollywood, is playing a forceful woman wrestler in her upcoming flick with Salman Khan, *Sultan*. The second teaser of the film released recently introduced viewers to Aarfa, who is Sultan's love interest in the film. Anushka has shown her fierce side in the teaser, wrestling with men and heading to various wrestling championships with zeal.

The teaser has an adoring voice-over from Salman aka Sultan, introducing the woman he loves. The voice-over says, "Iss desh ki jaan na, iss desh ki ladies hain, jitni komal ye laage hai, us se jada taakat inki baajuyon mein hai (The country's power is in the ladies, they might seem delicate, but have a lot of power in their arms)." Salman Khan released the teaser on Twitter, wishing Anushka on her birthday. He wrote, "Happy Birthday to my Sultani Arfa #SultanKiJaan"



FATHERHOOD INDEED!

After much speculation about a "baby bump" spotted on Shahid Kapoor's wife, Mira Rajput, at the Lakme India Fashion Week in April, actor Shahid Kapoor let out a dramatic confirmation at the trailer launch of his upcoming *Udta Punjab*. At the event, Shahid, who will be celebrating their first wedding anniversary soon, was asked what he thinks of fatherhood. The actor replied with a quip, "Why are you beating around the bush? Ask me the question directly. *Haan, main baap ban ne wala hoon*." Shahid was sharing the stage with *Udta Punjab* co-stars, Alia Bhatt and ex-girlfriend Kareena Kapoor Khan. In the film, Shahid plays a spoilt rockstar, Tommy Singh, who gets involved in a drug controversy while Kareena plays Dr Preet Sahani, who has sacrificed her easygoing life to move to Punjab to tackle the drug menace. This is Kareena and Shahid's first film after *Jab We Met* (2007) but the duo has not shared the screen in the film. Shahid and Mira had tied the knot in July last year are expecting their first child. According to reports, Mira is in her second trimester and is due later this year.



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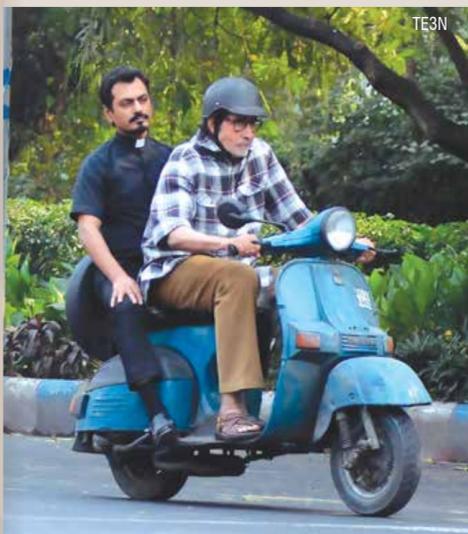
Known to be vocal about a string of issues, Sonam Kapoor says she guards her personal life fiercely. The Neerja star says she is outspoken about many aspects of her life but wishes to keep her love-life a private affair. At the launch of a mobile phone application named after her, Sonam said, "There are many other things which make you a whole person besides who you're dating. My personal life is out there because I've always been myself. But if you're talking about personal life in the context of a boyfriend, then I'll never talk about it. If I feel comfortable talking about it then I will, but I feel it is not necessary to talk about personal life. I won't even tell my parents till I decide it's serious."





Make Way for Nawaz

An unassuming farmer's son from Burhana in Uttar Pradesh, who earned his living as a watchman and a chemist, Nawazuddin Siddiqui has notched up an enviable body of work.



BY AARTI KAPUR SINGH

At 42, Nawaz says he is "just getting used to the attention". Perhaps, the actor currently has more work on his list than any A-list star in Bollywood. He has as many as ten films in the current year—*TE3N* with Amitabh Bachchan; *Raman Raghav 2.0*, *Raees*, *Farzi*, *Gawah*, *Lateef* and *Ghoomketu* with Anurag Kashyap. Nawaz is shooting for Sohail Khan's *Ali* and will be seen in Boney Kapoor's *Mom* alongside Sridevi.

Admitting that he is lucky, Nawaz says, "A director will only come to me if he believes only I can play this role. I am okay with saying no to any film if I don't like the role. Money and fame do not affect me." Nawazuddin recalls being introduced to cinema through films played out at the lone tin-roofed cinema hall in his village. He says, "I grew up watching C-grade films. It was when I went to National School of Drama (NSD) that I was introduced to films from the world over. But actually, I never wanted to be an actor."

He realized his passion for acting after watching over 70 plays in seven months while spending time on the NSD campus. Nawaz says, "I used to serve tea to the artists and crew, sweep the stage, the sets. I also became a *chowkidar* to make ends meet." His tryst with acting began with bit roles in plays—he kept his hands raised as a tree in *Ulhan*, based on Vijaydan Detha's novel. "I did it because Manoj Bajpayee was the lead protagonist. I played the role of Mikhail Borkin in a Hindi adaptation of Anton Chekov's *Ivanov*. I gained the confidence of playing intense roles. Seven years later, I realized that I was penniless and should earn some money. Then I thought that if I have to die a pauper or starving, I might as well do so while struggling. Nobody should say I didn't try," says Nawaz.

When he ran out of money, he took up small roles—a laundry man in Pepsi's '90s campaign with Sachin Tendulkar earned him Rs 500; a petty criminal thrashed by Aamir Khan in *Sarfarosh* (1999); a police informer in Ramgopal Varma's *Jungle* (2000); a pickpocket in *Munabhai M.B.B.S* (2003). Nawaz confesses that he struggled because he stood in his own way. "I never went looking for work and was too shy to ask for a role. I used to stand silently in a corner and wait for the producers or someone else to notice me. Then 2004 came as the worst year of my struggle. I couldn't afford to pay rent

and shared a Mumbai apartment with an NSD senior. TV was too glossy for someone as ugly as me and I wanted to do more. Then Anurag Kashyap signed me for *Black Friday* and I felt that it would be my take-off. Unfortunately, the film got banned but was eventually released only in 2007. After *Gangs of Wasseypur*, I got at least 200 offers."

American critic Roger Ebert watched Prashant Bhargava's *Patang* (released in New York in 2012) and invited Nawaz to his film festival, Ebertfest, in Chicago, last year. It was a big moment for Nawaz. "That's when I realised that I was being noticed," he says, adding that his parents once travelled to a town, 32 miles away from their home, to see him in *Kahaani* and *Talaash*. He adds, "They still cannot believe that I have finally made it. But, I still go back to the village to help my father with the farm work when I need a break."

Nawaz blushes at the mention of his female fan following, saying, "Yes I have come across a couple of them, not too many." While his fans are awaiting his intense portrayals, Nawaz declares with his trademark candor that he cannot pick his own favorite. "I get irritated watching myself on screen. I only see my mistakes. So, I watch my film once before its release and never again. But, I really liked the madness of Dashrath Manjhi. I found the script of *Miss Lovely* very complex. There was too much detailing in not just the narrative, but also my character."

Elaborating on his future projects, Nawazuddin says, "From Barry John's film on Phoolan Devi's killer Sher Singh Rana to *Raees* with Shahrukh Bhai, I am doing a lot of different work with varied kinds of people. Dibakar Banerjee also wants me to portray a struggling actor on screen and I am in talks with Bengali director Buddhadeb Dasgupta as I've always wanted to act in Bengali films."

For now, Nawazuddin Siddiqui continues to follow his heart setting himself apart from the crowd.

AWARDS

- National Award in Special Jury Award category for his performances in *Kahaani* (2012), *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012), *Talaash* (2012) and *Dekh Indian Circus* (2011).
- Filmfare Award for Best Supporting Actor for *The Lunchbox* (2013) and *Badlapur* (2015).

Eighth time Cannes-bound



Nawazuddin is elated that his film *Raman Raghav 2.0* will be premiering at the prestigious Director's Fortnight segment of upcoming 69th Cannes International Film Festival in May. It will be his eighth film at Cannes. He takes it as a sign that he is on the right path in his career. Filmmaker Anurag Kashyap's *Raman Raghav 2.0* is based on notorious serial killer Raman Raghav who went on a murder spree in Mumbai in the 1960s. Nawaz plays the title role of the notorious serial killer alongside Vicky Kaushal as the police officer.

"I am very happy that yet another film of mine is premiering at Cannes. It only goes to show that you are on the right track and are making the right choices," said Nawaz, who is a regular at the prestigious film festival. Nawaz's earlier films to make it to the Cannes include *The Lunchbox*, *Gangs of Wasseypur*, *Miss Lovely*, and *Liar's Dice*. Of his eight films at Cannes, seven feature Nawaz as an actor while one is a short film as a producer, *Miyan Kal Aana*, which was directed by his brother Shamas Siddiqui.

The film festival is slated to take place from May 11 to 22, 2016.

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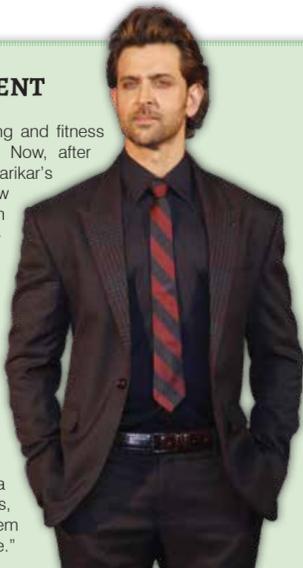
THE MANGESHKAR INSPIRATION

Legendary singer Asha Bhosle presented livewire actor Ranveer Singh and filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali with the prestigious Master Dinanath Mangeshkar Award on April 24, instituted by the Mangeshkar family in honor of the Late Pandit Dinanath Mangeshkar, to recognise artists who have created a great impact in their respective fields. Ranveer, who is away in Paris for his *Belikre* schedule, was to accept the honor through a Skype call. Alas, internet connectivity played spoilsport and the actor could only send a video message to extend his gratitude. Ranveer said, "I wish I was there today. I am finding it difficult to describe what it means to me to be recognized by one of the greatest artists of all time. Today, I feel the journey of *Bajirao Mastani* has been properly fulfilled. I promise to work harder and make you more proud in the future." Bhansali, also a music composer, revealed that the Mangeshkar family is a huge inspiration. Bhansali said, "My mother is happier today as I am receiving this award. She knows how much the Mangeshkar family inspires me. I have not spent a single day without listening to Lata *didi*, Ashaji or Ushaji, and Hridaynath Mangeshkar's compositions. I have learnt about timing, expressions, and dynamics from their songs. Moreover, they inspired me to work in a way that imprints everybody's hearts forever."



HRITHIK'S CURIOUS EXPERIMENT

HRithik Roshan is known for his vigorous training and fitness experiments to chisel his Greek-God looks. Now, after wrapping up his schedule for Ashutosh Gowariker's *Mohen-jo-Daro*, Hrithik has decided to try out a new vegetarian diet. It is a first for Hrithik who is a known foodie and a meat-eater. He has been on high-protein body building diets. The actor was required to bulk up for *Mohen-jo-Daro* and is testing the potency of a vegetarian diet in maintaining the muscular physique he has carved out. Hrithik is planning his own meals and is curious about subtracting meat from his diet for a few days. *Mohen-jo-Daro* is set for an August release. Along with his curious assessment of vegetarian meals, Hrithik is also finding some self-motivation in testing times—a murky legal battle, with actor Kangana Ranaut, spanning over several months after she called him her "silly ex". Hrithik posted a cryptic tweet, saying, "When people call you names, the universe is not testing whether you can prove them wrong. It's testing your own belief in your own name."



CANNES CANNED FOR KAT

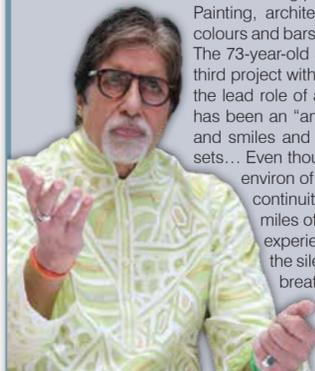
At her debut on the Cannes International Film Festival red carpet last year, Katrina's sartorial choices left many impressed. However, Kat, who is the ambassador of cosmetic brand L'Oreal Paris, will skip the prestigious film gala this year due to "prior commitments". As disappointed as she is to miss out on a 'fabulous platform', Katrina says her films are keeping her on her toes. Katrina said, "Cannes is a fabulous platform for any artist to attend, and I really enjoyed the experience last year. While the brand invited me to attend Cannes again this year, I have had to regrettfully decline the opportunity due to prior commitments. This has been an enormously busy year for me so far, and I am working on some amazing projects which are really keeping me on my toes. Nevertheless, although I will be giving Cannes a miss this year, I hope to attend next year."

The actress is busy with Anurag Basu's upcoming comedy-drama *Jagga Jasoos* alongside Ranbir Kapoor. She has just completed shooting for her upcoming flick with Sidharth Malhotra, *Baar Baar Dekho*.



MASTER OF THE "DELICATE" ART

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan, who has been entertaining cinema audiences for over four decades, recently described filmmaking as a "delicate art" in his blog post: "Filmmaking is such a delicate art. Painting, architecture, music, dance, speech, mood, colours and bars... Everything put into one big canvas." The 73-year-old actor, who is currently shooting for his third project with Shoojit Sircar (*Pink*) in which he plays the lead role of a lawyer, said that working on the film has been an "amazing experience" for him: "Laughter and smiles and the liberty of happy exchange on the sets... Even though there is the severity of the text, the environ of the story and the content. There is the continuity of each shot, running into miles and miles of time on cameras. It is just an amazing experience. No one speaks, the A/C is put off, the silence is deafening, each syllable of your breath is heard, and the performances of all the cast and the crew are marvelous, simply marvelous."



ASH SPEAKS FOR SALMAN

Actor Salman Khan's appointment as India's goodwill ambassador at Rio Olympics has earned him the wrath of several members of the Indian sports fraternity. On April 23, Salman, who plays a wrestler in his next, *Sultan*, was unveiled goodwill ambassador of the Indian contingent for the Rio Olympics to be held later this year. London Olympics 2012 wrestling bronze medalist Yogeshwar Dutt made his displeasure public with a series of tweets barely an hour after the decision was announced and former athlete Milkha Singh lashed out at the decision of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). The IOA justified its decision to appoint Salman by stating that "the association is only a gesture and does not include any monetary consideration". Salman, who has maintained a silence, found support from Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, his ex-girlfriend. When asked about the controversy around Salman's appointment, Aishwarya said, "Anybody who is doing good to represent the country and anybody who is working or seeking or standing out for any vocation that we have in the country—be it sports, arts or music—I think that's wonderful and needs to be recognized." Salman can smile!



SPEEDMASTER AKI

Superstar Akshay Kumar recently expressed his surprise that filmmakers took 300-400 days to wrap up their films. Akshay, who manages to do at least four films a year asserted that each film should be completed within 30 to 60 days. At the trailer launch of his upcoming comedy *Housefull 3*, Akshay said, "It is not rocket science. It is very easy. I don't think one film should take more than 60 days. I finished *Housefull 3* in 38 days. Everyone comes on time and we work hard for eight hours. I had read that they made the film *Mission Impossible* in 52 days. I don't know how we talk about 300 days and 400 days. Films are completed in 30 to 60 days or maximum 70 days. How much shooting will you do?" In a jest, Akshay added, "I shot the entire film in 38 days, but it took 40 days to make the trailer because they (makers) couldn't understand how to show in two and half minutes everything about its storyline." Akshay had four releases last year. This year, *Housefull 3* is his second release after *Airlift*. His third, *Rustom*, releases in August.



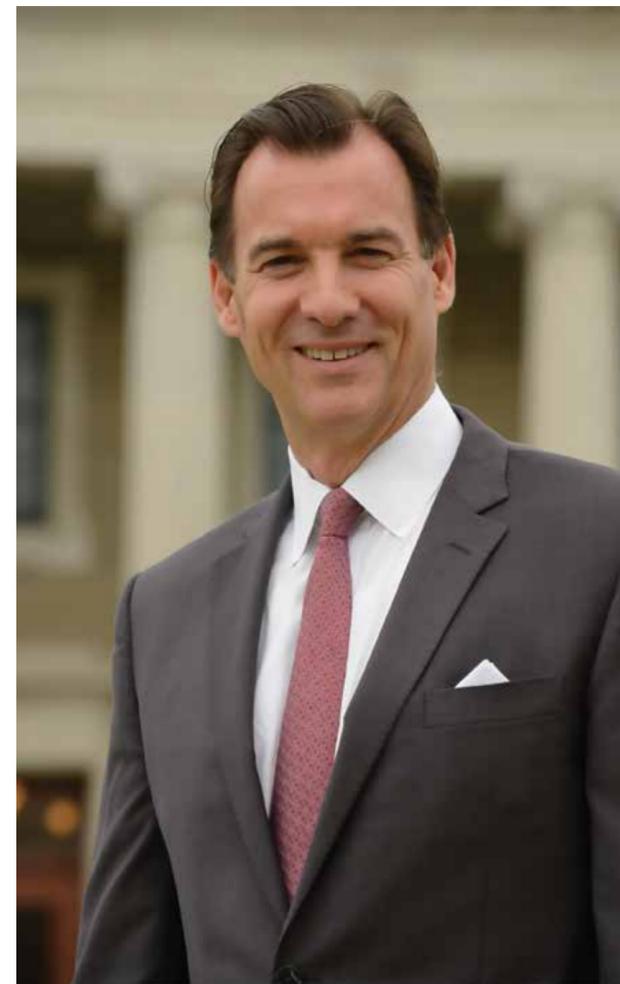
VOTE FOR TOM SUOZZI

Primary Election - Tuesday, June 28

Each & Every Vote Counts!

Difference of one vote can make a difference!

CONGRESS ★ 2016
SUOZZI
Gets It Done!



The Indian American Voters Forum is pleased to endorse the candidacy of Tom Suozzi in the primary election for US Congress.

As County Executive, Suozzi was great for the Indian American Community. As Congressman, he will really be great for India, Indo US relations and the Indian American community.

We urge every Indian American in the third congressional district of Queens, Nassau & Suffolk to vote for Tom Suozzi on June 28.

Varinder K Bhalla
Chairman, Indian American Voters Forum
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ANUSHKA SHARMA

As a child, actor-producer Anushka Sharma aspired to be a famous supermodel. She began training with well-known style consultant Prasad Bidapa at just 15. Never wanting to act, Anushka had enrolled herself with the Elite Modeling Agency to pursue her modeling dreams. Following an audition at Yash Raj Films, she made her screen debut opposite Shah Rukh Khan in Aditya Chopra's *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi* (2008). She has won 10 of the 19 different awards that she has been nominated for in her career. Anushka has confessed that she cried on her way back from Filmfare awards after her nominations for her first two films *Band Baaja Baraat* and *Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi* did not earn her the coveted black lady. She felt she deserved the awards that eluded her but was consoled by her mother. As a kid, Anushka collected toffee wrappers in little shoe boxes, much to the horror of her mother. She hates shopping and is an American TV show buff. She has confessed her love for eating baby-food, Cerelac. She has a weakness for the Ralph Lauren Blue fragrance. She turns 28 this year. Happy Birthday, Anushka!

May 21

ADITYA CHOPRA

India's movie mogul and the current chairman of India's 50-year-old multi-national entertainment conglomerate Yash Raj Films (YRF), Aditya Chopra has written, produced and directed several critically acclaimed and commercially successful films. The elder son of the renowned filmmaker Late Yash Chopra and Pamela, Aditya was diagnosed with severe Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) as a child and underwent therapy in his teenage. He completed his formal education and started his filmmaking career at the age of 18 as an assistant director, working with his father for films like *Chandni* (1989), *Lamhe* (1991) and *Darr* (1993). Then, at the age of 23, writer-director Aditya delivered the all-time blockbuster *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* starring Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol. He was married to Payal Khanna, whom he divorced in 2009 and remarried with actress Rani Mukerji in a private wedding ceremony in Italy in 2014. The couple has a daughter named Adira, born in December 2015. He turns 45 this year. Happy Birthday, Aditya!

May 25

KARAN JOHAR

Karan Johar, fondly called KJo, was born in Mumbai to film producer Yash Johar, founder of Dharma Productions, and Hiroo, sister of Late Yash Chopra. He holds a master's degree in French. At the age of 16, he acted as Shrikant in 1989 Sci-Fiction and Fantasy series *Indradhanush*, aired on DD National channel. Johar entered the film industry as an assistant director on Aditya Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* and also acted in the film, playing the role of a close friend of Shah Rukh Khan's character, Raj. His filmmaking inspirations come from Raj Kapoor, Yash Chopra, and Sooraj R. Barjatya. His directorial debut was the blockbuster romance *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998). For a long time, Karan turned to numerology for the success of his films, creating titles with the alphabet 'K'. He has said that after watching *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* (2006), which was critical of numerology, he decided to end his fixation. He recently willed his wealth to best friend Shah Rukh Khan's children and actors Alia Bhatt and Varun Dhawan. He turns 44 this year. Happy Birthday, Karan!



May 1

May 15

MADHURI DIXIT-NENE

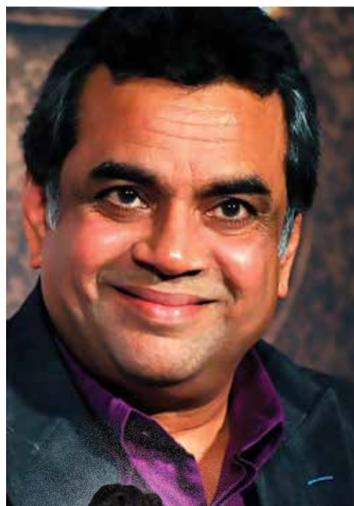
Dancing diva of Bollywood, Madhuri began learning classical Kathak at the tender age of three. She made her acting debut at 17, as a young bride in the 1984 film Rajshri Productions' *Aaboh*. Although she had cleared the screen test at the insistence of the producers much earlier, the Barjatiyas waited for her to appear for her Higher Secondary Board exams and began filming *Aaboh* during her vacations. Her exam results had arrived on the film set in June and Madhuri had scored more than 80%. After *Aaboh*, Madhuri completed her graduation in Microbiology and wanted to become a pathologist, but turned to films again and earned commercial success with *Tezaab*. She was paid Rs 27.53 lakhs for her role in the blockbuster *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun* opposite Salman Khan. In *Devdas*, Madhuri performed the dance sequence for *Kahe Chedd Mohe...* with great difficulty as her costume weighed 30 kilograms. She has been the most beloved muse of famous Indian painter Late M. F. Hussain, who was said to be so mesmerized by her beauty that he watched *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun* 67 times. She turns 49 this year. Happy Birthday, Madhuri!



May 30

PARESH RAWAL

Born in Pallad, Gujarat, Paresh moved to Mumbai at the age of 22 to become a civil engineer. His love for theater ensured that he was recognized as a great actor, capable of making it big in Bollywood. Paresh, who fluently speaks Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, and Telugu, made his debut with the 1984 film *Holi* and went on to appear in over 100 films. His all-time hit is *Hera Pheri* (2000) and Ketan Mehta's *Sardar*, in which he played Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. His Gujarati stage play *Kanji Virudh Kanji* (called *Krishan vs Kanhaiya* in Hindi) that questions the concept of God was used in the 2001 Australian film *The Man Who Sued God*. Rawal also acted in the Hindi film *OMG: Oh My God!* based on his own play. He is currently a member of the Lok Sabha (Lower House of the Indian Parliament) belonging to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He is married to actress Swaroop Sampat, who was crowned Miss India in 1979. He turns 66 this year. Happy Birthday, Paresh!



NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUI

Nawazuddin made us laugh our hearts out as Chand Nawab, the Pakistani journalist, in the Salman Khan starrer *Bajranghi Bhajjiaan*, in which he struggled to conclude his news report as people walking by kept on interrupting him.

With a BS degree in Chemistry, he worked as a chemist in Vadodara for a year, before being drawn into acting after watching a play, and got admission to the National School of Drama in New Delhi. After a long and hard struggle in Mumbai, he made his Bollywood debut in 1999 with a small role in Aamir Khan starrer, *Sarfarosh*. But success eluded him. He was often out of work, sharing a flat with four other people, sometimes unable to pay his rent. He was finally appreciated for his acting prowess, winning many awards and inundated with offers since 2012. In 2016, among other films, he will be seen with Shah Rukh Khan in *Raees*, Amitabh Bachchan in *Te3n*, and in the role of the title character in an upcoming crime thriller *Raman Raghav 2.0*, directed by Anurag Kashyap. He will be 42 on May 19, and we at BOLLYWOOD INSIDER wish him Happy Birthday!



A SUAVE SHOWMAN



As a child actor



Jab Jab Phool Khile



Aa Gale Lag Ja



Deewar

BY SHEETAL RODRIGUES

The enigmatic life of the dashing, flamboyant and debonair veteran Bollywood actor-filmmaker, who turned 78 on March 18, has unfolded in his official biography, *Shashi Kapoor - the Householder, the Star*, released earlier this month. Authored by film journalist Aseem Chhabra, it traces the affable star's foray into the world of cinema and his progressive theater trail.

The bright-eyed boy who made his screen debut as a child actor in a clutch of mythological roles—best remembered as a child actor in Raj Kapoor's *Aag* (1948) and *Awara* (1951)—catapulted to become one of the busiest actors in the 1970s, appearing in 116 Hindi films, including 61 films as the solo lead hero and 55 multi-star-cast.

Born as Balbir Raj Kapoor, the youngest of Prithviraj Kapoor's six children, success was not served to him on a silver platter. He continued acting on stage until 1956, both as actor and assistant stage manager for his father's Prithvi Theatre group.

It was on a tour to the erstwhile Calcutta that the young stage actor was smitten by Jennifer Kendall, the actress playing Miranda in *The Tempest*. After a courtship of nearly two years, the shy Kapoor married Jennifer in 1958, seeking help from older brother Shammi and his wife Geeta to break the news to their parents.

In a rare interview in 1995, the reigning star of the 1970s recalls, "When Prithvi Theatres closed down and Shakespeareana (founded by Jennifer's parents, Geoffrey Kendall and Laura Liddell) moved back to England, I was married and had my first child, Kunal. I had to do something to support my wife and child. My wife and I were used to living in a simple way but even the basic necessities were going to come at a cost. So, I overtly succumbed to films to make enough for a

decent, simple living. I was also conscious of the fact that I had married a foreign lady and should provide her with the bare necessities of life, which might be more expensive than those of the average Indian woman."

He was initially turned down by producers who were wary of pairing a "chocolate boy" with the reigning actresses of the time—Nargis, Meena Kumari, and Madhubala. After small roles in brother Raj Kapoor's films, he acted in B R Chopra's *Dharmputra*, which flopped. Roles in *Char Diwari* (with Nanda) and *Awara* (1951)—cancelled to become one of the busiest actors in the 1970s, appearing in 116 Hindi films, including 61 films as the solo lead hero and 55 multi-star-cast.

It was Nanda who placed her trust in the struggling actor—signing several films in a row. "I have always been grateful to Nanda for accepting a newcomer. That was the time when big female stars would not act with newcomers." Kapoor claims Nanda was his favourite heroine and one of his mentors, while Nanda stated in an interview that Shashi Kapoor was her favourite hero.

As if to vindicate Nanda's faith in him, every single one of their six releases turned super hits—*Mohabbat Isko Kahete Hain* (1965), *Jab Jab Phool Khile* (1965), *Neend Hamari Khwab Tumhare* (1966), *Juari* (1968), *Raja Saab* (1969) and *Rootha Na Karo* (1970). Kapoor also found on-screen companionship in Sharmila Tagore. The two shared a great chemistry in *Waqt* (1965), *Aamne Samne* (1967), *Suhana Safar* (1970), *Aa Gale Lag Jaa* (1973), *Paap Aur Punya* (1974), *Swati* (1986), and the critically acclaimed *New Delhi Times* (1985), which earned him a National Film Award for Best Actor in 1986. He also went on to do several films with Rakhee, who was a contrast in comparison to his debonair ways.

Shashi Kapoor's delayed but well-deserved success also witnessed a phase of brotherhood with Amitabh Bachchan in as many as 12 films. Blame it on his evergreen boyish appeal; although nearly seven years older to Bachchan, he played the younger sibling in most of their films.

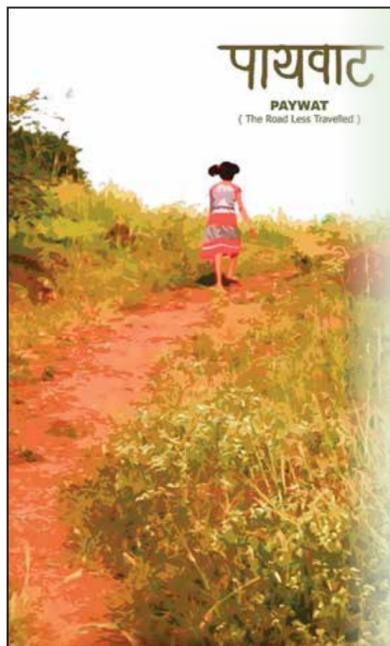
Kapoor and wife Jennifer established Prithvi theatre in 1978—now run by his daughter, Sanjana, who tried her luck in Bollywood but failed like her siblings Karan and Kunal. He lost his enthusiasm for the mediocre romantic comedies and forayed into English films through Ismail Merchant and James Ivory's Merchant-Ivory productions. He starred in international British and American films like *The Householder* (1963), *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965), *The Guru* (1969), *Bombay Talkie* (1970) and *Heat and Dust* (1982) with wife Jennifer Kendall—the film made it to the Cannes Film Festival.

In 1978, he set up his production house, Film Valas, which produced critically acclaimed films such as *Juno* (1978), *Kalyug* (1981), *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981), *Vijeta* (1982) and *Utsav* (1984).

Kendal and Kapoor also starred in a number of films together, particularly those produced by Merchant Ivory Productions. Their first joint starring roles were in *Bombay Talkie* (1970), one of the earlier films produced by Merchant Ivory. He felt devastated when his wife died of cancer in 1984.

In 2010, at the 55th Annual Filmfare Awards, Shashi Kapoor received the Filmfare Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2011, he was conferred Padma Bhushan by the government of India and in 2015 the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award.

Shashi Kapoor accepted very few roles as a character actor in films since 1987, and retired from the film industry by late 1990s, but his undying charm, generosity and humility have left a perpetual mark on Hindi cinema.



पायवाट

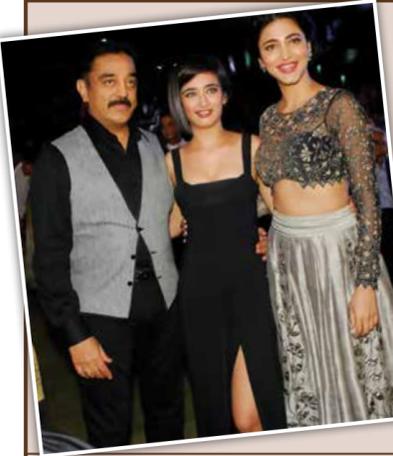
PAYWAT
(The Road Less Travelled)

Paywat's winning trail

BY SHEETAL RODRIGUES

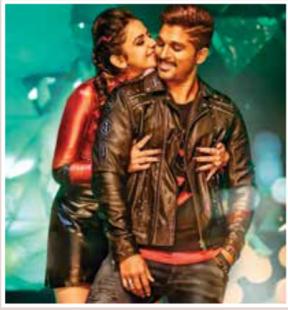
At tender, semi-autobiographic Marathi short film *Paywat* (The Road Less Travelled) pulled off a surprise with a National Film Award for Best Educational Film at the 63rd National Awards, becoming one of India's two entries to the 17th Ravenna International Short Film Festival, Italy, held between April 27 and 30. The film made it to the list of 68 short films from 1,800 submissions made by 27 countries. For Pune-based filmmaker Mithunchandra Chaudhari, 33, the recognition is his own "pathway" to fulfilling bigger dreams. "I had conceptualized the story in October, inspired by many children residing in India's remote villages. I hail from a small village called Patkul in Solapur and my sisters, cousins, and friends struggled to seek basic education. For girls, the journey to school is harder than boys. At times, sustenance becomes more important than the education," says Chaudhari, adding that he completed filming within three days in Jhendewadi village, near Diveghat in Maharashtra. The 15-minute silent film is the story of a 10-year-old daughter (of a laborer) who shoulders all domestic responsibilities, including tending to a bed-ridden grandmother and getting her younger brother ready for school. After finishing the chores, she gets ready for school. Without a decent bag, raincoat or shoes, she walks the winding hilly pathways to reach her faraway school. Yet, she smiles with a belief of leaping over the stumbling blocks.

Chaudhari says, "She knows that the school is her window to a better life. She can change her life only through education. The selection to the film festival in Italy came as a pleasant surprise to me as I was unsure if the jury would be able to identify with a story based in India's villages." Chaudhari has worked as the chief assistant director for other acclaimed Marathi films—*Fandry* and *Sairat*.

SABAASH NAIDU IS KAMAL HAASAN'S NEXT

Actor-filmmaker Kamal Haasan launched his upcoming trilingual tongue-in-cheek project titled *Sabaash Naidu* which revives Balram Naidu, one of his most loved characters from 2008 Tamil action-comedy *Dasavatham*. The film will also see Haasan and daughter Shruti sharing the screen for the first time as father-daughter. Younger daughter Akshara has joined the crew as an Assistant Director. Telugu comedian Brahmanandam, Ramya Krishnan and Saurabh Shukla will play sharp-witted characters in the film, which will go on floors in the second week of May and simultaneously be shot in Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi. A major portion will be filmed in the US, apart from India. Maestro Ilayaraja is the music composer.

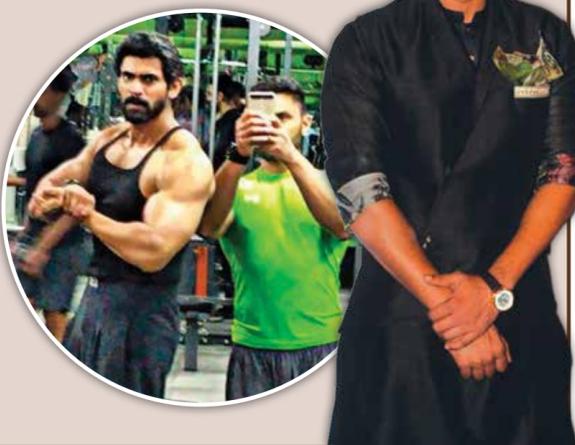


ALLU ARJUN IN RS 100 CRORE CLUB

Allu Arjun starrer Telugu action flick *Sarainodu* is inching towards the Rs 100 crore club after opening to mixed reviews. The film became Allu's highest opening, grossing Rs. 72 crore in its first week, worldwide. Directed by Boyapati Srinu, the film stars Rakul Preet Singh, Catherine Tresa, Aadi Pinisetty and Srikanth.

BHALLALA DEVA IS BULKING UP

Rana Daggubati aka Bhallala Deva from S. S. Rajamouli directed National Award Winner *Baahubali* is beefing up to play his part in the film's upcoming sequel. Rana had recently shed some weight to appear a lean naval officer for his film *Ghazi*. But for Bhallala Deva, Rana has begun a rigorous training session to get back his strapping look. The actor has shared pictures of his workouts, captioning them as "Built at steel. Bhallala Deva getting ready for battle." Rana explains that while fat can be gained by eating rich foods, gaining muscles is a "scientific process". He says losing weight is effortless than carving a physique. The actor says, "To lose weight for *Ghazi*, I just reduced my protein intake but to build up, it is hard to stick to the strict diet routine and vigorous training for months."



HUMA PAIRS WITH MAMMOOTTY

Malayalam film *White* starring megastar Mammooty will mark the Malayalam debut of Bollywood actress Huma Qureshi, who has displayed her acting prowess in *Badlapur* and *Gangs of Wasseypur*. In the trailer launched by EROS, Mammooty sports a stylish look as a millionaire for the film, which has been extensively shot in Europe. While the plot is kept under wraps, the trailer indicates that Huma plays the superstar's love interest. This is Mammooty's second release in 2016 after *Puthiya Niyaman*.

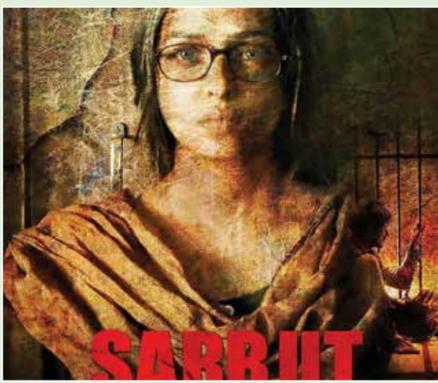


WOMEN FINDING THEIR REIGN

Formidable women protagonists may have delivered infrequent Bollywood blockbusters, but audiences are gradually warming up to scripts that add intelligence to glamor dolls

BY SHEETAL RODRIGUES

Traditionally, Bollywood scripts seldom trusted women to carry off a film to the winning post, reducing them to glam dolls in hero-centric films. Not many films featuring strong female protagonists are imprinted onto the cinematic memory of viewers. Producers are known to bank on male stars for box-office success. Just about half a century ago, Nargis played Radha, a poor village woman fighting against odds to raise her two sons in *Mother India* while Meena Kumari's Sahibjain embodied misfortune in *Pakeezah*. Both characters continue to be etched in public memory even as most recent women-oriented films have bitten the dust. It was in 2012 that women-centric films took centerstage at the box-office with Kareena Kapoor's *Heroine*, Rani Mukherjee's *Aiyyaa*, Sridevi's comeback in *English Vinglish*, and Vidya Balan's *Kahaani*. The films had female-centric scripts without any familiar male stars but earned much public praise and critical acclaim. The year 2014 saw Rani return as *Mardaani*, Kangana Ranaut in *Queen* and Priyanka Chopra in *Mary Kom*.



But despite claims of being progressive, Bollywood has a dismaying disparity in remuneration of male and female stars. Recently, Sonam Kapoor expressed her views on the disparity of pay towards actresses after her solo blockbuster performance in *Neerja* grossed over Rs 74 crores. She said "It's not about what the industry is paying you. It is about whether the audience wants to see the film or not. If my film is going to open at Rs. 6 crores, is it not okay for the producer to pay me that money."

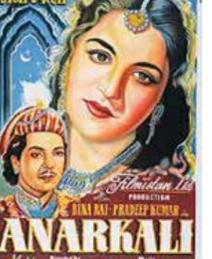
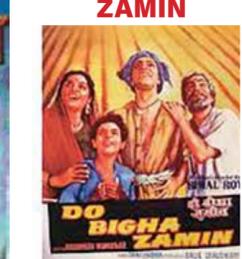
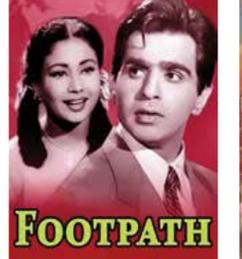


Bollywood opening up to girl-power at the box-office also brings along the challenge of generating an original narrative for its female protagonists. Amir Khan's *Dangal* releasing later this year has the actor essaying wrestler Mahavir Phogat. Amir recently revealed that the story is on 'women's empowerment', showing the emotional journey of a father and his two daughters, played by newcomers Fatima Sana Shaikh and Sanya Malhotra, whom he desires to turn into wrestling champions. Phogat's daughter Geeta is India's first female wrestler to win a gold medal at the Commonwealth Games.

Then, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan plays Dalbir Kaur, the protagonist in *Sarbjit* that releases in May while Randeep Hooda gets the titular male lead. Next, Aishwarya will be seen in Karan Johar's *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil* as the love-interest of a much-younger man, played by Ranbir Kapoor. Actress-producer Anushka Sharma feels films should not be differentiated on the basis of gender. She opted for a film with a strong message about honor killing and respect for women as she went behind the camera as a producer last year with *NH10*. "I don't think that a film should be known as 'male-centric' or 'female-centric', but it should be known for the story. That would be really nice and viable too. I think *NH10* is not a gender-centric film. It's the story that will appeal to the audience," Anushka told IANS.

Several women-centric films have enjoyed commercial success in the recent past. But more than the film, it is the budget that fails.

1953 Movies: Worth a Watch

<h3>ANARKALI</h3>  <p>This film directed by Nandlal Jaswantlal was based on the legend of the Mughal emperor Jahangir's revolt against his father Shahenshah Jalaluddin Akbar over his love for a slave girl <i>Anarkali</i> that shook the foundations of Akbar's empire. It was the top-grossing film of the year and one of the biggest in the decade. Starring Bina Rai as Nadira alias Anarkali, Pradeep Kumar as Jahangir alias Salim and Mubarak as Akbar.</p>	<h3>LADKI</h3>  <p>This comedy starring Vyjayanthimala, Kishore Kumar, Bharat Bhushan and Anjali Devi is the story of a feminist who believes in equal treatment of women. Kishore Kumar brought the film to life with his zany comedy. The film was much appreciated for its aesthetically pleasing set in days when film technology was fairly primitive. The film directed by M V Raman was among the top grossing films that year.</p>	<h3>DO BIGHA ZAMIN</h3>  <p>Directed by Bengali film director Bimal Roy and starring Balraj Sahni and Nirupa Roy, the film was praised for its socialist theme. Inspired by Italian neo-realistic film, Vittorio De Sica's <i>Bicycle Thieves</i>, it was an important trendsetter in the early Indian parallel cinema. The film merged art and commercial cinema, paving the way for future films. It was the first Indian film to win the International prize at the Cannes Film Festival.</p>	<h3>PARINEETA</h3>  <p>Starring Ashok Kumar and Meena Kumari, the film was based on Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay's 1914 Bengali novel, <i>Parineeta</i>. This version of the film is considered by many to be the most faithful adaptation of the novel, particularly due to Meena Kumari's interpretation of the role of Lalita. Director Bimal Roy won the Filmfare Best Director Award in 1954 while Meena Kumari bagged the Filmfare Best Actress Award for the film.</p>	<h3>FOOTPATH</h3>  <p>Written and directed by Zia Sarhadi, the film stars Dilip Kumar, Meena Kumari, and Anwar Hussain. The music of the film by Timir Baran and Khayyam tops the charts of yesteryear melodies. This left-leaning film is one of Dilip Kumar's most nuanced performances. The film that features in Avijit Ghosh's book, <i>40 Retakes: Bollywood Classics You May Have Missed</i>.</p>	<h3>JHAMELA</h3>  <p>A comedy thriller film produced and directed by Bhagwan, the film was a repeat formula earlier used in his commercially all-time hit film <i>Albela</i> (1951). Bhagwan tried to recreate the magic of <i>Albela</i> with Geeta Bali in the lead role and music composed by C Ramachandra. The film was termed a "semi-hit" at the box-office. One of the popular songs was <i>Dekho Ji Dekho Mera Dil Le Ke</i> sung by Lata Mangeshkar.</p>
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The Jungle Book gets a desi touch



is fun, eerie and thrilling. The film is based on Rudyard Kipling's timeless stories, purportedly inspired from the Kanha sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh. Favreau chose an Indian, Neel Sethi, to play Mowgli.

The Hindi version comes alive with voice-overs from Bollywood stars like Priyanka Chopra, Irrfan Khan, Nana Patekar, Shefali Shah and Om Puri for the principal characters while Jasleen Singh Chadda dubs as Mowgli. When Priyanka Chopra coos "Akele Ho Yahaan?" as Kaa, she certainly sounds far more dramatic than the underplayed Scarlett Johansson in English, who smoothly murmurs, "I know what you are." Priyanka, whose "Vishwas karo mera" is scarily hypnotic, says, "Mowgli was one of my favourite characters and had such an impact on me. The layers in Kaa was not just about being sultry or sexy, but about being this sugary-sweet trap. I am glad to be a part of history."

Irrfan has breathed life into Baloo like a true-blue Punjabi. The film's Hindi dialogue writer, Mayur Puri, says that it was intentional. "There is a lot of logic to the character adaptation. Baloo loves honey. So like any Punjabi who is a foodie and loves a good life, Baloo talks and behaves like one. The Hindi version is a trans creation of emotions, not a direct translation." Irrfan, who was apprehensive about

playing a Punjabi for the first time, says, "It was Mayur who said I should just tap into my intrinsic laid back personality and bring my Delhi-experience to the role."

Nana Patekar has lent his menacing voice to the character of Shere Khan in the *Jungle Book*. He also dubbed for the character in the TV series—roars to the scared wolves, "Ab hue kaan savdhaan." Shefali Shah lends her voice to mother wolf Raksha and veteran actor Om Puri to Bagheera, the Black Panther. Dubbing director Mona Shetty says, "We wanted to bring a fresh experience and perspective that matches the visual brilliance of the film. I think the liberties we took have paid off. It is challenging for any actor to stay within parameters already created on screen. But the Indian actors made it their own with their attitude." The iconic song, "Jungle Jungle Baat Chali Hai" has been recreated by the original composers Gulzar and Vishal Bhardwaj. "In 1992 National Film Development Corporation was making the TV version of *Jungle Book*. Someone else was supposed to do the song but backed out at the last moment. Gulzar Saab called me. It became a big success," said Vishal Bhardwaj. Music composer Vishal Dadlani has lent his voice for 'Bare Necessities', a version of *Yeh Zarooratein*, penned by Puri.

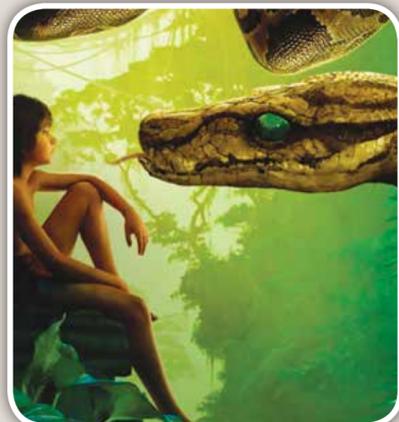
BY AARTI KAPUR SINGH

Disney's live-action adventure *The Jungle Book*, directed by Jon Favreau, released in India a week before it released in the US in April. This latest version, unlike its animated 1967 avatar, combines live action, animation and special effects to create a film that

Disney in a sequel overdrive

Disney studio has confirmed production of sequels to *The Jungle Book* and *Maleficent*. It is also planning to produce spin-offs of *Cruella* and *101 Dalmatians*. Actress Angelina Jolie is set to return for *Maleficent* sequel along with screenwriter Linda Woolverton. Reports have hinted that *The Jungle Book* director Jon Favreau and writer Justin Marks will make another trip into the wild.

Disney is also going ahead with Ava DuVernay's adaptation of Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, *The Nutcracker* and *Four Realms* with director Lasse Hallstrom (of *My Life as a Dog* fame) and writer Ashleigh Powell. In addition, the company is also planning a sequel to *Mary Poppins* with actress Emily Blunt and Hamilton creator Lin Manuel-Miranda and director Rob Marshall (of *Chicago*). While *The Jungle Book* has been a critical and commercial success, the studio has also reaped big profits with *Cinderella*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Maleficent*. The studio has announced a few release dates, but not specified which of the productions it was reserved for.



Priyanka Chopra slams Donald Trump

Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra who plays FBI agent Alex Parrish in American TV series on fighting terror, *Quantico*, has slammed Republican Presidential front-runner Donald Trump's call to ban Muslim immigrants from the US. Priyanka shared her views about the battle against extremism, which has come up repeatedly in the 2016 presidential race, at the TIME 100 gala.

Priyanka's name has been featured in *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the world alongside Oscar-winning actor Leonardo DiCaprio, Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg, singer Nicki Minaj and Trump. Priyanka said, "I just think you can't put a ban on anyone. Generalizing a type of people is really primitive. The fight against terrorism has grown so complex that you can't put a face on it anymore."

Priyanka has also bagged a role in *Baywatch* alongside Hollywood A-listers Dwayne Johnson and Zac Efron.



Will Ferrell to play Ronald Reagan in film

Having already famously portrayed former President George W. Bush in various comedy sketches, actor Will Ferrell is now all set to essay the character of former US President Ronald Reagan. Sources say Ferrell is attached to star as the 40th US President in Reagan. Penned by Mike Rosolio, the story begins at the start of the ex-president's second term when he falls into dementia and an ambitious intern is tasked with convincing the commander-in-chief that he is an actor playing the President in a movie. The script was so popular following its announcement on the Black List—an annual catalog of the top unproduced scripts in Hollywood—that a live read was done in March, starring actors Lena Dunham and John Cho. Ferrell will co-produce the film along with production banner Gary Sanchez Productions. The package, currently, is without a director but will soon be shopped to studios. Ferrell is no stranger to political humor having portrayed former President Bush several times over the years on Saturday Night Live. He would eventually take the impression to Broadway in the play *You're Welcome America*. He also starred in the political comedy *The Campaign* opposite Zach Galifianakis.



Baaghi: A Rebel for Love

Director: Sabbir Khan

Cast: Tiger Shroff, Shraddha Kapoor and Sudheer Babu

Rating: ★★★★★

Baaghi is the remake of the 2004 Prabhas-starrer Telugu film, *Varsham* (Rain), but with an addition of *kalaripayattu*—the traditional martial art of Kerala. The story of the film is a typical 1990s love story, set in the pre-social media years—without a sign of phones or technology—as the hero-heroine keep bumping into one another by chance. And, true to films of the era, it is the rain that plays cupid.

Baaghi is the story of Ronnie (Tiger Shroff), a friendly rebel, who is sent to a Kalar in Kerala to refine his moves in mix martial arts under Guruji (Grandmaster Shifuji Shaurya Bharadwaj). Ronnie meets Siya (Shraddha Kapoor) on his way to Kerala. Numerous predictable pick-up lines and rain sequences later, the two deeply fall in love. The couple reach Kerala, only to run into Guruji's son, Raghav (Sudheer Babu), who is obsessed with the idea of marrying Siya. After creating a misunderstanding between the love birds, Raghav abducts Siya and murders his disapproving father. When the news reaches Ronnie, hell breaks loose.

The tastefully filmed action sequences unfold, bringing to fore Tiger's praiseworthy natural flair for combats. A few secondary characters slow down the pace of the narrative with their dreary gags. Tiger hacks away at the bad guys but wallows in emotive scenes. When she is not dancing in the rain, Shraddha smiles her way through the film.

The first half is set in picturesque Kerala, and the second in the gritty streets of Bangkok. The story of the film is simple and caters to masses. The film's screenplay, loosely based on Hollywood flick *The Raid Redemption*, has its strong moments.

Despite good direction, the film suffers from a weak script. It lacks good dialogues and situational drama in this saga. With Tiger's action prowess, the film makes for a one-time watch.



FAN

A dynamic duel of deception

Director: Maneesh Sharma;

Cast: Shah Rukh Khan, Sayani Gupta, Deepika Amin & Yogendra Tikoo;

Rating: ★★★★★

FAN is Shah Rukh Khan's reply to detractors counting his downfalls. Breaking out of inadequate scripts and average direction in recent times, FAN is a recollection of SRK's creepy, gray characters that earned him the tag of Bollywood's *Baadshah*. Although not flawless, the script makes for a thrilling watch with SRK's watertight grip on both his characters.

The narrative is as complex as the relationship between the two characters, superstar Aryan Khanna and his die-hard fan Gaurav Chanana—both essayed by Shah Rukh Khan. But in many ways, the film is SRK's internal journey of meeting himself through a fan. The story derives much of its narrative from SRK's own life for Aryan, who starts out small but is hungry for success. His determination makes him one of the biggest brands of cinema.

West Delhi's Inder Vihar-based cyber café owner, Gaurav Chanana, wins the 'best actor' trophy in a local acting competition and finds a new goal—to trace his idol Aryan's struggling days in Mumbai and finally show off his trophy to the actor. He relives Aryan's journey and finally reaches the actor's house to catch a glimpse of his idol. He is one in a swarm of bees. Aryan's smugness in their eventual face-to-face meeting leaves him embittered. From the cheerful to creepy, Gaurav then takes the viewers on a roller coaster ride across a sinister plot of retaliation. SRK gets precious support from co-actors like Sayani Gupta, Deepika Amin and Yogendra Tikoo whose characters are cleverly combined into the forebodingly captivating duel between the debonair superstar and his distraught deceitful dead ringer.

It's SRK vs SRK with Shah Rukh dexterously performing his part of the benevolent icon with a hint of narcissism and temper tantrums and as the believable antithesis, Gaurav—a result of heavy prosthetics and SRK's knack for complete character transformation.

Writer Habib Faisal keeps the drama on a tight leash and Director Maneesh Sharma gives SRK the space for self-gratification, playing out his celebrated characters from *Darr*, *Baazigar*, and *Anjaam*. The film has its moments of illogicality but keeps the adrenaline pumping for its entire runtime. His first movie without a song, SRK owns the film from the word go. SRK fan or not, it is a must-watch!

COLLECTIONS

Baaghi springs Box-office surprise

Tiger Shroff and Shraddha Kapoor's April 29 release, *Baaghi* has become the third highest opener of the year after Shah Rukh Khan's *Fan* (Rs 19.20 crores) and Akshay Kumar's *Airlift* (Rs 12.35 crores). The film earned Rs 23.07 crores in the first two days of its release. In fact, the film has fared much better than other action films released this year—*Rocky Handsome* (total Rs 22.85 crores) and *Jai Gangaajal* (total Rs 30.15 crores). *Baaghi* tared well through the second weekend, taking its total



collections to 64.46 crores at the domestic box office and a whopping 101.25 crores at the worldwide box office. At the end of two weeks, Shah Rukh Khan's *Fan* managed to become the second highest Bollywood grosser of 2016 at Rs. 84.10 crores despite a decline in the second-week collections. It has also become the year's highest grosser at the overseas box office with Rs 64.96 crores (\$ 9.780 million). The magic of Hollywood production *The Jungle Book* is undefeated in its fifth week with a total collection of Rs 170.95 crores in India, breaking the Rs 155 crores record of Salman Khan's *Dabangg 2*.

APRIL WINNERS

- The Jungle Book**
Rs: 170.95 crores
- Fan**
Rs 84.10 crores
- Baaghi**
Rs 64.46 crores

Nil Battey Sannata

A mother's aching-sweet hope

Director: Ashwini Iyer Tiwari

Cast: Swara Bhaskar, Ratna Pathak Shah, Pankaj Tripathi, Ria Shukla

Rating: ★★★★★

An earnestly simple and soul-stirring film that conveys its message without much ado, director Ashwini Iyer Tiwari's debut feature *Nil Battey Sannata*, has upped the standard of inspirational films.

Devoid of the usual Bollywood charade, Swara Bhaskar essays the uneducated, needy maid, Chanda, who dreams of educating her 15-year-old daughter, Apeksha (Ria Shukla), who cannot grasp Mathematics and constantly runs away from school. Chanda feels perturbed that Apeksha's defense mechanism is her cynical mindset that a maid's daughter can only aspire to be a maid. She almost concedes defeat to the teenager when her compassionate employer—brilliantly essayed by veteran Ratna Pathak Shah—conceives an idea to shore up Chanda's hope.

With some humorously poignant scenes, Chanda enrolls as a student at her daughter's school—much to the disbelief of the headmaster, essayed by the talented Pankaj Tripathi. Is Chanda able to make Apeksha dreams of a better life?

Swara avows her acting skills, sinking deep into her character that is deprived but potent—a considerable variation from her modern characters earlier. *Nil Battey Sannata* goes much deeper than a tender mother-daughter relationship. It has an impressive moral on how a parent's inadequacies cannot come in the way of the child's future.



Cricket keeps Bollywood

hooked

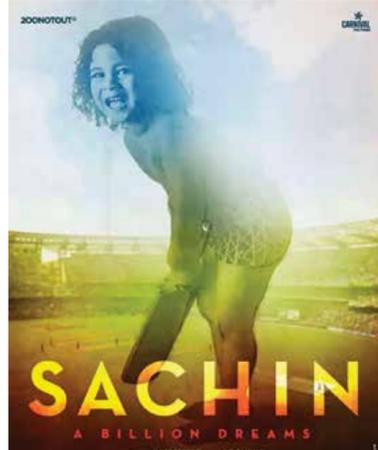
BY SHEETAL RODRIGUES

In recent times, Bollywood has won big with biopics of sportspersons. After *Paan Singh Tomar*, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* and *Mary Kom*, now cricket fans have a treat awaiting with films on three of India's biggest names in the game. Three films are set to trace the journeys of Mohammed Azharuddin, Sachin Tendulkar and Mahendra Singh Dhoni on the big screen—with success, downfalls and unheard struggles of the star players.

B-town is raving about the trailer of *Azhar*—based on the scandalous life of former Indian cricket captain, Mohammed Azharuddin—played by Emraan Hashmi and starring Prachi Desai as Naureen (his first wife) and Nargis Fakhri as actress Sangeeta Bijlani, who Azhar married later. The film releases on May 13.

Master Blaster Sachin Tendulkar announced his own biopic in April, after a nudge from Shah Rukh Khan on Twitter. Sachin released a teaser of his biopic, *Sachin: A Billion Dreams*, directed by James Erskine and produced by Ravi Bhagchandka. The film marks the acting debut for Sachin while son Arjun plays a younger Tendulkar in the story. Among the fans left stunned by the teaser of Sachin's film is cricketer Virat Kohli. At a recent event, Virat revealed, "I have idolised Sachin from the beginning. What has happened in his career will be portrayed in that film. I am really looking forward to it. There are memories connected to it, since childhood."

Apart from this, cricket fans have a treat from *Dhoni* with MS Dhoni—The Untold Story, played



by Sushant Singh Rajput. The teaser of the film was out during the World T20 championship to a loud cheer from fans. The film is directed by Neeraj Pandey and bankrolled by Rheti Sports Management Private Limited, which manages the commercial interests of Dhoni.



Emraan Hashmi plays Mohammed Azharuddin in *Azhar*

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