

ALL NEW

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**ALIA
BHATT**
SHOWS HER
SMARTS

**KAREENA
KAPOOR KHAN**
DOING IT HER
WAY

**JANHVI
KAPOOR**
UNPLUGGED

TWO'S COMPANY

APARSHAKTI KHURANA
AND KHUSHALII KUMAR GET
JIGGY WITH IT

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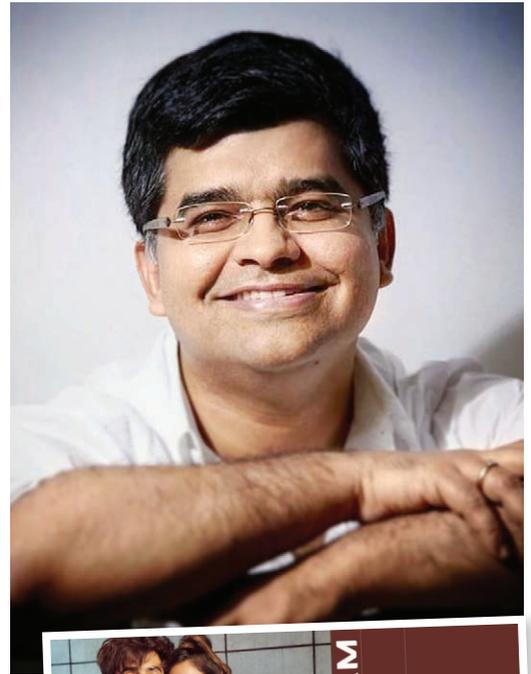
Letter from the Editor

Sibling revelry

Aparshakti Khurana is the younger brother of Ayushmaan Khurana. It's rare indeed to find equally talented siblings. Karisma Kapoor and Kareena Kapoor Khan are exceptions for sure. And so are the Khurana brothers. Both are rank outsiders who are making a name for themselves as dependable actors. While Ayushmann was launched as a leading man in John Abraham's production *Vicky Donor* (2012), Aparshakti made his debut in a supporting role in the film *Dangal* (2016). He played Aamir Khan's nephew in the film and also narrated it. It was a small but important role, and Aparshakti immediately made his presence felt with it. The film was hugely successful both in India and abroad. He subsequently played supporting roles in several other commercially successful films such as *Badrinath Ki Dulhania* (2017), *Stree* (2018), *Luka Chuppi* (2019) and *Pati Patni Aur Woh* (2019) and soon got a fan base going. In 2021, he acted in *Helmet*, his first film as a solo lead. The film offered a hilarious take on safe sex and condom usage. Released on OTT during the COVID period, the film went largely unnoticed. While his earlier efforts have largely been comedic, he's going for a change with *Dhokha: Round D Corner*, an out-and-out thriller. Aparshakti is no stranger to change. He could have been a cricketer as he was the captain of the under-19 team of Haryana at one point. The career change from sports to film has done him good, and he's looking forward now to being counted as a dramatic actor.

Khushalii Kumar, the younger sister of T-Series head honcho Bhushan Kumar, is making her big screen debut with *Dhokha: Round D Corner*. Khushalii studied fashion design at a prestigious institute and went on to make a name for herself in the fashion field. She's held fashion shows abroad, and global celebrities like Shakira and Justin Bieber have worn her outfits. She's also appeared in numerous music videos and has amassed a fan following because of that. She could have chosen a safe subject like a romantic comedy as her debut vehicle, but instead has taken a gamble by choosing a dramatic thriller as her first film. She knows that, given her legacy, she has much to prove. She's confident that the film will showcase her best version to the audience.

Both Aparshakti Khurana and Khushalii Kumar grace our cover this month. Turn the pages to find out more about the fresh on-screen couple. Savour their cool photos and their candid confessions...



Jitesh Pillai

For more on tinseltown's news and updates
find me on Twitter @jiteshpillai

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HAIR: IRFAN (HAKIM AALIM) Suit: HP Su Misura | Watch: Rolex | Shoes: Gucci
FOR KHUSHALII KUMAR: STYLIST: ESHA L AMIN | MAKE-UP: ARUNA KUMAR SAHU
HAIR: SUNITA PAL | Red gown: Tarik Ediz Earrings: Misho | Hand Stacks: Outhouse Coloured Heels: Christian Louboutin

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a bird's-eye view of show town's happenings

masala fix



TWO GOOD!

Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor are expecting their first child, and they are overjoyed. We are as well. Alia Bhatt attended an event in Hyderabad to promote *Brahmastra*, which stars the newlywed couple, wearing a dress with a 'Baby on Board' sign on the back. How adorable is that? We love how much the hottest couple in town is in love with their pregnancy. Alia Bhatt is proud of her baby bump and has been flaunting it with confidence. She even turned around so that the audience could see the artwork. We adore her and Ranbir and wish them a happy pregnancy.

John Abraham's first look in *Pathaan* goes viral [pg 08](#)

Karan Singh Grover and Bipasha Basu are pregnant [pg 10](#)

PHOTOGRAPH: YOGEN SHAH

Rumours & More

AAMIR KHAN TO TAKE A BREAK AFTER LAAL SINGH CHADDHA



Aamir Khan has been making headlines for a myriad of reasons following the release of his latest film, *Laal Singh Chaddha*. The **Advait Chandan** directorial, which also featured **Kareena Kapoor Khan, Mona Singh**, opened to rave reviews but underperformed at the box office. As per reports, Aamir Khan will soon jet off to the US for a much-deserved break of two months. After taking time off, he will return for the production of his next film. In terms of his next project, it has been reported that the actor will star in a sports film which will be directed by **RS Prasanna**, who is best known for his work on *Shubh Mangal Saavdhan*. While an official announcement is yet to be made, the film might be the Indian adaptation of the Spanish sports drama *Campeones* (2018).



JOHN ABRAHAM'S FIRST LOOK FROM PATHAAN HAS FANS ASKING FOR MORE

THE FIRST LOOK OF **JOHN ABRAHAM** IN *PATHAAN* WAS RELEASED RECENTLY, AND IT BROKE THE INTERNET. **SIDDHARTH ANAND**, THE DIRECTOR, SAID IN A STATEMENT, "EVERY ANNOUNCEMENT OF *PATHAAN* IS LIKE REVEALING A PIECE OF AN EPIC PUZZLE IN FRONT OF THE CURIOUS EYES OF THE FANS AND AUDIENCES, LEADING RIGHT UP TO OUR RELEASE DAY." WE ASPIRE FOR EVERY ASSET OF *PATHAAN* TO BE A BIG TALKING POINT, MAINLY BECAUSE, WE FORTUNATELY, HAVE THE CONTENT TO CREATE THAT BUZZ," HE ADDED.

RYAN REYNOLDS REVEALS HE WOULD LIKE TO SLIDE INTO RANVEER SINGH'S DMS

Ryan Reynolds has talked about his love for Bollywood films before, and now, the *Deadpool* star has revealed which Indian celebrity's DMs he'd like to slide into. And it's none other than **Ranveer Singh**. In an interview with a leading news portal, Ryan Reynolds shared that he'd like to slide into Ranveer Singh's DMs. His relatable response has netizens nodding in agreement. To note, Ranveer voiced *Deadpool* in the 2018 film *Deadpool 2*'s Hindi dubbed version. Ryan Reynolds was last seen in *The Adam Project* alongside **Mark Ruffalo**. The actor is all set to release his docu-series *Welcome to Wrexham*, which is about his football club, Wrexham AFC. Meanwhile, Ranveer Singh, who was last seen in *Jayeshbhai Jordaar*, is gearing up for the release of **Karan Johar's** *Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani* alongside **Alia Bhatt**.



Rajnikanth starts shooting for Jailer

Rajnikanth will once again be returning to the silver screen with his upcoming film *Jailer*. The megastar started shooting for the movie recently. *Jailer* (aka *Thalaivar 169*), directed by **Nelson Dilipkumar**, also stars **Ramya Krishnan**. The makers of the movie have released the first look of the movie, which shows the actor sporting an intense look. Other than Rajnikanth and Ramya Krishnan, sandalwood star **Shiva Rajkumar** will also be seen essaying a pivotal role in the movie. He is reported to be the antagonist in the movie. **Aishwarya Rai Bachchan** is also reported to play one of the leading ladies in the movie. The movie is scheduled to be released in theatres in mid-2023.



KATRINA KAIF SPEAKS ABOUT HER HUSH-HUSH WEDDING WITH VICKY KAUSHAL

Katrina Kaif has opened up about why her wedding with **Vicky Kaushal** was an intimate, low-key affair. They tied the knot in December 2021, at Fort Six Senses, Banwara. Recently, the couple was spotted attending the Filmfare Awards. Katrina stated the real reason behind their hush-hush wedding and said, "I think more than trying to keep it private, we were restricted by, unfortunately, COVID-19. You know, my family has been personally affected by COVID-19, and it was something that you had to take seriously. "Katrina further added, "I think this year it's been a lot better, but it was something that we wanted to really be cautious of, but the wedding was beautiful. I think we are both very happy."



SALMAN KHAN REVEALS HIS LOOK FROM KISI KA BHAII KISI KI JAAN

Salman Khan completed 34 years as an actor in the Hindi film industry on August 26. It was on this day in 1988 that his debut film was released. To mark the occasion, Salman shared a rare social media post, thanking fans for sticking by him all these years. And as a bonus, the actor revealed the title of his upcoming film, *Kisi Ka Bhai.. Kisi Ki Jaan*. Taking to social media, Salman shared a short video. The video opens with a note from Salman to fans and colleagues. "34 years ago was now and 34 years later is also now. My life's journey began from nowhere, made up of two words: now and here. Thank you for being with me then, and thank you for being with me now. Really appreciate it," the note reads. The video then gives a glimpse of Salman's look from the film, complete with long, flowing hair and a beard.

DILJIT DOSANJH IMPRESSES IN THE JOGI TRAILER

THE TRAILER OF **ALI ABBAS ZAFAR'S** UPCOMING FILM *JOGI* WAS LAUNCHED RECENTLY. THE FILM, SET AMID THE 1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS, STARS **DILJIT DOSANJH** IN THE TITLE ROLE ALONG WITH **MOHAMMED ZEESHAN AYYUB**, **KUMUD MISHRA**, AND **HITEN TEJWANI**. THE TRAILER SHOWS THE HARROWING JOURNEY OF DILJIT'S JOGI WHO MUST MAKE SURE HE CAN GET HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS OUT OF DELHI AND AWAY FROM THE RIOTERS AS THE CLOCK IS TICKING. THE FILM'S SYNOPSIS DESCRIBES IT AS A "STORY THAT CELEBRATES FRIENDSHIP, COURAGE, AND HOPE."



Throwback to when Alia Bhatt spoke about winning the Oscar

Alia Bhatt has been on a roll this year, and there's no denying that. Both on the personal and professional front, she has been tasting success and happiness in equal measures. News of her dream wedding to **Ranbir Kapoor** on April 14 and then of her first pregnancy broke the internet. Speaking of marriage, there was once an instance where Alia Bhatt expressed how she dreams of being at the Oscars and giving a winning speech the way most girls often dream of their big day being their wedding day. In a conversation with a leading entertainment portal, she mentioned, "I only think about that one day when I am standing in front of people, receiving an Oscar. What marriage is for most girls, an Oscar is for me." She concluded by saying that this is her one big dream and she has nothing against what marriage means and the importance of it, but for her, this is the one big dream she pursues.



VICKY KAUSHAL, SANYA MALHOTRA AND FATIMA SANA SHAIKH BEGIN FILMING FOR SAM BAHADUR



Vicky Kaushal's next is Meghna Gulzar's highly anticipated film, *Sam Bahadur*. The film will see *Sardar Udham* star as **Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw**. The actor has shared a video of the table read and preparation as filming begins. It also offers a behind-the-scenes look at his on-screen transformation. Filming for *Sam Bahadur*, which also features **Sanya Malhotra** and **Fatima Sana Shaikh**, is officially underway. In a new video, the cast and crew can be seen reading the script. Vicky Kaushal shared the video on his social media handle. He captioned the post, "Reading together, a story we are honoured to tell. Of a Soldier and a Gentleman. The video offers a look at Vicky Kaushal donning the uniform. We also see him alongside Sanya Malhotra, who plays his wife, Silloo. Meanwhile, Fatima Sana Shaikh plays Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

KARAN SINGH GROVER AND BIPASHA BASU ANNOUNCE THEIR PREGNANCY

Bipasha Basu took to Instagram to announce her pregnancy with her husband, **Karan Singh Grover**. Sharing the post, Bipasha and Karan wrote, "A new time, a new phase, a new light adds another unique shade to our prism of life. Making us a little more whole than we used to be. We began this life individually and then we met each other and from then we were two. Too much love for only two, seemed a little unfair for us to see... so soon, we who once were two will now become three..." The couple got married back in 2016 and are expecting their first child together.



KARTIK AARYAN SHARES THE FIRST LOOK OF SATYAPREM KI KATHA



Recently, **Kartik Aaryan** shared a post wishing **Kiara Advani** on her birthday. He took fans by surprise through the post, which also revealed the title and first look of his next film, *SatyaPrem Ki Katha*, which sees him sharing screen space with Kiara. The film was previously titled *Satyanarayan Ki Katha* but has now been changed to *SatyaPrem Ki Katha* following backlash. The photo shows the two embracing each other with their eyes closed. Kartik captioned the post, "Happy Birthday Katha!! Tumhaara SatyaPrem #SatyapremKiKatha @kiaraaliadvani". *SatyaPrem Ki Katha* is directed by **Sameer Vidwans**.



KARTIK AARYAN DREAMS OF OWNING A PRIVATE JET

KARTIK AARYAN SAYS HE STILL TRAVELS IN THE ECONOMY SECTION DESPITE BECOMING A SUPERSTAR AND HASN'T STOPPED DREAMING BIG. "I HAD A DREAM CAR AND WANTED A LAMBORGHINI, AND I GOT IT ALSO. I WANTED TO BECOME AN ACTOR AND THAT GOT FULFILLED. AND THE DREAMS ARE GETTING BIGGER. PRIVATE JET *BHI AANA CHAHIYE* (I WANT TO OWN A PRIVATE JET AS WELL)." KARTIK WILL BE SEEN NEXT IN *SHEHZADA*, THE OFFICIAL HINDI REMAKE OF THE 2020 TELUGU FILM *ALA VAIKUNTHAPURRAMULOO*, WHERE HE CO-STAR WITH KRITI SANON, THE FILM IS SET FOR A FEBRUARY 10, 2023 RELEASE.

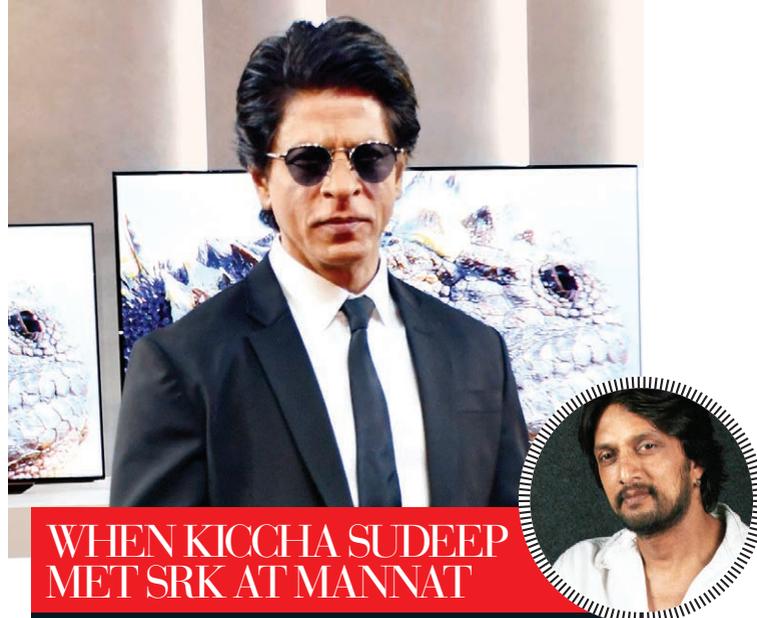
Throwback to when Hrithik Roshan talked about his dad Rakesh Roshan getting shot

Filmmaker **Rakesh Roshan** was shot in 2000 in Mumbai. Rakesh recovered in a few weeks, but the incident left the industry in shock. In 2001, **Hrithik Roshan** talked about the incident during an award show and was left in tears. While recalling the incident, Hrithik said, "As you all know, in the past few weeks my family has been through a lot. We have witnessed joy, happiness, success, fear, and sadness over the last few days. My father, who believes in doing good work, was recently attacked by unknown assailants." He added, "On that day, I just couldn't help but feel I was losing faith in hard work and goodness in the world. Basically, nothing made sense and I wanted to quit even before things began for me. But something changed all that. Something changed what I thought. On that day in the hospital when you came and I saw your faces, in your own special way, you made me feel that I was not alone, that I'd never be alone."



SHEHNAAZ GILL ANNOUNCES HER FILM WITH JOHN ABRAHAM

SHEHNAAZ GILL HAS ANNOUNCED HER SECOND BOLLYWOOD FILM, *100%*, AND SHARED THE FIRST POSTER OF THE UPCOMING MOVIE RECENTLY. TAKING TO INSTAGRAM, SHEHNAAZ POSTED A VIDEO AND REVEALED THAT THE FILM WILL BE RELEASED IN THEATRES NEXT YEAR. APART FROM SHEHNAAZ, THE FILM WILL ALSO FEATURE **JOHN ABRAHAM**, **RITEISH DESHMUKH**, AND **NORA FATEHI**. THE WORDS IN THE TEASER READ, "20% COMEDY, 20% ROMANCE, 20% MUSIC, 20% CONFUSION, 20% ACTION, TOGETHER WE'RE 100%." IT ALSO READ, "A FILM ABOUT LOVE, A FILM ABOUT MARRIAGE, A FILM ABOUT FAMILY, AND SPIES." THE FILM IS A COMEDY AND IS HELMED BY **SAJID KHAN**. IT WILL BE RELEASED DURING DIWALI IN 2023. THIS WILL MARK HIS RETURN TO FILMMAKING AFTER THE METOO ACCUSATIONS OF 2018.



WHEN KICCHA SUDEEP MET SRK AT MANNAT

Kiccha Sudeep is a pan-Indian star today, but there was a time when the Kannada star wasn't that well known across India. After the release of Ram Gopal Verma's *Rann*, he was reportedly invited to Mannat by **Shah Rukh Khan**, where the duo engaged in an insightful conversation. According to another report, Sudeep's friend **Nikhil Dwivedi** took him to Mannat without telling him where they were going. Sudeep was nervous at first, but soon the ice thawed and the two engaged in a two-hour conversation about cinema. "He (Shah Rukh Khan) was sweet enough to invite me to his house after seeing *Rann*. Yes, we had a good cup of coffee, and we chatted for a long time. I saw his house. He was very kind," Sudeep recently revealed details about the meeting to a portal. Sudeep was last seen in his pan-Indian film, *Vikrant Rona*.

Kunal Kemmu announces his directorial debut *Madgaon Express*

Kunal Kemmu recently announced his directorial debut film, *Madgaon Express*, on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi. Taking to Instagram, Kunal shared a poster of the film, which has also been written by him. The film will be produced by **Farhan Akhtar** and **Ritesh Sidhwani's** Excel Entertainment. Sharing the poster, Kunal captioned the post, "Ganpati Bappa Moriya! As all good things begin with his name I can't think of a better day to share this with all of you. It started with a thought in my head, which grew into a dream which flowed out through my fingers into words on my laptop, and now it is becoming a reality on its way to the silver screen. A big thank you to @



ritesh_sid @faroutakhtar and **@roo_cha** at **@excelmovies** for believing in my script and my vision and partnering with me on this exciting journey in the world of cinema. With folded hands and a bowed head, I seek all of your blessings and the blessings of Ganpati Bappa. Introducing *Madgaon Express*. #Madgaonexpress," he said in his post.



ANUSHKA SHARMA SHARES A NEW STILL AS JHULAN GOSWAMI FROM CHAKDA 'XPRESS

Anushka Sharma is one of Bollywood's most versatile actresses. Anushka, who has been away from the big screen for a long time, will make her onscreen return with *Chakda 'Xpress*, playing the role of an Indian woman cricketer, **Jhulan Goswami**. Anushka has also been working hard on her training for the film, and she frequently posts pictures and videos on her social media accounts. Recently, the actress shared a new still from *Chakda 'Xpress* with the caption: "A moment from a story that needs to be told!" In the image, Anushka is seen recreating a moment from Jhulan's life, making a phone call while pouring rain beats down on everything around her. It is directed by **Prosit Roy** and backed by **Karnesh Ssharma's** Clean Slate Filmz.



RAJINIKANTH SAYS HE WANTED TO BE IN PONNIYIN SELVAN

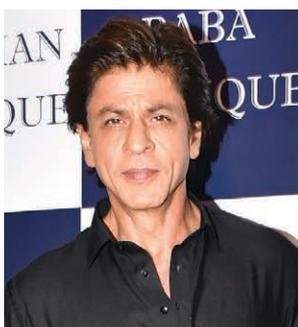
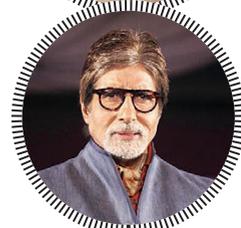
Luminaries **Rajinikanth** and **Kamal Haasan**, recently attended the trailer and music premiere of **Mani Ratnam's** *Ponniyin Selvan* in Chennai. Mani Ratnam declined Rajinikanth's request to be a part of the film. Rajinikanth said of his conversation with Mani Ratnam, "I wanted to be a part of *Ponniyin Selvan*. I asked Mani to give me Periya Pazhuvettaraiyar. I said I'll do a special appearance.



Mani asked me, "Do you want me to get bashed by your fans?" He went on to add, "Anyone else would have agreed, but Mani didn't. That's Mani Ratnam." He also revealed that he imagined **Sridevi** as Kundavai, the Chola Empire's princess. "I imagined **Kamal** as Arunmozhi Varman, Sridevi as Kundavai, **Vijaykanth** as Aditya Karikalan, and **Sathyaraj** as Pazhuvettaraiyar when I read the story," he said.

RASHMIKA MANDANNA OPENS UP ABOUT WORKING WITH AMITABH BACHCHAN IN GOODBYE

Rashmika Mandanna is preparing to release her Bollywood debut, *Goodbye*. **Amitabh Bachchan**, **Neena Gupta**, and others star in the film. The makers of the much-anticipated family drama have recently released the trailer. During the trailer launch of the film recently, the actor revealed the experience of working with Big B in *Goodbye*. Rashmika said, "We started shooting on my birthday, and I met him for the first time then. I remember this day very clearly as I was waiting for him since I wanted to say hey. While I was standing in the corner, he crossed me and he went away". She added, "I wanted to introduce myself but, of course, sir was busy thinking about the scene and what to do and not to do. But finally, I introduced myself and took a breath."



SHAH RUKH KHAN AND SALMAN KHAN ARE ALL SET TO BEGIN FILMING TIGER 3

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN **SHAH RUKH KHAN** AND **SALMAN KHAN** IS ENOUGH TO SEND THEIR FANS INTO A FRENZY. WITH BOTH KHANS HAVING MULTIPLE PROJECTS IN THE WORKS, IT BECAME EVEN MORE INTRIGUING WHEN IT WAS REVEALED THAT SALMAN KHAN WILL APPEAR IN SHAH RUKH KHAN'S *PATHAAN* AND SRK WILL ALSO APPEAR IN SALMAN KHAN'S *TIGER 3*. THE FILM IS DIRECTED BY **MANEESH SHARMA** AND THE STARS WILL BEGIN FILMING FOR IT EITHER IN LATE SEPTEMBER OR EARLY OCTOBER.



movies on the block, set-talk, talent-buzz,
hotties to watch out for

preview

AMAN SAINI

DARING TO DREAM

X FACTOR: PASSION AND PERSEVERANCE

Aman's mantra in life is to never give up. Having realised his true calling onstage at the age of eight, he has acted in over 25 plays so far. His journey in the entertainment industry started out in 2012 as a Clean and Clear Fresh Face finalist. He further went on to major in Theatre Studies. Aman can impersonate accents and dialects across the world and also composes poetry. He moved to Mumbai from Bangalore in 2021 to actualise his dream of becoming an actor. He has been a part of a Telugu feature film, and multiple advertisements, and voiced an audiobook as well. Watch out because he hopes to touch many hearts.



Newbies Harleen Sethi and Divya Agarwal share their hopes and desires *pg 14*

Hello, World!

Harleen Sethi is slowly making a name for herself in OTT series like *Broken But Beautiful*, *Test Case 2* and a CBI officer in *Gone Game 2*. **Tanisha Bhattacharya** meets the bubbly actor



Harleen Sethi has been a dancer, an anchor, done TV commercials, and then found her true calling in acting thanks to her performance in *Broken But Beautiful* alongside Vikrant Massey. As a child, she used to take part in *hazaar* competitions. She was the most extra-curricular activity-inclined girl in her school. So much so that her mother used to always have three or four costumes ready. Her confidence grew with every win. In fact, she'd end up winning despite not getting training. That's what convinced her to

be do something creative. "I was inclined towards advertising. I wanted to become an ad film director as he's the captain of the ship. My parents had already paid Rs 25000 for MBA classes when I told them I wanted to pursue something creative. They supported me in my decision and I started learning jazz, ballet and contemporary dance. I was a good student and soon got a scholarship for it." She progressed to being a dance instructor and was soon teaching students on a one-to-one basis. She even taught Frieda Pinto for her role in the

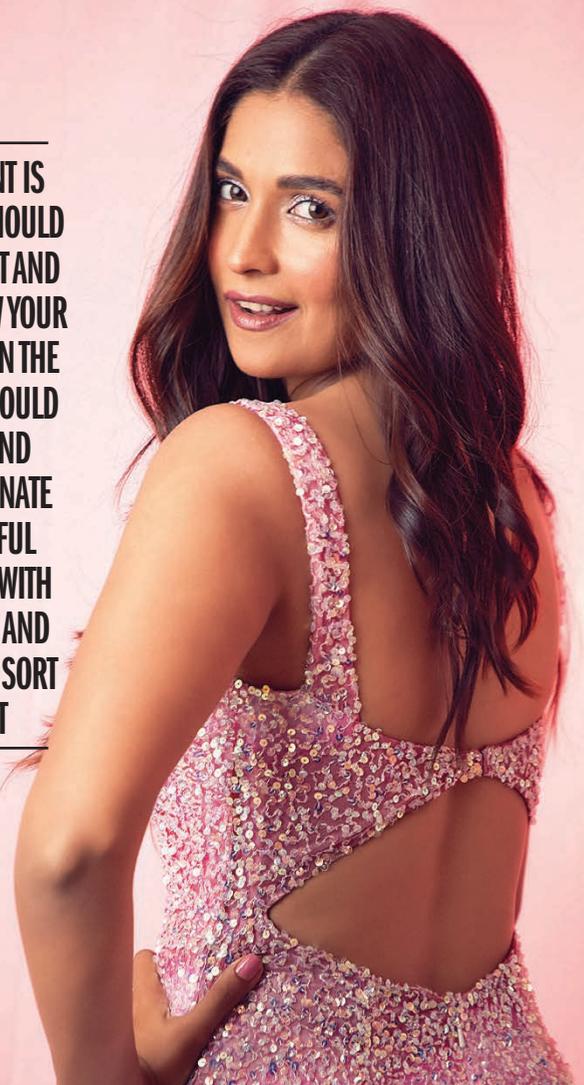
I'M FROM MUMBAI AND LIVE WITH MY PARENTS, SO UNLIKE A LOT OF OUTSIDERS, I DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT PAYING RENT OR PAYING MY BILLS ON TIME. SO MY STRUGGLE HASN'T BEEN THAT HARSH

Gone Game 2



Hollywood musical *Desert Dancer* (2014). Dance led to her getting a break in the ad world. “My first ad happened as a dancer. They were looking for someone who could do ballet in pointed shoes. That is how my journey began in front of the camera. For a few hours of work, I got Rs 17000 at that time. I got another call for another ad, but this time the director asked if I could act instead of dancing. That is how the journey in front of

— ○ ○ —
70 PER CENT IS LUCK. YOU SHOULD RESPECT THAT AND NEVER ALLOW YOUR EGO TO GET IN THE WAY. YOU SHOULD BE KIND AND COMPASSIONATE AND HELPFUL EVERY TIME WITH EVERYBODY AND LET DESTINY SORT YOU OUT
 — ○ ○ —



paying rent or paying my bills on time. So my struggle hasn't been that harsh. There have been ups and downs for sure, but that's part and parcel of being an actor,” she explains.

She plays an army officer in *Test Case 2* and a CBI officer in *Gone Game 2*. Harleen says she said yes to them because of their uniqueness. “Right now, I am in the zone of being an actor who is just exploring, having fun, and learning. It all boils down to how convincing I can look in an audition. If I can convince a director at that point that I can play the part, then I can work with him and develop it further when we actually shoot. Also, 70 per cent is luck. You should respect that and never allow your ego to get in the way. You should be kind and compassionate and helpful every time with everybody and let destiny sort you out.” She'd love to do comedy, which is something she hasn't explored till now. In fact, she'd love to be in a proper Bollywood romantic comedy, with all the tropes thrown in. “Being a dancer, I fantasise about doing a dance number in a film. I'm doing a medical drama on OTT, which is also a romance. But it's going to be all realistic and not over-the-top, like in our films.” ■



Broken But Beautiful

the camera began,” she reveals.

She worked in ad films for two years both as a model and an assistant director and also started giving auditions for shows and films. One such audition led to her being featured in *Broken But Beautiful*. She was actually chosen for another show called *The Great Indian Dysfunctional Family*. The entire cast were called for a narration with Ekta Kapoor. Harleen's sister was getting

married, and she left her *bidaai* function early to be there for the narration. She was all decked up in traditional attire, with a big *matha patti* and huge earrings, when she landed at the meeting “When I was introduced to Ekta, she said, ‘Don't you think you are a little overdressed for narration?’ They'd already locked in Vikrant Massey for *Broken But Beautiful*, and I'd heard they were considering Nushratt Bharuccha or Prachi Desai to be the female lead.

Ekta must have seen something in me as I was called for an audition. I gave one solo reading and the other with Vikrant. I was asked to choose between the two shows, and I picked *Broken...* because I'm a romantic at heart.”

She'd been an anchor for the show *India Adventures* and says she's open to doing all kinds of things, provided they're good. “I recently met someone who was interested in developing a series on lesser known dance forms and

wanted me to anchor it. It would take me all around the world to interview dancers. I want to live a wholesome life and not be restricted to doing just one thing,” Every newcomer has to go through a cycle of struggle, and Harleen is no exception. With time, she's learnt to take rejection in her stride. “I don't see it as rejection or failure, but as a learning opportunity. I'm from Mumbai and live with my parents, so unlike a lot of outsiders, I didn't have to worry about

FUTURE READY

DIVYA AGARWAL IS A KNOWN NAME BOTH IN REALITY TV AND OTT CIRCLES.
TANISHA BHATTACHARYA CHARTS HER JOURNEY

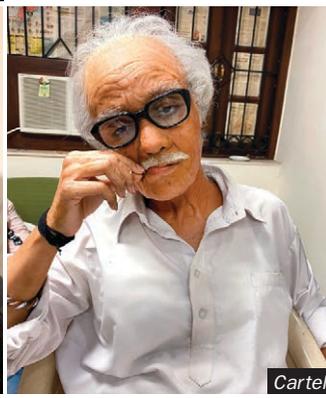


Divya Agarwal shot to fame with her stint in *Splitsvilla*. She won the *Big Boss OTT* and gained further recognition. Her big acting debut happened with the horror web series *Ragini MMS Returns season 2*. She was also seen in OTT shows such as *Cartel* and *Abhay*. In *Cartel*, she showcased six different avatars. It must have been difficult to maintain all of these looks. Divya says her powers of observation came in handy while essaying her role. “I looked around for real-life people I could draw inspiration from. I saw an old man sitting on a bench in a park and copied his posture. I saw a sweeper in a municipal hospital and mimicked her gestures. My dance training too helped, because in dance you flow from one mood, one expression to another flawlessly.”

She reveals that even as a child, she could easily break up dance routines in her head. “I have been choreographing annual day events for my school since I was 13 and opened my own dance class when I was 15, where I taught some 700 students. I also opened a YouTube channel called *Open Window* to teach dance moves. My parents saw that spark in me quite early and have always encouraged and



“I HAVE BEEN CHOREOGRAPHING ANNUAL DAY EVENTS FOR MY SCHOOL SINCE I WAS 13 AND OPENED MY OWN DANCE CLASS WHEN I WAS 15, WHERE I TAUGHT SOME 700 STUDENTS”



ice. Once they got to know me better, there were no worries. It's good for you as an actor if you work with talented people, as you can ask them to point out your mistakes and make your part better."

“THANKS TO SOCIAL MEDIA, EVERYONE IS UNDER HEAVY SCRUTINY ALL THE TIME AND SOMETIMES YOU GET MERCILESSLY TROLLED BECAUSE OF IT. IT'S NOT AN EASY SPACE TO BE IN BECAUSE OF THAT”

In one episode of *Abhay*, she had to talk down to a fan, and it's something she found hard to do as her career has been built around the goodwill she generated as an influencer. "I told myself – listen, you're playing a character. You're not doing this in real life. So tighten your belt and just get on with it." After being successful on OTT, she's waiting for her big Bollywood debut to happen. She says the length of a role doesn't bother her, as long as she has something meaty to do. "I wouldn't mind playing Shah Rukh Khan's mother or Kartik Aaryan's grandmother if I got to do something worthwhile in a film," she jokes, adding, "I don't have this insecurity that I've got to play my age in films. I'm willing to play any age as long as my role is a memorable one." She's open to working in all kinds of genres and storylines and would love to do something that's futuristic in nature. "Something like a *Minority Report*, you know, or *Gattaca*, which tells you what our society would be like in future. I'm often thinking about whether we would still have the same set of prejudices when it comes to class, race or religion or would we outgrow them and have different biases altogether?" ■

supported me. Their only criteria was that I should excel in whatever field I chose to follow." Though like any other Indian parents, they imposed restrictions. Wearing short clothes was frowned upon and talking to boys was strictly off limits. She followed a curfew and was expected to be back at home by a certain time.

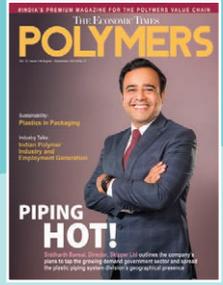
She transitioned from the world of reality shows to the world of acting quite seamlessly. Probe her and she states it wasn't quite all that easy. She mentions that on reality TV, she just had to be herself. She'd always been frank and straightforward in real life, and she extended that during *Splitsvilla* and *BigBoss OTT*. "Reality TV has become different from what it was ten years ago,"

she explains. "Thanks to social media, everyone is under heavy scrutiny all the time and sometimes you get mercilessly trolled because of it. It's not an easy space to be in because of that. You are expected to be yourself, but even a simple remark can trigger off a wave of hateful comments." She says viewers really invest a lot in such shows. And the correct attitude is to take it all as a learning experience. Compared to that, acting in a fictional show seems more of a breeze to her because everything is scripted.

She was chosen by Ekta Kapoor to be part of the *Ragini* franchise and came on board knowing that it was a big responsibility. She was nervous about it at first, but as the shooting

progressed, she started getting more comfortable with the process and it was smooth sailing from then on. "I played the lead character and hence the onus of success and failure was on me. I was apprehensive at first because of that, but didn't let the fear get to me. My co-stars were quite supportive and their caring attitude helped me adjust well to my role." She says she feels privileged to have worked with actors like Supriya Pathak and Kunal Kemmu early in her career and says it was a great learning experience. "Initially, I was apprehensive about working with them. I have this habit of facing my fears head on. So I took the initiative to interact with them and break the

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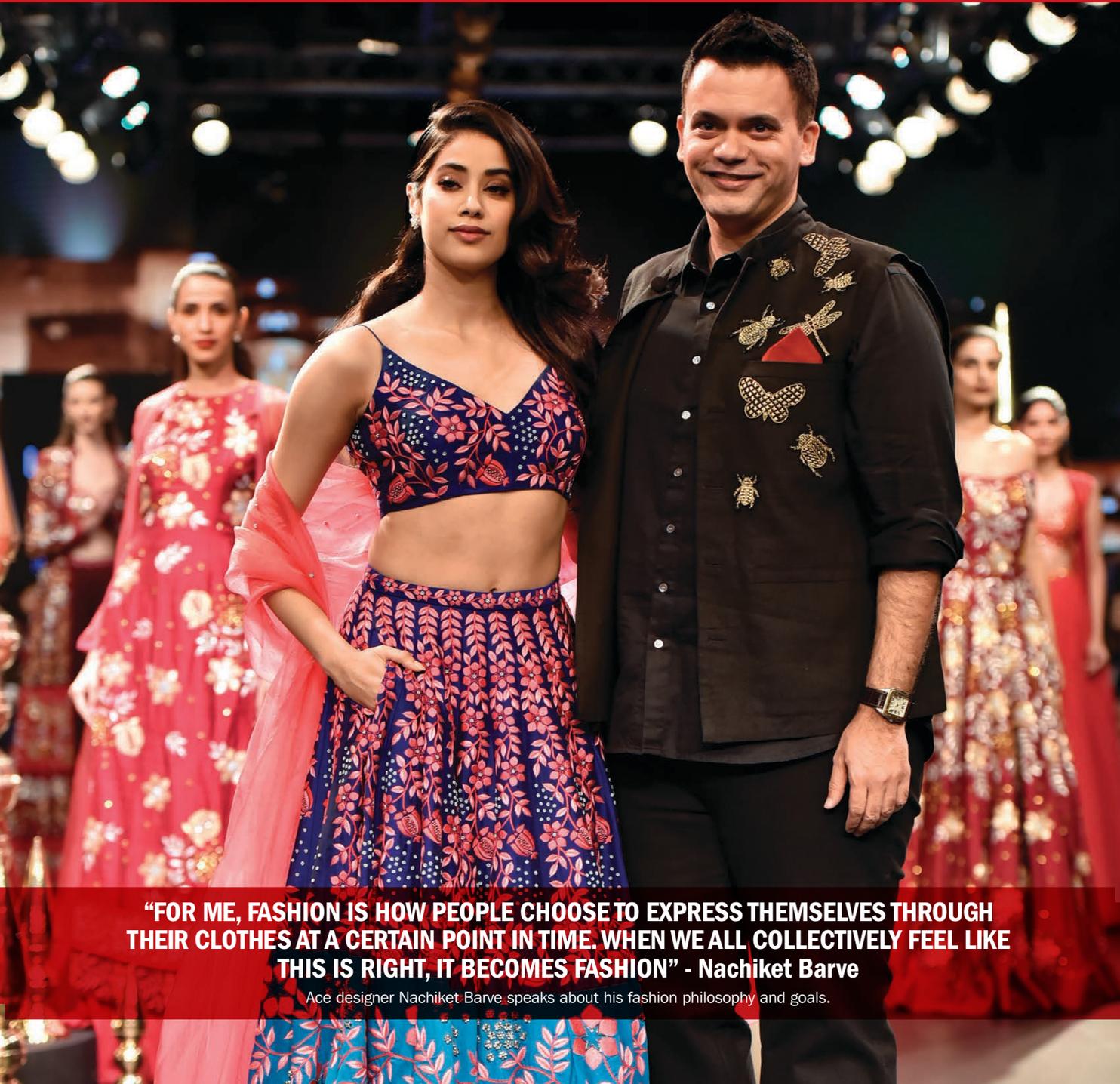
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F&B

fashion and beauty

They are hot, they are cool.
Meet our trend makers and breakers



“FOR ME, FASHION IS HOW PEOPLE CHOOSE TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES THROUGH THEIR CLOTHES AT A CERTAIN POINT IN TIME. WHEN WE ALL COLLECTIVELY FEEL LIKE THIS IS RIGHT, IT BECOMES FASHION” - Nachiket Barve

Ace designer Nachiket Barve speaks about his fashion philosophy and goals.



Designer Nachiket Barve seems to be the most at ease among threads and weaves, as he let Indian craftsmanship seep into his cinematic visions. With a recent National Award for costume design in the historical epic *Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior*, one can only imagine his attention to detail and unwavering passion for his craft. The artistic journey that began with his eponymous label in 2010 has soared and attained resounding success, and today, he is approached to chronicle the best of historical tales, letting costumes narrate a story of a bygone era. Excerpts:

ON A WINNING STREAK

Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior

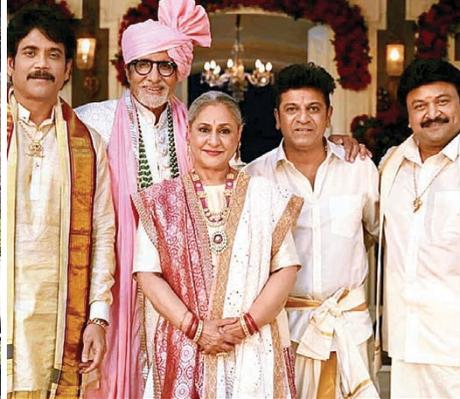
TANISHA BHATTACHARYA
CHATS WITH
DESIGNER
NACHIKET BARVE, WHO
WON THE NATIONAL
AWARD FOR
COSTUME DESIGN
FOR HIS WORK IN
TANHAJI



Nachiket Barve



With the cast of *Adipurush*



A still from an Ad featuring Nagajuna, Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Bachchan, Shiva Rajkumar and Prabhu Ganeshan



Samantha Ruth Prabhu in *Oo Antava*

Let's begin with the big National Award win. Were you expecting it?

I had no idea the national awards were being announced that day, and I got a call from Om Raut. He had called to congratulate me, and I said, "For what?" and he was like, "You've got the national award!" So it was a very pleasant surprise. It is a very high honour to be given that kind of recognition for a film like this, which takes so much blood, sweat, and tears.

How did Tanahji come your way?

Tanhaji is my first Hindi film but I had done two Marathi films like *Katyar Kaljat Ghusali* and *Ani Dr Kashinath Ghanekar* before this which also came as a surprise. There is no formal training there, the two Marathi films I did - both got a ton of recognition and are cult classics. Director Om Raut called me and asked if I wanted to do a film with him and I said sure why not. You are correct that a film like this takes a lot of responsibility because you are dealing with historical characters who carry a lot of reverence in people's minds and they are put on such high pedestals. Especially with a character like Shivaji Maharaj which has been adapted so many times

THE EXCITING THING ABOUT PERIOD FILMS IS THAT THERE IS A LOT MORE RESEARCH INVOLVED, AS WELL AS THE FACT THAT EVERYTHING HAS TO BE CREATED FROM SCRATCH. YOU CAN'T JUST DASH TO THE MALL AND BUY SOMETHING

over the years in theatre and films. But there is no photographic evidence so it is an interpretation already. You have to take a step back and understand the history and then translate it to the cinematic beauty.

Period productions are particularly the most difficult - because there's the era to keep in mind, the larger-than-life characters to keep in mind.

There is a common misconception that period films must be OTT, grand, or highly exaggerated—they can be, but I believe that my job as a film costume designer is to transform these well-known actors into believable characters. Om had a vision in mind for this film, and it was a very specific brief. It had been almost two years of research and I had been to museums across the length and breadth of the country: the Craft Museum in Delhi, Salarjung in Hyderabad. Even though the Victoria and Albert Museum in London is not open to the public, it does house original Mughal textiles—textiles worn by people during that time period. Also, when making

an action film, there should be a functional aspect in addition to the cinematic beauty. There is harnessing. The shoes must be authentic while also being comfortable for the actors to run in. There are all of these extra details, as well as things that should help you along the way. I wanted to use a palette that was historically accurate, so we used a lot of natural dyes. We experimented a lot with mineral colours and flower colours like indigo and gerua—the colours that should have been prevalent at that point in time.

Go on...

Even in terms of the jewellery that Kajol wore, we found a jeweller in Kolhapur whose family used to work with Shivaji Maharaj's family. There were things they had in their treasure that were 400 years old. We recreated pure gold jewellery using that. Armour was done using leather craftspeople who have centuries of experience and traditional artistry. So there are three broad clans—there are the Rajputs, the Marathas, and the Mughals. All of them

have a different sartorial history and culture. The Maratha empire was really widespread, so I looked at textiles like Chanderi, Maheshwari, and even Dharwad in Karnataka for Kajol's sarees. We got old sarees revived. You cannot go to the market and buy these things, you know. Aurangzeb was a very austere man, so we looked at textiles along the silk route for him - textiles from central Asia, UP, and even parts of Bengal.

What reaction did you get from Ajay Devgn, Kajol, and Saif Ali Khan to your vision?

The whole star cast—let's start with Ajay Devgn. He is a man of few words, but he is very intelligent, perceptive, and intuitive as well. He made a couple of suggestions at times—like altering the fit to make it look good on camera. Kajol is part Maharashtrian and she has only worn a nauvari saree at her own wedding. So she was so excited to wear all this stuff and tell this story. Saif Ali Khan was also so forthcoming. He took me to his house to show his ancestral jewellery and then he picked a



With Janhvi Kapoor



Katyar Kaljat Ghusali



With Saif Ali Khan



With Amitabh Bachchan



Sonalika Kulkarni looks were inspired by Sulochana in Ani Dr Kashinath Ghanekar



Lakme Fashion Week 2015

THERE IS A COMMON MISCONCEPTION THAT PERIOD FILMS MUST BE OTT, GRAND, OR HIGHLY EXAGGERATED – THEY CAN BE, BUT I BELIEVE THAT MY JOB AS A FILM COSTUME DESIGNER IS TO TRANSFORM THESE WELL-KNOWN ACTORS INTO BELIEVABLE CHARACTERS

ring which we had worn as a personal touch to the character. That was brilliant.

Samantha Ruth Prabhu wears your design in the iconic *Oo Antava* song. She looks stunning, and it's a far cry from what you did in *Tanhaji*.

I enjoy juggling several balls in the air. Whether it's the brief for *Oo Antava*, which came from the film's stylist, they wanted a certain kind of look and it was up to me to interpret it in a certain colour or texture, or *Tanhaji*, which is a completely different world; or what I do for fashion, which is for contemporary women today. Each one is correct in its own way.



With Kajol

You're also done costumes for *Adipurush* by Om Raut. What other projects do you have planned?

I have completed my work on *Adipurush*. I've also completed work on a multilingual film called *Har Har Mahadev*, which will be released on *Diwali*. I've also worked on a few characters in another contemporary Hindi film. The exciting thing about period films is that there is a lot more research involved, as well as the fact that everything has to be created from scratch. You can't just dash to the mall and buy something. As a result, it becomes both challenging and exciting.

After such big-budget projects as *Tanhaji* and *Adipurush*, would you be able to design for a light, slice-of-life film?

I'm open to anything. A film set in the 1960s, for example, would have a different kind of period, but that is different. A contemporary story could be about a subculture or a group of people in a specific location or time. Each of

us has a code of conduct, which dictates how we dress. Every day, we all dress up in costumes. We choose clothes that capture our essence, current fashion, and the context. So none of our options are autonomous; they all fit into some sort of framework. One can understand that framework and set a trend. The key is to collaborate with filmmakers who believe that costume design plays an important role in their storytelling process and can propel the film forward. Every designer has their own take on fashion... For me, fashion is how people choose to express themselves through their clothes at a certain point in time. When we all collectively feel like this is right or at this moment, it becomes fashion. But for me, what is important, along with fashion, is style. Great style is timeless. Style is an expression of who you are that you choose to convey, and it can change or mould over time. If you look at

the greatest style icons over time, they all have a style that is consistent and feels true. That is very important. The costume is a way to move the story visually forward. The job of fashion is also to create joy. In a world where there is so much stress and trouble, but if we can bring joy to people's lives and help them create memories by wearing those special clothes and feeling like their best versions, that is enough. We are a very inclusive brand; we cater up to 6XL; everybody is welcome. I never say, "Oh you can't sit with us or you are not welcome." Whoever you are, we are happy to dress you. Because I work with a lot of Indian work, it also brings attention and appreciation of our heritage to a newer generation of audience. A film like this ignites interest and appreciation and thereby also employs the craftsmen, which is also important. When you are talking about 1000+ costumes being made, they are also something that is created through this. ■

what's on their mind?

exclusives

KILLER INSTINCT

After two comedic roles in a row, it was a treat to play a serious, darker, and more intense role in *Dhokha: Round D Corner*

— APARSHAKTI KHURANA

It wasn't easy for me to understand Saanchi and how she behaved. It was extremely difficult, but I believe I prefer to do difficult things

— KHUSHALII KUMAR

Aparshakti Khurana and Khushalii Kumar talk about what attracted them towards *Dhokha: Round D Corner*, their forthcoming thriller

PHOTOGRAPHS: KUNAL GUPTA

Aparshakti Khurana: Tuxedo Jacket: Rick Owens | Ring: Gucci

T-shirt: Pull n Bear Watch: Rolex | Neckpiece: Jacquemus

Khushali Kumar: Black Fringe Jacket Dress - River Island

Earring: Misho | Rings: Obm | Shoes: Moschino





FULL STEAM

AHEAD!

KHUSHALII KUMAR AND APARSHAKTI KHURANA ARE GREATLY GUNG-HO ABOUT THE RELEASE OF THEIR FORTHCOMING FILM, *DHOKHA: ROUND D CORNER*. THEY SHARE THEIR EXCITEMENT ABOUT IT WITH FILMFARE.

Dhokha: Around D Corner. The name itself is intriguing. The film is set to be a mystery thriller and stars R Madhavan, Aparshakti Khurana, and debutante Khushalii Kumar. She's a legacy kid in the sense that she's the daughter of the late movie mogul Gulshan Kumar and the sister of Bhushan Kumar, the T-series head honcho. Khushalii has been a fashion designer before and is now seeking new horizons. Much has been expected of her and given the confidence with which she has answered our questions, she looks like someone to the manor born. Aparshakti Khurana is the younger brother of Ayushmann Khurrana. Ayushmann has been known for his bold choices, and Aparshakti is kind of emulating that but in his own way. He started off doing comedic roles and he's hoping that *Dhokha...* is going to help change the perception and help him make a name for himself as a dramatic actor. Read on to read their sassy replies...

PHOTOGRAPHS: KUNAL GUPTA

FOR APARSHAKTI KHURANA: STYLIST: JAY SAMUEL | MAKE-UP: MAHESH ZENDE
HAIR: IRFAN (HAKIM AALIM) | Hoodie: Amiri | Trousers: Reiss

FOR KHUSHALII KUMAR: STYLIST: ESHA LAMIN | MAKE-UP: ARUNA KUMAR SAHU
HAIR: SUNITA PAL | Denim Crop Top: Bershka | Printed Bottoms: Kendall & Kylie
Earrings: Isharya | Stacked rings: Misho | Boots: Chloe



CHANGING

APARSHAKTI KHURANA PROMISES THAT THE AUDIENCE WILL SEE HIM IN A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT AVATAR THAN BEFORE IN *DHOKHA: ROUND D CORNER*. SUMAN SHARMA RECORDS HIS ENTHUSIASM

SEN
JAN
A



Aparshakti Khurana has made a name for himself doing comic roles. Like his brother Ayushmann Khurrana, he too has been part of radio and theatre before setting foot in the film industry. Now, he's all set to reveal a darker, grey-shaded avatar of himself in the forthcoming thriller *Dhokha: Round D Corner*. He's been paired with Khushalii Kumar in the film and R Madhavan too plays an important role in it. Aparshakti looks up to his brother and says beneath the stardom, they both are still the same people who find pleasure in slurping masala tea as Dilip Kumar or Dev Anand songs play in the background. Excerpts from a candid interview with the talented actor.

TELL US ABOUT *DHOKHA: ROUND D CORNER*. WHAT STRUCK YOU THE MOST ABOUT THE SCRIPT, AND WHAT SIDE OF YOURSELF DID YOU EXPLORE THROUGH THIS ROLE?

I've been wanting to do something negative for a long time. This was my chance, and I seized it as soon as I heard the script and the narration ended. The shooting began almost immediately. We are already receiving positive feedback. After two comedic roles in a row, it was a treat to play a serious, darker, and more intense role. I'm doing the Kashmiri dialect for the first time, and for the first time ever, I'm on screen with short hair.

YOU SEEM TO BE PLEASED ABOUT THE NEW HAIR-DO...

My father would never allow us to wear our hair short. We used to get a good beating when it was cut too short. He desired that our hair look like Dilip Kumar's. As a result, we had no opportunity to experiment with a short haircut, either on or off-screen. This was my first opportunity, and I've grown to like myself in this new avatar.

I'VE BEEN WANTING TO DO SOMETHING NEGATIVE FOR A LONG TIME. THIS WAS MY CHANCE, AND I SEIZED IT AS SOON AS I HEARD THE SCRIPT AND THE NARRATION OF *DHOKHA: ROUND D CORNER* ENDED

WHAT WAS IT LIKE WORKING WITH YOUR CO-STAR, KHUSHALII KUMAR?

It's a pleasure to have her on set every day and collaborate with her. Khushalii is someone I've known for a long time. She used to come completely prepared with all of her homework, which was incredible given how serious the film was. I think she looks lovely in the film as well. Her persona has many facets. She began her career as a fashion designer and knows everything there is to know about it. Furthermore, because she was born and raised in a musical family, she has had enough exposure to predict what will succeed and what will fail. She is also an excellent dancer, making her a complete package.

AFTER DOING COMEDIC ROLES IN *PATI, PATNI,*

AUR WO, STREE, AND DANGAL, WHAT MADE YOU SUDDENLY DECIDE TO BE PART OF AN INTENSE FILM LIKE DHOKHA...?

People frequently accept you in a specific space in succession, and then you become typecast in that, to the point where you are barred from portraying roles in other genres. Even if others are unwilling to consider it, you might be able to do the opposite. When I was in the theatre, all of my directors used to cast me in dark roles. I used to request that they try me out for comedy, but it was all in vain because of my intense eyes. They didn't think I could ever look like a comedian. Then when I graduated to films, it so happened that my debut film *Dangal* I had a comedy role to play and it was followed by two comedies in a row. Bhushan Kumarji and Kookie Gulati (director) Sir gave me this new and challenging role to play one fine day and I immediately said yes as it offered variety.

ARE YOU MAKING A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO BREAK AWAY FROM THE TYPES OF ROLES YOU HAD PREVIOUSLY PLAYED WITH THIS FILM?

I'll say 50/50. It's not something I went all out for. I was making every effort to seize these opportunities. However, I continue to do whatever comes my way. At the end of the day, you can't disrespect your job, especially when people accept you in certain shades of comedy. You can't also disregard how much love and respect people have shown you.

HAVE YOUR TASTES SHIFTED TOWARD PLAYING MORE SERIOUS CHARACTERS NOW?

In reality, I am only getting lead roles in the scripts I am receiving by chance. I believe the fraternity has begun to love and respect me. But it's not like I have any preferences for a specific shade of character or anything else. Whatever work comes my way, I accept it gratefully, whether it's for singing, OTT, or hosting. I enjoy working on projects that are both productive and allow me to learn or do something new.

THE LAST FEW HINDI FILMS DID POORLY AT THE BOX OFFICE, AND THE MAJORITY OF THEM WERE RELEASED ON OTT. DO YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS ABOUT THE AUDIENCE'S REACTION?

No way. *Dhoka...* is a fantastic film, so I'm confident that people will enjoy this. They should pay attention. Isn't the current bad phase of the film industry a bad phase for the entire world? Even though we're



I'VE SEEN AYUSH BHAIYA DO EVERYTHING FROM ACTING TO SINGING TO RADIO JOCKEYING TO HOSTING. I FIGURED I'D GIVE IT A SHOT AS WELL

talking about films from the South, only two or three have been box office successes. We must recognise that the audience is intelligent. So, I believe we are still making good films; it is simply a perception that has arisen. That's pretty much it.

WAS IT DISAPPOINTING THAT YOUR FIRST FILM AS A LEADING MAN, HELMET WAS ONLY AVAILABLE ON OTT AND NOT IN THEATRES?

No way, no how. First and foremost, I believe the most important thing is that the work that we have all done reaches the audience, which is already happening. Second, the producers who have invested in me have earned their money back. I believe the debate between OTT and theatre is never-ending, but you simply

MY FATHER WOULD NEVER ALLOW US TO WEAR OUR HAIR SHORT. WE USED TO GET A GOOD BEATING WHEN IT WAS CUT TOO SHORT. HE DESIRED THAT OUR HAIR LOOK LIKE DILIP KUMAR'S

Jacket: Balenciaga | T-shirt and Denims: Diesel | Sunglasses: @retrosuperfuture @kapooropticalco



need to do good work. The simple fact is that the producers must earn money, and people must watch the content, regardless of the medium.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE WEB AS A MEDIUM?

Both films and OTT content are suitable for personal exploration. Only OTT has fewer restrictions, allowing us to say dialogues that the censor forbids. OTT allows you to express yourself more freely. To us, OTT is more beneficial because it gives equal time to each character, whereas the film focuses on and lingers on only the lead characters.

THE SLOGAN 'BOYCOTT BOLLYWOOD' IS VERY POPULAR THESE DAYS. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS TOWARDS IT?

It's truly heartbreaking. Artistes are a vulnerable bunch, burdened by the stress of an uncertain life full of ups and downs that comes with the industry by default. I believe we simply need to relax. I'm referring to the general public, who readily respond to trolls and boycotts. I would advise them to be more patient and to use their good judgement. Social media content should be strictly monitored. The government should really keep an eye on them.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY IS IN NEED OF CHANGE?

Audiences want good stories, and today's writers have excellent scripts and content to offer. I believe that writers should be recognised and respected in the same way that directors, actors, and producers are. I believe we should pay more attention to the writers. The writer should have the same status as the director, actor, and producer.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH AYUSHMANN KHURRANA, YOUR ELDER BROTHER.

I adore and admire him. For many years, our family adhered to Papa's rule of touching the feet of the elderly for blessings as soon as we awoke in the morning. We followed this up to the date. This, I believe, is one of the reasons there is no sense of insecurity, competition, or anything else. And why love and respect are present in just the right amount.

HOW DO YOU REACT WHEN PEOPLE MAKE COMPARISONS BETWEEN YOU AND AYUSHMANN?

Such questions arise when you have taken someone's assistance on your journey, such as if you were launched by a star or if you yourself are a star child. I began my journey with five-minute roles without seeking assistance from anyone. In 2019, I also released a song called *Kudiye ni* with Neeti Mohan on T-Series. While listening to it, I found myself wondering if it sounded similar to Ayush (Ayushmann) *bhaiya's*. We have a lot in common. Every single reviewer, however, stated we are both different. The most encouraging aspect was that no one made any comparisons.

DID HE INSPIRE YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER AS AN ACTOR?

Yes, of course. I wanted to be a cricketer and even captained the Haryana under-19 cricket team, but I ended up studying law in Chandigarh for five years. I got my first

KHUSHALII IS SOMEONE I'VE KNOWN FOR A LONG TIME. SHE USED TO COME COMPLETELY PREPARED WITH ALL OF HER HOMEWORK, WHICH WAS INCREDIBLE GIVEN HOW SERIOUS THE FILM WAS

job working for senior lawyer Amarjit Singh Chandhok for three months before realising I wasn't cut out for this field. Fortunately, I was given the opportunity to work as a radio jockey. I've seen Ayush *bhaiya* do everything from acting to singing to radio jockeying to hosting. I figured I'd give it a shot as well. After all, growing up in a family where your parents and even grandparents are involved in the creative field influences everyone. Good energies collided, and God was gracious enough to allow me to accomplish these minor goals in life. Not only has Ayush *bhaiya* inspired me, but entire Chandigarh has been an inspiration.

TELL US ABOUT ARZOIE, YOUR DAUGHTER, AND YOUR NEW ROLE AS A FATHER.

You may have played a variety of roles throughout your life, but becoming a father is a new challenge. I believe it simply brought a lot of happiness, good luck, and positive vibes to the entire family. It



Outfit: Hop Head
Eyewear: Fendi @kapooropticalco
Slippers: Amiri



WHATEVER WORK COMES MY WAY, I ACCEPT IT GRATEFULLY, WHETHER IT'S FOR SINGING, OTT, OR HOSTING. I ENJOY WORKING ON PROJECTS THAT ARE BOTH PRODUCTIVE AND ALLOW ME TO LEARN OR DO SOMETHING NEW

is something that truly binds us together. It's amazing to come home and try to get everyone together for dinner when there's a new member of the family. It's wonderful to have this new addition to the family, and I couldn't be more grateful to have another girl in my life after my wife and mother. My wife and mother have prayed to God for better things to happen in my life. I now have a second soul. I believe she will be my cheerleader when it comes to movies, and I will be her cheerleader when it comes to her education, life, and upbringing. I will always be her biggest cheerleader.

WHAT NEW PARENTING SKILLS DID YOU PICK UP AFTER BECOMING A FATHER?

Touchwood, I'd like to think I'm a very hands-on father. And I try to make my wife, Aakriti, as comfortable as possible. Of course, a father cannot do everything that a mother can. Having said that, I continue to try to fill her shoes by assisting her with minor tasks. I was never a homebody before. I would call Aakriti out for a ride as soon as I got home at the end of the day. But now I try to finish work as quickly as possible while remaining disciplined, and then return home to spend time with Aakriti and Arzoie.

AAKRITI IS SAID TO HAVE HELPED YOU A LOT DURING YOUR SALAD DAYS...

We used to stay in Delhi when I was filming *Dangal*. It was her idea for us to relocate to Mumbai. She landed a good job in Mumbai and we both relocated here as she said it will help me in expanding my career. Without her help, it would have been extremely difficult to keep the passion going.

WHAT NEW THINGS HAVE YOU RECENTLY DISCOVERED ABOUT YOURSELF?

I'm just glad I can do hosting, singing, music, and acting all at the same time, not to mention sports and play. And as a result of all of this, I discovered that I am very happy to return home and spend leisure time with my family. All of this keeps me so active and upbeat that I wouldn't ask for anything more from life, not only this but in the next birth as well, even if it means repeating all of my previous mistakes and lessons learned, and finally achieving my goal. My objectives may seem mundane to others, but they are simply fulfilling to me. The bottom line now is I am very happy. Cross your heart!

WHAT DO YOU FIND ENJOYABLE IN LIFE AND HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE IT?

Spending time with family or having a cup of tea with a biscuit can assist you in achieving happiness. If you aim for the impossible while ignoring such sweet moments, your pleasure will be fleeting. Happiness is not found in flashy cars or first-class travel. That pleasure is fleeting because it will leave you at the will of God. I never asked for the impossible or indulged in envy. My little pleasures are entirely mine, and no one can ever take them away from me!

WHAT ANNOYS YOU AND HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH IT?

My desire to complete ten tasks in a single day irritates me greatly. I am extremely active.

WHICH DIRECTORS AND ACTORS DO YOU WANT TO COLLABORATE WITH?

Raju Hirani, Sriram Raghavan, Suresh Triveni, and Zoya Akhtar are my dream directors. Zoya Akhtar is one of the country's most talented filmmakers.

YOU ARE DOING A SHOW CALLED JUBILEE, DIRECTED BY VIKRAMADITYA MOTWANE. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT IT.

It's a show about the rivalry between two Hindi film superstars. I am one of them. It's a period piece set in the 1940s. I am extremely pleased. I don't think I could have done what he made me do if he hadn't been my guide! I trusted him and followed every advice he gave me to the best of my ability.



PRINCESS

KHUSHALII KUMAR, WHO'S MAKING HER ACTING DEBUT WITH *DHOKHA: ROUND D CORNER*, SPEAKS ABOUT HER LEGACY AND MORE. TANISHA BHATTACHARYA TAKES NOTES.

Laced Bralet: Stradivarius | Brown trench coat: Deme | Green short Skirt: Bershka | Jewellery: Misho | Shoes - Christian Louboutin

DIARIES



DHOKHA: ROUND D CORNER IS AN INTRIGUING NAME; WHY IS IT WRITTEN AS “D” INSTEAD OF THE?

You'll have to wait until the film is released to get the answer.

KOOKIE GULATI HAS DONE FILMS LIKE THE BIG BULL—HOW WAS THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING DIRECTED BY HIM?

He's so well sorted and completely clear about exactly what he wants, and he's also written a beautiful script. My brother had told me clearly that they had a script for which they were looking for a new face. So, you meet the director because it's a completely performance-oriented film and he needs to be convinced whether you fit into the character or not. And so he saw my work. I had also done a short film earlier. He saw that and then auditioned me. And the best part is, when I saw the teaser, I got to know he used my voice in it for narration because he felt it had a mysterious quality.

WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO MAKE YOUR DEBUT WITH SUCH AN UNUSUAL STORY?

For me, the story and the characters must be exciting. And as an actor, I felt there was so much I could do with this character, which piqued my interest. And I realised that it wasn't easy for me to understand Saanchi and how she behaved. It was extremely difficult, but I believe I prefer to do difficult things.

IT'S NOT A TYPICAL ROM-COM BUT IS SAID TO BE A DARK DRAMA?

It is not at all dark. It's a suspenseful thriller. It's more exciting for me to experience something that isn't me. I mean, that's what I like to do. I'm more interested in other people. Like you know about that character, there's so much to learn about her. And doing a rom-com or something along those lines as

Kushalii Kumar continues to explore different realms of creativity, from being a designer to appearing in numerous music videos produced by her legacy home brand T-series to now making her film debut. *Dhokha: Round D Corner* sees her big Bollywood dreams coming true. With talented co-stars like Aparshakti Khurana and R Madhavan on board, she's truly gung-ho about the film and can't wait for it to get released. In an exclusive interview with *Filmfare*, she spills the beans on her ambitions and dreams as well as the bond she shares with siblings Bhushan Kumar and Tulsi Kumar.

MUSIC VIDEOS ARE AN ENTERTAINING RIDE. YOU'RE ON A HIGH BECAUSE YOU'RE ALWAYS HAVING FUN AND DANCING. FILMS TAKE YOU ON AN EMOTIONAL ROLLER COASTER. INTENSE SCENES CAN BE EMOTIONALLY DRAINING AT TIMES

my debut, I mean, I'd love to do that as well. I'm not going to say it's something I don't want to do. But this is what piqued my interest the most.

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER IN THE FILM, ANY CHALLENGES YOU FACED, AND WHAT WERE THE EASIER PARTS FOR YOU.

All of my challenges were initial, that is, before I reached the set. I sat with the director several times, always trying to understand Saanchi, my character. And then, of course, you're acting alongside talents like R. Madhavan, Aparshakti, and Darshan, who have so much experience. For me, just standing over there and saying my lines was a big deal. Matching up with them and standing in the same frame was a huge challenge. But the moment I became Saanchi, everything became a part of me. I remember that on my first day itself I was shooting with Maddy. And he's fantastic because he knows how to get his co-actors to relax. And the first day I met him on the set, it was as if I was Saanchi and he was my husband, Yatharth, and then everything went smoothly.

WE FOUND THIS PHOTO OF MADHAVAN AND YOU FROM THE FILM DAHI CHEENI, WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO BE YOUR DEBUT...?

Jeena Mushkil was a short film I had acted in. It was only shown at film festivals, and I received a best critics' actress award for it as well. So Maddy saw my work, and he liked it. And there was this script, *Dahi Cheeni*, but somehow that project did not turn out the way it was supposed to. In the middle of all that, Kookie sir's story came in, which Maddy sir really, really liked. So the entire switch happened.

YOU'VE DONE MUSIC VIDEOS BEFORE; HOW DIFFERENT IS IT FOR YOU TO ACT IN A FILM?

It is entirely different. Because it's more of a performance-oriented, character-driven process. Saanchi is dressed in a saree throughout the film. So I began my readings and preparations in a saree. Music videos are an entertaining ride. You're on a high because you're always having fun and dancing. Films take you on an emotional roller coaster. Intense scenes can be emotionally draining at times.

YOU ARE A GIRL OF MANY TALENTS. YOU ARE A FASHION DESIGNER TOO—WHAT IS THAT EXPERIENCE LIKE?

I've always wanted to be an actor since I was



a child. So I've also worked on a religious film with my father. Papa was the only one who supported me in this, but after his tragic death, we shifted to Delhi. My mother was terrified of me or any of us appearing in front of the camera. Because she was afraid of fame and popularity, she persuaded me to pursue a career in design at the time. So that's how my career as a fashion designer began. And I used to skip NIFT and go to an acting class at the same time. Which my mother later discovered. I'd still call fashion my hobby. And now I feel it was more of a best friend, with each of my garments having a story to tell. I started showing them in Paris and New York. And a creative aide pointed out that each of your outfits tells a story. It's a work of art with a lot of thought put into it. So you

SHAKIRA LOVED MY DRESS THAT I HAD SENT TO PARIS. I JUST COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. I REMEMBER I DID NOT SLEEP THE ENTIRE NIGHT. I STILL GET GOOSEBUMPS THINKING ABOUT IT.

Blue Bralet: Reve by Khushali Kumar
Distressed Denim Jacket: Dsquared 2
Denim Skirt: Zara | Rings: Misho
Earring: Stradivarius | Boots: Stuart
Weitzman | Bracelets: Curio cottage



know, when you get recognised in a place like that, and even when Shakira wore my dress, that was something that kept me alive and my dream alive. So all of this encouraged me; it gave me a way to keep myself motivated and going; that, yes, I will do what I want one day. And I would say that fashion has been my best friend and has kept me alive.

YOU'VE DESIGNED FOR INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTARS SUCH AS JUSTIN BIEBER AND SHAKIRA—HOW DID YOU GET ACCESS TO THEM?

I began doing it by performing my first show in Paris, then in New York. And over there, you get to know all these buyers, and you're retailing in nearly a hundred stores all over the world through these shows. Stylists of Hollywood stars visit these shows. Shakira's and Justin Bieber's personal stylists, as well as their main publicists visited the show. So they all come over there, visit you, and then they

Cinderella in a school play for the first time, and I still cherish it. Another great memory was going to Vaishnodevi and Haridwar with him on a regular basis. He accomplished so much in such a short period of time. Whether it was acting, charity, or building such a massive empire when it was cassettes and CDs and the manufacturing of those. There was a large T-Series family with over 5000 employees at the time. He used to look after everyone and everything all of the time. There used to be people in Mumbai who would cage birds and sell them on the street. So if he chanced upon them, he'd buy all the birds and open the cages, setting them free. And then if he found the vendors the next day as well, he'd buy again from them and free the birds. "I have a factory in Noida; come and work there," he used to tell them. "These birds are meant to fly and enjoy their freedom. They should not be locked up." This is just

Bralet Top: La Senza
Orange Pants: Nasty Gal
Jewellery: Outhouse
Studded Heels: Moschino

MY MOTHER WAS TERRIFIED OF ME OR ANY OF US APPEARING IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA. BECAUSE SHE WAS AFRAID OF FAME AND POPULARITY, SHE PERSUADED ME TO PURSUE A CAREER IN DESIGN AT THE TIME

click pictures and send them to their celebrity friends. Shakira loved my dress that I had sent to Paris. I just couldn't believe it. I remember I did not sleep the entire night. I still get goosebumps thinking about it because I was so excited and thrilled.

DO YOU ALSO TAKE PART IN RUNNING YOUR FAMILY BUSINESS?

My mother, you see, is the one who handles everything from Delhi. Many people are unaware of this. My mother is in charge of our main headquarters in Delhi. My mother handles all of the finances, the backend, and the management of the large T-Series family. I've always been drawn to things that involve creativity. If you're wondering whether I was involved in the day-to-day operations of the T-Series, the answer is no. Yes, I am always available as an emotional support for my brother and mother, but I am not involved in their business decisions.

SHARE SOME MEMORIES OF YOUR FATHER.

Every moment spent with my father is invaluable. I recall attending shoots of his *bhajans* and always sitting with the crowd in the front. Papa came to see me perform as

one example, but there were many more. As a result, every moment I've spent with my papa has been extremely special and memorable.

HOW IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR SISTER, TULSI KUMAR? DO YOU BOTH HAVE SIMILAR MUSICAL TASTES?

We do have similar tastes in fashion, but in music *hamara tastes itna nahi milta hai*, we are unique. Though I enjoy listening to her. All my playlists include Tulsi's songs. I share a great bond with her and with my mother. We're both close to each other and to our mother.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO GROW UP IN THE SHADOW OF A TRAGEDY?

After Papa died, everything changed overnight. Tulsi, Mom, and I moved to Delhi. Despite the fact that he hadn't even finished college, my elder brother Bhushan had to stay in Mumbai and take care of business. He was in his first year of college, and there was so much work and pressure that the initial period of bonding, fun, and *masti* between brothers and sisters faded. In the past, I recall us always playing games together. Then Papa died, and he was put





under work pressure. He'd only get home around 12:30–1.30 a.m. And then he'd leave at such an early hour. As a result, distance began to creep in. We made sure to take family vacations, and we have continued to do so even now. And now we've all got our things going and don't get that much time to spend together. Tulsi has her recordings, I've got my acting, *Bhai* always has a list of releases lined up. But the bond will always remain, no matter what.

HE IS WELL-KNOWN FOR HIS COLLECTION OF EXOTIC CARS. DO YOU HAVE A FETISH FOR ANYTHING?

For clothing, I'd say. I do have an interest in fashion and style. It doesn't have to be high-end brands; in fact, I enjoy going to flea markets abroad and buying things from them. So, for me, it's anything that looks interesting and catches my attention.



Dhokha: Round D Corner

HE (GULSHAN KUMAR) ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH IN SUCH A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME. WHETHER IT WAS ACTING, CHARITY, OR BUILDING SUCH A MASSIVE EMPIRE

DO YOU FEEL PRESSURE OR EXPECTATIONS BECAUSE YOU ARE A LEGACY CHILD?

I don't because, as you can see, I like to follow my Papa's lead in everything. Of course, you have a large legacy to carry, but I believe you can never do anything under pressure. Papa never took any pressure, so it's just like, stay happy, stay positive, love people. Whatever you are, whatever you earn, always give it to the people who are a little less fortunate. So do that, and continue to spread love, happiness, and smiles. That, I believe, is my real legacy, and I will always adhere to it. ■



*MAYUKH MAJUMDAR listens mesmerised as
evergreen screen goddess KAREENA KAPOOR
talks about life, stardom, career and more*

PHOTOGRAPHS : PRASAD NAIK / FEMINA

Nothing lasts forever, so they say: That is, unless you are Kareena Kapoor Khan.

She's the quintessential movie star, one of the last in Bollywood. In the age of social media and instant access to actors, she's managed to maintain an aura of mystery around her. She once famously said that she doesn't need to be on social media because she is all over it, anyway. "That's so Bebo na," her fans say every time they come across a statement of hers that no other actress would have dared to utter. Be it Poo from K3G, Chameli from Chameli, Geet from Jab We Met, Dolly from Omkara or Mahi from Heroine, her stardom goes way beyond the films she's chosen or the box office hits she's delivered. Speak to any film critic and they'll bemoan the fact that Kareena is a good actress who doesn't choose "good" films. They'd like her to do "cinema" instead of starring in the masala fare she's known for. But the 41-year-old is content. She's not one to have regrets. Whether she stars in a 100-crore movie or a flop, she'll always remain the one and only Kareena Kapoor Khan. On the eve of Laal Singh Chaddha's release, the actor sat down with us for an exclusive interview. Little did she know it would turn out to be a milestone performance...

In these twenty-two years, what is your main takeaway from being in Bollywood?

Talent is key. Being consistent and humble is important. And always be proud of your accomplishments as well as your failures.

How important is talent and how important is temperament when you're an actor?

Both go hand in hand. Over the years, I've also become a calmer actor, and as you grow, your calmness also grows. I kept growing and now I am better than what I was twenty-two years ago.

Do you feel like you've become calmer when it comes to picking scripts or caring about the box office?

I've always worn both my failure and my success very

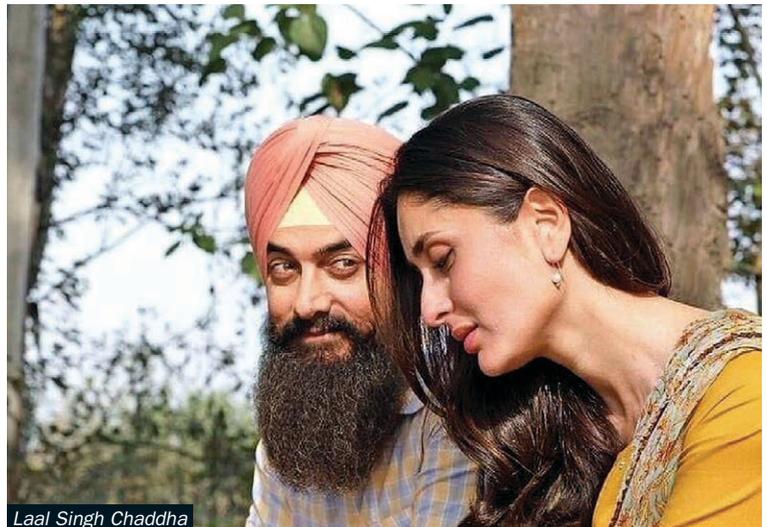
proudly on my shoulders. That's actually what kept me going. Because as an actor, you must be prepared for both. And I think there are takeaways from both. There are lessons from both. So, whether it's picking scripts, whether it's performances, with age and constant ups and downs, calmness has just come with it.

You've had the kind of longevity as an actress that very few people have – from Refugee to Laal Singh Chaddha. What would you say is the secret to your success?

I'm very normal and I don't come with too much baggage. I've never taken myself seriously as a person or as an actor.

Really?

Ya, I think that's the reason because there's no actual



TALENT IS KEY. BEING CONSISTENT AND HUMBLE IS IMPORTANT. AND ALWAYS BE PROUD OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS WELL AS YOUR FAILURES.

planning 'ki yeh picture karni hai'. In fact, I've always been like, "I'll do films that I want to do". Maybe, of course, I've had the privilege of doing so, I'm not denying that. But I've also made decisions that people have thought that 'God she's really silly

and stupid, why's she doing that?" So, it's been a little mix of that, a little mix of chance, and I think ya, a bag full of hopefully talent. That's why I've survived. Otherwise, it's not possible.

Where do you get your self-confidence from?

I think the confidence is in the fact that I know that I love my work, I know that I can do it, and I'm a good actor. Working with Aamir three times over, you know, making it different with 3 Idiots and Talaash-how will that be possible? I'm always like, "No,

it will be, and I'll make sure it is." So there's also a little bit of that. You must have that tenacity within you.

Are there days when you're not confident and if yes, how do you deal with that?

Not really. Maybe I don't feel good on a particular day or about something but that's normal. But I don't think there's been a day that I'm not confident about the fact that I know what I'm doing.

Has this self-confidence been a practice over the years, or is it something that you were just born with?

It's always been there, it's not practised. Nothing is calculated - that is one thing about me. I don't have four agents and two PR people telling me what I'm supposed to do. I've never been that actor. Like 'oh why is this not there, why am I not on this cover, why am I not at this event, what am I doing'. 'We need to do this, or we need to do that'. For me, nothing is calculated. I was quite clear and confident, even at the age of 12.

You don't put filters on your selfies.

When I came to Mehboob Studios for this interview,

I've always worn both my failure and my success very proudly on my shoulders. That's actually what kept me going. Because as an actor, you must be prepared for both



I sauntered in in my jeans and my T-shirt, and I would've been happy to talk in that. But obviously, there's protocol now. But otherwise, I'm happiest when my hair is tied and I'm sitting in my jeans. And I don't know any other way.

There is no other actor in Bollywood who has such a massive fan following in the gay community. Why do you think that is so?

Do you remember your slanging matches with Ameesha Patel?

Oh god, I don't know how. I don't even remember that part of my life.

Does it seem like another lifetime?

It feels like another lifetime. Everything was just so pointless. But now everyone has grown, matured, for that matter, even the media has. Somehow, it's just different now. People also want

thought. Like the things she said and everything else that was not meant to intentionally hurt or do anything. And even Geet, was inspirational in every way because she kind of ran away from home, wanting to marry this guy. She was just a character that gave hope to people. And ever since, most of the characters in Hindi movies now are based somewhat on them, you know. There will always

From size zero to the changes that come with motherhood, how has your relationship with your body changed?

Like every girl, when you're in your teens, you're like, "God, we all want to be thin, we all want to look this way. I wish I had thinner legs, I wish I had thinner arms." Now I'm just like... I'm done. I just want to be happy the way I look. Because I think I look great. And when I look in



With Saif Ali Khan, Saba Ali Khan, Soha Ali Khan, Kunal Kemmu and their children

From school till now, I've just connected better with them. It's somehow more honest. There's a sense of belonging that's there. I don't know why, but I'm happy.

You've never retracted a statement.

I'm okay with whatever and now I've become boring, like how I was on *Koffee With Karan*.

to talk about more different things rather than catfights and things like that.

In 2022, if you had to give Poo and Geet a word of advice, what would you tell them?

They were just perfect in every way. Because they stood for hope, love, and kind of gave people that. You know, Poo was very innocent. She was just doing things the way she

be a hint or a spark that every character will, you know, want to have.

And then Geet started a full trend.

Sure thing, Geet *toh...* Everyone was in a *Patiala salwar* after that. I don't think Poo and Geet need any advice. Because I think they're the kind of people like me—they've lived their life to the fullest.

I want to love myself. Because if I don't love myself, I don't know if others will love me also. You have to first start loving yourself for that

the mirror, I look amazing. And that's what's important. I don't want to have a six-pack.

Does Kareena Kapoor Khan ever look in the mirror and find flaws in herself?

No, because I'm not that kind of person. I don't want to find flaws, I want to love myself. Because if I don't love myself,

I don't know if others will love me also. You have to first start loving yourself for that. And, and I think I do well—even if I know that I have flaws or I'm no more than a size zero (which I don't want to be and I don't think anybody should be). But I don't have long legs, or you know, I'm not a particular height, I'm like, it's fine. People still love me. I am the way I am. You know, I am the girl who actually wants to watch *F.R.I.E.N.D.S.* and eat burgers and fries all her life. If that means that I'll have to be a size ten or twelve, I'm really happy about that. And that's the space I think every girl should be in.

But will that grey hair you've noticed bother

I just want to be happy the way I look. Because I think I look great. And when I look in the mirror, I look amazing. And that's what's important. I don't want to have a six-pack



Stardom is very different and it's more difficult for this generation. Because they have to be really, really good. Because anyone today can be amazing and be on top

you, or that small wrinkle on your face?

It'll never affect me. Because you're as old as you look, and you're as fit as you feel. You have to feel good. I feel amazing now, like after my workout, after I look, I feel I look good. So, I'm just like, I'm like, I'm as old as I look.

So, do you think movies have changed in that sense?

Because there was a time when actresses would hide their age?



Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham

Hide their age, hide their pregnancy, hide their marriage. They would do everything.

And you have actually announced it to the world. So, do you think the attitude in the industry has changed?

I think so. And I'm hoping that it will. It is high time that it changed. Today, it's not just about being a twenty-something and getting a role and, you know, whatever. Because

of the types of performances that are taking place today, I believe that you must be a serious actor. Whether it's on the web or OTT, whether it's in films, people. I think there is work for serious actors. Like now, it's all about how the game has changed. I just worked with Vijay (Varma) and Jaideep (Ahlawat) and I found the whole experience to be amazing. Because you get to learn so

much. I'm dying to see Darlings because I know all of them are just going to be unbelievable. So today it's not about that. And if like-minded people are thinking that way. It's really archaic.

But you know how it used to be. Actresses used to sit at home after having kids. Now it's no longer the case.

No, now I believe there are roles for everyone. Today, actors are cast if

they are suitable for the role, and if you know what they can bring to the table. Not just for their star value.

But do you feel like the era of the superstar is over? Even when Karan first introduced you on Koffee, he stated that you are the quintessential, bona fide movie star.

We are in the day and age of accessibility. Stardom is very different and it's



Jab We Met

more difficult for this generation. Because they have to be really, really good. Because anyone today can be amazing and be on top. So today, everybody has to be on their toes.

What is the one thing about social media that you think would have been beneficial when you made your film debut and what is the one reason, you're glad, it wasn't there.

I remember how, at

the time, we were all very innocent. We would literally just be excited to be facing the camera. Today, people instantly upload a picture and everyone goes, "Super hot, super hot, fab, fab, amazing." At that time, we were waiting for people to watch our films and give us their reactions. Which was amazing because, you know, it was genuine. But I love Instagram.

And I just feel there should be no place for negativity. Like on my page, I don't need the comments. Because there's no place for that. Because you know, it's a happy page, it talks about my life, my family, what I like, how much I eat, it's a positive page. You want to come, come on it, but you know, I don't care about eighty million. I just want people to just like me and know me for what I am. ■



Beyond
the
ordinary

JITESH PILLAAI INTERVIEWS ALIA BHATT, WHO IS BEAMING WITH THE MATERNITY GLOW AND IS BASKING IN THE SUCCESS OF *DARLINGS*, HER FIRST PRODUCTION VENTURE

She finds the space between the words in the dialogue and makes magic.

Is there anything she can't do other than fly? She does it on screen. Alia Bhatt in her latest outing, Darlings, breaks your heart and gives you hope. She's soft, she's vulnerable, and she's hard as nails. She morphs in every scene like a chameleon. How does she do it? Maybe there is some "source" in the ether from where she channels this changeling persona.

This year, from her spitfire turn in Gangubai Kathiawadi to Darlings, it's nothing short of terrific. Darlings deals with the not-so-easily-discussed topic of domestic abuse. Darlings is dark and funny, and full marks to the director who makes a moving and yet zany caper about those living life on the edge. At the heart of it all is Alia as Badru, ably supported by the sensational Shefali Shah, is there anything he can't do-Vijay Varma and the dependable Roshan Mathew.

With such razor-sharp ensemble performances and a movie which made me think about why women go through what they do, I asked Alia Bhatt a few questions.



You have turned producer with *Darlings*, despite the director, Jasmeet K. Reen, being a debutant. Is it your gut feeling which says this is the kind of film you should produce? Jasmeet co-wrote it with Parveez Shaikh. The fact that she wrote the script and the fact that she wanted to direct it made me believe that she knew this world better than anyone else. I felt if anybody could do justice to the script, it would be her. There was also this gut feeling that she had the understanding and good sense because there was a certain texture and tonality that she had brought to Badru's world. The script was so unique and surprising. Somebody gave me an opportunity when I was a nobody, and after having been in the industry for so many years, I also want to be able to support new talent. Instinctively, I felt that this would fit just right.

How did such a dark subject grip you? Did you think of sending it to Ranbir Kapoor or Karan Johar? I never send my

scripts to anybody, be it Ranbir or Karan. I always try to make the decision myself. When I wanted to produce *Darlings*, I took advice from my father, director Abhishek Varman, and Aman Gill, who is a producer and good friend. They all loved the script, so I asked if I should produce it. They all echoed the same reply: "Yes". I have done a film like *Udta Punjab*, which was really dark, including my character. But *Darlings* tells a story of hope. There's a positive message at the end. For me, that positive thing in the end matters.

You seem to shine under female directors, whether it's Zoya Akhtar or Meghna Gulzar or Gauri Shinde. Is it because Jasmeet was a woman that she was able to understand domestic abuse better? What is it that separates female directors from males? If you are telling a story of a woman trying to find her feet in a man's world, then I feel no one is better than a woman to tell that story. But you never know, a man could



“Badru is an eternal optimist and assumes that it takes time for people to change and that things will eventually work out. She feels one should give people a chance”

“
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that story”

also have a very interesting gaze. I don’t think gender has a part to play. It’s your knowledge and understanding of the way people are treated. I can definitely say that there would have been no better person to direct *Darlings* than Jasmeet because she wrote it and created it. But I can’t say there’s no better person than a woman to understand violence against women. That wouldn’t be fair and a bit of a cliché. We don’t want men to be unfair to us, so why should we be unfair to them?

Your character Badru didn’t take enough of a stand against her husband...

If, as a viewer, you feel so strongly about Badru, it’s great. Basically, you just want to wake somebody up. Badru is an eternal optimist and assumes that it takes time for people to change and that things will eventually work out. She feels one should give people a chance, and she’s just brushing everything under the carpet.

You have a compatible relationship with all your screen mothers, whether it was in *Gully Boy* or whether it was *Dear Zindagi* and now *Darlings*...

That’s true. In cases of domestic violence like in *Darlings*, usually the mothers would say ‘don’t leave, bear it’ and all of that. Here Shamshunissa (my mother in the film) says all the opposite

things to me, which I find so beautiful because it’s honest, it’s real, it’s daring, and it’s what you need to hear in a situation like that.

Would you agree that the turning point in the film was when you abuse Hamza and say “ladki thi”? And also the hospital scene. What was going on in your mind when you were doing those scenes?

In the hospital scene, you are just mourning and somehow coming to terms with it. In the scene where I abuse him, I am irritated that he’s bringing out this violent side of me. And becoming this person who wants to inflict pain on him. It’s something that she really does not want to do, but she’s doing it out of anger and vengeance. The wound is still raw. The subtext is that if he were to manipulate her, she

could slip in that moment because her emotions were so raw. But she doesn’t.

You have an amazing chemistry with Shefali Shah in the film...

Individually we are all actors who have our own process of bringing our characters to life. Whether it was Shefali, Vijay Varma, or Roshan Mathew. It’s the director’s tone which brings you under one roof. We did our first reading and it was nice. But you never get a sense of a scene in a room with a script and a table. You have to be in costume, in character, on the set and in front of the camera to get real. I remember when going back home one day I was feeling extremely happy and satisfied with the day’s work. We had worked for 12 hours and I already felt like going back on the set. That is a good



←With Ranbir Kapoor

indication of work going well. But you never want to say it, you don't want to jinx it. You just feel it and hope to feel it again and again.

Playing a character who is going through emotional and physical abuse must be very alien to you. As a privileged person, what kind of reference points did you have?

I didn't have any reference points. People do ask me whether I met someone or spoke to someone. I don't know, maybe I did, but no one was my reference point.

Okay, suppose there were friends who were going through emotional abuse and toxic relationships.

What would be your instant reaction?

My instant advice to anybody would be to get out of a toxic relationship. But a lot of people don't want to hear that advice. They need to reach that point themselves.

Was there a conflict between the privileged la-di-da actor and

the money-counting producer?

Never! Because I am and will always be a creative person first. And I don't understand money. That's why I had Red Chillies to partner with, and they handled that beautifully.

Heart Of Stone was your first Hollywood project, and you were pregnant while filming with Gal Gadot (who was also pregnant while filming



“My mum has been a great example of everything to me. I have zero complaints about the kind of mum she has been all my life. She's a beautiful example and obviously you try to be as good, lovely and perfect as possible”

Wonder Woman). Were you intimidated or scared as you had to wrap up the schedule in one shot?

The shooting took place as per schedule. They did have to change a few things around and pull up a lot of work to see that I was done by a certain date as I had to come back here. But the whole team was extremely accommodating. I was grateful because I was shooting my first action movie and also doing some stunts. They had doubles and I was made to feel very comfortable. And that's all that matters, especially when you are doing it for the first time. When I called up Gal and told her that I was pregnant, she said, "Oh my God, that's going to be amazing." She had such a lovely reaction and said that it was a good omen for the movie. She and her husband were very supportive. Even Karan Johar was fantastic because I was in the middle of shooting for *Rocky And Rani* when I

told him that I was pregnant. I was just back from a shoot and Karan was always like, 'Alia, please watch your step, watch your step!' Which he always did, but now he was doing it even more. Our production team had to deal with correct angles and all of that. Everybody has been so lovely, so excited and so supportive.

Marriage happened so quickly, and the baby also arrived quickly. Did you have the time to process all this?

I don't know if I had the time to process it, but it feels the same. There's a different dynamic with so much more love and detail as we are no longer girlfriend and boyfriend and are going to be parents. There's some new beautiful energy which I can't explain. I feel like touching my head, touching wood, and everything around me.

Would you advocate

living-in for everyone before getting married?

Yes, if you can, why not? It's great because you get used to each other, you get comfortable and you build so many memories without the pressure and baggage of being married. But each to his own.

With so much excitement and friends and relatives, what was going through your head when you were getting married?

He proposed to me in January when we went for our holiday, and that was the time it started processing and changing. For me, it was like an exciting adventure coming ahead and nothing much to process.

When you marry into such a large family, does anything change?

There was acceptance and warmth from the very beginning. We have been together for so many years now.

How did your sister Shaheen react?

There was a lot of

crying! Tears of joy and tears of this and tears of that...

And Pooja?

My dad told Pooja that I didn't really get to see her first expression, but lots of love and only good energy.

Looking at your mother, do you ever think what kind of a mom you would be?

My mum has been a great example of everything to me. I have zero complaints about the kind of mum she has been all my life. She's a beautiful example and obviously you try to be as good, lovely and perfect as possible. But there's no such thing as being a perfect parent. You just try to be as honest and as real as possible.

What was the reaction of your dad and mum to your pregnancy?

My dad started dancing, thrilled that he was going to become a grandfather. For my mum, it was health and safety and the usual instructions.

Coming to *Brahmastra Part One : Shiva*. It's a macho film, and you were obviously in a relationship with Ranbir when you were doing the film.

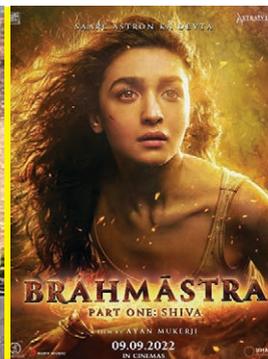
The relationship was happening behind the scenes, on the side and in the film. But at the end of the day, Ayan Mukerji's vision was so much larger and there was so much at stake. There was a lot that we had to give, and that was all that mattered when we were working. Everything else took a backseat. Of course, there were moments like when *Kesaria* was playing and I would look at Ranbir and he would look at me. It's great when you are romancing for real with the music playing in the background, which only happens in the movies. The whole experience of shooting for *Brahmastra* has been the best I have ever had in my life. The hope is that it all comes together.

Are you a better wife or girlfriend?

I am a great human being! I would say both. *(Laughs)*

"When I called up Gal and told her that I was pregnant, she said, "Oh my God, that's going to be amazing." She had such a lovely reaction and said that it was a good omen for the movie"

With Gal Gadot →





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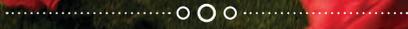


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hunting

**JANHVI KAPOOR GOT A LOT OF PRAISE FOR
HER RECENT OTT RELEASE GOOD LUCK JERRY.
ANURADHA CHOUDHARY CHATS WITH HER ABOUT
CAREER CHOICES AND MORE...**



Looking at her, you don't feel that you're

talking to a stranger. There's an instant connection, though we haven't interacted much before. She seems like a happy-go-lucky girl, but when you scratch the surface, you find her to be an actor deeply in love with her craft. An actor who wants to push the envelope with every outing. An actor whose only wish is to grow, to learn, to be counted as someone relevant to the scheme of things. Someone who feels that, given her pedigree, more is expected of her and she holds on to that high ideal, striving to achieve it in every which way. Her earnestness is refreshing, as is her candour. She's someone who is aware and grateful of her privileges and keeps her feet planted firmly on the ground. Excerpts from a candid interview with the talented Janhvi Kapoor:



Are you happy about the response to *Good Luck Jerry*?

I was expecting more from *Gunjan* also, and then I felt like people were being sceptical about praising openly because of what was going on, so I was like *iss baar bhi wohi hoga* but people were being very expressive, so I was like, so happy.

So, are you on top of the world right now?

No, I don't let myself feel on top of the world. *Kyunki abhi kiya hi kya hai*. I'll feel on top of the world when I'm back on a film set, feeling like I'm doing something to make it even better.

How would you rate your performance in the film and how would you rate the film?

Can I be very honest? I think the film is a six point five on ten, and I think I'm also a six point five on ten.

Did you surprise yourself when you saw the film?

I knew that there were a lot of scenes where I got to do something different from what the audiences had seen me do before, and that was a lot of fun for me, to try things differently, to try my hand at comic timing, to be this girl who is playing everyone.

I was waiting for you to

mess up, but you didn't. What is the kind of preparation that went behind it?

The Bihari dialect took a lot of preparation. For two months, I prepared extensively for that. Then there's the planning: *Jab woh ghar pe hoti hai, toh Bihari zyada organically aana chahiye*. I spent a lot of time on planning things like that, and in understanding Jerry's backstory. It was fun.

You could've easily done movies that are just commercial instead of middle-of-the-road cinema.

I was very lucky that Karan Johar believed in me enough to give me a story like *Gunjan Saxena*. Having said that, I really, really want to do the singing, dancing, and glitz. I really want to do all of that also, but this is like food for my soul. So when an opportunity like that comes, I can't pass on this because then I'll be a very depleted, hollow artist. I need to do both, actually.

Do you think doing films that are more art than mart has worked to your advantage?

I can only hope. In my opinion, it's worked to my advantage in the sense that I feel like I've grown and I'm more confident in

“YOU’VE GOT TO WORK EXTRA HARD TO WIN APPRECIATION. AND PEOPLE WILL ONLY APPRECIATE YOU IF THEY FEEL YOU’RE SOMEONE WHO HAS THE WHEREWITHAL TO DELIVER THE GOODS”



Good Luck Jerry

front of the camera and I'm more confident in what I have to offer, and in my capabilities. I'll work harder than anyone else on the set to make sure I get there, to make sure that my director is happy.

You were talking about doubts, so were there moments where you had doubts about your ability?

I had doubts during *Dhadak* for sure. I was like, "This character is from a completely different world. I hope I get it." And I realised the key to it is actually believing that you can do it. There shouldn't be any doubts because the camera captures it. I stopped overthinking and slowly, the scenes started working for me.

You come from a privileged background.

When you play a character like Jerry, who is a Bihari selling momos in Punjab, how difficult does it become for you to empathise with the character and get under the skin of the character?

The excitement is in getting to know that world. And my director knew a lot about that world and he explained many things to me, and there were a lot of things, like even though it's not an autobiographical drama, there was a lot of research that an actor can still do. You can watch videos of people from there, you can understand the geography of the place, how there are so many Bihari migrant workers coming to Punjab to work, what they feel like displacement, what it feels like to have that financial

pressure when there's no man in the house, what it feels like to feel like your mother's life is threatened and you are feeling the burden of that. I know I'm in an industry where I'm constantly trying to prove my merit to people who think I'm not deserving to be here. *Toh kahin na kahin woh parallels mil jaate hai*.

How do you vindicate yourself when you feel like, OK, there are people who think she's not deserving? How do you deal with that?

See, it used to bother me, till, honestly, till I shot for *Jerry*. Then I realised that talent, beauty, popularity *ka pata nahi mujhe*, personality *ka bhi pata nahi*, mein *itna jaanti hu*, *ki mein itni mehnti hu*, *ki yeh mujhse koi nahi cheen sakta*.

(I realised that I am sure about talent, beauty, popularity, or personality, but one thing I'm sure about myself is that I'm very hard-working. No one can take that away from me). I bring an eagerness to learn, to grow, and to work hard to the table. When I come across comments like, "Learn to act first," I now know that I'll be able to win them over one day.

Do you think the audience is now going to take you seriously?

I hope I've given them reason to at least look at my work with an open mind. People say outsiders don't get work. And then they try to find fault in your work as you're an "insider." Expectations are always high and you have to set your own bar high as well. You've got to work extra hard to win appreciation. And people will only appreciate you if they feel you're someone who has the wherewithal to deliver the goods. I enjoy doing films like *Good Luck Jerry* as I enjoy playing characters that aren't run of the mill. Tell me, objectively, what do you think the reaction would have been if someone who didn't come from a film family had done *Gunjan*



I WAS VERY LUCKY THAT KARAN JOHAR BELIEVED IN ME ENOUGH TO GIVE ME A STORY LIKE GUNJAN SAXENA. HAVING SAID THAT, I REALLY, REALLY WANT TO DO THE SINGING, DANCING, AND GLITZ

Saxena exactly the way I did it?

Are you saying they'd have gotten more praise?

I'm a fairly objective person. I'm not delusional. When you feel your work hasn't been appreciated objectively, you stop expecting things. You feel that, however hard you try, people will judge you on the basis of your insider status. That pessimism needs to be overcome. The other side of the argument is that people will say you got the film easily. The audience will always play God. The only way to please them is to keep doing good work and entertaining them. All I can ask them is to be a little more

objective in their judgement.

Do you think there's a trend where women are coming to the front, or does that come with its own challenges?

I think it comes with its own challenges if you're not as big a star as Vidya Balan or Alia Bhatt, who've been doing author-backed roles on a regular basis. Hopefully, one day. And the pressures are more financial, because producers then think of things like: *iske naam pe, sirf iske naam pe film kar rahe hain, toh recovery milegi ki nahi.* (Would her name guarantee recovery?) Today, when the footfalls in the theatres are low, that becomes more of a concern.

But the advent of OTT platforms has levelled the playing field a bit. There are so many different kinds of films being made, and new talent and voices are getting an opportunity to grow.

Now you have Mr. and Mrs. Mahi also. You have headlined it for the kind of training you've put in. Tell us about the film.

Mahi and *Bawaal* are two films where I resonate with my characters so deeply. I just finished *Bawaal* and being on that journey was like the most blessed thing. *Mahi* I'm scared because Sharan's a bit of a taskmaster, but I know how special *Gunjan* is to me, how much it changed me as a person and how fulfilled you feel as an artiste because you feel like you've given your life to something.

So tell me what the best thing about being an actor is for you.

Learning. Through my films, I've learnt what it's like to be a Bihari migrant in Punjab; I've learnt how to ride a chopper; I've spent 18 hours a day in a freezer that they built for me in *Mili*; and I've fallen sick countless times because of that. I'm learning how to play cricket. By nature, I am a slightly nomadic person.

I love talking to people and growing, and I'm an empath. If I speak to you for long enough, *mujhe sab jaana hota hai. Aapka pehla boyfriend kaisa tha, your first job, what it was like, what the room smelled like when you entered it, how your boss spoke to you, all those things.* I love those little details. And then I like to imagine what it'd be like if I lived that life. So that's why acting is such a soul-fulfilling thing for me.

Do people ever misjudge you?

All the time. Every time I'd go to meetings, every time I'd interact with anyone, they'd be like, "We didn't know you were like this. We didn't know you were nice." So many people thought that I was reserved and so many people even during these interviews have said, "You're so glamorous and put together and you're playing a Bihari girl, it doesn't make sense." But that's the excitement in it for me. That's also an actor's job, right. Sometimes you play a mentally handicapped person, you may play someone from another ethnicity, sometimes you play an alien. Does it mean in real life too that you're an alien walking around? ■

I DON'T LET MYSELF FEEL ON TOP OF THE WORLD. KYUNKI ABHI KIYA HI KYA HAI. I'LL FEEL ON TOP OF THE WORLD WHEN I'M BACK ON A FILM SET, FEELING LIKE I'M DOING SOMETHING TO MAKE IT EVEN BETTER



Gunjan Saxena: *The Kargil Girl*

LETHAL FORCE

DHANUSH HAD AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN THE RUSSO BROTHERS' *THE GRAY MAN*. TANZIM PARDIWALLA CHATS WITH THE SUPERSTAR ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE



Dhanush occupies an interesting space in pop culture. Somewhere between winning accolades for films like *Aadukalam* (2011), the internet phenomenon *Why this kolaveri di*, and *Asuran* (2019), he rose to fame. And that was only the beginning of his career spanning decades. Over the years, Dhanush has taken to directing, producing and music-making. After winning over the South and Bollywood, the superstar has now set his gaze westwards. Dhanush recently made his Hollywood debut with the Russo Brothers' *The Gray Man* starring Ryan Gosling, Chris Evans, Ana de Armas and more. The big-budget action thriller sees him play Avik San, a Tamilian agent and a man of few words. A character that seems to be tailor-made for the actor. However, actions speak louder than words, and Dhanush certainly isn't one to keep it low key. In *The Gray Man*, he goes up against Ryan Gosling's Court Gentry with an unparalleled swagger. That's just what you get when you pair one of our biggest stars with some of the most prolific action filmmakers Hollywood has to offer. In an exclusive interview with *Filmfare*, Dhanush opened up about his scene-stealing Hollywood debut, Indian representation in international cinema, and more.



The Gray Man

WHEN I CHOOSE A TAMIL FILM, IT'S DIFFERENT; WHEN I CHOOSE A HINDI FILM, IT'S DIFFERENT ... THE SCOPE FOR ME TO DELIVER AS A PERFORMER AND CONNECTIVITY IS WHAT I LOOK FOR WHEN I CHOOSE A FILM

Your character, Avik San, is described as a "lethal force" in the posters. What was your approach to playing him?

To be honest, I gave in to what the characters required, and this character specifically needed more physical preparation because of the intense action scenes.

The Gray Man sees you do the "superhero landing," so if you were to be cast in a superhero film, which character would you pick? I would rather have a superhero character developed for me, an Indian superhero.

While the Russo Brothers

are known for action films, including Marvel's *Avengers*, we're curious to know if you had any notes or ideas for them. Haha, not really. Our interaction was more or less limited to the film in hand.

In the film, you have an extended fight sequence with Ryan Gosling and Ana de Armas. What was your experience of shooting those scenes?

The stunt choreographers, James and Mark, were really awesome and made the whole process really smooth in how I learnt and what I learnt. All the actors had trained really hard, and there were a lot of rehearsals, but when we went on the floor, it all just exploded.

What was your experience of working with Ryan Gosling, Chris Evans, and Ana de Armas?

It was a great experience to work with such international actors. They were kind and professional, and I had a great time.

What made you pick *The Gray Man*? Can you give us an insight into why you pick certain films and your process of choosing roles? It's the Russos. What more reason do you need? They are the biggest action filmmakers, and I saw this as an opportunity to explore and learn more. Choosing roles for me varies from industry to industry. When I choose a Tamil film, it's different; when I choose a Hindi film, it's different, but having said that in general, the scope for me to deliver as a performer and connectivity is what I look for when I choose a film.

You have done a fair share of action films. Which films from your career would you say prepared you for your Hollywood debut? I think all the films are put together. The knowledge I have gathered in the last two decades in the film industry has immensely helped me to showcase what

I can contribute to this character.

How different was the on-set experience in Hollywood from filming for projects in the South and in Bollywood? As an actor, I did not feel any difference, but the technicians would know more about the working differences in all industries.

We're finally seeing good Indian representation internationally in the past few years. Can you talk about how important it is for you to be a part of that? I'm just glad talent from our country is being recognised all over the world. It's about time.

And finally, how would you say you have evolved as an actor from your very first film to your big Hollywood release?

Your question pretty much describes evolution. I feel blessed and grateful to have had the opportunity to work with such amazing directors from our country who built and shaped my career. ■



MARCHING AHEAD

ISHWAK SINGH MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF PLAYING COP IMRAN ANSARI IN THE GRITTY *PATAAL LOK*. **JITESH PILLAI** TALKS TO THE ACTOR WHOSE ROOTS ARE IN THEATRE

Sometimes, a character pops out of a film or a series and grabs your attention without being the protagonist. One such actor is Ishwak Singh. One saw him recently as physicist Vikram Sarabhai in the seminal series. His defining role came with *Paatal Lok*, where he played an honest cop hailing from Kashmir, who is subject to casual racism in Delhi. He appeared as the conscience keeper of the series, holding a mirror to the corrupt practices of his colleagues in particular and the society in general. Ishwak studied to be an architect, got into acting by joining the theatre group Asmita, then followed the usual routine of auditions to jump onwards to films and TV. After doing bit roles in *Raanjhanaa* and *Malaal*, he got his big break with *Paatal Lok* and seems to be on his way to bigger and better things. Excerpts from an in-depth interview with the talented youngster...

YOU COME FROM AN ARCHITECTURE BACKGROUND. DO YOU SEE A SIMILARITY BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND ACTING?

Why only architecture? Dancers would also find a common ground between dancing and acting, as would artists and musicians. Even martial arts, which I have been practising for a while, have similarities. The basic principles of performing arts and art are the same. But when you compare architecture and acting, there is a lot of similarity in the art part of architecture. The best

one is methodology. Not that there is a fixed way to do things, because when it comes to acting, it is always fluid. So there is no set pattern that I have and I don't structure it so much that it takes the joy away. But I guess there's a certain discipline, like the fact that as an architect you sit at the drawing board and make drawings and notes and as an actor you write and think about the character. I find a great deal of commonality between acting and writing. I end up writing a lot about my character because when I am performing, I need to



“THEATRE WAS THE STARTING POINT OF MY JOURNEY, AND EVERYTHING ONWARDS HAPPENED VERY ORGANICALLY. I STARTED WITH A WORKSHOP, BECAME PART OF A THEATRE GROUP AND TRAVELLED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY DOING PLAYS”

know him well.

YOU SEEM TO HAVE DONE A LOT OF STAGE WORK.

Theatre was the starting point of my journey, and everything onwards happened organically. I started with a workshop, became part of a theatre group and travelled all

over the country doing plays. That was a great experience. Then I started getting films and doing some work in the South. All thanks to casting directors who hunt for talent in theatre groups.

INSTEAD OF LOOKING FOR TYPICAL HEROES, DO

YOU THINK THE CASTING DIRECTORS ARE LOOKING FOR ACTORS WITH SUBSTANCE, AND THAT IS BEING REFLECTED IN THE KIND OF SERIES BEING MADE TODAY?

Yes, absolutely. When you take up the performing arts, you are quizzed about how you are going to make it in this niche space, especially when you don't have contacts. When I saw captivating movies like *Black Friday* and *Gangs Of Wasseypur*, I got all the more inspired. For me, every frame in these films was extraordinary, coupled with remarkable acting. It was inspiring to know that these serious actors were selected by casting agents. It gave me hope that if someone was looking out for talent and I had earned it, then I'd probably get my shot.

YOUR CASTING DIRECTOR, ABHISHEK BANERJEE, SAID HE WAS KEEN TO DO YOUR ROLE IN PAATAL LOK. DID YOU DISCUSS IT WITH HIM?

I wasn't aware of it until he spoke about it in interviews. I think he was great in his part and he would have done a pretty good job if he had done my part. And I would have been happy to do his part, though I would have had my own take on it. Unfortunately, it's not a play where we can re-stage and change the parts. That's one thing I enjoyed a lot on stage.

WHAT KIND OF NOTES DID YOU MAKE WHEN YOU WERE WORKING ON YOUR CHARACTER, IMRAN ANSARI, IN PAATAL LOK, AND WHAT DO YOU THINK NOW WHEN YOU WATCH YOURSELF?

For me, preparation is an

important part of the whole thing. I am particularly interested in the first part when you are reading the text. It sends you on an organic trail and inspires you to read books and even meet people. If I ever play a film critic or a journalist, I will come to you. Every time you play a new personality whose psyche you are not familiar with, it's inspiring. And when you get those insights, it is like an eye opener. I end up dissecting and deconstructing and seeing the whole process of shooting.

DID YOU DISCOVER THE LATENT COMMUNALISM WHEN YOU WERE WORKING ON YOUR CHARACTER?

I would say there were a few avenues which were very clear to me. One, what it is like to be an Indian Muslim today; and secondly, what it is like to be a rookie cop in *Paatal Lok*, irrespective of religion.

WHAT WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF PLAYING ANSARI? AND WHEN WAS THAT MOMENT YOU REALISED YOU HAD CRACKED IT?

It's not difficult or easy. There are always challenges, like working long hours and not getting enough time, etc. But if I have the basics in place, it doesn't change much from scene to scene, even if there's action or something intimate or something personal. It's all a part of me.

IF YOU WERE TO MEET YOUR PAATAL LOK CO-ACTOR, JAIDEEP AHLAWAT, IN REAL LIFE, WHAT KIND OF QUESTIONS WOULD YOU



“EVERY TIME YOU PLAY A NEW PERSONALITY WHOSE PSYCHE YOU ARE NOT VERY FAMILIAR WITH, IT'S VERY INSPIRING. AND WHEN YOU GET THOSE INSIGHTS, IT IS LIKE AN EYE OPENER”

ASK HIM?

Seriously, I would have a lot of questions for him. Since I have enjoyed some of the movies he has been part of, I would ask him about them. His track in the film *Gangs Of Wasseypur* was understated and interesting, and his performance was remarkable. There was a fight sequence in the film that I am curious about. Then a bunch of other things he has done on stage in Delhi and his experiences in film school. And since he's from Haryana and I am from Delhi, I guess we would have had a lot of common things to talk about.

YOU PLAYED RENOWNED SCIENTIST, DR VIKRAM SARABHAI, IN ROCKET BOYS, ONE WHO MADE INDIA PROUD. DID YOU HAVE ANY PARTICULAR TAKEAWAY FROM THE ROLE?

I was super happy to play

the part. It taught me so much about myself and about some great people in our country who laid the foundations for modern India.

DO YOU OVERTHINK YOUR ROLES, OR DO YOU PLAY THEM AS THEY COME?

It depends on the writing. If the writing is simple, then it's okay. But if it has layers and you are talking about religion, and what it means to be this person in today's times in a certain location in Delhi, then I need to go to these places to find out what it's like. Complex writing needs a complex process. Like, in *Paatal Lok*, why was my character living in an outer district of Delhi, an almost dystopian city, considering he is a Kashmiri, etc.? I spent a lot of time with the cops there.

IS THERE ANY AUDITION WHERE YOU SAW ANOTHER



genuinely believe that there is no dearth of talent.

NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUI ONCE SAID THAT THERE IS A LOT OF JUGAAD IN THE OTT SPACE AND HE WOULDN'T WANT TO DO IT ANY MORE. HOW DO YOU VIEW OTT?

It's an individualistic viewpoint. If someone believes that it's not the same as it used to be, I am sure that there are reasons for that. My exposure to OTT is different and limited compared to a lot of senior actors. But so far it has been great from my point of view. There's some great stuff being done. I'm happy with the things I'm doing right now.

YOU HAVE WORKED WITH DIRECTORS LIKE HANSAL MEHTA, MANGESH HADAWALE, SHASHANKA GHOSH, IMTIAZ ALI, AND ANUBHAV SINHA. WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A DIRECTOR AS AN ACTOR?

I've never thought about it. Every director is different in the way they want their actors to perform. For me, a director gives you a canvas and every time the canvas is of a different size and orientation. You just have to paint within. And every time it's going to be a different parameter. It's as simple as that.

CAN YOU NAME FIVE FILMS AN ACTOR MUST WATCH TO UNDERSTAND ACTING?

What works for me might not work for someone else. But there are a few films I go back to again and again. *Birdman*, *Whiplash*, *Satya*, *Gangs Of Wasseypur*, *Black Friday*, *Gulal*, *Garam Hawa*, *Godfather*, *Sicario*. I also watched all of Al Pacino, Jack Nicholson and Daniel Day Lewis movies. ■

ACTOR AND YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD HAVE DONE A BETTER JOB?

We don't get to see each other's auditions, and I wouldn't have been surprised if someone had done a better job, because I

“MY EXPOSURE TO OTT IS DIFFERENT AND LIMITED COMPARED TO A LOT OF SENIOR ACTORS BUT SO FAR IT HAS BEEN GREAT FROM MY POINT OF VIEW”

PRINCE *of* POP

ANURADHA CHOUDHARY CONVERSES WITH MUSIC DIRECTOR AMAAL MALLIK

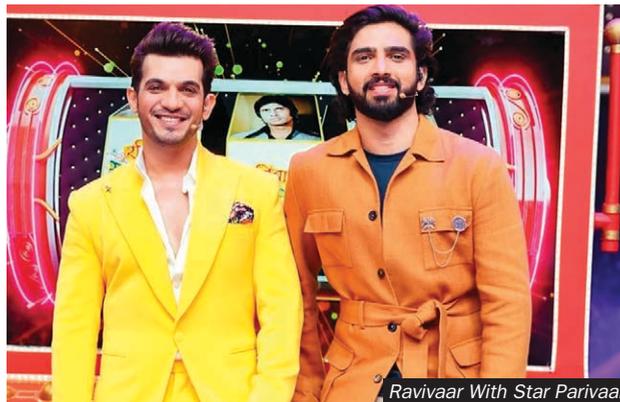
Composer and singer Amaal Mallik has not only made a name for himself through his work in Hindi films but has also climbed the popularity charts when it comes to independent music. Being the grandson of iconic veteran music director Sardar Malik, he's aware of his legacy. Like his grandfather, he's known for the infusion of melody in his compositions. Currently, he's also hosting a show called Ravivaar With Star Parivaar. It's the start of a new innings for him but he's taken to it like a duck takes to water. Clearly, there was an actor hidden in him which has come out now. He's reached many milestones in his young age but remains humble and rooted as ever. Excerpts from an interview where the talented composer talks about his new ventures, changing face of film music and more...

Let's start with your new avatar as a TV host.

I'm ecstatic. The first few times I did it, it was a complete departure from my world because we come from the film industry and TV is in a different league. 16 hours of shooting on set. That is very unusual for a composer of music to do. But I've always acted like an anchor when I looked in the mirror since I was a child. "This year's recipient is..." I used to change my voice and do this in the shower.

How did this happen?

They desired someone with musical ability and the ability to sing. They



“WHEN ACTORS OR PRODUCERS ARE STUCK AND UNABLE TO COME UP WITH A GOOD HEARTFELT SONG, THEY COME TO ME”

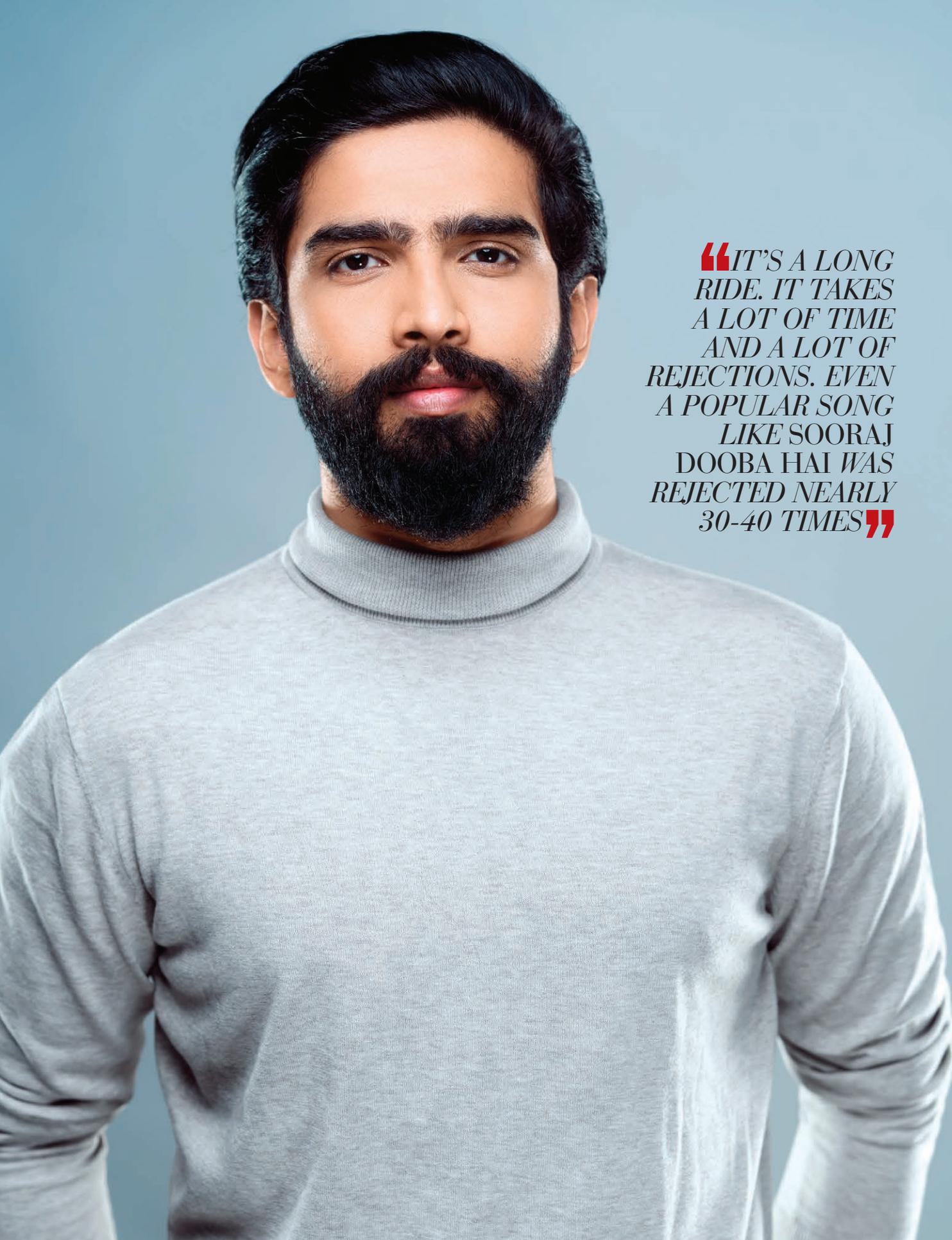
auditioned me and fell in love with me. They wanted someone who is young and introduces new music to the show. Because it is a show that appeals to a wide range of people. The music spans the years from 1930 to 2022.

What was the experience?

I'm interacting with different types of people. Arjun Bijlani and I have a good chemistry as well. On the set, we are similar to Jay and Veeru. It's almost like one big family.

Is there an actor hidden inside you?

This is something I'm



**“IT’S A LONG
RIDE. IT TAKES
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AND A LOT OF
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LIKE SOORAJ
DOOBA HAI WAS
REJECTED NEARLY
30-40 TIMES”**

doing for my fans. They've been telling me for a long time that I should be in music videos. It's difficult to look at the camera. There are some songs that do not suit my voice. So I didn't want to take any chances, and I'm not particularly fond of acting. I'm having a great time in this closed studio, driving and making music. Independent music has always been a pipe dream. There was no way for me to make a name for myself in college. Those were my father's dreams, so I reasoned, let's make dad's dream a reality, and then we'll see. I started my own label and signed with Sony as an artist in the last two years. In some ways, this show also gives back to my fans.

Are you comfortable in front of the camera?

It's difficult. In the first video, I was extremely nervous. But when I did *Pyar ek tarfa* with Jasmin Basin, it became second nature. Hemant Kher was a great help to me when I was judging *Sa Re GA Ma PA*. He was showing me the angles and everything.

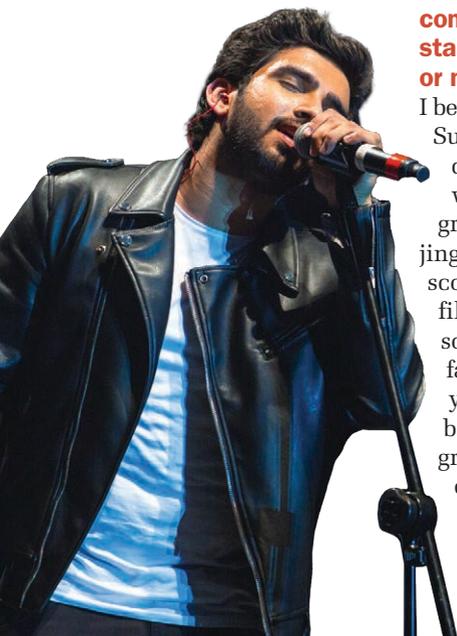
I had no idea what it was. I am very comfortable doing what I know for the music videos. I'm just going to be myself and live my song lyrics.

You are a music composer, a singer, a lyricist, and a TV host. You wear so many hats. Which one do you identify with the most?

It feels great to me to create something from nothing. My first love has always been music, but now that I have founded MVM, I am also a label head. In the last two or three years, I've met a lot of young people who say they don't have a place to release their music and are unsure *ki hum karenge toh kon sunega?* So I'd like to have a place where I can be there for them. There was this RJ who did one of my radio interviews, and she had a lovely voice. So I told them to just give me the song and I'd release it. I enjoy introducing new writers and singers. I am able to help them live their journey while also living mine.

How different is the music scene today as compared to when you started out? Is it easier or much more difficult?

I began assisting Salim-Sulaiman and other composers when I was 16 years old. I gradually completed jingles and background scores for 30-40 films. People say that sometimes you are favoured, sometimes you are not, or you belong to a certain group, and so on. At the end of the day, it's all about comfort. Mani



“DESPITE THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE SEEN ME AT AFTERTARTIES, I AM HIDDEN SOMEWHERE. BECAUSE THAT IS NOT MY PERSONALITY, I GRAVITATE TOWARD REAL PEOPLE AND SPEND TIME WITH THEM”

Ratnam collaborates with Rehman Sir 95 per cent of the time. Anurag Basu will only collaborate with Pritam *Da*. It's a long ride. It takes a lot of time and a lot of rejections. Even a popular song like *Sooraj dooba hai* was rejected nearly 30-40 times. There

are numerous outlets for distributing your music nowadays. Anyone entering now should be aware that they are not alone. There will be thousands of other artists like you, you must bring your unique voice to the game.



Saina

“MY SONGS GIVE THE SOUND OF 2022, BUT MY SOUL, WRITING, LYRICS, AND COMPOSITION COME STRAIGHT FROM THE '60S AND '70S”

Do you think you have cemented your position in the industry?

I work in the industry but am not very social. Despite the fact that you have seen me at afterparties, I am hidden somewhere. Because that is not my personality, I gravitate toward real people and spend time with them. Somehow, I feel happier in that space. But when actors or producers are stuck and unable to come up with a good heartfelt song, they come to me. So perhaps I've cemented my place in this industry in that way. The support I've received from fans and listeners has been overwhelming. My songs give the sound of 2022, but my soul, writing, lyrics, and composition come straight from the '60s and '70s. If they could give me that patience for the songs, I could not be there.

You have come to be

associated with quality. Does that come with a certain extra pressure to live up to that expectation every time?

I think more than anything, people believe that I make the nicest antaras. People love those stanzas of mine. So I feel a little pressured to perform better every time. I had done a song called *Chale aana* for Ajay Devgn's film *De De Pyaar De*. We rewrote the song 17–18 times. By the end of that, Kunal Verma, the writer, was ready to leave the industry only because I did not like anything. That pressure is always there. There is more pressure when there are bigger stars. Their fans are very excited and even before the announcement comes, they say, “I hope you are giving the best to our actor; if you don't give the best, we will troll you.” All these things happen.

How is working on singles different from working on a movie?

The only difference is that we make the songs first for the movies based on the narration, story, and dialogues. Here we make the melody, lyrics and genre everything and then we set a story around it. The one who produces my videos is an old childhood friend of mine. It is fun to not be stuck to a storyline because when you have your own song, you can make parallel stories with it.

Do you think, in your own small way, you are going to change the scenario of music in this industry today?

Non-film artists like Prateek Kuhad, as well as many singers and rappers like Divine, are significantly changing the scene. It will be very niche right now because it is new, but when the lockdown occurred, people began listening to new music. The audience's ears are now open to all types of music. Even Armaan has moved on from Bollywood to work with Ed Sheeran. I believe he is paving the way for future Indian artists. And I'm working hard to keep Indian music alive. So, while I'm doing this, I'm hoping that someone says, “We want this in our film,” because that's how I want it to happen.

You were always for one singer singing one song. Have you ever stood up to a label about this?

I did it and lost the film in the process. However, everyone has a choice. It's a business decision,

and I don't blame them entirely. I only fight when I believe a particular singer is inappropriate for my song. Today, not only the label but also the actors decide who will sing for them. Sometimes the choreographer is called in. Today, there are music supervisors. At times, the fight becomes difficult. I have no problem if the label sends me a list of their artists and one of them meets my criteria. However, if they are unable to deliver, this is where the problem lies. *Besabriyaan* was a song in MS Dhoni that was supposed to be sung by Arijit, and he had even recorded half of it. The director chose Armaan to sing the final song because the character is 19 years old and Armaan's voice will suit him better. Everyone in the industry wanted a dance voice to sing *Sooraj dooba hai*. They didn't want Arijit because he sings romantic songs, they reasoned. How is he going to sing such a powerful club banger? As an artist, he also refuses to do the same thing over and over. Even after hearing this, he asked if I was certain he could pull it off. I state unequivocally that this song will change everything. I always try to do this because if a good singer who has never dabbled in a different genre succeeds, you have a whole new song.

Moving forward, what's up with you?

There are currently two to three singles. There are two films, one of which is a complete solo film with no title. And I'm also doing a lot of work in the south.



Many of my fans have asked me, “*Ki aap Telugu picture me gaana kyu nahi karte ho?*” So I’m going to do those as well. But right now, the journey of independent music will be even more difficult for me. I’m not working on more than one film until January. I have so many songs that are only mine, and I have never used them in a film or pasted them anywhere. I’d like to make use of this 4-5 month period. I want to shoot and keep at least three or four more singles because I won’t be able to do so once I’m in a film. When a film comes out, I lose interest in everything except the instruments and lyrics.

Does it irritate you that when we talk about Indian or Hindi music nowadays, we only refer to Bollywood music?

You can’t argue with the fact that Bollywood is hugely popular. People have stopped listening to music but have begun to see it. I’m making simple music videos that are still touching people’s hearts. I hope Bollywood occasionally shoots simple songs. Bollywood music has its own place, as does indie music, but you can’t escape Bollywood. It is in every Indian’s blood.

We’ve heard you’re planning a tribute to Shah Rukh Khan?



“SHAH RUKH KHAN HAS BEEN A BIG INSPIRATION FOR ME. WHEN I’M HAVING A PROBLEM, I ALWAYS TELL MYSELF, “SHAH RUKH KHAN NE KAR LIYA, HUM BHI KAR SAKTE HAI”

Shah Rukh Khan has been a big inspiration for me. When I’m having a problem, I always tell myself, “Shah Rukh Khan *ne kar liya, hum bhi kar sakte hai.*” That dynamic he has provided for young people is critical. And now my fans want to see me get the girl. They see me in every video and say, “*Ya toh director aapke ache dost nahi hai,* or you fought with the director and he took the girl away.” But now, as an independent song, I’m doing a proper filmy, Bollywood song. It has a Hindustani flavour and will be a tribute to the king of romance.

People call you the king of melody.

They keep tagging me with Shah Rukh sir and saying things like, “King of romance *woh hai* and king of melody *aap ho.*” I hope

my dream comes true. I’d like to write a nice romantic song for him. I met him and told him that if he just stood there, I’d shoot him with one of my songs and that would be enough. All I want is for him to lip sync to my song.

Do you have any South actors you’d like to collaborate with?

From the South, the first actor I want to work with is unquestionably Allu Arjun. That person is capable of performing in any genre. So he and Mahesh Babu, two very talented actors, I saw *KGF* recently, so maybe something with Yash. All of these guys share one trait that is similar to mine: they have a strong belief in themselves and their work. I believe in my music, and these are the types of people with whom I would like to collaborate. ■

your say

reader's reviews, box-office, celebrity column & more

INSTA LIKE

Medley of moments

Check out the best Instagram posts of the stars from recent times



@priyankachopra: Love like no other ❤️
Priyanka Chopra is the picture of motherhood in this photo. Adorable indeed!



@siddhantchaturvedi: and It's a wrap! ❤️ 🎬
#KhoGayeHumKahan
We were young, crazy, and restless. Fun, curious & a millennial mess. It's a story about you & me, and we were just... A bunch of cool kids makin' a film.
Thank you @zoieakhtar
You love the way Siddhant Chaturvedi's face lights up after wrapping up Kho Gaye Hum Kahan, where he co-stars with Adarsh Gourav and Ananya Panday.



@katrinakaif: Birthday wala din ❤️❤️❤️
Trust Katrina Kaif and her gang to give us birthday celebration goals. They all looked like they had a blast on the beach and rightly so.



@parineetichopra: York, England
Akshay Kumar and Parineeti Chopra make for a delightful on-screen couple. Don't you feel so?



@anushkasharma: Always wanted to start a band with a cute boy 🥰👉👈❤️
Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli give us some of the most candid and heartfelt posts. We love their energy.

Readers send in their feedback pg 70

Shatrughan Sinha's racy rejoinders pg 72



IN THE MAIL

READERS WRITE AND BITE BACK... WITH LOVE AND AFFECTION



Candid lad: Arjun Kapoor

1st Prize
₹1500

TRUE CONFESSIONS

Arjun Kapoor is one of the most candid and honest actors in today's industry. His transformation has been inspiring, especially for me as a man trying to get into shape and follow a healthy lifestyle. His interview in your last issue (August), where he spoke about the roadblocks he faced while transitioning to a healthy lifestyle was a great read.

Anand Arora, Gurgaon

KUDOS PRATIK

I've binge-watched almost all of Pratik Gandhi's shows. I loved that he is getting the recognition he deserves and thoroughly enjoyed the article in your last month's issue (August). The part in which he credited his wife for being supportive and having his back during his early days was really sweet.

Aanchal Agarwal, Hyderabad

GLAMOROUS TARA

Tara Sutaria has always been one of my favourite actresses, because I've watched her in some of my favourite shows, during her early days in the industry. Seeing her on the cover of your last issue (August), somehow feels like a personal win. The way she

has grown as a person and as an actor is visible in the way she carries herself. She is so poised and put together when it comes to her appearance as well as her personality.

Anirban Ghosh, Kolkata

TARA SUTARIA ROCKS!

Tara Sutaria is one of the most glamorous actresses of today's generation, and she looks great so effortlessly. I found everything she said in your last month's issue (August) with regards to music extremely relatable. I'm also a fan of *Phantom Of The Opera* and other such musicals, and so for her to recognise them as well, felt nice to hear.

Anushree Iyer, Chennai

2nd Prize
₹1000

TALENTED PRATIK GANDHI

I am the biggest fan of Pratik Gandhi, ever since I saw *Scam 1992*. I recently watched *Modern Love Mumbai*, and despite it having an ensemble cast of exceptional actors with great storylines- his episode stood out. In your last month's (August) issue he spoke about how he no longer needs to be



Super actor: Pratik Gandhi

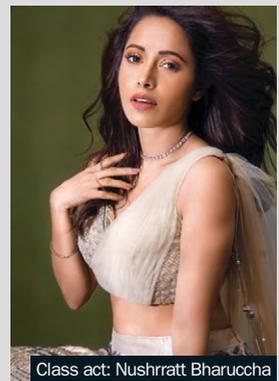
concerned about getting work, and can now explore himself in terms of acting. And so, I'm excited to see

what he has to offer in the future because versatility is definitely his strong suit.

Anushka Dave, Vadodara

DIFFERENT STROKES

Nushratt Bharuccha's interview in last month's issue (August), was something I really liked. I loved her role in rom coms such as the *Pyaar Ka PUNCHnama* franchise and *Sonu Ki Titu Ki Sweety*. I



Class act: Nushratt Bharuccha

haven't watched *Janhit Meri Jaari*, but after reading the interview, I'm really looking forward to watching it.

Isha Mishra, Gaya

Just one Point



Ageless grace: Anil Kapoor

Anil Kapoor aces every role with ease, a father, grandfather, husband and an actor. His interview in your last month's (August) issue was an extremely interesting read.

Anusha Chandak, Amritsar

A Suitable Boy, Mirzapur, Out of Love, Delhi Crime- Rasika Dugal is the face of good quality OTT shows. I loved her interview in your last month's (August) issue.

Sanskriti Naik, Allahabad

Arjun Kapoor's interview in your last month's (August) issue was a great read- witty, whacky and yet straight from the heart.

Chinmay Khetarpal, Patna

I have loved Bhumi Pednekar's massive transformation from *Dum Laga Ke Haisha* to *Raksha Bandhan*- not just physically but also as an actor.

Chhavi Batra, Guwahati

INTERNATIONAL ICONS

My favourite article from last month's (August) issue was *Shining Bright*, which discussed Indian films and actors who have won big internationally. Reading about movies like *Dil Se*, *Do Bigha Zamin*, and *Pather Panchali* made me nostalgic. It felt good to know that there are articles that cater to old souls like me; it made me nostalgic. Sudhanshu Malhotra, Jabalpur

GRAND EXPERIENCE

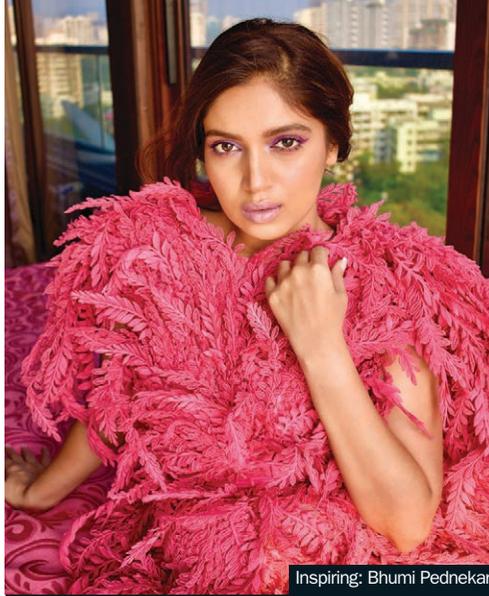
Rimple and Harpreet's larger-than-life vision is extremely inspiring to me as an aspiring fashion designer. Getting to know their journey through their interview in your last month's (August) issue was fantastic, especially given their work on period films. From a majestic film like *Padmaavat* to a comedy like *Housefull*, getting an insight into their thought process was genuinely fascinating. As someone who adores grandiose and glamorous fashion, their designs are definitely something I admire.

Nitya Doshi, Pune

NEW FRONTIERS

Falguni and Shane Peacock are trailblazers in the true sense, and their article in your last month's (August) issue was proof of their groundbreaking ideas. I was especially fond of their point of view regarding red carpet looks, and how they are no longer restricted to just traditional.

Manju Singh, Mumbai



Inspiring: Bhumi Pednekar

GLORIOUS BHUMI

Bhumi Pednekar is one of the few new-age actors, who is a change maker in every way. Whether it's in terms of her appearance which is not the conventional skinny and fair, or whether it is in terms of her choices in movies. Reading about how she adopted the tribal kids during the shooting of *Sonchiriya* in your last month's (August's) issue, strengthened this belief of mine. Even *Badhaai Do* was a stepping stone in terms of queer representation in Bollywood. Her movies are informative but also entertaining, which makes her a wholesome actor in the true sense.

Harshit Chandak, Mangalore

FASHION REVOLUTION

Anita Dongre is not only a fashion industry icon, but she is also a pioneer in promoting sustainability in the fashion industry. Her interview in your last issue (August) about cruelty-free fashion, handwoven garments, and the work of local artisans was refreshing. I appreciated her perspective on these issues.

Aash Khurana, New Delhi

BIG CITY BLUES

Shreya Dhawanthy has never let her fans down. In your last month's (August) issue, she spoke about moving to Mumbai for acting and how difficult it was for her to adjust to a new city. Everything in a big city is unfamiliar and new, and it's reassuring to know that others, no matter how successful they are, feel the same way.

Nishka Arora, Mumbai



Fearless: Rasika Dugal

REFRESHING RASIKA

Rasika Dugal is the type of actress we all need: no ostentatious attitude or extraneous frills, just great unfiltered talent. She has never shied away from bold roles, whether it is *Qissa* or *Mirzapur*, and has made them look effortless. Her interview in your last issue (August) was like a breath of fresh air.

Mahika Saini, Meerut

NEW VOICES

Guilty Minds is one of the best OTT web series of today's. Varun Mitra's role in it is not only witty but also extremely charming. I'm glad that more nuanced roles are being explored by actors like him, and it was great to read his interview in your last month's (August) issue!

Sanjana Raut, Raipur

MADHAVAN AHOY!

I watched *Rocketry: The Nambi Effect*, and was extremely impressed with the ease with which R Madhavan portrayed the role of a rocket scientist. I loved hearing about his journey with that character in your last month's issue (August).

Ruchie Pant, Dehradun

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Shatrughan Sinha's Rapid fire



Soulful voice: KK

How can film stars contribute to eradicating the social problems of the country?

Shikhar Singh, on email

Through their sincerity, films, and via social media.

Would a tour of duty in the Indian Defence Services bring a good result in the future?

Ram Mehar Nagal, Haryana.

Let's hope so. We can't be casual about our country's defence.

Pain is always felt. Why is it not visible?

MD Salim, Kolkata

Just like God, it's felt but not visible. In other

words, what's deep within can never be seen and only felt.

Who is responsible for the increasing corruption in India?

Mandeep Kaur Sodhi, Ratlam

I would say the politicians as well as the people who vote for them. I do believe that the ethical and moral values of the people who vote for them have been equally corrupted. These days, money buys money – and everyone is after that. Instead of evaluating what's right and what's wrong.

We are hearing about a recession being on its way. How realistic is the threat?

Amit Jain, New Delhi

Very realistic. Recession is on its way, possibly all over the world, not just in India. It's due to the loss of business and consumer confidence. Of course, COVID-19 has played a major part in it as well.

Why are Bollywood movies like *Laal Singh Chaddha* and *Raksha Bandhan* struggling at the box office?

Amit Jain, New Delhi

OTT platforms seem to be the newest trend. The sooner we expect it, the better it will be. Part of the reason could be due to people boycotting the so-called Bollywood and its stars. Also, OTT platforms these days seem to be our only source of entertainment, especially during COVID. Not only did people find it convenient, a huge amount of stuff was available for everyone, and the icing on the cake has been that it helped save extra expenditures too.

Why of late is our Parliament House being used as a 'yuddha bhoomi' between the ruling party and the opposition party?

R Ramakrishnan, on email

Kaam krodh, moh maaya *ahankar* are increased,

After the tragic demise of KK, don't you think it's time for the artists to plan their performance schedules in a more phased manner, giving due time for the mind and body to recoup?

Anjali Sarkarm, Kolkata

I'm not aware of all the details revolving around the demise of our dear KK. I was very sorry to hear about his untimely death. In general, I believe that artists and banners need to be comedians in a useful way. Safety and hygiene must be top priorities.



One in a million: Amitabh Bachchan



Laal Singh Chaddha



Rakshabandhan

the parties are split. They don't seem to be thinking of the welfare of the people, the nation, or society. They seem to be more interested in their own benefits and profits from being a party member. In other words, leaders have become more arrogant, greedy, demanding, with an I-me-and-my-self attitude, and the nation takes a backseat.

Patience is a virtue, anger is a curse. What is silence?
MD Salim, Kolkata

Wisdom and/or sensibility It's positive and constructive and helps us grow into better, more stable human beings.

What do you do when you are depressed and negative thoughts won't leave you?
MD Salim, Kolkata

Well, if nothing helps, then seek help immediately from your true friends, experts, and specialists.

What do you consider a brave man?
Deepak Purohit, Indore

1st Prize

Do you agree that you too have got a great second innings in politics similar to what Amitabh Bachchan got in films years back?

Ms. Rita Kumar, New Delhi

Well, he is a true icon, a favourite of the people. However, both fields cannot be compared. But extremely humbled by the love and support of the people. I will do my utmost to live up to their expectations.

2nd Prize

Is it necessary to invite a political leader to inaugurate a bank's new ATM?

CR Hariharan, on email

No way, absolutely no. It amazes me as to why this country or for that matter people are so much into sucking up to the politicians. Politicians are people's servants and need to serve the people and not get accolades and inauguration functions. In fact, there is no need for these extravagant expenses which can be easily avoided. Moreover, all VIPs come with their extra whims, fancies, and extra bags attached. The sooner we let go of the practice, the better.

Who lives life in a detached manner and who stands up when need be? Without a thought It's rare to find such people these days, especially in today's troubled environment.

What role can the youth play in eradicating corruption?
Shivani Yadav, Udaipur

By not following in the footsteps of the corrupt people and standing up for the rights of those who can't raise their own voice. Each young person in this country should do

something to eradicate corruption. Every little bit helps.

Age is just a number. Do you agree?

Aayush Yadav, Udaipur

Not exactly. But yes, to some extent. It varies from person to person, location to location, and situation to situation.

(Feature co-ordinated by DEVESH SHARMA)

Please note: The column doesn't reflect Shatrughan Sinha's political or personal views. His answers are given in jest and humour.

Win!
CASH PRIZES

1st prize

₹3000

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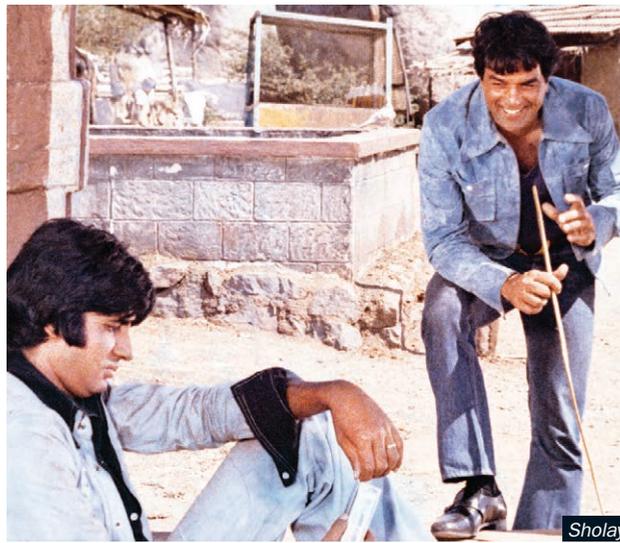
YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE FORWARDED TO: Shatrughan Sinha, who insists his answers do not reflect his political and social views.

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Exploring *the past*

In the early eighties, Channel 4 was commissioned to do a documentary on Asha. They toured the country with her, spoke to filmmakers and music directors like R D Burman. They also captured Ashaji in action while at a concert. There is rare footage of Smita Patil on the sets of *Angaaray* lip syncing and dancing to an Asha Bhsole song composed by Anu Mallik. You can also catch Ashaji and Pancham rehearsing at home for a song from *Anokha Rishtha* and for their tours around the country. In short, a glimpse into the lives of two legends. To the channel and BBC, we shall be eternally grateful. I also remember watching a documentary on Rajesh Khanna called *Bombay Superstar* (1973), which tried to decode the phenomenon called Rajesh Khanna, talking to people like Dilip Kumar, Mumtaz, Shashi Kapoor, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, and many more, apart from the superstar himself. It was a candid, behind-the-scenes take on the Hindi film industry in general and Kakaji in particular.



Sholay



Asha Bhsole



R D Burman

I remember thinking how articulate the yesteryear stars were and how clueless today's stars sounded in comparison.

I don't think India has any exhaustive documentaries on Ashaji or Bollywood save the ones Nasreen Munni Kabir made on Guru Dutt, Lata

Mangeshkar, Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan. I'd love to watch a series on the making of iconic movies like *Mughal-e-Azam*, *Guide*, *Sholay*, et al, but where's the material? I bemoan the fact that our filmmakers just didn't believe in archiving their work. And

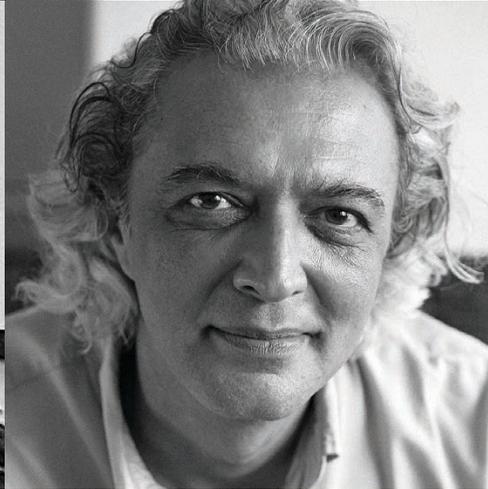
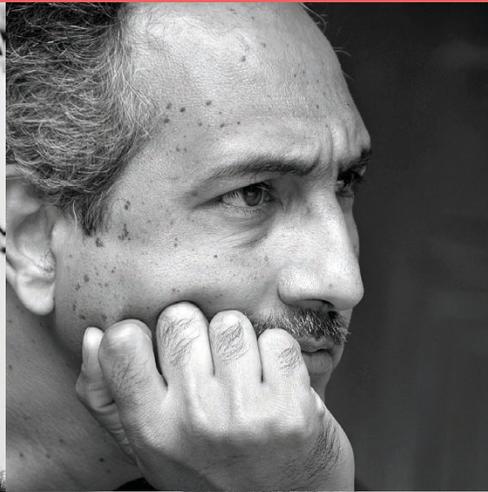
that our documentary filmmakers, who have won international laurels for their work, have, by and large, neglected to work on projects which reveal the inner workings of Bollywood. Thanks to our lack of interest in research or archiving, some of the best stuff we have has been lost to the mists of time.

The need of the hour is for a nationwide collective of film enthusiasts, collectors, and filmmakers to come together and start chronicling what's left of our rich and varied movie heritage. I'm sure government organisations like the Films Division and Doordarshan, as well as FTII, have tonnes of footage lying in their lockers. It should all be collated, digitalised, curated, converted into episodic capsules and put on the internet, so that students of cinema can look back in time and learn new lessons. Documentaries are finding a new home on OTT and I'm sure such a venture can easily find takers. Let's hope someone is listening...

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