

FILMFARE

MIDDLE EAST
JUNE 2024

RACE TO THE TOP

Rajkumar Rao

SUMMER SPECIAL ISSUE



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FILMFARE
MIDDLE EAST



ALL THAT'S HOT AND HAPPENING!

It's been a busy month and our social calendars are chock-a-bloc with some of the most-happening events in and around the city! The soaring temperatures are clearly not a dampener when it comes to Dubai ruling the roost as an important pit-stop even when it comes to movie promotions both for Hollywood and the Indian cinema! So, while **Will Smith** and **Martin Lawrence** schmoozed with us at the red-carpet premiere of their much-anticipated actioner *Bad Boys: Ride or Die*, we were also privy to Bollywood heartthrob **Kartik Aaryan** and director Kabir Khan announcing the advance bookings of their most-talked about upcoming film *Chandu Champion* on the Burj Khalifa. Flip the pages and get your dose of all that glamorous action

and also check out our YouTube channel and Instagram handle for all the exciting coverage and exclusive interviews with these stars.

Kartik Aaryan who is gracing our Digital Cover this month is all the buzz with his *Chandu Champion* showcasing him in a never-before avatar! The adorable *Pyaar ka Punchnama* actor has consolidated his rock-solid star-status at the Box Office film after film and with the Kabir Khan directorial - based on the life of India's first Paralympics gold medallist and living legend Murlikant Petkar - he clearly looks ready to hit the ball out of the park! This one's promising to be his best one yet and we couldn't agree more. Taking on the challenging role, Kartik is all grit and gumption, as Jitesh Pillai talks to the Bollywood star in an exclusive interview and unravels the actor's process that went into the making of an unsung hero's epic screen tale.

Also on the cover this month is the versatile **Rajkumar Rao**. With two back-to-back releases within a span of a month - *Srikanth* and *Mr and Mrs Mahi* - the actor has consistently been showcasing his acting prowess and how! With two releases under his belt and two on the anvil, the actor is riding the high wave, finds Anuradha Choudhary as she talks to him about love, life, and career choices in an exclusive interview!

The Dubai visitors also included the OTT heartthrob Taha Shah Badusha and the super-talented Rasika Dugal. While the *Heeramandi* star won our hearts just as effortlessly as his character Tajdar did in the Sanjay Leela Bhansali series as we decoded love with him; Rasika talked to us about stepping out of her own comfort zone to play the fierce and sensuous Beena Tripathi with aplomb in *Mirzapur* which is currently onto its highly-anticipated Season 3!

In the pages ahead, we also have interviews with Randeep Hooda who has been basking in much acclaim for his directorial debut *Swatantrya Veer Savarkar* in which he also plays the titular role; Sonali Bendre talks about making tough choices both on screen and in life and Yami Gautam shares her take on breaking stereotypes. We also spoke to the rapper-singer King who made a stunning debut at Cannes recently. In Fashion & Beauty, check out our pick of the best summer-wear and must-have perfumes to add to your collection this season!

A big shoutout to all the influencers and social media stars out there to come and be a part of one of the most-awaited events of Dubai calendars - the 3rd edition of the **Filmfare Middle East Social Night, 2024!** A super-glam event, the evening will have some of the most loved names from the entertainment industry in attendance and the top social media influencers of the region being felicitated. To participate and win, all you need to do is register online, pick your category and keep your fingers crossed! Check out www.filmfaremiddleeast.com for more

Meanwhile, the city is also geared up to celebrate **Eid Al Adha**. There are some amazing discounts and offers going on across malls, restaurants and hotels, so make the most of it and create loads of happy memories with your family, friends and loved ones! And on that note, here's wishing all of you...

Eid Mubarak!

Aakanksha Naval-Shetye

Editor-In-Chief

Filmfare Middle East

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June 2024 **FILMFARE MIDDLE EAST** 3

contents

Volume 75 | JUNE 1, 2024



highlight

10

SRK CONVINCED SHIAMAK DAVAR TO TAKE UP CHOREOGRAPHY

VARUN – NATASHA WELCOME BABY GIRL



man-du-jour

22 DIGITAL COVER STAR KARTIK AARYAN IS ALL GRIT AND GUMPTION AS HE TAKES ON ANOTHER CHALLENGE PLAYING CHANDU CHAMPION. JITESH PILLAAI TRIES TO UNRAVEL THE PROCESS THAT WENT INTO THE MAKING OF AN UNSUNG HERO THUS FAR

12 COVER STORY

ACTOR-PAR-EXCELLENCE, RAJKUMMAR RAO TURNS ASIDE HIS RETICENCE TO CHAT WITH ANURADHA CHOUDHARY ABOUT LIFE, RELATIONSHIP AND CAREER CHOICES



COVER PHOTOGRAPH: KUNAL GUPTA
STYLIST: SANAM RATANSI | MAKE-UP: NITIN PUROHIT | HAIR: VIJAY P RASKAR
Co-ord set: Karo | Tank: RWDY
Shoes: Banjaaran Studio | Accessories: The BRO CODE | Watch: G-SHOCK

interviews

34 RANDEEP HOODA GETS CANDID WITH AAKANKSHA NAVAL-SHETYE ABOUT HIS NEW ROLE AS A HUSBAND AND ALSO TURNING DIRECTOR

38 RASIKA DUGAL DECODES PLAYING BEENA TRIPATHI IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH AAKANKSHA NAVAL-SHETYE



summer special

18 KEEP IT COOL IN THESE SUMMERY DRESSES

20 ADD THESE FRAGRANCES TO YOUR PERFUME COLLECTION



events

31 WILL SMITH AND MARTIN LAWRENCE AT THE DUBAI PREMIERE OF BAD BOYS: RIDE OR DIE



32 SANJAY DUTT SHOWCASES HIS LATEST VENTURE

33 CHAMPIONS IN THE HOUSE WITH CHANDU CHAMPION KARTIK AARYAN AND KABIR KHAN



50 YAMI GAUTAM IS ON A ROLL FINDS SUMAN SHARMA

must-watch

64 GET YOUR DOSE OF THE BEST ON SCREEN THIS JUNE

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VIEWS : 6.9M

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filmfareme Kim K rocked the Met Gala 2024 by balancing on her toes!

#KimK #MetGala2024 #FashionIcon #ToeBalance #MetGalaFashion

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filmfareme Ek film to banti hai!!! - Aamir Khan talks about working with Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan on a movie.

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filmfareme Acing all his roles with masterful finesse, his top-notch performances have always tugged at the viewer's heartstrings. Presenting actor-par-excellence and our May Cover Star Vikrant Massey! Catapulting him into the spotlight, his awe-inspiring biopic 12th Fail has not just won him accolades and critical acclaim, but the sleeper hit is winning this 'unconventional hero' the much-deserved awards too! The star has come a long way and is unstoppable as he strides ahead confidently having earned the stripes at the Box Office. The power-performer talks to Editor-in-Chief Aakanksha Naval-Shetye all about

VIEWS : 150K

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Highlights

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

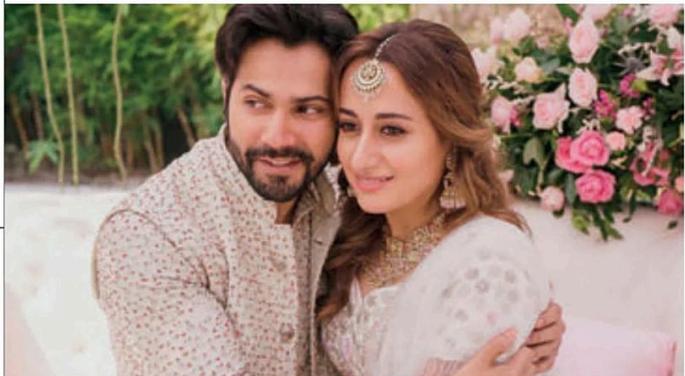
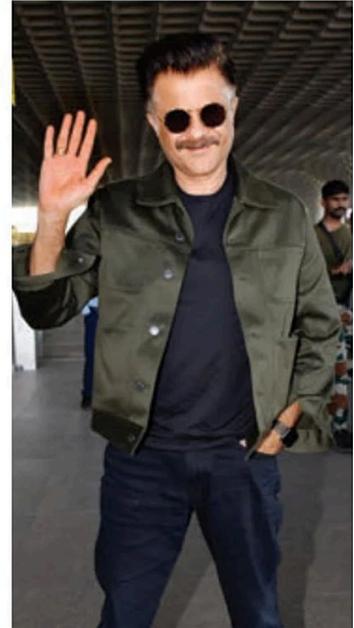


SRK CONVINCED SHIAMAK DAVAR TO TAKE UP CHOREOGRAPHY

It has been 27 years since the release of **Shah Rukh Khan, Madhuri Dixit, and Karisma Kapoor** starrer *Dil To Pagal Hai*. The film is remembered not only for its great story and performances, but also for the music and the fresh choreography by **Shiamak Davar**. It was Davar's first stint with Bollywood choreography. But not many are aware that it was SRK who got him on board for the film. Shiamak was taken aback when SRK broached the subject. He told King Khan that his style was too western but the star persisted and even director **Yash Chopra** went along with SRK's choice. Seeing their conviction, Shiamak had no choice but to say yes.

HERE'S WHY ANIL KAPOOR REJECTED BAAZIGAR

It's said that **Abbas and Mustan** expressed a strong interest in casting **Anil Kapoor** for *Baazigar* and had even approached him for the role. However, Kapoor was occupied with shooting for *Roop Ki Rani Choron Ka Raja* at the time and politely declined the offer, citing the project as being too risky. Subsequently, the filmmakers considered casting **Salman Khan** for the role. But Salman was primarily involved in family-oriented films at that point, hence was advised against doing a grey-shaded role. **Shah Rukh Khan** had praised their murder mystery *Khiladi*, adding that he would have loved to do something like that and remembering that, Abbas Mustan turned to him, and the rest, as they say, is history.



VARUN – NATASHA WELCOME BABY GIRL

Varun Dhawan and his wife Natasha Dalal are now parents to a baby girl. The actor shared the good news on his Instagram handle with a super-cute video of their pet dog holding a placard that read 'Welcome Lil Sis' accompanied with Varun's adorable caption, "Our Baby Girl Is Here, Thank u for all the good wishes for the mama and the baby." Well, here's congratulating the proud papa and mama!



AKSHAY KUMAR TO WORK WITH MRIGDEEP SINGH LAMBA?

Akshay Kumar has proved his mettle in Bollywood time and again, initially as an action hero and later even as romantic and comedic lead. As per reports, the star is all set to team up with *Fukrey* director **Mrigdeep Singh Lamba** for an out-and-out comedy. The report added that Akshay recently met Mrigdeep and was bowled over by the idea of the film. It's said to have a cast of talented actors besides Akshay and will be released next year.

DILJIT DOSANJH WAS WORRIED ABOUT LEGAL ACTION FROM IMTIAZ ALI

Singer-actor **Diljit Dosanjh** revealed during a media interaction that he was worried about **Imtiaz Ali** suing him for making *Jodi* (2023) because the film is a fictionalised take on **Amar Singh Chamkila**. He said, "I thought I knew a lot about Chamkila before meeting him (Imtiaz Ali). When I got to know that a Bollywood film is being made on Chamkila, I wondered what kind of film they would make. We have made a fictional film called *Jodi*, as we didn't have the rights. I got a call from Imtiaz sir. I thought he would sue us, as he had the rights (to Chamkila's story). We didn't have it. But he said that he wanted to cast me in the film."



POOJA HEGDE ON A ROLL!

Pooja Hegde is poised for a blockbuster year with not one but three highly anticipated films! There's *Deva* with Shahid Kapoor, *Sanki* with Ahan Shetty and *Suriya 44* with the South superstar! What's more, we hear that she has three more big-ticket projects yet to be announced. While *Deva* directed by Rosshan Andrews is set for a Dussehra release this October, *Sanki* directed by the duo Adnan A. Shaikh and Yasir Jah, is set to hit theatres on February 14, 2025.



VIDYA BALAN LODGES AN FIR AGAINST A FAKE INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT EXTORTING MONEY IN HER NAME

Vidya Balan reportedly lodged an FIR against an unknown person for creating a fake Instagram and Gmail account and posing as the Bollywood actress. As per multiple reports, the case came under scrutiny when an unknown person started asking for money, assuring people of jobs under Vidya Balan's name. When the actress learned about the situation, she immediately lodged a complaint with the Mumbai police. One of the police officers said that an unknown person had also created a Gmail account and used these accounts to contact people from the industry, posing as the actress and luring them with promises of lucrative job opportunities. **Vidya** will next be seen in *Do Aur Do Pyaar* and has also been roped in for *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*.

expert advice



Director of American Aesthetic Medical Center

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WHAT DOES THE TREATMENT INVOLVE?

Profhilo is injected just below the skin's surface over 2 sessions 4 weeks apart. It is absorbed within a 2cm radius of its injection site, so to treat the face only 10 injection points are needed in total.

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Call us at 80085555



LIFE as HE knows it...

Rajkummar Rao

turns aside his reticence to chat with
Anuradha Choudhary
about life, relationship and
career choices

PHOTOGRAPHS: KUNAL GUPTA | STYLIST: SANAM RATANSI
MAKE-UP: NITIN PUROHIT | HAIR: VIJAY P RASKAR
Outfit: Varun Bahl Couture | Shoes: Dune London
Accessories: The BRO CODE

There's something about **Rajkummar Rao**
that makes you want to be on his team pronto.

You want to be his cheerleader.

Maybe it's that gentle smile that lights up his face, his easy demeanour or his willingness to engage in casual conversation that does the trick.

Whatever it is, his niceness shines through.



He remains unsullied by the industry, which is an achievement in itself. What's more Rajkummar Rao has emerged as the powerhouse of talent, of versatility. If there's one thing he knows for sure, it's how to galvanise the screen. Whether it's intense dramas or quirky comedies, he seamlessly slips into every role; just like that. Honestly, Rajkummar Rao makes acting look so easy like it's child's play. He's the reason there are so many pretty faces pretending to be actors. He makes them believe everyone can act, like he can... ha! It's a measure of his range, his craft that he convinces you whether he's playing a small town saree salesman in *Bareilly Ki Barfi*, an anti hero in *Monica O My Darling*, an inspector coming to terms with his caste identity in *Bheed*, or a novice gangster in *Guns & Gulaabs* his performances leave an indelible mark earning him critical acclaim and a loyal audience. He pushes the envelope with every outing and everything he does merits a watch. Right now, he's flying high. His *Guns & Gulaabs* has been received well. *Bheed* too has lived up to expectations... as has Srikanth and Mr & Mrs Mahi. Right now, he can't seem to put a wrong foot forward. And more power to him... Presenting excerpts from a freewheeling chat with the actor par excellence.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT STATE OF MIND?

I am thankful every day. I'm God's child. I am a spiritual person by nature. I'm in a happy mood right now. And I'm also preparing for my next release: *Stree 2* and *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video*. I miss my parents every day, though.

WHAT WAS THE EXPERIENCE LIKE WORKING ON SRIKANTH?

To play a visually impaired man is not easy. The only way I saw was to actually go blind. Of course, I'm always hungry for such parts where you live the role throughout the filming process. I would be on the set and I wouldn't

see. People were actually helping me go from point A to point B. I refused to see anything. I literally went blind. It happened so many times later, like three or four days later, an actor met me at an event. He said, "I played your friend that day." I apologised saying, "I have no idea because I did not see

anything or anyone."

THAT MUST'VE BEEN TOUGH. YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE YOURSELF IN THE POSTERS. HOW DO YOU DO THAT?

I don't know how I do it. You just try and mentally be that person and then start thinking like that person. I guess it's an organic process.

IS THERE A METHOD TO YOUR MADNESS?

It varies from film to film. Some films give you that opportunity to actually go deep down into the psyche of your character and do some physical transformation as well. And some films are fun films, where you just have to go and have fun, like *Bareilly Ki Barfi* or *Stree*. But there also, you try to bring in some different quality to your character. But films like *Newton*, *Trapped*, *Srikanth*, is where I go deep down to the psyche of the character.

WHEN YOU'RE DOING A BIOPIC LIKE SRIKANTH, WHERE THE PERSON IS IN FRONT OF YOU, HOW DO YOU PLAY HIM? DO YOU EMULATE HIS MANNERISMS AND JUST BE HIM ON SCREEN OR DO YOU BRING YOUR OWN INTERPRETATION TO THE TABLE?

The trick is to not imitate. It is to understand him as a person. Whatever struggle, pains, happiness and sadness that he must have experienced in his life, you imbibe those experiences in your character and just start living it honestly. I think when there is sincerity, when there's honesty in your work, it translates.

ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THE WAY YOUR CAREER IS SHAPING UP RIGHT NOW?

Honestly, no complaints. Sitting in a small town like

“
God has
been very
kind to
me.
I've always
wanted to be
an actor, and
as long as
I get to do
it every
day, I'll be
happy



Suit: Line by Shamim Khan
T-shirt: Replay
Neck chain: The BRO CODE



Gurgaon, dreaming of being a film actor one day, and that dream actually coming true is rare. It doesn't happen to everyone. I'm fully aware of that. And I have a lot of gratitude in my heart for that. I'm just so thankful to God every day for making my dreams come true. The kind of films I've done, the kind of wonderful filmmakers I've worked with, they've helped me grow so much as an artiste and the kind of people I've met... I didn't know anyone here when I came to the city... I have so many friends now who are like family. This city, this industry has given me everything. There are no complaints at all. But I know it's going to be a long journey. And what I've realised, especially since the pandemic, is that I want to do work that I really want to do. Something that I enjoy and something that I can be proud of. That's where my focus is now, just to push myself as an actor and to explore. Acting is such a vast ocean. I want to explore it.

SO WHAT'S YOUR PROCESS OF SIGNING A SCRIPT?

As I said earlier, the process is different for every film. It depends on the genre. It depends on the maker and how they see it. But then there are some realistic films which require a physical transformation and that gives me a high as an actor. Because you can literally change yourself completely and that's what I aim for. Whenever I get a chance, I genuinely love doing that.

SO WHEN YOU DO THIS PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION FOR A ROLE OR WHEN YOU GET INTO THE PSYCHE OF THE CHARACTER, DOES IT MESS UP WITH YOU AS A PERSON? IT DOESN'T MESS UP

with me. It actually makes me happy because this is what I always wanted to do. This is my work. And I love my work. If I don't give my hundred per cent to my work, then there's no point in doing what I'm doing. After a long shooting day, I want to come back home and I want to feel tired mentally and physically. You get the best sleep that day because you're so exhausted because you've given everything that you had to your character that day. That's the best part. When you work on something and it makes you tired. It's not I-don't-want-to-do-this-anymore-tired. It's like wow I've-given-it-my-everything-tired.

HOW MUCH OF THE CHARACTER DO YOU TAKE HOME?

I won't say all of it. But yeah, subconsciously it's natural. It's human to do that. If you're in character for 13-14 hours, on set for two, sometimes three months then it's natural to subconsciously carry it back home. But at home, I'm Raj. I try to not bring my work home. But subconsciously, it's playing in your head, it's playing on your mind.

SO WHEN A CHARACTER PLAYS ON YOUR MIND SUBCONSCIOUSLY, DOESN'T THAT MESS WITH YOU?

It depends on the character. Like *Omerta*... That really messed up with my head that changed my whole being. That's something Patralekhaa told me when she saw me. There was a shift in my energy. Everyone has an aura and energy. She felt that shift in my energy. So I think that if it's a happy character, it's aspirational, it's nice. But if it's broody, like a violent guy then that messes you up.

YOUR OTT PROJECTS HAVE MADE QUITE THE BUZZ. TELL US WHAT EXCITES YOU MORE, OTT OR THE MOVIES?

I don't really differentiate. For me, it's work. Nothing changes. The way you shoot a film for theatre is exactly the way you shoot

a film or a series for OTT. Nothing changes. For me, it's about telling the story, telling a good story and trying to be a part of a good story always. That's what matters.

YOU RECEIVED A LOT OF APPRECIATION FOR GUNS & GULAABS. WHAT WAS THE EXPERIENCE LIKE?

In a series, the script is so detailed. You have that liberty of bringing in those scenes, which a film's script might not be able to include because it's a short format and this is long. My only job was to make it peculiar from my other characters, how to make it slightly different, because I've done something on similar lines in different films. The credit goes to Raj & DK because they brought in so much detailing and humour to my character. I was just playing with those lines, with my co-actors. I was improvising a lot during the scenes. It takes a few days to figure out your character. But once you find it, then especially in a comedy, it's about having fun.

HOW MUCH CREDIT WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR DIRECTORS FOR YOUR CHARACTERS? WHAT DO YOU BRING TO THE TABLE?

Filmmaking is 100 per cent the director's medium. No matter how good or bad you are, if your director doesn't know his or her job, it won't work. Because the film has to work in totality. That's the most important thing. No actor wants to hear anyone say that you were good in the film but I didn't like the film. No one wants to hear that. But as an actor, you also have a small part in it to play. Because it's through you that the director is telling his or her story. You're always following the director's vision. But in my case, touch wood, all my directors have shown so much faith in me. They give me a lot of freedom to improvise. To take the scene to maybe a different

“
I'm still that simple boy from Gurgaon who gets starry-eyed when he sees a film set or a good film

angle. Like sometimes you write thinking it in a certain way, but then on that day, something else happens and you do it differently and it works. So they give me that freedom to try and explore.

WHAT IS YOUR USP AS AN ACTOR?

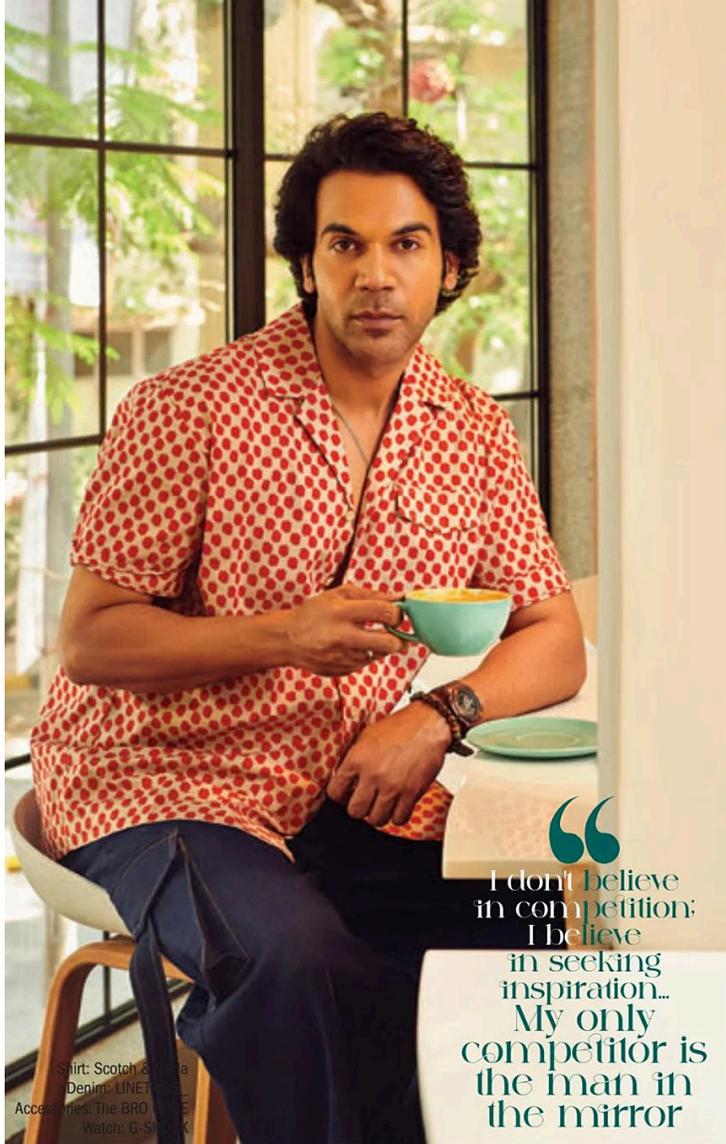
My USP? I dunno. A lot of people tell me different things. I don't want to know what my USP is. But a lot of people have come up to me and told me that they feel like I'm one of their own. When they see me, they relate to my performance.

THAT SHOWS ON SCREEN. AND THAT'S WHY YOU'RE SO GOOD AT IT?

How can you do something if your heart is not there?

YOU PLAY A POLICE INSPECTOR IN BHEED COMING TO TERMS WITH THE CASTE IDENTITY. HOW COULD YOU PLAY THAT CHARACTER SO CONVINCINGLY? DOES COMING FROM A SMALL TOWN HELP?

It certainly does. And I've had experiences from different people. I've heard stories, maybe my help has told me a story about what happened back in his village. Anubhav sir is a sensitive filmmaker. He works a lot on his story and his characters. So I had discussions with him. And whatever stories I'd heard from different people also helped. Yes, caste discrimination exists but things are improving. But



Shirt: Scotch & Soda
Denim: LINET
Accessories: The BRO
Watch: G-Shock

“
I don't believe
in competition.
I believe
in seeking
inspiration...
My only
competitor is
the man in
the mirror

we have to eradicate it from our society.

MONICA O MY DARLING HAD AN OPEN ENDING. DID YOUR CHARACTER SURVIVE? WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

I'm confident my character survived. Jayant is a hustler who won't let things go so easily. It is up to Vasana Bala, Matchbox and Netflix to decide whether to make a sequel.

YOU'RE DOING STREE 2. HOW WAS IT GETTING BACK WITH THE TEAM?

Absolutely fantastic. It took a long time because we were waiting for the right story. *Stree* was such a major blockbuster and we wanted to do this the right way. But it was absolutely fantastic. All of us are thick friends. We were in touch with one another. I would keep meeting Amar (Kaushik, director), Apar (Aparshakti Khurana). I love the friendship that we have. It's always been there. Of

course, it became stronger after *Stree*. When Shraddha and I went back on the set on the first day, we felt so nostalgic to go back to the same place, to relive the same world, same characters, same locations. There was a big smile on our faces when we went back to Chanderi.

IS THERE PRESSURE ON YOU GUYS CONSIDERING STREE WAS SUCH A BIG HIT?

Honestly, no. I don't want to take pressure and I don't like taking pressure. We have told a story and I'm hopeful that it's come out funny. That's exactly how *Stree* was. There's a dose of horror in it and there's an ample amount of comedy in it. There's a crazy fan following for *Stree*. Wherever I go, people ask me the same question, when is *Stree 2* coming? We're just happy that people will get to experience Vicky and all

those people again.

YOU HAVE A TALENT FOR PLAYING THE EVERYMAN. WHAT ASPECT OF YOUR PERSONALITY DO YOU DRAW ON FOR SUCH ROLES?

I just try to be honest in everything I do. I come from a humble background. As I grew up, I saw people from all walks of life. Maybe that experience helps me develop my characters better.

YOU'VE COMPLETED MORE THAN A DECADE IN THE INDUSTRY. WHAT DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU LOOK BACK?

I see everything. I see rejection. I see struggle. I see growth. I see finding friends. I see the loss of my parents. There's a lot that has happened. But there are absolutely no complaints. I would want to relive this life again and again. Of course, this time, the only thing I would want is for my parents to be there with me. Apart from that, I wouldn't change anything. So I don't really think about other things, apart from work and being with my family...Patralekhaa, me and our home that we have built with so much love. That's my life, that's my role and I'm very happy living that way.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY HAVE BEEN YOUR MILESTONES IN THE LAST 10 YEARS?

I don't know. Just to be an actor. For a guy like me coming from a small town with absolutely no connection with the movies apart from say reading *Filmfare* and watching *Filmfare* Awards and watching films, belonging to a lower-middle-class family... For that boy to become an actor is a huge milestone. I guess it's God's wish.

DOES IT SEEM LIKE A FAIRY TALE TO YOU SOMETIMES?

Honestly, I don't really sit back and think like that. I try to live in the moment. I'm not attached to materialistic things. For me, my family, my friends,

my work is the most important thing. That's what I count upon. So I don't sit back and think about what has happened, how I was 10 or 12 years back... And where have I reached now? It doesn't matter to me. Yes, it's all God-given. It's all surreal to me. If you were to ask me 20 years ago, when I was in Gurgaon if this would ever be my life, I wouldn't have believed it. I have no contribution to this. My only contribution was to follow the path. Apart from that, it's all my parents and God. I haven't really achieved anything.

ARE THERE ANY INSECURITIES AS AN ACTOR THAT SURFACE NOW AND THEN?

No, I don't have insecurities.

REALLY?

Honestly, I don't have any insecurities. When you lose your dear ones, when you see death so closely like in the pandemic, like my parents and Patraa's father, when you see death so closely... something happens, something shifts in your head. People can react differently to different things. But the way I reacted to it was like, I'm not attached to things. I just want to live every day. That's the only thing I'm looking forward to when I wake up.

HOW EASILY AFFECTED ARE YOU BY THE FAILURE OF YOUR FILMS?

I'm not affected. If a really good film doesn't do well, then of course I feel bad. It's natural to feel bad then. But that's also for a day or two max. But then also because I know eventually the film will find its audience. Because films are for posterity. And we have often seen in the past - films that didn't do

well at the box office at that time went out to become cults later on.

HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE THIS SENSE OF EQUANIMITY?

How do you achieve it? I don't know. Maybe when you don't attach yourself to everything that is happening in your life or through meditation, I guess. And not take yourself so seriously. I don't do that.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ACTORS JUST STARTING OUT?

Be disciplined, be the hardest worker in the room, and be a good person, because I firmly believe that good people make good artistes. Don't compare yourself to others; instead, focus on your own development as an actor. If you don't get an acting job right away, don't give up; if you're truly talented no one can stop you. There will be opportunities for you.

HAVE YOU FOUND YOUR ACTING COMFORT ZONE?

No, and I don't want to find it. It's always enjoyable to be nervous and scared before playing every role. That fear motivates you to work hard.

YOU ARE A STAR. HAS THIS CHANGED HOW FILMMAKERS APPROACH YOU?

I'm not sure. While there are many more options now, I'm still that simple boy from Gurgaon who gets starry-eyed when he sees a film set or a good film.

HAS STARDOM CHANGED ANY OF YOUR MIDDLE-CLASS HABITS?

Not really, I'm still very middle-class. I'm not particularly attached to material things. I value relationships and friendships more than things, and my middle-class values

have taught me to treat everyone with dignity.

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU MISS ABOUT BEING RAJKUMAR YADAV, WHO WAS AN OUTSIDER?

Somewhere, I still feel like an outsider, but I've made some wonderful friends in this industry. The only thing I feel guilty about is not spending enough time with my parents in their final days.

A VIDEO OF YOU DISCUSSING NEPOTISM KEEPS CIRCULATING ONLINE. WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT THOUGHTS ON NEPOTISM?

My thoughts remain the same. As a star child, you may be given the first few opportunities, but you can only survive if you are a good actor.

WHO WOULD YOU SAY IS YOUR BIGGEST COMPETITION RIGHT NOW?

I don't really believe in competition. You cannot say Michelangelo is a better artist than Leonardo da Vinci. They both are different. Both are great in their respective places. There should be no competition, especially in this art form. In acting, you're dealing with emotions. It's the most truthful thing that you're trying to live. So you can't compete by saying that an actor cries better than this actor. Both have a different way of looking at things.

YOUR RECENT MESSAGE TO YOUR MOTHER MOVED PEOPLE. YOU MUST BE MISSING HER A LOT. HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THE LOSS OF LOVED ONES?

You can never deal with it. That void will always be there, but I am confident

that they will be with me. Their values will always be with me.

WHEN YOU POSTED THAT MESSAGE TO YOUR MOTHER, THERE WAS AN OUTPOURING OF GOOD WILL. THAT IS THE POSITIVE SIDE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, BUT THERE IS ALSO A NEGATIVE SIDE. HOW DO YOU COMBAT THIS?

I ignore the negativity and am not that active on social media. Life was simpler without social media. I'd rather focus on my work and characters than spend hours on social media.

HOW IS YOUR MARRIAGE GOING SO FAR?

It's the best thing that ever happened to me. I feel complete. It's always a good feeling when your partner is also your best friend. We are always ready to take a bullet for each other.

HOW DO YOU AND PATRALEKHA BALANCE EACH OTHER'S FLAWS?

We complete each other and

have a great deal of mutual understanding.

YOU HAVE BEEN TOGETHER FOR OVER A DECADE. WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THIS RELATIONSHIP?

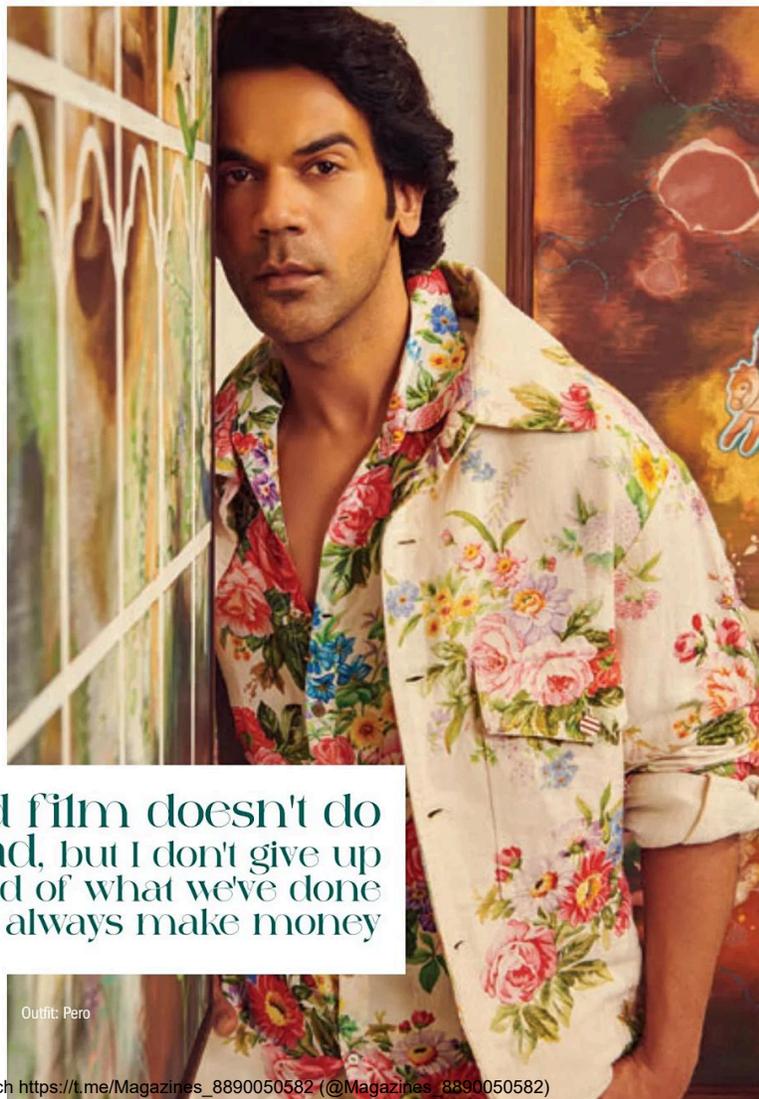
Be there for one another. There will always be difficult times, but you can overcome them together.

HAS THIS RELATIONSHIP AFFECTED YOU IN ANY WAY?

Meeting Patralekhaa has undoubtedly made me a better person. She has helped me become better both as an actor and a human being. She motivates me to do good work and is my most honest critic.

WHEN WILL WE SEE YOU AND PATRALEKHA ACTING TOGETHER IN A FILM?

Hopefully, very soon. We did a beautiful film together called *City Lights*, and we are waiting for the right story to come up. ■



Outfit: Pero

“
If a really good film doesn't do well, I feel bad, but I don't give up because I'm proud of what we've done and my producers always make money



LULUS

YVONNE LÉON



MARNI

Summer Vibes

BEAT THE HEAT IN STYLE THIS SUMMER



VERSACE



BURBERRY



VANS



MAISON MICHEL



ETRO



KARL LAGERFELD



JIMMY CHOO

COMPILED BY - AMIT PANCHAL



CASABLANCA



JACQUEMUS



H&M



POLO RALPH LAUREN



CARTIER EYEWEAR



RASTA CLAT



ASOS DESIGN



CRAIG GREEN



ETRO



MAISON MARGIELA

THE Summer NOTES

CHECK OUT SUMMER IN A BOTTLE
A CURATED SUMMER PERFUME LIST

FOR HIM

FOR HER



TOM FORD AZURE LIME

THIS SCENT EVOKES RELAXED, YET REFINED STYLE WITH A LIME WATER INFUSION ACCORD, GREEN AROMATICS, AND SENSUAL SANDALWOOD. AZURE LIME CAPTURES THE EASY STYLE AND RELAXED GLAMOUR OF MUSTIQUE, A PRIVATE ISLAND NESTLED IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN.



LOUIS VUITTON PACIFIC CHILL

FRAGRANCE THAT CAPTURES THE ESSENCE OF A REFRESHING OCEAN BREEZE AND THE TRANQUILITY OF A TROPICAL PARADISE. INSPIRED BY THE ENDLESS BLUE HORIZONS AND PRISTINE WATERS OF THE PACIFIC



D.S. & DURGA BOWMAKERS

INSPIRED BY THE CRAFTSMEN WHO FORGED VIOLINS AND BOWS FROM AROMATIC WOOD, THIS FRAGRANCE OPENS WITH NOTES OF VIOLIN VARNISH, OUTDOORS ACCORD, AND MAHOGANY. AMBER PINE ROSIN, CYPRESS, AND MAPLEWOOD FOLLOW, LEADING TO A BASE OF SPICED TREE RESIN, MOSS, AND CEDAR. EXPERIENCE THE MAJESTY OF THE FOREST WITH EACH CAPTIVATING SCENT.



HARAMAIN AMBER OUD AQUA DUBAI



MARC JACOBS DAISY WILD

THIS DARING FRAGRANCE COMBINES VIBRANT JASMINE, VETIVER, AND BANANA BLOSSOM NOTES TO CAPTURE THE ESSENCE OF NATURE'S WILDERNESS.



ISSEY MIYAKE L'EAU D'ISSEY SOLAR VIOLET

ENVELOP THE SENSES WITH AN ELEGANT, AQUATIC BREEZE INFUSED WITH FLORAL AND FRUITY NOTES OF PEAR, VIOLET LEAVES ABSOLUTE AND POWDERY IRIS NOTES.



VIKTOR & ROLF FLOWERBOMB RUBY ORCHID

A BLEND OF FLORAL AND ORIENTAL NOTES. EXPECT A BURST OF FLORAL NOTES LIKE JASMINE, ROSE, FREESIA, AND ORCHID, WHICH COULD ALIGN WITH THE NAME "RUBY ORCHID."



HARAMAIN FLORAL FAIR

COMPILED BY - AMIT PANCHAL



PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS



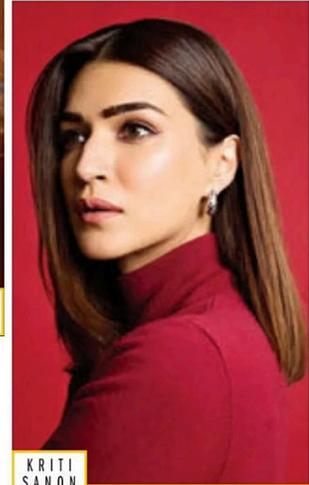
ALIA BHATT



ANUSHKA SHARMA



SHRADDHA KAPUR



KRITI SANON

Summer of lob

The trendiest summer hairdo inspiration you need

Step into summer with the sizzling trend of the long bob, affectionately known as the “lob.” This hairstyle isn’t just a cut; it’s a vibe—the perfect blend of chic and carefree. Our Bollywood queens, Deepika Padukone, Alia Bhatt and Anushka Sharma, are turning heads and setting Instagram on fire with their flawless lobs. Imagine breezy beach days where your hair effortlessly dances with the wind. The lob’s playful versatility allows these celebs to rock anything from beach waves to sleek updos, making it the ultimate summer hairdo for those who want to slay like our favourite stars.

The bob hairdo has been on the style radar for a while now; short and sexy, they are the “IT” factor this summer



ANANYA PANDAY



DEEPIKA PADUKONE

BREAKFAST WITH A CHAMP

KARTIK AARYAN is all grit and gumption as he takes on another challenge, playing *Chandu Champion*. JITESH PILLAAI tries to unravel the process that went into the making of an unsung hero thus far

PHOTOGRAPHS: ARJUN MARK
STYLIST: VAINGLORIOUS | MAKEUP: VICKY SALVI | HAIR: MILAN THAPA

HOW DID A BOY FROM GWALIOR SHIMMY INTO THE HEARTS OF SHOWBIZ? WITHOUT GODFATHERS AND CONNECTIONS, JUST HOW DID HE PROVE THAT HE HAD WHAT IT TAKES? OF COURSE, HE RUFFLED LOADS OF FEATHERS IN SHOWBIZ, BUT THIS BIOTECH ENGINEERING GRADUATE SLALOMED TO THE TOP OF HIS GAME. WHAT MAKES KARTIK ARYAN TICK, YOU MAY ASK? Is it the *X factor*, his ability to romance women on screen, or just his sheer charm? He's got it made. From his monologue in the misogynistic *Pyaar Ka Punchnama* to his easy-breezy act in *Bhool Bhulaiyaa*, Aaryan has struck a chord. Is it his small-town believability in films like *Satyaprem ki Katha* and *Luka Chuppi* or his roving eye act in *Pati Patni Aur Woh*? Aaryan is your Everyman, and that makes identification easy. He's not overwhelming you with ideology; he's not consumed by being a fashion icon. He plays it straight. A certain believability in his performances has hit pay dirt. He's the quintessential nice guy, everyone will tell you. The characters speak for themselves. It's this Everyman quality that he channels in his latest outing, *Chandu Champion*, portraying Murlikant Petkar, India's first Paralympic Gold medalist. You watch frames of the reel, and he's morphed into the skin of Petkar as *Chandu Champion*. All of which adds up to the right time to meet him for a chat fest. Juhu, on a sultry summer mid-morning has an array of sounds—from cars zigzagging through the bylanes to contractors hard at work, birds twittering while busy bees dig up and repair roads. Here's a transcript of a conversation with the man of the moment, Kartik Aaryan.





What have you given to Chandu Champion and what has the film given to you?

Chandu Champion has given me a lot. When Kabir (Khan) sir first approached me, neither of us knew it would lead to this role. But when he narrated the story of Murlikant Petkar, I was captivated. It felt unique and important. So, despite not knowing the challenges ahead, I eagerly agreed to be part of it, knowing it would be fulfilling.

The film is inspired by Murlikant Petkar; how did his story impact you?

Playing such a character instils a belief in invincibility, where willpower and hard work are paramount. Like Petkar, the determination to achieve becomes

pursuit of excellence became my mantra, earning me the nickname 'machine' from my team as I dedicatedly pursued swimming, gymming, boxing, and a predictable soup for dinner every night.

What was the advice that Murlikant Petkar gave you when you spoke to him?

When I met him, he was full of energy. He always used to come wearing a blazer, which had all his medals on it. I met his children and his grandchildren as well. I remember we had met right after I completed my swimming session, and he was really, really happy about how his story was being moulded by Kabir sr. He told me that I was doing a specific swimming stroke

box office, reviews, or validation. It made me disconnect from the industry and its ways. It made me stronger mentally and made me a more positive person. It just generated a lot of warm and positive energy in me. Lastly, it taught me to be fearless. Because it has been such an inspirational journey, this is the toughest role of my career, and I don't think I am ever going to do a role tougher than this. It was about mental strength more than physical strength.

Can you recall an incident where your mental strength was tested?

Our aim was to reach 12 per cent body fat; when I checked it for the first time, it was 41 per cent, which is obese. It was mind

Were you feeling annoyed or angered during that period?

Actually, it was quite the opposite. It felt more like a form of meditation to me. Despite many people suggesting that sticking to a strict diet might provoke a different reaction in me, it actually felt meditative. While there were moments of withdrawal where I craved certain foods but couldn't indulge, those passed relatively quickly. My focus was solely on my physical regimen, diving into boxing and swimming lessons. I remember vividly my first swimming class, where Vir bluntly told me I was terrible, leading me to question if my trainers disliked me. Their directness left no room for doubt. At times,

paramount. I mirrored Brad Pitt's physique from *Fight Club* as my goal, embodying the power of manifestation. The journey took dedication, but when I matched the envisioned physique, the fulfilment was unmatched. It's about cultivating a 'Champion's Mentality', feeling like a superhero in every endeavour. The relentless

exactly like him. That was the biggest thing for me and it stayed with me. Because we did not have any video of him. He's a happy man.

What are the three lessons you have learned from Chandu Champion, and what has it given you?

This film has given me a new life. I no longer feel dependent on the

over matter from that day onwards.

Don't you feel hungry on a diet?

The thing is we are all so used to having junk that it becomes normal for us. To have biscuits, snacks, and other unhealthy things. At one point, I used to have five rotis, and now I can't even have two. I feel full on days I have two. It's all about replacing unhealthy options with healthier ones and training your body. Now I can't even imagine overfeeding myself; it just makes me very uncomfortable. This way your stomach will also feel better, you'll feel lighter.

Did Kabir Khan's fitness rub off on you?

He is genuinely so fit and kind of an inspiration as well. He's the right person to be around for this kind of film. The way he follows his diet, the way he goes to multiple films a year.

I even questioned my ability to portray the role effectively. Ultimately, it all came down to getting into the zone, taking each step methodically. For instance, we had to film at an Olympic Aquatic stadium, with only a one-month window available in three years. I found myself surrounded by Olympians and seasoned swimmers. While we initially studied footage of athletes like Michael Phelps and Muhammad Ali, Kabir sir insisted I focus solely on mastering the required skills. It became clear he aimed for me to embody the essence of an athlete. In some scenes, I felt completely immersed in the character of Murlikant, reminiscent of my days in school or university, where I absorbed knowledge from every available source.

How does someone maintain their mental well-being while dedicating

CHANDU CHAMPION HAS GIVEN ME A LOT. WHEN KABIR (KHAN) SIR FIRST APPROACHED ME, NEITHER OF US KNEW IT WOULD LEAD TO THIS ROLE. BUT WHEN HE NARRATED THE STORY OF MURLIKANT PETKAR, I WAS CAPTIVATED. IT FELT UNIQUE AND IMPORTANT

so much to a film?

Perhaps due to my background in sports, integrating a diet into my regimen transformed me into the athlete I was striving to be. It was largely a test of mental fortitude, offering valuable insights into life and relationships. I reduced my phone usage, limited social engagements to only essential ones, and prioritised rest, often feeling ready for bed by 10:00 pm. Night shoots became increasingly difficult to endure, prompting questions about their necessity. Every moment became precious when adhering to such a structured routine, with specific time slots allocated for workouts and sleep. Despite the challenges, I experienced a newfound sense of health and positivity. I felt better than ever before, to the extent that I would have embraced even an adversary if they had crossed my path during that time. This process granted me valuable personal time, a reprieve from the relentless work schedule, allowing me to reconnect with myself.

Have you ever attended therapy?

No, I haven't. I've never felt the need for such sessions. It's commonly said to be beneficial for many issues, but perhaps I've been fortunate due to the support of my family and friends.

What's your perspective on social media?

Why do contemporary actors obsess over every piece written about them? It detracts from our purpose. In the past, media, including social media, was more limited. Nowadays, it's pervasive. Personally, I approach social media as part of my work, although it doesn't significantly impact my life. Yet, I do believe it can compromise authenticity.

How does having an acting



BACK IN GWALIOR, THE WORLD OF MOVIE STARS SEEMED DISTANT AND UNREACHABLE. I COULDN'T EVEN FATHOM BECOMING A HINDI FILM HERO. EVEN NOW, DESPITE MY ACHIEVEMENTS, THE FEAR OF LOSING IT ALL PERSISTS

career intersect with social media?

I don't believe they're inherently linked. However, it's hard to imagine anyone completely disconnected from social media today. It's an unparalleled tool for staying informed.

Do you take social media commentary seriously?

At times, yes. Other times, no. Nonetheless, as a human, I'm affected by both praise and criticism. There are days when I feel disappointed despite my best efforts if my work isn't acknowledged.

Some actors avoid social media altogether.

Many who claim to abstain from social media often maintain private accounts. Rejecting publicity can sometimes be a form of publicity itself. It's an integral aspect of our profession.

Do you have friends within the industry or outside of it?

Outside of the industry. They often give me more than just

a reality check.

How do you handle criticism?

I don't like being ignored. I thrive on attention, positive or negative. Complete silence from the public would affect me more deeply.

Are you continually in search of approval?

Not anymore. Initially, I sought validation for everything, but after spending several years in the industry, I've reached a point where I no longer feel the need for it. I've stopped taking validation so seriously. Now, I only value the validation of the audience. I've mentioned this before, but it's genuinely how I feel. Over the years, I've received a lot of love from the audience, and having them by my side makes me feel empowered.

Do you worry about being judged?

Yes, if you put it that way, I do feel concerned about being judged unfairly. However, I've stopped

striving to please everyone.

What advice would you give to a 22-year-old Kartik?

I'd tell him to stop seeking validation. That's genuinely what I would say. At that time, I was constantly seeking it, especially since I didn't know anyone in the industry and felt alone. I craved acceptance and opportunities. I believed in my work and worked hard, but now my focus is simply on whether I'm entertaining or not. Initially, there was a lot of self-doubt, and I felt unsure about where I stood at parties. But now, it doesn't bother me even if I'm standing alone.

Do you recall a moment when you failed an audition?

I used to attend auditions directly without any connections to casting directors. I would find out about auditions happening in Aram Nagar and would take a train



to reach the venue. Often, I was turned away without even being given a chance to audition. Securing an audition for a film was rare and felt like hitting the jackpot. There would be long queues, and sometimes, after hours of waiting, I would be told that I wasn't suitable for the role. Experiences like these left a lasting impact, and I felt disheartened at times. I grew resentful, but eventually, I learned to channel that negativity. I would tell myself that it was their loss.

What's the worst thing that has been said to you?

"Likh ke lelo ye Hindi film ka hero nahi ban sakta" (Take it from me in writing that he can't become a Hindi film hero).

Have directors ever reconsidered working with you after initially declining?

Absolutely! Many have. I view it as a sort of cosmic justice. My approach isn't about confrontation; it's about dedication to my craft. Those around me know I've put in relentless effort, like a well-oiled machine. I don't take breaks, I'm not one for parties, drinking, or smoking. I don't judge those who do, but my only addiction is work. It's as if there's a higher power recognizing my sincerity towards my craft. *(Laughs)* Perhaps that's why I'm single too. My focus is always on the task at hand.

But you were a casanova at one point...

(Laughs) Not anymore.

What are your aspirations?

My goals are ever-evolving; I constantly set new ones as I gradually accomplish the old ones. I believe in the power of manifestation and superstition, always envisioning

success. I've faced challenges that seem unimaginable to many, but for me, it's always been about the work. I have faith that my efforts don't go unnoticed, that there's a higher force recognizing them.

Has the allure of money, love, and fame ever gone to your head?

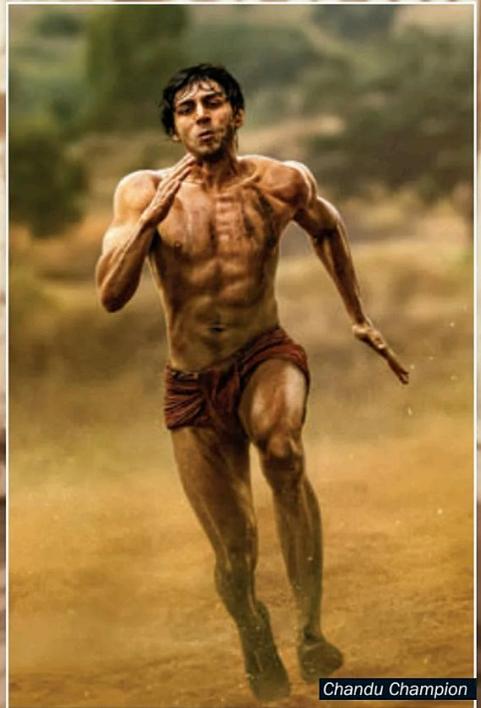
Back in Gwalior, the world of movie stars seemed distant and unreachable. I couldn't even fathom becoming a Hindi film hero. Even now, despite my achievements, the fear of losing it all persists. From my humble beginnings in Gwalior to the present day, there hasn't been a single moment when I've felt completely satisfied or that I've reached my ultimate destination.

How does your family perceive your fame? Do they think you've changed?

My sister has distanced herself from the industry, but I strive to keep my parents involved in my journey. My mother, especially, has been a constant support, understanding the rigours of my commitments, like when I portrayed Murlikant Petkar. She ensured I maintained a strict routine, even regulating my sleep schedule. I'm fortunate to have such supportive parents and siblings; they're my true anchors in life.

What was your experience like growing up in Gwalior?

I spent my childhood in Gwalior until I completed my 11th standard there. That's where I attended school and developed a passion for watching films. It was during my 9th standard that I set my heart on becoming an actor. The idea of



Chandu Champion

moving to Mumbai from Gwalior seemed like a distant aspiration at the time. In Gwalior, I lived with my parents and my sister, and life had a distinctly different rhythm there.

Was it challenging to gain your parents' approval?

I didn't directly discuss my desire with them. I understood that the only feasible path from Gwalior to Mumbai involved pursuing an engineering college entrance exam. So, I enrolled in DY Patil College in Nerul. Gwalior presented financial challenges for my family; witnessing my parents' resilience in those circumstances continues to inspire me. Their struggles, I believe, were unimaginably tough.

Even though they were doctors, they faced financial difficulties?

Indeed. Gwalior's economic landscape was markedly different from Mumbai's. Consultation fees for doctors were nominal, barely reaching Rs. 100, let alone thousands. Consequently, sustaining a comfortable lifestyle was an uphill battle. We led a middle-class existence, with every expense meticulously calculated, from my sister's education to mine. My parents had to take out loans to support my education. Sometimes, I wonder how different life might have been had they practised medicine in Mumbai. Consequently, disclosing my aspirations to pursue acting and relocate to Mumbai was out of the question. I lived with six people in Nerul and later with twelve here, as that was all I could afford. I never entertained the notion of asking for additional financial support from my family, knowing full well their limitations.

Did your parents express disappointment when they discovered your desire to pursue acting?

Yes, they were



HE (KABIR KHAN) IS GENUINELY SO FIT AND KIND OF AN INSPIRATION AS WELL. HE'S THE RIGHT PERSON TO BE AROUND FOR THIS KIND OF FILM. THE WAY HE FOLLOWS HIS DIET, THE WAY HE GOES TO THE GYM, RIGOROUSLY WORKS OUT, AND DOESN'T EVEN TAKE A DAY OFF-NO MATTER HOW BUSY HE IS, WHEREVER HE IS SHOOTING OR HOW TIRED HE IS

disappointed. By the time I received my first acting opportunity, I had already completed two years of engineering studies. Until then, my parents held onto hope that I would pursue a career in engineering.

How did you succeed in auditioning for your first film, *Pyaar Ka Punchnama*?

I discovered the audition notice on Facebook while regularly searching for casting calls online. Despite having an exam scheduled on the same day, I chose to attend the audition instead. This decision reinforced my belief in karma. Had events unfolded differently, I might have pursued a career in engineering. It's not the best example to set, but truthfully, I skipped

my exam that day to attend the audition. Although I failed my exams initially, after the release of *Pyaar Ka Punchnama 2*, I eventually earned my degree by completing all my exams.

How do you adjust to different directors' styles?

I consider myself a director's actor. Each director, from Kabir Khan to Anees Bazmee, brings a unique approach. Kabir sir's meticulous planning is unparalleled, while Anees sir thrives on spontaneity. With Kabir sir, scenes are executed precisely as scheduled, whereas Anees sir often improvises and explores various options on set. While Kabir sir is known for his detailed planning, Anees sir is more open to experimentation. Thus, it's crucial for me to adapt to their respective methods.

I listen attentively to the director's vision and follow their lead. However, if I sense a director needs assistance, I'm not hesitant to offer my input. While I typically avoid conflicts with directors, I'm assertive when it comes to standing by my convictions. I'm inclined to debate when I strongly believe in something.

What was your experience working alongside Vidya Balan?

Her presence and infectious laughter uplift everyone on set. Her ability to seamlessly transition in and out of character is remarkable. I find myself in awe of her talent whenever we work together. It's truly a privilege. Following this interview, I'll be heading straight to the sets of *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*. ■

DUBAI

THE WHAT, WHERE, WHO IN THE CITY

SCOPE



WHO:

RIZWAN SAJAN, ADITI RAO HYDARI, ORRY, RASIKA DUGAL

WHAT:

HOSTED BY SUDHAKAR ADAPA, THE HELLO! 100 ICONS AWARDS CEREMONY RECOGNIZED OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS IN BUSINESS, FASHION, SPORTS, AND DIGITAL MEDIA AND CELEBRATED INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS. ALSO PRESENT WERE BOLLYWOOD SUPERSTAR SALMAN KHAN, RENOWNED FASHION DESIGNER MANISH MALHOTRA AND SPORTSPERSON SANIA MIRZA



WHO:

WILL SMITH, MARTIN LAWRENCE, JADA PINKETT SMITH, ADIL EL ARBI AND BILAL FALLAH

WHAT:

HOLLYWOOD STARS WILL SMITH AND MARTIN LAWRENCE ROCKED THE CITY AT THE RED-CARPET PREMIERE OF BAD BOYS: RIDE OR DIE. THE EVENT SAW THEM INTERACT WITH FANS AHEAD OF THE FILM'S SCREENING. IN AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT WITH US, THE TWO STARS EXPRESSED THEIR EXCITEMENT OF THEIR FILM PREMIERING IN DUBAI, SHARED INTERESTING ANECDOTES AND ALSO SPOKE ABOUT THEIR BROMANCE IN THE SUMMER BLOCKBUSTER. ALSO PRESENT WERE THE MOVIE'S DIRECTOR DUO ADIL AND BILAL, AS WELL AS SMITH'S WIFE - JADA PINKETT SMITH!



PHOTOGRAPHY : YASIR ARAFAT | VIDEO - JAFAR VETTIYIL



WHO:
TAHA SHAH BADUSSHA

WHAT:
HEERAMANDI STAR TAHA SHAH BADUSSHA WOWED MEDIA AT AN EVENT IN THE CITY

PHOTOGRAPHY : YASIR ARAFAT | VIDEO - JAFAR VETTIYIL



Sanjay Dutt at the launch of his new venture in the city



WHO:
ATIF ASLAM, ABIDA PARVEEN, BISMIL

WHAT:
MUSICAL MASTERY MET CELESTIAL SPLendor AT SYMPHONY OF STARS, FEATURING ATIF ASLAM AND THE 'QUEEN OF QAWWALIS, GHAZALS, AND KAFIS,' ABIDA PARVEEN. A HARMONIOUS COLLABORATION PRESENTED BY BLU BLOOD, EVA LIVE MIDDLE EAST, AND MIDAS EVENTS.



Filmmakers Abbas Mustan with Gaurang Doshi and Niti Agarwal at the launch of a new app in Dubai



WHO:

KARTIK AARYAN, KABIR KHAN

WHAT:

KARTIK AARYAN AND KABIR KHAN ATTENDED THE PRESS CONFERENCE OF THEIR UPCOMING FILM CHANDU CHAMPION AT DUBAI MALL BEFORE ANNOUNCING THE ADVANCE BOOKING OF THE EPIC MOVIE AT THE ICONIC BURJ KHALIFA. KARTIK WAS SEEN INTERACTING WITH FANS AND THE MEDIA WHO CLEARLY DIDN'T SEEM TO GET ENOUGH OF THE BOLLYWOOD STAR



Trailblazer!

Randeep Hooda

POWER-PERFORMER RANDEEP HOODA TALKS TO AAKANKSHA NAVAL-SHETYE ABOUT EVOLVING AS AN ACTOR AND CREATING A NEW MILESTONE WITH THE SUCCESS OF HIS DIRECTORIAL DEBUT SWATANTRYA VEER SAVARKAR

Randeep Hooda has done it yet again. The power-house performer who continues to raise the bar as an actor has proven his mettle once again with the hard-hitting *Swatantrya Veer Savarkar* – a biopic that has him play the titular role of the late freedom fighter and revolutionary Vinayak Damodar Savarkar – that’s garnered much critical acclaim at the Box Office. It’s hard to not point out that biopics certainly are a forte for this cinematic chameleon as he never ceases to amaze with his incredible and awe-inspiring on-screen transformations. But this one is more special than most others. The Bollywood star has upped the stakes with this one as the film currently streaming on ZEE5 Global also marks his directorial debut. The film, says the multi-faceted actor-filmmaker, has helped him grow far more than his on-camera journey had over the past two decades that has seen him be a part of several cinematic gems and commercial hits alike including his action-packed Hollywood OTT outing in *Extraction*. Whether it’s his passion for movies or love for horses and photography, Randeep’s a man of convictions and confidence and in an exclusive interview, we talk all about it and also ask him about his new role as a husband having tied the knot with his girlfriend Lin Laishram late last year. Excerpts

Congratulations Randeep professionally for the success of *Swatantrya Veer Savarkar* and personally for the marriage!?

Yes, thank you very much! Life is on an upswing. God is making my shoulders wider so that I can take more responsibility (laughs).

How is the ‘husband’ Randeep doing then?

I’m doing better. It’s sinking in now because earlier I was so busy with making and release of the movie that we didn’t quite have much time together. But now we have more time together and it’s sinking in and we’re married and life does change and change for the better I think.

And with *Swatantrya Veer Savarkar* you have added another gem to your crown! It has been quite the conversation starter...

Yes, I think we have to hear all voices, all opinions, all point of views, to come to a conclusion. I felt it was a bit unfair that we are not given the point of view of the armed revolution that happened in our country as well. It all became about ahimsa, it became our brand abroad. I really felt that it was important to also show stories which cover the armed revolution of our country which was just as important as the non-violence movement was. So it should get its due and people should hear that point of view as well. It’s not a commentary on what was right or wrong, it’s simply saying that this also happened and people need to be made aware of this too!

The film marks your

directorial debut, as well as has you in the titular role. What’s been the biggest takeaway for you?

All that we have shown in the movie are recorded facts, but like most people even I did not know about these important parts of history and I’m very glad that I got to learn it and then share it with people. There was so much that I discovered as I made it, and similarly I hope the audience also discovers it as they see it. And there are so many other things you discover and realise - all these “so called” liberals are not very liberal. They don’t want to hear another point of view. There’re a lot of my friends who really admire my work and gave me a pat on the back for making this cinematic feat which they have read about but they refused to watch it because it’s about Mr. Savarkar. So that’s another thing that, you know, not all points of views are welcome. But that’s okay. Life goes on. People’s opinion will change as we go along. All over the world there are different aspects of history that we’re discovering which were kind of kept away from us. Whether it is America, or so many other countries, including India. So, it’s a good thing. Social media is lending to conversations, even though sometimes there are very non-civil conversations but



Swatantra Veer Savarkar

still I'm glad people are having these conversations, and my attempt to make this movie was simply to present another point of view. Present a point of view of Mr. Savarkar and his times and what made him who he was. So, whether you agree with him or disagree with him, that's absolutely fine but to shut it out just because it's about him; it shows something about us as a nation.

As an actor, is the excitement any different ahead of a theatrical release and now when it's releasing again on an OTT? Is it more relaxed because you know that it's already been accepted well...

Oh yes, definitely! It's much more relaxed, because now there've been a couple of months between that whole process of giving the final

touches to the movie and promoting it at the same time. Earlier there were jitters because I had, as a director, chosen a slightly unconventional way of telling a story where I break the fourth wall, like there are conversations with the audience and lot of editing patterns were very experimental, over 50 minutes of the film is in English, so all those were there but it's very widely accepted. People who have seen the movie have really loved it and whether they've agreed with it or not, they think it's of some cinematic importance if nothing else. And 90 per cent of the shows that happened in the country, people clapped in the end,

which was such a big pat on the back for me because they clapped and it was like the clap at the end of a theatre performance. And I did keep it very direct and to the point and probably that's why I'm very happy for that. I've earlier been accepted as an actor, but now as a director, the acceptance is really boosting me. And I also have new found respect for all my directors. It is a very tough job and it'll take me some time to pick it up again.

With ZEE5 Global the reach is tremendous globally on the OTT...

Yes almost 119 countries apparently! And Indians whichever part of the world they are in, can see an alternate point of view towards Mr. Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) and our whole freedom struggle and partition of the country. So it's a movie that can be shared with the westerners as well, with your friends, with your neighbours, with your colleagues... It doesn't have that detaching song

and dance fare like a lot of Indian movies, which a lot of westerners feel when they watch it, like they feel a bit detached from it. But this is like any other movie made across the world so I'm sure they would enjoy too.

You seem to have a very strong affinity to play real people on screen...

No, there's no such affinity, and I don't go looking for biopics! It's just that these are the roles that I come upon, these are the roles that I'm offered and every time I find them interesting I say okay. I do want to do a fun film where I just chill and rock on set, wear nice clothes, walk in slow motion, get a pay check and go home (laughs)! So I'm really looking forward to those kind of roles. But then every time something or the other comes across like D which was hugely based on Dawood's life and then Risk based on Daya Nayak's life and then Raja Ravi Verma, Charles Sobhraj, Sarabjeet, Beeba Boys is also based on a

true story. And Inspector Avinash which is on Jio. So many such characters have come my way and seriously I'm not sitting here and saying 'Arrey kaunsa real life character aayega' Nahin bhai! I mean I also want to, you know, it's very tiring to live these parts and for extended periods of time and I just hope that I'll do some not-so-serious work and have fun with acting as it is.

But you raise the bar as an actor each time with these films...I

have my doubts, every time I attempt something. I'll tell you, I really feel that this time people are going to find out that I don't know anything (laughs)!

Do you think that things would have panned out a little different professionally if you were more active in the industry social circuit!

Who is to know? Maybe it would have, maybe it would not have. But I'm living my life, I'm living the best life that I can. And usually I'm very busy with something or the other to actually be a part of these social gatherings. Though I don't mind them. I really enjoy them as well occasionally. But I've also realised that they are more of networking social gatherings and I'm guilty of going there to party so it doesn't gel anyway (laughs).

Looking back, what do you think has changed in Randeep Hooda as an actor...

Oh! I acted as a child basically and I think the more involved you are as an actor in your work, the more childlike you are, almost childish. So the biggest turn of events has been this movie Swatantra Veer Savarkar, where I went from just being an actor to being a co-writer, producer, director, and that really made me grow up in a lot of ways. Like I'm dyslexic with numbers, I'm not very good at planning things and not very good at talking to too many people. Only people who understand and know who I am, I'm more comfortable with. But with being the director, I had to really cast my net wide, I had to speak to 200 people and then of course handling all the accounts and you know...

I have grown more in the last two years than I have grown in all my time as a person. But as an actor it's been a gradual growth and you think you're right and there would be no time to discover, maybe you could have been wrong and then you try and correct it and then of course you got to keep learning new things. So basically I'm still learning as an actor and that growth as an actor has been slow and constant, I've really tried to improve upon myself. There's lesser difference between my thoughts and my application and I hope that keeps growing. But as a person as I said earlier, I've grown leaps and bounds in the last two years. I think Mr. Savarkar came into my life to make me realise my own capacity.

What is the one advise you would want to give yourself say 20 or 24 years back?

Keep your mouth shut unless it pays (laughs)! Be more kind to yourself. Let yourself go out there a bit more and yeah, you don't have to be raw Haryanvi self. You can just be diplomatic and sweet and still get your point across.

Diplomacy is the word! Yes! Be more diplomatic bro What's next on your plate now?

Well there are a few things. I've been so busy with this biopic, that I'm just a bit exhausted. There are a few things on the anvil, I'm just trying to see which one would excite me the most to do next. There is enough exciting work out there and I'm really grateful for that and I'm just hanging back and enjoying being a husband before I take another part where I disappear from her life again.

How're your photography and equestrian pursuits?

Oh they're going good. We've done a couple of trips, me and my wife, and we've been really enjoying the jungles and it's been a true blessing. There's no network and just us.



THAT GROWTH AS AN ACTOR HAS BEEN SLOW AND CONSTANT. I'VE REALLY TRIED TO IMPROVE UPON MYSELF. THERE'S LESSER DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MY THOUGHTS AND MY APPLICATION AND I HOPE THAT KEEPS GROWING. BUT AS A PERSON, I'VE GROWN LEAPS AND BOUNDS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS. I THINK MR. SAVARKAR CAME INTO MY LIFE TO MAKE ME REALISE MY OWN CAPACITY.

rapid fire

WITH RANDEEP HOODA

ONE SUPERPOWER YOU WISH YOU COULD HAVE...

To get inside people's heads and see what they are thinking and what they are saying - the difference between that. One personality you wish you could spend a day with... I would like to spend time with both Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Savarkar. And sit in their company and just listen to their conversation. I did try to do that in the movie quite a bit in all the lines that Mr. Savarkar and Mr. Gandhi say to each other in their three meetings are all recorded and factual. But I would have loved to be there!

WHAT IS THE SEXIEST THING ABOUT RANDEEP HOODA?

I don't know. I think you should ask this question to someone else. The fact that I don't know probably.

RANDEEP, IS HE A BETTER HUSBAND OR A BETTER ACTOR?

Oh I have not been working as a husband for too long so definitely a better actor. I will improve though.

Being Beena

Rasika Duggal

VERSATILE ACTRESS RASIKA DUGGAL TALKS TO AAKANKSHA NAVAL-SHETYE ABOUT MAKING TOUGH CHOICES AND PLAYING ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR CHARACTERS ON THE OTT

AN ACTOR PAR EXCELLENCE, RASIKA DUGGAL ACES IN EVERY ROLE SHE ESSAYS ON SCREEN WHETHER THE MOVIES OR THE OTT! FROM QISSA, MANTO, DELHI CRIME TO OUT OF LOVE, ADHURA, LOOTCASE, FAIRY FOLK, MADE IN HEAVEN, CHUTNEY, AMONGST OTHERS AND OF COURSE MIRZAPUR WHERE SHE HAS PROVEN HER METTLE AS BEENA TRIPATHI. NOW READYING FOR SEASON 3, THE ACTRESS IS THRILLED WITH THE LOVE SHE GOT FOR THE IMPACTFUL CHARACTER WHICH RASIKA SAYS IS NOTHING LIKE HER AT ALL IN REAL LIFE. WE CAUGHT UP WITH THE VERSATILE ACTRESS IN DUBAI AND OVER A CANDID TETE-A-TETE, WE EXPLORE HER AFFINITY FOR PLAYING STRONG AND DEFINITIVE SCREEN CHARACTERS ON SCREEN AND GET HER TO SPILL THE BEANS ON BEING BEENA TRIPATHI



EVERYONE'S SUPER-EXCITED ABOUT MIRZAPUR 3 COMING UP. WHAT'S THE HEADSPACE LIKE?

Just *Mirzapur 3* and taking in all the excitement!

DO YOU EVER GET CALLED OUT AS BEENA INSTEAD OF RASIKA?

A lot! A lot! *Mirzapur* fans are everywhere and they're very expressive and they're very loyal and it's great for us. We enjoy that!

YOU HAVE COME TO BE IDENTIFIED WITH A LOT OF DEFINITIVE AND STRONG WOMEN CHARACTERS ON SCREEN. IS THAT SOMETHING YOU HAVE PURPOSEFULLY WORKED TOWARDS?

Not really, but maybe subconsciously you kind of aspire to be in a situation of power. So a woman who is sort of holding her own and finding her way around like Beena Tripathi for example who's very overtly doing that, is something which I guess subconsciously something that many women aspire to be. But also somebody like Neeti Singh in *Delhi Crime* for example, who will not be overtly termed at all as aggressive or, in fact is very soft spoken and is very gentle, but is still making very strong choices and taking difficult and bold decisions. So, yeah I think subconsciously that's what happens and I think I'm drawn to well-written scripts and any well-written script will have that complexity and a layer to every character. So yeah I guess I'm just drawn to well-written scripts and subconsciously drawn to women-oriented roles.

WE HAVE SEEN YOU SHINE THROUGH IN SOME VERY LAYERED AND COMPLEX CHARACTERS, LIKE IN HAMID, OR QISSA... BUT WHAT WAS YOUR REACTION WHEN MIRZAPUR WAS FIRST OFFERED TO YOU?

PLAYING A CHARACTER THAT IS NOTHING LIKE YOU AND COMPLETELY PUSHED YOU OUT OF THAT COMFORT ZONE...

That was exciting to me. But to be honest, when *Mirzapur* was first offered to me, I was like 'have they made a mistake? Were they wanting to call somebody else and they accidentally called me?' Because, I somehow felt like it was a very out-of-the-box casting and I'm very grateful to the casting directors of *Mirzapur* and Karan Anshuman and Gurmeet Singh for thinking out of the box and being able to visualise me in that role. Because if they had thought stereotypically, maybe somebody like me wouldn't have been a choice for Beena Tripathi at all because the body language is so different, body type is so different from what you imagine a sensual woman to be like. But I think they didn't do that and I'm so grateful for that and it's so much fun when casting is done like that. Even for other parts when they cast actors who I would have never imagined in a certain role, it's always so nice to watch that.

AND YOU TOOK EVERYONE BY STORM WITH THAT ONE...

It's a very well written role and I was just waiting to sink my teeth into something like this which required me to have a physicality different from mine. Beena is sort of very sure of what she is doing and you can see that in her body language. The real me, I am generally a person who's a little... you know all my gestures are a little small and Beena is not like that. She really sort of owns the space that she is in at that time. and I really felt like that would be interesting for me to do physically.

YOU'RE ONE OF THE MOST LOOK FORWARD TO CHARACTERS IN MIRZAPUR 3!

Yeah! One of the best things about the show is that every character is so

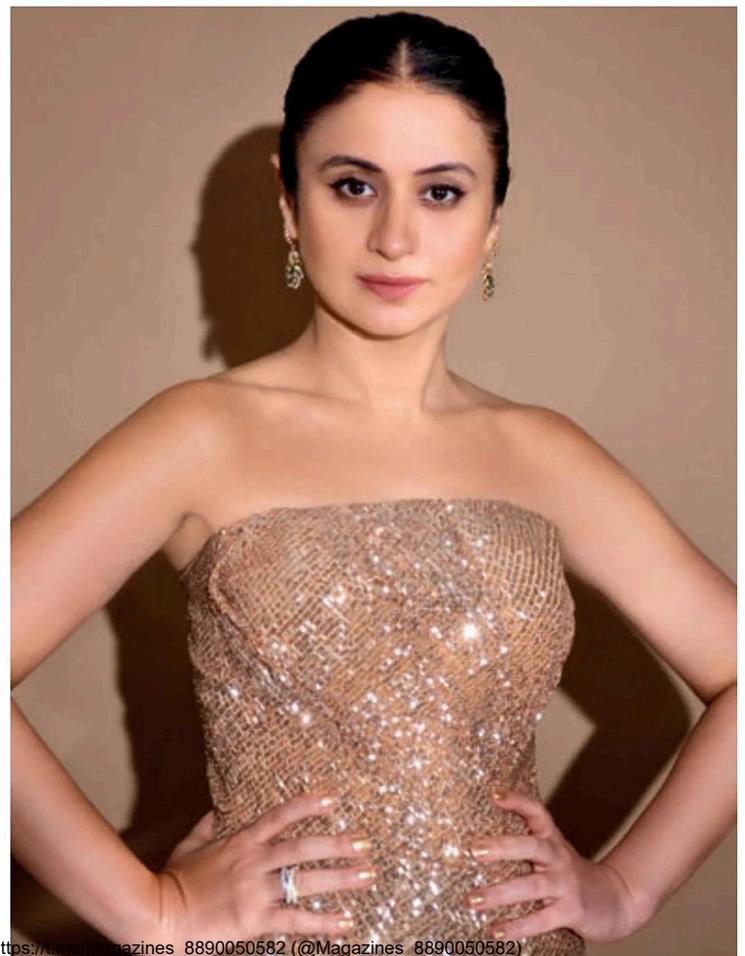
well etched out and they've build such a solid ground for the characters right in the beginning, right at the out-start that it's been very easy to therefore build on stories in subsequent seasons. Otherwise if you don't do that work properly, then it becomes very difficult to take those characters forward in subsequent seasons. So I find Guddu Bhaiya so interesting, and of course Munna Bhaiya is everybody's favourite, everybody is lamenting that Munna will not be there this season. So yeah, but all the characters are very

interesting. Like if I had been offered something else besides Beena Tripathi... no actually I do love Beena Tripathi! I change my mind (laughs).

YOU ENTERED THE INDUSTRY AROUND 2007 AND THEN THE BIG BOOM HAPPENED WITH THE OTT...

Yes, I think it was 2015-16 that I actively started working in the streaming space. I started with a small part in TVF's show *Permanent Roommates*. The writing was so new and fresh and it was very slice

IF THEY (THE MAKERS OF MIRZAPUR) HAD THOUGHT STEREOTYPICALLY, MAYBE SOMEBODY LIKE ME WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN A CHOICE FOR BEENA TRIPATHI AT ALL BECAUSE THE BODY LANGUAGE IS SO DIFFERENT, BODY TYPE IS SO DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU IMAGINE A SENSUAL WOMAN TO BE LIKE."



of life but so interestingly written. And then I did another show with them - *Humorously Yours* and then a short film called *Chutney* with Tisca Chopra which at that time hit 1M views overnight which was very rare then. It was quite impactful. So from 2007 to 2016, there were many years where work was not as much it is now...

BUT YOU DID NOT SUCCUMB TO THE LURE OF TELEVISION SHOWS!

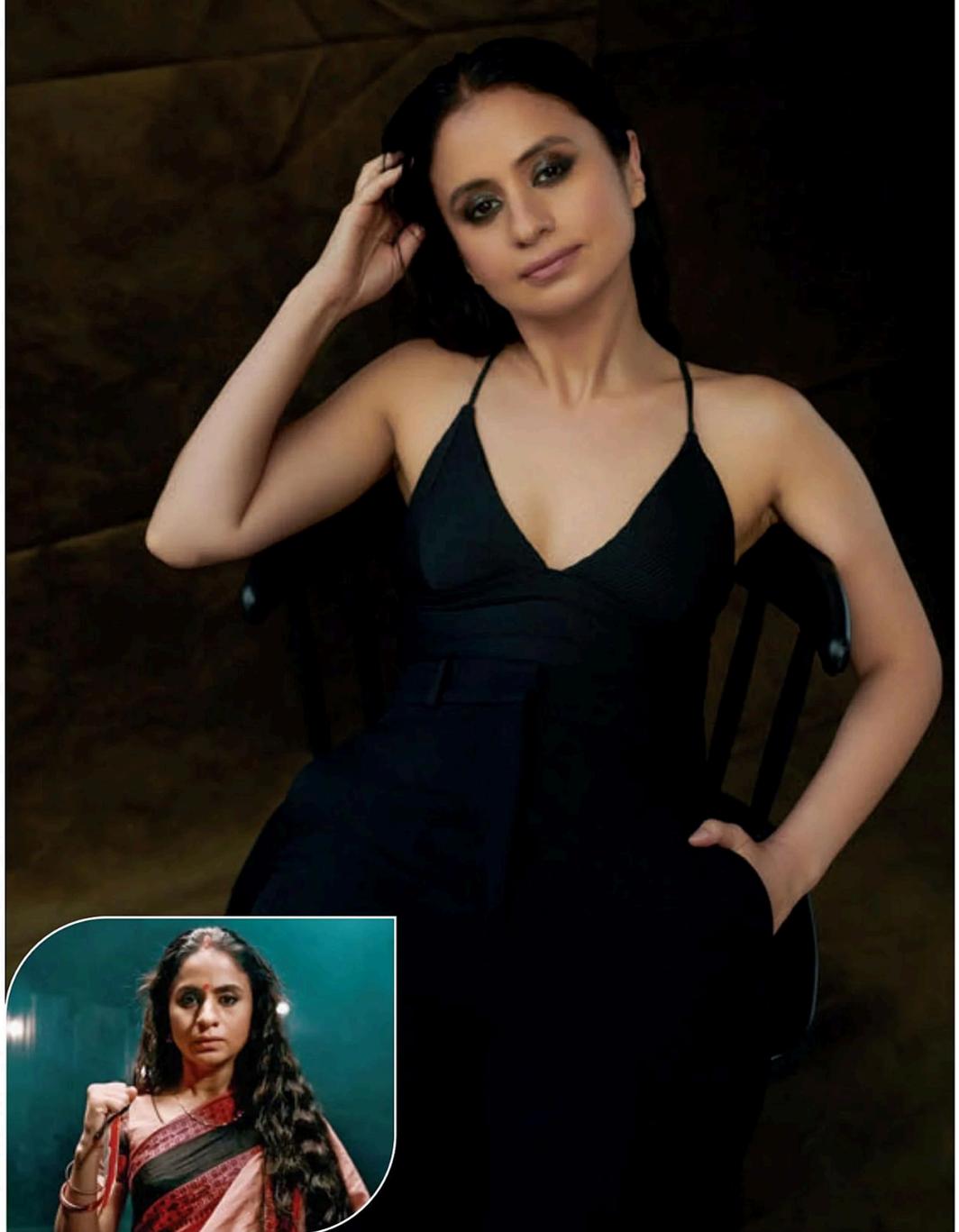
No I didn't. I held out on that. They were tough decisions because I was getting many interesting offers in daily soaps at that time which I was not finding interesting from the content point of view, from a performance point of view. So yeah, that was a tough time when I had to really sort of... you know when I didn't have much else happening, but I had to say no to what I was being offered. So that's always difficult. But I'm glad that I held out.

HOW DID YOU SAIL THROUGH THAT?

I think it's always hard to say no. I mean it never gets easier. In fact it just gets tougher. Because you've nothing to lose when you're starting out and you don't have so much work but the stakes keep getting higher as the work becomes better and bigger and so then you feel like am I making the right decision, am I losing out on something by not doing it. So in one sense when you have little, it's very freeing. Because then you're not sort of racked up in too many ideas of what you might be losing.

WHAT IS THE REAL RASIKA LIKE? WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN NOT IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA?

When I'm not facing the camera? I think I make everything work related. Even if I'm reading a book and find it interesting I'm like 'what if this was a show that we would all be in'. you know 'what would this be like'. So I think it kind of finds its way back into thinking about work



THEY WERE TOUGH DECISIONS BECAUSE I WAS GETTING MANY INTERESTING OFFERS IN DAILY SOAPS AT THAT TIME WHICH I WAS NOT FINDING INTERESTING FROM THE CONTENT POINT OF VIEW, OR FROM A PERFORMANCE POINT OF VIEW.

very often. And that's not always the best thing to do and I try and compartmentalise things but no I'm a little obsessive in this regards.

IF YOU HAD TO TAKE ONE TRAIT FROM BEENA AND ADD IT

TO RASIKA, WHAT CHARACTERISTIC WOULD YOU PICK-UP FROM HER?

She very silently observes everybody and knows exactly what the other person's weakness is which I am not at all good at doing in real life. I will not know

what the other person is thinking in life and I kind of go through the whole... a little bit zoned out in my own head a little bit. Beena is like very much in tune with what everybody around her is thinking and doing which is why she's able to manipulate people.

So I'd love to have that trait. And silently so. Like you'd never know what she is thinking. With me I'm an open book, you'll know exactly what I'm thinking, I'm saying what I'm thinking. You know all that is happening. So yeah, I quite admire that.

YOU'VE ALSO DONE BANANA BREAD WITH YOUR HUSBAND (ACTOR MUKUL CHADHA)...

Yes, we had co-written it, he did most of the writing to be honest but we kind of brain-stormed on it together.

SO ANYTHING FURTHER HAPPENING ON THOSE LINES?

Nothing concrete. We keep trying with ideas as creative people living together. We think it's an opportunity to sort of bounce ideas off each other and we continue to do that but nothing concrete.

DID YOU SEE A LITTLE BIT OF YOURSELF IN ANY OF THE CHARACTERS, LIKE THIS IS THE CLOSEST THAT YOU IN REAL LIFE WOULD BE LIKE?

Yeah, I mean some characters are very relatable and some are very aspirational. For example, Neeti Singh in *Delhi Crime* was very relatable. When I read it, I was like this is me, this is how I was in my college days. Very idealistic very 'wanting to change the world with my own hard work' and all of that. And Neeti's journey through subsequent season and how she gets jaded, but still doesn't leave her sincerity is something that I've been very drawn to, to see how that progresses. So Neeti Singh is definitely one that I related with completely.

BUT NOT WITH BEENA...

Yes, Beena was somebody I didn't understand. When I read the script, I was like 'yeh toh... this is not me at all'. But then to get into somebody else's skin, to

understand how they are wired, how they think is a very interesting exercise as a performer. And we sort of look for those opportunities.

AT WHAT POINT DID THE PAT ON THE BACK COME FOR YOU!

As an artiste, it is always wanting more. I mean that's how you sort of keep yourself motivated in a sense. But yes, I think I'm very grateful for the variety of roles that I've had. And I hadn't imagined that for myself. I was so much in the throw of things when I was looking for work and trying to find my ground in Mumbai and after a few years, I didn't have any idea of what exactly I want to do because you can't in this career! You have to kind of improvise along the way. You can't come with a set idea *ki mujhe ye chahiye* and then you'll achieve that. *Aisa nahi tha* and I didn't have set idea. All I knew was that I wanted to do different kinds of acting work, different kinds of performances. And I did get a chance to do them very close to each other so I got opportunities to explore versatility and also to showcase it. I think in that regard I've been very lucky.

SO WHAT ARE THE UPCOMING PROJECTS?

A bunch of stuff that I've shot for but the next I think will be *Mirzapur 3* which will come out soon. I'm scheduled to shoot *Delhi Crime 3* this year. And there are a few films, one is *Little Thomas* with Gulshan Devaiah, another is *Lord Curzon ki Haveli* with Arjun Mathur and two new shows - one which I'm very excited about which is another very different role which is very snappy sassy role and I'm really looking forward to see how that has panned out.



Breaking the **Glass** ceiling!

Sonali Bendre

LIFE'S COME A FULL CIRCLE AS THE GORGEOUS AND EVER GRACEFUL SONALI BENDRE COMPLETES THREE DECADES IN THE INDUSTRY AND MARKS THE MILESTONE WITH HER SUCCESSFUL OTT SERIES BROKEN NEWS SEASON 2, FINDS AAKANKSHA NAVAL-SHETYE

Having ruled hearts and the marquee in the 90s, the gorgeous and graceful Sonali Bendre made a successful comeback to fictional content and her OTT debut with *Broken News* on ZEE5 Global! Post the stupendous reception of the series that saw her garner much love and acclaim, the star is now back with a bang in Season 2 where she reprises her role of the fearless journalist Amina Qureshi! Interestingly, Sonali also completes three decades in the industry. We caught up with the 90s heartthrob for an exclusive interview and in a candid tete-a-tete, the star talks about making tough choices both on screen and off it and also breaking the stereotypes in her second inning!

We recently watched *Broken News* Season 2 on ZEE5 Global and you were amazing in the series as 'Amina Qureshi' especially with your character bringing out that balance of not losing the objective...

You think so! I think it was the way it was written too. Vinay (Waikul) Sir and Sambit Mishra, they wrote the show constantly keeping that fine line. In fact, Amina sees herself in Radha (played by Shriya Pilgaonkar) in such a huge way, there were times when even I asked, 'how can I do this to Radha', and they explained that if my child was not on the right path, what would I do? Would I just let the child go on because of my love or would my love make me stop the child and say: 'I love you but this is not the path'. So yeah, that was the hard part but it was fun and really fulfilling to do.

The story and your character lends itself for a prequel showing how Amina Qureshi became the journalist that she is!

We're letting the cat out of the bag then but yeah I think a prequel would be a great idea because in this season, you see Dibankar (Jaideep Ahlawat) and Amina come face to face for the first time. It's one scene, very subtle but there're so many layers in that scene. And there are just so many things that you look at and wonder

what this relationship would have been like. And it's so interesting to see that it's like, 'wow, we should explore that relationship more sometime. Go back and do it.'

So is the team already on it?

No they are not. I think I will literally have to turn the clock back which I can't (laughs). So I don't think I can look back!

Is the excitement higher for Season 2?

You know the first time when I spoke to you, it was before the first season came out. And I was explaining what the show is about and I had shared that it is a newsroom drama, but not just that! If you remember that conversation. So the good thing about this journey and the second season is that now people have seen the first season already and loved it. That's why we got the second season! *Broken News* is based on the BBC series *Press*, and *Press* never had a second season, so for us to actually get the second season says it all! Obviously BBC India has produced it but for BBC also to be like, 'okay this is written so well let's give it a shot,' because it's original in that sense,

so it just goes to show how well the first season did and we're so grateful for that. But this time around when I am talking about the show, the beauty is that a lot of people have seen it, so I think they are coming with a lot more love and affection for the show. The reaction that we've had after Season 1 was that it was so authentic and we managed to depict what really happens in the newsroom, the turmoil journalists go through, the relationships, the personal lives, how they collide, what makes you take certain decisions, sometimes you make a choice and then you're stuck with it and you might want to go back and you're not able to, and sometimes you regret that you didn't make a choice. But these are all such human emotions, and I think that's what *Broken News* is. It's the human story from newsroom. And that I think is so beautiful and this time around everyone's come to us with so much love. I think we lived up to what the viewers would want it to be portrayed as.

It touched upon many topics subtly... gender politics,

empowerment, the dilemmas we face as women and you nailed it perfectly on many levels! There are certain questions that come up in a woman's mind. You can be a feminist, but there are certain things like your biological clock that you cannot stop and that is the reality of every woman's life. So do you pause it all to have a baby or you go ahead and reach a point where you've achieved what you wanted to, but then maybe you're lonely. So it's just so real and it is something that all of us as women go through. These are the choices we are making all the time. I mean for me also, as a working woman, it was a choice I made and then to come back to work, it took me so long.

Yes, the struggle is real. As a top star you've made some of those tough choices, you stepped back, got back in with a bang and there's a larger palette of roles to choose from... I think in many ways, it's a second inning and I'm really looking forward to it. But that's

“ *There are certain questions that come up in a woman's mind. You can be a feminist, but there are certain things like your biological clock that you cannot stop and that is the reality of every woman's life.* **”**



“
30 years! Doesn't feel like 30 to me. If you look at the experience and knowledge and what I think I have soaked in it would be worth 60 years, because that's what happens in this profession.
 ”

why I remember when I spoke about *Broken News Season 1*, when it was about to release and I said that not just the Indian audience but even for the global audience, this series is so relevant on so many multiple levels. As for me,

thank God for OTT coming in, for these kind of roles getting written, because if that didn't happen, then where would I be? You know now that my son is 18, what would I do? So, thank God for this genre and such shows that I got a chance to find myself again.

But making this choice must not have been easy...

I agree with you. It was not an easy choice and I really appreciate ZEE5 Global for not only the first season but giving me the second season also. After coming back into fiction, I was very clear that I wanted to do a certain kind of role, I wanted a strong character, I wanted a character that had shades. And for me hope is very important. Because when you see Amina and her fighting for something that nearly could be non-existent in

today's day and age, it gives you hope. And I think we as human beings live on hope. If hope is gone, there's nothing worth living for. And I think this character gave me that hope because it was such a strong character and I said if I want to come back into fiction, I want it to be something like this. There're a lot of other roles and scripts that come to you and maybe now I can look at it in a different way but I wanted to come back in my first role when I came back into fiction and I wanted it to say a few things which this character gave me and I mean, BBC, ZEE5 Global, my director Vinay, writer Sambit and the cast Shriya, Jaideep... I mean I cannot ask for a better team. It was just perfect.

You have set the bar really high with this one so going forward what is it that you'll now be looking to in the roles?

Well I'm definitely looking forward to not being typecast! You know in my first inning when I started I realised and I appreciate that you know making that niche, making that image for yourself helps you with the career but the con of that is that then you get stuck with that image. So it's taken me a very long time to move from the image that I had. And I appreciate that and I'm grateful for having that image. A lot of people work really hard to get one and I'm grateful for that. But now it's time to move on so I really don't want to typecast. I'm really open to all kinds of role. I'm very excited about it and look forward to reading all the scripts that are coming and I don't know what is it that will turn that switch on for me and I'll do it so I'm looking forward to that. And I'm waiting to be surprised.

Also, you complete three decades this year, does it feel like life's come a full circle with the *Broken News*... how do you look back!

Oh my god! Thank you! I think I've grown up you know. All of us do. It's a long time and especially when you're working the line that I'm working in, you know the ups and downs you go through are... how do I say... like your success is very public and you get all the adulation. So are your failures. They're very public and there's no hiding away from it. So I think you grow up faster in this line. I mean look at the ups and down in this line, every Friday either you can be the sunlight or you can be in darkness. It's such a yo-yo. I mean if you look at any other industry or any other business, that could probably take a generation to achieve what happens in this line every Friday. So automatically you learn a lot. Then you play various characters, again that teaches you a lot. You soak in so many things that you don't even realise you're soaking in. Then every time you're starting a new project, you're working with a new team. So all of these things I feel teach you a lot more. So like you mentioned 30 years, doesn't feel like 30 to me. If you look at the experience and knowledge and what I think I have soaked in it would be worth 60 years, you know because that's what happens in this profession. So yeah, I feel that's what I've learnt so much, I've soaked in so much and it is a different me. I've grown up.

If there was one thing that you could imbibe from Amina, what would it be?

Oh my god! I think the sticking for truth. It's very hard to do and we all look at the easier way out and sometimes say 'let it be', but sticking to that truth no matter what the cost, is something that is very admirable.

Yonboon

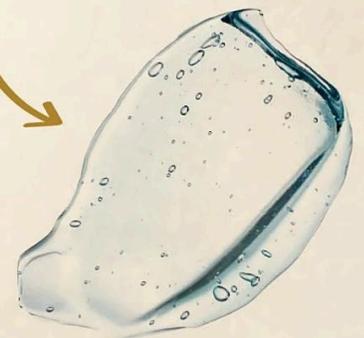
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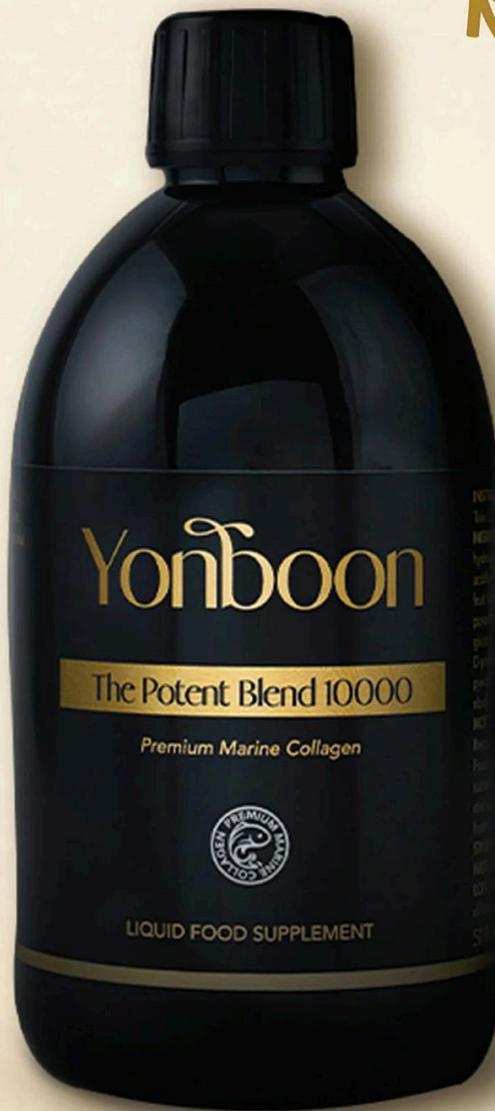
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KING OF HEARTS



Pop star King talks to Aakanksha Naval-Shetye about his record-breaking music, international collaborations and his need to keep it all real!

RAPPER KING, WHO HAS BEEN RULING THE CHARTS AND HEARTS WITH HIS SONGS RECENTLY, HIT ANOTHER HIGH NOTE AS HE BECAME THE FIRST INDIAN POP SINGER TO WALK THE CANNES RED CARPET. HOWEVER, THE SINGER WHOSE RECORD-BREAKING SONGS 'MAAN MERI JAAN', 'TU AAKE DEKH LE' AND MOST RECENTLY 'BUMPA' WITH JASON DERULO, MADE WAVES GLOBALLY, PREFERS TO NOT LET THE FAME AND STARDOM WASH OVER HIS REAL SPACE! "I DON'T CHASE RECORDS OR NUMBERS, I COURT CREATIVITY," HE TELLS US IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW OVER A ZOOM CALL. AND AS WE PLUNGE INTO A CANDID CONVERSATION, THE SINGER ALSO REVEALS HIS MUSE, TALKS ABOUT HIS MUSIC AND JOURNEY SO FAR. EXCERPTS

YOUR LATEST TRACK 'BUMPA' HAS BEEN REALLY WELL-RECEIVED!

Yes, and I'm delighted that it's gotten so much love across! It's nothing like your usual music! Yeah, I wanted to break the monotony and try a more fun track. It's been one hit after another for you, what's the headspace like... I wouldn't say I'm a very busy person per se, but I'm a busy person in my head! I don't wait for things - good or bad - to come to me. I just do my stuff and move forward. The one thing that I definitely do is - I count my blessings. So, after each track, I'm in a good headspace, and I'm in studio preparing something else already. But yes, it's a nice feeling... especially interacting with you guys. After all, it's Filmfare Middle East so yeah, that's great.

YOUR SONG 'MAAN MERI JAAN' WAS LIKE A CHARTBUSTER AND RULING AT NO.1 THROUGH AND

THROUGH.

It was so much on No.1 and I'm grateful but I have no feelings for the number one thing as such. I mean, it creates history - like it was Number 1 for more than 130 days. That's a record. But I'm not in a space that I want to chase that record or something, I want to just enjoy being in the creative space. I want to create something else now, because I've already done this one. I want to create different families of music. And I'm confident, I'm happy that whenever I'm touching a paper, I'm writing something that makes sense. So, I'm good.

NO PRESSURE FROM THE PREVIOUS SONGS BEING SUCH HITS THEN!

No, no! I want to make music for people. That has been my first priority since day 1. I just want to create music for people like us. Markets have created these charts and everything and I've been a part of that too because my music was right at

“

I don't wait for things - good or bad - to come to me. I just do my stuff and move forward. The one thing that I definitely do is - I count my blessings. So, after each track, I'm in a good headspace, and I'm in studio preparing something else already



the top. But genuinely, you listen to a track because you love that track not because that became number 1. You love that track; you listen to that track and that's why it's topping the charts and that wasn't a market move. So, like I said, there's no chasing numbers, just that hunger of creating good music.

HOW DO YOU LOOK BACK AT THE JOURNEY? LIKE HAD YOU EVER IMAGINED THAT YOU'LL BE SUCH A CELEBRATED NAME GLOBALLY AND HOW DO YOU LOOK AT ALL THE FAME AND STARDOM!

I still have a long way to go obviously. True artists can never be satisfied with what they get and I don't mean by fame, I mean in terms of putting out that music. I don't go out checking on how famous I am, I don't crash parties and stuff. I don't want to trouble people. And I don't want to trouble myself

because I'm a very low-key Batman kind of a guy *jo raaton me bahar nikalta hai apne ghar se*, gets his things done and gets back. *Kisi ko nahi pata kaha ja raha hai*. I love that life. *Kyunki main ek ye life bhi jee raha hu* so it's good to be mysterious. So, I love that and I never go out and *mere ander hai nahi vo cheez ki bahar jaana aur dekhna ki arey koi dekh raha hai kya; mujhe jaanta hai kya, ki okay...* I'm famous. I don't do all those things and go out to see that stardom.

SO, WHAT IS THE REAL KING LIKE WHEN NOT WORKING ON HIS MUSIC!

Simple! I just go sit with my homies, we cook, we eat, we have fun, we make jokes. That's it man! I mean I go to mountains with my homies and that's it. I never go out and pop champagne and stuff. I used to do that

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I don't go out checking on how famous I am, I don't crash parties and stuff. I don't want to trouble people. And I don't want to trouble myself because I'm a very low-key Batman kind of a guy jo raaton me bahar nikalta hai apne ghar se, gets his things done and gets back. *Kisi ko nahi pata kaha ja raha hai.* I love that life.



only when I was doing my club shows but now clubs cannot afford me, I largely do open shows (laughs). So, I'm a mix of many things like my songs. People can pick their own pieces to connect. *Log apne hisaab se apni feeling ko chunte hain, toh aap kisse relate karte ho vo aap choose karo.* Like I said earlier, I am a bit like Batman in that I'm okay with a few aspects of my life being known, but more aspects to be left untouched. I like to be low-key and watch the world rather than being watched!

WHAT'S YOUR CONSTANT INSPIRATION OR IS THERE A MUSE! ARTISTES YOU'VE GROWN UP LISTENING TO?

Yeah, they have been my muse but *mujhe inspire or copy ka fark pata hai.*

So, I would say that I'm that artist *jo inspire hoke ek alag cheez banayega!* Shoutout to my homie, he always says that *ek original gana kisi ek gaane ki inspiration hota hai. Saat hi sur hain is duniya mein. Us saat sur se kitne saare gaane bane hain.* So in that I would say, I'm my own muse. I'm not saying this for Instagram bio or caption (laughs), I'm genuinely my own muse. I love myself! Creating something new that's a fresh feeling, a new experience for the listeners, that's all.

YOU'VE EARLIER COLLABORATED WITH NICK JONAS, AND NOW WITH JASON DERULO!

Yeah! I've been very blessed in my journey that I've got a chance to work with these artistes

that I've been a fan of. The most beautiful thing is their own story of how they have come so far in their journeys and are so humble! And I would love to share the creative spaces with such artistes. You may be the greatest artiste, but for me it's more important if you are a good human! A person who would enter a room and instead of announcing their greatness would welcome a newcomer warmly! That's the kind of person I would want to share space, work and collaborate! Both Nick and Jason are like that and I'm blessed to meet such beautiful people. With Jason it was like being with a homie, *aise milte hi ekdum vo ladko wali baatein hone lagi apas mein.* We met

up and created this song '*Bumpa*' in three hours. The title was his suggestion!

GUILTY PLEASURE...

Not sleeping on time and being busy with my own thoughts. *Main aur mere andar jo hai, woh, hum do gyaani baithtey hain.* My parents also get tired of telling me to sleep on time!

WHAT ARE YOUR UPCOMING PROJECTS?

My upcoming project is called '*MM*'. Then I also want to work on creating something classic, that reflects me back in 2017 and something that people will listen to even after 10 years and will still be able to relate as much!



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Dancing through life's melodies

YAMI GAUTAM IS BASKING IN THE GLORY OF BEING A NEW MOTHER. **SUMAN SHARMA** CHATS WITH HER ABOUT HER CAREER AND LIFE CHOICES

Yami Gautam: She's more than just an actor; she's a symbol of empowerment, resilience and versatility. From gripping performances in powerful roles to embracing the joys of motherhood, Yami's journey resonates with sincerity and passion. She breaks stereotypes and challenges norms with each role she undertakes, carving a path for herself in the industry. Yet, amidst the glitz and glam, she remains grounded, rooted in family values and is driven by a desire to make a difference. Here's what we learned as we delved into the life and career of this dynamic star.



With husband Aditya Dhar

“

AT THE END OF THE DAY, IT REALLY DEPENDS ON YOUR RELEVANCE IN TODAY'S TIME. ARE YOU RELEVANT BECAUSE OF YOUR TALENT? OR BECAUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

”

What was it about the script of Article 370 that got you on board?

I still remember that moment in 2019. We watched the news on TV and saw it *Article 370* in the Parliament. So, I went back to that moment and recalled how I felt at that time. To have a film now being made on the subject and to have a role based on someone's life during such a monumental chapter in our political history was simply awesome. I wasn't going to let go of the opportunity to portray that on screen and bring

it alive for our audience.

What were the challenges you faced physically while preparing for this role, considering you were pregnant at the time?

We had a team of doctors on set. So in that sense we were careful. I was really excited to undergo the training required for the role. I was given a docket containing correct names and designations. We had a military supervisor, Lt. Col. Keshavendra Singh Ji, and Bhushan Sir from the NSG (National Security Guard),



“ NOTHING GOES UNNOTICED HERE. YOUR KARMA, WHAT YOU PUT IN, COMES BACK TO YOU, SO I AM HAPPY THAT THIS IS THE TIME THAT I CAN GIVE VOICE TO MY CHOICES, TO MY FULLEST MEANS ”

who were training us with weapons. I had Mustafa Ahmed, who was in charge of physical training. The training started with basic things. They taught us how to hold the guns correctly, at rest and during combat. Those drills made us comfortable with the weapon. It was supposed to be hard and challenging but, beyond the pain, the motivation was that I was portraying somebody really important. So, that kept me on my toes. One day we got to visit NSG in Mumbai and had one practice firing session. It was one of the best days of my life. Just being around them for one day was something else. The other part which was amazing was the mental preparation to understand the character. To sketch the character from scratch and bring Zuni to life was an intensive process. I didn't take shortcuts. Whatever I felt while reading the script, I jotted down each emotion and worked on it.

Every actor needs some sort of motivation. What's yours?

The desire to win the trust of my directors. They should be open to giving me any kind of role knowing that I'll

do justice to it. It's been a great journey for me. I have taken it step by step. Nothing goes unnoticed here. Your karma, what you put in, comes back to you, so I am happy that this is the time that I can give voice to my choices.

What do you feel about the kinds of roles you are receiving currently?

At the end of the day, it really depends on your relevance in today's time. Are you relevant because of your talent? Or because of social media? Or are you relevant because of the new-age paparazzi culture? For me, it's about getting roles that are versatile and have substance, which means taking a direction where my equity is not

characters. They could be flawed, or they could be great. All these shades will be somewhere, in my head, an extension of how I see today's women.

What kind of cinema do you want to associate yourself with?

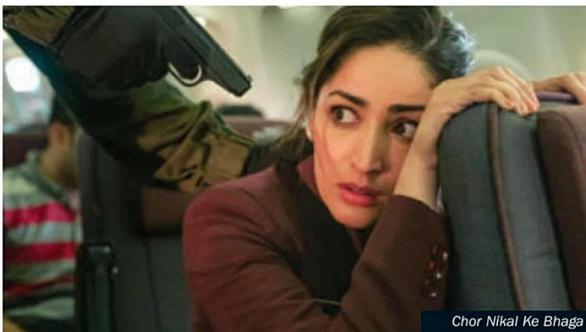
The kind I am doing right now. I am doing everything I can. But there has to be scope for performance; apart from the fact that the role is entertaining it's an engaging watch. Something like *Article 370*, where I am playing a character that is based on someone's real life. I am chasing such characters. Change your path, break the pattern and do something else when you become too

some things became part of the structure. When it comes to a female actor, the budgets are tighter as compared to a male actor. So it all comes down to the business side of it.

Do you feel that things are changing now?

Change doesn't happen overnight; it takes time. And we have already come a long way. We've seen times when actresses would not be comfortable sharing their marital status. Because it would affect their career. But now those things are changing. And that change will only come when we are more aware. When we tell the creators that we want to play better roles. It's a constant process

“MY MOTHER HAS TASTED MORE DISHES COOKED BY ADITYA THAN I HAVE COOKED IN MY ENTIRE LIFE. I STARTED LEARNING TO COOK AFTER GETTING INSPIRED BY HIM”



Chor Nikal Ke Bhaga



Article 370

dependent on anyone or my male counterpart. I am chasing good stories and good roles, not projects. You have to get to a position where you are not easily replaceable. That takes work. And I am happy to put in that extra work.

Does playing powerful roles empower you as a woman?

They both go hand in hand. That's how I see women's empowerment and the portrayal of female characters on screen. Whatever you seek, it kind of stems from the frame of mind you are in, right? The kind of roles I am choosing don't have to be the most politically correct

comfortable doing a certain thing. So that's why my next film, *Dhoom Dham*, will be in a different zone from *Article 370*.

How tough is it to make your mark in this male-dominated industry?

Of course, it's challenging. And it has been like that for years. That has been the economic structure, right? It's business at the end of the day. Like, where is the money coming from? Who's getting the audience to the theaters? And because at that time the characters were written in a certain way, the casting was done in a certain way and women's roles were portrayed in a certain way, That is how

and it can't be sporadic. I won't ask my audience to watch the film because it's a female-driven film. It has to be a good film. If I am here in business, I have to compete like a professional. I can't make it a story about gender. Because it is a female-led script, you have to support it. No. They can support it, but I can't sustain it if I am not good. I hope writers write better roles and better scripts, which is happening now. Directors and producers are more open to such roles and such films being made.

Tell us about your husband, Aditya Dhar. How supportive has he been of your career?



“

I WON'T ASK MY AUDIENCE TO WATCH THE FILM BECAUSE IT'S A FEMALE-DRIVEN FILM. IT HAS TO BE A GOOD FILM. IF I AM HERE IN BUSINESS, I HAVE TO COMPETE LIKE A PROFESSIONAL

”

I didn't realise it was almost three years of marriage until I read it in an article. Of course, he is such a caring person. I am fortunate to have Aditya as my life partner. He's someone who believes in empowering you, encouraging you, and someone who is rooting for you and adding wings too. You are already fluttering.

What are the similarities between you and Aditya?

We are both rooted, family-oriented people. We are both similar in our ethics and values. So we really uphold these things and value what we have. And we both are very private people.

Does he share equal responsibilities with you?

Aditya is not someone who belongs to that school of thought; this is my responsibility and that is your responsibility. Whatever it is, we're in a relationship; we are partners and companions for life. So, it's not that this is your department and that is mine. Everything is ours, together.

Has he ever cooked for you?

My mother has tasted more dishes cooked by Aditya than I have cooked in my entire life. I started learning to cook after getting inspired by him. I do a decently good job, whenever there is time. That's the way a relationship should be.

What would your relationship advice be?

There are no hard-and-fast rules. Be more giving, be more generous and be more loving. Don't overthink. Be real; be as close to reality as possible. It's life, don't take things so seriously; just go with the flow. Nothing can substitute for your family. It should always be family first.

You've recently announced your pregnancy.

Your thoughts on that...

Motherhood gives you a different kind of confidence and power. I am enjoying balancing my work. I have Aditya and my family by my side and am blessed to be doing what I love. Of course, I'm being careful and cautious too but not overthinking things that are not required. ■

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Founder Neha Silva, designer Ramesh Dembla with the showstoppers Ishaan Sehgaal and Elli AvrRam for the Grand Finale



Saumya Sahay with Event Support Partner - Sawan Mehra



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As summer brings its warmth and vibrancy, wardrobes naturally shift towards lighter, breezier attire. Alish Apparel, a Dubai-based brand, offers a range of summer dresses that merge Indo-western style with traditional elements. Here's an overview of their collection, which includes a variety of options for different occasions. Whether it's a breezy kaftan, a chic co-ord set, an elegant gown, or an indo-western ensemble, suitable for various summer occasions, the brand's offerings reflect a blend of comfort and style. Exploring their latest collection could provide fresh and versatile additions to your summer wardrobe, celebrating the season with elegance and ease.



Ms Shabnam Nissar Kassam
 Founder of Alish Apparel and Director of the
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June 2024 **FILMFARE MIDDLE EAST** 57

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Woman on the verge

PRATIBHA RANTTA MADE HER PRESENCE FELT AS ONE OF THE LEADS IN *LAAPATAA LADIES*. TANZIM PARDIWALLA INTERVIEWS THE SURE-FOOTED YOUNGSTER

Pratibha Rantta, the doe-eyed newcomer from Shimla who rose to prominence with the delightful film *Laapataa Ladies* directed by Kiran Rao, a heartfelt satire about women in Indian society, is living a dream she doesn't want to wake up from. "It's been weeks since the release, and I'm still enjoying the love. There are constant DMs coming in," she says, her bubbly voice brimming with excitement as she talks about the appreciation pouring in for her portrayal of Jaya in the film. She has harboured dreams of becoming an actress since childhood. "My family recognised my passion for acting and dancing at a very young age. They'd say '*bacchi ka shauq hai*.' When I was in 8th standard and my friends were deciding what to do with their lives, some said they wanted to be doctors and teachers. And I realised I can't relate to that at all. I only saw myself as an actor."

Her elder sister, a NIIFT graduate, secured a job in Andheri, and Pratibha decided to join her. From visiting the beaches to travelling on local trains, the actress fell in love with her first impressions of Mumbai. She enrolled at Usha Pravin Gandhi College of Management in Mumbai to pursue her graduation in filmmaking. Based on suggestions from her seniors and friends, she joined



“THE WAY HE (SANJAY LEELA BHANSALI) FRAMES HIS CHARACTERS IS BEAUTIFUL. EVERY FRAME WAS PERFECT. I LEARNED HOW TO DELVE DEEPER THAN EVER INTO MY CRAFT”

an online audition group. Initially scared to attend auditions at distant locations, she always shared her live location with her sister. Within six months of arriving in Mumbai,

She recalls that both Aamir and Kiran made her feel at home during the audition. Thanks to their calming presence, she was able to deliver her best. "I was performing

messages from back home. "I got messages from my friends back home saying that if you were able to do it, then we can do it too. It feels like I've finally achieved something," she

magic moment.' And that makes sense to me. He's not looking for perfection. Sometimes you get it in one shot, sometimes you get it in a couple of takes." She auditioned

was decked up, lights were coming in trucks, and costumes were being carried in bulk. When I went to my van and saw my costumes, I was thrilled with how different I looked. It was the complete opposite of *Laapataa Ladies*." The actress can't stop gushing about working with SLB, "The way he frames his characters is

“WHILE I WAS READING THE SCRIPT (OF LAAPATAA LADIES), SO MANY OF MY SUPPRESSED EMOTIONS SURFACED. I WAS ABLE TO COME TO TERMS AND FIND CLOSURE TO MANY HIDDEN THINGS”



Laapataa Ladies

she landed her first TV show, *Qurbaan Hua*, becoming a celebrity in her hometown. That's when her parents realised she was serious about pursuing acting. She soon secured a role in *Aadha Ishq* as well. Always envisioning herself as a big-screen actress, she realised that dream when she auditioned for Kiran Rao's *Laapataa Ladies*. Even now, it all seems surreal to Pratibha. "I didn't even realise when I ended up sitting in front of Aamir Khan and Kiran Rao, auditioning for *Laapataa Ladies*. They say some things are planned for you. If you work hard on your craft, the universe is there to handle everything else."

better because of their positive energy. By 5 pm, I wrapped and went home. At 7 o'clock, I received a call saying that I was selected for the part." Pratibha found herself relating to her onscreen character, Jaya. The film helped her analyse herself better. "While I was reading the script, so many of my suppressed emotions surfaced. I was able to come to terms and find closure to many hidden things," she narrates. She adds that working with a female director certainly helped as she was able to understand what Kiran Rao wanted with much ease. Reviews are validating, but the greatest compliment came in the form of



Heeramandi

narrates.

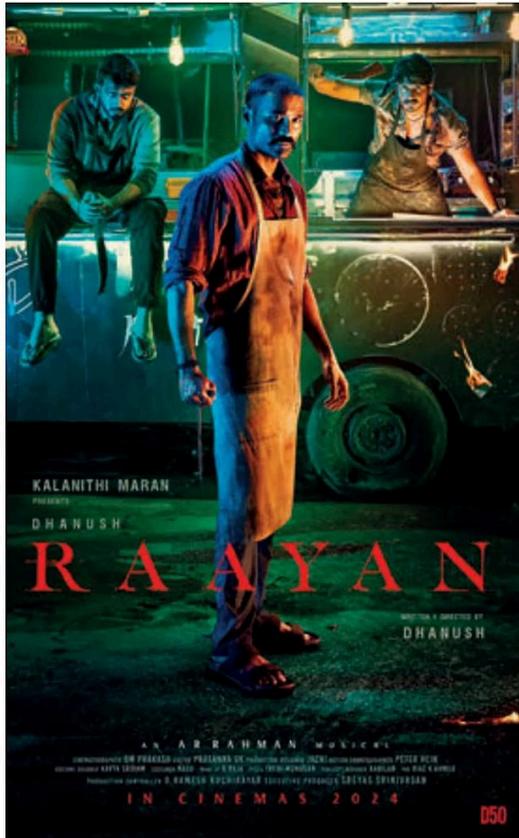
Pratibha had to ask Aamir Khan the most pressing question - How did he earn the title of Mr. Perfectionist? "I actually asked him, and he gave me a very nice answer. He said, 'I'm not seeking perfection, I'm seeking a

for Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Heeramandi* right after wrapping up *Laapataa Ladies*. She recounts her first day on SLB's sets, saying, "I was taken in by the grandeur. It was such a huge set. That was a very intimidating feeling. Everything

beautiful. Every frame was perfect. I learned how to delve deeper than ever into my craft. Aamir Khan, Kiran Rao, and Sanjay Leela Bhansali come in the category of the greats, and I'm so lucky I've worked with all of them so early in my career." ■

DUBAI WATCH LIST

CHECK OUT SOME OF THE MOST-AWAITED MOVIES AND OTT SERIES TO HIT THE SCREENS THIS JUNE

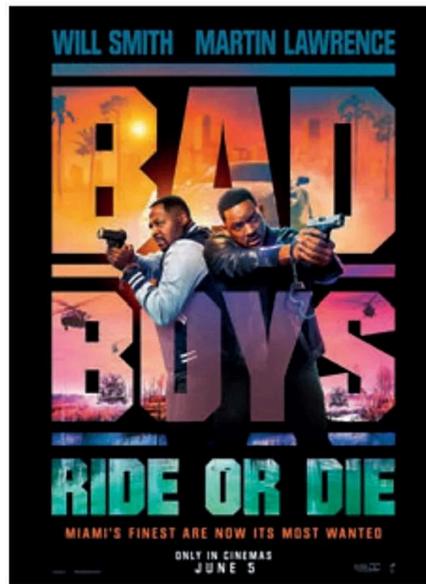


RAAYAN

Director: Dhanush

Cast: Dhanush, S. J. Suryah, Prakash Raj, Selvaraghavan, Sundeep Kishan, Kalidas Jayaram, Dushara Vijayan, Aparna Balamurali, Varalaxmi Sarathkumar, Saravanan

The action thriller is Dhanush's second directorial venture and has him play the titular role. The film follows Raayan, a young man who sets out to avenge the deaths of his murdered family. On his quest to seek those responsible for the killings, he is led through the criminal underworld. The music composed by AR Rahman is also a highlight. Dhanush's transformation has us intrigued and this one is certainly high on our watch-list!



BAD BOYS: RIDE OR DIE

Director: Adil El Arbi, Bilall Fallah

Cast: Will Smith, Chris Martin, Vanessa Hudgens, Alexander Ludwig, Tasha Smith, Joe Pantoliano, Alexander Ludwig, Paola Núñez, Jacob Scipio, DJ Khaled

This one is action unlimited as the Bad Boys return doing what they do best - chasing criminals and busting cartels! The fourth instalment of the blockbuster franchise has Detectives Mike Lowrey and Marcus Burnett on the run as fugitives when they investigate corruption within the Miami PD after their late Captain Conrad Howard is posthumously accused of shady dealings with the mafia. There's more at stake this time around and it's a ride or die as the two set out to save the day! It's edge-of-the-seat meets their trademark comedy and if you've been a fan of the franchise, don't miss it!

Cast: Amy Poehler, Maya Hawke, Kensington Tallman, Liza Lapira, Tony Hale, Lewis Black, Phyllis Smith, Ayo Edebiri, Lilimar, Grace Lu, Sumayyah Nuriddin-Green, Adèle Exarchopoulos, Diane Lane, Kyle MacLachlan, Paul Walter Hauser, Yvette Nicole Brown

The much-awaited sequel to 2015's Oscar winning Inside Out, this one returns to the mind of newly minted teenager Riley just as Headquarters is undergoing a sudden demolition to make room for something entirely unexpected! New Emotions. Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear and Disgust, who've long been running a successful operation by all accounts, aren't sure how to feel when Anxiety, Envy, Ennui and Embarrassment show up.



KALKI 2898 AD

Director: Nag Ashwin

Cast: Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, Kamal Haasan, Amitabh Bachchan, Disha Patani

The epic sci-fi action thriller is said to be one of the costliest productions being rolled out in Indian cinema! Set in the post-apocalyptic world, the Pan-India movie also brings together some of the biggest names in Bollywood and the South for the first time. Naturally the curiosity is high and so are the expectations. The first installment of the planned Kalki Cinematic Universe certainly calls to be experienced on the big screens. Our take: Go for it!



INSIDE OUT 2

Director: Kelsey Mann

Cast: Amy Poehler, Maya Hawke, Kensington Tallman, Liza Lapira, Tony Hale, Lewis Black, Phyllis Smith, Ayo Edebiri, Lilimar, Grace Lu, Sumayyah Nuriddin-Green, Adèle Exarchopoulos, Diane Lane, Kyle MacLachlan, Paul Walter Hauser, Yvette Nicole Brown

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A QUIET PLACE: DAY ONE

Director: John Krasinski
Cast: Emily Blunt, Cillian Murphy, Djimon Hounsou, Millicent Simmonds, Noah Jupe, John Krasinski

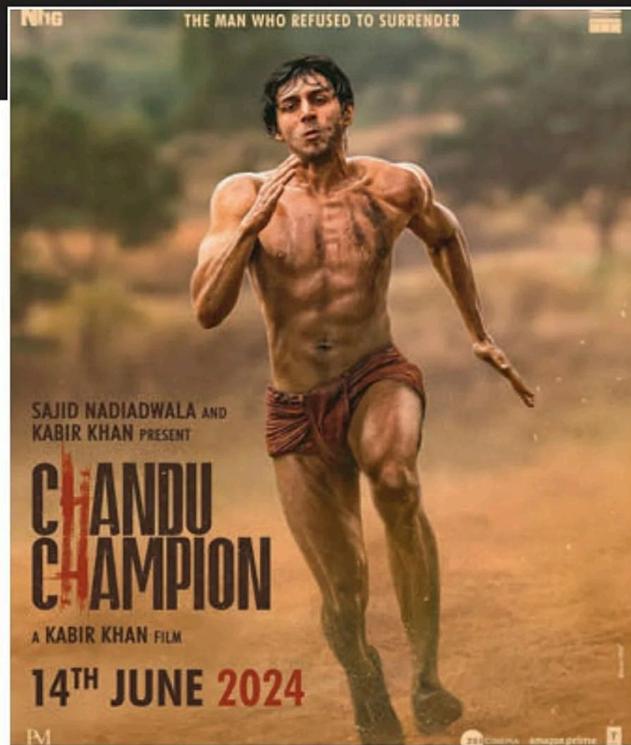
This one is a prequel to A Quiet Place (2018) that followed a family as they navigated and survived in a post-apocalyptic world inhabited by blind aliens with an acute sense of hearing. The second installment traces back how it all started when a strange meteor-like object hurtled towards the Earth. Hostile creatures emerge from the meteor and begin slaughtering the townspeople. These blind extraterrestrial beings possess armored skin, extraordinary speed, and strength, and track victims with hypersensitive hearing, attacking anything that makes even the slightest noise.



THE WATCHERS

Director: Ishana Night Shyamalan
Cast: Dakota Fanning, Georgina Campbell, Olwen Fouere, Oliver Finnegan

A young artist Mina finds herself stranded in an expansive forest in western Ireland. Unknowingly she becomes trapped alongside three strangers as she finds shelter as the three strangers appear to be stalked by mysterious creatures each night.



CHANDU CHAMPION

Director: Kabir Khan
Cast: Kartik Aaryan, Vijay Raaz, Bhuvan Arora

A biographical sports drama, the film has Kartik essay the role of Murlikant Petkar - India's first Paralympics gold medalist! Buzz suggests that this might be Kartik's best performance till date and the songs are certainly building the tempo. With Kabir Khan helming the project and teaming up with Kartik for the first time, it's hardly a surprise that Chandu Champion is one of the most-looked forward to movies this year and certainly a must-watch on our list.

EXHUMA

Director: Jang Jae-Hyun
Cast: Choi Min-sik, Kim Go-eun, Lee Do-hyun

The South Korean supernatural horror film is a must-watch if you are a horror buff! An American Korean family enlists the help of a Korean Shaman to lift the curse befallen on their family by one of their ancestors. The solution lies in relocating a grave, but it unleashes dreadful consequences.



MUNJYA

Director: Aditya Sarpotdar
Cast: Sharvari, Abhay Verma, Mona Singh, Sathyaraj

The horror-comedy is based on a popular Indian folklore of Munjya - a bachelor boy who dies after his thread ceremony, but before marriage! The film is said to be a part of the Maddock Supernatural Universe alongside Stree, Bhediya and Roohi.

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