



In tune with changing times

AMIT NEWTON

THERE ARE three major trends that have helped shape Bollywood music in the last two decades: Technology (the media boom, the Internet and mobile phones), Hollywood and other western influences (Tata Young crooning and grooving to *Dhoom Dhoom*), and a revival of sorts of indigenous music (sufi, ghazals).

As an offshoot of all-pervasive influence of technology, Hindi film music has spawned phenomena such as item numbers and Hinglish: a mish-mash of Hindi-English lyrics.

Interestingly, even the trend of Hindi-English lyrics dictating the agenda finds its roots in the technological

Malika Arora Khan in the film *Dabangg*.

revolution. The trend gained prominence with the music group Bombay Vikings, which was started by Neeraj Shridhar in Sweden. Bombay Vikings caused a sensation both in India as well as overseas among the Indian music community due to its unusual combination of classical Bollywood style with a dash of English lyrics.

Meanwhile, good old Rock music has also had its day to tell effect on Bollywood music. Proponents that come to mind are the music-composer trio of Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy (of *Rock On* fame) and Pritam Chakraborty (*Life in a Metro*). The mysticism too caught the imagination of the Indian audiences and held them enthralled. The credit for popularising Sufi songs in India goes to Kailash Kher. Singing 'Allah ke bande' (You man of God) from the film, *Waisa Bi Hota Hai* (It happens like that too) in his Springsteen timbre, he entered many a heart and stayed there. Regularly he throws up a number that one must listen, appreciate and absorb. One such number is *Teri Diwaani* (Mad about you) from his album *Kailash*.

Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, Pakistani great late Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's nephew, is another singer who has capitalised immensely on the foothold he got into Bollywood. With a style similar to his more celebrated uncle but the richness of our own cultural heritage is pushed back. Isn't it why the few experiments with fusion music have largely gone unnoticed or have failed?

The need of the hour is a proper marriage of the two and better marketing strategies, to further the interests of Indian music.

The horizon ahead is lit by creative talent but the onus for a better day lies on two factors: the lyricist and the music director.

When 24-hour music channels beamed down explicit videos into family drawing rooms, also came in a certain permissiveness in perceptions, one that only continues to grow. That open-mindedness generated the trend of item numbers, featuring a new avatar of the vamp in revealing clothes (remember Helen?) pointing to titillating rhythms, if you will. What the media boom did then, was to give a licence to be even more

scantly dressed, and to gyrate even more suggestively or so thought music directors and choreographers. One would distinctly remember the rage of the age, *Choli ke peechhe kya hai* from the film *Khilnayak*.

After that almost every film carried an item number and it was not just the wannabes that these songs were filmed on. There is a bevy of Bollywood beauties who have performed item numbers. The rage continues and today it is the turn of the two lasses from the Hindi heartland: Munni and Sheila Malika Arora Khan in *Dabangg* as Munni and Katrina Kaif as Sheila in *Tees Maar Khan*, collectively hold the imagination of an entire people and its Diaspora to ransack.

With the Hinglish trend setting in, lyricists understood, or were made to understand the new trend and so, came up songs like 'Emotional Atyachhaar' (Emotional torture) from the film *Dev D* and *Humka peenai hai* (I want to drink) from *Dabangg*. If popularity is a measure of success, the songs were right up there with the audiences. Then there was no less than Australian superstar Kylie Minogue crooning 'I wanna jiggly-wiggy with you, boy' in *Dhoom Dhoom*.

Both composers have put soulful ballads and head-banging rhythms to tune with equal ease.

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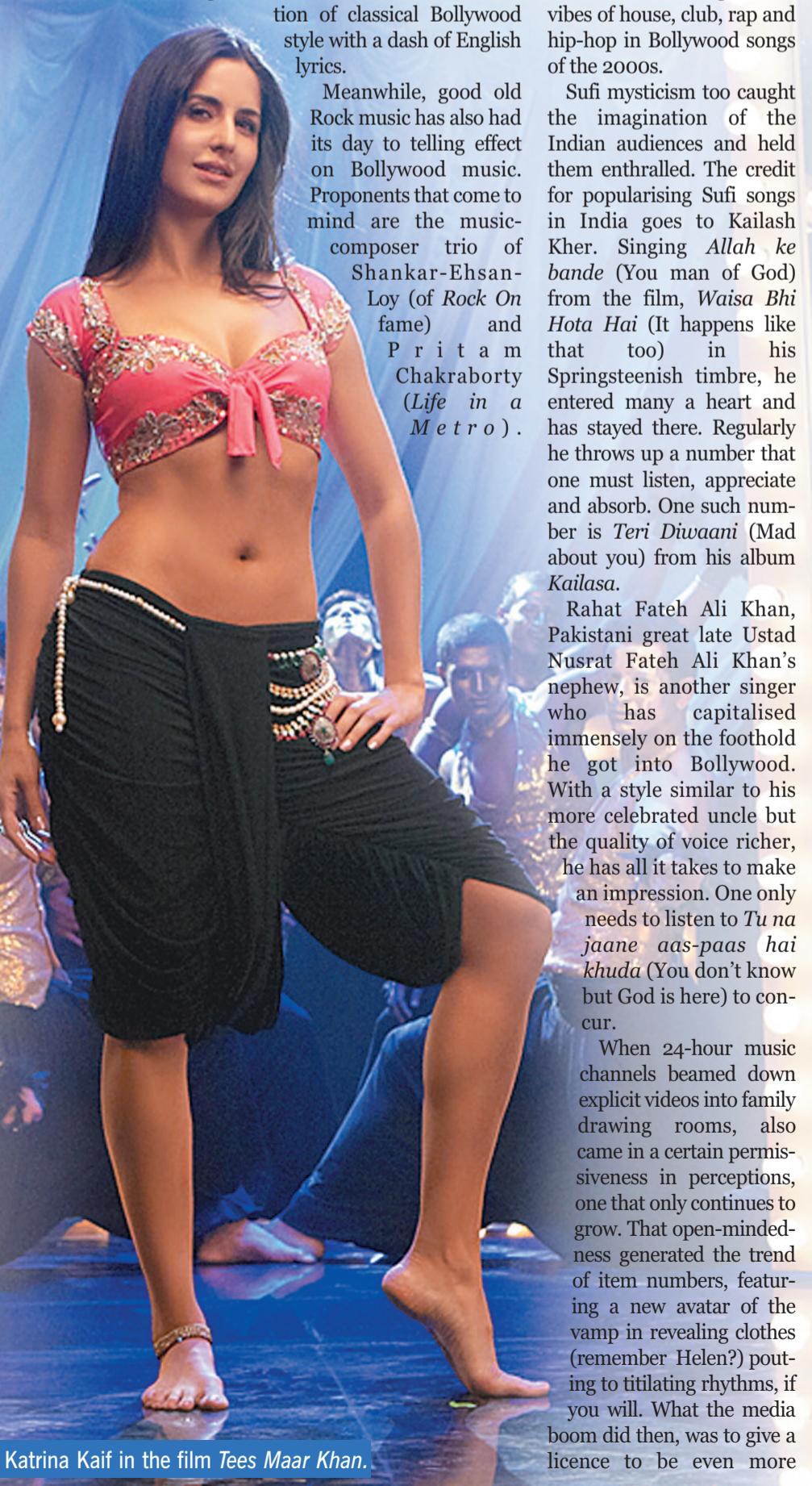
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Katrina Kaif in the film *Tees Maar Khan*.

STORY GOES FOR A TOSS IN BOLLYWOOD GLOSS



RAJESH MISHRA

RENOWNED Bollywood thespian Dilip Kumar had once said that a good story was a must for a good film and had regretted its absence in an average Bollywood movie.

However, his comment failed to move filmmakers of that time as a majority of them believed that a film's success depended more on the star cast than on the story. The less imaginative filmmakers ignored films like *Mother India*, *Ganga Jamuna*, *Pakeezah* and *Guide*, which were commercially successful and yet left an indelible mark on viewers' minds.

Drawing inspiration and borrowing ideas from outside cannot be scoffed at in music and arts. In

Bollywood, however, the West is wildly aped, while the richness of our own cultural heritage is pushed back. Isn't it why the few experiments with fusion music have largely gone unnoticed or have failed?

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The horizon ahead is lit by creative talent but the onus for a better day lies on two factors: the lyricist and the music director.

In *Gulzar* (*Jai ho*) and *Javed Akhtar* (*Baawre*) we have the two best lyricists in Bollywood. While they might not be ready to pass on the torch yet, fresh blood like Neelish Mishra (*Once Upon a Time in Mumbai*) is infusing vigour into lyrics.

With music makers like AR Rahman (*Jai ho*), Pritam Chakraborty (*Pee loom* from *Once Upon a Time in Mumbai*), Vishal Dadlani and Shekhar Ravjiani (*Jab mila tu* from the film *I hate huv stories*), good music is sure to keep coming our way.

struggle of lovers from two warring families.

However, even when the drought of good story-based films was at its peak in the '70s and '80s, there was one band of filmmakers led by Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu Chatterjee, who made meaningful movies with beautiful storyline. These filmmakers made light of the situation surrounding a common man. Films like Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Bawarchi* or Basu Chatterjee's *Rajni Gandha* are classic examples of such movies.

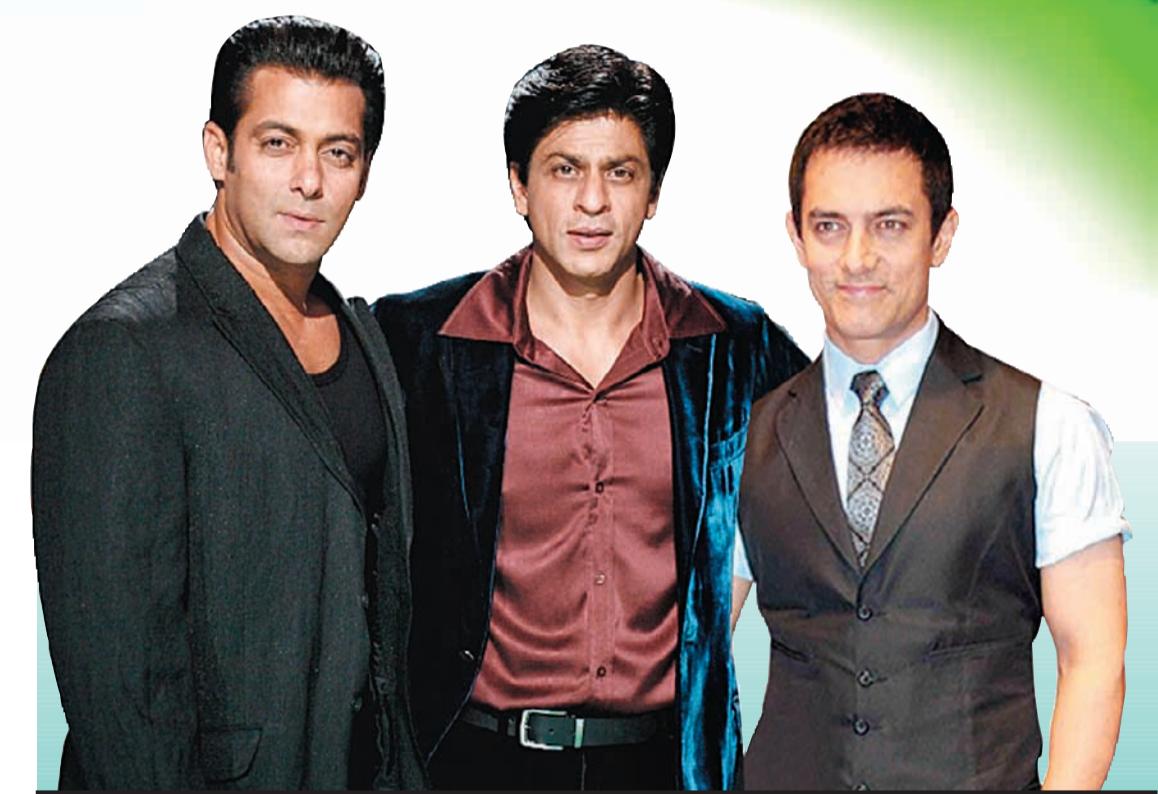
Parallel cinema as an alternative to mainstream commercial cinema emerged in the late '70s and was spearheaded by filmmakers like Shyam Benegal, Govind Nihlani and Gautam Ghosh. Parallel cinema can be credited with not creating stars but great actors like Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Pankaj Kapoor, Smita Patil and Shabana Azmi. The film presented him realistically, sans his King Khan glamour, in a rural atmosphere reminding us of Hrishikesh Mukherjee's healthy household movies such as *Golmal* or *Bawarchi*.

The parallel cinemas are known for its serious content, realism and naturalism, with a keen eye on the sociopolitical climate of the times. However, it goes without saying that such films were only appreciated by the classes and not the masses.

Filmmakers of late have realised the importance of stories in films, though the hard way. Today mere presence of a superstar cannot ensure the success of a film unless there is a strong story to back it. The failure of much-hyped Farah Khan's big-budget *Tees Maar Khan* bears testimony to this. The film crashed despite the presence of stars like Akshay Kumar, Aishwarya Rai and Katrina Kaif.

There are exceptions as well. *Swadesh* of Shah Rukh Khan, which despite having all the ingredients of a good movie did not fare well at the box office and *Salman Khan's Dabangg*, which despite having nothing but plenty of farcical humour, was a bumper hit. However, critics would not disagree that Shah Rukh Khan gave one of his best performances in the film. The film presented him realistically, sans his King Khan glamour, in a rural atmosphere reminding us of Hrishikesh Mukherjee's healthy household movies such as *Golmal* or *Bawarchi*.

The genuine attempts made by some mainstream cinema makers to work on good stories show us light at end of tunnel and signal the arrival of more serious filmmakers on the scene in future.



From left: Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan and Aamir Khan.

Hindi cinema, the Khan way

FALAK KABIR

If all goes well, Bollywood's super Khans could leave a lasting imprint on the US and the European markets this winter. And guess who is leading the charge? None other than the Don himself!

The Indian film industry is heavily banking on Shah Rukh Khan's *Ra One* and *Don 2* to infiltrate into Hollywood territory. The other super Khan, Aamir, has already unleashed his *Mumbai Diaries* or *Dhobi Ghat* this month. As reports suggest, Shah Rukh's *Don 2* is slated for a simultaneous release with Tom Cruise's *Mission Impossible 4* and now it remains to be seen whether King Khan's daredevilry will turnout as 'mission success or suicidal'.

It's true that Bollywood has made efforts to get noticed in Hollywood through its hard work. Today mere presence of a superstar cannot ensure the success of a film unless there is a strong story to back it. The failure of much-hyped Farah Khan's big-budget *Tees Maar Khan* bears testimony to this. The film crashed despite the presence of stars like Akshay Kumar, Aishwarya Rai and Katrina Kaif.

And Aamir Khan is simply fascinating in *Taare Zameen Par* in which he portrays an innovative teacher. Aamir Khan's contribution to the making of healthy movies in recent times is remarkable. His recent films *Peepli Live* and *Dhobi Ghat* reassess that a film does not need to have magnificent sets, handsome and imposing heroes and beautiful heroines for its success. The success of his low-budget films like *Peepli Live* and *Dhobi Ghat* reiterate the importance of story in a film. Similarly, Raj Kumar Hirani's contribution to the making of issue-based healthy movies is really commendable. His films *Munna Bhai MBBS* or *Three Idiots* convey a strong message.

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How and when will the Khans go to Hollywood heights, and how much impact the three Khans can make in this expansive endeavour are the open-ended questions.

As the Khans are trying to grab Hollywood territory, musician AR Rahman, also known as the 'Mozart of Madras', has already put his imprint on Hollywood with his music for Academy Award-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire*.

But one thing is patently clear, this will only be the beginning, as SRK himself puts it aptly in one of his films, "The real picture is still a long way off my friends!"

The Khans have been the undisputed sultans of Bollywood. Will they enact a similar script in Hollywood?

