



Great showman

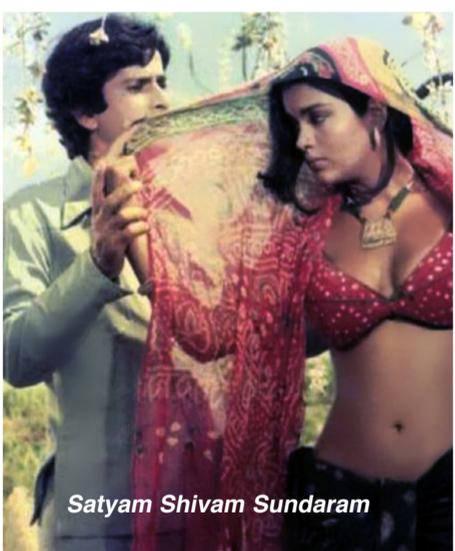
CAREER OF MEGA STAR RAJ KAPOOR

all time. What added to their sizzling chemistry was a very famous real-life relationship. Their all-time classics include *Andaz* (1949), *Barsaat* (1949), *Shree 420* (1955) and *Chori Chori* (1956).



O is Opus: The actor rounded off his career as a leading man with his biggest budget film *Mera Naam Joker* (1970). Although the magnum opus almost bankrupted him, it would become a cult classic and be regarded as one of the all-time great movies of Raj Kapoor.

P is for Peshawar: Raj Kapoor was born in Peshawar, in present-day Pakistan in 1924 and was the eldest of six siblings. His father Prithviraj Kapoor moved to Mumbai in 1928 with a loan he got and made his acting debut the same year, which kick-started a family dynasty still going strong today. Interestingly, his biggest rival during the golden age of Bollywood, Dilip Kumar, was also born in Peshawar, in 1922.



Satyam Shivam Sundaram

Q is for Queens: The actor starred opposite the biggest leading ladies throughout his career, but more impressively led the way in delivering powerful female characters in his films. Some of the most memorable female protagonists appeared in his home productions, including *Awaara* (1951), *Shree 420* (1955), *Sangam* (1964), *Bobby* (1973), *Prem Rog* (1982) and the path-breaking *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (1978).

R is for RK Films: Raj Kapoor founded his film banner RK Films with *Aag* (1948) and then later after the blockbuster success of *Barsaat* (1949), he built his own studio, despite still only being in his twenties and an in-demand movie star. He would go on to mastermind some of the greatest films in Indian cinema history, which broke ground, tackled taboo subjects, launched new talent and entertained billions across different generations. Sadly, his children were not able to carry on the film banner successfully after he passed away.



S is for Stamp: A postage stamp featuring the legendary actor was released by India Post on December 14, 2001, to honour him. A brass statue of him was later unveiled on Walk Of The Stars in Bandra, Mumbai. In 2014, Google commemorated his 90th birth anniversary.

T is for Tunes: Hit songs played a huge part in all of Raj Kapoor's movies and that was largely thanks to the great ear for music he had. His finest collaborations were with music duos Shankar-Jaikishan and Laxmikant-Pyarelal, respectively. He had also given a platform to legendary lyricists like Hasrat Jaipuri and Shailendra. Songs from his films are still loved many decades later. He also helped turn singers like Lata Mangeshkar and Mukesh into big stars.

U is for UK: The Bollywood icon maintained a close connection to the UK and was a frequent visitor. His last official movie as an actor was a cameo in British TV movie *Kim* (1984).

V is for Videos: The popularity of timeless songs, scenes, films and moments is such that videos featuring Raj Kapoor have been viewed billions of times on video sharing sites like YouTube.

W is for Wife: Raj Kapoor had an arranged marriage to Krishna Malhotra in 1946, before finding fame, and they remained married until his death in 1988.

X is for X-Rated: Whether it was the close embraces in *Barsaat* (1949), the barely there sari in *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (1978) or the wet see-through sari in *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* (1985), Raj Kapoor pushed the boundaries of censor laws his entire career to the limit.

Y is for Youngster: Raj Kapoor made his film debut as a 10-year-old child star in *Inquilab* (1935). Although he would do more films as a child star, the youngster did other jobs on set from sweeping up to operating the clapperboard so he could learn about filmmaking. By the time he made his debut at 23 as a leading man opposite a teenage Madhubala in *Neel Kamal* (1947), he had a lifetime of knowledge and used that to become a legend.



Z is for Zeba Bakhtiar: The Pakistani actress made her Bollywood debut in *Henna* (1991), which was a cross-border romance Raj Kapoor had commenced working on but was not able to make as he passed away during the planning stages. It would be the last successful film of his banner and was India's submission for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. It was the last creative moment of a wonderful career.

Untold story of The Beatles and their close cultural connection to India

THE closing night film of this year's UK Asian Film Festival is a world premiere of *The Beatles And India* on June 6.

Drawing on a rich seam of archive and interviews, the fascinating documentary explores the close connection legendary pop super group The Beatles shared with India and the impact it made on their music. The film is inspired by the book *Across the Universe: The Beatles in India*, which was published by Penguin Random House to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the band's trip to Rishikesh.

The book's author Ajoy Bose has directed

the documentary and is delighted it was selected for this year's UK Asian Film Festival, describing it as an ideal launch for a movie that celebrates the cultural bridge between the West and the

East, more than half a century ago by the most famous rock band.

"The book got widespread critical acclaim because it was perhaps the only attempt to comprehensively examine the role India played in shaping the evolution of The Beatles, from the most famous pop icons into pioneering musical artists with a social message that swept the world. At the same time, the band brought two vastly different cultures closer and in many ways drew the curtain on the past ugly history of colonial exploitation and prejudice," explained Ajoy Bose.

The unique audio-visual presentation uses rarely seen and heard footage, recordings and photographs, eye-witness accounts and expert comments, along with location shoots across India. "It has been a joy to work with British Indian music entrepreneur Reynold D'Silva, who some years ago had traced the influences that went into the making of the world's first concept album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and my co-director,

the gifted cultural researcher Pete Compton, and a dedicated production department."

The biggest challenge of making the movie was finding rare footage, audio recordings and photographs to make the main characters in the film come alive. It was also challenging to find those involved in The Beatles India story more than half a century later. "I am so glad that we managed to find a variety of eye-witness accounts."

Not surprisingly, the writer-director has many favourite moments in the movie and particularly likes the eyewitness accounts of

George Harrison's wife Pattie's birthday celebrations in the spring of 1968 at the Maharishi's ashram in Rishikesh, standing exactly in the same place they did more than 50 years ago. "These evocative

reminders of Nick Nugent, then a visiting young English teacher, and Ajit Singh, musician and music shop owner who befriended George and John (Lennon), are both unique. They also represent the kind of meticulous research and hard work that has gone into putting the film together."

With The Beatles connecting with different generations since they became the biggest band in the world in the 1960s and continuing to be popular, he is confident the film will appeal to all ages. He said: "In fact, our interviews with young Indian musicians, most of whom were born after The Beatles broke up as band, show in the film that there is a very emotional appeal for the band of the past century, which is so contemporary."

Bose is in the middle of writing a book on his experiences as a teenage Naxalite, who dropped out of an elite Delhi college and went to rural India to start an armed revolution exactly 50 years ago, which he hopes to turn into a film or TV series.

When asked, who his own filmmaking hero is, he said: "Satyajit Ray, the Bengali maestro of world cinema, is my filmmaking hero. His master craftsmanship, competence over every part of the film, including the storyline, music, cinematography, to name only a few, but also the infinite variety of genres his films managed to span, I think is unmatched by any other filmmaker in the world so far."

Ajoy finishes off the conversation by telling us why we should watch *The Beatles And India* at the UK Asian Film Festival. "The

Beatles have a very loyal audience across the world and certainly in the United Kingdom where they belonged. This film also deals with the special India connection of the band, which has been mentioned in passing but never really expounded in a film. That itself should cause considerable interest. And finally, at a time when the world is still being ravaged by a deadly virus, a film about The Beatles does provide romance, hope and joy amidst so much gloom, doom and hysteria."

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THE INDIA CONNECTION: Ajoy Bose; (above) *The Beatles And India* poster

