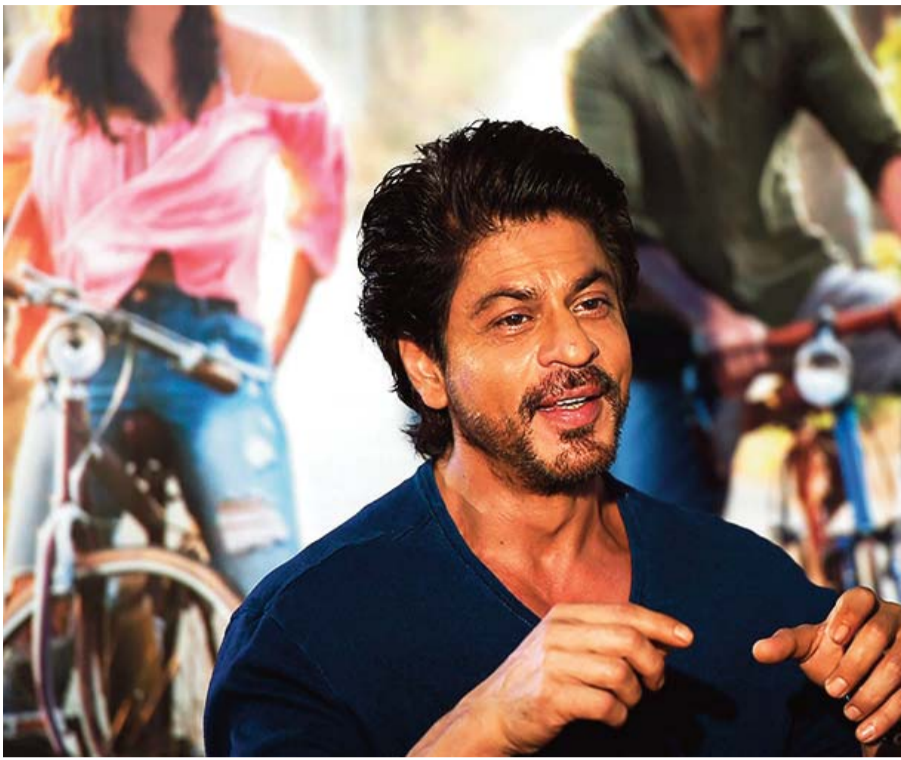
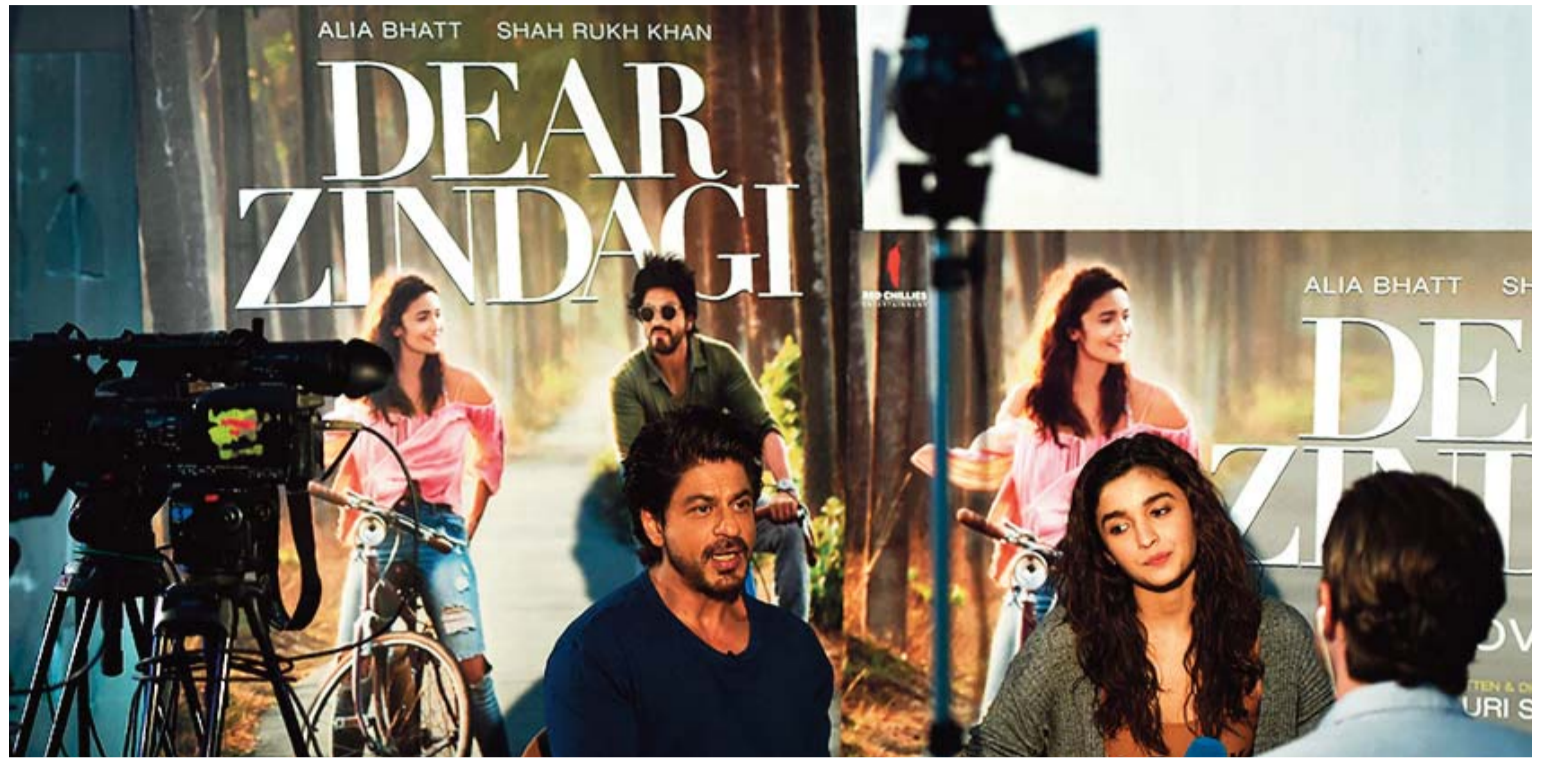


MUSIC & MOVIES



Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan speaks during an interview with AFP.



Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan speaks as actress Alia Bhatt looks on during an interview with AFP in Mumbai. — AFP photos

India's **Shah Rukh Khan** dreams of global Bollywood hit

Indian screen icon Shah Rukh Khan has starred in dozens of Bollywood blockbusters and is adored by millions, but there's a movie he still dreams of making—one that's a truly global hit. "I would like to be a part of that one Indian film, as an actor, as a producer, as a gaffer, as a sound recordist, as a production manager, whatever, which becomes famous all over the world," Khan told AFP in an interview.

"That's my 'Make in India' dream. I've had this since 25 years," he added, borrowing Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's much-trumpeted slogan for boosting manufacturing in the country. The Asian giant's Hindi film industry churns out hundreds of movies every year, raking in billions of US dollars in ticket receipts, but is yet to release a blockbuster that really takes Western box offices by storm. "I hope to achieve that but I don't sit down with people (and focus on) 'What is the crossover film that we can make?' No, I think it will happen because I believe in it," said Khan.

The actor known in India as "King Khan" or simply "SRK" to

his legions of fans is arguably Hindi cinema's biggest and most-recognizable star of the modern age. He shot to stardom in the mid-90s as the hero of romantic dramas such as "Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge" ("The Bravehearted Will Take Away the Bride") and "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" ("Something Happens"). Khan is also known for lead roles in high-octane thrillers like "Don" and this year's "Fan" while other major hits include the 2013 comedy "Chennai Express" and 2010's "My Name is Khan", in which he played a man with Asperger's syndrome.

'I like James Bond'

The 51-year-old boasts 22.2 million Twitter followers and regularly sees hordes of admirers gather outside his mansion by the sea in India's commercial capital of Mumbai, the home of Bollywood. His next film, called "Dear Zindagi" ("Dear Life"), hits cinema screens on Friday. But Khan admits he initially had misgivings about playing the role of Jehangir Khan in the comedy-drama directed by Gauri Shinde. "I'd be honest, I did

n't think I'd like the film. Not because it's not a good film... But it's not my genre of film. I like bad boys. I like James Bond," he said. Khan says his character plays the role of a "mentor, friend, philosopher, guide" to the much younger Kaira, played by upcoming Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt, 23, in the film which he says is "sweet" and "funny".

He described "Dear Zindagi" as a feel-good movie about life and how to cope with it "not only as a youngster but as a parent, as a middle-aged person." It deals with all of them without being preachy," he explained. Khan, whose career as one of Bollywood's most bankable actors spans three decades, says he doesn't see himself as a real-life mentor to young actors, but will give advice if asked.

'Out of body experience'

Khan has appeared in around 80 Bollywood movies and collected numerous accolades since travelling to Mumbai on a train from his hometown of Delhi in the early 90s with the

clear intention of becoming a superstar. "I always wanted to be famous, I wanted to be recognized, I want thousands of people outside my house, I don't want to go on the beach and relax. If I want a McDonald's I'll open it in my house," he said.

"When I was 25 I wanted to be like Madonna said: rich, famous, well-known, hard-working, recognized and get all the awards possible. I really enjoy being a star, I would not exchange it for anything." In "Fan", released in April, he played the double role of a movie megastar and a crazed young admirer whose obsession with his idol turns increasingly violent after he fails to meet him. "SRK" describes his own fame as being like an "out of body experience." "I'm extremely grateful and I don't even understand how I've become what I've become. "Does it even belong to me? I say this again and again, I'm just an employee of the superstar called Shah Rukh Khan. I have no idea how he does it." — AFP

CAN YOU GO HOME AGAIN? LOVELY 'LION' SAYS YES

There are two ways to view "Lion." One is as a heart-warming tale of love beyond boundaries and the incandescent pull of home. The more cynical view is that it's a two-hour advertisement for the wonders of Google Earth. Let's not be cynical, shall we? Let's just enjoy this poignant and true story of a man who became separated from his family in India at age 5, was adopted by an Australia couple and then tracked down his family 25 years after going missing. "Lion" is really two beautifully-shot films - the tenacious story of 5-year-old Saroo Brierley lost hundreds of miles in eastern India and the less dramatic, and slightly forced, story of that same boy all grown up looking for answers about his past.

Dev Patel, of "Slumdog Millionaire" fame, proves he's a talented, striking leading man, but even he would admit he's delightfully overshadowed by newcomer Sunny Pawar, who plays his 5-year-old self with irrepressible sweetness. "I can lift anything," he says at one point, and proves it by lifting this film. Luke Davies' screenplay, adapted from Brierley's memoir "A Long Way Home," starts in 1986 with the younger Saroo tagging along with his older brother to scrounge for work. He then falls asleep on a decommissioned train that travels some 1,600 kilometers to Calcutta.

Physical journey

Lost, hungry and scared, the boy isn't even able to seek help since he speaks only Hindi in an area where Bengali is

the common language. He scrounges for food, turns a piece of cardboard into a bed and narrowly escapes child abductors before being taken to an orphanage that resembles a prison. It's a grim journey in which few adults are good. The camera doesn't shy away from staring at gritty places and forgotten people. Salvation comes in the form of Nicole Kidman in a truly appalling '80s wig. She and David Wenham play an Aussie couple who adopt young Saroo and Kidman turns in a very unglamorous, quiet and meditative performance.

Director Garth Davis has got us in the palm of his hand at this point, with Saroo wide-eyed at encountering a plane and a refrigerator for the first time. But the second half of the film slackens somewhat as Patel takes over 25 years later. He's great as a brooding, haunted man but he has less to work with. If the first half was a compelling, physical journey, the second is one taken solely inside the mind and the film degenerates into long moments showing Saroo's solitary wanderings and sleeplessness. The dense crowds of harsh, urban India give way to the empty, lush expanses of Tasmania.

Partial memories

The adult Saroo seems unmoored from his Indian roots until - like Marcel Proust's madeleine he encounters a fried cake called a jalebi that triggers childhood memories.

Someone helpfully suggests he look at Google Earth - yes, it's actually written into the script. (The company's logo also appears on the screen multiple times, on the movie poster and Google is thanked in the end credits. This is product placement on par with Reese's Pieces in "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial.") Soon, Saroo is pushing away his girlfriend (a very bad idea since it's the marvelous Rooney Mara) and studying satellite images from India by a certain internet company, tracing train tracks from a laptop.

He has no idea where he came from and the film nicely uses flashbacks to show partial memories flooding back. A breakthrough gets him on the right track and soon he's back on a plane, heading to his former home and a bitter-sweet finale with the people he left behind. It's all thanks to love, tenaciousness and, of course, the good folks at Google. "Lion," a Weinstein Company release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "thematic material and some sensuality." MPAA definition of PG-13: Parental guidance suggested, with some material may not be suitable for children. Running time: 119 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four. — AP



Brad Pitt poses for photographers during the photocall for the new film 'Allied' of director Robert Zemeckis, in Paris. — AP

FBI clears **Brad Pitt** over abuse claim

Brad Pitt has been cleared after a probe into allegations he mistreated one of his children in a mid-air altercation, the FBI said on Tuesday. The claims centered on an alleged incident with his 15-year-old son Maddox in September on a flight from France to Los Angeles. Pitt's wife Angelina Jolie claimed he had struck the boy. "In response to allegations made following a flight... carrying Mr Brad Pitt and his children, the FBI has conducted a review of the circumstances and will not pursue further investigation," the agency said in a statement.

"No charges have been filed in this matter." The announcement marks Pitt's second vindication over the incident, two weeks after Los Angeles social workers cleared the 52-year-old of wrongdoing following interviews with the couple, their children and witnesses. Jolie, 41, filed for divorce in September, citing irreconcilable differences. She is seeking sole custody of their six children. Pitt, who won a best film Oscar for producing "12 Years a Slave" (2013), has been in contact with all six of the couple's children and is seeking joint legal and physical custody.

The reunions were supervised by a therapist as part of the couple's temporary custody agreement-mediated by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services—which was recently extended. Under the agreement Jolie had physical custody of the children—three of whom, including Maddox, are adopted—at a rented LA house. The A-listers-given the celebrity moniker "Brangelina"-wed in France in August two years ago, but had been a couple since 2004. AFP reached out to Pitt's representative, who declined to comment. — AFP



In this image released by The Weinstein Company, Dev Patel appears in a scene from 'Lion.' — AP



Sue Brierley, from left, Nicole Kidman, Priyanka Bose, Sunny Pawar, front, Saroo Brierley and Dev Patel attend the premiere of 'Lion' at the Museum of Modern Art on Wednesday in New York. — AP

'Moonlight,' 'American Honey' top Spirit Awards nominations

Coming-of-age tale "Moonlight" and road movie "American Honey" led the pack of independent films tipped for Oscars glory as the Spirit Awards nominations were announced on Tuesday. Starring Mahershala Ali and Naomie Harris, Barry Jenkins' "Moonlight" tells the life story of a young African-American man struggling to find his place as he grows up in a rough neighborhood of Miami. It was nominated in six categories, including best feature, best director and best screenplay. It was passed over in the acting categories, despite Ali and Harris being considered strong contenders for Oscar nods. The entire cast, Jenkins and casting director Yasi Ramirez will get the special Robert Altman Award.

"American Honey," written and directed by British filmmaker Andrea Arnold and starring Sasha Lane and Shia LaBeouf, also secured six nominations, including female lead, supporting female and male. Kenneth Lonergan's New England-based family drama "Manchester by the Sea," which has given Casey Affleck an early lead in the race for the best-actor Oscar, got five

nominations. The movie, which opened on Friday to some of the best reviews of the year, is up for best feature and best actor and supporting actor.

"Jackie," Pablo Larrain's political drama focusing on former US president John F Kennedy's assassination through the eyes of First Lady Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, picked up nominations for directing, editing and feature, as well as nod for Natalie Portman's acclaimed performance in the title role. The Film Independent Spirit Awards are seen as an strong indicator of independent movies that could win Oscar glory. "Now more than ever, the voices of independent artists play a critically important role in our culture," said Film Independent's president Josh Welsh. "The films we celebrate at this year's Spirit Awards embody the diversity, innovation and uniqueness of vision that we champion all year long." The winners will be announced on February 25, a day before the Academy Awards. — AFP



Kim Jee-Woon's 'The Age of Shadows' to Open Marrakech

The 16th Marrakech Film Festival - one of the largest cultural events in the Arab world and African continent - has unveiled its full-line up. Opening film is the 1920s-set transcendent spy thriller "The Age Of Shadows," by South Korea's Kim Jee-woon. Marrakech will close with Fatih Akin's coming-of-age drama, "Goodbye Berlin." Other out-of-competition pics include Louis-Julien Petit's "Carole Matheou" starring Isabelle Adjani; "Elle" by Paul Verhoeven; Disney's animated adventure, "Moana," and "My Uncle" the second feature by Moroccan director Nassim Abassi, starring comedian Abderrahim Tounsi. Adjani, Verhoeven and Tounsi will all receive career tributes at the festival.

Marrakech's official selection aims to offer new, distinctive and dissonant voices in world cinema: "The radicalism of the selection reflects a wish to counter the widespread artistic blandness which unfolds on screens, and instead seeks a return to principles, to the roots of what enayer, Afghan-Iranian drama, "Parting" by Navid Mahmoudi will also play in competition. Other official selection titles take in Sandrine

Veyssset's French generational drama, "The Story of a Mother"; Venice-selected mockumentary "King of the Belgians" by Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth; Reiner Frimmel and Tizza Covi's Locarno-seen circus docu-fiction "Mister Universo"; and immigration drama "The Road to Mandalay," by Burmese director Midi Z, that bowed at Venice;

Family customs

Also in the mix: Berlinale-bowing South African drama "Shepherds and Butchers," directed by Oliver Schmitz; and coming-of-age drama "Zoology" by Russian writer-director Ivan Tverdovsky, that world premiered at Toronto. Marrakech's six-film sidebar, From the Heart, featuring what Barde terms "some ferocious filmmaking," includes three debut features: Otto Bell's "The Eagle Huntress" lensed in Mongolia; "Heaven Sent," by Lebanese director Wissam Charaf; and Daouda Coulibaly's drug trafficking drama "Wulu." —Reuters