

# EDITORIAL

Hollywood is great at war movies. The USA's excursions around the world and the military industrial complex that funds it did not fail to extend itself to the sphere of glitzy entertainment. Alongside the problematic feature films that end up glorifying war and violence, Hollywood also focuses on an aspect of war that one might call "modern" compared to how old the idea of war is. War-related trauma, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been pointed to as a strong argument against war in the West in modern times. War trauma is also something rarely spoken about in the context of our Liberation War of 1971.

So much has happened since victory was achieved on December 16, 1971. We rebuilt a country, we were set back time and again, we rebuilt it again, and are now faced with all the usual problems of a young democracy. But the war is still recent, because it was fought by the young'uns. The teenagers and twentysomethings who wrenched freedom from the hands of oppressors are now old men, but their memories linger, and their trauma remains unaddressed, while the world keeps moving on.

— Azmin Azran, Editor-in-charge, SHOUT



## PLAYWATCH

### MOVIE



DESIGN: ABIR HOSSAIN

# SHAH RUKH KHAN: the last of the stars

HASIB UR RASHID IFTI

It was on *The Anupam Kher Show* where Shah Rukh Khan was asked whether he fears losing his stardom in the future. With his iconic smile, he answered, "I'm the last of the stars".

And nobody else could illustrate SRK's stardom more accurately.

Keeping aside his wit and charm as an individual, it's Shah Rukh Khan's impeccable self-consciousness that makes him unique. He isn't one deluded by his stardom or box office collections, which is incredibly common in Bollywood.

However, the word "superstar" holds a completely different meaning than the word "actor".

Stars like Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, or Johnny Depp aren't dependent on box office collections or performances for their stardom to survive. Maestros like Daniel Day-Lewis or Philip Seymour Hoffman will always be considered better actors than Tom Cruise or Brad Pitt. But nobody goes in on a Sunday show of *Top Gun: Maverick* to experience a masterful acting performance from Tom Cruise. They go in to be entertained and trust Tom Cruise with that responsibility. Tom's track record made him indestructible at the box office. Even with a few flops, Tom Cruise will always be one of the biggest entertainers in the business.

Shah Rukh Khan's indestructibility roots back to the fact that he's a part of the audience's nostalgia. From the late 1990s to the 2010s, SRK has single-handedly dominated the box office. Our generation has grown up rewatching classics like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* or *Kal Ho Naa Ho*. So, Shah Rukh Khan's recent form at the box office or the quality of his scripts doesn't impact our mindset anymore since his

past glory is incorporated into our childhood. No matter how heartwarming his 2016 film *Dear Zindagi* was, we'll always remember him for hits like *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* regardless of its mediocrity.

However, actors like Aamir Khan and Salman Khan reached the peaks of their careers around the 2010s. No one can deny the impact Aamir Khan had on Indian cinema with *Taare Zameen Par*, *3 Idiots*, or *Rang De Basanti*. But his stardom is dependent on the quality of his films.

Aamir's recent ventures like *Dhoom 3*, *Thugs of Hindostan*, or *Laal Singh Chaddha* saw him criticised for his choice of poor scripts and caricaturish performances. Even a few years back, the audience thought Akshay Kumar could do no wrong after consecutive hits like *Baby*, *Airlift*, or *Rustom*. But with his poor choice of scripts and rushed projects in recent years, even a veteran like Akshay is being discarded by the audience. And who'd have thought that Salman Khan could fail at the box office?

But even after SRK's recent failures at the box office, fans are still excited about his next venture. Because it's not about the script or the quality of the movie with him. It's about the moviegoing experience, about watching your favourite star in a new role and reconnecting with your nostalgia.

As the audience's taste develops over the year due to the rise of OTT and regional cinema, the very idea of a "superstar" is going extinct. Films can no longer be successful solely based on star power. As film industries try to rise from the ashes of their past, Shah Rukh Khan will prove to be the last of the Bollywood superstars.

Remind Ifti to be quieter at [hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com](mailto:hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com)

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