

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel: 212-708-9400 Cable: MODERNART Telex: 62370 MODART

FILM-UTSAV INDIA

Part I: PROFILES; October 25 - December 15, 1985

Schedule

Unless otherwise noted, all films will be screened in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1 and will be spoken in Hindi with English subtitles.

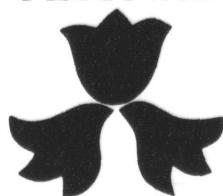
- Friday, October 25 at 2:00 p.m.: Aag (Fire). 1948. Raj Kapoor. With Raj Kapoor, Nargis. 140 min.
- Friday, October 25 at 6:00 p.m.: Awāra (The Vagabond). 1951. Raj Kapoor. With Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Prithviraj Kapoor. 170 min. RAJ KAPOOR WILL INTRODUCE THE FILM.
- Saturday, October 26 at 1:00 p.m.: Awāra (The Vagabond). See Friday, October 25 at 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday, October 26 at 5:00 p.m.: Aag (Fire). See Friday, October 25 at 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, October 27 at 1:00 p.m.: Shree 420 (Mr. 420). 1955. Raj Kapoor. With Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Nadira. 169 min.
- Sunday, October 27 at 5:00 p.m.: Boot Polish. 1954. Produced by Raj Kapoor, directed by Prakash Arora. With Baby Naaz, Ratan Kumar, and David. 140 min.
- Monday, October 28 at 2:30 p.m.: Boot Polish. See Sunday, October 27 at 5:00 p.m.
- Monday, October 28 at 6:00 p.m.: Shree 420 (Mr. 420). See Sunday, October 27 at 1:00 p.m.
- Saturday, November 2 at 1:00 p.m.: Barsaat (Monsoon). 1949. Raj Kapoor. With Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Premnath. 164 min.
- Saturday, November 2 at 5:00 p.m.: Satyam Shivam Sundaram (Love Sublime/Love Truth and Beauty). 1978. Raj Kapoor. With Shashi Kapoor, Zeenat Aman. 165 min.
- Sunday, November 3 at 1:00 p.m.: Jagte Raho (Stay Awake). 1957. Produced by Raj Kapoor, directed by Sombhu Mitra and Amit Maitra. With Raj Kapoor, Pradeep Kumar, Sumitra Devi. 143 min.
- Sunday, November 3 at 5:00 p.m.: Mera Naam Joker (My Name is Joker/I am a Clown). 1970. Raj Kapoor. With Raj Kapoor, Manoj Kumar, Achala Sachdev, Rishi Kapoor. 244 min.
- Monday, November 4 at 2:00 p.m.: Barsaat (Monsoon). See Saturday, November 2 at 1:00 p.m.
- Monday, November 4 at 6:00 p.m.: Satyam Shivam Sundaram (Love Sublime/Love Truth and Beauty). See Saturday, November 2 at 5:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, November 5 at 2:00 p.m.: Jagte Raho (Stay Awake). See Sunday, November 3 at 1:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, November 5 at 6:00 p.m.: Amar Jyoti (Eternal Light/Immortal Flame). 1936. V. Shantaram. With Durga Khote, Shanta Apte, Chandramohan. 163 min.
- Thursday, November 7 at 2:30 p.m.: Amrit Manthan (The Churning of the Sea). 1934. V. Shantaram. With Chandramohan, Shanta Apte, Nalini Tarkhud, Suresh Babu. 148 min.
- Thursday, November 7 at 6:00 p.m.: Mera Naam Joker (My Name is Joker/I am a Clown). See Sunday, November 3 at 5:00 p.m.
- Friday, November 8 at 2:30 p.m.: Amrit Manthan (The Churning of the Sea). See Thursday, November 7 at 2:30 p.m.
- Friday, November 8 at 6:00 p.m.: Duniya Na Mane (The Undefeated). 1937. V. Shantaram. With Shanta Apte, K. Date, Vasanti, Raja Nene. 154 min.
- Saturday, November 9 at 1:00 p.m. (TITUS 2): Duniya Na Mane (The Undefeated). See Friday, November 8 at 6:00 p.m.

- Saturday, November 9 at 5:00 p.m. (TITUS 2): Amar Jyoti (Eternal Light/Immortal Flame). See Tuesday, November 5 at 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, November 10 at 1:00 p.m.: Pyaasa (The Thirsty One). 1957. Guru Dutt. With Guru Dutt, Waheeda Rehman, Mala Sinha, Johnny Walker. 145 min.
- Sunday, November 10 at 5:00 p.m.: Kaagaz Ke Phool (Paper Flowers). 1959. Guru Dutt. With Guru Dutt, Waheeda Rehman, Baby Naaz, Johnny Walker. Hindi, possibly French subtitles. 148 min.
- Monday, November 11 at 2:30 p.m.: Kaagaz Ke Phool (Paper Flowers). See Sunday, November 10 at 5:00 p.m.
- Monday, November 11 at 6:00 p.m.: Pyaasa (The Thirsty One). See Sunday, November 10 at 1:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, November 12 at 2:00 p.m.: Mr. and Mrs. 55. 1955. Guru Dutt. With Guru Dutt, Madhubala, Lalita Pawar, Johnny Walker, Kumkum, Cuckoo. 152 min.
- Tuesday, November 12 at 6:00 p.m. (TITUS 2): Ajantrik (The Mechanical Man/Pathetic Fallacy). 1958. Ritwik Ghatak. With Kali Banerjee, Gyanesh Mukherje. Bengali, English subtitles. 102 min.
- Thursday, November 14 at 5:00 p.m.: Sahib Bibi Aur Gulam (Master, Mistress, Servant). 1962. Produced by Guru Dutt, directed by Abrar Alvi. With Guru Dutt, Meena Kumari. 173 min.
- Friday, November 15 at 2:30 p.m.: Aar Paar. 1954. Guru Dutt. With Guru Dutt, Shyama, Shakila, Johnny Walker. 136 min.
- Saturday, November 16 at 1:00 p.m.: Sahib Bibi Aur Gulam (Master, Mistress, Servant). See Friday, November 15 at 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday, November 16 at 5:00 p.m.: Mr. and Mrs. 55. See Tuesday, November 12 at 2:00 p.m.
- Sunday, November 17 at 2:00 p.m.: Nagarik (The Citizen). 1952-1953. Ritwik Ghatak. With Satindra Bhattacharya, Sobha Sen, Kali Banerjee, Ketaki Devi. Bengali, English subtitles. 120 min.
- Sunday, November 17 at 5:00 p.m.: Ajantrik (The Mechanical Man/Pathetic Fallacy). See Tuesday, November 12 at 6:00 p.m.
- Monday, November 18 at 2:30 p.m.: Nagarik (The Citizen). See Sunday, November 17 at 2:00 p.m.
- Monday, November 18 at 6:00 p.m.: Aar Paar. See Friday, November 15 at 2:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, November 19 at 2:30 p.m.: Bari Theke Paliye (The Runaway). 1959. Ritwik Ghatak. With Param Bhattarak Lahiri, Padma Devi, Sailen Ghosh. Bengali, English subtitles. 123 min.
- Tuesday, November 19 at 6:00 p.m.: Meghe Dhaka Tara (The Cloud Capped Star/The Hidden Star). 1960. Ritwik Ghatak. With Supriya Chowdhury, Anil Chatterjee. Bengali, English subtitles. 120 min.
- Friday, November 22 at 2:30 p.m.: Komal Gandhar (E Flat). 1961. Ritwik Ghatak. With Supriya Chowdhury, Abinash Banerjee, Anil Chatterjee. Bengali, English subtitles. 110 min.
- Friday, November 22 at 6:00 p.m.: Jukti Takko Ar Gappo (Reason, Debate and a Tale/Reason, Argument and a Story). 1974. Ritwik Ghatak. With Ritwik Ghatak, Tripti Mitra, Saonli Mitra, Bijan Bhattacharya. Bengali, English subtitles. 120 min.
- Saturday, November 23 at 2:00 p.m.: Meghe Dhaka Tara (The Cloud Capped Star/The Hidden Star). See Tuesday, November 19 at 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday, November 23 at 5:00 p.m.: Bari Theke Paliye (The Runaway). See Tuesday, November 19 at 2:30 p.m.
- Sunday, November 24 at 2:00 p.m.: Jukti Takko Ar Gappo (Reason, Debate and a Tale/Reason, Argument and a Story). See Friday, November 22 at 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday, November 24 at 5:00 p.m.: Komal Gandhar (E Flat). See Friday, November 22 at 2:30 p.m.
- Monday, November 25 at 2:00 p.m.: Subarnarekha. 1962. Ritwik Ghatak. With Madhabi Mukherjee, Satindra Bhattacharya, Abhi Bhattacharya. Bengali, possibly English subtitles. 132 min..
- Monday, November 25 at 6:00 p.m.: Titash Ekti Nadir Naam (A River Named Titash). 1973. Ritwik Ghatak. With Rosy, Sufia, Kabari Chowdhury. Made in Bangladesh. Bengali, possibly English titles. ca. 140 min.
- Tuesday, November 26 at 2:30 p.m.: Titash Ekti Nadir Naam (A River named Titash). See Monday, November 25 at 6:00 p.m.

- Tuesday, November 26 at 6:00 p.m.: Subarnarekha. See Monday, November 25 at 2:00 p.m.
- Friday, November 29 at 2:00 and 6:00 p.m.: Nehru. 1985. Shyam Benegal and Yuri Aldokhin. Documentary in three parts. Text by Jawaharlal Nehru. English narration spoken by Saeed Jaffrey. 177 min.
- Saturday, November 30 at 2:00 and 5:00 p.m.: Satyajit Ray. Shyam Benegal. Documentary. English subtitles. 135 min.
- Sunday, December 1 at 2:30 and 5:30 p.m. (TITUS 2): Mati Manas (The Mind of Clay). 1985. Mani Kaul. Documentary on terra cotta art. 90 min.
- Tuesday, December 3 at 2:00 p.m. (TITUS 2): Mahatma: Life of Gandhi, 1869-1948. 1968. Vithalbhai K. Jhaveri. Documentary with rare footage. English version. 330 min. (break at 5:00 p.m., screening resumes at 6:30 p.m.)
- Thursday, December 5 at 2:00 p.m. (TITUS 2): Mahatma: Life of Gandhi, 1869-1948. See Tuesday, December 3 at 2:00 p.m.
- Friday, December 6 at 2:30 p.m.: Ten Days in Calcutta: A Portrait of Mrinal Sen. 1984. Reinhard Hauff. Documentary. Print courtesy of Teleculture. 82 min.
- Friday, December 6 at 6:00 p.m.: Baishey Shravana (The Wedding Day). 1960. Mrinal Sen. With Madhabhi Mukherjee, Gnanesh Mukherjee, Umanath Bhattacharya. Bengali, English subtitles. 124 min.
- Saturday, December 7 at 2:00 p.m.: Ten Days in Calcutta. See Friday, December 6 at 2:30 p.m.
- Saturday, December 7 at 5:00 p.m.: Akash Kusum (Up in the Clouds). 1965. Mrinal Sen. With Soumitra Chatterjee, Subhendu Chatterjee, Aparna Sen. Bengali, English subtitles. 110 min.
- Sunday, December 8 at 2:00 p.m.: Akash Kusum (Up in the Clouds). See Saturday, December 7 at 5:00 p.m.
- Sunday, December 8 at 5:00 p.m.: Baishey Shravana (The Wedding Day). See Friday, December 6 at 6:00 p.m.
- Monday, December 9 at 2:30 p.m.: Interview. 1971. Mrinal Sen. With Ranjit Mullick, Sekhar Chatterjee, Karuna Banerjee, Mamata Banerjee. Bengali, English subtitles. 101 min.
- Monday, December 9 at 6:00 p.m.: Bhuvan Shome (Mister Shome). 1969. Mrinal Sen. With Uptal Dutt, Suhasini Mulay, Sadhu Meher, Shekhar Chatterjee. 96 min.
- Tuesday, December 10 at 2:30 p.m.: Oka Oorie Katha (The Outsiders). 1977. Mrinal Sen. With Vasudeva Rao, Mamata Shankar, Narayana Rao. Telegu, English subtitles. 112 min.
- Tuesday, December 10 at 6:00 p.m.: Interview. See Monday, December 9 at 2:30 p.m.
- Friday, December 13 at 2:30 p.m.: Akaler Sandhane (In Search of Famine). 1980. Mrinal Sen. With Dhritiman Chatterjee, Smita Patil, Gita Sen, Sreela Majumdar. Bengali, English subtitles. 123 min.
- Friday, December 13 at 6:00 p.m.: Oka Oorie Katha (The Outsiders). See Tuesday, December 10 at 2:30 p.m.
- Saturday, December 14 at 2:00 p.m.: Bhuvan Shome (Mister Shome). See Monday, December 9 at 6:00 p.m.
- Saturday, December 14 at 5:00 p.m.: Kharij (The Case is Closed). 1982. Mrinal Sen. With Mamata Shankar, Anjan Dutt, Sreela Majumdar, Indranil Moitra. Bengali, English subtitles. 100 min.
- Sunday, December 15 at 2:00 p.m.: Kharij (The Case is Closed). See Saturday, December 14 at 5:00 p.m.
- Sunday, December 15 at 5:00 p.m.: Akaler Sandhane (In Search of Famine). See Friday, December 13 at 2:30 p.m.

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FESTIVAL



OF INDIA
1985-1986

For Immediate Release
October 1985

FESTIVAL OF INDIAN FILMS TO TOUR U.S.

FILM-UTSĀV INDIA*, one of the largest and most diverse programs of Indian films ever to appear in the United States, will tour twelve cities across the country as part of the Festival of India 1985-1986. The two-part program, a compilation of forty-seven films spanning a fifty-year period, will open October 25 at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, with West Coast openings at the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley November 1, and the UCLA Film Archives November 2. The series will be highlighted by the appearance of several major Indian directors and stars.

India, a country of 850,000,000 people who speak twenty-two different languages, is the world's most prolific producer of films, turning out some 800 films a year. The films have remained largely unknown outside their country of origin, however, because of their strong national character. They feature songs, dances, and themes specifically related to Indian culture. FILM-UTSĀV INDIA provides an opportunity to acquaint a Western audience with this rich and fascinating body of work.

The program is comprised of two sections--PROFILES and PANORAMA--which together offer a representative sample of Indian cinema from the

*Utsāv: a Sanskrit word meaning festival/celebration

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thirties up to the present. PROFILES spotlights the work of five important directors: V. Shantaram, a classic studio filmmaker of the thirties, whose films exhibit the often exotic qualities of that period; Raj Kapoor and Guru Dutt, representing the Golden Age of the musical in the late forties and fifties after India's independence; and Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen, who, like their better-known contemporary Satyajit Ray, brought political and social concerns to Indian films of the sixties and seventies.

Raj Kapoor, who will be present when his films open the festival in New York and Los Angeles, is one of India's most popular cinematic figures. An actor-director in the style of Charlie Chaplin or Gene Kelly, Kapoor is the embodiment of the traditional Indian musical, usually playing a romantic character trying to rise above his class. His films, like others of the genre, are spectacular, sentimental, and highlighted by songs.

Music and dance are essential ingredients of traditional Indian films, no less important than the plot. Song is an integral part of India's spiritual culture and this tradition finds expression in its cinema as well. It is largely because of the inclusion of numerous elaborately produced musical numbers that many Indian films are longer than standard features of other countries.

PROFILES also features four notable documentaries: Pandit Nehru and Satyajit Ray by Shyam Benegal, one of India's most prominent directors; a three hundred and thirty-minute compilation of footage on the life of India's most revered figure, Mahatma Gandhi; and Mati Manas (The Mind of Clay), Mani Kaul's extraordinary study of terra-cotta art and its relation to

Indian culture and mythology.

Like the films in PROFILES, the eighteen contemporary features of Part II, PANORAMA, demonstrate a remarkable range and diversity. The selection includes films exhibiting the most commercial and popular melodramatic excesses and those portraying the stark realities of village life. Recent features by such directors as Kumar Shahani, Saeed Mirza and Kethan Mehta are evidence of the emergence of Indian films from a specifically national cinema to an important international one.

This growing sophistication and universality can be seen in Shahani's Tarang (Wages and Profits), a story of class politics and interpersonal relationships, which has a distinctive style reminiscent of French director Robert Bresson. Ardh Satya (Half Truth), directed by Govind Nihalani is, on the other hand, a police picture which examines corruption in the Indian political system. Kethan Mehta's Holi (The Festival of Fire) is the story of a rebellion in a boys' school. In addition, PANORAMA includes two films by women directors, Phaniyamma by Prema Karanth and 36 Chowringhee Lane, the first feature by popular actress Aparna Sen.

FILM-UTSĀV INDIA will introduce not only some of the great Indian directors and films, but several of India's major stars as well. The magnitude and influence of India's star system exceeds even that of Hollywood, and Indian movie stars are known and idolized throughout the country. Actors such as Shabana Azmi (Arth), Smita Patil (Arth, Tarang, Umbartha), and Om Puri (Ardh Satya) appear in a great number of both commercial and art films every year (sometimes working on as many as six films at once) and have inspired fan clubs and, in some cases, suicides in their honor.

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All of the films in FILM-UTSĀV INDIA will be presented in their original language versions with English subtitles. While most of the films are in Hindi, the language of the majority of Indians and of the commercial film industry, other tongues including Bengali, Telugu, Sanskrit, and Oriya will also be represented.

FILM-UTSĀV INDIA was organized in the United States by Geoffrey Gilmore, director of programming at the UCLA Film, Television & Radio Archives, with the special assistance of Adrienne Mancina, curator of exhibitions in the Department of Film of The Museum of Modern Art. The festival was programmed in coordination with the National Film Development Corporation, Bombay; the Directorate of Film Festivals, New Delhi; and the National Film Archives of India, Pune. FILM-UTSĀV INDIA is made possible through a generous grant from the Ford Foundation and the support of the Government of India.

For additional press information and photographic materials, contact the following people:

- at The Museum of Modern Art in New York: Howard Feinstein, 212/708-9752
- at UCLA Film, Television, and Radio Archives: Geoffrey Gilmore, 213/825-8263
- at the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley: Shelley Diekman, 415/642-1412

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FILM-UTSAV INDIA

TOUR SCHEDULE

The Museum of Modern Art, New York	October 25 - December 15, 1985 January 24 - February 23, 1986	PROFILES PANORAMA
UCLA Film, Television, & Radio Archives, Los Angeles	November - December, 1985 February - March, 1986	KAPOOR + PANORAMA PROFILES
Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley	November - December, 1985 February - March, 1986	PANORAMA PROFILES
The Film Center, School of the Art Institute of Chicago	March - April, 1986 May, 1986	PROFILES PANORAMA
The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.	January, 1986	PANORAMA
The American Film Institute, Washington, D.C.	April - May, 1986	PROFILES
University Film Society/ Minneapolis Museum of Art	April, 1986 June - July, 1986	PANORAMA PROFILES
The University of Texas at Austin	June, 1986 October - November, 1986	PANORAMA PROFILES
Honolulu Academy of Arts	July, 1986	PANORAMA
Denver Center Cinema, Denver Center for the Performing Arts	August, 1986	PANORAMA
Houston Museum of Fine Arts	May - June, 1986 September, 1986	PROFILES PANORAMA
The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	March, 1986 September - October, 1986	PANORAMA PROFILES
Cornell Cinema, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York	August - September, 1986 October, 1986	PROFILES PANORAMA

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RAJ KAPOOR--THE SHOWMAN AUTEUR OF INDIAN CINEMA

by ELLIOTT STEIN

For the sake of argument (and at the risk of some over-simplification), Indian films of the last 30 years can be divided into three groups:

1) The Hindi (or all-India) films made largely in Bombay, which are commercial, bent to formula, glossy, unsophisticated and enjoyed throughout the subcontinent. These generally take place in a fantasy universe; hardly are any adult films, destined for the literate middle class.

2) Regional films, often with high intellectual or artistic goals (e.g. those made in Calcutta by Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen and Satyajit Ray, in Bengali--and recently, in the Southern states by a few young directors) whose public is to be found in their own language areas, and elsewhere in India only in limited "art house" situations. These often deal with social problems or at least attempt to create a greater sense of reality than the product churned out in Bombay. These, for the most part, are the Indian films seen in the West at festivals, and if bought for release, in theaters.

and 3) The films of Raj Kapoor, made in Bombay, in Hindi, the best of which however use the all-India formulas to enhance serious themes. These "quality films for the masses," as they have been aptly called, have been smashing successes in India, elsewhere in Asia, in the Soviet Union and the Middle East. Kapoor--star-director-producer--occupies a unique niche in Indian film history.

Raj Kapoor is the keystone of a vast familial arch which has vaulted over Indian show business for nearly 60 years and three generations. The Kapoors are the Barrymores of India, the first family of the Indian screen. It seems as if there is a Kapoor connected with at least one out of every three Hindi movies--as director, actor, producer, editor or distributor. This horde stems from the strikingly handsome Grecian-profiled Prithviraj Kapoor, who left his native Peshawar in the north and arrived in Bombay in 1929, where he joined the Imperial Film Co., appeared

in Alam Ara, the first Indian talkie, and toured the country playing Shakespeare on the boards. In 1944, he formed Prithvi Theaters which became a launching pad for his sons: Raj, Shammi and Shashi. The sons and grandsons of Prithviraj have performed in 300 films, and have produced and directed at least 50.

Raj's younger brother Shashi, for years a matinee idol (he is known in the West for his appearances in the Merchant-Ivory films The Householder, Shakespeare Wallah, Bombay Talkie and Heat and Dust) has recently taken to producing films of some import--Junoon, Kalyug, and 36 Chowringhee Lane, which contained a matchless starring performance by his wife, Jennifer Kendal. With her untimely death last year, the country mourned the loss of the greatest actress of her generation.

Ranbirraj Kapoor, born in Peshawar December 14, 1924 (a Sagittarius), started on the stage with his father. After a stint as clapper boy and assistant to director Kidar Sharma at Ranjit Studios in 1946, and some work at Bombay Talkies, his acting career began in earnest in 1947. He starred in four films that year, and could have simply remained a very famous film star. He went off almost directly into producing, directing and starring in his own movies, and in 1948, with Aag, at 23, made one of the most striking directorial debuts in film history.

A complete RK retrospective would, of necessity, last for months. This one concentrates on Kapoor, the complete auteur, on the films which bear his personal stamp. Not represented are the more than 50 films directed by other men in which he appeared, although some of these (Teesri Kasam, Jis Desh Men Ganga Behti Hai) are of indisputably high quality.

RK's singular and gargantuan talent subsumes a variety of influences and affinities--Chaplin, Frank Capra, Orson Welles--with even a touch of Russ Meyer apparent in the later work. At times, his oeuvre recalls the work of a 19th Century European literary giant whose sympathy for the underdog, protean activity, inexhaustible energy and penchant for excess earned him fame and a national reputation as early in life as Kapoor. Yes, Raj Kapoor is--to a degree--the Victor Hugo of Indian cinema.

His first film is a full-blown brooding melodrama, etched in highlights and shadows, told in flashback, in which RK plays a theatrical producer whose face has been horribly burned. He encounters a woman who has no name, comes from nowhere: all of her family have been killed in fires of Partition. The intensity, the conviction of the love scenes, the total immersion of the actors in their roles in Aag/Fire--were not common currency in the Hindi cinema of the day. The visual style is a rich intermixture of film noir and expressionism. (RK's early films reveal a German influence which would seem to derive from his apprenticeship at Bombay Talkies, a studio which employed a number of German directors, cinematographers and technicians. RK himself will buy none of this--"In Aag, I was simply influenced by Citizen Kane." Since Kane is awash with UFA-isms, we are perhaps talking about the same thing.)

Although no box office blockbuster, Aag was a breath of fresh air in Hindi cinema, a sharp break with musty traditional techniques. It fired the imagination of teenagers. Its 24 year-old director was hailed as the leader of the youth movement in films.

RK later remarked: "I'll never forget Aag because it was the story of youth consumed by the desire for a brighter and more intense life. And all those who flitted like shadows through my own life, giving something, taking something, were in that film."

Aag was a modest success. With Barsaat/Monsoon (1949)--produced and directed by Kapoor--who also worked on the script and starred in it--RK went through the roof. The film was the biggest hit of its time. The poster (RK holding a violin in one hand and the swooning maiden Nargis in the other) became an icon for lovers all over India. Barsaat's love scenes--even without kissing--are intense: young Indians turned out in masses for it, and RK became the premier torchbearer of romanticism in Hindi cinema.

This moral tale concerns two young city vacationers, a cynical Don Juan, played by Premnath, an idealistic poet and song writer, played by Raj. Both fall for mountain girls; one romance ends in suicide, the other with a happy marriage. The moving final sequence is a haunting cremation scene on a mountain top.

The superb black and white cinematography is often in the service of impressive depth-of-focus shots. There are two rousing dance sequences, one a splendid village fete, the other an amusing turn by Cuckoo in a night club--the picture's idiosyncratic score which reveals Neapolitan, Hungarian and South American influences, is a lively mix of Western and Indian music. From Barsaat onwards, the music in Kapoor's films was not simply plunked down, it was always an integral part of the fabric. The music and lyrics help carry the movement of the story. This was rarely the case in the work of other directors.

Once Kapoor decided to be his own man in the industry, it was clear that he would require his own studio. Construction on the four acre RK studio at Chembur began in 1950, at a time when the place was still a jungly suburb of Bombay. Today, Chembur is another kind of jungle: a polluted cacophony of gridlocked traffic. The studio's neighbors are oil refineries, fertilizer plants, slaughterhouses and an atomic complex.

Shooting began on the spectacular dream sequence of Awāra/The Vagabond (1951) even before the studio walls and ceiling were in place. This delirious melodrama--RK's first movie to deal directly with social issues--is brilliantly constructed in a convoluted flashback structure. The film originated with a screenplay by the left-wing writer and director, K.A. Abbas, who later wrote the script for Shree 420--these films consolidated Kapoor's screen persona as an Indian variant of Chaplin's underdog, an image to which he would return in film after film. The script is dominated by the notion of social determinism: i.e., criminals are formed by their environments, heredity is a mere happenstance in the creation of character. The casting of Awāra injects a note of ambiguity into all this: while the script debunks heredity, the leading role is played by an actor who seems to have inherited a good deal of talent from his father--and who, what is more, cast that father (Prithviraj Kapoor) to play his father in the movie!

If Awāra proves little about heredity, it was further proof of Kapoor's immense talent. The film is a masterpiece. The song sequences carried Indian film music to new heights.

RK chose his collaborators wisely. His studio became a quality talent pool, a stock company which worked with him on film after film: cinematographer Radhu Karmakar; Mukesh, Kapoor's playback singing voice for most of the films; art director M.R. Achrekar; composers Shankar and Jaikishen; the left-wing poet Shailendra, lyricist of Awāra's songs. The stunning Nargis was RK's principal leading lady for nearly a decade--on and off screen. They co-starred in 17 movies and became the Garbo-Gilbert couple of Indian 50s cinema.

Awāra was released in the United States and promptly panned by The New York Times, whose critic, Milton Esterow, called it "a poor soap opera." This landmark movie opened the Russian market for Indian pictures. Prints of Awāra were flown to the Soviet expedition at the North Pole. On their visit to the Soviet Union, Nargis and Kapoor were greeted as national celebrities. RK became the favorite actor of the Soviet people. The theme song, Awāra Hoon/I'm a Bum, translated into a dozen languages, spread like wildfire across Asia and the Middle East. The film triumphed in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Turkey. (Its distributor in Ankara built the Awāra Apartment House with the profits he made from it.) It is still frequently revived in India.

Satyajit Ray's Pather Panchali had its world premiere at New York's Museum of Modern Art at about the same time that Awāra was released in Russia and throughout the Middle East. Film historian Punita Bhatt makes an interesting distinction in comparing the careers of Ray and Kapoor. She writes: "Although both men are Indians, and although both made their international reputations with films about India's poor, Ray seemed to be speaking about them and Raj Kapoor to them."

In order to diversify production, RK encouraged his assistants to become full-fledged directors, under his banner. The resultant credits are at times misleading. A case in point is Boot Polish (1954) whose credits read: "Produced by Raj Kapoor, directed by Prakash Arora." The release version of this tale of Bombay slum life

bears the stamp of RK's authorship from beginning to end. Most of it was shot--or reshot--by him.

Boot Polish is one of the great tear-jerkers. It is in there with Stella Dallas and Les Misérables. Kapoor squeezes every drop out of every scene--and then a few more for good measure. The film's oddly lyric neo-realism underlies an inordinate string of vicissitudes worthy of Victor Hugo. Ratan Kumar and seven year-old Baby Naaz are remarkable in the leading roles of a destitute brother and sister, as is David Abraham as their friend John Chacha, an eccentric bootlegger. (The recently deceased David, a Jewish character comedian, was one of the glories of Indian cinema.) The monsoon song performed in jail by David with his fellow prisoners is a highlight--another is a rousing production number with a chorus line of slum kids--"A New Dawn Will Come."

Boot Polish was released in the United States in 1958--but this was a version that had been cut by more than an hour. The complete version will be shown during the festival.

Shri 420/Mr. 420 (1955) was based on another script by Abbas, directed and produced by RK. He stars in it as an honest country youth who comes to Bombay in search of work and quickly discovers that honesty is not much of an asset in the big city.

The film's first half is decidedly Chaplinesque--Raju is a wise fool, a variation on Chaplin's underdog tramp. Its second half emphasizes the plight of the jolly have-nots, contrasted with the misdeeds of the evil rich--and is clearly influenced by Frank Capra's social comedies of the 1930s. The film's strongest assets are its catchy score and the romantic scenes with Nargis, especially a lovely idyll in the rain.

This mixture of high jinks and social conscience proved a triumph in socialist countries and reinforced RK's popularity in the Soviet Union. The song Mera Juta Hai Japani/My Shoes are Made in Japan, But My Heart Was Made in India swept Russia, Iran, Turkey, the Middle East, and translated into Fiji, was for some time at the top of the Fiji Islands' Hit Parade.

The Abbas-Kapoor writer-director team, which continued until Bobby (1973) has been compared to that of Zavattini and De Sica. Abbas recently published a memoir of their collaboration, some of which is quite revealing:

"I was asked at a crowded premiere to say something about Raj Kapoor. This is how I began: 'Relations between a writer and a director are very delicate and confidential. They might be likened to the relations between a husband and a wife, though it is difficult to say who is the husband and who is the wife.' At which, Raj Kapoor got up and said: 'I will tell you. I am the wife. Unless I conceive the idea, there is a danger of the child being disowned by the husband-writer, who may say that he is not responsible for the offspring. I give my milk to the baby and bring him up.'"

RK's next production, Jagte Raho/Stay Awake (1957) was co-directed by two major figures in the progressive theatre movement of Calcutta: Sombhu Mitra and Amit Maitra.

The striking first reel looks very much like a film noir. Indeed, it is a dark drama (with some comic scenes) in which Kapoor plays a ragged country yokel, who, wandering alone at night in Calcutta, enters a courtyard for a drink of water and is mistaken for a thief. The entire film takes place in the course of one long night during which a hounded innocent man takes refuge in the middle class apartment building and the vices of the seemingly respectable people who inhabit it are revealed. We go beyond Chaplin--at one point RK is clearly identified as a Christ figure.

Jagte Raho did not do well on its initial Indian release. It then became the first Indian film to be awarded a Grand Prix at an international film festival (Karlovy Vary, in Czechoslovakia, 1958) and when it was reissued, played to packed houses. It turns up often on Indian critics' lists of the 10 best Indian films of all time.

RK produced Jis Desh Men Ganga Behti Hai in 1960. In it, he gives one of his best performances--as a pilgrim to the Ganges who falls in love with a bandit girl. In allegorical form the film propounds the Gandhian message of non-violence. It was directed by Radhu Karmarkar, the studio's cinematographer-in-residence.

The Ganges figures prominently, literally and symbolically, in Sangam/Confluence (1964), produced, directed and edited by Kapoor--who also stars. The film takes its title from the meeting place of three sacred rivers, and is, as can be guessed, a love triangle. It appealed to patriotic sentiment--RK cast himself as a pilot who volunteers for a dangerous mission and is shot down. (The enemy--China?--Pakistan?--is never named.) It was shot in Technicolor (RK's first color film) and made extensive use of locations in Europe.

Sangam was a runaway hit--from its release in 1964 until 1969 it held the record as the biggest box office grosser in the history of Indian cinema. Today, it still ranks as one of the half-dozen top-grossing Indian films of all time. It was also a huge moneyspinner throughout the Middle East--the only film to run simultaneously for several years in both Israel and Egypt.

Today, it seems more notable as a successful exercise in showmanship than anything else. It is emptily formulaic; the three main characters are paper-thin.

You win some, you lose some. If Sangam was RK's greatest commercial success, the next film he directed, Mera Naam Joker/My Name is Joker/I Am A Clown (1970) was a resounding flop. A flop of monumental proportions--for it had been six years in the making, was over three hours long, and cost a fortune. Abbas's script was based on reflections drawn from Kapoor's own life. The producer-director staked everything he had on the project.

Joker the flop is more interesting than Sangam the hit. It is an ambitious failure, a return to Chaplin--it is Raj Kapoor's Limelight.

The film begins with the farewell performance of Rajoo, the famous clown. All those who had known him are gathered under the big top--a sort of "This is Your Life" situation. Most of the film unfolds in its three long flashbacks.

In part one, Kapoor's son Rishi plays Rajoo as a youth, a student at a Catholic school. He has two ambitions: to wed the beautiful schoolmarm and to become a clown in order to make Jesus laugh. (His own father, a clown, had been killed in a fall from a trapeze.) In due course the teacher marries a young man of her own age.

In the second part, the grown-up Rajoo (played by RK) gets a job as a singing clown with a Soviet circus. He falls in love with a ballerina who leaves him to return to Russia.

In part three, Rajoo befriends a boy who turns out to be a girl in boy's attire. He teaches her acting and dancing. When she makes it as a successful film star, she drops her mentor. Three stories--three rejections.

There are fine things throughout the film, but also a good measure of self-pity and self-indulgence. It is, however, one of the most personal films made in India during the last two decades. The first section is an unalloyed joy from start to finish. It is worth the price of admission if only to hear the gaggle of Indian schoolkids sing their version of "Oh, Susanna!" Joker deserves its day in court.

RK kept a low profile for a few years after the Joker fiasco. Many in the industry dubbed him a has-been. The announcement that his new film, Bobby, would star his son Rishi and a newcomer--Dimple Kapadia--did not generate much excitement.

Kapoor sensibly decided to cater to a new generation of filmgoers. A breezy narrative style and Dimple--in modern clothing and a variety of bathing suits--did the trick. Bobby (1973) a story of teenage love and elopement, shot partly on location in grandiose Kashmir, proved a runaway hit--it became one of the most popular Hindi films of the 1970s. It is a charming commercial film, a quality confection, a tasty all-India bonbon.

Satyam Shivam Sundaram/Truth Love and Beauty (1978) may be Kapoor's most controversial film. Although it was made for Indian audiences, I have never met an Indian who will admit to liking it and I have never met anyone from the West who didn't like it. When it was released, articles were published calling for a censor ban of it. None of its zealous adversaries ever discuss SSS critically as a film--their disapproval is always on moral grounds and seems fixated on the director's display of Zeenat Aman's body.

Kapoor's reply to this wave of Puritanism was: "SSS was about adivasis (tribals) and they dress like that--bare-breasted with just a thin muslin saree wrapped around. Go to Bihar, go to Bengal, you'll find all the Santhal women dressed like that. It's nothing new I've shown, except that it was projected on screen for the first time and people were shocked. In this country we permit a lot of violence on screen and are not shocked. We must grow up. That a country which produces 700 million kids should object to a piece of beauty! As if children are born on trees. They are made in beds!"

Although its plot harkens back to Aag (in which the protagonist's face had also been scarred in a fire) RK has stated that his inspiration here was taken from Lata Mangeshkar. He first thought of using Mangeshkar in the lead as a singing actress--in the role eventually played by Zeenat Aman. Mangeshkar is India's top playback singer and her voice has been heard on the soundtrack of many a Kapoor film. The lady, however, does not have a particularly photogenic face--doesn't really jibe with her appealing voice. The story deals with a young engineer who falls in love with a village girl because of her lovely singing voice. She veils the side of her face which had been badly scarred in a childhood accident. They marry--and it becomes a disaster movie!

SSS tells of a woman's journey from disfiguration to transfiguration through love. Audiences may have been disconcerted by the fact that it is a story of spartan simplicity compared to most Hindi films: no villains and fights, no subplots and parallel story lines, no vamp. It does possess a mythical, fairy-tale quality: the realistic sequences (e.g. the climactic flood) are nearly as dream-like as the dream sequences.

The dream sequences are outrageously baroque--call them kitsch, camp, or what have you--they are scenes of memorable cinema, and evocative of some of the best things in Busby Berkeley, and the Vincente Minnelli of Yolanda and the Thief and The Ziegfeld Follies. These are not negligible references.

A major contributor to what is best about SSS--its luscious visual style--was cinematographer Radhu Karmakar. This is a film which should never never be seen on

cassette, never in 16mm. It should be experienced in a theater, as it was intended, with the audience's eyes glued to a pristine 35mm. color print.

Prem Rog, produced and directed by RK in 1982, is set in post-independent India of the early 1950s. The British have left, but Rajas and Zamindars still hold sway over the common people. Women, in particular, are kept strictly subject to feudal traditions.

This is the story of a carefree young girl who marries into a class-conscious Thakur family. Her husband is killed in an accident. As a widow, she becomes a non-person. Her husband's family cuts her hair; she must not wear shoes; she must only eat tasteless food. She soon realizes that her in-laws are trying to kill her. What starts out as a light comedy becomes serious drama. RK fashioned yet another film in which issues of some importance are made palatable for mass audiences in an entertaining fashion. Prem Rog even includes a martial arts sequence--it may well be the first feminist kung-fu movie!

Although Prem Rog was no slouch at the box office, at the time of its release, Kapoor, fed up with conditions in the industry, declared that it would be his last film: "I've tried to do my best. This is going to be the last time I'll make a film. Nowadays, you have to wait for everything, you have to go begging. With the kind of atmosphere we have and the kind of film-making conditions that have cropped up, it's difficult for any conscientious film-maker to work."

In spite of this pronouncement, the movie bug was still in his blood. Last year, he began shooting Ram Teri Ganga Maili/Lord Ram, How Filthy is Your River Ganges. It is now ready for release. Raj Kapoor has remained true to himself--a return to the Ganges, a return to social comment, and Mandakini--a new leading lady with a beautiful body.