



**Raj Kapoor
&
The Golden Age
of Indian Cinema**

Shree 420

On Sunday, June 26, TIFF, in partnership with the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) and the Government of Ontario, presents an exclusive, all-star salute to Indian film legend Raj Kapoor at TIFF Bell Lightbox. To celebrate this extraordinary event, we are proud to present the first major Kapoor retrospective in North America in nearly three decades—featuring a number of newly struck 35mm prints—and an exciting new installation from acclaimed filmmaker Srinivas Krishna.

Actor, director and mogul Raj Kapoor was one of the giants of Indian cinema, and is synonymous with the rise of the monolith known as “Bollywood.” Largely unknown in North America—except of course to millions of fans of South Asian descent—Kapoor is revered not only in India but throughout the former Soviet world, the Middle East and beyond for the films he made during the Golden Age of Indian cinema.

While this period is normally identified with the 1950s, Bollywood—or as it is more politely known, Hindi cinema—had its roots in the 1930s, when a number of young Bombay entrepreneurs fused the young medium of cinema with Urdu Parsi Theatre, the popular fusion of English plays, Persian legends and the folk song-and-dance traditions of northern India. This gave birth to the “musical melodrama” that is still in evidence today. During the waning days of British colonial rule in the thirties and forties, this new format took the shape of “mythologicals,” special effects-laden versions of tales from the Mahabharata and Ramayana which were enormously popular in both the city and the countryside. However, following the elation of Independence and the horrors of Partition in the late forties, the genre fell out of favour, replaced by a more sophisticated urban cinema infused with the nationalist dreams of Gandhi and Nehru, self-consciously political and obsessed with connecting cinema to the masses.

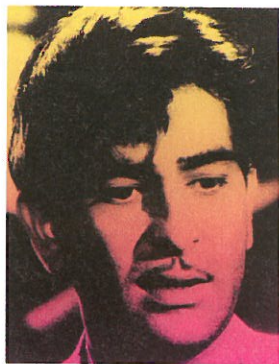
It was against this backdrop that Raj Kapoor founded RK Films in 1948, the most important studio of the post-Independence era. Kapoor’s acting career had begun many years earlier, first on stage with his father’s theatre company and then in small film roles from 1935 on. Most importantly for his evolution as a director, he served as an apprentice with the great pre-Independence studio Bombay Talkies, which was at that time flush with German directors and technicians inspired by the Expressionism of Murnau and Lang. *Aag (Fire)*, Kapoor’s first film as producer and director, reflects these influences while establishing the modern-day, ultra-romantic style that would become his trademark: a combination of contemporary Hollywood melodrama with the moral lessons and metaphors of the mythologicals. *Aag* also marks the first of many films in which he appeared with Nargis, the greatest female star of Indian cinema, who would later be immortalized as the star of Mehboob Khan’s epic *Mother India*. The Kapoor-Nargis partnership was cemented when they appeared together in Khan’s giant hit *Andaz* and Kapoor’s own *Barsaat*; the latter film yielded the famous RK Films logo, a dramatic image of the couple embracing.

The staggering success of these films made Kapoor the biggest superstar of Indian cinema. Inspired by and cannily appropriating the traits of Western models, Kapoor combined the smirk and swagger of Clark Gable, the heightened emotions and showmanship of Gene Kelly, and most importantly, Charlie Chaplin’s

underdog heroism and sense of pathos. Chaplin’s Little Tramp is the clear precursor for Kapoor’s most famous screen character: the vagabond in a too-tight suit, observing the bustling world around him with wide-eyed wonder. Unlike Chaplin, however, Kapoor moved his Indianized tramp (variously known as Raj, Raju or Rajan) up and down the social ladder, and into surprisingly unpleasant incarnations: self-obsessed artists, whiny rich guys and, in his *maudit* masterpiece *Meera Nam Joker (My Name Is Joker)*, a distinctly unfunny clown whose romantic yearnings verge on the pathological.

Kapoor’s early films focus on India’s new, frequently hostile urban environments—which had been swelled to the breaking point by the massive influx of post-Partition refugees—and are infused with a mild but deeply felt Nehruvian socialism that was largely the product of Kapoor’s long association with celebrated left-wing writer K.A. Abbas. (Their collaboration has frequently been compared to that between Vittorio De Sica and Cesare Zavattini, who are prominently featured this season in our programme devoted to Italian neorealism; see page 40.) For Wimal Dissanayake and Malti Sahai, authors of *Raj Kapoor: Harmony of Discourses*, Kapoor helped enable Indian society to embrace the disorienting changes of the twentieth century. Rejecting both the dogma of Communism and xenophobic traditionalism, Kapoor believed that certain Western ideas could be useful tools for bettering the lives of India’s poorest citizens. All of his films contain clearly enunciated statements to this end—including a belief in nurture over nature in defiance of caste-based logic, suggestions for how to increase the self-respect of the poor, and a questioning of *punya*, the idea of “merit” associated with giving alms to beggars—that are repeated and reinforced through traditional visual symbolism, music, dialogue and (Vedic) religious references. By couching these Western-inspired concepts in traditional forms, Kapoor demystified and normalized them for his domestic audience. In the view of Dissanayake and Sahai, Kapoor’s films have had a discernible effect on Indian mass consciousness and are prime examples of the power of film to not only recount history, but to reshape it.

Kapoor himself saw his impact in more modest terms. He saw his contribution as taking the latent romanticism of pre-war Indian commercial cinema and making it frank, intense and personal, creating a new idiom for the expression of emotion that had little place in traditional Indian literature and drama; his frequent use of the love triangle, for example, proved especially influential for later Indian films. That outsized romanticism found its greatest expression in the legendary song-and-dance sequences that appear in all of his films, and that have since become the stumbling block for many Western viewers in their first encounters with Bollywood. Unlike comparable sequences in Hollywood musicals, which



“Raj Kapoor’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.”

—Elliott Stein, *Raj Kapoor: The Showman Auteur of Indian Cinema*

◆ prepare the audience for their segue out of “reality,” the musical numbers in Bollywood films tend to arrive without warning, are unapologetically removed from the narrative and contain music that can be a hurdle for even the most well-intentioned world music enthusiast.

Kapoor’s films not only allow us to see where these sequences originated, but to better understand and appreciate their unique synthesis of the Hollywood musical and Indian folk-musical theatre traditions. Kapoor was himself a talented musician with a strong desire to marry traditional Indian musical forms with new imports from the West. (He adeptly played on the cross-cultural significance of certain instruments such as the tambourine, which symbolizes the onset of love in Indian folklore and signals a kind of wild abandon in American rock ‘n’ roll; Kapoor draws on both meanings.) His legendary collaborators Shankar-Jaikishen shared this belief, and between them they created some of the most famous and popular songs ever written—Mao Tse-tung himself was known to hum a few bars of “Awaara Hum” over breakfast!

In many of Kapoor’s films the song-and-dance numbers are set up as dream sequences, and are meant to function as “a psychic cleansing and exploration by the dreamer” (Dissanayake/Sahai) and as a means to give the audience a privileged look at a character’s most private thoughts. First introducing this idea in *Barsaat*, Kapoor pushed the radical self-containment of these sequences in his subsequent films, freeing them from the formal transitions common in Hollywood musicals. Later on, Kapoor’s song-and-dance sequences became a site of experimentation within an increasingly formulaic Bollywood industry: in *Satyam Shivam Sundaram (Love Sublime)*, the musical number “Quicksilver Silver Fresh Pure Tender” is a clever but quite deranged synthesis of religious metaphor, swinging sixties outfits and full-on psychedelia.

This programme is largely focused on films directed by Kapoor and those he directed in all but name. Thematically and stylistically, it breaks roughly into two halves: the early films, most featuring Nargis, contain stunning black-and-white cinematography and urgent social messages; the later films, considerably more commercially-minded and delighting in rich Technicolor, largely feature Kapoor’s extended family in the lead roles and are preoccupied with the contradictions of India’s new class structures and moral failings—plus, one must add, a lot of T&A! (Many critics credit Kapoor for popularizing the “wet sari” sequence.) In between is his magnum opus and greatest commercial flop, the unclassifiable *Meera Nam Joker*.

Though Raj remained the most internationally famous member of the Kapoor clan, other members of this grand theatre and film dynasty were and are bona fide stars in their own right. Raj’s father Prithviraj, a titan of the Bombay theatre and a prominent

social reformist, appeared in the first Indian talkie, *Alam Ara*, and also in the most important Indian epic, *Mughal-E-Azam*, which we are featuring in this series. Prithviraj appears at the start of every one of Raj’s films leading a stylized *puja*, a kind of blessing; he also occasionally takes roles in the films, often as a cruel father figure (e.g., *Awaara*), creating a most interesting Oedipal frisson. Raj’s two brothers also became superstars: Shammi Kapoor, the ebullient face of Indian cinema in its 1960s “rock ‘n’ roll” phase, is represented here by the film that made him famous, *Jungle*; Shashi, one of the best-known Indian actors in the West, is featured in the Merchant-Ivory production *Shakespeare Wallah*. Raj’s sons were all film personalities as well, with Rishi the most famous (seen here in his father’s youth-on-the-run epic *Bobby*), although both Randhir (who directed *Kal Aaj Aur Kal*) and Rajiv (the star of *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*) had notable careers as well. In their turn, Randhir’s two daughters Karishma and Kareena and Rishi’s son Ranbir are among the leading actors in Bollywood today.

We have also included other key films of the Golden Age era and beyond to help contextualize Kapoor’s work, including exceptional films from Bimal Roy (the elegant ghost story *Madhumati*) and Guru Dutt (the celebrated tragedy *Pyaasa*). Both directors were Calcutta transplants who provided a bridge between Bollywood spectacle and the wistful poetics and neorealist flavour of that other famous tradition of post-Independence Indian cinema, the Bengali art film, and its best-known practitioner Satyajit Ray. The great Mehboob Khan, Kapoor’s only rival as Hindi cinema’s most important filmmaker, is represented here by the Kapoor-Nargis-starring *Andaz* and the legendary *Mother India*, Nargis’ apotheosis and considered by many to be the most important Indian film ever made. This film and *Mughal-E-Azam* function as parallel tracks to Kapoor’s urban narratives, updating and modernizing traditional stories to a post-Independence context.

This series owes a great deal to long-time friends in the Indian film world. Uma da Cunha, Meenakshi Shedde and our friends at the International Indian Film Academy provided enormously important assistance, along with countless friends in Toronto and London. My interest in Kapoor’s films comes through the late David Overbey, the great Toronto International Film Festival programmer, who awoke me to the richness and complexity of Kapoor’s vision. This retrospective is dedicated to him.

—Noah Cowan

Presenting Partner





My Name Is Raj

An installation by Srinivas Krishna
Commissioned by TIFF and Luminato

Srinivas Krishna's participatory installation draws a connection between Raj Kapoor's use of screen personae as projections of himself and the self-dramatizing portraits ordinary people commonly take in Indian photo studios. A photo wall of these portraits leads the viewer to a loop of clips from Kapoor's films in which Krishna manipulates the actor-director's image, even taking his place on screen. Viewers then enter a photo studio where their portraits are taken in the guise of Kapoor's characters and inserted into his cinematic worlds on monitors—a fantasizing reinvention of identity that takes us to the heart of Kapoor's art and its hold on Indian audiences.

My Name Is Raj runs from June 10 to August 14 in the atrium of TIFF Bell Lightbox.



Barsaat



Awaara

Barsaat (Monsoon)

dir. Raj Kapoor | India 1949 | 171 min.

New 35mm Print!

Kapoor's first megahit, featuring "two rousing dance sequences . . . [and an] idiosyncratic score which reveals Neapolitan, Hungarian and South American influences" (Elliott Stein), shuttles between the stories of romantic idealist Pran (Kapoor) and his more carnally-driven best friend Gopal (Prem Nath). On two separate trips, they both meet daughters of innkeepers: Gopal loves and leaves Neela, vowing to return when the monsoon comes, while Pran woos Reshma (Nargis) with music until her father ends it, claiming all city boys are degenerates. In an attempt to see Pran once more, Reshma falls into a river and is presumed dead, but is in fact rescued by a village man who wants her as his bride. Much complication, happiness and tragedy follow until the film's unsettling end. Set in part against the gorgeous landscapes of Kashmir, *Barsaat* is beautifully shot, its black-and-white images constantly moving into deep focus and silhouette and elevating the star-crossed lovers to objects of veneration. The film also introduced the whisper to Indian commercial cinema, a type of intimacy and emotional dimensionality unknown on screen at the time.

Friday, July 1 12:30 pm

Awaara (The Vagabond)

dir. Raj Kapoor | India 1951 | 193 min.

One of the greatest and most famous Indian films ever made, *Awaara* was a global (or at least Soviet and developing-world) sensation. Collaborating for the first time with star writer K.A. Abbas, Kapoor concocted a modern-day version of the tale of Rama's banishment of Sita. A judge (Prithviraj Kapoor) rejects his pregnant wife after she is kidnapped and presumably raped by a criminal. Protesting her innocence, she raises her son Raju (Raj Kapoor) in poverty; after being expelled from school for not paying his fees, Raju is soon recruited into the same criminal's gang. When he is reunited with his childhood sweetheart Rita (Nargis), now a ward of the judge, he tries to extricate himself from the vicious circle of poverty and violence. *Awaara's* marvellous, extended dream sequence—with Kapoor and Nargis successively cast in different guises, some mythological, some modern, continually seeking each other's embrace but torn apart by the forces of society—revolutionized Hindi cinema, and introduced the idea of externalizing characters' inner conflicts through song-and-dance numbers. The film also marks the first appearance of the tramp persona that would make Kapoor famous: a sly, sexy bandit, a carefree underdog who could charm a rock.

Friday, July 8 3:00 pm

There will be a 15-minute intermission
approximately 90 minutes into the film.

Shree 420

dir. Raj Kapoor | India 1955 | 169 min.

New 35mm Print!

Referring to the Indian penal code statute for fraud, *Shree 420* is perhaps Kapoor's most famous incarnation of his tramp persona. Arriving in the big city to make his fortune, country bumpkin Raju (Kapoor) is introduced to the urban underworld following brief encounters with a moralistic oligarch and a Cassandra-like beggar. Wooing the honest schoolteacher Vidya (Nargis) while secretly dipping into a life of gambling and petty fraud, Raju is inexorably drawn into more dangerous criminal territory; growing disgusted with his boasting and love of money, Vidya rejects him. As he finally rouses the poor into action against the rich parasites who prey off them, he reveals to Vidya that "he wears the mask of an entertainer to conceal his nerve endings, his pain and disappointments." The post-Partition changes to the major Indian cities loom large over the film's tragicomic situations, with the teeming city streets a vivid backdrop for the film's legendary musical numbers—most famously the fabulously titled "Mera Joota Hai Japani" ("My Shoes Are Made In Japan"), which spent a year at the top of the charts in Fiji!

Friday, July 15 3:00 pm



Shree 420

Meera Nam Joker
(My Name Is Joker)

dir. Raj Kapoor | India 1970 | 224 min.

New 35mm Print!

Kapoor's legendary film *maudit*, clocking in at almost four hours, was condemned as an exercise in self-pity throughout the Indian film world. A colossal failure, its reputation has been gradually revived by Western critics, who saw in it echoes of Chaplin's *Limelight* and proclaimed it a self-reflexive masterwork. Kapoor here completely undermines the tramp persona he had so carefully evolved over two decades, removing from it all traces of heroism and social justice: this tramp is a saccharine, mopey, love-obsessed clown whose one goal in life is to follow in his father's footsteps as a trapeze artist so he can "make Jesus laugh." *Joker* mirrors the three-story, three-ages structure of Kapoor's first film *Aag*, tracing the clown's three pathetically failed relationships: with his high school teacher, a Soviet circus performer and a cross-dressing girl who dumps him when she becomes a movie star. As a sign of love he sends each a sad clown doll and, later in life, gathers them all together at a circus performance for a kind of send-off monologue that begins and ends the film. A compulsively watchable, astonishing train wreck of a film.

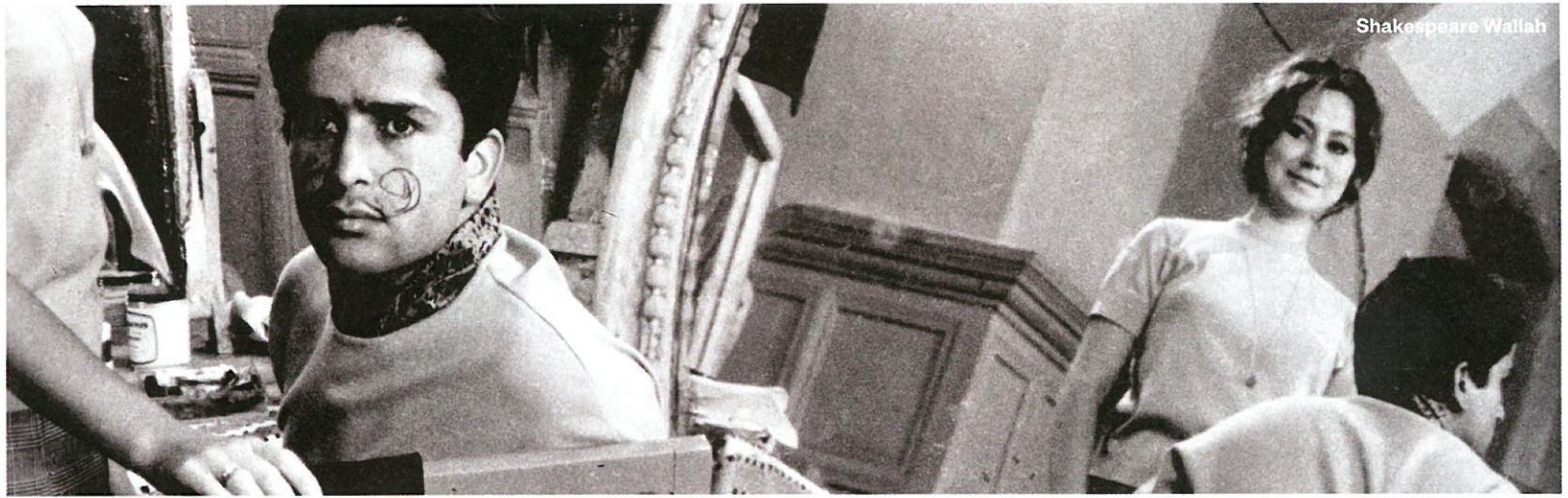
Friday, July 29 1:30 pm

There will be a 15-minute intermission approximately two hours into the film.



Meera Nam Joker

"[*Shree 420*]'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."
—Elliott Stein



Shakespeare Wallah



Mother India



Sangam

Shakespeare Wallah

dir. James Ivory | USA/India 1965 | 120 min.

Shashi Kapoor's second collaboration with British producer-director team Ismail Merchant and James Ivory seems to articulate the youngest Kapoor's ambivalence about his family and its impact on global culture. He plays a nouveau-riche Indian playboy who carries on a dalliance with a Bollywood screen queen (an outrageously funny Madhur Jaffrey, lately of cooking fame, who won the Silver Bear for Best Actress at the Berlin Film Festival for her performance). When he meets the young ingenue (Felicity Kendal) of a British Shakespearean troupe, sparks fly and cultures clash. The film had its roots in reality: the troupe in the film was based on (and played by) the Kendal family, a well-known touring company which Shashi had joined in the late fifties; he later married his onscreen love interest Felicity's elder sister Jennifer, a union which was to form the core of succeeding Merchant-Ivory productions and transform the theatre scene in Bombay. Set against the stunning backdrop of the former British Raj capital of Shimla, *Shakespeare Wallah* also marks an interesting bridge between the populist cinema of the Kapoors and the Bengali art film tradition represented by Satyajit Ray: Ray loaned his cinematographer Subrata Mitra to shoot the film, and wrote the film's score as well.

Saturday, July 2 8:30 pm

"[*Mother India* is] the quintessential Indian film, a new national epic."
—Rachel Dwyer

Sangam

dir. Raj Kapoor | India 1964 | 238 min.

Breaking box-office records wherever it played (including multi-year runs in both Israel and Egypt), *Sangam* is four hours of pure spectacle: a whirlwind tour through suburban mansions, European vacations, scotch-sipping parties and a furious love triangle that rips upper-crust society to shreds. Sundar (Kapoor), an unmonied, self-involved party boy, is convinced that he will perish without the love of Gopal (Nargis), his companion since childhood. When he seeks to prove himself as an air force pilot and is presumed dead, Gopal and Sundar's best friend Radha (Rajendra Kumar) fall in love, setting up a tragic dance of death when Sundar returns a hero. Hiding his class anxiety and aspirations behind a mask of narcissistic hedonism, Sundar bears a fascinating similarity to Kapoor's breakthrough role in *Andaz*: an extraordinarily unlikeable, obnoxious character who seems totally oblivious to the amorous anxiety of his companions, especially the hangdog devotion of his best friend. The clues to his real self, of course, come through the film's multitude of songs, which reveal an enormous sensitivity and poetry—as well as conflicted feelings about marriage and even the matrimonial bed!

Sunday, July 3 12:30 pm

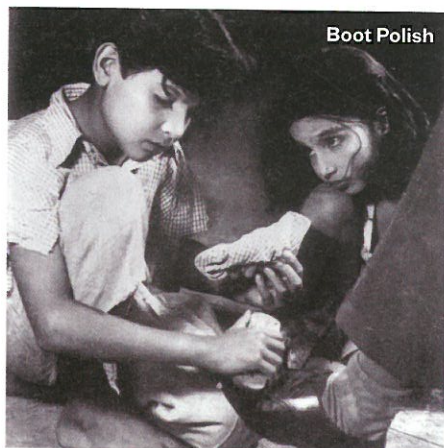
There will be a 15-minute intermission approximately two hours into the film.

Mother India

dir. Mehboob Khan | India 1957 | 180 min.

Often referred to as the *Gone With the Wind* of Indian cinema, *Mother India* was the only film from the Subcontinent nominated for an Academy Award prior to 1988's *Salaam Bombay*. Heavily indebted to Soviet socialist realism, the film is a significant instance of post-Independence mythmaking that reasserts and updates the nineteenth-century nationalist identification of the nation-as-woman and women-as-nation. Nargis, in an unsurpassable performance, plays a rural woman who seeks to better her life but is battered by circumstances beyond her control. The film concerns her relationship with her two sons, one law-abiding and respectful and one an outlaw vigilante fighting for social justice. She is eventually forced to choose between the two of them in order to protect her community—and India itself. "[A] virile epic of rural life" (Peter Bradshaw, *The Guardian*); "*Mother India* is played at a high emotional pitch that is rendered all the more forceful by Mehboob's taste for iconic, unmatched inserts, and builds to a climax of maternal sacrifice that trumps all surviving examples of Greek tragedy" (J. Hoberman, *The Village Voice*).

Sunday, July 3 5:30 pm



Boot Polish

"*Boot Polish* is one of the great tear-jerkers... 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."
—Elliott Stein



Kal Aaj Aur Kal



Aag

Boot Polish

dir. Prakash Arora | India 1953 | 149 min.

New 35mm Print!

Although credited to Prakash Arora, most sources insist Kapoor largely directed *Boot Polish* himself, and the film clearly bears his authorial stamp. Often compared, for obvious reasons, to De Sica's *Shoeshine* (see page 46), the film also offers some interesting parallels to *Slumdog Millionaire*, which takes place on the very same mean streets. Orphaned brother and sister Bhola (Ratan Kumar) and Belu (seven-year-old Baby Naaz) are forced by their horrid aunt to beg on the streets, until a kindly smuggler (David) and a young shoeshine boy encourage them to join the boot-polish trade. But their new life is interrupted by the monsoons, which tear the two siblings apart: Belu is sold off to a middle-class couple and begins a new life, while Bhola is forced back into a life of begging until his inevitable reunion with Belu. *Boot Polish* is writer K.A. Abbas' most explicit articulation of the beliefs underlying Nehru's campaign for social reforms, especially the contention that the poor must be helped to find work in order to further their self-respect. "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" (Elliott Stein).

Monday, July 4 6:30 pm

Kal Aaj Aur Kal (Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow)

dir. Randhir Kapoor | India 1971 | 158 min.

Three generations of Kapoors—Prithviraj, Raj and Raj's son Randhir, who also directs—take to the screen in this tale of generational conflict. Lonely, wealthy widower Ram (Raj) brings his father (Prithviraj) from the old village and son (Randhir) from abroad so they can live together as a family. But the older and younger generations lock horns when the elderly patriarch attempts to marry his grandson off to a friend's granddaughter; the younger man, who has his own ideas about love and marriage, storms off with his girlfriend. Forlorn Raj takes to drink and debauchery and soon finds himself entangled in a nasty scandal, forcing the family to reunite to help him out of his troubles. The fun here is watching three terrific actors riff off one another—one senses that whatever script existed at the beginning of the shoot was quickly tossed out the window. The film also marks the last collaboration between the Kapoors and the music team of Shankar-Jaikishan, and the songs are delightful, ingeniously creative confections.

Tuesday, July 5 9:00 pm

"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."
—Raj Kapoor

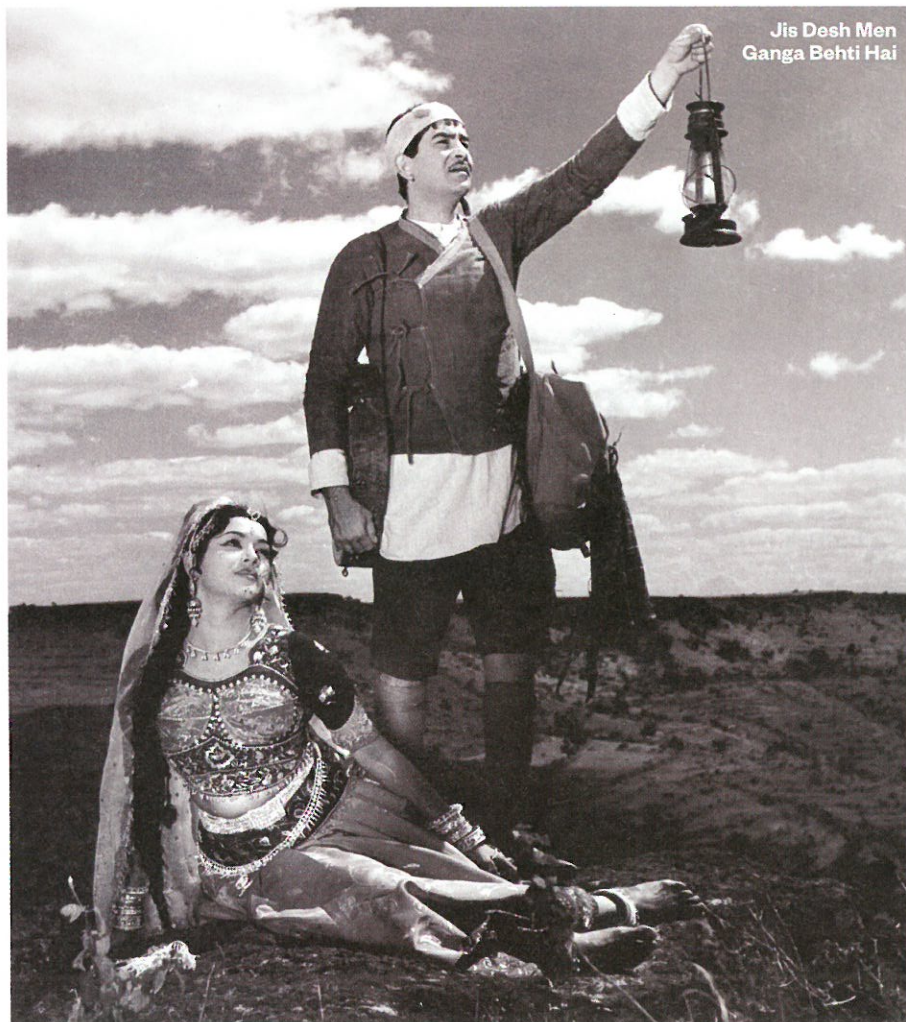
Aag (Fire)

dir. Raj Kapoor | India 1948 | 138 min.

New 35mm Print!

The brooding, noir-ish *Aag* is an ideal entrance point for audiences unfamiliar with Hindi cinema: it often feels like a 1930s Hollywood melodrama with an expressionistic twist. (Elliott Stein attributes this to the plethora of Germans at Kapoor's first studio apprenticeship; Kapoor himself cited *Citizen Kane* as his chief inspiration, especially in the film's complex flashback structure.) Kapoor stars as a theatre producer obsessed with the twinned ideas of ideal beauty and self-sacrifice, who meets and falls in love with three women named Nimmi at different phases of his life. In each instance she is taken away from him, destroying his dream of playing opposite her onstage for the rest of their lives. Introducing two key themes for his future work—the love triangle and Kapoor's casting of himself as a theatrical performer—*Aag* also represents one of Kapoor's earliest experiments with heavily symbolic shots, in this case evoking the manifold meanings around fire (including the fires of Partition).

Wednesday, July 6 6:00 pm
Friday, July 22 3:00 pm



Jis Desh Men
Ganga Behti Hai

Jis Desh Men Ganga Behti Hai
(Where the Ganges Flows)

dir. Radhu Karmakar | India 1951 | 167 min.

New 35mm Print!

A controversial entry in the Kapoor canon, this film (nominally directed by Radhu Karmakar, the studio's cinematographer-in-residence) marked Kapoor's final direct incarnation of his tramp character and the first time he was not paired with Nargis. Raju—portrayed this time out as at best a naive innocent and at worst a total simpleton—is a pilgrim to the famous river, lured from his religious observances by a tomboyish (yet scantily clad) female bandit. Ardently pursuing her, he bumbles into an outlaw encampment, where he attempts to convert the brigands into latter-day Robin Hoods. Kapoor's performance is a constant question mark: is he indeed a fool or is it a put-on, an act to win the lady through charm? While expressed in borderline simplistic terms, Raju's homilies reflect Gandhi's teachings on bringing non-violent change to the countryside; the film's story was apparently based on an apocryphal secular pilgrimage by an acolyte of Nehru's. In any event, the film is hilarious, and it is Kapoor's cleverest use of (often charmingly raunchy) double entendres.

Thursday, July 7 6:30 pm

Andaz

dir. Mehboob Khan | India 1949 | 148 min.

Andaz was one of the great Mehboob Khan's last black-and-white films, and his deft sense of pacing and mood find their finest expression in this tale of a morally ambiguous love triangle. The film also cemented the reputation of Raj Kapoor and Nargis as *the* couple of Hindi cinema's Golden Age. As Nina, the spoiled daughter of a rich businessman, Nargis defines her screen persona as the embodiment of the Westernized Indian woman: she wears pants, rides horses, drinks alcohol, you name it. As her playboy fiancé Rajan, Kapoor gives his first of many performances as a clueless, narcissistic man-child. The plot hinges on whether Nina actually falls for her father's smitten business manager Dilip (played by suave Dilip Kumar, Kapoor's only real challenger for the biggest star of the age). When jealous Rajan sparks an incident that causes Dilip to confess his love openly, tragedy quickly follows. Owing a debt to Lubitsch and Cukor in its air of breezy sophistication, *Andaz* delights in the sleek chic of modernity and upper-class luxury and gets much mileage out of the contrast between Kapoor's typical boisterousness and Kumar's tragic-hero persona, with his soft, intimate line readings and dewy-eyed closeups.

Friday, July 8 7:15 pm

Friday, August 5 3:00 pm



Andaz

"Andaz is a key film in Hindi cinema and is celebrated for setting new standards in acting and a modern approach to themes, becoming the model for many films to follow."

—Nasreen Munni Kabir

Madhumati

dir. Bimal Roy | India 1958 | 180 min.

A haunting ghost story by Bimal Roy, the conscience of the Golden Age, *Madhumati* is narrated in flashback by an engineer, Devendra (Dilip Kumar), when an emergency stop at an old mansion leads him to recall his former life. At that time he was known as Anand, a manager for a forestry company, who met and fell in love with the beautiful tribal girl Madhumati (Vyjayanthimala), who was also being pursued by Anand's boss (a deliciously evil Pran). When Anand meets another girl in the forest identical to Madhumati, he convinces her to help him entrap his sinister rival—but the girl is not what she seems. With a refined, poetic script by Calcutta art film master Ritwik Ghatak—who, well aware of international cultural trends, seems to be emulating another great ghost story, Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu*—*Madhumati* is possessed of a quiet wistfulness that attests to Roy's intimate, actor-focused shooting style.

Print restored by National Film Archives of Pune.

Sunday, July 10 5:00 pm

Mughal-E-Azam

(The Greatest of the Mughals)

dir. K. Asif | India 1960 | 173 min.

A sumptuous epic based on one of the most beloved stories of Indian theatre, *Mughal-E-Azam* was the "sword-and-sandal" blockbuster of its age, made over nine years and costing almost 100 times the budget of a typical Bollywood film of the time. Starring Raj Kapoor's father, the thunderous Prithviraj, as the great seventeenth-century Mughal prince Akbar and Dilip Kumar as his son Prince Salim (later Emperor Jahangir), the film ostensibly concerns the conflict between father and son over the young man's affair with a court dancer, but alludes to the Oedipal dilemmas of imperial dynastic politics that shaped India's history. Shot in black-and-white and interspersed with epic colour song-and-dance sequences, the film retains a romantic (even erotic) frisson largely due to Kumar's exceptional performance. Like *Mother India*, *Mughal-E-Azam* rethinks the national epic for modern times, setting its action against famed Muslim sites and meditating on their meaning in the modern day. "Some 40 years after it was released, *Mughal-E-Azam* retains its position as one of India's greatest films" (Naman Ramachandran, *Sight & Sound*).

Monday, July 11 6:30 pm



"*Mughal-E-Azam's* themes of love, loyalty and sacrifice remain as relevant as ever—a true testament to director K. Asif's vision and commitment."
—Jaspreet Pandohar, BBC

Pyasa (Thirst)

dir. Guru Dutt | India 1957 | 146 min.

The ultimate fusion of self-aware Bengali film poetics and Hindi cinema conventions, master filmmaker Guru Dutt's *Pyasa* is a towering example of the new energy flowing through Bollywood cinema in the 1950s and a cautionary tale about its limits. Although among the most critically celebrated Indian films in history, it was a resounding flop at the box office and crushed Dutt's spirit; he stopped making films soon after and later took his own life. *Pyasa* presages these events in its story about Vijay (played, tellingly, by Dutt himself), an impoverished poet rejected by an uncaring world who achieves recognition only after his apparent death—in reality, the dead man is a homeless street person who was discovered wearing Vijay's coat. At a memorial reading of his work, Vijay turns up and denounces the crowd, only to be thrown into an asylum as a mad imposter. He escapes with his companion, a poetry-obsessed prostitute (a career-defining role for screen legend Waheeda Rehman), and retreats from the world. "If we look at the climax of *Pyasa*, we see how [Dutt] painted success and fame with a brush of disdain and suspicion. The poet is finally appreciated, yet he walks away from that hall of fame and leaves that world with a prostitute by his side. If *Pyasa* is telling us something about Guru Dutt, it is how little success meant to him" (Nasreen Munni Kabir).

Sunday, July 17 3:30 pm



Pyasa



Jagte Raho

Jagte Raho
(Stay Awake)

dirs. Sombhu Mitra & Amit Maitra | India 1956 | 115 min.

An ironic, socialist comedy-thriller, *Jagte Raho* is an episodic noir that exposes the behind-closed-doors perversions of Calcutta's upper-middle class. Kapoor plays a tramp who wanders into an upscale apartment building, where he witnesses a veritable carnival of evil-doing as he moves from flat to flat; he is ultimately forced to wear a barrel (Hollywood hobo-style) to evade the police. The film was directed (or co-directed with Kapoor, as most insist) by Sombhu Mitra and Amit Maitra, two key progressive figures in the Calcutta theatre scene, and its storytelling rhythms—a more stately pace, an emphasis on close-ups, a more “natural” soundtrack and an emulation of literary models in terms of its structure and narration—bear a distinct similarity to the Bengali art film tradition familiar to Western viewers from the films of Satyajit Ray. This may help explain the film's success in the West, where its winning of the Grand Prix at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival made it the first Indian film to take the top award at a Competition festival.

Thursday, July 21 6:00 pm

Jagte Raho also plays for free in David Pecaut Square on August 3 as part of TIFF in the Park. See page 98.

Junglee

dir. Subodh Mukherjee | India 1961 | 180 min.

The Kapoor dynasty entered a new phase when Raj's brother Shammi Kapoor, “the original rock 'n' roller of Hindi films,” brought pop-culture modernity to the Indian screen with *Junglee*. A spectacle of wild abandon (its title translates as “wild” or “ill-mannered”) whose musical numbers bear an intriguing resemblance to the eye-popping Technicolor films of Frank Tashlin, *Junglee* is set in the snowy mountains where Shekhar Shammi, a stuffed-shirt businessman, returns from abroad to run his aristocratic family's business. When his younger sister is found to be having a secret affair, their harridan mother ships them both off to Kashmir, and instructs her son to marry a princess while he's there. But Shekhar falls for a common girl who turns his head in one of Hindi cinema's most memorable moments: when he shouts “Yahoo!” at the top of his lungs and breaks into “Yahoo Chahe Koi Mujhe...”, the anthem for love slapping you in the face.

Sunday, July 24 3:45 pm



Satyam Shivam Sundaram

“Satyam Shivam Sundaram 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.... 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.” —Elliott Stein

Satyam Shivam Sundaram
(Love Sublime/Love, Truth and Beauty)

dir. Raj Kapoor | India 1978 | 172 min.

There is nothing quite like *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*: it's a meditation on love and beauty, a raunchy, Russ Meyer-esque T&A melodrama, an exposé of the dangers of rural electrification and a throw-back psychedelic musical. A city engineer (Shashi Kapoor, bemused throughout), recently arrived in a small village to run a hydroelectric dam, falls for temple girl Roopa (Zeenat Aman), whose beauty is marred by a horrible scar on her right cheek which she keeps hidden from him. When he discovers her disfigurement on their wedding night, he goes mad, insisting she is an imposter—leading Roopa to undertake a strange masquerade to win him back. Ravishing to look at—Kapoor and cinematographer Radhu Karmakar spent considerable energy experimenting with camera filters the better to capture the lush rural landscapes—and featuring mesmerizingly outlandish song-and-dance sequences that evoke the dreamlike textures of Vincente Minnelli's *Ziegfeld Follies* and *Yolanda and the Thief*, SSS was Kapoor's bid to return to public prominence after he and his Golden Age colleagues had been eclipsed by such action epics as *Sholay*. If it won him no new fans, it at least won him notoriety: regarding public outrage over his female star's constant near-nakedness, Kapoor retorted, “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!”

Sunday, July 31 3:45 pm

Ram Teri Ganga Mailli
(God, Your River is Tainted)

dir. Raj Kapoor | India 1985 | 178 min.

Kapoor's final and most financially successful film returns to the crusading social-message dramas of his early years, vividly depicting the corruption and mendacity at the heart of Indian society and utilizing the Ganges itself as a guiding metaphor for the country's decline. Narendra (Rajiv Kapoor, Raj's son), a young man fed up with the bloviating and corrupt politicians in his hometown of Calcutta, flees to the source of all purity, the headwaters of the great Ganges. Falling in love with a local girl not coincidentally named Ganga (Mandakini), he marries her (after a fashion) and then leaves again for the city, promising to return for her; family troubles prevent him, and he is unaware that a child is born from their union. Following the path of her fluvial namesake, Ganga travels to Calcutta to find her husband, a journey that becomes a Dante-esque descent into human degradation: Ganga ends up in a brothel, encounters her former husband again, and then things get even worse! The film's union of matters spiritual and environmental was at the time a major theme of Rajiv Gandhi, the nation's Prime Minister.

Sunday, August 7 4:30 pm



Ram Teri Ganga Mailli

Bobby

dir. Raj Kapoor | India 1973 | 168 min.

New 35mm Print!

Following the commercial and critical disaster of *Meera Nam Joker*, Kapoor directed this charming paean to youth starring his son Rishi, which became an enormous hit amongst young urban audiences and exhibited a devil-may-care innocence that was a relief after the heavy social-message films that preceded it. The film concerns Raj (Rishi), the teenage son of a wealthy family, who falls in love with their former maid's granddaughter Bobby (played, in her first role, by Bollywood icon Dimple Kapadia). When Raj's parents try and arrange a marriage for him with a brain-damaged heiress, the young couple runs away, pursued by a horde of bounty-hunting bandits. What makes *Bobby* so fun, other than the zany sets, outrageous clothes and delightfully corny physical comedy, is the music: Kapoor sought to marry traditional musical forms with Western music, and so an Ashkenazi wedding waltz is followed by a *qawwali* (a Sufi-inspired devotional song), a Goan folk song and the naughty, rock 'n' roll-flavoured "Hum Tum Ek Kamre Mein" ("You and Me, Shut Up In A Room").

Sunday, August 7 8:15 pm



Bobby