



NOVEMBER 1975

It's surprising that Busybee wasn't lynched by the Kapoors after this piece he did specially for us. Daboo was suspicious from the start, "What does that *bawaji* know about our films? I don't like his type of humour." But Raj was keen. He thought it was a special honour to have a well-known non-filmi columnist interview the great Kapoors. Rishi was plain scared. The session was a disaster from the word 'go'. Busybee made faux-pas galore by asking dumb questions about R.K.'s glorious history. Raj, visibly annoyed said, "These are all clerical questions. Why don't you interview my secretary?" Unfazed, Busybee bravely carried on and wrote one of the most unusual R.K. stories that've ever appeared.



bined interview with what's-her-name, what's-her-name and what's-her-name.

The boys were on their best behaviour, Rishi was nervous, tongue-tied and timid, and Daboo was respectful. Raj Kapoor is known to have this sort of influence on his sons. Which is very strange, for when in the rest of the world the old respect by sons for their fathers is forgotten, this very, very filmi family has maintained the tradition.



with Coce,

An afternoon with Raj-

Three rather plump men sat opposite me and it was the greatest moment of my life. There was Rishi Kapoor (whom I had met before and whom it is always a pleasure to meet) and Raj Kapoor (whom I had always wanted to meet) and Randhir Kapoor (whom I had never wanted to meet).

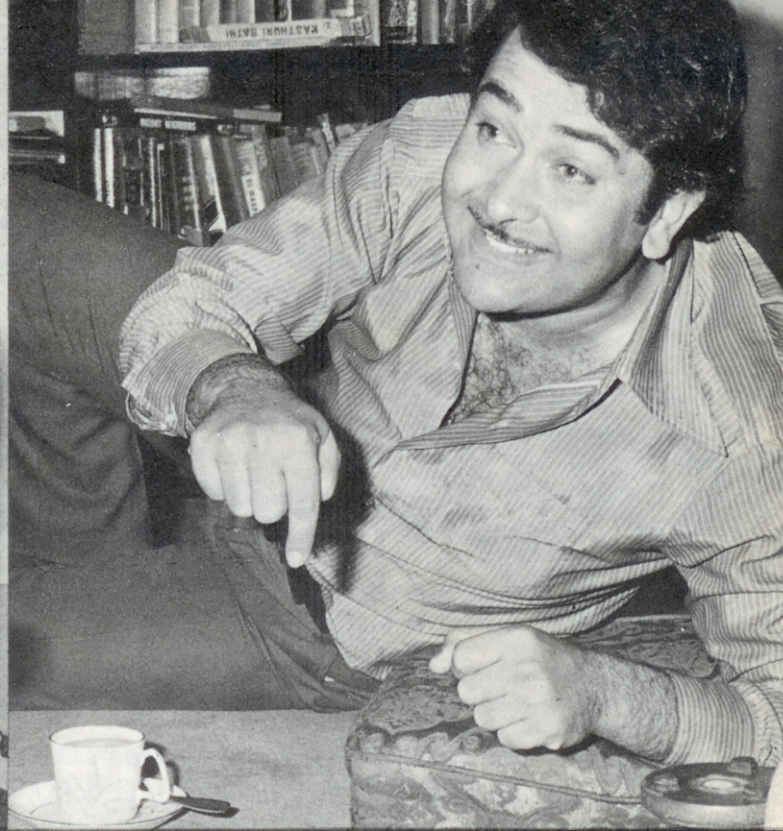
They came separately to RK Studios, which is their ancestral property, and, as timings of film-stars go, they were more or less punctual. Daboo came in a yellow Mercedes Benz; Chintu in a bright red

Chevrolet Vega 2300; Papa Raj in an old studio Ambassador.

It was going to be the interview of the century, the inner-inner circle of the Kapoor clan together in one shot, and I could honestly think of only two other interviews that I could have enjoyed more. The first, a combined interview with Zeenat Aman - Shabana Azmi and what's-her-name, and the second a com-

Seeing them sitting together opposite me, I had this strange impression that I was the principal of Campion School and Raj Kapoor had brought his two sons to be admitted.

Chintu's nervousness, I could understand. He has a real problem. For some people have a father complex and some people have a brother complex, he has both.



But Daboo's behaviour was a surprise. For before Raj Kapoor came, dressed in his elegant silks (which swished like Pakeezah), he was referring to his father as Old Thunderball and Father Moses (he has a name for everybody and calls Satyajit Ray a dinosaur, for his art is almost extinct), and suddenly he was quiet and whistling and trying to look nonchalant.

First came the photographs, which were taken in the large RK dressing-room, where once I had seen Chintu with Neetu Singh (also Neetu's mother, Parveen Babi, a make-up man, myself and three other persons). The dressing-room is adorned

sons. Somebody asked Daboo to put on an orange shirt, and he said, "You will have to go to Shanker B. C.'s house to get it." The humour was all there and the smarty-smarty replies, only it was a little subdued in the presence of the father. For, solo, Daboo is like a bottle of champagne being opened by an inexperienced maitre d'hotel.

I personally felt (and I said so) that such pictures (taken with grown-up healthy sons) would be bad for Raj's image.

"What image?" asked the showman haughtily, (making me feel a bit of a fool).

Some actors would think so, I mumbled foolishly.

from his past films, the famous RK banner, his coin collection, a photograph of Prithviraj and his three sons, awards that he has received, as best actor, director, producer, parallel hero, character role, awards from the Soviet Union, a special award for 'Bobby', for 'Jagte Raho'.

And now, in the mid-day of his life, here in this cottage he spends most of his time living in the past and yet, all the time, planning for the future.

For that, in essence, is the man who made 'Mera Naam Joker', a man full of memories, a sentimentalist, a man who has projected his past into his future. And

From, the Kapoors!

Randhir-Rishi

with Chintu's pictures, which are very nice, and a poem by K. A. Abbas, which is very bad (it is my opinion, and not Daboo's, that Mr. Abbas should not write in English). Daboo prefers a room full of mirrors, to look at himself.

The three posed (Old Thunderball all ready to explode as the photographers went on clicking), like an advertisement for Raymond suiting — from father to

"They're not actors — they're images!" he declared pompously (and by now I felt a complete fool).

And then we put on our shoes (for the Kapoors observe this peculiar Indian habit of not dirtying the carpets) and adjourned to the famous cottage.

The cottage is a strange place, full of Raj Kapoor's memories. Photographs of Nargis and Vyjayanthimala, little souvenirs

he is ten years ahead of any other filmmaker.

"We are the Barrymores of India", said Raj. Not quite, I thought, though very near it.

"With us the theatre is a heritage and a tradition", said Daboo, looking more dedicated than he has ever done in his films. Though, at this stage, I must admit that I have seen only one film with Daboo and



that too because at Maratha Mandir no tickets were available and his film was in the theatre across the road.

Chintu merely said he agreed and held his head and pretended he had a headache. And not being a good actor, except when directed by his father, when he is super, one could see that he was only acting.

He sat there, nodding his head, and not once did he smile, which was a great pity. For he has the most beautiful smile in the entire Kapoor clan and the entire Barrymore clan and I know for a fact that at least seven people saw 'Bobby' for Chintu's smile and not for Dimple.

I thought the father was the best person to talk about his sons and I asked him his opinion. "They are both near and dear", said Raj. "Chintu is more of an introvert, like Shashi. Daboo is blah, blah, blah. Like his father or his uncle."

Chintu said, "I have learnt everything from my father. And Daboo is a far far better director than actor. He tells you exactly what to do and he is creating all the time. He is easily the best director in the country."

And Daboo said about Chintu, "He is one of the few good actors we have in the country and Raj Kapoor has started him off on one of the greatest launching pads in history — 'Bobby'."

I thought I had before me the perfect three-men mutual admiration society. Still I had asked for it and it was any day better than Rajesh Khanna's one-man mutual admiration society.

We sat on *gaddis*, cross-legged on the floor. Raj Kapoor smoked cigarette after cigarette. The sons kept their American cigarettes in their pockets out of respect for the father. And Raj ordered tea after tea after tea, for himself and all his guests. It was very comfortable in the cottage, sitting with Raj Kapoor and his two sons and his memories.

I asked the boys, if I may call them boys, if they had ever thought of doing anything other than being in the films. Daboo said, "I was destined to be in the films. Therefore I was born in the Kapoor family." (He was evidently on his best behaviour.) Chintu said, "Same". And he looked at me with eyes which said, Why-don't-you-stop-pestering-me-with-questions-when-my-father-is-here.

Raj Kapoor took over. "Their acting career was ordained and prophesied by their grandfather", he said. And he told this story.

The day Prithviraj's first grandson (Randhir Kapoor) was born, Prithviraj was on the stage of the Royal Opera House, giving a performance. When the news reached him, he ordered an unscheduled curtain, then went in front of the curtain and told his gracious audience, "Today, I have been blessed with a grandson. I wish to share this moment with you. I now beg your indulgence to please pray, bless and love my grandson who will one day follow in our footsteps."

And two weeks later Randhir Kapoor was brought to the Royal Opera House and presented on the stage. It was a scene from 'Pathan', where Bahadur Khan is

born, and Randhir Kapoor was Bahadur Khan.

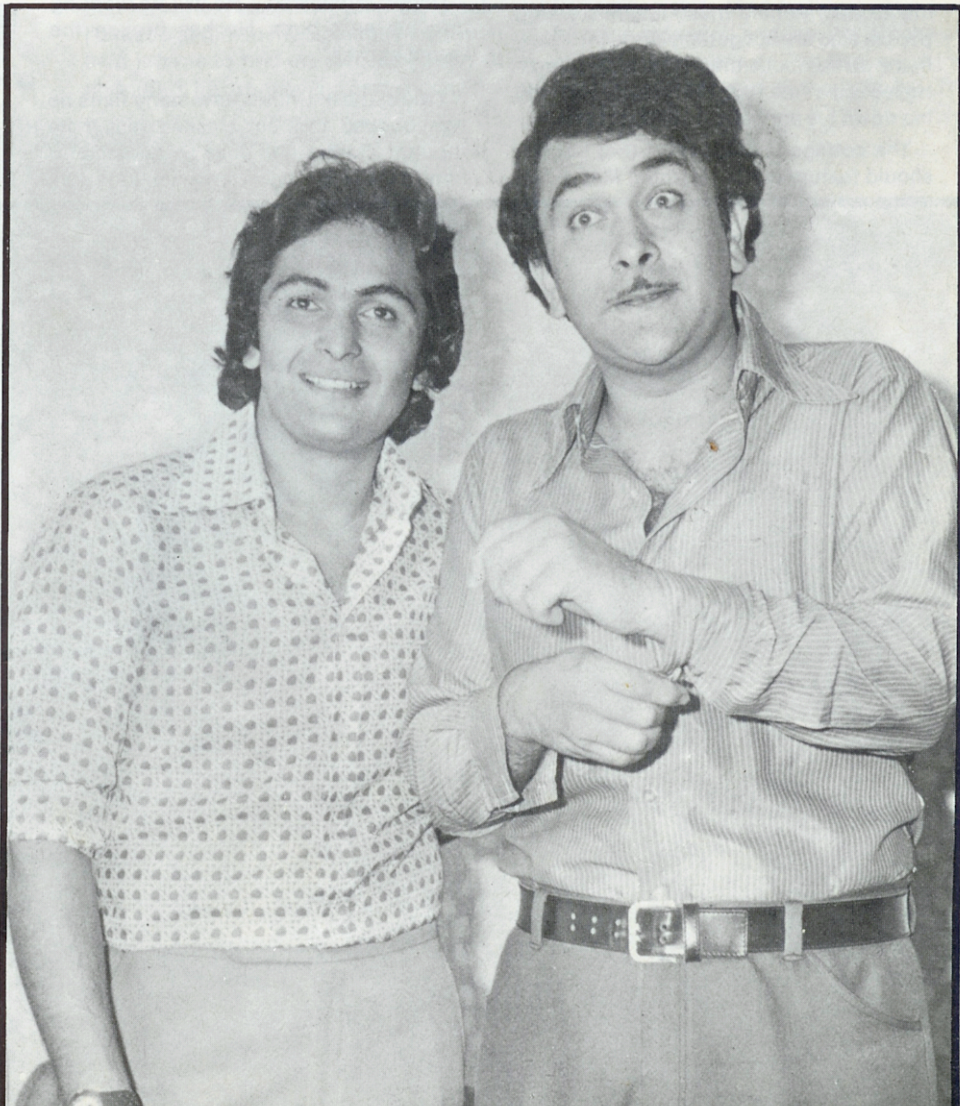
And watching Daboo lolling on the carpet, he still seemed to be two weeks old.

Prithviraj's other great obsession was that he should live long enough to be directed by his sons and grandsons. Raj directed him in 'Awara' and, finally, Daboo directed him in 'Kal, Aaj Aur Kal'.

When I said I had not seen 'Kal Aaj Aur Kal' or whatever it was called, both Raj and Daboo roared at me, their eyes flashing. "You are not the right person to interview us, you are not fit for the job", I wondered who they would have considered the right person to interview them. James Reston?

Through all this poor Chintu sat, looking as if he was feeling sorry for me. At that moment I thought he was the best of the Kapoors. I still think so.

I said I had seen 'Bobby'. Daboo said he had seen it 40 times. I thought Daboo could see it 40 times because it was his family's film and he did not have to buy a ticket. For me 40 times would be a fortune. Actually, I have seen about 30 Hindi films in my life and more than half of them have been with Raj Kapoor (either his own films or acting in other people's). And it is not because Raj Kapoor's films are all that



great but they are better than any other Hindi films.

The tempers came down fast. The Kapoors are easily aroused and easily cooled. After all, they are show-business and Daboo is show-business number one. I had always thought that all the witty remarks attributed to Daboo were cooked-up by film journalists sitting in their office. And I found that I was wrong. It was an afternoon of correcting many impressions.

Said Daboo, "The stars build up the magazines. But for us you would not sell." I agreed since the "you" was not exactly in reference to me.

And then came the Daboo line that I was getting used to. "If the magazines build up stars then Manu Narang would have been India's biggest star with all the publicity all the magazines gave him. And he went phut-phut-phut."

Raj Kapoor put in an appeal in that intense style film actors employ when playing the role of lawyers defending innocent murderers in the grand finale scenes. (I think the court scenes are the most ridiculous scenes in Hindi films and one of the main reasons why I have not seen more than 30 films).

He said, "I am requesting you (film magazines) to help those talented young people who are not getting work. Interview them, write about them and help them." He looked at me to see whether I was taking down his appeal. So I took it down.

The cottage is all comfort (Raj Kapoor should feature it in his coming film, a film

featuring the entire Kapoor clan, the inner-circle and the outer-circle). In front of the main *gaddi* on which the senior Kapoor sits, there is a low table and attached to the bottom of the table is a call-bell. Raj Kapoor pressed it and ordered more tea.

The tea came, almost on the instant, and we talked about the film with all the Kapoors. "An experiment", I said, once again saying the wrong thing. "No", said Raj, "I would not call it that. A documentation, for the archives." Big people, I thought, think big, and those who have made it, think bigger.

We talked about his sons' films. Did the father see them all? Said Raj, "All sorts of films they keep working in, I do not have the time to see them", I asked Daboo how many films he was in at the moment. "Five or six", said Daboo. "Thirty-one, he has got", said Raj.

Raj Kapoor continued, "Times have changed. We used to work in three or four films at a time. No more. Now I have to get dates from my sons to work in my films. Shashi holds the record, he is booked for 145 films and will be working till 1999."

Daboo intervened, "He will be working into his next birth. He has broken the sound barrier."

I did not ask Chintu how many films he was booked for. But I asked him if he thought 'Bobby' had been a handicap for him. In the sense it was too much too soon,

and it was difficult to live up to it. Chintu said, "Yes and no." I thought that was a very good answer (under the circumstances).

And I wondered if the Kapoors thought show-business was all that great, why they did not allow their women in the films. Why only the men?

Raj Kapoor said I was generalising again. His sister, Urmila, had been on the stage, and she was a grand actress. Jennifer (who I was later told was Shashi's wife) had been an actress as also Geeta Bali. True, Daboo's wife had given up the screen and Daboo had no intention of his wife working. But that was taboo in Daboo Kapoor's family not in the Kapoor family.

After that the inter-com buzzed and Raj Kapoor picked up one of those fancy instruments that I expected only Zeenat Aman or Yogeeta Bali to have in their houses. It looked strange in Raj Kapoor's pudgy hands. All the Kapoors have lovely eyes and pudgy hands. At least all the Kapoors I met that afternoon. And, after all, they are the inner-circle.

And so the interview ended, and Chintu looked the most relieved of all.

And all through the interview I had not asked one word about Neetu Singh or her romance with Chintu. And I knew why. For, to tell the truth, like Daboo and Chintu, I was also a little intimidated in the presence of Raj Kapoor.

— BUSYBEE

