



The Unconventional

Deol

We all love those dimples when he smiles. His approach is classic, his passion for acting is self-nurtured even after a family legacy into films. We are talking about the Deol with cute looks; Abhay Deol. Having made his debut with a classic rom-com 'Socha Na Tha', he has broken the stereotype of being categorised into the eight-pack brigade but has positioned himself with his film choices. With his latest release 'Happy Bhaag Jaegi' termed as a 'comeback' for him, he is loving every bit of the attention and plans to show more of him. Delhiites caught up with the 'unconventional' Abhay Deol and his warm smile was everything to die for

By Vani Malik

You are back on screen after a long-long time. How does it feel to be 'back'?

It's been two and a half years and it feels nice to know that you are still wanted. At least the audience is not saying go back or why are you here. I feel a little bad when people tell me that I should make more films now, so for the next two-three years, I don't want to stop. I am keeping my fingers crossed.

What is the essence of Happy Bhaag Jaegi?

The film reflects the 'desiness' that we all have. Both the countries are not very different, culturally. In 70 years, no one can wipe out thousands of years of culture. I play a character who is from Lahore but has studied abroad. He speaks Urdu. I have learnt Urdu when I was 18, so that really helped in playing this. And, any well written story is appreciated by everyone.

How was it to play a Pakistani character?

I have learnt Urdu and I was aware of the 'Nukhtas'. My vocabulary was weak but Mudassar was there to my rescue. He can speak almost every language. The script is engrossing, it has humour and I got to play a different shade on screen. Also, Urdu as a language is itself poetic and has its own effect on you.

You have always bagged charming roles. How has this been possible?

It is all about the vision of the filmmaker and also a part of your personality that you end up relating to the character. I have been lucky in that way to get roles with which I have been able to connect. The best is to find a common factor between the character and myself to relate to it. Also, the mannerisms are in you. One cannot be loud on screen if that's not a part of his/her mannerisms.

Were you able to chalk out any difference between India and Pakistan while shooting for the film?

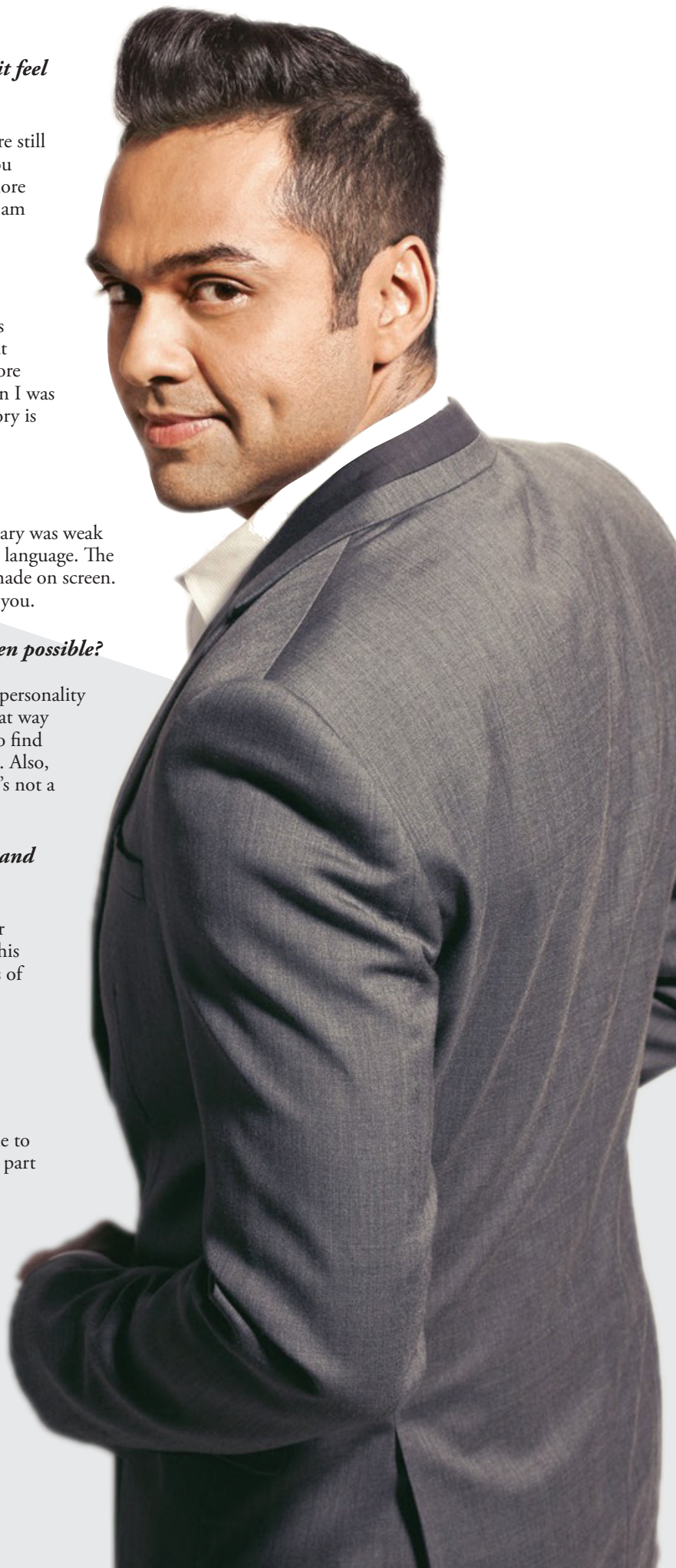
Culturally, these two countries are very similar. With the humour part in it, one can relate to the plot very easily. My character in this film hails from Lahore. In reality, the only striking difference was of language; he spoke Urdu and I converse in Hindi.

With so much competition around, is it safe to take such long breaks in this industry?

I believe that competitiveness brings with it a lot of baggage on you. If you are not trying to prove anything, you have all the time to concentrate on the right scripts and roles. You don't want to be a part of a rat race to be in the market. It is in such conditions when you grow as an artist because you hone your skills. If you are constantly a part of a comparison, that's a part and parcel with your job. However, it is clear in your head that you are certainly not a part of this rat race.

Also, was acting always your career interest?

I must admit that I was intrigued by it in the initial times. When in school, I used to thoroughly enjoy acting; only! Was it natural or the environment at home, I really don't know. However, it was a decision that I took of not acting at the age of 10 as it came as a but-natural decision from my end. However, it was more of that urge in me to prove people wrong.



What kept you busy all this while?

It was maybe in search of the right script. I have always been appreciated for roles in particular films. Everyone wants me to do something similar to the roles that the viewers have loved me doing. It is nearly impossible to fulfill all wishes. I always wanted to do films that is for the audience, which does not force them to leave their brains behind. Doing something where the script is nice but the marketing fails is also a big no-no for me. I have been a part of projects with a strong plot but poor marketing techniques.

You are strong supporter of indie-cinema. What is the misconception among people according to you in regards to this aspect?

I believe that people have a serious misconception; Hindi cinema is not only about Bollywood. It can be a part of it. There are several films that may not be musical, shot at over-the-top locations, or with a famous star-cast. However, such films have an equal right to be up on the screens. I guess such films should be funded for better visibility. There needs to be a vision so that things change. I agree that there have not been many people for too long who have tried to bring a change. But that doesn't mean that there haven't been any at all — there was Guru Dutt, Bimal Roy, and now Naseeruddin and Shabana Azmi. Why can't we try and nurture the next Shabana Azmi or the next Guru Dutt? Instead, we are just moulding every actor into an eight-pack clone or an item number because they won't be supported in any other way.

After so many years in Hindi cinema, where do you see yourself fitting in?

It is a media driven world and I guess I need to be more media savvy. I'm also very picky with my films. It's hard to find the right fit. After so many years, I still need to fit in! I've heard many people say that to me. Maybe that is true or maybe not. I believe that if a filmmaker wants to work with you and use you for what you have, then he or she will do it.

Which films so far have been the most satisfying and which the most unfulfilling for you?

Most satisfying would be *Dev.D*, *Shanghai* and *Manorama Six Feet Under*. They were heavily driven by the characters.

On a lighter note, what is that one thing that makes you instantly happy?

Well, well, it comes in a small package! I will let you all guess.

Anything in the pipeline?

You can strike a balance only when you go from one extreme to another. You need patience and you need to make mistakes. Right now, I am not being as extremist as before, but I am not being a sell-out either.

