

## Will Smith: the man with the Midas touch

Will Smith is the most dependable actor in Hollywood right now. His latest hit 'Hancock' has topped the box office to give Smith his 12th No.1 film. He now has eight straight movies topping the \$100-million mark. Smith is a true global superstar, but he had a humble beginning and his career arc is the stuff of dreams. Smith has conquered the music business, TV and now movies.

Smith began his showbiz career as a musician. His first single with his partner DJ Jazzy Jeff. 'Girls Ain't Nothing But Trouble' launched his fame as it served as a more wholesome alternative to the more rampant Gangsta Rap in the late 1980s.

His debut album 'Rock the House' made him a millionaire when he was just 18. A few years later he won his first Grammy. But it was in 1997 when Smith went solo that he established himself as a rap star. The album was 'Big Willie Style' and it spawned his biggest hit to date, 'Gettin' Jiggy Wit It'.

Even as his rap career was taking off, Smith was establishing himself as a TV star. He played himself in the show 'Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' about a street-smart kid living in affluent Beverly Hills.

The show ran for six years and gave him a solid platform to build his future acting career.

One of the secrets of his success is clearly his shrewd selection of movies. He thrills in action movies like 'Bad Boys' and 'Independence Day' beautifully anchors himself in dramatic fare like 'Ali' and 'The Pursuit of Happyness'. Even in 'I Am Legend' where he was onscreen alone for most of the time, he has enough gravitas to capture audiences' attention.

Though his first hit was 'Bad Boys', it was in 'Independence day' that he showed the first true signs of his coming superstardom. He followed this up with the hugely successful 'Men in Black' playing veteran actor Tommy Lee Jones' sidekick.

He followed this with the thriller 'Enemy of the State'. But next came 'Wild, Wild West' and this to date is Smith's only real dud. It was panned by the critics but still managed to make some sort of impact on the box office.

His next acting challenge was the biopic 'Ali' and here Smith showed his true acting range. He had reportedly turned down the role eight times citing the impossibility of anyone truly capturing the essence of the boxing legend Muhammad Ali's personality. It took Ali calling up Smith himself to finally convince him to tackle the job. He was rewarded with an Oscar nomination.

He followed up his success as a dramatic star to take in roles in the action movie 'I, Robot', the animated movie 'Shark Tale' and the romantic comedy 'Hitch'. It was with 'Hitch' that he could be deservedly crowned the box office king.

He then took another off turn and starred in the drama 'The Pursuit of Happyness', for which he earned his second Oscar nomination. This movie was extra special for him because his real life son Jaden starred as his onscreen son. He later went on to score another hit with 'I Am Legend' with his latest 'Hancock' slowly also becoming an international hit.

Everything Smith touches turns to gold. He is a beloved star and his personal life is clean and

wholesome. But his true secret of success is his work ethic, as he himself said, 'While the other guy's sleeping, I'm working. While the other guy's eating, I'm working. While the other guy's making love, I mean, I'm making love, too, but I'm working really hard at it!'

His status seems nowhere close to waning and we can be sure he will return with more hits in the future.

*Sevanand Gaddala* ( © IANS / India eNews)