

## Abhishek detractors should eat loads of humble pie: Amitabh

Proud father Amitabh Bachchan is in raptures over son Abhishek's latest achievements and says he wasn't as daring in his selection of roles.

'I was never this adventurous. And had I been so, I doubt if I would've been able to carry it off with such conviction and aplomb. I never got the opportunities and also maybe I was never so brave,' Amitabh told IANS in an interview.

Abhishek's performance in 'Guru' is being hailed as no minor achievement.

'Guru' coming in the wake of 'Dhoom 2' has proved to all and sundry that given a role and an opportunity, Abhishek can deliver. He has in one stroke silenced all his detractors and critics. It's a slap on the face of those that thought unkindly of him. Large volumes of humble pie need to be devoured by them.'

Commenting upon a media analysis that his days as brand ambassador are over, Amitabh said: 'The brand endorsements have never been so good, contrary to certain media analysts, who recently headlined that 'The King Is Dead Long Live The King'. It is a rather prolonged thesis on my diminishing and expired brand value and the rising value of my colleague and dear friend Shah Rukh Khan.'

Excerpts:

Q: Were you so adventurous in your heydays?

A: Adventurous in my heydays? Thank you for relegating my heydays to the past! But seriously though, I was never this adventurous. And had I been so, I doubt if I would've been able to carry it off with such conviction and aplomb. I never got the opportunities and also maybe I was never so brave.

Q: Considering Hrithik Roshan had an author-backed role in 'Dhoom 2', do you think it was a mistake for Abhishek to do the film?

A: No, it was not a mistake. I've a huge respect for him and his decision. Because, knowing fully well that his was a minuscule role, he still went ahead for the sake of his relationship with Aditya Chopra and because without him in the film there is no story.

For all practical purposes, he is the hero of the film. The success of the film will go down in his record as his success as well. And the fact is that those who were with him in this project -- Aditya, Hrithik, Uday Chopra -- are aware of the sacrifice that he made and have expressed that to him too.

Q: Apparently director Sanjay Gadhvi has commented on Hrithik's larger impact in 'Dhoom 2'.

A: Gadhvi is the director of 'Dhoom 2'. Strangely, soon after its release he proclaimed in rather bold headlines that Abhishek is finished and beaten. I think very lowly of a director when he derides an artiste of his own film. Why take them to work for you if you consider them substandard? Why deliberately prop up and showcase the villain, as per the dictates of the script, and then scream that

the other character has lost out? Somewhere your ethics are misplaced and wrong.

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Q: You continue to be the primary endorser in our entertainment business. Is it hard to juggle films with ads, specially now when you have so many movie assignments, family and social events claiming your attention?

A: Yes, the brand endorsements continue and have never been so good, contrary to certain media analysts, who recently headlined that 'The King Is Dead Long Live The King'. It is a rather prolonged thesis on my diminishing and expired brand value and the rising value of my colleague and dear friend Shah Rukh Khan.

Firstly, the King is not dead. The prayers and good wishes of the people of this country keep insuring that time and again. All my clients have renewed their contracts (Dabur, Emami, Reid and Taylor, Cadbury, Parker) and if I might add, at enhanced rates for a substantial period of time.

Fresh and new products are in negotiations and soon we should be announcing their presence in my life. In particular, one historic endorsement... more of which later. ICICI did not renew with me, and the reasons for that I would not like to discuss in public.

No, it is not difficult to find time for films and endorsements. A very proficient schedule manager in our organisation ensures that. Family and social events are a pleasure to be associated with and they find their own time.

But what really satisfying is the campaigns highlighting social and national causes. Polio and India Poised are a pleasure, as have been the campaigns for Uttar Pradesh, I being the brand ambassador for the state.

These are done, obviously, without any monetary considerations, and fill me with a sense of great pride and fulfilment. Let me also say, nothing and nobody lasts forever... not Shah Rukh Khan, not me. It's how long you last and what you achieve within that time, that matters.

Q: Your movie assignments remain as dense this year as they were last year. Which are the films we can look forward to? Every other day we've a director clamouring for your attention and pouting when he doesn't get it.

Q: Yes, the assignments remain dense. Which is good... makes me feel wanted, though I haven't the foggiest idea why! Films due this year should be 'Eklavya', 'Nishabd', 'Cheeni Kum', 'Sarkar 2', 'Sholay', 'Bhootnath' and 'Johnny Walker'.

There are a host of others that shall start this year too. Rohan Sippy, Vidhu Vinod Chopra and Rituparno Ghosh want to start films with me, and some very exciting projects with a new fresh lot of youngsters, brimming with unique ideas. They're an absolute joy.

As for the pouting directors, I haven't seen any. I've been very accommodating.

Q: There was a front-page report in a tabloid last week about your brother gifting you some land.

A: Yes he did.

Q: Speculation on Abhishek and Aishwarya Rai's marriage date abounds. Have you zeroed in on a date? How true is the February date being bandied in some part of the media? Where is the wedding likely to take place?

A: We are just about to sit down to discuss just that. And as soon as there is consensus on what it might be, we shall inform you. Dates and locations being bandied about are a lot of rubbish.

*Subhash K. Jha (© IANS / India eNews)*