

Kartik calling Kartik

Stardom may not have changed his life overnight, but Kartik Aaryan's rise to the top has begun, and there's no stopping him now

Words **RADHIKA AGRAWAL**



We all know a guy in our friend circle who takes pride in delivering Kartik Aaryan's breathless monologue

from *Pyaar Ka PUNCHNAMA*. It's not very often that an outsider's debut film gains cult-like status in Bollywood, but that's the effect his performance had on today's generation. "Luv sir didn't try to make a newcomer into a big hero. The relatability factor was high because he wanted me to play a regular guy," says Aaryan, a few minutes into our telephonic conversation for the August cover story. Through their first film, he and director Luv Ranjan established a bond that would later manifest in hits such as *Pyaar Ka PUNCHNAMA 2* and *Sonu Ke Titu Ki SWEETY*. In fact, Ranjan is known for casting his OG gang in almost all his films, perhaps an indication of a friendship built on the shared experience of being outsiders in an otherwise exclusive industry.

THE BOY NEXT DOOR

Through his characters in movies such as *Akaash Vani*, *Luka Chuppi*, and *Love Aaj Kal*, Aaryan has perfected the portrayal of the boy next door. The anxiety and fear of being typecast, however, is not weighing heavily on his mind. "I believe that relatable characters can never be typecast," he says. But that's not to say that he can't pull off a completely different avatar. The moustache man from *Patni Patni Aur Woh*, Chintu Tyagi, is testament to the fact that

the audience enjoys watching him, regardless of which character he's playing. "To be honest, even if I was given the role of 'the boy next door' for the rest of my life, I'd be happy," he says.

But the future has something else in store for the country's favourite 'lover boy'. Two of his upcoming films, *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2* and *Dostana 2*, are sequels to blockbuster hits from the previous decade. And both the projects allow him to explore and showcase a new facet of his on-screen personality. The original *Bhool Bhulaiyaa*, which starred Akshay Kumar, Vidya Balan and Shiney Ahuja, was the first psychological thriller in India to take the horror-comedy route. Apart from the tight screenplay, the film owes its success to Kumar's impeccable comic timing. To carry on the legacy of his performance must come with a decent amount of pressure, right? "I feel like there's already so much expectation, even before the film's release. That makes my job a lot easier," he says. Aaryan is also grateful that he's in good hands, with a well-written script and a director he believes in. Having directed films like *Hulchul*, *Welcome*, and *Singh is Kinng*, filmmaker Anees Bazmee is undoubtedly a great resource to have in Aaryan's corner.

After pairing up with Sara Ali Khan in *Love Aaj Kal* and Ananya Pandey in *Patni Patni Aur Woh*, Aaryan is set to be seen with another GenNext actor in *Dostana 2* – Janhvi Kapoor. While there's not much he can reveal about the movie yet, he does talk about his experience >>

"To be honest, even if I was given the role of 'the boy next door' for the rest of my life, I'd be happy"



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working with the debuting director, Collin D’Cunha. “The way he moves in and out of the script while navigating all the characters is absolutely brilliant,” he says. Both the films, which would’ve been out in theatres had it not been for Covid-19, will resume shooting once normalcy is restored.

ACTING FROM HOME

For Aaryan, the lockdown has been less of a full-stop and more of a comma. While things have slowed down on the filming front, he has opened up new avenues for himself from the safety of his home. One such project, *Koki Poochega*, is his new talk show where the actor puts on the interviewer cap to chat with celebrities, journalists, and the superheroes leading the battle against Covid-19. “With every episode, it feels like a new film of mine has released – such is the support and appreciation,” he says. While many celebrities have taken to social media to spread awareness about the pandemic, no one has quite done it in such a dedicated, innovative and entertaining manner. We’re not talking about an odd IG post with a mask or a 30-second performance in a fundraising concert – this is a proper digital show that requires hard work, a team of content creators, and of course, his loyal fan base of 444k subscribers on YouTube. “I’m glad that people are listening to me and accepting my socially relevant conversations as well,” he says.

Apart from being insanely productive, the actor has also utilised this time to unwind with his family. A blessing in disguise, this isolation period has allowed him to revisit his pre-stardom days. He’s also made it a point to catch up on all the content doing the rounds on OTT platforms, where newcomers are stealing the limelight day in and day out. On being asked if it’s easier for outsiders to enter the industry than it was for him ten years ago, he says, “Right now is the best time to be an actor. There are so many amazing opportunities that I often get FOMO for not being able to bag them,” he laughs.

Being indoors has fuelled conversations about careers and futures all over the world. Where does Aaryan see himself in ten years, now that he has ‘made it’ in Bollywood? “I don’t know how to plan ten minutes in advance... ten years is a long time. Where do you think I’ll be?” he spins the question around and throws it at me, no doubt a lesson he’s learnt from his newfound role as an interviewer at *Koki Poochega*. If you ask me, like he did, here’s what I think lies in store for Kartik Aaryan: A long career of movies that spread laughter and warmth, a personality that becomes a household name, and perhaps, another sequel to *Pyaar Ka PUNCHNAMA*, where he plays the dad to three wayward boys in love. **U**



THE COOL KIDS

From travelling the world, jamming to top tunes, and interviewing A-list celebrities, this OG gang of VJs was our window to all things hip

Words **RADHIKA AGRAWAL** Photographs **KEEGAN CRASTO** Styling **SURBHI SHUKLA**

Today, we live in a world that's brimming with pop culture. But back in the 90s and early 2000s, it was highly exclusive. This, of course, was back when music channels were *actually* about the music. Growing up, there was nobody cooler than the VJs who introduced us to what was hip, happening, and 'in'. We managed to round up a few of the OGs – Maria Goretti, Mini Mathur, Ramona Arena, Yudhishtir Urs, Shruti Seth, and Shenaz Treasury – and the result, of course, was an undeniably infectious energy. It was not long before 90s music was blasting from the speakers and impromptu dance performances were being filmed. The cool kids had enveloped us into their crazy world, and it was difficult to remember that we were in fact, working.



Track suit, sneakers, **adidas Originals**

THE BOY WHO LIVED

Bubbling with energy and positivity, Yudhishtir Urs, fondly known as VJ Yudi, can liven up any room. Channel V signed him on after a countrywide VJ hunt, similar to the one MTV used to conduct. He hosted many shows, including *V Dares You*, in which he would go out on the street and ask random people to do crazy things for money. "For instance, I would offer ₹1,000 to anyone who was willing to put their hand into a tub of cow dung to find something," he laughs. A decade later and he is still pursuing his many passions – writing, directing, acting and dancing.

DEFINITION OF COOL:

"To be cool was to have a pulse for what's 'in', be it in music, films, or travel."

FAVOURITE MEMORY: "Aside from the friendships that I built, I loved that we got to travel a lot, attend many concerts and interview musicians. I remember the time when we got the chance to watch Coldplay live in Singapore, when the band had just released *Yellow*. We went nuts."

MAXIMUM GIRL

Unlike most other VJs, Mini Mathur was already on TV before she became one. She hosted India's first travel show, *Indian Holiday*, on Zee TV. So, when she heard about MTV's *VJ Hunt*, she felt confident enough to sign up. To her surprise, they sent her straight to the finale, and her VJing journey began soon after. "The training was rigorous – we were interviewing people from all walks of life, be it Amitabh Bachchan or a rickshaw driver," she says. She became the face for various shows, such as *MTV Classic* and *MTV Gao Baby Gao*. According to her, a VJ back then had to have their own style, be a 'people's person', and had to have the ability to bounce back from just about anything.

DEFINITION OF COOL: "The problem with being cool is that you don't realise it. We just went about swimming in the dark, and then one day we came across a generation that started talking to us like we had been influencing their youth – that's when it hit us."

FAVOURITE MEMORY: "I remember I once had to do an interview for *MTV Big Picture* with the entire cast of *Lagaan*, comprising 13 people who had never faced the camera. I truly believe that it was one of my best pieces of work, because when I got up, I saw this awe and love in everyone's eyes, which made me believe I had done justice to each one of them."



Dress, **Quod**; PVC heels, **Truffle Collection**

THE GIRL NEXT DOOR

When she was cast for the StarPlus show *Shararat*, Shruti Seth came one step closer to her dream of being a VJ with Channel V. In fact, it was the producer of the rom-com show who got her an audition with the music channel for her birthday. "After my audition, I walked out and bumped into a stranger, grabbed them and said, 'I don't know who you are, but I have to tell you that I am the new Channel V VJ!'" she recalls. She was with the channel for about two years, following which she went on to host TV shows like *Comedy Circus*, and acted in shows such as *The Suite Life of Karan & Kabir*.

DEFINITION OF COOL: "It meant being unapologetic, quirky, silly, foolish, and doing things unabashedly without worrying about what people would think of you, because they thought you were cool anyway."

FAVOURITE MEMORY: "Once, Bobby Deol prank-called me while posing as a sleazy producer. I used choice expletives and was really mean to him. My producer caught all of it on camera. And of course, they aired it."



Button-down shirt, linen trousers, both **H&M Studio**; diamante necklace, **Swarovski**



Playsuit, sneakers, both **Shenaz's own**

THE DREAMER

Shenaz Treasury was only in junior college when she was noticed, and was asked to audition by MTV. "I didn't want to be in front of the camera at the time, because I felt it would be a short-lived career. Turns out I was wrong," she says. She recalls how she wasn't sure what the producers saw in her, but looking back, she wonders if it was just her ability to laugh and not take herself too seriously. She was young, and just wanted to have fun. Today, things are a lot more serious. As a content creator on social media, she edits, writes and shoots herself. "I'm the producer, director as well as the actor. And it's because of my MTV days that I can do it all so effortlessly," she says.

DEFINITION OF COOL: "I think I was quite a dork back then. I was just happy to have work. There was no social media, so I had no idea how popular I was."

FAVOURITE MEMORY: "Cyrus Broacha and Cyrus Sahukar were my two sweethearts. Broacha would talk my ear out – I could hear his voice in my sleep, but I loved it. I had a crush on Sahukar and I was always happy to be around him. We're still great friends."

SHE'S ALL THAT

It's hard to fit Maria Goretti into a category. She's a mother of two, the wife of an actor, but also the girl who once taught the country how to groove on her show, *MTV Hipsbakers*. When she arrived on set in a striped shirt and comfy jeans, she ran to the clothes stand and picked out the craziest, most fun outfit for the shoot. "I dress so simply in real life. So, when I'm at a shoot, I like to go all out," she says. Perhaps, it's her way of holding on to the glamour and excitement of her VJ-ing days. She joined MTV sometime after Cyrus Broacha and Malaika Arora had become known faces. She created a distinct space for herself with various dancing shows, travelling shows such as *MTV Chill Out*, and lots more.

DEFINITION OF 'COOL': "I didn't know I was cool until years later. But what I loved about being a VJ was that I had the freedom to be me. I was never told to talk, behave or dress in a certain way."

FAVOURITE MEMORY: "There was no bigger blast than when all of us VJs would get together to do a shoot for New Year's, once a year. It was a nightmare for our producers and directors, but we would have a ton of fun."



Quilted blouse, tulle skirt, both **Quod**; drop earrings, **Swarovski**; PVC heeled boots, **Christian Louboutin**

MAKING HER MARK

If you're a KJo fan like me, you probably remember Ramona Arena from her role in *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* as Poo's best friend. Even though it was a small role, it got her noticed. But she was quick to recognise she didn't want to be typecast as a hot bimbo for all her future projects. So, as a singer who had also worked in radio, VJing was a natural progression for her. After winning *MTV VJ Hunt*, she went on to transform her show, *MTV World Chart Express*, into a full-fledged travel show, which made many of her contemporaries envious.

DEFINITION OF 'COOL': "Just the fact that I could say that I was a MTV VJ, was super cool. And even though the days of VJs may be over, it's still associated with a time when television was intelligent, and to me, that is cool."

FAVOURITE MEMORY: "Be it the peons, directors, VJs, make-up artists, or even people from finance, everyone looked forward to coming to work. You didn't want a day off, because work was just so much fun." ❗



Pleated dress, **Rhea Pillai Rastogi**; drop earrings, **Swarovski**; sneakers, **Nike**

LAUGHTER RIOT

Words **RADHIKA AGRAWAL**

Styling **OJAS KOLVANKAR**

Photographs **KEEGAN CRASTO**

The OGs of comedy talk about the then and now of the Indian comic scene

Back in the 90s, comedy in Indian culture was limited to what we saw on the big screen – caricature-like Shakespearean fools that offered some sort of comic relief in an otherwise intense storyline. As a genre, it was often clubbed with other genres to fill gaps in the plot. But all of this changed with the emergence of the second wave of television, as MTV and Channel V started shelling out original content. Led by oddballs such as Cyrus Sahukar, Cyrus Broacha, and Anu Menon, the comedy space began to morph into something unfamiliar, yet fascinating. Perhaps for the first time, we wanted to tune into a music channel not just to listen to the top tunes of the day, but to watch these guys rant, play pranks and portray a hundred different characters.

Today, with comedy specials being streamed on every OTT platform, shows being sold out every weekend, and sketches going viral on social media, it's safe to say we've come a long way. While still not entirely acceptable to some, the idea of being a professional comedian is not as laughable as it used to be. But none of this would have been possible had the right tone not been set by the OGs of comedy, the 'weirdos' that came into the space and changed it for the better. We sat down with Sahukar, Broacha and Menon to talk about the good ol' days and how they compare to the situation today.



ODD ONE OUT: CYRUS SAHUKAR

Sahukar was not cut out to be a typical VJ. When he entered the space, he was surrounded by a ton of young, successful people who had very distinct personalities. "I couldn't understand how they could stay so 'on' all the time. I was quieter and more thoughtful," he recalls. And so, he



From left to right: On Cyrus Sahukar: T-shirt, jacket, Jack & Jones, jeans, Tommy Hilfiger, sunglasses, sneakers, both Cyrus' own
On Cyrus Broacha: T-shirt, Dsquared2 at The Collective, jeans, Tommy Hilfiger, sneakers, Nike
On Anu: Printed dress, Dhruv Kapoor, sandals, Charles & Keith

realised that playing characters helped him express himself better. Sahukar started creating a niche for himself with shows such as *MTV Fully Faltoo*, *Piddhu The Great*, and *Simi Girebaal*, which were spoofs of real personalities, films and content. "It was tricky to do it in a country like India, because

some of our stuff is already so funny. How do you spoof a spoof?" he laughs. But the bigger problem he faced was in the way people viewed comedy, i.e. through punch lines. Building character-driven spoofs took some time, but it eventually paid off – so much so that the parodies became more popular than the originals.

Once he quit MTV in 2010, things began to change for Sahukar. He was

no longer part of a tribe. "What I really respect about those days is that I had a playground to try out different things," he says. In today's day and age, consistency is everything. Sketches have found their way onto the Internet, but in a shorter format. "With social media, you just can't afford to be lazy. But sometimes I also feel that it may stop you from creating something magical," he says. Every idea you have has been googled by hundreds of people before you, and therefore, plagiarism becomes a problem. Sahukar believes that the solution is making comedy more personalised, so that every story and piece is authentic and different.

But that's not the only issue comedy has to battle. We live in a very politically charged environment and comedians are not free from censorship. So, how does one say what they want to, without attracting trouble? "India is a very touchy country and at the end of the day, you are on your own. So, I don't blame people for staying away from political comedy, but I have a lot of respect for people who are pursuing it."

NEVER A DULL MOMENT: CYRUS BROACHA

The one thing you should know about Broacha is that he is never playing a part. He is as funny, goofy and sarcastic in real life as he is on TV. And so, in an industry that was dominated with attractive models and a very defined cool quotient, fitting in was not an option for him. "Everybody at the MTV auditions was extremely serious, and I just couldn't bear it. It was easy to stand out because I was simply not interested," he recalls. Having been an on-screen host, actor, author, podcaster and comic, there's very little Broacha has not done. But his most popular stint was *MTV Bakra*, in which he used to play pranks on



Hair and make-up: SURAJ TIWARI. Beauty Assistant: MADHURA DEOKUTE. Fashion Interns: LEHAN DEVADHIA AND SHWETA JAIN. Location Courtesy: EARTH CAFE @ WATERFIELD, BANDRA



though. It is not possible to resent something that you created.”

When she first started out, no one had a clear path in mind for her. They kept her around because she was fun. “I began to think it would be cool to play a character that people do not expect to see on a music channel,” she says. And that’s how Lola was born. Almost a decade later, Menon decided to re-enter the comedy space, but this time, as herself. Her debut stand-up special, *Wonder Menon*, came out on Amazon Prime Video in June 2019. There was no sari, no accent, and no elaborate backstory – just a modern woman talking about her family, her failures and her daily struggles. “It was weird for me to find my own voice because I was so used to playing a character,” she says. Menon believes that the industry has become more democratised over the years, so that more than a select few have the chance to showcase their talents. “Earlier, you first became Miss India, then a VJ, followed by a career in acting. Now, if you have something to say, you can just shoot a video and put it up online, hoping it goes viral,” she argues. The middlemen have been cut out of the process, for the comedians as well as the audience. Today, you don’t need to seek out trends on a music channel – the Internet makes sure they come to you. “The world has changed and that’s fine. It’s just evolution,” she says. **■**

TWIN FORCES: ANU MENON

If you’ve grown up watching Channel V, you’ll know who Lola Kutty is. A spinster from Kerala with a thick Malayali accent, who wears flowers in her oiled hair, and is irrevocably in love with Abhishek Bachchan. The character became so popular, it overpowered the person who was playing it – Anu Menon. “She became a living, breathing person to people, which is both touching as well as scary,” says Menon. To this day, people recall things she said in character, expecting them to be true. “I am grateful,



SUGAR QUOTED

A deep dive into how metabolism trackers are changing the fitness tech space with continuous glucose monitoring

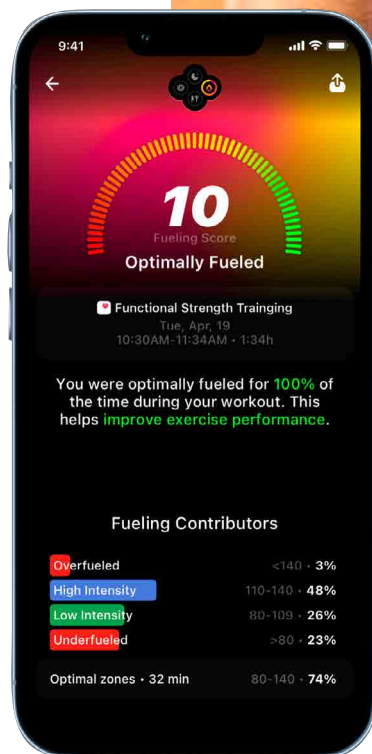
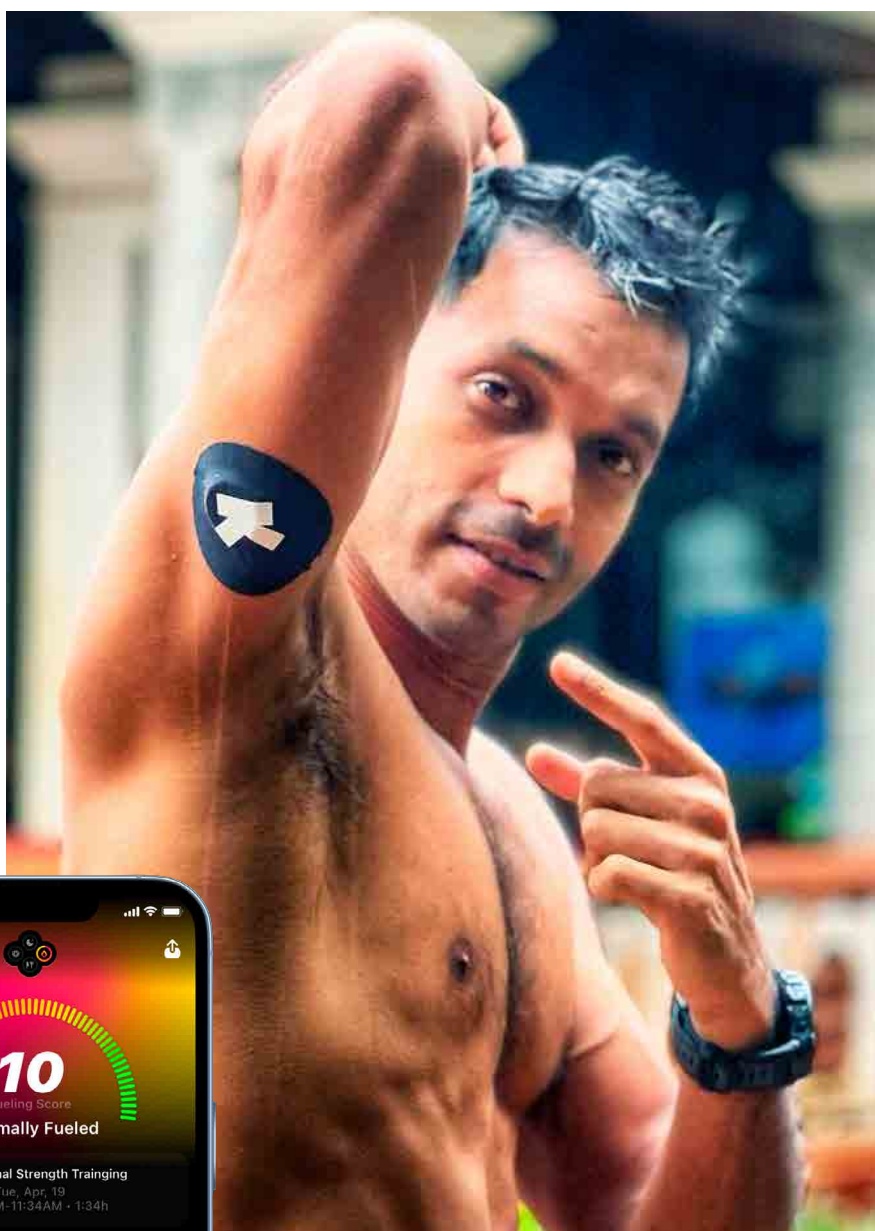
By Radhika Agrawal

Tracking bodily data to optimise one's fitness needs is not a new trend. What started with daily step counting has evolved into heart-rate tracking, sleep analysis, and borderline obsessive calorie counting. Metabolism trackers take this one step further by helping you keep a consistent eye on your blood sugar. Unlike a blood glucose meter, which has been used by diabetic patients for decades, these devices don't require you to prick yourself every time you want a reading. Instead, a continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) sensor is inserted in your skin, which measures your blood glucose levels 24 hours a day, helping you identify foods that cause a spike.

While there are a few brands in this niche space, Ultrahuman proved to be the first to break out in India, raising \$17.5 million in funding in 2021. "Out of the available biomarkers, we found glucose really interesting because of its ability to offer real-time feedback on your food. We realised that if we wanted people to change their eating habits, we would have to establish a positive or negative feedback loop," says Mohit Kumar, CEO & Founder, Ultrahuman.

The growing number of people wearing black patches in the gym can be attributed to the genius branding stroke by Ultrahuman for its first product, Ultrahuman M1. The patch with the brand's logo covers a semi-invasive continuous CGM sensor, which stays mounted on your arm for a period of two weeks, after which you need to replace it with a new sensor. It stores up to eight hours worth of data, and you can scan it with your NFC-enabled phone to access real-time readings and insights on the Ultrahuman app.

What's interesting is that the M1 uses



a FreeStyle Libre CGM sensor by Abbott. HealthifyMe, a digital health and fitness ecosystem, uses the same sensor for HealthifyPro, a program that offers you access to a smart scale, pro coaches, calorie tracking, and a metabolic panel, apart from the CGM sensor. You can also opt for the Abbott sensor as its portable reading device directly from the brand's website, but it comes at a similar cost as an M1, minus the advanced app of Ultrahuman.

But is there really a need for all this constant data, especially for someone not suffering from diabetes? Aman Vig, 29, comes from a family of diabetics,

and falls in the prediabetic zone. "Using a CGM was a precautionary step for me. You can't change habits you don't measure," he says. The National Urban Diabetes survey estimates the prevalence of prediabetes in India at 14 per cent. Additionally, millions of people globally suffer from different types of metabolic disorders. By recognising problem foods and changing eating habits accordingly, metabolism trackers can help prevent and reverse more damage.

It's no secret that your diet plays a huge role in your fitness. Whether you're a pro-athlete or a regular gym-goer, eating a balanced diet is a must if you want results. You might already have an understanding of what is generally considered healthy, but did you know that no two bodies respond in the exact same manner to the same foods? With no one-size-fits-all rule when it comes to

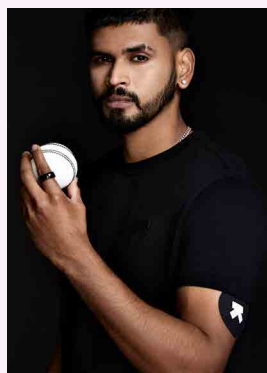
WEARABLE TECH: CHECK OUT THESE 5 FITNESS TRACKERS



1. Fitbit Charge 5: The Charge collection has always been a fan-favourite, and this one is no exception. Stylish, affordable, and with a host of exciting new features like a built-in GPS and a bright AMOLED display, the Charge 5 hits the sweet spot.



2. Garmin Instinct 2 Solar: The all-new Instinct 2 comes with enhanced solar charging, sport-specific data, and a battery that can last up to 28 days — or forever, if you spend enough time in the sun.



3. Ultrahuman Ring R1: Currently on preorder, you can wear the R1 all day, all year long. It promises to measure sleep, movement, and the body's energy dynamic in real-time to decode your metabolism.



4. Xiaomi Mi Smart Band 6: With a 14-day battery life, blood oxygen monitoring, heart, stress, and sleep tracking, the Mi Band 6 proves to be an efficient and lightweight tracker.



5. Apple Watch Series 7: If you're an Apple loyalist, you can make the most of metrics such as ECG, blood oxygen, and heart rate tracking. The display is brighter and larger, and the watch itself is available in a range of colours.

blood glucose, it becomes essential to study individual responses to what you eat. I was surprised to learn that a bowl of poha caused a larger spike in my blood sugar than a pizza. By using the M1, I was able to figure out which type of foods gave me a better glucose score at varying times of the day. It also helped me stay optimally fuelled for my workouts. The app also had a collection of video workouts covering a range of fitness disciplines.

Ultrahuman also allows you to sync some popular fitness trackers with their apps so that you can correlate your sleep and workout data with your glucose trends. Lumen, too, offers advanced integrations with brands like Garmin and Apple. In its second integration phase, Lumen allows Garmin users to conduct post-workout metabolism measurements by tracking new data metrics such as body battery, resting heart rate, and high heart rate. Lumen's metabolism tracking app is also available for Apple Watch users, making it easier to track your fat burn on the go.

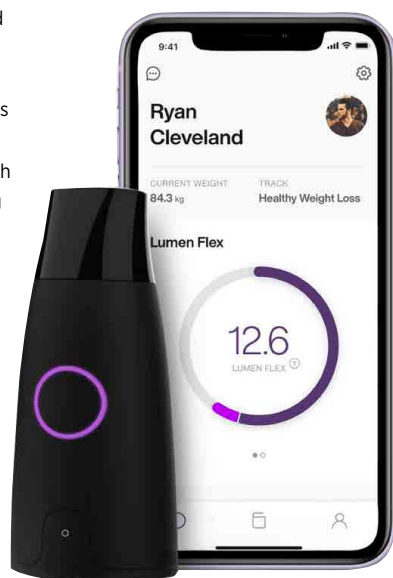
The M1's two-week trial kit costs ₹4,999. For you to keep up with that kind of investment, you would need to know if there's a continuous requirement for CGM in your life. "I honestly think that you can learn everything you need to from the two-week trial, without opting for the annual subscription—unless you have

a super experimental lifestyle," says M1 user Aarushi Singh, 25. On the flip side, discontinuing the service may also result in settling back into old, unhealthy habits. "Even though I now know the best-suited foods for my body, I have decided to keep the M1 tracker on. Without it, I would slack off from my best eating behaviour as the app was no longer alerting me. This led to a significant drop in my peak power and endurance," says Partha Varanashi, 37, high-performance coach and aquatic educator.

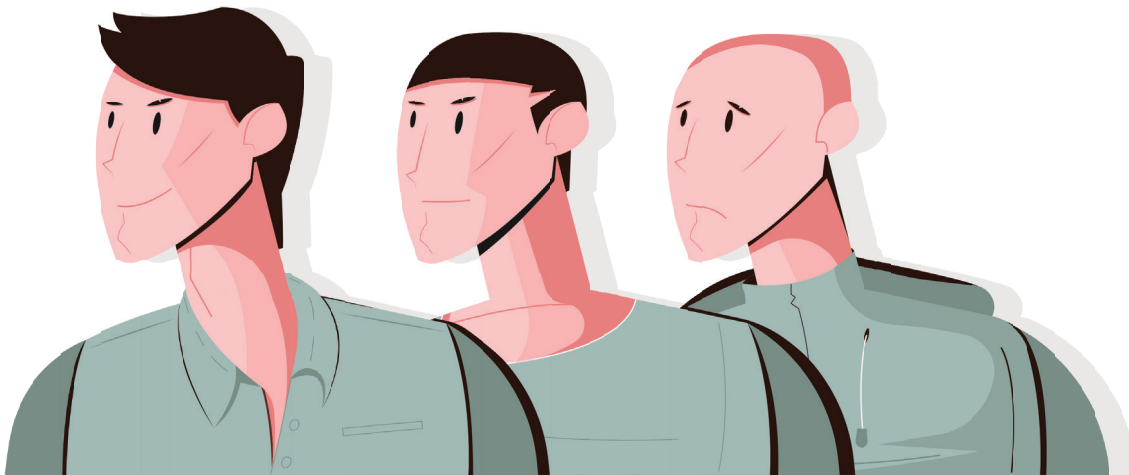
In a country where people aren't overly concerned with what they're

putting inside their bodies as long as it tastes good, the concept of metabolism tracking may not be welcomed by the masses. In the two weeks that I had the M1 on, my family repeatedly reproached me for being 'too conscious' and unnecessarily stressing myself out. Singh points out how logging every food item and closely tracking its result on the body can be harmful to those who have had a complicated relationship with food in the past. "Sometimes you won't see a spike if you eat something unhealthy, but a healthy food may cause your glucose to rise. Seeing those unexpected spikes can be triggering if you have settled into a healthy lifestyle after a lot of hard work," she says.

If metabolism trackers sound tricky and complicated, it's because they are attempting to solve a complex problem. Whether they'll succeed or not, only time will tell. In the meantime, if you are looking to try them out for yourself, just remember that you will only get what you put into the process. And yes, it's a fair amount of work. Without logging your foods, analysing daily glucose trends, and optimising your metabolic score, the CGM sensor will be nothing more than a fancy patch on your body. The crucial question to ask before making your purchase is whether you are investing in your health or you are participating in a fad. ☹️



"Out of the available biomarkers, we found glucose really interesting because of its ability to offer real-time feedback on your food" — Mohit Kumar, CEO & Founder, Ultrahuman



Hair To Stay

Hair fall is an emotional trigger, and the conversation around a receding hairline is always a sensitive one. From handpicked products to tactical hairstyles, here are the many weapons you need to fight off — or mask — a receding hairline

By Radhika Agrawal

Maybe you've noticed that your forehead is beginning to look bigger, or perhaps you found stray strands on your white pillowcase, but it has finally sunk in — you're losing your hair. Hair fall takes you through a series of emotional stages, much like those of grief. You'd find yourself denying that the hair in the shower drain belongs to you, getting angry with your flawed genes, negotiating how bad it really is, and losing all hope and confidence, before finally accepting the undeniable, universal truth: Hair loss is inevitable.

The root cause of hair loss can range from genetics, lifestyle choices, hormonal changes, and well, age. Male pattern baldness or androgenetic alopecia, however, accounts for more than 95 per cent of hair loss in men. Sravya C Tipirneni, consultant dermatologist and cosmetologist at Manipal Hospitals, says that one in five men are affected by this condition. "Men are extremely conscious groomers in this day and age. So naturally, a receding hairline is a big blow to their confidence," says Dr. Tipirneni.

While a visit to the doctor's office will help sniff out the reason behind your hair fall, stopping or reversing the process is not as straightforward. It will require time, energy, experimentation, positive spirits, and if all else fails, deep pockets. If you are struggling to find the best route to tackle a receding hairline, consider these expert-approved short-term



“According to research published in the International Journal of Dermatology, caffeine is shown to stimulate the growth of hair follicles” — Tarun Sharma, co-founder & CEO, mCaffeine

and long-term solutions.

Be it a bad breakup or a receding hairline, there's nothing a good haircut can't help with. Experts suggest going short — really short. Hairstyles such as undercuts and fades help take away some of the attention from your crown by making the disparity less obvious. "Bangs or fringes are also a popular choice for modern men," says Vipul Chudasama, founder and educator at Vipul Chudasama Academy & Salon. According to him, the key is to choose a hairstyle that complements your face shape, hair density, body proportions, and personality.

Experimenting with your parting is also a clever hack — and no, we're not talking about a comb-over. Instead of hiding your scalp, you can use your side part to subtly reveal it. By strategically parting your hair where it is thinnest, you can successfully camouflage a problem area.

It can be tricky to choose the right product when countless brands are crowding the shelves, each with a taller claim than the one before it. There are three types of hair fall products you can consider adding to your grooming cabinet: formulas that conceal hair loss, ones that prevent it, and those that promote hair growth or regrowth.

Hairstylists regularly use fiber sprays to fill in thinning areas and balding patches. They typically contain keratin fibers that latch onto the strands, and make your hair look more voluminous.

Shampoos, conditioners, hair oils, and serums that protect against damage and hair fall are rich in ingredients that offer anti-inflammatory and anti-fungal properties. They ensure that your follicles are not being clogged while strengthening your strands, thereby delaying hair fall.

While no conclusive research has proven that it is possible to naturally regrow hair, there are products that work on revitalising the roots and creating a healthy environment for your hair to flourish. A few ingredients, like caffeine,

have begun to garner special attention. "According to research published in the International Journal of Dermatology, caffeine is shown to stimulate the growth of hair follicles," says Mr. Tarun Sharma, co-founder & CEO, mCaffeine.

Ayurvedic formulas have also remained a popular choice among men and women with thinning hair. The alternative medicine system attributes hair fall to an imbalance in the doshas. "People with excess *pitta* and *vata* are more prone to premature thinning, graying and hair loss. The *rasayanas* in ayurvedic herbs like *amla*, *bhringraj* rosemary, hibiscus, neem, etc. have the power to reverse the damage by balancing your *doshas*," explains Dr. Aruna Purohit, ayurveda expert at Kama Ayurveda.

Going in for a medical or surgical procedure to regrow hair is seen as the last resort for many reasons: it's time consuming, expensive, and quite frankly, terrifying. Nobody is thrilled by the idea of needles going into their scalp. But not all medical treatments for hair growth are invasive. Minoxidil, a common drug prescribed for hair loss, is available both as an oral tablet and a liquid solution. Depending on the severity of your condition, your doctor may pair minoxidil with surgical treatments such as the Growth Factor Concentrate (GFC) procedure and LED therapy. You may begin to see results in as soon as a month's time.

The bottom line? Combatting hair fall can be a long and frustrating process. The choice between fighting the battle or embracing the changes is entirely up to you. But whatever you do, remember to admire your reflection in the mirror, with or without a head full of hair. ☺

FIVE HAIRSTYLES FOR A RECEDING HAIRLINE

With inputs from Vipul Chudasama

- **Short bangs:** Tight and stylish, this hairdo effortlessly conceals hair thinning at the crown. Pair it with short cropped hair on the sides, as in an undercut or taper fade
- **Angular fringe:** Sported by the likes of Ashton Kutcher and Ed Westwick, this one masterfully covers one half of your forehead, ensuring that your forehead looks less glossy
- **Short textured fringe:** You don't need long hair for a front fringe that masks a receding hairline. Layered and textured bangs, even if they are short in length, can do the job perfectly well
- **Classic fade:** This is the perfect style to let your hair blend in with your hairline without creating a fuss
- **Textured crop:** Often worn with a fade at the back, this short, layered haircut is great for a messy, carefree look

WORK(OUT) FROM HOME

The many ways in which Covid-19 will change our relationship with the gym, forever

Words **RADHIKA AGRAWAL**

The treadmills are gathering dust, the barbells lie forgotten in a corner, and the pain of leg day is a distant memory. As we enter the second month of lockdown, people all over the globe are finding alternatives to hitting the gym for their daily workouts. In modern-day India, the idea of fitness has been closely linked with going to the gym. From middle-aged women in salwar-kurtas and running shoes to bulked up bros in tank tops, everyone associates the sweat shop with losing weight, gaining muscle and achieving the dream body they've always wanted. But now that the possibility of stepping out has been taken out of the equation, newer and – one might argue – more effective means of staying fit are popping up.

YOURS VIRTUALLY

Fitness is the need of the hour. Not only does a daily workout help keep you in shape and build your immunity, it also relieves stress and anxiety. And so, content around fitness has shot through the roof on social and online media to help beginners as well as seasoned fitness enthusiasts stay on track with their goals. From handstand challenges to online classes, everyone is partaking. “Virtual fitness services are no longer looked at as an alternate method of working out. They have, in fact, become the ‘new normal,’” says Jayam Vora, co-founder and COO of Fitternity.

It’s a great time to be a fitness blogger with a social media presence. Instructors have been taking both free and paid personal and group classes through Instagram Lives, Zoom and other such portals. “Necessity is the mother of all inventions. I encourage my students to make the most of their home space by incorporating sofas, chairs and kitchen shelves in their workout challenges,” says fitness and lifestyle coach Sudipta Mondal.

Videos of actors like Katrina Kaif working out virtually with their trainers – Yasmin Karachiwala, in this case – have flooded the Internet, giving us a longer than usual peek into celebrity workouts. And with all this information out there, it’s up to us to keep up. “With a variety of workout options to choose from and guidance provided by industry experts and trainers, virtual fitness acts as a boon to individuals who want their fitness services uninterrupted and from the comfort of their homes,” says Vora.

Home workouts have also opened up the age-old debate of bodyweight workouts vs. strength based ones, with a newfound fan base for the former. With no option but to ditch the bulky weights and machines, people are discovering the benefits of doing different variations of functional exercises such as push-ups, pull-ups, handstands, squats, burpees, and more. “Body weight training is foundational for one to start one’s fitness journey, but it’s not only for beginners. Advanced students can take on more challenging movements and workouts without the use of expensive equipment,” explains Rahul Kaul, fitness instructor and founder of BoxFit.

That’s not all. According to Mondal, the benefits of this type of training are threefold. “Firstly, you don’t have to depend on anyone or anything. Secondly, the chances of injury are



Rahul Kaul: At war with battle ropes

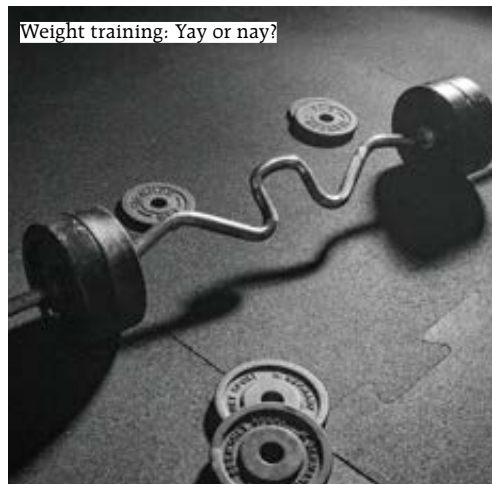
significantly reduced. And lastly, you end up developing muscle mass the right way,” she explains.

THE WAY FORWARD

So, will people flock to the gym once the lockdown is lifted? Vora believes that the fate of physical gyms is tied with the discovery of a vaccine for Covid-19. And once we’ve closed the chapter on this disease, a two-pronged fitness model will arise. “In a futuristic world, both the engagement models between users and gyms/studios will co-exist, leading to higher revenue and more footfall both virtually and offline,” he explains.

What this basically means is that you will finally be able to make informed choices about your preferred means of working out. Signing up for a gym won’t be the only way for you to embark on a journey of fitness. “There will be a clearer distinction of people who will go out for their fitness needs and those who will bring fitness equipment into their homes,” says Kaul.

I don’t know about you, but I’m rooting for a world where a holistic approach to health and fitness has no room for gym selfies and ‘bro science’. 📸



Weight training: Yay or nay?



A stable relationship: Katrina Kaif and her stability ball



Sudipta Mondal: A new perspective on fitness

LAUGHING MATTER

The comedy star is all set to break the Internet with his newest stand-up special



I was in school when Kanan Gill first became a viral sensation. Now, this is less a ploy to make him feel old and more a means to assess how far he has come. It has been an interesting ride for the 30-year-old, who in 2014, teamed up with fellow comic Biswa Kalyan Rath for the YouTube series *Pretentious Movie Reviews*. He has since made appearances on shows like *Comicstaan*, and created a mildly popular comedy sketch, *Sketchy Behaviour*. You might argue that he hasn't been around as much as you'd have thought, based on the love and support he got early on in his career.

But all that's about to change, because Gill is back with a new stand-up special, this time on Netflix. In *Yours Sincerely, Gill* the comedian talks about the goals he had set for himself as a teenager, while contrasting the expectation then with the reality today. And he does so with a bag full of charm, hilarity and endearment.

GRAZIA: You were one of the first Indian comedians to go viral on the Internet. How do you think it has evolved since then, with the onset of OTT platforms?

KANAN GILL: There are a lot more creators now. It's amazing that now you can get the kind of content you want in the language you want, all from India. OTT platforms in India are at a place where TV usually is in other countries. It's the next step for players of the self-shot self-produced field.

G: Tell us about the latter that was the inspiration behind your new special.

KG: I wanted to talk about what drives us and why, and how it feels like to look back on what used to be important to us. I think a lot of us laugh at the dreams we used to have, but are still completely serious about our current dreams.

G: You talk about your health – both physical and mental – in your special.

How do you think comedy can be more involved in conversations around mental health?

KG: I really only joke about my own experience of physical and mental health. That was a difficult part of the show to write. But I tried to be fair only to my own life and feelings. Of course, it had to be wrapped under many layers of contrivance, but that's just what I do.

G: What's the one thing you'd want viewers to take away from the special?

KG: I think there's a variety of things people can take away. I don't really want to force an interpretation on people. But yes, it would be nice if everyone came out of it less stressed out.

G: How is your on-stage personality different from your off-stage one?

KG: My on-stage personality is that of a professional comedian who will make you laugh, because you are an audience member who bought a ticket. My off-stage personality is to be a ticket-holding audience member of the world and demand fulfilment. I'm quiet, boring and I space out easily.

G: Who or what makes you laugh?

KG: Really lame jokes. Weird, odd things. I've found this to be true of some of the best comedians and artists I know. They all have the oddest sense of humour. **👏**

Words RADHIKA AGRAWAL



Kanan Gill: The 'almost' musician

**Yours sincerely,
Kanan Gill**

MONTH IN MONTH OUT

MOVIES, ART, BOOKS, AND MORE, HERE ARE OUR TOP PICKS OF THINGS THAT GOT US TALKING THIS MONTH



Saiyami Kher as Sarita Pillai



Anurag Kashyap

DIRECTOR'S CUT

This filmmaker has found a new home for his art

There was a batch-mate in college who worshipped Anurag Kashyap. He would study his films between classes, bring him up in every conversation possible, and fashion his own short films around the director's filmmaking style. Kashyap has inspired a whole generation of young, aspiring filmmakers – people who aren't afraid to break the rules to create something memorable. From *Black Friday* to *Manmarziyaan*, his journey in Bollywood has been a true cinematic delight. He was also one of the first A-list directors to enter the OTT space with *Sacred Games* in 2018, the show that changed the way we looked at web series (and Saif Ali Khan). And now, he's back to solidify his relationship with the Internet with his next film, *Choked: Paisa Bolta Hai*, starring Saiyami Kher and Roshan Mathew. We sat down with him to find out more about the new Netflix original, which explores the story of a young couple in Mumbai against the backdrop of demonetisation.

GRAZIA: What made you want to make a film about a political topic like demonetisation?

ANURAG KASHYAP: Nihit (Bhave) wrote this script long before demonetisation, and it came to me somewhere around 2015.

It was always a script centred on marriage, but we felt that something was missing. So, when demonetisation happened, Nihit decided to rewrite the script to incorporate it. A film has to chronicle the times that we live in. Having said that, it was our intention to make sure that the core story revolved around a story of a marriage, and the aspirations and dreams of the young couple. In the film, each character's political expectations depend on their individual expectations from life. My politics could not have been thrust into the film – or it would've become propaganda.

G: Tell us about the treatment of the movie's soundtrack. As a director, how do you play with music and silence in scenes where there are no dialogues?

AK: I, for one, love music. I believe it makes silence so much more interesting. When I start with a film, I'm not always sure what I'll do with the music to find the sound of the film. For *Choked*, I asked Karsh Kale and Rachita (Arora) to play to their strengths. I've wanted to work with Karsh for a long time. He started out as a tabla player, and no one has really explored his full potential.

G: What has your experience been like with the OTT world?

AK: I've found my home here. I've been able to reach out to my audience because of it, even for older films that didn't have massive stars or couldn't stay in theatres for too long. I've found it so much more liberating, because the amount of money I get to make the film is based on the script rather than who's in it.

G: With Covid-19, it'll be a while before things go back to normal. How do you think the industry will cope?

AK: We are privileged – we can still sit at home, shoot on our mobile phones, and upload it online. Besides, we still have content that can last us for some time. It's the daily wage workers who will be impacted the most. And they comprise the largest chunk of the industry. But this too shall pass. I'm confident that we will adapt to the situation and come out stronger. **G**



Roshan Mathew as Sushant Pillai

SHOT IN THE DARK



Amitabh Bachchan plays a grumpy landlord

The Gulabo Sitabo director reveals why he chose to release his film on an OTT platform

In the last five years, filmmaker Shoojit Sircar has consistently directed memorable films. In 2015, he gave us a slice-of-life comedy, *Piku*; In 2016, the courtroom drama, *Pink*; *October*, a coming-of-age love story in 2018; and finally in 2020, he's back with *Gulabo Sitabo*. Set in Lucknow, this comedy-drama stars Ayushmann Khurrana and Amitabh Bachchan in the lead roles, seen on screen together for the first time. The movie was revving for a big theatrical release over the summer, that is before Covid-19 decided to put a spanner in the works. But instead of holding onto the film until later, the director chose Amazon Prime Video as the medium for its release, which is scheduled for June 12th. We sat down with Sircar to talk about his decision to release the film digitally, his inspirations and more.

GRAZIA: What is the premise of *Gulabo Sitabo*?

SHOOJIT SIRCAR: It's a slice-of-life film with just the characters and their world, and the camera moves around with them. For the first time, I've tried my hand at a satire on life through these characters.

G: Films based in small towns present challenges of their own, the biggest being that of authenticity. How did you tackle this?

SS: I'm not from Lucknow and I had never shot there before. I'm from Kolkata and there are a lot of similarities between Lucknow and old Kolkata. Besides, I wanted to create

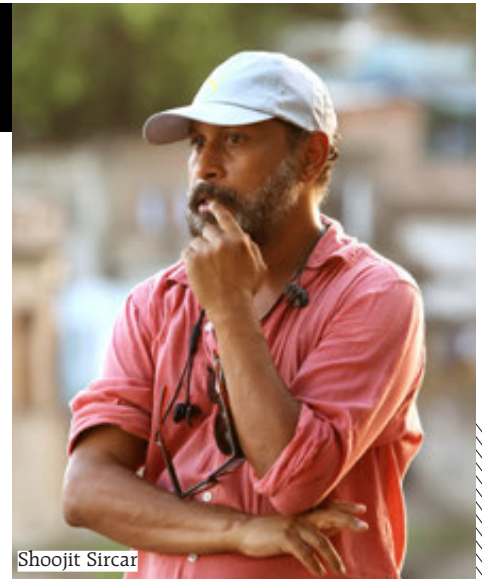
a new imagery for this film, so I picked locations that had never been seen before, other than the monuments, of course.

G: You have worked with both Ayushmann in *Vicky Donor* and Mr Bachchan in *Piku* and *Pink* before. What was it like bringing them together for this film?

SS: The idea was to create a freshness and novelty. We had thought of Mr Bachchan for the film when we started writing the script, so we'd already informed him. We struggled with his look a fair bit. Ayushmann came on board much later. I ran his name by Ronnie (Lahiri), and we all became quite kicked about seeing the two of them together. Both of them are like kids when they're on set – the age difference doesn't matter at all.

G: Why did you decide to release the film on an OTT platform, instead of waiting for theatrical release?

SS: Amazon Prime has a massive reach. I was told the film would go out to over 200 countries, which is something I've never experienced for my previous films. But the main thing that was running in our heads was that theatres would not open for a while.



Shoojit Sircar

It seemed like a good time to experiment with the digital space. In general, it's very difficult for me to hold onto a film once it's finished. I'm always in a hurry to release my films.

G: What do you think the future looks like for the film industry?

SS: The industry has already been severely impacted by Covid-19. Our technicians haven't worked for over two months, and I gauge the situation will not improve for another few months. But I think once we do go back to work, in due course of time, a new discipline will be adopted on set as well as in cinema halls. **G**

Ayushmann Khurrana as Baankey and Amitabh Bachchan as Gulabo

