

Ishq In A Backpack

A HONEYMOON ADVENTURE

IDOL CHATTER: SAAWARIYA



Q&A: RANBIR KAPOOR AND SONAM KAPOOR

BY SONA CHARAIPOTRA

As a kid, in my steady diet of late '70s Bollywood cinema, no one looked as appetizing in a purple velvet flared jumpsuit than young Rishi Kapoor, son of Raj, grandson of filmi forefather Prithviraj. Now another generation of Rishi's sweet-faced and smooth-moved son Ranbir, is gracing silver screens big and small in the uber-lush Sanjay Leela Bhansali romance *Saawariya*, now available on DVD. And he makes his debut opposite another up-and-coming Bollywood scion, actor Anil Kapoor's daughter Sonam Kapoor. Here, IshqInABackpack.com chats with the newcomers about growing up Bollywood.

Growing up a Kapoor must have had its advantages when it came to scoring that big Bollywood break, right?

SONAM: The reason I got to work with Mr. Bhansali in the first place was because I am my father's daughter. But he never treated me like a kid of a star, he treated me as an individual and I respect him & love him for that. People on the set were also totally professional and quite nonchalant about our backgrounds, and we never expected any special privileges. But I do feel very privileged to be Anil Kapoor's daughter. My mother has always told me to give people the benefit of the doubt, but also not to see them with rose-tinted glasses.



RANBIR: It's definitely feels great to be a part of Kapoor Clan. There is an upside because you obviously can get big break and people look forward to seeing your films but the downside is that the expectations are so high. People are critical right down to how your hair or nails look. So, there are ups and downs to everything. I am not saying that somebody else's struggle is more than mine or mine is more than his. But everyone has his own struggles and I have mine too.

Making your debut in a Sanjay Leela Bhansali flick is no small achievement. You both worked with him behind-the-scenes in *Black*—what was your experience like in front of the camera?

SONAM: Working with Sanjay Leela Bhansali for the past four years was like going to college and getting an education. I never expected him to pick me as the heroine for this film. When he decided to cast me, the only thing I could say was "Are you serious?" And then I was just grateful to him for having so much faith in me and giving me a sense of self worth and confidence. Whatever I may become in the future as an actor will be thanks to him. Honestly, I told Rani Mukherjee that I was desperate to work with Sanjay when I learned she was acting in *Black*. I began working for him as an assistant on *Black*. It was during this time that he decided he wanted me as a heroine in one of his movies. My father (Anil Kapoor) is a perfectionist so I know what it is like to push yourself beyond your limitations. Mr Bhansali definitely pushed us beyond our limits, and he actually pushed himself the hardest. Today, after four years with him, I know he is a magician. I am completely in awe of him and can talk to him about anything.



RANBIR: After I saw *Devdas*, that's when I decided I wanted to work with him and eventually ended up by assisting him on *Black*. *Saawariya* was an out-of-control experience. I was acquainted with life behind the camera, but being in front of the camera was entirely different. But Sanjay really took good care of Sonam and I. It was a brilliant experience working with him and given the chance, I would love to work with him again. I don't think I could have had it better than this. But I wouldn't call *Saawariya* an easy film to make. I think I am too new so I don't have experience to gauge it. But yes, it wasn't an easy process. We worked really hard but Mr. Bhansali gave us everything he had. He imparted his

knowledge of cinema and of life to us, which helped us a lot. So, I wouldn't call it easy but I can't say it was difficult because he made it easier than it could have been for us. I've learnt more just working on this one film with him than I could in 10 years. He is a perfectionist. We are more like friends now and through this experience we were able to share a father-son like bond.

Growing up Bollywood must have been a trip. Were you close to your famous fathers?



SONAM: My parents gave me everything but they also ensured that I was brought up as normally as possible. My parents are a unit and they make joint decisions. At the end of the day my dad comes home and leaves his work behind, so there has never been any conflict with that. From my mother he learned to be sensitive to world issues and this awareness was instilled in us. I studied theatre arts, English and History and hence I have a good perspective on the world and larger issues and try not to get carried away with the smaller stuff. Even though my father used to work three shifts, there hasn't been a time when he wasn't around for the important or even the small intimate moments of

my life or that of my siblings. He is great at pep talks and instills us with enthusiasm through both the low points and high points. I couldn't have a better father. I've never seen my dad work, but I've heard some amazing stories of his professionalism, hard work and brilliance. I hope I can be as honest in my trade as he is. I also hope the discipline that he has instilled in all three of us serves us in our respective career paths.

RANBIR: My mother [actress Neetu Singh] is the brightest spot in my life. I cannot see beyond her and everything that makes her happy makes me happy. She is always thinking of us. I am very protective of her and don't like anyone judging her, which is why I don't see her movies. As for my dad, there was a point when I didn't know that he was an actor because we were always shielded from the set. While I was growing up we didn't have a close a relationship because he was always away working. Actually, I assisted him on his film *Aa Ab Laut Chalen* by default because my ICSE Board exams were over and I had the usual holiday break after that. Dad was



shooting in America and he said "Why don't you come along. You can take a holiday and can assist me at the same time." So, it was a mixture of both, and that is the first time we really starting bonding as two adults. I don't know if I am as good as him. I also don't know if I can live up to those expectations and can even be compared to him. Maybe I have a style of my own. I don't think he had a style of acting which can be copied. A lot of people say I sound like him and smile like him. I think I have learnt more from him off screen. I am waiting for my father's reaction [to *Saawariya*] because he is completely honest, even if he is talking about his own family. He will call a spade a spade, so he won't hide whether he loves or hates me in the film.