



**Priya
Mulji**



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Thanks, Karan Johar

THIS column comes to you while I am sat in front of my computer listening to the title track of the new romantic drama *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil*, which is directed by one of my all-time favourite filmmakers Karan Johar.

There is a lot to be said about Bollywood in 2016. I, for one, love the alternative cinema that breaks boundaries, but inside of me exists that dreamy-eyed girl who is the Anjali of *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*. The one who still hasn't been saved by her knight in shining armour, Rahul. The Naina Catherine Kapur of *Kal Ho Naa Ho*, who's waiting for her angel Aman to make her believe in love again.

Ae Dil Hai Mushkil looks like it is a film about unrequited love, which I can tell you I am an expert on. You could make a long-running TV series about my failed attempts to find love, which have been one-sided, and if you have read my column for any period of time, you already know this.

Single life for a woman in her mid-30s is so so hard, and people say as you get older, it gets easier. No it doesn't – if anything, it gets harder.

With the abundance of alternative cinema in this day and age, that little girl inside of me just wants to watch a film that will make her forget that she is single, and like in the 90s and early 2000s, believes that someone, somewhere is made for me.

I want to see someone like Kajol or Preity Zinta, who isn't a size zero, show me again that it's okay to have glasses and not be contoured to the max, but that in the end Rahul will fall in love with her.

I have had a problem recently where I haven't been able to cry. I have tried everything – soppy films, depressing music, thinking about sad times, and therapy with friends, but nothing has bought me to tears.

When I spoke to someone about this, they told me it is because my heart chakras have hardened and that my ability to feel love has been taken away by those loser men who just hurt me over and over again.

Someone like Karan is like magic though. Listening to *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil* is breaking those barriers and I can't wait to see the movie in all its glory. The emotions he can bring to the screen is untouchable, and in many ways I will always be Anjali. That girl who will always be a tomboy and can't see without my glasses or contact lenses.

Karan, I salute you, keep giving this hopeless romantic faith, and help me to believe love will find me, that my knight in shining armour exists, and one day true romance will find a way.



Mani Kohli: A fine

by DIMPLE SAGHANI

A MAINSTAY in the fashion industry, entrepreneur and ace designer Mani Kohli has always been synonymous with strength, determination, creativity and a relentless passion for work.

The big-thinking couture queen has been the head of Khubsoorat Collection for 30 years and is now leading the British Asian Fashion Network, an organisation she created to promote, collaborate and connect members of the British and Pan Asian fashion community.

This continues the journey of a pioneer who has paved the way for original and artistic interpretations of bridal, fusion and pret fashion. She forges ahead with her timeless, feminine and refined designs, along with effortlessly integrating ethnic fabrics and embroideries into a silhouette that is reflective of each individual client's personality, body shape, lifestyle and occasion.

Eastern Eye got the forward-thinking Mani to look back at her remarkable life in fashion...

When I was 12 years old... I would often watch beautiful actresses like Zeenat Aman, Parveen Babi and Neetu Singh in Bollywood films. They became huge inspirations for my dress sense and were the earliest style icons I admired.

Another style icon I admired growing up... was Sophia Loren. I thought the beautiful Italian actress was the epitome of a stylish woman. She was so graceful and effortlessly elegant. Watching her on-screen shaped my work in the future.

I remember watching the Bollywood film *Pakeezah*... and absolutely falling in love with the breath-taking costume design. Meena Kumari had the most amazing anarkali dresses which seemed so dream-like and elegant. I always felt they were so opulent and resplendent, epitomising true Indian craftsmanship.

One of my favourite designers growing up was... Chanel. It was a very aspirational brand. They inspired me to create an Indian ready-to-wear designer brand, as there wasn't one at the time.

Archie comics were also a great inspiration for me... and I thought (character) Veronica always had the best clothes! So in a very quirky way, she was a great muse.

My father was... an army officer posted in Shillong, India. This exposed to me to a liberal, rock and roll environment at the age of 12/13. Hot pants and skirts with slits were all the rage; however, none were available as ready-made garments. This inspired me to create something new and unique.

I was educated in a convent, which meant... that social gatherings were encouraged in order to mix the girls and boys' schools. Dressing well was key and we were required to find the right balance of modernity and conservatism.

A movie character who influenced me growing up was... Scarlet O'Hara in *Gone With The Wind*. I distinctly remember feeling inspired when watching her. The tight corsets certainly left an impression on me and my future work.

When I was 14 years old... my father was posted to Goa, which was a fabulous move as it introduced me to the bohemian arena. I was surrounded by maxi dresses, frills, cat-suits, jeans and halter necks. This broadened my palette and had a significant influence on my dress sense.

Growing up, Fridays became special because... I was able to spend my meagre pocket money on fabrics. I wanted to learn the art of dress-cutting, but with my own patterns. My mother assisted me with stitching, and by Sunday I would have a brand new outfit! Usually school fetes and music festivals were when I got to show off my flare for self-styled garments. I definitely stood out for being fashionable.

By the age of 16... I had entered college and

AN INDUSTRY INNOVATOR LOOKS



had transformed into a fashion diva. My brother bought me my first pair of Levi jeans – these were a real treat as they were not easily available in India in those days. I lived in those jeans and experimented with outfits, pairing every style of tunic with them. I was the envy of my social circle!

One trend I remember very well growing up is... when platform heels, flares and hipsters came steamrolling into fashion. I used to love wearing platforms as they helped give me a little bit more height. I wore them to complement every fashion statement I made. I also loved the round go-go shades. I remember we used to wear them in an assortment of coloured rims – white, red and yellow.

On my wedding day... I wore a bright fuchsia, loose bottom salwar-kameez, with a beautifully embroidered chiffon dupatta in gold zardozi and turquoise thread-work. I can still vividly remember the colours and feel of the material.

When I was 18... I arrived in London and the world changed for me in terms of style. Suddenly I was exposed to a brand new world. I remember searching for Asian clothes and not being able to find any! It was this that kick-started my journey as an Asian clothes designer.

I will always remember the first collection I made in 1983... It comprised of salwar suits with beautiful hand embroidery – it was very popular.

My first store opening... will always have a spe-