

Yahoo, again

FILM Shammi Kapoor may share the screen with his grand-nephew Ranbir in *Rockstar*

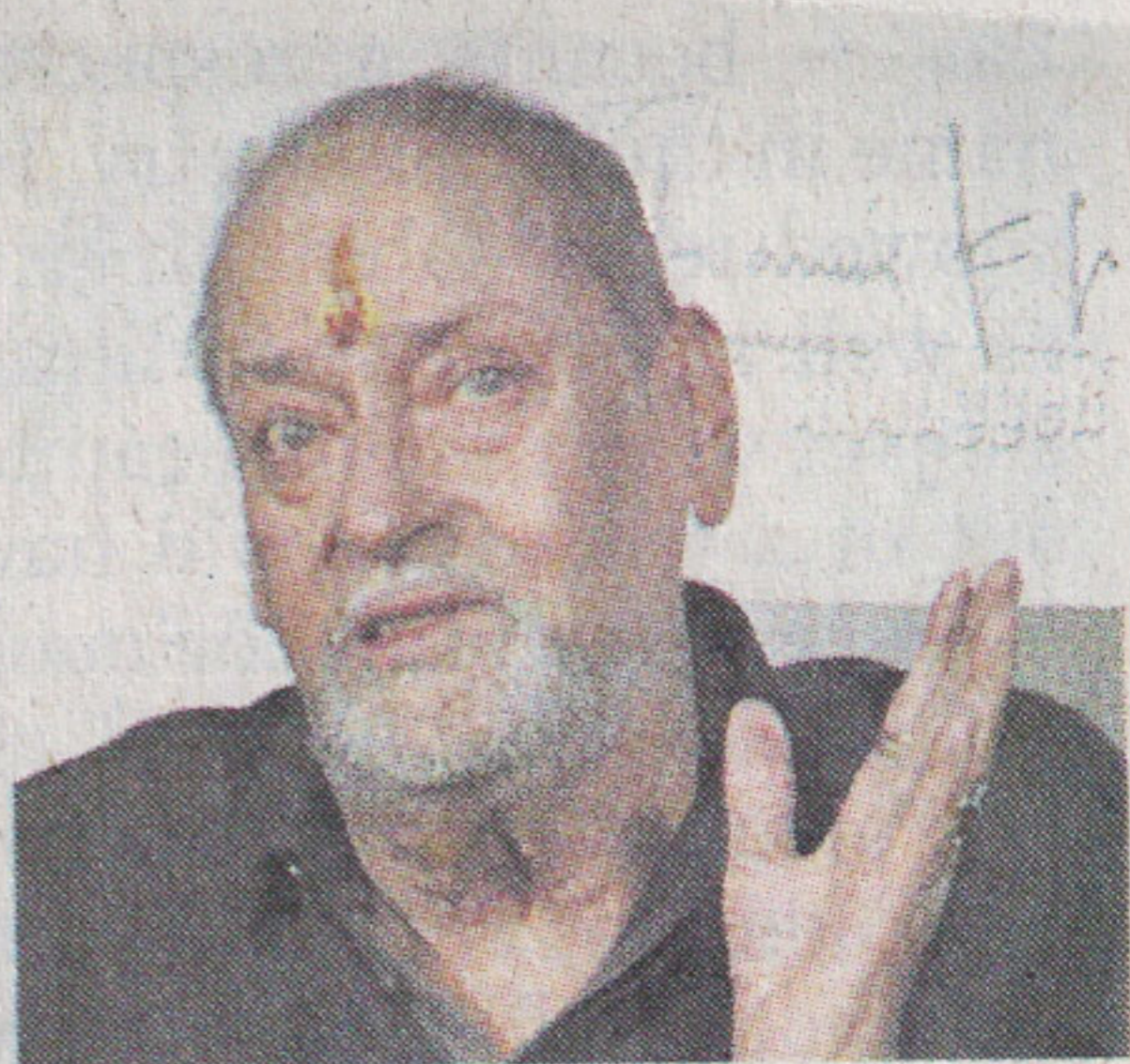
SURESH KOHLI

"Maybe, and really maybe," was the expected tentative, non-committal response to the report of his acquiescence to filmmaker Imtiaz Ali's request for a special guest appearance in his next, "Rockstar" with Ranbir Kapoor in the lead. "My health raises the big question mark. I would have loved to do it. Ranbir is just superb – he is a great actor. Talented, handsome and a wonderful dancer. But let's see," said Shammi Kapoor, the self-taught rocking star of Hindi cinema of the 1950s and the '60s. His last fleeting appearance, as an unnamed producer was in a nondescript Hindi flick, "Bhola in Bollywood".

However, his last decent release was "Kareeb" more than a decade ago, though he was also visible in a couple of otherwise non-starrers, including Dev Anand's "Censor" in 2001. "Dev made me look like a glorified joker," he confessed, controlling his trademark laughter.

Going back in time, Shammi, who was seen only for a fleeting moment during a dance sequence (after a string of flops) in "Awaara", does not have a single (unlike his peers and contemporaries) unreleased starrer till date. And he has acted in 140 films, including 62 as the hero. "I succumbed to Dev's persuasion, didn't even hear the role. I owed him."

His moment came after 21 successive flops, and he latched onto it when Dev Anand walked out of "Tumsa Nahin Dekha" after a few scenes and title song picturisation because of bad vibes with the financier, Tolaram Jalan, and his muse, Ameeta. The film became a golden jubilee hit, and there was, indeed, no looking back for a new-look Shammi. He went on to be called the "Rebel



Star", redefining stardom in mainstream Hindi cinema.

Although the three brothers went on to become major stars, they never worked together, or even in combination – though Shammi has acted with nephews, Randhir and Rishi in a handful of RK films, notably "Biwi-o-Biwi", "Prem Rog" and "Henna". And now there is the possibility of working with grand-nephew and current heart-throb, Ranbir.

"Honestly, believe me I would love to work with Ranbir, but for my health." When egged on, and confronted with stories of Imtiaz's plans to shoot with him during the breaks in bouts of hospitalisation for dialysis thrice a week (the veteran star suffers from acute kidney failure, necessitating blood transfusion), he heaved a sigh, and said, "Well, nothing has been finalised yet. At the moment it is maybe, and really maybe. Given my state of health, and circumstances, we are still working on the possibilities." The way things are being planned out, the director hopes to wrap up the former rollicking star's work in seven days flat. What Shammi's role will be, considering Ranbir is the star of "Rockstar", is anybody's guess, and the extent to which his aging legs can take the burden of his large frame.

Time alone will tell. Rock, Shammi, rock, till you have the boots on, and bring alive the magic once again.