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HELLO!

MEN IN FOCUS

VIJAY VARMA,
TAHA SHAH,
ALEX SANCHEZ
AND MORE



ARJUN KAPOOR

REVS UP FOR A NEW
CHAPTER IN FITNESS,
FILMS, SUCCESS AND
SELF-DISCOVERY

INTERIORS SPECIAL
DISCOVER INDIA'S
BEST DESIGNED HOMES
AND THE CREATIVE
TALENT BEHIND THEM

BANITA SANDHU
CROSSING OVER
FROM BOLLYWOOD
TO BRIDGERTON





TO THE MEN IN OUR LIVES

It's time we extend gender acceptance and banish stereotypes

“Hi, guys!” the Digital Editor of the magazine remarked casually as she started her daily morning catch-up call.

Only thing to note: on the screen were six team members, and only one of them was “a guy”.

If a man were to do this in a roomful of women, would you take him to task? Or, have you, like the Digital Editor and her colleagues, erased gender distinctions to naught?

I've often questioned chivalry and the term “stronger sex”. In college, we joked that the Stronger Sex is, in fact, the Weaker Sex, because of the weakness of the Stronger Sex for the Weaker Sex.

If chivalry is dead in the way it used to be, it's only a good thing. I know many young girls who'd like to pay their part through a date, and hold the door open for their men when they want to.

It is with these thoughts that we bring to you a celebration of men and male pursuits in this issue. From Arjun Kapoor on the cover, who has battled fitness issues, box-office challenges and incessant scrutiny of his personal life... to actor Vijay Varma whose talent lights up the screen, just as brightly as his love for fashion.

The man of the moment, however, is the newest Nawab in



town, Tajdar Baloch aka Taha Shah Badussha, who charmed his audience despite the “red flag guy” his character in *Heeramandi* was meant to be.

Another favourite story of mine is the one that features Gentlemen Collectors: Akshat Bhatt's collection of guitars is as impressive as Sanjay Jain's passion for valuable books. Then, there's Nirmal Sethia whose passion for teas has made him convert it into a full-time occupation. All three gentlemen show that the shallow, single-track image society paints of men being interested in wine, women and song, is flawed and incorrect.

As gender biases evolve, let's empower our men to thrive: to

explore their true personalities and pursuits, and liberate themselves from the pressure of being the strong, stoic providers they are singularly believed to be.

Then, one day, we might find ourselves in a room filled mostly with men, with just a woman or two present, and we'll greet everyone with a casual “Hello, ladies...” And everyone will know that the entire room is being addressed... and nobody will care a hoot!

AVARNA JAIN

Chairperson
RPSG Lifestyle
Media



Highlighting Akshat Bhatt's guitar collection, the vulnerable sides of our cover star Arjun Kapoor and Vijay Varma, and the irresistible charm of Taha Shah Badussha, this issue celebrates the evolving facets of masculinity

THE GENTLEMEN COLLECTORS

THEY POSSESS A KEEN APPRECIATION OF THE FINER THINGS IN LIFE AND HAVE ACCUMULATED EXTENSIVE ARRAYS OF RARE AND EXQUISITE ITEMS RANGING FROM ART AND TEA TO BOOKS AND GUITARS. HELLO! HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF VISITING THE HOMES OF THREE PASSIONATE COLLECTORS WHO GRACIOUSLY SHARED THEIR COLLECTIONS WITH US, SHOWCASING THEIR PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE AND UNWAVERING PASSION FOR THEIR CHOSEN PURSUITS

GUITAR HERO

AKSHAT BHATT

As the Principal Architect at the firm Architecture Discipline, a New Delhi-based multi-disciplinary architecture practice he founded in 2007, Akshat Bhatt's biggest passion isn't evident at first go. However, upon speaking to him, his love for guitars becomes evident. "I've been playing and studying the guitar since I was 13 years old. It started with a casual exploration of rock music because I thought it was cool and then it turned into an obsession!"

The obsession began when he saw a Guns N' Roses video on MTV, and he began practicing 18-20 hours every day. He spent hours learning songs, music theory and scouting for new music. His first instrument was an acoustic archtop, made in a small workshop in Kolkata. He later found an old Les Paul, which he still owns and plays to this day.

His sizeable collection includes modern instruments that are progressive and technical, mainly built for performance. There are Vigiers, Wolfgangs, EVHs, Musicmans, Godins, Parkers and even a hand-cut Caparison. There are also pedals, processors and valve amps, mostly made for stage performance. "Most of these guitars are played as they were meant to be played, they are set up for progressive metal performance and often modified to suit my style of playing," he explains.

PURSUING HIS PASSION

Akshat firmly believes that the instruments find him instead of the other way round.

He recalls the story of an instrument he sold in 1997 to a friend who shifted cities and couldn't be traced. Many

years later, he spotted it in a YouTube video, found the person who bought it on Facebook and hounded him for three months until he agreed to sell it back to Akshat in 2017. Another precious memory is attached to a Parker Fly guitar his mother had offered to buy for him in 1994 but which he hadn't fancied at the time. Having changed his mind years later, he finally acquired it after an eight-hour bidding war on an auction site based in London.

Another precious memory is missing Sachin Tendulkar's innings in his last match in New Delhi, for which Akshat had tickets, because he had spotted something on the way and just had to get it.

"My engagement with the guitar has profoundly influenced my approach to my work, and heavy metal music is my window to the world," shares Akshat. "Before studying architecture, I was already studying music, which taught me the value of intensity and hard work. I focused on expression and space. Over the years, this discipline intertwined with my architectural education, solidified my belief in progress, optimism, sustainable development, and a strong work ethic."

Akshat also strongly believes that the pursuit of music and architecture are similar in many ways. The only difference is that music is deeply personal and completely individual. He emphasises that music fuels his creative process and demonstrates a different dimension of his work and inspiration as an architect. "I believe in self-referencing, so one doesn't need external input or stimuli for inspiration and energy. Creative dialogues begin within one's own mind."



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