



Aamir Khan An Actor and a Star

Aamir Khan, one of the most versatile and intelligent actors in the current crop in Bollywood, is basking in the success of his latest film *Rang De Basanti*. The 40-year-old etched out with élan the role of a fun-loving college student who makes a conscious effort not to get into the real world in the Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra film.

"I think this is his best performance till date. It was very gutsy of Aamir to do the role. And he allowed it to be so graceful. Most importantly, at the end of the film we remember all the actors' names," director Sudhir Mishra noted.

The year started on a positive note for the prolific actor. First, he tied the knot with his long time girlfriend Kiran Rao. This was followed by the release of *Rang De Basanti*, which has struck gold at the box office, becoming the first hit of the year.

"It got a phenomenal opening and so far it has sustained the success. Till now the total collection from the film is approximately Rs. 35 million and the occupancy rate is 75 percent in most of our outlets," said Saurabh Varma, Marketing Head of PVR Cinemas. "Going by its current performance, we are expecting it to become a top grosser like *Bunty Aur Bubbly*," he added, referring to the Abhishek Bachchan-Rani Mukherji starrer that was among the big commercial successes of 2005.

After the poor showing of the historical *Mangal Pandey*, people appeared to have lost confidence in Aamir Khan. And they were apprehensive about his playing a young college student in *Rang De Basanti*. But those fears have now been allayed and his performance is being praised both by the critics and the mass audience.

"I know and you know that he is 40 years old.

But what is important is whether or not he is playing the role of a college student convincingly on screen. And I think he did a great job," said director John Mathew Matthan. "In fact, I had also cast him as a college student in my film *Sarfarosh*. He was in his mid-30s then, but he carried it off well."

Aamir doesn't allow his star status to eclipse his characters and his films. So far, in most of his movies he has allowed his character to take charge. Little wonder, we still remember Munna of *Rangeela*, Ajay Rathod of *Sarfarosh*, Bhuvan of *Lagaan* and Akash Malhotra of *Dil Chahta Hai*.

And there is no clash between his star status and his characters. He balances them with ease. He stays away from the media glare because he believes people won't come to see his film for his interviews and photo sessions and *Rang De Basanti* proves this point. He irked mediapersons by barring them from his wedding celebrations. But this bad publicity couldn't stop his film from becoming a success.

A highly selective actor, Aamir Khan has, in the last five years, appeared in only four films — *Lagaan*, *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Mangal Pandey* and *Rang De Basanti*. Except for *Mangal Pandey*, the other three were huge commercial successes.

When *Mangal Pandey* faltered, the actor was subjected to heavy criticism for distorting the image of the freedom fighter. But the success of *Rang De Basanti* has wiped out the grey patches.

Years ago, he decided to boycott award functions and do one film at a time. But 2006 has two films by him — *Rang De Basanti*, which is already out, and Kunal Kohli's *Fanaah* with Kajol.

Remember, in 2001 he had two releases — *Lagaan* and *Dil Chahta Hai* — and both had created history? Will history repeat itself this year? ■



Aamir Khan in a still from 'Mangal Pandey' and, top, from 'Rang De Basanti'