

Recently at the VCCCI event in Mumbai, I saw Nitin Dossa's 1947 Oldsmobile which featured in the film *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*. It's the 'kissing car' in which Sanjay Dutt kisses Vidya Balan while singing the song *Samjho Ho Hi Gaya*. I believe Sanjay also drove the Oldsmobile as he is quite an auto enthusiast and his collection includes a Ferrari, Audi R8 and more. His father, the late Sunil Dutt also owned many nice cars including a Jaguar and a Ford Mustang.

Interestingly, some Indian film actors have been very avid car enthusiasts and amongst the earliest was actor and producer Sheikh Mukhtar, who was one of the first Indian screen villains. He owned a 1931 Mercedes-Benz SSK Roadster and a supercharged 1936 Duesenberg SJ, which was owned by an ex-Maharaja of Holkar, that he purchased from the Maharaja of Idar. If that is not enough, he also bought the Maharaja of Orcha's 1930's Cadillac V16 - an amazing car that could do a top speed of 160kmph! Sheikh Mukhtar was also a member of the Classic Car Club of America.

Sohrab Modi, the Parsi stage and film actor, director and producer known for making historical films, had a 1920 Packard and several other cars. Actor Motilal who starred in Raj Kapoor's *Jagte Raho* and Bimal Roy's *Devdas*, was fond of Cadillacs and had several. Actor, producer, director and comedian Mehmood had a Jaguar XK 120 and a 1965 Chevrolet Corvette, which is now part of Abbas Jasdhanwala's car collection. Mehmood was also the first Indian to own the first generation Honda Civic hatchback with a honeycomb front grille. Superstar Rajesh Khanna was fond of sportscars and had many including a Sunbeam Alpine, Fiat Spider, Ford Mustang and even a Lotus Elan, that is now also part of Abbas Jasdhanwala's fine collection.

Ashok Kumar liked cars too and bought the Maharaja of Mysore's very impressive Daimler. Kishore Kumar made the film *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi* starring him and his brothers Ashok Kumar and Anoop Kumar. A Ford Model A featured prominently in the movie and the title song was filmed in it. Kishore Kumar also owned one of the few Mercury Cougars to come to India. The favourite car



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was seen driving some excellent cars and in *Qurbani*, he actually destroyed a Mercedes-Benz W114/ W115, something unimaginable at that time!

Shashi Kapoor had a Mercedes-Benz 190 SL. Some Indian actresses were fond of cars too and Nutan had a Ford Mustang, which is still with her son Mohnish. Waheeda Rehman was one of the few to travel in a Jaguar S-Type and Zeenat Aman drove around in an orange coloured Mercedes-Benz 280S that is now part of the Gondal car collection. The Royal Family of Gondal also owns the black Cadillac Limousine seen in the film, *Amar Akbar Anthony*. Raaj Kumar, the star with a distinctive style, had all his cars painted in a combination of black and white. He had a Mercedes-Benz W 123 Coupe, a convertible Chevrolet Impala, a Volkswagen Passat, few jeeps etc.

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though has to be the 1959 Chevrolet Impala convertible. Most big stars had one. Shammi Kapoor who loved driving had several as did Jitendra and OP Ralhan, a Bollywood producer, director, writer and actor. In the 1964 film *Shehnai* starring Biswajeet, a convertible Impala featured notably in many scenes and songs. In fact many films of that period have songs shot in Chevrolet Impalas. Jeeps were very popular too and again many songs were filmed in them, including the all time favourite *Mere Sapno Ki Rani*.

One of Amitabh Bachchan's earliest cars was a Pontiac Le Mans, and both he and his son Abhishek now own Rolls-Royces, Bentleys, a Range Rover, Porsche Cayenne etc. Feroz Khan was a true car lover and even made *Apradh*, a film in which he played a racing driver named Ram Kumar. The film was partly shot at Le Mans and it is believed it was Steve McQueen's 1970 film, *24 Hours of Le Mans*, that inspired Feroz Khan to make *Apradh*. In most of his films, Feroz Khan

Amongst present day actors, Jackie Shroff has to be one of the keenest on cars. He has owned cars like a Pontiac Firebird Trans Am and Lotus Esprit. In fact the climax scene of *Rangeela* has Jackie's Lotus in it. Apart from modern cars, Jackie also loves classics and at one time owned a Mercedes-Benz 540 K and a Jaguar SS100. Others enthusiasts from the present lot are Ranbir Kapoor who has an Audi R8 and a whole lot of other cars. John Abraham loves both cars and bikes. Sadly, the Badshah of Bollywood, Shahrukh Khan, is no car lover. In fact he once told me he just buys whatever his friends or family recommend and many times is not even aware of the car he is travelling in!

These days many cricketers are also into cars. Of course in earlier years Tiger Pataudi was known for his fleet of cars and loved driving his 1931 Buick and Jaguar XK 120 which was gifted to him by the Nawab of Bhopal. Everyone also knows of Sachin Tendulkar's passion for cars and motor racing whereas Mahendra Singh Dhoni loves bikes. **DD**