

My Name is Khan a love story, not about terrorism: Shah Rukh



Bollywood actors Shah Rukh Khan (right) and Kajol smile during a news conference for their forthcoming movie *My Name is Khan* in Mumbai Dec. 16, 2009. (Reuters)

MUMBAI: Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan says his upcoming film *My Name is Khan*, which pairs him with co-actor Kajol after an on-screen hiatus of eight years, does not have terrorism as its main theme and is mostly a love story. "This film is first and foremost a love story. In fact this is one of the nicest love stories I have ever participated in - and I have participated in some of the best love stories that have been made here," Khan told reporters on Wednesday night after the first look of the film was released. Directed by Karan Johar, *My Name is Khan* tells the story of an autistic man

Rizwan Khan (played by Shah Rukh Khan), who is caught in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. Khan, co-actor Kajol and Johar are teaming up after more than eight years, in what has been billed as one of the biggest releases to come out of Bollywood in a while.

The film is widely anticipated by fans of Khan and Kajol, whose great on-screen chemistry have helped deliver several hits in the past.

Fox Star Studios has signed a deal to finance and distribute the film, which unconfirmed media reports have pegged at 21 million USD.

However, both Johar and Fox have refused to confirm the figure, which, if true would be the highest ever for a Bollywood film.

"This film will be a step towards Indian cinema reaching worldwide," Khan said. India, home to the world's most prolific movie industry, has long tried to draw wider audiences, including by forging ventures with Hollywood studios looking to offset sluggish box-office sales with new markets and cheaper production costs.

My Name is Khan releases worldwide on Feb. 12, 2010. -Reuters

Eminem named artist of decade on US charts

LOS ANGELES: Eminem has earned Billboard's artist of the decade title, just slightly more than 10 years after he made his Billboard Hot 100 debut.

The decade-end artist recap ranks the best-performing acts of the past 10 years (from Dec. 4, 1999, to Nov. 28, 2009) based on activity on two charts: the Billboard 200 albums list and the Billboard Hot 100 songs tally.

The hip-hop king first graced the Hot 100 chart Feb. 27, 1999, with "My Name Is," then racked up another 27 entries from 2000 onward. On the Billboard 200, all five of his sets released in the decade reached No. 1. Additionally, his album *The Slim Shady LP* debuted and peaked at No. 2 in the spring of 1999, but continued to chart in 2000. Eminem is also the top male artist of the decade. The female honor goes to Beyonce, while the top duo/group is Nickelback.

Beyonce's solo career began in the 2000s, notching 23 Hot 100 singles and five No. 1s. On the Billboard 200, she's racked six entries, including three studio efforts that all went to No. 1.

As for Nickelback, its entire Hot 100 history is contained in the '00s, and it started off well with its first No. 1, "How You Remind Me." The rock act has since earned five more top 10 singles. The group's last four albums reached the top 10 on the Billboard 200, including the No. 1 set "All the Right Reasons," which spent 156 weeks on the list.

Though Eminem is the decade's top artist, he was not the top performer for any single year. In 2000 and 2001, Destiny's Child netted the prize, followed by Nelly in '02, 50 Cent in '03 and '05, Usher in '04, Chris Brown in '06 and '08, Akon in '07 and Taylor Swift in '09. Eminem helped kick off the decade with a bang, as *The Marshall Mathers LP* was one of five albums in 2000 to sell at least 1 million copies in one week. On the Billboard 200 dated June 10, 2000, it opened at No. 1 with 1.8 million, just a week after Britney Spears' *Oops! ... I Did It Again* debuted at No. 1 with 1.3 million and two months after 'N Sync set the one-week Nielsen SoundScan sales high of 2.4 million with



FILE - Eminem seen in an undated photo while performing in a concert

No Strings Attached. "Strings," the pop quintet's second album, tops the decade-end Billboard 200 albums tally, ahead of Usher's *Confessions* (No. 2) and Eminem's *The Eminem Show* (No. 3).

All told, of the 20 biggest one-week sales frames for an album in SoundScan's 18-and-a-half-year history, 14 of them were in the 2000s. On the flip side, of those 14 weeks, only three of them came in the last half of the decade, thanks to the debut weeks of 50 Cent's *The Massacre* (2005, 1.1 million), Kanye West's *Graduation* (2007, 957,000) and Lil Wayne's *Tha Carter III* (2008, 1 million).

So what happened in the late '00s? The collision of supernova-bright pop stars in the early 2000s with the limited availability of commercial singles yielded tremendous album sales achievements and Billboard 200 triumphs. But by the middle of the decade, those wild and crazy days were mostly a thing of the past, thanks to the single biggest thing to change the music industry and Billboard's charts in 2000s: the Internet.

Once consumers popularized file-sharing services and used digital retailers like Apple's iTunes store, the Billboard 200 started to reflect many music buyers' desire for single-song purchases instead of a full album. -Reuters

Madonna leads list of 2009's top music tours

NASHVILLE: A year ago, many were predicting a downturn - if not disaster - for the music touring industry in 2009 based on a gloomy economic forecast, particularly in North America.

A look at the top tours of the year shows that there were plenty of acts people wanted to see. A dozen of the top 25 tours topped 1 million in attendance, and Madonna and U2 reported 2.1 million and 3 million tickets sold, respectively. The numbers are based on data reported to Billboard Boxscore from the print magazine issues dated Dec. 6, 2008, through Nov. 21, 2009.

In terms of grosses, five tours exceeded \$100 million at the box office, and 18 were at \$50 million-plus. Leading everyone is U2 with its groundbreaking 360 tour, which reported a staggering \$311.6 million in grosses and 3 million in attendance from 44 sellouts. And that's just the first leg. U2's strategy of boosting capacities by staging a first-ever mobile 360-degree configuration clearly paid off. The band averaged more than \$7 million in revenue and attendance of nearly 70,000 per show, surely the highest averages ever reported to Billboard Boxscore.

Not only is the Irish band's production fiscally sound, but it's also a crowd-pleaser. Word-of-mouth is driving ticket sales well into 2010.



Madonna and daughter Lourdes Leon attend the premiere of *Nine* at the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York, on Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2009. (AP)

With around 50 stadium shows scheduled for next year, compared with 44 in 2009, U2 is on a pace to top \$600 million total, which will make it the highest-grossing tour ever, surpassing the Rolling Stones' Big-ger Bang tour of 2005-07.

The second leg of Madonna's Sticky & Sweet tour finished second for the year, coming in at \$222 million, on her way to the top-grossing solo tour ever. Madonna's numbers are also among the highest per-show averages ever, taking in an average \$4.8 million in sales and 47,565 in attendance per show.

Bruce Springsteen continued his marathon with his E Street Band in 2009, morphing the Magic tour into the Working on a Dream tour without missing a beat. Springsteen's take for the year was \$156.3 million from 72 shows and attendance of 1.7 million. The total take for the two tours, since October 2007, is \$388 million and 4.1 million in attendance from 171 shows. Among them: the final shows of Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J., and the Spectrum in Philadelphia.

AC/DC's return to the road after an eight-year absence continued in 2009, with the Aussie rock act grossing \$135.3 million with attendance of 1.6 million in an international run that included stadiums and arenas.

If there's a surprise among the upper echelon of tours in 2009, it would have to be pop singer-songwriter Pink, who put up superstar numbers on an international scale. Pink's \$102.9 million gross and 1.5 million in attendance is enough to rank her fifth among all tours and puts the artist on the map as one of the top earners in the world.

Dutch violinist/composer Andre Rieu staged the sixth top-selling tour of year, playing 112 shows to 834,992 fans for a gross of \$95.8 million.

Coldplay's second year of touring in support of the band's "Viva la Vida or Death and All His Friends" album was strong, grossing more than \$84 million with worldwide attendance of 1.2 million.

Jonas Brothers proved that their career is still on the upswing, reporting \$73.3 million and more than 1 million in attendance from 62 shows. This is the band's second straight appearance in the top 25.

Country superstar Kenny Chesney managed his seventh consecutive year with more than 1 million in attendance, as his Sun City Carnival tour drew 1,034,021 and grossed \$71 million.

Seventies hitmaker Fleetwood Mac returned to the road in 2009 and quietly put up big numbers, grossing \$62.6 million and selling 640,201 tickets to 59 shows.

And it was another year, another top-ranked tour from Dave Matthews Band, which in 2009 had the added juice of touring on a new record, "Big Whiskey & the GrooGrux King." DMB grossed \$52 million and drew almost 1 million in attendance.

The best news in the year-end chart is that there's a real infusion of new headliners into touring's elite. A shift in the trend toward veterans is evident, with two of the top 25 tours by acts that broke in the '60s, four from the '70s, five in the '80s and four from the '90s. Britney Spears, Coldplay and Brad Paisley (No. 24 on the recap) all released debut albums in 1999, but they're really development stories of this decade, along with fellow Top 25 Tour acts Jonas Brothers, Il Divo, Lil Wayne (the only hip-hop artist in the top 25 tours for 2009), Rascal Flatts, Pink and Nickelback. For a music business that many feel has struggled in the artist development arena, this is encouraging news. -Reuters

Alicia Keys finds 'freedom' from Motown sound



FILE - Alicia Keys performs on the NBC "Today" television program in New York. (AP)

NEW YORK: A music industry desperate for bankable superstars has all but anointed Alicia Keys as heir to the golden era of Motown, when Aretha Franklin, Smokey Robinson and others made it seem easy to pump out timeless R&B hits. Keys, however, is haunted by the prospect.

"The Motown era, the songs did something to you that you couldn't get enough of, they sent the hairs on your skin standing up and taught you about what love really is and life is," Keys, the 28-year-old hitmaker, told Reuters. "I think about it, all the time."

In many ways, Keys' fourth and newest album that hit stores this week, *The Element of Freedom*, is a rebellious thrust away from a Nu-Motown sound that helped to win many fans.

Keys' earlier albums were filled with pleading love songs belted-out in her raspy voice, backed by her gospel-inflected piano playing. While *Element of Freedom* offers fewer soul-baring moments from behind the piano, it serves up many catchy, ringtone-worthy melodies, crunchy drum beats and synthesized

grooves.

In the single, "Try Sleeping With a Broken Heart," Keys hits unmistakable pop pay dirt. The drum machine and organ sound like something from Prince's early 1980s playbook. And a duet with Beyonce, "Put It In a Love Song," might pack nightclub dance floors with its strong, bottom-heavy beat.

Keys' solo version of a recent collaboration with Beyonce's husband, Jay-Z, *Empire State of Mind*, also appears on the record. The swaggering rap Jay-Z lent to the original track is absent, but Keys' smooth vocals keep the track a compelling, if less energetic, New York City anthem.

Reviews have been generally favorable according to website Metacritic.com, which compiles criticism and gives albums a score. *Element of Freedom* earned 71 points out of 100.

Keys has been among the hardest working people in showbiz since she broke onto the scene in 2001, and she and her growing cadre of musical collaborators have honed their craft.

While her evolving sound may not

offer die-hard R&B fans as many goosebumps as the Motown classics, Keys is cranking out radio-ready tunes every time she hits the studio.

"There are very 'hooky' parts you can put in, that people can sing along with you which I find can be the biggest songs," she said.

Keys' first starring role behind a piano was in a Manhattan kindergarten, and while there is less of the instrument on her latest album, Keys said she is looking forward to an upcoming tour that will give her time to play and compose.

"When I was younger it was mandatory, I studied very diligently at the time and was playing three hours a day. Honestly, I still should be doing it that way. Time management becomes a little difficult," she said.

Keys also said she's working on ideas for a Broadway debut, although it's not clear whether she'll act, direct or write.

"I want to do the stories and music, create a piece, a play. I don't necessarily want to act in it. I may, I may not." She's not ready to give away the plot either. "You have to wait and see." -Reuters