

Double trouble

The team of *Do Patti* speak to mid-day about their upcoming thriller, a sibling story which will see Kajol playing a cop for the first time in her three-decade career

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I'VE ALWAYS loved thrillers. Be it [those by] Agatha Christie, James Hadley Chase or Sidney Sheldon," producer, author and screenwriter Kanika Dhillon tells us. "There are various artistes, directors and writers who have been influences, [for instance]—David Fincher, in the way he holds tension. I also really enjoy writing thrillers." *Do Patti*, releasing on Netflix this week, is her second thriller this year after the Taapsee Pannu-starrer *Phir Aayi Haseen Dillruba*, a sequel to 2021's twisty *Haseen Dillruba*. Dhillon, however, is quick to point out the differences between the films. "Haseen Dillruba was a pulpy thriller, it was in-your-face, loud and unapologetic. *Do Patti* is more inward, subtler—its unpredictability creeps up on you. These films are at two different ends of the spectrum. I'm really enjoying the diversity and exploring these nuances within the larger genre of thriller," she shares.

Dhillon has also co-produced the film with its star Kriti Sanon, and shares how the experience taught her of the importance of good collaborators. "It made me appreciate the kind of people I partner with [because] they have your back and you are in it together. One really values that as a new producer."

Do Patti is a story of siblings, twins, played by Sanon, who do not have "obvious physical differences except for the length of their hair," the actress points out. "They were born and brought up in the same environment, and speak in a similar manner. It is their personalities, the way they react to things, their expressions, and their [respective emotional] baggage from their past, that was different."

And then, there's Kajol. "The writer and producer in me were doing cartwheels," Dhillon tells us excitedly of the day the actress accepted the role. The character, a cop assigned to investigate a case involving Sanon's characters, had to have a sense of authority and believability, especially since much of the story is told from her perspective. "The audience has to instantly connect with her and we knew that Kajol, as an artist, connects hugely with audiences



Kriti Sanon and Kanika Dhillon say that the cop character in their new film needed someone who had a sense of authority and believability, and whom the audiences could instantly connect to. Kajol fit the bill perfectly. **PIC/SATEJ SHINDE**



KAJOL ON KRITI

Kriti has done a lot more movies since *Dilwale*, where we worked together. Experience takes its toll, allows you to grow up. *Do Patti* was a more involved experience, and there was a lot more meat to work with



KRITI ON KAJOL

She's open to things if it's good for a scene and when there's a little pat on the back from her, it just means so much. **PICS COURTESY/NETFLIX**

across age groups and borders. [Getting her] was a big win," the screenwriter admits.

"I have been offered the role of a cop before, but I didn't want to do a throwaway [role] just because I hadn't done it before," shares Kajol. "It had to be done properly and in the right way. I felt that this was the right script for it. I loved it from the get-go." Though the script had enough to go by, the character underwent some alterations during the process of filming. "We got a little bit of a dialect and I think when you speak differently, you walk differently. Your entire body language changes," Kajol observes.

Kajol and Sanon have worked together previously in 2015's *Dilwale*. "A lot has changed in her since then," chuckles Kajol about her co-actress. "*Dilwale* was [Kriti's] second film and she's done a lot more movies in this time. Experience takes its toll, allows you to grow up." She admits that the Rohit Shetty film didn't have too many scenes of them together and by comparison, *Do Patti* was "a more involved" experience. There was "a lot more meat [to work with]" this time around.

The younger actress recalls the time when they shot *Dilwale* as one when she was still making sense of the world of acting and film sets and was both reserved and in awe of the people and processes around her. "I don't think we broke the ice at that point because [we didn't have a lot to go by]. I am glad that in this film we spoke about other things and discussed scenes." Besides being a remarkable performer, Sanon points out how Kajol is honest enough to indicate if a co-actor can do better in a scene. "She's open to things if it's good for a scene and when there's a little pat on the back from her, it just means so much."

I think one of the great things [about the old days] was that we didn't have mobile phones. You had nothing better to do on set. So, you bonded with the cast, crew.

Kajol

Kajol, from a film family herself, who has now effectively worked for more than three decades in the industry, speaks of some of the changes she's been witness to over the years. Vanity vans, she says, have been a positive change. "We didn't have them when I started work. It was ridiculously difficult to be on location and change clothes, or use the bathroom. One of the reasons I think we have more women in the film industry today is the proper amenities we have now. It has made a huge difference. I know it sounds small, but it isn't."

But there are things she misses about the old days too. "I think one of the great things was that we didn't have mobile phones. It gave us a lot more freedom and because you didn't have a phone, you had nothing better to do on set. So, you bonded. When you sat around on a set with another hundred people, you were bound to talk to somebody. And, your friends came over in between shots. I think at that time everything was not so specialised, so a 100-people unit was considered a really big unit. [The industry] has gone from being a small business to a big business. That's the main difference."

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