

COVER
STORY

SHAPE SHIFTER

With several awards under his belt and an ever-growing list of films, the multi-faceted actor, musician, director, and now producer, Neil Nitin Mukesh certainly knows a thing or two about keeping trim.

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STYLIST MANPREET KAUR HORA

HAIR VIKRAM JAYANTILAL PARMAR

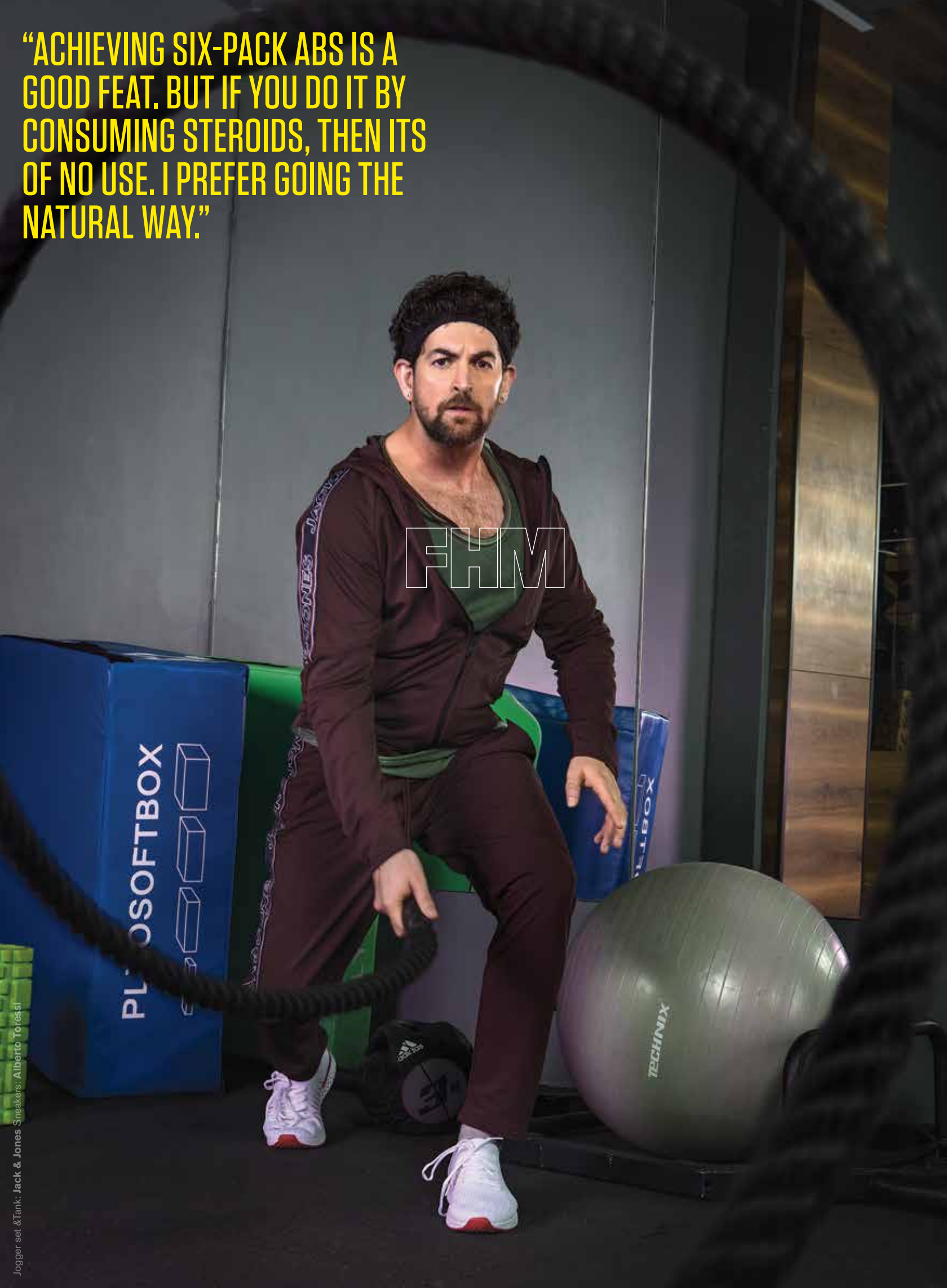
MAKE UP VASEEM SHAIKH

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Rocker iSmart Healthband by Zook

“ACHIEVING SIX-PACK ABS IS A GOOD FEAT. BUT IF YOU DO IT BY CONSUMING STEROIDS, THEN ITS OF NO USE. I PREFER GOING THE NATURAL WAY.”



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Neil Nitin Mukesh embodies virtues which are fast disappearing in today's world.

Versatile in his professional approach, he focuses on pushing limits and raising the bar for every feat that he undertakes. Our Bollywood actors have always endorsed fitness and the importance of having a fit body. While six-pack abs are synonymous with almost every actor now, there are few who still stand out of the lot and are termed the fittest of the fit. Neil epitomises what it means to be one of those actors who are ready to burn the midnight oil, and stay in shape while keeping the healthy and natural route in mind.

With a family lineage of music and melody, Neil can also be called a boy with the golden spoon. But destiny was set to make him known amongst the masses as a diligent actor, who is versatile with the roles that he takes up. Amidst his busy schedule and an intense workout at the gym, Neil opens up about turning into a producer, creating his own content and being the best bad guy onscreen. Edited excerpts...

You come from a family of singers, yet you chose to be an actor. What made you bypass the musical route for the theatrical and commercial aspect?

I like to don one hat and add many feathers. I'm an artist and that's the umbrella brand, and all of the rest are just offshoots. After cinema, I guess it's music and production that are my stress busters. Music anchors me and helps me connect with my emotional side. Becoming a producer was a long awaited dream and something I worked towards for many years. I happened to meet Madan Paliwal of Miraj Group and he was kind enough to back my vision. I think everything I do compliments the other and it just polishes that multi-faceted tag. Someday I'd like to launch my own restaurant chain because I dig quality cuisine and can cook up a storm. I'm actually a pure-bred romanticist, when I make a commitment, I endorse it a 101 per cent.

Your choice of films, right from your debut movie Johnny Gaddaar (2007), has been



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WHAT'S THE FIRST THING THAT COMES TO YOUR MIND WHEN YOU HEAR?

- Junk Food**
Tempting
- Traffic**
Mumbai
- Fame**
Humbleness
- Melody**
Family Lineage
- Elegance**
Confidence
- Pride**
Self-esteem
- The Next Big Thing**
Me

unconventional. Is that a deliberate move?

My choice of cinema stems from a challenge. I'm a pretty culturally rooted man and I like to try my hands at different things, that I don't do 365 days in a year. Cinema for me is an adventure where I get to create, evolve, and yet have fun all along the way. Every hero is incomplete without a villain. The grey shades and negative roles attract me. Having said that, I'm open to doing all kinds of films, provided I get the right

team backing the project. I think I can make quite the conventional good-looking bloke in a romantic film. Sometimes playing bad pays off and in my case it clearly stands as testimony.

You have spent over a decade in the industry. How do you look back on your journey so far? What has been the biggest success and the biggest challenge?

I owe whatever I am today to my family, friends and fans. I always

Jogger set & Tank. Jack & Jones Sneakers: Alberto Torresi

Hoodie: Life by Shoppers Stop Sneakers: Nike Shoes: Alberto Torresi



Rocker iSmart Healthband by **Zook**
Thunder Plus Speaker by **Zook**

Jogger Set: Nike T-Shirt: Jack & Jones Headband: Nike Shoes: Alberto Torresi

was sure of the direction I wanted my life to take and every year I keep revisiting my to-do list to shape up that vision. I am constantly building my empire even if it means putting smaller blocks together first. I've never felt the need to be answerable to a multitude of people, the self-assurance needs to come from within and that happens only when you believe in your roadmap and you're not constantly seeking approval. There have been a lot of ups and downs, but life has to have a graph; it can't be a straight line.

I have worked with some fine filmmakers such as, AR Murugadoss, Vishal Bharadwaj, Sriram Raghavan, Madhur Bhandarkar, Sooraj Barjatya and more. I'm grateful that I've sustained so far. Initially, people said that I would probably not last too long because a singer's grandson and son becoming an actor is a major question mark. I'm glad I've been able to carve a niche for myself, no matter how small it is. At least people know of my existence and I am happy and proud of that.

How did Saaho come about? What was it about the role that appealed to you?

Saaho is one of the most exciting films of my career. When I heard the script for the first time, I just knew I had to be a part of it since it felt like larger than life cinema. Today young directors like Sujeeth, Ali Abbas Zafar, Siddharth Anand, Aditya Dhar are booming and that's why working on films like *Saaho* and *Bypass Road* is interesting because there is so much you can learn from these young minds.

RAPID FIRE

Your first celebrity crush?
Divya Bharti

What's one fitness myth that people should avoid?

That cardio is the best form of working out. I think it should be mixed with strength training and a proper healthy diet.

What is your ideal non traditional form of exercise?

Tyre lifting and rope climbing

What song do you listen to in the shower?

Tere Dar Par Sanam

What advice would you give your 20-year-old self?

Never stop dreaming and never compromise on your goals

How many calories do you target at burning on a daily basis?

When I focus on gaining weight I try to not hamper the muscle mass and aim at 500 calories a day. But when I push myself on burning fat, I would be working towards 1,200 calories a day.

Any phobias?

I am scared of height (Acrophobia) and speed (Tachophobia)

How do you push yourself to workout and not procrastinate?

For me fitness is all about inner strength, stamina and my energy level. I concentrate on being a fitter version of myself every day.

What title would you give to your autobiography?

NNM Diaries

When I signed the film I had a much leaner body. But the character demanded me to gain a couple of kilos and bulk up to give a mature feel to my character. Since the past 3 years I've been trying to maintain this weight so that it looks ideal on screen. As luck would have it, for *Bypass Road*, I also needed to put on a few extra kilos and we were shooting for both the films simultaneously. Being a multi-lingual film, I had to learn Tamil. I am familiar with Telugu since I had done *Kaththi* with AR Murugadoss. There was a huge take back home element with *Saaho* as I learnt immensely. I had to constantly be at the top of my game and make my on-screen presence felt since I was being pitted against some fine actors.



T-Shirt, Hoodie, & Shorts: H&M Sneakers: Alberto Torresi Ear pods and smartwatch: Apple

“EVER SINCE I’VE BECOME A FATHER, I AM MORE RESPONSIBLE. NOW, I KNOW THAT I NEED TO CREATE A LEGACY FOR MY DAUGHTER.”



What kind of a workout are you following these days, given that you have to constantly work on transforming your body for every role?

I follow a six-day workout routine along with cardio every alternate day. Sometimes, I do cardio daily, depending upon the body type I'm trying to achieve. I spend around an hour and 15 minutes every day on my workout. I concentrate on one body part, with three sets of six exercises, 15-20 repetitions per set, after which I do cardio for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. I love running, swimming, playing squash, tennis and aerobics.

The entertainment industry comprises of hectic schedules with unending working hours. How do you remain so dedicated to working out?

I think being fit is an indispensable ingredient for holistic well-being. Being in the business of entertainment, fitness plays a more imperative role because there is a corporal representation to constantly cater to. It's all about how you emerge on the big screen at the end of the day and being fit is an important criterion for being termed as desirable. I'm fit largely because I enjoy being fit, so its 90 per cent free will and 10 per cent compulsion.

Judging by your popularity, you have a physique that is in demand. How do you work on improving it consistently?

I come from a family with the tendency to put on weight, so I kept my eye on fitness from as early as class eight. I associate fitness with contentment. You should be fit so that you stay happy. Fitness is not a quest for a six-pack. Achieving six-packs is a good feat but if one has acquired it by consuming steroids then it is absolutely of no use. I prefer going the natural way.

How do you plan your diet with such rigorous workouts?

Also, what's your take on the superfood trend?

My day starts with a heavy breakfast of dates, six egg whites, and a bowl of porridge. After two hours, I consume a green apple. Lunch usually comprises of boiled vegetables or a bowl of vegetable broth without salt, and steamed fish followed by a protein bar. I start loading myself with carbohydrates like sweet potato and bananas because I work out from five in the evening. Post workout, I have a good protein shake that comprises of 40gms of protein. For dinner, I have lots of steamed fish and boiled vegetables. When I'm doing heavy training, a combination of low fat and high protein diet is what works for me. *Nimbupani* works for me, whenever I feel low.

Coming to your personal life, how has fatherhood been treating you? How has the experience changed you as a person? Have your priorities and outlook towards life and your career changed?

Fatherhood is the most beautiful life changing feeling after marriage. I'm completely in love with my life all over again, and am reliving my childhood. It's a mixed bag of feelings. I am a hands-on brother, son, uncle, and now father. Rukmini, my wife was quite shocked that I could look after a baby so well. I think I have become more responsible now, since I know

I need to create a legacy for Nurvi, something that she can take forward and be proud of.

Have you thought of exploring the digital platform, which is the in-thing right now?

Yes, I have been receiving a lot of offers but I will give it some time till I get offered a role that excites me enough. But, in the interim I'd like to produce content for digital platforms as I believe that's where the audience is today.

Tell us something about your upcoming projects.

I just wrapped up *Saaho* and now I have my first home production *Bypass Road* releasing on 1st November 2019.

How was your experience of shooting with FHM India?

It was an amazing experience. They made me feel extremely comfortable and at home. They have a loving and welcoming team. It was a memorable experience that I would cherish.

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QUICK FAVOURITES

Singer
Mukesh, Nitin Mukesh and Kishore Kumar

Sport
Basketball

Gadget
Apple iPad Pro

Holiday Destination
New York

Gym Buddy
My trainer

Cheat Meal
Pizza

T-shirt: H&M Hand gloves: Under Armour

Rocker iSmart Healthband by Zook