

THE
ESSENTIAL
GURU DUTT
WATCHLIST

He lived a life so short, gone at just 39, that he only directed eight films (most of which he also starred in) and acted in about half a dozen others. Here are Guru Dutt's most remarkable moments in cinema.

Baazi (1951)

His first movie as director was a stylish thriller with a dash of romance. It would birth a genre that came to be known as Bombay noir, typified by moody black-and-white cinematography, heroes who were rakish rogues, luminous heroines, and sultry sirens propelling the plot forward. In Baazi, the heroine, a doctor, falls in love with a taxi driver-turned-cardsharp (Dev Anand). A club dancer (Geeta Bali) loves him too, and has some sizzling numbers set to SD Burman songs (one being the unforgettable Tadbeer Se Bigdi Huyi Taqdeer).

Jaal (1952)

It was Bitter Rice, an Italian film Dutt and Dev Anand watched together, that sparked the idea for this one. In his autobiography, Romancing with Life (2007), Anand wrote: "The male lead... a roguish character, had all the shades of villainy in him. I did not mind doing that type of a role for a change." Set in Goa, Dev Anand played a ruthless smuggler who seduces a young woman named Maria (Geeta Bali) for sinister reasons. Watch it for his unusual turn as a cad, Bali's spirited performance, an evocative representation of a Goan fishing community, and for the evergreen song Yeh Raat Yeh Chandni.



Pyaasa (1957)

Even in a year of outstanding Hindi releases (Mother India, Naya Daur, Do Aankhen Barah Haath), Pyaasa stood out. Dutt's tale of a poet scorned by society remains a classic. Its poetry, songs and striking visuals were matched by dazzling performances, particularly by Dutt but also by Waheeda Rehman (left), Mala Sinha, Johnny Walker and Mehmood. It resurfaces regularly on lists of the greatest movies ever made.

Kaagaz Ke
Phool (1959)

Not even an audience primed by Pyaasa could embrace this grim, relentless tale of a once-successful film director's descent into poverty and alcoholism. Kaagaz Ke Phool bombed at the box office. Dutt was so dismayed, he never directed again. Today, the film is celebrated for its exquisite black-and-white frames, its powerful story, and for standout SD Burman songs such as Waqt Ne Kiya Kya Haseen Sitam.

Chaudhvin Ka
Chand (1960)

Set in Lucknow, this tale follows an aristocratic young man (Rehman) who falls in love with a beautiful woman (Waheeda Rehman) he has glimpsed just once. By a series of misunderstandings, he ends up helping her marry his best friend (Guru Dutt). Most of the tale explores what happens to the two men next. Directed by M Sadiq and produced by Dutt, Chaudhvin Ka Chand was a huge box-office hit, and still makes for riveting viewing.

Sahib Bibi Aur
Ghulam (1962)

Though it was directed by his long-time writer Abrar Alvi, this Guru Dutt production is generally considered the third in Dutt's great trilogy, following from Pyaasa and Kaagaz Ke Phool. The haunting story of a late-19th-century Bengali zamindari family's decline, it features outstanding music by Hemant Kumar, a starring role by Dutt, and a towering performance by Meena Kumari, as the neglected chhoti bahu who turns to alcohol in an attempt to win over her indifferent husband (Rehman).



hen (1950), he soon realised he could never stand out in a field dominated by the likes of Mohammed Rafi and Mukesh. So, when Dev Anand — who describes Khosla in his autobiography as "my coffee-house friend from the days I was working at the military censor office" — offered to recommend him to Dutt, Khosla accepted. Dutt, who was working on his directorial debut, Baazi (1951), took him on as one of his two assistant directors. Khosla assisted on his next three films too. In-between, he made his own directorial debut, with Milap (1955). The Dev Anand-Geeta Bali starrer, about a poor country youth who comes into a big inheritance and falls prey to swindlers, flopped at the box office. Fortunately, Dutt stepped in and offered him the chance to direct his next production, the noir thriller CID (1956). It was a

huge hit. Dutt would remain an important figure in Khosla's life and much of his work reveals influences of his guru's cinematic style. These influences are particularly clear in the way he used songs. They weren't just embellishments but carried the story forward. And they were exquisite, truly deserving of the term "evergreen". It was Khosla's films from the '50s and '60s that gave us Yeh Hai Bombay Meri Jaan (CID; OP Nayyar), Naina Barse Rim Jhim and Lag Ja Gale (Woh Kaun Thi; Madan Mohan), Mera Saaya and Jhumka Gira Re (Mera Saaya; Madan Mohan). Many of Khosla's films are remembered fondly even today: Do Raaste (1969; starring Rajesh Khanna and Mumtaz); Mera Gaon Mera Desh (1971, starring Dharmendra); Main Tulsi Tere Aangan Ki (1978; starring Asha Parekh and Nutan); Dostana (1980, starring Amitabh Bachchan). Yet, oddly, the man himself has faded from memory. In his centenary year — he was born in the same year as Guru Dutt — a new biography by Amborish Roychowdhury seeks to right this strange imbalance. **Jabbar Singh!** Two genres stand out in Khosla's filmography: suspense and the dacoit drama. In the former, the first two films of his famous trilogy — Woh Kaun Thi (1964), Mera Saaya (1966) and Anita (1967) — were



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almost Hitchcockian. The suspense is real, the plots taut. Both films keep the viewer on the edge of their seat. (The third was weak and faltered on plot and pace). Among the dacoit dramas, Mera Gaon... foreshadows the blockbuster Sholay (1975): A small-time thief and jailbird Ajit (Dharmendra) must protect a village from the depredations of a merciless daku (who is called Jabbar Singh!). Khosla saw hits and success in his peak years. Behind the scenes, however, a complex personal life was taking its toll. Khosla had fallen in love outside his marriage. Amid the turmoil, he sank into alcoholism. "Going by several accounts, he was mentally disturbed... The double life he was leading sat heavily on his lean shoulders," Roychowdhury writes in his biography. Khosla's later films, meanwhile, were neither commercially successful nor did they do justice to his talent. Work started drying up. His time was over. He died in 1991, aged 66, forgotten by the industry. Until the end, he kept a giant photograph of Guru Dutt in his office, Roychowdhury writes. "In the autumn of his life, it was not uncommon for journalists or assistants to walk in on him weeping in front of the portrait." Perhaps he was remembering his guru, perhaps he was remembering happier times, or perhaps it was a bit of both. (Poonam Saxena is a journalist and translator whose works include Dharmvir Bharati's iconic Gunahon ka Devta, Rahi Masoom Raza's Scene: 75 and Aleph's Greatest Hindi Stories Ever Told)

culture

Hot plate: The climate crisis is changing how food tastes



(Clockwise from top left) Longer summers are affecting the European hops that give beer its distinct flavour. Warming ocean waters have altered, and then led to the deaths of, billions of snow crabs in the Bering Sea. Onions are gaining pungency in drought conditions. A shortage of acorns amid heatwaves and droughts is affecting the prized Ibérico ham in Spain.

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The crunch of the apple, the tang of the grape and the sweetness of onion may be among the flavours set to change amid the climate crisis. Some cheeses are also losing their flavour, amid intensifying drought in certain regions; lettuce is becoming more bitter; and a premium ham is being impacted, amid factors such as changing soil composition, reduced rainfall and rising temperatures. Plants' attempts at adaptation are registering as changes in flavour, writes Kathryn de Master, an environmental resource scientist at the University of California, Berkeley. In 2019, she led a study focused on artisanal Wisconsin cheese and New England oysters and found that a drought in 2012 that affected much of midwestern America through spring, summer and autumn introduced climate-induced changes in the flavour profiles of both. The drought's impact on feed quality affected the taste of the milk from which the cheese is made, weakening the Wisconsin cheese's distinct flavour of nutty, earthy and tangy notes. Raised ocean temperatures in the same year made New England oysters more susceptible to bacteria and viruses (a particular concern since this seafood is consumed raw). In southwest Spain, meanwhile, a shortage of acorns amid heatwaves and droughts is affecting the sweetness of the prized Ibérico ham. Named after the Iberian Peninsula, the trademarked product retails for about Rs 750 per 100 gm. As farmers replace the missing acorns with supplements such as cereal, the change is altering the fat composition of the uniquely nutty and savoury ham. Lettuce, tomatoes and beer have been hit too. According to the American Society of Horticultural Science, the ideal average daily temperature for field-grown lettuce is 18.5 degrees Celsius. High temperatures affect growth and lower yield, while also leading to

tip burn and undesirable bitterness, the Society reported in 2022. Onions get more pungent when grown under drought conditions, according to a 2024 study by researchers at University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin. A 2023 study by scientists at the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS) and Cambridge University, meanwhile, found that hotter, drier and longer summers are affecting the European hops that give beer its distinct flavour. And a 2013 study conducted in Japan found that varieties such as the Fuji and Tsugaru apple are losing flavour and crunch, as a result of warmer temperatures. "When winters are too warm, fruit and nut trees do not enter a required dormant state. Without this 'chilling,' crop yields drop dramatically," says Michael P Hoffmann, professor emeritus at Cornell University, who specialises in research on how climate change affects food. Elsewhere, he adds, 10 billion snow crabs, known for their wonderful flavour, disappeared from the Bering Sea over about three years (2018-21), because of warming waters. "The warm waters increased their metabolism so they ate more and more until their sources of food were gone and they starved to death. Phytoplankton are also in decline in some regions of our oceans, raising concerns about the future of the fish we eat," he says. Hoffmann documents some of these pivotal shifts in his 2021 book Our Changing Menu. Co-authored with Cornell colleagues Carrie Koplinka-Loehr and Danielle L Eise-man, it chronicles how climate change is affecting yields of beloved foods such as cacao in West Africa, Brazil nuts in Bolivia, tea in India and sushi rice in California. Since this is an evolving issue, he adds, the book has a "living" component: a website where other researchers can post their findings too. We need to remind people of the power of food, Hoffmann adds. "It is the perfect package for the climate-change story. It's not only essential to life but is also deeply embedded in family histories and cultures. It gives us joy. Food is also easy to talk about, giving us unlimited stories to tell about what is changing, and how."

{ DEE FOR DRAMA }
Deepanjana Pal



Stream team

There have been some big disappointments in 2025 already, but let's focus on the good news. Our mid-year top five features anime, a new ER, vampires, cops and petty crime

Part comedy, part social satire and part murder mystery, this is a show about a hedge-fund manager who turns to crime to maintain his lifestyle after losing his job. His targets? His super-rich friends and neighbours. Jon Hamm is on song as Coop, ably supported by a talented cast that includes Olivia Munn and Hoon Lee. Your Friends & Neighbors shifts gears awkwardly halfway in and the finale leaves us with many questions, but the good news is that the Apple TV show has been renewed for a second season, in which James Marsden will join the cast.

TV done right: The Pitt (released in January)

What do Panchayat, The Bear, Squid Game and The Last of Us have in common? All released new seasons this year that have left fans disappointed. While this isn't good news for the entertainment business, there has been great news elsewhere, with some excellent additions to streaming platforms too. As we hit the mid-year mark, here are my top five picks.

Best film: Sinners (released in April)

It is unlikely that anything released this year will hold a candle to director Ryan Coogler's incandescent take on the vampire flick. Michael B Jordan is extraordinary as the twin brothers Smoke and Stack, who unwittingly attract the attention of the vampire Remmick (Jack O'Connell). Watch out for the way Coogler uses the sound of feet thumping in both song and violence; it's mesmerising. The film is now available on-demand, on Amazon Prime and Apple TV.

Hamm on Top: Your Friends & Neighbors (released in April)



Feminism, but make it fluffy: The Apothecary Diaries (2023; now on Netflix)

Adapted from a manga series of the same name, this animated show follows Maomao, a servant at the imperial palace, who is also an apothecary's daughter and therefore knows a fair bit about medicines and poisons. As a result, Jinshi, an influential eunuch, enlists her to help him track and intervene in various incidents of palace intrigue. Soon enough, Maomao seems to be the one calling the shots. This is escapist entertainment at its best and the anime wears its progressive heart on its sleeve.

A masterclass in build-up: Paatal Lok (S2 released in January)

The taut and thoroughly binge-worthy Amazon Original Paatal Lok delivers another great set of characters, while giving us more of the wonder that is Jaideep Ahlawat as Inspector Hathi Ram. Paatal Lok S2 reflects issues central to Nagaland, where the story is set, without losing sight of what it takes to craft a gripping context for crime and crime-fighting. All in all, a second season so good, one can even overlook the weak finale.

(To reach Deepanjana Pal with feedback, write to @dpanjana on Instagram)