



# Legends never die

On Madan Mohan's 30th death anniversary, **Subhash K Jha** puts together a tribute to the extraordinary musician

On a clear day you can see him forever. Madan Mohan, the talent extraordinaire who never got his due during his lifetime, is today one of the foremost retro-legends of Hindi music.

"His ghazals have no parallel. But he could also compose every other kind of song like the folk tune 'Jhumka gira re' which my sister Asha sang. Why don't we regard talent for what it's worth when it's with us?" wonders nightingale Lata Mangeshkar who sang a majority of Madan Mohan's mind-numbing melodies.

"Madan Bhaiyya was my rakhi brother and enormously gifted. His ability to create tunes was like an ocean. Some of his most loved compositions, for example, 'Aapki nazron ne samjha' came to him in a jiffy. He was very particular about the sur and other components of the composition. During the recording of 'Naino mein badra chhayee' for the film Mera Saaya, he broke the glass partition in the recording studio because a musician was playing off-key. That's why, even today, his numbers like 'Lag ja gale se' and 'Aaj socha to aansoon bhar aaye' sound so fresh. Sach much, unke barey mein aaj socha to aansoon bhar aaye (remembering him brings tears to my eyes). I remember when he lost the Filmfare award for his very popular score in Woh Kaun Thi; I told him he deserved it. His response was a quiet, 'Tumne bola wohi qafi hai (your just saying this to me is enough).'

Madan Mohan was like an emperor in ex-

ile. His entire career, which began in raga-earnest in 1950 with Aankhen, was a litany of 'wows.' Critics and connoisseurs raved over Madan Mohan's songs. But the charts told another story. 80 percent of Madan Mohan's classic melodies went into B and C grade movies. Apart from Chetan Anand and Raj Khosla, no top-notch filmmaker gave Madan Mohan a chance to compose in big-banner projects.

His son Sanjeev Kohli recalls how hurt and bitter his father was by the lack of commercial success. "I remember while driving for a family picnic, my brother and I were singing all the popular songs of the time, like Shankar-Jaikishan's 'Baharon phool barsao' and O.P. Nayyar's 'O mere sona re.' He just looked into the back seat with a pained expression that I'll never forget. It's sad, but despite his obvious talent he had to settle for

lesser films. The biggies just went to the others."

Until his death in 1975, Madan Mohan had done 104 films. The continued failure of his films and the changing environment in the industry led him into depression. Says Sanjeev, "My dad began to drink heavily. He died when he was only 51. Providentially, in 2004, I was able to trans-create his unused tunes in Veer-Zara. And I thank Mr Yash Chopra, who's my boss, guru and surrogate father, for this. Today, when I hear little kids singing 'Aisa des hai mera,' I feel my father has come alive again."

Ironically, both of Madan Mohan's posthumous scores for H.S. Rawail's Laila Majnu and Gulzar's Mausam, released in 1975, turned out to be money spinners. The man who composed gossamer feelings dressed up as songs, had finally arrived.

## MOHAN'S 10 BEST SONGS

- Lag ja gale se: Woh Kaun Thi
- Maai ri: Dastak
- Aaj socha to aansoon bhar aaye: Hanste Zakhm
- Hai tere saath meri wafaa: Hindustan Ki Kasam
- Dil dhoondta hai: Mausam
- Mushqil hai jeena: Sahib Bahadur
- Main to tum sang: Manmauji
- Woh chup rahen to: Jahan Ara
- Do dil toote: Heer Ranjha
- Meri aankhon se koin neend: Pooja Ke Phool

