

TO MOST EYES, it would seem like a personal tribute, but for Nissar and Amal Allana, who have put together a photo exhibition of the life and works of theatre, TV and film actor Manohar Singh, it is their way of saluting "one of the greatest contemporary theatre actors in India," in Nissar's words.

So 62 photographs of the actor, mostly while performing on stage, have been put up at Art Heritage, strictly for display. The photos span nearly three decades from the 70s till 2002, the year he died. While Nissar has shot some of the pictures himself, some of the snaps are by Shobha Deepak Singh, executive director of Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra, artist Gopi Gajwani, theatre guru Ebrahim

Alkazi and other photographers who had a chance to shoot Manohar, who, incidentally, was also chief of the NSD's Repertory Company. "His great work is not in films and TV but in theatre because this was his passion," says Nissar. And the passion comes

'Some people should always be documented. He's one of them'

—Shobha Deepak Singh

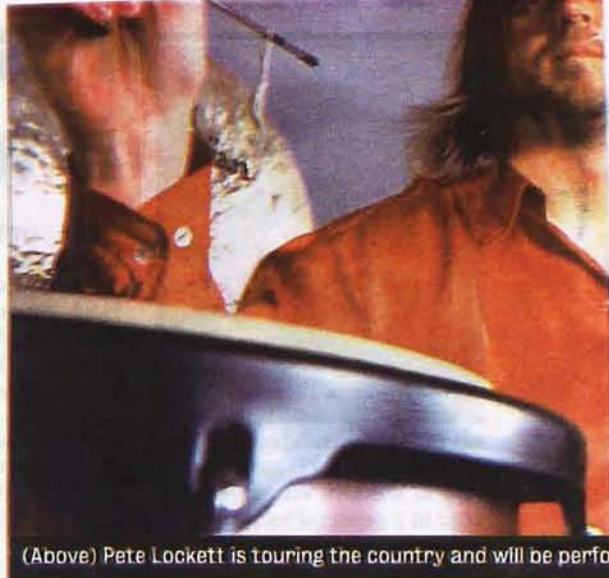
through quite clearly in the photos.

"Some people should always be documented and he's one of them. For me as a photographer his greatest quality was his ability to give so many different shades to one character. I

have his play on record, I have his voice recorded and I have enough negatives of just one play to make an exhibition in itself," says Singh.

The Allanas are now planning a book (should be out in six-eight months) and a film on Manohar Singh apart from a seminar on acting and performing for the contemporary actor. "I have a lot of footage on him; he did the maximum number of productions with us," says Nissar. Interestingly, when the Allanas formed Studio One, a theatre troupe in 1977, Manohar Singh was the treasurer.

On till April 12 from 11 to 7 except Sunday at Art Heritage, Triveni Kala Sangam, 205, Tansen Marg. Call 23719470, 23736226.



(Above) Pete Lockett is touring the country and will be performing

'Indian abstracts are at par with the best'

Curator and art book publisher from Paris, Ravi Kumar, releases a first-of-its-kind coffee table book on seven Indian contemporary artists today

Shougat Dasgupta

BACK IN 1960, Ravi Kumar left India to promote contemporary Indian art in Europe, Japan and the US. Six years later he stopped curating exhibitions and concentrated on publishing comprehensive, lavishly-produced art books. Since then he has published landmark books on topics ranging from Jain cosmology to Indian dance to Tibetan paintings. Now, Kumar is in town to launch his latest book, *Seven*, an examination of the work of seven contemporary Indian artists spread over three generations.

"Nothing serious has been published collectively on Indian abstract painters even though their work is on par with any great work of art anywhere in the world," Kumar

says. "*Seven* took about 15 months to put together and I had to work extensively in both India and France to select each artist and the works I wanted displayed," he adds. Ashok Vajpeyi, prominent poet and founder of Bharat Bhavan wrote the essays that form the book's text. Price: Rs 4,000.

Seven will be released at the India Habitat Centre today and is accompanied by an exhibition, curated by Kumar himself, of the works of the seven artists profiled in the book—Raza, Dhawan, Viswanadham, Bajaj, Akhilesh, Seema, Sujata and Manish. Kumar says, "It is the quality of the work of these artists that inspired me to return to curating." The exhibition is being toured around seven cities worldwide: "Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi, followed by London, Paris, New

York and next year Tokyo."

Despite having lived in Paris for almost 40 years, Kumar, born close to Sadar Bazaar, describes himself as "a Delhiite through and through." But the present Delhi skyline, "all those ugly skyscrapers on the Barakhamba Road," saddens him. Kumar pines for the Delhi of his childhood: "The most beautiful city in the world to me, totally green. In 1950 you could stand in CP and look out at Rashtrapati Bhavan in the west and the Jama Masjid and Red Fort in the north. It was a city of well-mannered people. Even now when I visit Delhi I take all my friends to Paranthewali Gali, a fascinating area and still the heart of Delhi."

On till March 31 at India Habitat Centre. Call: 24682001.

ISHAN TANKHA

