



I've been a struggling actor all my life: Soni Razdan



MUMBAI, MAY 13 /-/- In her almost four-decade-long career Soni Razdan has given Hindi film industry some memorable moments, but the veteran actor says the dearth of work throughout her cinema journey has always made her feel like a "struggling actor". The 61-year-old actor, who made her debut in Indian cinema with 1961 film "Chawringhee Lane", went on to star in critically-acclaimed films

The actor says while struggle can be heartbreaking, she channelled her frustration in a positive direction and ventured into other streams related to filmmaking. "Struggle is always very demoralising. It's not a romantic phase in anybody's life. It's very difficult. What it does, it brings out your creativity in different way. In my case, I started writing, reading, directing, looking at different avenues. I would have never thought when I was a young actor that I would want to direct... Till today I'm looking at other ways to hone my skills," she says. Razdan says she is glad she got a chance to work with "many interesting people and learnt a lot along the way". The actor, however, still wishes she had a better career in films. "I've never wanted to take it slow. People haven't really come to me with offers. If I've had a flood of offers, I would've done all of them. It's not that I refused work, I didn't get work. I refused very little work. I take up most of what is offered to me. "For some reason people

didn't give me work, didn't think of me while casting and I hope that's going to change now. Though every 10 years I say the same thing, but it does change a bit," she adds. The struggle to get the desired work had turned Razdan a bitter person, but today she holds no grudges against anyone. "For the first time, in the last ten years, I'm enjoying living. Earlier, I used to be 'I want to do this, do that' and for some inexplicable reason, that has evaporated. There's so much more to life than just acting or directing." Razdan credits age as a stabilising factor in her life. "May be it's the age factor, where you start valuing things a lot more than when you were younger. When you are young, you are impatient. Now I know I cannot do one thing but there's something else that I can," she says. Razdan, whose latest release thriller-drama "Raazi", co-starring daughter Alia Bhatt, has opened to rave reviews, says going forward she only hopes she gets more work to showcase her talent. (PTI)



Director Eva Husson poses with cast members Emmanuelle Bercot, Ervin Ahmad, Golshifteh Farahani, Sinama Alievi and Mari Samidoio. Photocall for the film "Giris of the Sun" (Les Filles du Soleil) in competition at 71st Cannes Film Festival, Cannes, France—REUTERS

Georgina Chapman breaks silence on Harvey Weinstein scandal

LOS ANGELES, MAY 13 /-/- Harvey Weinstein's ex-wife Georgina Chapman has opened up about the sexual harassment scandal that saw the downfall of the powerful Hollywood producer, saying she "never suspected" him of any wrongdoing. "There was a part of me that was terribly naive—clearly so naive. I have moments of rage. I have moments of confusion. I have moments of disbelief! And I have moments when I just cry for my children." Chapman, 42, told Vogue in an interview for the June issue of American Vogue. This is Chapman's first interview since the scandal, which comes seven months after dozens of women accused Weinstein of sexual assault and harassment. Asked whether she had suspicions, the fashion designer replied: "Absolutely not." "I had what I thought was a very happy marriage. I loved my life," she said. In the aftermath of the scandal, Chapman had announced that she was separating from Weinstein, with whom she has two children — seven year-old India and five-year-old Dashiell.

Chapman, who founded the brand Marchesa with her friend Keren Craig, said she avoided going out in public for five months after the story broke. "I was so humiliated and so broken... that... I didn't think it was respectful to go out," she said. "I thought, 'Who am I to be parading around with all this going on? It's still so very, very raw. I was walking up the stairs the other day and I stopped; it was like all the air had been punched out of my lungs,'" she added. When she first became aware about the allegations against Weinstein, Chapman said she lost "ten pounds in five days. I couldn't keep food down." It took her two days to accept the reality. "My head was spinning. And it was difficult because the first article was about a time long before I'd ever met him, so there was a minute where I couldn't make an informed decision. And then the stories expanded and I realized that this wasn't an isolated incident. And I knew that I needed to step away and take the kids out of here," Chapman said.

Recently actor Scarlett Johansson wore a Marchesa at the Met Gala in New York. She was the first celebrity in months to wear the label at a high-profile event. Chapman said the brand's absence from the award season this year was her decision, despite several actors offering to wear something to show their support. "We didn't feel it was appropriate given the situation. All the women who have been hurt deserve dignity and respect, so I want to give it the time it deserves. It's a time for mourning, really," Chapman said. (PTI)

Spoke to Shahid about 'Bhavesh Joshi' briefly: Motwane

MUMBAI, MAY 13 /-/- Director Vikramaditya Motwane has revealed Shahid Kapoor was initially in talks for his upcoming film "Bhavesh Joshi". Actors like Imran Khan and Sidharth Malhotra were also being sought for the superhero vigilante film, which now features Harshvardhan Kapoor in the lead. "We spoke to Shahid, but it was very briefly. For this film, casting went through a lot of changes. Imran Khan was to be part of it, then it went to Sidharth Malhotra. "With Imran it was like his career wasn't going well and we couldn't raise the money. I am quite sad about it with Sidharth, it just fell apart. With Shahid, it was just a conversation, it was not formulated," Motwane told PTI. "Bhavesh Joshi" will see Harshvardhan as a vigilante fighting corruption in the society and Motwane says the idea emerged from his own experiences. "Bhavesh is a local superhero... Sometimes being a vigilante and putting a mask only seems to be the solution as there is frustration. As long as the story and emotions are in place, it will strike a chord with audience," he adds. The director says the era of '80s-'90s of Hindi cinema

was a huge influence in creating the outline of a vigilante. "The angry young man of '70s like Amitabh Bachchan, and in the '80s there were Anil Kapoor and Sunny Deol. So many films such as "Zanjeer", "Deewar", "Mr India", "Nayak", "Arjun" have influenced 'Bhavesh Joshi'." "Also, the film draws influence from the DC and Marvel comics." The film is a departure from the kind of films Motwane has directed and he says he believes in taking risks. "If it works great, if it doesn't work then it is alright. No one will ever blame you for taking risk," the 41-year-old director said. "Bhavesh Joshi" is set to release on May 25. (PTI)

Easy to essay a lesser-known character: Rasika on playing Safia Manto

MUMBAI, MAY 13 /-/- Actor Rasika Dugal, who is playing the wife of legendary short story writer Saadati Hasan Manto in the upcoming biopic, says portraying a little-known character on-screen evokes different interpretations in minds of people. Rasika, an avid reader of Manto's work, said she was relying on the extensive research done by director Nandita Das to play Manto's wife Safia, as not much information is available about her in the public domain. "I had read an article written by Nandita on Safia Manto just before she announced the project. It is easier to play a role where not much is known about the character, as people come with pre-conceived ideas. They have an image of that person and they have certain expectations of what you would give them. "They could either be thrilled

by what you offer and the flip side is they could be disappointed," Rasika told PTI. According to the actor, the pressure is more on her co-star Nawazuddin Siddiqui, who is playing the titular character in "Manto", as a lot of people know about the legendary author. "There are people who are die-hard fans of Manto. I am sure people will be more than happy with what they will see on-screen. If there is absolute no information about a person then that can be a problem and a challenge. "Nandita has spent a lot of time with Manto's family and did an extensive research. The script is very rich with great anecdotes and that was a solid base to begin with," she said. "Manto" is the only Indian production which has made it to the Un Certain Regard section at the 71st Cannes Film Festival. "Being placed at the Cannes

CREATIVE WORLD

Manoj Bajpayee returns to Cannes with fresh ammo



CANNES, MAY 13 /-/- Bollywood star-actor Manoj Bajpayee, who was last seen on the Croisette in 2012 when Anurag Kashyap's rambo-thriller "Paan Singh Tomara" premiered in Directors' Fortnight, marked his presence on the sidelines of the 71st Cannes Film Festival for the first look launch of Devashish Makhija's politically-inflected drama "Bhonsle". The film, coming in the wake of the lauded short "Bandaa" and the dark, disturbing rape-themed drama "Aaji" is Makhija's take on the vulnerability of north Indian migrants in the city of Mumbai. It has the makings of another milestone in Bajpayee's much-feted screen acting career: "It is pointless choosing a film of the kind that one has done before especially in the independent cinema space. There is absolutely no challenge in it," the actor told PTI, explaining why he was drawn to the world of "Bhonsle".

The upcoming film hinges principally on an "undefined relationship" that develops between a retired, terminally ill policeman "who is running away from his loneliness" and a migrant woman who comes to live in his neighbourhood and faces grave threats to her well-being. The project germinated four-and-a-half years ago. However, the politically sensitive theme of the film scared away prospective producers "when we went around pitching the idea in the industry", Bajpayee said. So the only alternative was to find several individual producers who would put in small inputs so as to minimise the risk. "The team that eventually emerged consists of people who believe in the film completely," said the lead actor who has, on his own part, frequently lent his weight as a star to adventurous movie projects. What is "Bhonsle" seeking in Cannes? "This is a great platform from where we can let the world know about the film," Bajpayee replied. The film is in the final stages of post-production and its producers are in Cannes to explore sales and marketing prospects.

Bajpayee, who played key roles in recent Bollywood biggies like "Aiyaz" and "Bandaa" and has just wrapped up the shoot of the cinema-starrer "Satyameva Jayate", sees his buzzy off-mainstream outings as an opportunity to boost his profile on the international festival circuit. Roles in independent Hindi films have lately seen him don the guise of a day (Lata Mangeshkar) and two pegs of whisky a gay ("Aligarh"); of an Old Delhi man with a tormented childhood ("Gali Gulistan"); and a father/husband who feels that he has failed his family ("Rukh"). None of these roles was a cakewalk. "What other characters could have thrown such challenges at an actor. These were demanding yet rewarding roles that called for a great deal of preparation, introspection and questioning. Each obliged the actor in me get in touch with newer facets of the craft," Bajpayee said in response to a question about his penchant for complex, conflicted characters in independent cinema.

Asked whether he believes that an actor of his calibre now has more openings than when he started out nearly a quarter-century ago, he said, "You are talking to a person who fought to create this space. After 'Satya', I could have opted to play villains in many films with big Bollywood stars. But I chose to sit at home and bide my time. I waited for the tide to turn. "Wouldn't it be better to make global moves as an actor? Bajpayee replied, "At least one film of mine each year has been travelling across festivals." So, as he himself suggests, there is reason to believe that his visibility is on the upswing beyond the shores of India. "Bhonsle" is another step in that direction and the Cannes market just the right pit-stop. (PTI)

Benedict Cumberbatch wants Dr Strange merchandise range



LONDON, MAY 13 /-/- Benedict Cumberbatch is not happy that all of his Marvel Comics Universe (MCU) co-stars have their own merchandise range - but he does not. Cumberbatch, who plays Doctor Strange in the MCU, says he felt the need to have his merchandise when Tom Hiddleston (Loki) showed him the range of products inspired by his character, reported RadioTimes magazine. "This is a point of contention. Tom Hiddleston, he comes back from doing Thor and he's like, 'Look, dude!' And he's got a Thor lunchbox, a Thor slippy cup, a Thor backpacks. And there's Spider-Man backpacks and Hulk backpacks too. And I'm like, 'I'm a Marvel superhero too! Where's my Dr. Strange backpack for

Christ's sake? Where's my merch? I can bloody manipulate time. I can fly! Kids need to realise the potential value of having a Dr Strange backpack," the 41-year-old actor joked. Cumberbatch was last seen as Doctor Strange in "Avengers: Infinity War". (PTI)