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GURINDER CHADHA: Film director.

Film director juggles work and family life

By Laurina Robertson

COMBINING being a mum to three-year-old twins and a top British film director, travelling all over the world for premieres and glitzy parties, may seem impossible. However, Gurinder Chadha has got it nailed.

Not only does the director of blockbusters like *Bride and Prejudice*; *Angus, Thongs and Full Frontal Snogging* and *Bend It Like Beckham* have the perfect teammate in her director husband Paul Mayeda Berges – but her toddlers also love travelling and accompany her around the world. “We’re always in an aeroplane and they love it although they normally get a bit confused about which country they are going to land in – for some reason they always think it’s Italy,” said the 51-year-old from London.

“We have a great schedule going when we are at home – Paul and I work hard when Romack and Kamiko are at nursery, then in the evenings we spend all our time with them.



BUSY: Gurinder Chadha has a hectic schedule.

'It's crazy but I love making blockbusters'

“I love what I do and being a mum.” Despite their limited work hours, the couple currently have four projects on the go. “We’ve been working on a historical film about the transfer of power between Britain to India, a stage adaptation of *Bend It Like Beckham*, a children’s film set in India with elephants and a script for Dreamworks Animation called the *Monkeys of Bollywood*. “It’s all a bit crazy but we push each other on.” In spite of the heavy workload, the family are taking a long weekend to come to a Director’s Cut event at the University of Aberdeen next Friday.

“I’m going to be talking about my work, the ups and downs of the industry, showing clips and taking questions. “I’ve never been to Aberdeen before so we’re excited to see the sights.” Gurinder started making documentary films in the mid 1980s because she was fed up of British Asians having no representation on screen. After several documentaries, she directed her first feature film in 1993, working with Meera Syal, *Bhaji On The Beach*.

And by the time her third movie *Bend It Like Beckham* was released, Gurinder was a household name.

The story about Indian girl Jess’ passion for playing football, despite her family’s disapproval, took the film world by storm in 2002 – and made Keira Knightley and Parminder Nagra huge stars. But football isn’t something Gurinder is passionate about.

“My friend Guljit Bindra is mad about Manchester United and she approached me about doing a film.” “My relationship with my father heavily influenced Jess and her father – there is definitely a lot of me in the rebellious character of Jess.”

Don’t miss Gurinder Chadha in conversation with Alan Marcus on March 18 at Kings College Centre.

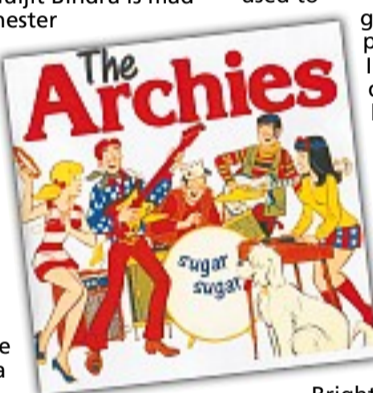
My first home

It was a terrace in Southall and it’s still there. It was the first house my parents ever bought and I was in a box room with my sister in bunk beds. I lived there from when I was three until I was 11. I was always avoiding chores by running out into the back garden and through the back gate to play

with my friends. We played all kinds of games.

My first school

It was a lovely little place called Clifton Infant School in Southall. I remember loving going there and especially loving the school dinners. All we got at home was Indian food and if we did go British it was sausages and chips. I loved the roast dinners we used to



get, the pies and the puddings. I love cooking to this day and in our house we cook every kind of cuisine from proper roast dinners to Mexican food.

My first holiday

When I was little we used to go on day trips to the seaside towns like Brighton and South End. On Sea rather than big holidays. We used to pack these big boxes full of Indian food for the beach. We used to go to India quite a lot too to visit my grandparents but that was never really classed as a holiday.

My first job

It was stacking toilet rolls, washing powder and biscuits in Tesco at Southall when I was 14. It was good as I knew everything there was to know about all of these three things. I also worked in a bakery and I learned how to make lots of



HIT: Gurinder’s films include *Bend It Like Beckham*.

different kinds of breads. After these jobs I graduated to Harrods where I worked in the men’s hats department. I learned about all the different kinds of hats and I once sold a handkerchief to playwright Tom Stoppard.

My first music

It was *Sugar Sugar* by The Archies when I was about 12 or 13. I loved it – it was such a huge hit and really catchy. Everyone was singing it.

My first TV show

I used to love this show called *Double Decker*. A lot of the people in it went on to be big TV stars. I also loved *Blue Peter* like everyone else and a show called *Vision On*.

My first film

I remember as a tiny kid I went to see *Songs Of The South* with my

father and I was terrified. But the first film I remember consciously seeing was *The Wizard Of Oz* with my sister. We went all the way to Ealing to see it and when it started in black and white I couldn’t believe it. I started kicking the back of the chair in front and throwing a tantrum. My big sister was not impressed. Then it changed to colour and I felt really daft.

My big break

I think my big break was making my first film with the BFI grant. I did that without any practical film experience. That film became a hit and then I was able to go into *Bhaji On The Beach*. I found the technical side really difficult at first and when I look back at my early work I often think how I should have done things differently. I’m still learning.



SCARY: *Song Of The South* terrified Gurinder.

Where Gurinder is now

Home: I live in Primrose Hill, London with my lovely husband and our lovely children.

Last holiday: I went to Thailand for a wedding. I’ve never eaten so much delicious food in my life.

Favourite TV program: *Modern Family*. I love it.

Last film watched: *Mumbai Diaries*. I really liked it.

Last music listened to: My favourite song at the moment is Usher and the *Black Eyed Peas* track *OMG*.

Regrets if any: That I didn’t have children earlier so I could have had more.



FAVE: Gurinder loves *Modern Family*.

FIVE MINUTES with ... Marianne Faithfull



STILL ON THE ROAD: Marianne Faithfull.

SINGER-SONGWRITER and Sixties icon Marianne Faithfull is a former convent schoolgirl who found fame with the 1964 single *As Tears Go By*, written by Rolling Stones stars Mick Jagger and Keith Richards.

After surviving a descent into drug addiction and homelessness, she went on to produce numerous albums and has just released her 23rd solo offering, *Horses And High Heels*. The 64-year-old, who was born in London, now splits her time between Paris and Co Waterford in Ireland. She embarked on a new world tour this month.

Why did you choose to record the new album in New Orleans?

I never want to record where I live. I never made a record in Ireland, and I haven’t done one in Paris. I like to go out to work, so that’s

'The Rolling Stones changed my life forever'

what we did. New Orleans is a great place to work because there are so many great musicians there, like George Porter Jr from *The Meters*. He would never have been able to play on the record if we hadn’t gone there.

Is there a theme that runs through the album?

I don’t really think so. It’s stuff that’s interesting me now. It’s very much now. And I loved writing the song about Dublin and Paris (title track *Horses And High Heels*), and making Dublin as elegant as Paris in its own way.



Do you read reviews of your music?

I really try to read good reviews and ignore bad ones, that’s what I do. I get these things called *Google Alerts*, which is everything that mentions my name. And sometimes it’s nice, sometimes it’s really nasty.

Did negative comments concern you more when you were younger?

Oh yes, I was very much more vulnerable then.

If you could give advice to your younger self now, what would it be?

All I would say really is just don’t take drugs. It was a total waste of my time.



GREAT GUY: Jonathan Rhys Meyers.

If you hadn’t got that record deal, what would you have done?

I would’ve been the same, I’m sure. I love performing, I love singing, I love my life. It’s just what I want... I sometimes do a little bit of longing for what I didn’t have, I do. Like if I hadn’t been

discovered, my life would have been quite different. But I’ve accepted it all.

Did your connection with the Rolling Stones change your life?

Oh yeah. *As Tears Go By* changed my life, that’s what changed my life.

Do you listen to that song now?

I play it on stage. I don’t actually listen to the record, no. I don’t listen to my records much.

Is there a preference for music or acting?

No - music is my life. That’s what’s kept me alive and kept me happy and it’s very important. But I do love acting too.

WEEKEND DIARY with SCOTT BEGBIE

London takes heart from Leona Lewis

THERE has been great surprise in some quarters that Leona Lewis, pictured, has been named the most inspirational woman in London of the past century. But diary fan Bill Cameron reckons it’s fair enough. “When you consider one of the front-runners was Maggie Thatcher, I reckon Londoners got it right. “At least Leona puts her heart into her singing... the jury’s still out on whether Maggie actually had one.”



MAKES SENSE: For those drivers who can never quite remember how high their vehicle is.

JIM Wilson has been in touch to tell the Diary about his mate’s revolutionary fitness plan to lose weight. “He showed me this exercise where you shake your head slowly from side to side. “I asked him how often he has to do it. “He said: ‘Every time someone suggests another pint then a kebab on the way home.’ Might work.

LENT is upon us... well, some of us anyway. Sarah Green swears she heard a couple of ladies who lunch talking about what they were giving up for the duration. “Oh I used to give up chocolate for Lent,” said one. “Then I decided I would be far happier just giving up Lent.” Pass the Dairy Milk.

Bid for a cabinet position

AS THE Dons get ready for their Scottish Cup clash against St Mirren, diary fan Tim B can’t help but be cynical. He tells us: “Apparently

there are plans afoot at Pittodrie for urgent action if the Dons lose. “They are going to rename the trophy cabinet. It will just be known as the cabinet.”



The diary is now open for all offers of funny stories, bits of gossip and anything remotely amusing or titillating. E-mail your gems to ee.diary@ajl.co.uk