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"My intention behind this project comes through in the making of it — which was to celebrate Pakistan and Pakistanis on a global stage"

JEMIMA KHAN

Speaking exclusively to OK! Pakistan, Jemima Khan talks about her big-screen debut with What's Love Got to Do with It?



he called Lahore home for over a decade and till today continues to carry a little bit of Pakistan in her heart. 'What's Love Got to Do with It?' you might ask — everything, I would say. Jemima Goldsmith Khan is no stranger to Pakistan. The former Mrs. Khan, who once served as the European Editor for Vanity Fair, and Associate Editor for The New Statesman, first turned producer in 2015.

February 2023 saw the release of the first ever rom-com under the banner of Instinct Productions, her London-based content company specialising in television, documentaries and film. Jemima Khan's rom-com has received a warm reception both at home and abroad. Accolades aplenty, *What's Love Got to Do with It?* is the recipient of not one or two but four National Film Awards. Jemima's labour of love has been awarded honours for the Best Screenplay, Film, Director and Supporting Actor by the National Film Academy.

Discussing love, marriage and multicultural complexities, Jemima's creative vision seems to have clearly resonated with audiences, engaging and compelling viewers with her heartfelt narrative and sensitive storyline.

A distinct shift from her earlier endeavours that include the likes of the well acclaimed 10-part FX drama series, *Impeachment: American Crime Story*, the docuseries *The Case Against Adnan Syed*, The Clinton Affair, and the feature documentary *We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks; What's Love Got to Do with It?* is a cross cultural romance bringing together a mix of talent from east and west.

Witten by Jemima Khan and directed by Shekhar Kapoor, starring Lily James, Shazad Khan, Shabana

Azmi and Sajal Aly among a host of others, the film essays the journey of an award-winning London based film-maker who documents her best friend's journey into an assisted marriage in line with his family's Pakistani heritage. In the process, she

44 I will always carry a little bit of Pakistan in my heart. 11

challenges her own attitude towards relationships.

How, when and where did the concept of *What's Love Got to Do with It?* come about, and what made for it to translate into an award-winning film?

JEMIMA KHAN: So the idea came about years and years ago – it took me a really long time to get to this point. I was working on other things – documentaries, through my company. And the idea came from wanting to make a rom-com for mainstream cinema in the west, that was a celebration of Pakistan and all things Pakistani, based on my experience there for 10 years between the ages of 20 and 30.

How in your view does the narrative of your film engage audiences and allow for them to connect with it?

JK: I can only hope that it entertains and that it

touches people in some ways, and that it is relatable. But it's not really for me to say.

From Emma Thompson to Shabana Azmi and Shekhar Kapoor, from Sajal Aly to Shazad Latif and Lily James, *What's Love Got to Do with It?* brings together the best of talent from the east and west – tell us what it was like working with a team of creatives combining powerhouses from South Asia and the UK?

JK: I think that the best bit of the whole project was bringing together such incredible talent from east and west and seeing such incredible collaborations. Even for the music, we got to work with Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and he made a song with British musicians – Naughty Boy who is British-Pakistani, and Nitin Swahaney. There was a rapper called Billy Khan on the track and Lily James did the music. And then you have Rahat singing and he also plays himself in the film in a Qawali scene. And I think that kind of sums up what the film is about, which is a great collaboration of talent from east and west, and hopefully a fun watch.

Is the film, in any way, an ode to your years in Pakistan? Does it reflect first hand experiences or people you've met?

JK: It is definitely inspired by my time in Pakistan. Those 10 years were very formative for me. And I think living in Pakistan for 10 years had a profound effect on my life but it's not a biopic.

You've been quoted as saying that you, like your sons, are half Pakistani, and on many an occasion you've been seen openly flaunting your love





The film is a great collaboration of talent from east and west. 17

for your once home and its people (thank you for your generosity towards the flood affected communities). Is it safe to say you will always carry a little bit of Pakistan in your heart?

JK: Yes – is my short answer! I do. I feel as though I grew up in Pakistan. I was so unformed when I came there. I was in my second year at university when I came to Pakistan and I left a fully formed grown-up. And I think, therefore, I'm probably quite different from who I would have been if I hadn't had that experience. And I'm really different from a lot of people in my family and social circle because I've had that experience and that will always be the case, regardless of where I live now.

Are your children your sharpest critics or your biggest fans? What has been their feedback on What's Love Got to Do with It?

JK: Definitely my sharpest critics, definitely not my biggest fans. And their reaction was lovely. They really enjoyed the film although I was terrified to show them. Almost as scared as I was for it to open in Pakistan. But my children were lovely, and enjoyed it and seemed to laugh and cry, so I was happy.

How has the *What's Love Got to Do with It?* journey changed Jemima Khan the person and the professional?

JK: That's a good question, I don't know how to answer. I think it's a bit too early to say. I think you have to ask me when it's all... settled down. For the moment, I feel so in the midst of it all. I've been travelling across the country and the world. I haven't really had a moment to sort of take it all in yet.

Is there another film in you waiting to happen or is the next cinematic venture still a fair bit away?

JK: I'm always making documentaries – that's what I do in my day job and I'd really like to write something, but it takes me a really long time, so I will probably talk to you again in 2035 with my next venture.

What's next for Jemima Khan?

JK: I will definitely work on a writing project, and we have Episode 5 of our Adnan Syed documentary about a miscarriage of justice in the United States where the victim was a Pakistani American boy who got jailed wrongly because of Islamophobia. And I have a few other things I'm working on, so yeah.

Your message to the people of Pakistan...

JK: I really hope you have enjoyed the film and that I've done you proud. My intention behind this project comes through in the making of it — which was to celebrate Pakistan and Pakistanis on a global stage. My Urdu is so bad it's embarrassing. I used to speak Urdu pretty well when I was there. But they say when you learn a new language as an adult you don't retain it if you don't keep speaking it. And I don't have enough interaction, though my Urdu is still better than my children's Urdu, I might add. I need to practise and get back to scratch again. But I can't embarrass myself so can I just leave it with Pakistan Zindabad...

Khuda Hafiz.



"THE FACT THAT JUDY BLUME WAS GIVING HER BLESSING AFTER 50 YEARS FOR THE MOVIE TO FINALLY BE MADE, WAS A REALLY BIG DEAL"

RACHEL MANUEL STATES OF THE ST

The stunning actress on life in Canada, being protective of her private life, and starring in Are You There God, It's Me?, a drama based on the eponymous best-seller by Judy Blume





Ithough she's appeared in her fair share of blockbusters – the Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Strange films – Rachel McAdams is best known for her performances in more serious dramatic fare such as The Notebook, Spotlight, and Disobedience.

That's why audiences will be pleased to see her starring in *Are You There God, It's Me?*, a lighthearted but sensitive drama based on the eponymous best-seller by Judy Blume that is still a must-read for young women sixty years after it was first published.

The 44-year-old McAdams plays Barbara, a single mother building a new life with her precocious 11-year-old daughter, Margaret (Abby Ryder Forston). Sticking closely to the spirit of the novel, the film is a classic coming-of-age tale in which Margaret is grappling with existential and religious issues while adjusting to life in a new city (New Jersey) and new school while going through puberty. In parallel fashion, Barbara is dealing with her own identity struggles as an artist and mother trying to serve as Margaret's mentor. The film opens in UK theatres on April 28th.

"Margaret's mother Barn is a free spirit and an artist type who has recently moved Margaret from her beloved New York to New Jersey and we're trying to make a new life there," says McAdams. "I've quit my job to become a full-time mom and learn to cook and we're kind of both going through an identity crisis...It's a beautiful story by Judy Blume that many young women have read since it was first published and its themes still resonate with women. I was really proud to be part of telling this story."

Blume, the author, has sold over 90 million books during her lifetime and resisted multiple previous attempts to turn "Are You There God, It's Me?" into a film. Ultimately it was left to writer/director Kelly Fremon Craig to convince her that she could bring the book to life and do so faithfully.

"My readers are always fantasy-casting my books, but I've never done that," says Blume. "But you know it when you see it, and Abby is a natural. And I'm so excited that Margaret got a funny, sexy, sassy morn in Rachel."

Canadian actress Rachel McAdams has enjoyed a varied career in films that includes dramas (*The Notebook, Spotlight, Disobedience*), studio blockbusters (*Doctor Strange, Sherlock Holmes, The Time Traveler's Wife*), and comedies (*Game Night, Midnight in Paris*). She and her partner, screenwriter Jamie Linden (*Money Monster, Dear John*) live in her hometown of London, Ontario together with their five-year-old son and a two-year-old daughter.

What attracted you to this particular project?

RACHEL MCADAMS: The fact that Judy Blume was giving her blessing after 50 years for that movie to finally be made, for the books to be adapted, was I think a really big deal. I was also a huge fan of James L. Brook (the producer), and the casting of Abby as Margaret and Kathy Bates (as the grandmother) and I knew that Judy had given her blessing to Kelly the director, so for me it was an easy yes.

It's such an iconic book that's been a huge part of so many people's childhoods. And for that very reason, it was scary to take it on because you want to live up to what everyone's imagined all these years. But fortunately, I had some leeway with my character because she's bigger, more expanded in the film than in the book. I just felt like it was a once in a lifetime opportunity and I love Judy Blume so much, grew up reading her and it felt pretty surreal to be in that company.

How would you describe the film?

RA: It's a grown-up movie about adolescence that young people and grown-ups will enjoy. I think it's really, really honest about how hard it can be being a young person and to be mother, or father for that matter, and how weird it is to be a human. It's just so relatable, and I think it's going to inspire so much conversation.

While Margaret's evolution as a young woman is a a focal point of the story, what did you make of Barbara's struggle to define herself?

RA: In a weird way she's on a parallel journey with Margaret, still figuring out who she is, who she's trying to impress, losing her way a little bit, and having guilt about...whether to be a working mother or a stay-at-home mom.

Does being a mother yourself give you added perspective on playing the mother in this movie?

RA: It makes you think about your responsibility when it comes to raising children. But I tried to see things more through the eyes of Margaret, trying to imagine what it was like to be that age and the kind of things that you were worrying about.

But after reading the book and understanding things from Barb's point of view, I was also thinking about her desire to be a good role model, as well as her own struggles as a woman experiencing her



"The truth is that I never wanted to be a big star."



own conflicts about a woman's role in society that was undergoing upheaval in the 70s...

She's putting her life as an artist on the side so that she can be the perfect mom, whatever that is, so she's grappling with that.

What do you think of Barbara's parenting approach?

RA: She's letting Margaret figure life out for herself. The only place where she's heavy-handed is when it comes to religion because she wants to protect her from being hurt the way she was. But I really like her as a mom where she's saying that life is weird, and I'm figuring it out, and I'm trying to be the best support I can so come to me if you need anything.

You and your young co-star Abby who plays Margaret apparently became very close during the filming?

RA: I feel really lucky that I got to work with Abby and I can't imagine anyone else being Margaret. So our bond was kind of instantaneous. She's such a pro but she's also such a kind, loving human. She's wise beyond her years.

So it was really easy to fall into that relationship and find a friendship as well with Abby that is reflective of our relationship in the film. Barbara doesn't want to be an overbearing mother, she wants Margaret to find her own way.

You're noted for doing both dramas as well as comedies over the course of your career. Do you have any preference?

RA: I kind of like jumping back and forth. I feel like that keeps things interesting, keeps me on my toes. A good example is when I went straight into Game Night after working on *Disobedience*, which was a very dramatic and serious film. But I'm really more of a dramatic actress, so comic roles don't come my way very often.

I enjoy doing different kinds of projects. It's the diversity of the stories and the roles that draws me to projects. I'm someone who can get bored very easily and I don't like to repeat myself so I'm always looking for new kinds of stories. It's always more exciting for me when I get taken out of my comfort zone.

You've tended to be quite protective of your private life. Is it very important to you to fly under the radar?

RA: If you're successful in this business, you often get swept up in this big wave and you have to be careful to find time for yourself.

I once took a year off (in 2006) because I wanted to restore some to my life. The truth is that I never wanted to be a big star. That's why I prefer to live in Canada – I never found a need to live in L.A. to get good roles. Hollywood can be a very lonely place. I don't know why exactly, and of course everything revolves around the film industry and people are always talking about business. When I go back home to Canada I can just forget about work and be myself.

What was growing up in London, Ontario like?

RA: I had a very happy childhood and my mother and father have been together for over forty years and they were always very supportive of me and my brother and sister. Our family is very close-knit and I'm closer than ever to my sister Kayleen who also works in Hollywood as a make-up artist.

We didn't have much money but the atmosphere in our home was always very loving and caring. They are both hard workers and they taught us to



be very responsible and independent individuals and that's been very helpful to me in how I've managed my career...

You were a competitive ice-skater while you were growing up?

RA: I started when I was four and I got really into it for a long time. My parents were very supportive and the only thing they asked from me was that if I'm going to pursue it, that I take it seriously.

So I think the discipline that came from all the hours of practising I would put in every week for so many years is something that helped me with my acting. At one point though, I felt that figure skating was becoming too consuming and I really needed a different outlet which is what I found with acting.

What else is there about life in Canada that makes living there so special?

RA: I like being in nature. I like being able to ride my bike everywhere and also be able to take long walks in the wilderness. My family also has a cottage in

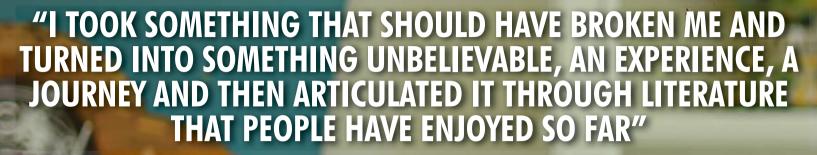
the woods and it's so relaxing and peaceful to be out by myself in nature and appreciate the beauty of that setting.

Is there any one great life lesson that your film roles have taught you?

RA: Probably the biggest lesson I've learnt is to be as honest and present as possible. That applies to both acting and to my own life. We sometimes have an overly idealistic or romanticised view of the world and then when you try to experience that kind of life you're often disappointed. I've taken a much more realistic outlook on things and how people behave because it's better if you can operate with no illusions.

The above comments by Rachel McAdams were made during the course of her March 24th appearance at the premiere of "Are You There God, It's Me?" in Key West, Florida. Her comments have been condensed and edited for length and clarity.

INTERVIEW: JAN JANSSEN/WENN PHOTOGRAPHS: W ENN, SHUTTERSTOCK



SHASHBAZ SIASIBIR

Shahbaz Taseer on his book, "Lost to the World: A Memoir of Faith, Family, and Five Years in Terrorist Captivity"





hat began as a mundane Friday morning in August of 2011 changed many a life forever. Barely eight months after his father's brutal assassination, Shahbaz Taseer was kidnapped on his way to work, just minutes away from home. Here began an almost five-year nightmare in captivity, one that thankfully had a happy ending. Today 12 years later, from his home in Lahore, Shahbaz Taseer speaks exclusively to *OK*! Pakistan about freedom, faith, family and friends and his book 'Lost to the World: A Memoir of Faith, Family, and Five Years in Terrorist Captivity'.

In March of 2016, you found freedom after being lost to the world for over four and a half years – seven years on, how would you define Shahbaz Taseer?

SHAHBAZ TASEER: It's a difficult question because the person that you see today would have a very difficult time recognizing the person in captivity. While I was in captivity, I couldn't recognize myself, I couldn't find myself, I couldn't see Shahbaz. It wasn't just the beard and the hair, the dirt on my face, nor months of not showering, but because of how unhappy I felt when I would think about my life. The person you see today is someone who has evolved and survived all of this and that has a different look. It's obviously not the same but maybe a more evolved person, well maybe a little bit more empathetic and humble.

Three months after your release, when I last interviewed you, you told me: "My grandfather was a poet. My father for all his amazing qualities was a writer, as well — he wrote a book and also owned a fantastic newspaper. I

think it's in me to write a book, as well. It'll be a great way to talk about my time away. It's a difficult account to tell in an interview or even in a conversation — it's four and a half years. I think writing a book would be an amazing medium to get my story across". How does it feel to finally share your story with the world? Is having narrated your ordeal by means of a book, a weight off your chest?

ST: I don't know if it's a weight off my chest, it was something that I really wanted to accomplish and I did. I remember that I used to keep these diaries when I was in captivity. My grandfather was a poet, and my father wrote a book about Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. My Grand Uncle was Faiz Ahmed Faiz. My paternal aunt has also written a book. To be in this company is an honour for me and of course, it is a great sense of accomplishment because you know whenever you want to do something despite the hurdles, despite how difficult it might be, when you do it, it is amazing.

Do you feel 'Lost to the World: A Memoir of Faith, Family, and Five Years in Terrorist Captivity' has been a catharsis of sorts for you?

ST: Writing this book required me to work with my mother and my uncle who has now passed away. We spent a lot of time in close quarters, working very hard for endless hours a day – editing, checking, counter-checking, researching, and coordinating with intelligence people that were involved. So in that sense, but you know I have this amazing sense of accomplishment that I managed to pen it all down, and now anyone who wants to read about my story can do so.

"While I was living it, I had realised mine is

a great story. And because I've been to film school, in my head, I decided that if a film about me is made, it would be directed by my favourite director, Martin Scorsese. And don't think of me as an ego maniac but I'd love Leonardo Dicaprio to play me. And if it's in Pakistan, my friend Ali Zafar — he's the best, the best in this part of the world", you told me back in 2016. With a book under your belt, is the film you envisaged also in the offing?

ST: Wow, yeah. I am looking at it, of course. That would be the next step so maybe in another four or five years you know we'll be having another conversation. That's the dream, of course – Martin Scorsese directing your film – but you know, our own cinema has grown so much and I would love to work with Pakistanis. I still remember I said Ali but Fawad would be fantastic, Riz Ahmed would be amazing. I don't know, anyone cool would be cool. But yeah, I would love to work with Pakistanis. Oscar winner Sharmeen Obaid, who is my cousinin-law – that would be the most amazing. And then there are so many more. We have so many talented people in this country.

"I am not made from a wood that burns easily"; over a nightmarish almost five years in captivity, would you say it was the power of faith and desire to reunite with family that fueled you to keep going?

ST: Yes, of course – they are such an important part of my life. The first time I actually thought that I was going to die and I spoke to my mother she had this unbelievable resolve that nothing would happen to me. I remember she told me over the phone "Don't worry about what they say, I've left you in Allah's hands and I know nothing will



happen to you". And even my friends. I have this very close friend Haris. He is my best friend, we went to school and college together. Another very close friend asked him once because there were news reports that I had been killed in a drone strike and he said do you think that Shahbaz is gone? Haris turned to him and said "You know something, the universe would have told me. I feel him. So, no". My friends, my family had this undying resolve that I would make it. I had to fight very hard to come back to them.

Despite the curveballs life has thrown at you, your positivity is remarkable — do you believe that looking up is the only way to keep afloat?

ST: I mean you should always look forward, you should always want to accomplish things. When I came back, I had spent almost five years in captivity, I had to put my life together. I had to start working again, I had to do physical therapy. I had to meet doctors to see if everything was okay. It's all a way forward and you have to always have goals. Life may have thrown many curveballs at me but you have to move forward. Some days are down, some days are up, but you have to accomplish tasks every single day. I have a beautiful family, I have beautiful children, and I have managed to get this book. My work life is amazing. I work with wonderful people. I have the most wonderful friends and family. I don't think I could be any more blessed – I'm just very, very lucky.

From the harshest of the harsh living conditions to the comfort of being home — what was the adjustment like? Would you say that you as a person have learned how to cope with the bare minimum and find happiness in the simple pleasures of life?

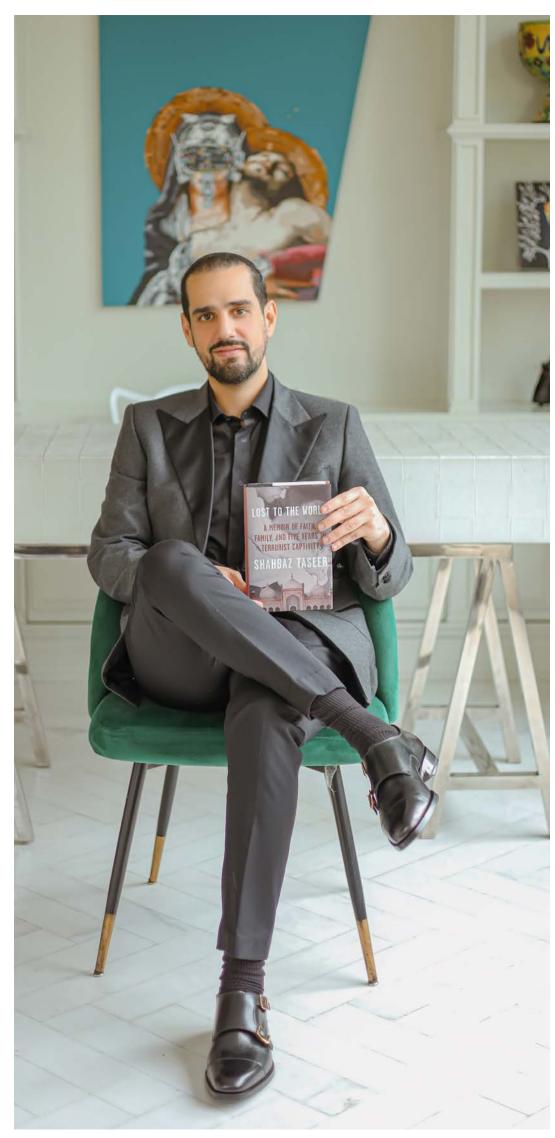
ST: Yes, of course. But like I tell my friends that just because I had a bare minimum for five years doesn't mean that that's what I want moving forward. While in captivity, I slept on the floor for five years. It was very difficult initially when I came back to sleep on a bed. But you know it's much easier to get used to sleeping on a bed than to getting used to sleeping on the floor. I've had a very hard life but you know I'm looking forward to an easier one.

In the time you have been home, have you managed to pick up life from where you left off or have you started afresh?

ST: After my release, I picked up exactly where I left off, but in the five years I was away a lot had changed so in some ways I did also have to start fresh. When I came back so many of the things that I used in my day-to-day life were obsolete, they didn't even exist as mediums anymore and I had to acquaint and familiarise myself with the

Your kidnappers used tweets posted by your family to play mind games with you during your captivity. Today, your candid and interactive use of the platform tells us you're enjoying reconnecting with the world through the medium. Do you find it easy to talk openly and speak your mind through your posts?

ST: Social media is one of the most wonderful things. Before I got kidnapped, social media was not what we know it as today. As I was gone, there was a boom in the tech industry and there was Instagram and Twitter. All these new social media platforms became available on which my family would put up posts of remembrance about me and lots of people used to pray for me. And my





kidnappers used this as a way of mocking me, but it actually became an access for me in a very dark place, a window to my family, a window to the world. So today a lot of people think you should act a certain way on social media or you should give a certain persona, I just enjoy being me. Everyone who knows me and has access to me or can access me or whatever, however, works on these platforms. They'll never get some made-up person and it's more fun that way. Plus you know I am marketing my book on it and it's such an amazing way to do business and the kind of outreach that you get, it's the most amazing thing that I've seen in my life.

Following in your father's footsteps might you ever consider joining politics or assuming public office?

ST: My brother Shehryar and I are of the opinion that my father's legacy was in business. We aren't half the businessman he was, but we are trying our very best to do him proud. Politics, one day – maybe.

You've travelled to Afghanistan with a visa and as a hostage - would you consider making a trip across the border again?

ST: So it's a firm no from me on that. I'm kidding, obviously as someone who has survived the war and seen the devastation of it, I pray that any country that's suffering becomes a place where people can visit. It's very sad what's actually happening in Afghanistan and it's going to take decades before they heal enough because they have suffered I think like no other country in modern history.

Do you divide and define your life in terms of landmarks and milestones?

ST: I don't. I am not one of those people. When I was in captivity, there were many things I hoped to be able to do one day. I wanted to be integrated back into my life, I wanted to start working again, start a family, you know – small milestones. And life has been very kind to me – it is unbelievable that at the end of such a devastating experience,

"Life has been kind and I hope it continues to be."

I've had these unbelievable opportunities and I really want to make the most out of it.

If the last decade and a half had panned out differently for you, do you think you might have had an alternate calling in life?

ST: Well, I have the same job so I don't know but of course, the book and an opportunity to tell the story is new. And you know, I took something that should have broken me, should have left me devastated for the rest of my life, and turned into something unbelievable, an experience, a journey and then articulated it through literature that people have enjoyed so far.

What motivates you to push and raise the bar?

ST: The opportunity for the next day. I have fought for these days. I always encourage people to look forward to the next day no matter how hard today was. You have tomorrow.

What inspires you?

ST: My mother, my wife, my sister-in-law, my sister. I see them every day. They work, they fight in a very difficult environment and yesterday was Women's Day and we saw what happened. I'm very lucky to have these women in my life. They inspire me every day. Some through their bravery, some through their commitment to their work. These women are my inspiration.

What is your motto?

ST: Glory, Glory, Man United.

What is your comfort zone?

ST: My home, my kids.

Your getaway?

ST: Holiday anywhere. I love LA. I feel at home there. My best friend lives there.

Five years from now, where do you see yourself?

ST: Hopefully with good business, a successful book, and a TV show.

What next for Shahbaz Taseer?

ST: Life has been amazing. I don't know what's next. I have had lots of highs, and lots of lows but life has been kind and I hope it continues to be.

INTERVIEW: YUSRA ASKARI PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF SHAHBAZ TASEER "I'm very proud about giving audiences one of the most thrilling action sequences that I've certainly ever been a part of"

GERARD BUTLER

The Scottish actor on starring in the taut thriller, Plane, his admiration for heroic characters, and why his mother is his real-life hero





erard Butler has played in his fair share of action films. Beginning with 300, Butler has carved out a niche for himself in Geostorm, Greenland, Hunter Killer, Law Abiding Citizen, Machine Gun Preacher, Olympus Has Fallen and its two sequels.

The film sees Butler, a Scot, playing Scottish airline pilot Brodie Torrance who finds himself struggling for survival after his *plane* is struck by lightning and is forced to make an emergency landing in the middle of a southeast Asian jungle.

But that is only the beginning of his problems. Torrance must then find a way to rescue his passengers and crew members after they are taken hostage and held for ransom by a bloodthirsty gang of rebel bandits. In the process, he forms an unlikely partnership with Gaspare (Mike Colter), an accused murderer being transported to spend the rest of his life in prison. They team up in order to free the hostages and then attempt to restart the damaged plane and fly to safety.

That's familiar territory for Butler, a man who is used to being the guy that saves the day on the big screen.

"I feel 'Plane' has so many different layers to the story — action, that disaster element, survival. At the same time, there's a lot of humour, a lot of emotion and we still had a chance to develop some pretty interesting characters that

audiences can get behind and root for," said Butler, who also produced the film.

"And especially intriguing and unique is the relationship between my character and Gaspare. It's not every day you see a pilot who

44 I feel Plane has so many layers to the story. **55**

has to enlist the help of an accused murderer in handcuffs, saying, 'You've got to help get me out of the situation.' It's a memorable relationship between those two men and it's a pretty fascinating concept."

The 53-year-old Butler, a proud Scot and former law student at Glasgow University, lives in Los Angeles with his longtime girlfriend Morgan Brown.

What is your take on your pilot character, Brodie Torrance, who is forced to play the hero to save his passengers and crew?

GERARD BUTLER: Until this moment, Torrance is not someone you would expect to play the hero – you wouldn't even notice him from the next man. He's your neighbour. An Everyman

who's making the best of what is not the most enjoyable part of his life. He's lost his wife, he's working on the other side of the world, and barely sees his college-age daughter anymore. There's a kind of sadness to him. Yet he's a good man who tries his best.

And even though you might call him a hero, he's a flawed kind of hero. He's made a lot of mistakes in his life and his passions have gotten in the way of making the right decisions at different points in his life.

How does he manage to summon the courage under these terrible circumstances?

GB: He has an advantage in that he's built to be stubborn. And sometimes his idea of what is a sense of duty maybe takes him too far. A lot of unfortunate things happen. He made some good calls, some bad calls. But what's interesting is that the audience can see that this guy is courageous and is willing to risk his life against lousy odds.

The great thing about him is that he's the kind of ordinary man who is forced by circumstances to become a hero and that's why audiences can relate to him and identify with the crisis he's dealing with and how that brings out the best in him.

Did you do any preparation to play an airline pilot?

GB: I spent dozens of hours in a flight ▶



44 In real life, the person who inspires me is my mother. 35

simulator to feel exactly what it's like to be in a cockpit trying to understand the thinking of a pilot and how he might react while trying to keep his plane from crashing after being caught in a very bad storm. I wanted to sense that kind of pressure and also how he relies on his training to stay focused on the task at hand.

A lot of people might not be so anxious to get on a plane after seeing this movie?

GB: (Laughs) Well, I have to admit that I'm very proud about giving audiences one of the most thrilling action sequences that I've certainly ever been a part of, especially when we see my character and the passengers reacting to the experience through the storm and realising that maybe you're not going to make it.

I like the way we put the audience right in the middle of that sense of terror and dread that passengers would go through under those conditions. I think anyone who sees the movie will feel like they're right in it and there's no way off until the plane lands. And that's just the beginning. You think you've looked death in the face and survived and suddenly you're dealing with another kind of hell.

Apart from some pretty heavy action sequences, there are also some very quiet moments where you get to know Gaspare, a man who may or may not be a killer?

GB: Those quiet moments are some of my favourite scenes in the movie. I think those are the moments that really grab you and show how these two men, these strangers, start to bond because they have no choice. But we see the underlying humanity in both of them and that makes you gravitate towards them because they're both very vulnerable and are dealing with a lot of pain and adversity, albeit on different levels.

The film also poses some moral and practical decisions that are facing your character Torrance and how far he's willing to risk his own life for what, at times, seems like a hopeless cause?

GB: He's faced with a fundamental decision about whether it's really possible to save the passengers, and maybe he needs to give up because the odds are just stacked too high against him.

But what really drives your attention is feeling that you're part of their journey, this wild ride that we're taking you on. It's not hard to imagine yourself in similar circumstances and thinking how you would handle yourself, whether you're the pilot or the prisoner or one of the passengers. I think you can appreciate the story from many different perspectives.

You often play heroes, men on a mission of some sort. Is there something about the hero that resonates with you especially?



GB: I think if you grow up Scottish you're going to be drawn to fighters and heroic figures, men of honour and courage who defend important values and principles. I've always loved playing characters who embrace those qualities and have great ambition and determination. I have tremendous respect and admiration for heroic characters and they inspire me to achieve as much as I can in my own life.

Do you have any real-life heroes you admire?

GB: If I can be honest, in real life, the person who inspires me is my mother. My mother raised me alone, without a husband. With three children she arrived [back in Scotland] from Canada with only \$14 in her pocket, and had to plead with Air Canada to get us on board.

She had no academic qualifications, but she raised us while working at the same time. I would not have enjoyed the same opportunities that I've had in life or succeeded to any extent if my mother had not taught me to work hard and be a good person.

Who are some of the actors who have inspired you?

GB: I was drawn to actors like Brando, Steve McQueen, and especially Paul Newman. What was interesting about their work is how they played damaged men, broken heroes whom you loved all the more because of their imperfections and weaknesses.

That taught me that when I play characters forced into heroic situations, I want to create a very rounded figure because audiences identify with characters who don't have all the answers

44 I was drawn to actors like Brando, Steve McQueen, and especially Paul Newman. 55

and are flawed in different ways. That's what draws towards them. It's their underlying humanity.

One of the interesting elements to *Plane* is that you get to play a Scottish character again. Is this some shrewd planning on your part since you're also the producer of the movie?

GB: (Laughs) No, it just came about. For many years I've been playing American characters and it took me a long time before I think I was able to speak and not sound like a Scottish actor pretending to be an American. (Laughs)

So for a long time I've had to keep my Scottish accent under wraps as much as possible, although after living in the States for so many years it's not as difficult for me to hide my accent when I'm working on a film as it used to be.

But lately I've been able to play characters who are Scots and it's a bit more relaxing for me not to have to think about the accent and not slipping into my Scottish way of speaking. For



this movie, it was a case of thinking, "Hey, why does this guy have to be American. Why can't he be a Scottish pilot?" So we made him Scottish and I'm proud to say that I enjoyed being able to put all my Scottish passion into him.

The above comments by Gerard Butler were made via Zoom chat on January 7th while he was promoting his new film, Plane. His comments have been condensed and edited for length and clarity.

> INTERVIEW: JAN JANSSEN/WENN PHOTOGRAPHS: WENN. SHUTTERSTOCK

"I AM EXCITED ABOUT RAISING THIS LITTLE GIRL, TO SEE HOW SHE WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORLD AND HOPEFULLY MAKE IT A BETTER PLACE."

ARMEENA KHAN

The new mother shares it all with OK! Pakistan







rmeena Khan is a highly talented actress and model. The Pakistani-Canadian is a recipient of the prestigious Lux Style Award in addition to a Hum Award as well as a Nigar Award nomination. Her latest accomplishment and perhaps the one that makes her happiest, is her daughter, Amelie. The newly-turned mother discusses motherhood, the changes that come with it, experiencing love in its purest form and so much more...

How has being a mother changed your life?

Armeena Khan: There is an entire life before motherhood and then there is one after - both very distinct. I like to think of it as re-birth because everything changes; some things become harder while others fall into place, like a puzzle.

So what does this change look like? I cannot just hop into a car and go out on a whim, for example. A trip to the grocery store requires forward planning, ensuring I am armed with bottled milk, diapers, extra clothes in case of a blow out, etc. Holidays have to be baby friendly now and my entire home has changed to make room for my darling little girl. Then there is a whole new relationship with yourself and your partner that needs attention/navigating. All in all, it is an exciting new journey and I cannot wait.

What is your favourite part about being a parent?

AK: I have to pinch myself at times because I

cannot believe that my body has produced an entire living, breathing human being. As a parent, I am experiencing love in its purest form: it's an unconditional lifelong bond and I feel so lucky.

I love waking up to her beautiful face in the morning, and watching her hit all those important milestones. I am excited about raising this little girl, to see how she will contribute to the world and hopefully make it a better place. One day when she is a young woman, I would like to say to myself 'Congrats, you've done it.'

Since you are both working parents, how do you manage your time?

AK: We have been working from home these past two years (due to Covid lockdowns) and the nature of this disease forced us to adapt. Being at home has enabled us to care for her effectively and the baby has us at her disposal, which is a blessing.

How did you think of the name Amelie?

AK: I went to Paris in 2014, where I came across the name and absolutely fell in love with it. I made a mental note that if ever I were to have a girl, I would name her Amelie, which means hard-working, industrious and according to some online sources - "Close to God."

What is the biggest challenge of being a new mom? And how did you overcome it?

AK: It has been a steep learning curve (being away from family immediately after birth) with tasks

ranging from changing diapers to bathing baby. I would look at the midwives in awe, thinking how did they do it all so effortlessly. After a lot of tears, hard work and consistency, I learnt!

However, if we are talking about something specific then it has to be breastfeeding. There is just so much pressure around it and it is advertised as something that comes so naturally, when in reality it is probably one of the hardest things a mother has to master. I, for one, had a hard time and a lot of anxiety around it because I wanted best for the baby. I was only able to overcome this challenge with the help of my mum (she joined me a few weeks after) and a lactation specialist. I still struggle with it sometimes and in the end, I realised bottle or breast, a FED baby is best!

The photoshoot is beautiful. What is the inspiration behind it and the theme?

AK: I am quite a sentimental person and like to collect 'moments' from my life. I cannot imagine a more important phase than pregnancy and so I wanted to capture it. I started my research and was lucky enough to come across "Willow and Bear Photography" based in Manchester. It's an all-female hard working team and I absolutely fell in love with their fairy-like, ethereal aesthetic. That is exactly how I wanted to be captured.

We got in touch with them and Kirsteen and Mirren designed everything from my outfits to my makeup. I honestly placed my faith in them and I was not disappointed. You can see the results for ▶







yourself - I cannot recommend them enough. The photos were so beautiful that I decided to share them with my fans and a lot of ladies came out in support and were appreciative.

Share your health and fitness routine.

AK: I will be honest with you - right now I am taking everything slowly. My body needs to heal from the trauma of a c-section and pre-eclampsia that I developed during my pregnancy. I am still in recovery so I am not on any crazy diets.

Tips for new Mums?

AK: Engage with your baby as you would with an adult. As tempting as it is to just 'oooh' and 'aaah' at your baby, I would ask that you speak gently. Assume they understand what you are saying and seek to understand them. In a very short amount of time, you will understand their cues and they will acquire patience and a self-respect which will surprise you. This will pay dividends in later years.

How do you cope with the invasions of privacy

that being a celeb mum involves?

AK: I don't mind it as I use my platform to try and educate and enlighten parents about my journey, and to exchange tips on child rearing. For example, on my social media we ignited a heated conversation about fathers changing their daughters' nappies.

What are your current projects and future

AK: My one and current project for the next 12 months is called project 'Amelie'. Almost all my energy and attention is going into my daughter. The only exception to this is my commitments to the charitable causes I am associated with. After 12

months I hope to take on a meaningful project and return to the screen.

Walk us through your day.

AK: This is a very interesting one, as my day now resembles almost every other parent's schedule. Amelie determines my waking and sleeping hours. I ensure Amelie's feeds and nappies are provisioned for. The additions to this are her outings, medical appointments and play dates, and if I am lucky with child care, the odd coffee with one of my own friends.

INTERVIEW: ARMEENA KHAN PHOTOGRAPHY, HAIR & MAKEUP: WILLOW AND BEAR PHOTOGRAPHY HAIR: CATHERINE BODEN



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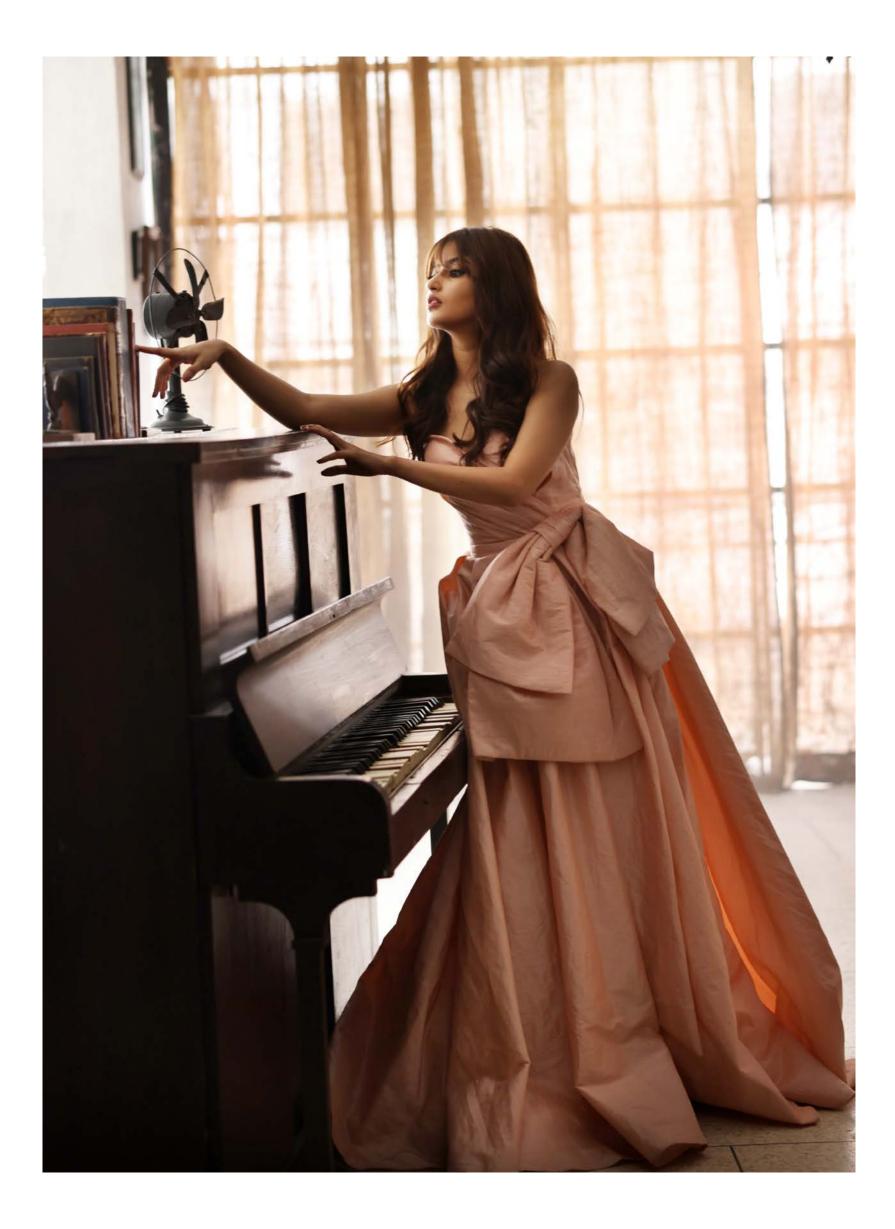
SUMMER GLANIOUR The ultimate guide to summer glamour featuring Sajal Ali

SHOT BY RIZWAN UL HAQ MAKE UP AND HAIR NABILAS SALON JEWELLERY ROUGE BY ROOJ AMIR STYLED BY RAO ALI KHAN











OK! Red CARPET







ROCKSTARS







OK! Fashion EDIT





TEXTURE ALERT!

Macramé, crochet and other similar textures are having a major moment this spring. The knot-tying craft popular in the 1960s and '70s was prevalent on the runways with designers like Chloé, David Koma, Simone Rocha and more. Elevated and chic; it's not just for resort wear but can be worn daily head-to-toe or as an accessory.





STOCKISTS: AKOIA SWIM, ALEXIS, ETRO, DES PHEMMES, SELF PORTRAIT, SIMKHAI www.modaoperandi.com; ANCIENT GREEK SANDALS, ZIMMERMANN www.netaporter.com; CELINE www.celine.com; CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN www.christialouboutin.com; GUCCI www.gucci.com; H&M www.hm.com; LOEWE www.loewe.com; LORO PIANA www.loropiana.com; RIVER ISLAND www.riverisland.com; STELLA MCCARTNEY www. stellamccartney.com; ZARA www.zara.com; prices are approximately

OK! Style CRUSH





EMMA ROBERTS

Super Star Emma Roberts has been rocking everything she's worn for the past few years. If she's not looking fabulous on a day-to-day basis wearing comfy yet chic clothes, she's looking fabulous on red carpets and at parties. Her style has been on point lately – which is why she's our latest style crush!



 $STOCKISTS: MICHELLE\ MASON\ www.farfetch.com; GUCCI, GALVAN, MONIQUE\ P\'EAN\ www.mytheresa.com; AMINA\ MUADDI\ www.sandrascloset.com; prices\ are\ approximate$



ltaú **KSW**

SXSI GET YOUR GREENS!

Chris Pine makes a strong case for a monotone greens head-to-toe look.



STOCKISTS: A KIND OF GUISE, CANALI, FEAR OF GOD ESSENTIALS, ON RUNNING www.mrporter.com; ADIDAS ORIGINALS www.adidas.com; MANOLO BLAHNIK www.manoloblahnik.com; NIKE www.nike.com;





What's IN HER BAG?

Maira Khan, the Pakistani actress, model and former VJ shares the contents of her bag with OK! Pakistan



Zong Wifi Device My internet just keeps dying on me - therefore I carry a device at all times.



iPhone It's my lifeline.

LISTERINE





Wallet I love this wallet because of the colour. I change purses and this can just stay. It goes with everything.



Car Keys Even If I am not driving I still have to keep them with me.



This perfume by Christian is a hot seller. I own so many perfumes, but this seems to be my favourite, and with just a little spritz one can smell it from miles away.

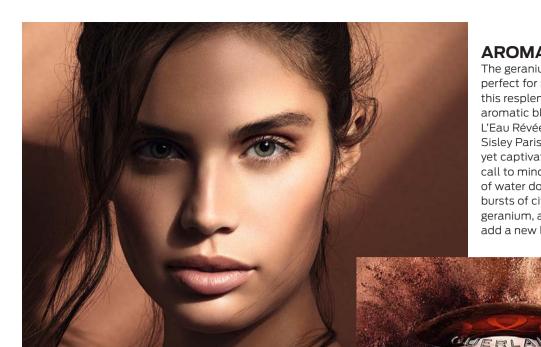
Oud Ispahan





skin types.

OMPILED BY: LYNNE HYLAND PHOTOGRAPHY: MEGAN BRAMLEY



AROMATIC BLISS!

The geranium notes are perfect for spring, and carry this resplendent scent into aromatic bliss.

L'Eau Révée d'Hubert by Sisley Paris includes nuanced yet captivating notes that call to mind a cool stream of water dotted with greens, bursts of citrus, (our favorite) geranium, and even mint to add a new layer of flavor.



BEST LIGHT

It's rosé in the garden time again, and after two glasses on a warm spring day I'm prepared to pretend I'm a golden-hour goddess, the late afternoon sunlight glancing off imaginary supermodel cheekbones.

Complicit in this fantasy is Guerlain Terracotta Light, PKR 14,700 in three shade intensities, which is back for another season in all its luminous loveliness. The iconic powder has had a tweak, so it's now 96% natural ingredients, but the look is the same as ever: blurring, super-soft and naturally bronzed. Don't stop believing!

BEAUTY Esentials

TSSC 1

HUDA THOUGHT IT

Super-influencer Huda Kattan has made a career out of trowelling it on (in the best way!), but the woman who once called herself a "cake face" had an epiphany in lockdown. She embraced skincare like the rest of us embraced leisurewear, and – gasp! – has now decided she's dialling down the Insta-glam.

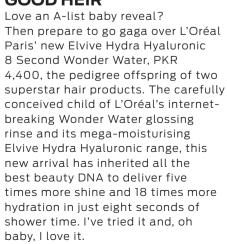
It's led to the creation of Huda Beauty GloWish Multidew Skin Tint, PKR 14,400, which involves previously alien vocabulary such as "natural" and "minimalist". I never thought Huda would make a base so sheer I could practically smoosh it on in the dark with my fingers, but she has — and my goodness, it's glorious. It looks glowy, feels silky and somehow manages to tick the "barely there" box while adding a fabulous soft-focus filter. Unbelievable!



RED CARPET SKINCARE

Some people love trying new skincare. For others, it's love at first swipe and they are not to be swayed from their fave face cream. Fans of Charlotte Tilbury's Magic Cream clearly fall into the latter category, as this moisturiser – a favourite with make-up artists and beauty editors – sells one pot every two minutes. If you're one of these devotees, save yourself a tenner every time you need a top-up by adding the refill pods to your basket instead. The eye and night cream from the Magic range are also refillable, as are a number of Charlotte's lipsticks, powders and brow products. Charlotte Tilbury Charlotte's Magic Cream, PKR 28,900, and Refill, PKR 25,000







TO FEEL ENERGISED

Look for: Citrus, mint

"If you're feeling a bit down in the dumps, a spritz of something citrusy can really help with that. The majority of people will find citrus scents uplifting," says Rebecca. "There's also something super energising about the fresh, zingy smell of mint."

Try: Aerin Mediterranean Honeysuckle Clementina EDP, PKR 36,000 for 50ml

A postcard from Positano in perfume form, this is a juicy yet elegant scent that combines Corsican clementine with bright and breezy bergamot and wild honeysuckle.





FEEL-GOOD FRAGRANCES

The perfume you pick can affect how you feel

that day, say the experts. So here's how to

influence your mood through scents

EAU DE PARFUM

ÉLAN

VITAL

hile the idea of a signature scent — making you instantly memorable by the trail of perfume you leave in your wake — still has a certain glamorous appeal, nowadays it's becoming more popular to own a fragrance wardrobe — an assortment of spritzes to select from depending on factors like what you're wearing or what you're doing that day.

Experts believe that perfume can also have an effect on your mood. Rebecca Rose, founder of British fragrance brand To The Fairest, says, "The way I select my fragrance is very much dictated by how I want to feel that day. For example, if I've got a really busy day I'd want to feel efficient, so that might mean a perfume that's less romantic, less floral and more energising."



TO FEEL GROUNDED

Look for: Green, earthy notes

"Earthy, rooty notes aren't for everybody, but they can really connect with people. That feeling of going off-grid and connecting with nature can be incredibly calming and grounding," Rebecca says.

Try: To The Fairest Élan Vital EDP, PKR 23,000 for 50ml

Meaning "life force", this unisex scent whisks you away from everyday stresses and takes you on a walk through an ancient forest after a rainstorm, bursting with life. Earthy top notes of vetiver and nettle lead into hints of lily of the valley, oakmoss and patchouli.



TO FEEL HAPPY

Look for: Coconut, vanilla

"Look for 'solar scents' that connect with that sunshine feeling," Rebecca advises. "That often means subtle coconut (not the smell of sunscreen), something that takes you out of your landscape to a different place – fantasy scents. Vanilla is also a happy scent. It's rare to find a moody vanilla."

Try: Jimmy Choo Rose Passion EDP, from PKR 18,000 for 40ml

Happiness comes in the shape of a trip to the French Riviera this spring, as this joyful new EDP captures the sea and sunshine in notes of coconut water, jasmine, vanilla and sandalwood.

IMMY CHOO

TO FEEL CONFIDENT

Look for: Smoky notes

"There's a difference between wanting to feel confident walking into a boardroom and walking into a party," says Rebecca. "Generally, I would choose a fragrance that was within my comfort zone but also has assertive notes, like something smoky — something that announces who I am and captures people's attention."

Try: Escentric Molecules Molecule 01 + Guaiac Wood EDT, PKr 42,000 for 100ml

Cult classic Molecule 01 has launched three new variations, each with one additional aroma added to the original single-molecule scent. Guaiac

Wood is a warm, smoky offering that's empowering without overwhelming.

TO FEEL CALM

Look for: Gourmands

"Lavender is the most obvious calming scent, but there's a recent trend for gourmands: nutty, sweet, pudding-type notes," explains Rebecca. "Something about those notes is very soothing."

Try: Akro Bake EDP, from PKR 29,000 for 30ml, available from May

Inspired by the lemon drizzle cake at the Akro founders' favourite London bakery Crumbs & Doilies, this delivers hearty helpings of sugar and zest in equal measure, finished with base notes of Chantilly cream. It's as comforting as curling up on the sofa in front of an episode of Bake Off.

Aparis Serior dipty que l'EAU L'EAU L'EAU PAPIER Paris Se il poulle vard saint gennont dipty que l'approprie d

ecule

Guaiac

TO FEEL SEXY

Look for: Unusual combinations

"What I find sexy in a fragrance is an unexpected combination of notes. These unusual pairings can be really intriguing and it's the intrigue that draws you into someone's personal space," says Rebecca.

Try: Diptyque L'Eau Papier EDT, from PKR 32,700 for 50ml

The French fragrance house's latest scent blends light florals and white musks with two less common notes: roasted sesame seeds and steamed rice, said to evoke the smell of blank paper and fresh ink. It's a love letter in fragrance form.

THE LIFE OF ZAINAB SHABBIR

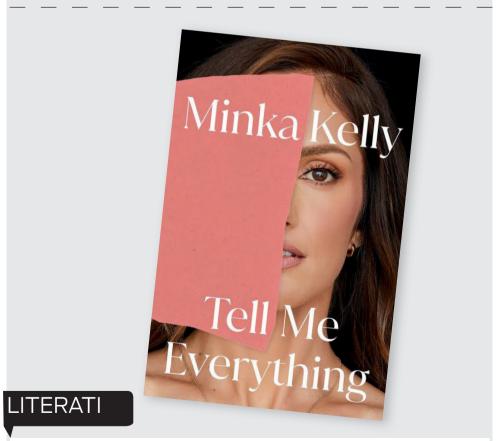
The Pakistani actress shares it all with OK! Pakistan



ENTERTAINMENT

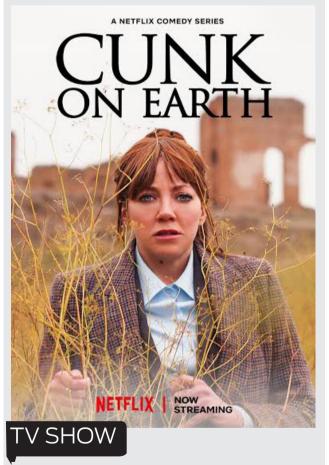


he latest film from award-winning director Ben Affleck, is a fact-based drama that brings to light the relationship between the legendary Michael Jordan (then a rookie basketball player) and Nike in addition to following the unconventional team's route to success. From Ben Affleck to Matt Damon, the film has a great cast and a 92% rating on Rotten Tomatoes.



TELL ME EVERYTHING BY MINKA KELLY

any will recognise the author from *Friday Night Lights* and the hit TV show *Euphoria*, however, most of you probably don't know about her struggles growing up - from depending on friends and family to take her and her single mother in, to spending nights in storage units, to reuniting with her father, Aerosmith's Rick Dufay, and eventually getting her big break in Friday Night Lights. The book describes her journey of resilience and love in great detail.



CUNK ON EARTH

ith a rare 100% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, this is one show that you don't want to miss. Hosted by Diane Morgan, the show consists of anthropological documentaries with a twist and will make you laugh out loud from beginning to end. We highly recommend this one!



of Anglo-German Education about revolutionising the education sector and more...



r Markus Markert, Entrepreneur, Co-Founder of Anglo-German Education, and Oxford DPhil, is interviewed by OK! Pakistan on his love for the nation and how he seeks to revolutionise the education sector.

How did you develop your interest in Pakistan?

Markus Markert: I first came to the land of the pure in a purely academic capacity back when I was still at Warwick University. During my second year, I was invited by a dear friend from Rawalpindi to carry out the fieldwork for a research project on the ground here in Pakistan. Incidentally, he also very kindly invited me to attend his sister's wedding where I made a terrible fool of myself shaking a leg to "Tu Mera Hero" on the dance floor. Naturally, everyone enjoyed watching the white man dancing and I kept getting invites to come to Pakistan! I think at some point I had built a reputation as some sort of German "wedding junkie" who would only come during "the season". By now, I must have attended over 100 weddings in Islamabad alone. One thing I can say with confidence is that compared to your weddings, ours look and sound more like funerals! But don't forget: I was actually writing a variety of papers during my stay. When I eventually got into Oxford, my MPhil and DPhil supervisor, Professor Jan Zielonka, actually told me that my very unusual - unusual for a German Gora - interest in Pakistan in fact constituted what he called "the extra ingredient", which got me over the finish line. This

is also what I tell my students: everyone can have good grades - you have to build an impressive extracurricular portfolio if you want to stand out from the crowd!

But your engagement with Pakistan did not stop there, did it?

MM: No, not at all! How could it ever stop? Deko:

of Once, I was persuaded to take the GT road from Islamabad to Lahore instead of the highway. 77

You can leave Pakistan but Pakistan never leaves you. It's a most lovely and endearing case of Stockholm syndrome for me. My MPhil thesis was again focused on Pakistan and I am also proud to say that I was elected as the first Gora treasurer of the Oxford Pakistan Society. I had the honour and the privilege to serve as the Second in Command to the President of the society at the time, a very

close friend of mine and even greater role model. As you know, we Germans work extremely well in hierarchies and love to execute orders - so that role came natural to me!

In our respective roles, we were using the great reputation and convening power of Oxford to build sustainable institutional linkages between the university and different stakeholders in Pakistan. That was a phenomenal learning process for me and also elevated my involvement in Pakistan beyond the "mere" academic level.

After my MPhil and before I commenced my DPhil studies a year later, I decided to move to Pakistan for a year and to work for a private British school system in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. A most enriching experience, which also allowed me to travel widely. Sadly, I have not yet made it to the Northern areas!

Where in Pakistan have you been?

MM: I have been all over the place! Sometimes not intentional though! Once, I was persuaded to take the GT road from Islamabad to Lahore instead of the highway. I have forgotten the number of near-death experiences I had during that hellish ride but I definitely agreed with Winston Churchill who once famously said: "Although prepared for martyrdom, I prefer that it be postponed".

Another time, that was during my very first trip to Pakistan, one of the wedding functions was supposed to take place in Rahimyarkhan and my hosts persuaded me to postpone my flight ▶

OK! PAKISTAN · 61





for a few days and fly south with them. The original plan was to attend the wedding function on the Friday, fly back to Islamabad on Saturday morning, and comfortably get on that flight back to London on Sunday at 03:00 AM. Well, you know the old joke: "how do you make God laugh? You make a plan!". So, on Friday evening, this chap walks up to me and says: "Sir, there are no flights!". I could not believe it! Flights can be postponed but how can they possibly be cancelled? The next day, I ended up driving all the way for 12 hours from Rahimyarkhan to

Islamabad! I probably saw more of the Punjab than most Pakistanis! Luckily, I made it and when I told the stewardess about my odyssey, she gave me a Toblerone for free!

Based on what you have seen and experienced during all those years, what are the defining features of Pakistan in your eyes?

MM: Well, initially I did feel a bit overwhelmed. Remember: I am a proud son of Hanover, a city in northern Germany, perhaps known only for having supplied England with her kings. Everyday life is quiet and orderly as one would expect from any ordinary German city. Can you imagine: I was once stopped by the police for crossing a red traffic light at night with my bicycle and was "sentenced" to pav 60 Euros for the crossing itself and 300 Euros to attend a seminar that would help me to improve my behaviour in traffic. Lenin, the Russian revolutionary, best captured this very essence of my people when he observed that it would be impossible to start a revolution in Germany: "If we were to tell the Germans to occupy a train station, they would all purchase their tickets first"!

But once one can see past that first "clash of cultures", which is in fact a lovely one and, mind you, a good sort of shake up for us Goras, one realises what makes the land of the pure so unique amongst the nations of the world! If I had to capture this in two defining features, I would say that the first is your refusal to succumb to history's horrors. Just look at what has been thrown at you and you are still standing! Weaker nations would have cracked

to occupy a train station, they would all purchase their tickets first! **77**

already. The second feature is that this is a country with extremely talented people, who, I am afraid, for the most part, are not given the opportunity that they deserve. I have been all over this country. From Karachi to Swat valley. You can enter a village and see how a simple plastic bottle has been put to use in fifteen different ways! The human genius in this country is simply enormous!

So how do we give opportunity to that genius?

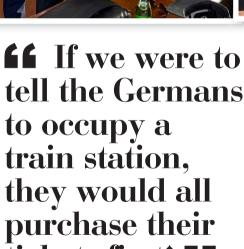
MM: You see, there have been so many initiatives focused on giving people an education. But where are these kids? What has become of them? We never see them! One of my great mentors, Asif Rangoonwala, once perfectly summed up this dilemma when he observed that "Pakistanis spend between \$1 to \$2 billion a year in charity; it's a huge

number. But they are not creating the institutions - that shows you what a big cash economy you have. It's a question of creating systems, ending ad hocism and introducing structured systems" - and I could not agree more with Asif Sahib. As a German, I firmly believe that the missing link in a lot of educational projects is the long-term, systematic involvement of industry. Deko: It's all fair and games to help a student get through school or obtain a higher education degree. But then what? In the worst case, a lot of these youngsters end up being unemployed or drive Ubers with a university degree. My calling and mission - both as an entrepreneur but also as someone who holds Pakistan very, very dear - is to work with schools, universities, and, crucially, Pakistani industry to develop an education similar to the German system of Applied Sciences.



MM: Essentially, it is a practice-oriented study mode in which universities work closely with local industry partners and thereby develop a highly skilled workforce. The students are required to work during their studies. They will get paid for this but they have to do it. Also, the professors teaching them are usually businessmen and industrialists themselves. The entire focus is on work experience and practice as opposed to the research and theory focus we see in "traditional universities".

Our company has started working with reputable industries, schools, as well as local and international universities on a few pilots in Karachi that seek to slowly but surely change the way we "do education" towards an applied science model.



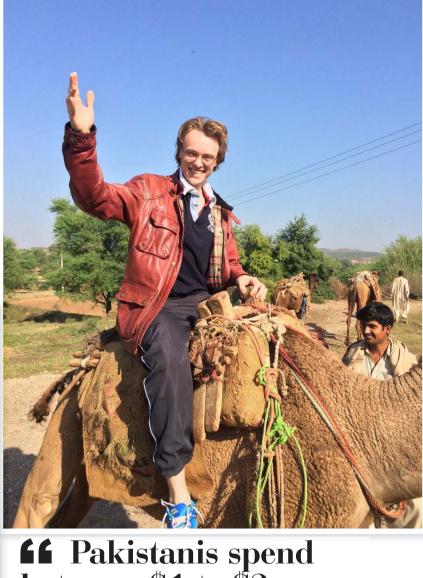




This is now becoming a more and more popular trend worldwide - beyond Germany. Her Majesty's Government introduced a similar system in 2020 called "T-Levels". In fact, one of our university partners in the UK, the University of Law has recently changed its curriculum and made industry placements mandatory in a number of courses.

And it makes sense, does it not? As an accountant in Pakistan you cannot get your degree until and unless you have worked for a certain period of time. Why does this not apply to all other subjects? From engineering to media studies or architecture! We do not want our students to only start interacting with the labour market and employers after they graduate. We want them to gain that practical experience during their studies!

I firmly believe that this is the way forward for Pakistan and we are blessed to have the top industries of this country supporting us. Industry is the key, indispensable element in all of this! Only long-term industry collaboration with schools and universities in this country can help to build a system that will produce the skilled labour that we need. I mean, I amjust astonished by the fact that Pakistanis have been assembling generators for other countries for decades but cannot build their own!



between \$1 to \$2 billion a year in charity; it's a huge number. 77

Instead, precious US dollars and Euros are spent

on importing these goods from abroad. Similarly, whenever, say, a particular machine in a factory is broken, the Pakistani industrialists have to hire some Gora to fly in and fix it for them.

But again, risking to repeating myself like a parrot: if we endeavour to develop the skillset we need, we have to have students work for industries as part of their studies. Only through this will they develop the practical skills they, the industry, and the country as a whole need. We have launched a number of initiatives at the high-school, the undergraduate, and the postgraduate level to - inshallah - make this a reality!

Germany itself is becoming a more and more popular study destinations for Pakistani students. What can they expect and what are the benefits for them?

MM: You are right: we have been a known unknown. People knew that the German education system is good but given the traditional orientation towards the Anglo-American system in this country, no one knew quite what to make of it. This is changing now: Germany is becoming more and more popular and this trend has become particularly apparent in the increase of international students at applied

sciences universities where they are able to work and study at the same time.

What is more, Germany right now is facing a severe shortage of skilled labour. We are in dire needs of bright and qualified minds who can join the labour market and economy and ensure that "made in Germany" retains its old respected fame throughout the world. There have been new regulations facilitating this, such as the skilled labour immigration act. This allows students who have graduated with a German degree residency for up to 18 months to find a job. After that they would become permanent residents. Around 96% of those studying at the universities we are working with have found a job within 12 months and around half of them hold a job offer before they graduate. Another myth here in Pakistan is that you have to speak German in order to study in Germany. This is not true. At the universities we are working with you can complete both your undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in English and get a German degree. For most undergraduate courses at state universities, however, you do have to have command over the Teutonic tongue but we can help you with

OK! Pakistan: Dr Markus, we wish you all the success in all of these great initiatives! ☑...

INTERVIEW: MEHR KASSIM PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF Dr Markus



NUTRI BULLETS

BOOST YOUR ENERGY LEVELS, IMMUNITY AND SLEEP QUALITY WITH JENNIFER MEDHURST'S DELICIOUS, NUTRITIOUS DISHES





INGREDIENTS

- 70ml extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for greasing
- 110g 100% rolled oats
- 60g gram flour
- 1 date, finely chopped
- 1 tsp dried oregano, plus extra to sprinkle
- 1 tsp dried thyme, plus extra to sprinkle
- Pinch of salt
- 5 tbsp cold water
- 4 medium vine tomatoes, sliced
- 2 large handfuls of mixed colour cherry tomatoes, halved

For the filling

- Extra-virgin olive oil, for frying
- 2 medium onions, diced
- 5 garlic cloves, chopped
- 500g ricotta20g basil fir
- 20g basil, finely chopped
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 3 free-range organic eggs, plus 2 yolks

To serve

A big green salad

- **1.** Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4 and grease a 23cm springform tin with extra-virgin olive oil.
- **2.** Blend the oats into flour in a blender, then add the gram flour, date, oregano, thyme and salt. Pulse to combine, then gradually mix in the olive oil.
- **3.** Add the water, a tablespoon at a time, until a dough forms. Press the dough into the prepared tin, forming a flat base. Poke the base with a fork to allow air to escape and then bake for 10-12 minutes until it is cooked through and slightly browned.
- **4.** Meanwhile, make the filling. Heat some extra-virgin olive oil in a large frying pan over a low-medium heat and sauté the onions for 20 minutes or so, stirring from time to time until they are soft and sweet but haven't taken on any colour. Add the garlic for the last 2 minutes of cooking. Set aside to cook
- last 2 minutes of cooking. Set aside to cool. **5.** Grab a large bowl, add the ricotta and whisk it, ideally using an electric whisk. Then add the cooled onion and garlic mixture, the

- basil, salt and pepper, and mix until it is well incorporated.
- **6.** In a separate large mixing bowl, whisk the eggs and the 2 extra yolks together, preferably using an electric whisk, until they are light and airy. Add the ricotta and onion mixture carefully and work it in, just until it is well incorporated. Pour over the pastry and bake for 45-50 minutes, or until the filling is just set
- just set.
 7. Arrange the tomatoes on a lined baking tray, cut side up, drizzle with extra-virgin olive oil and season with salt and pepper, then sprinkle with the extra oregano and thyme.
- **8.** Roast the tomatoes in the oven for about 30 minutes until the edges are just starting to catch.
- **9.** Once everything is cooked, arrange the roasted tomatoes, cut side up, on top of the tart, so they are touching each other. Serve immediately, with a big green salad, or pop the tart back in the oven for a few minutes and serve it warm. This tart is also very good left to cool and served cold. ▷





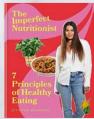
SERVES 4-5

bark

Dark

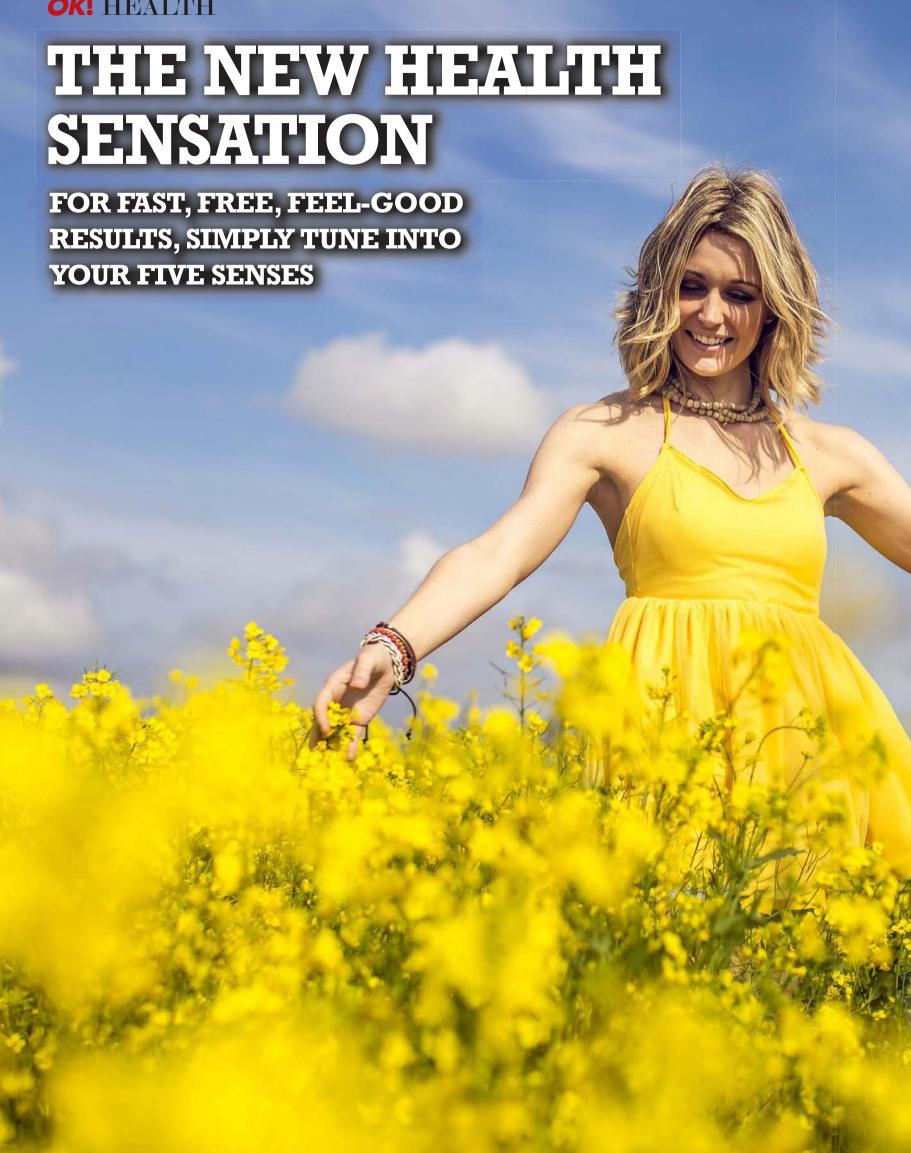
INGREDIENTS

- 2 x 100g bars of dark chocolate
- 1 tsp extra-virgin olive oil For the topping
- Seeds, such as flaxseeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds or sunflower seeds
- Mixed nuts
- Dried mulberries
- Puffed rice
- Dried coconut flakes
- 1. Melt the chocolate in the microwave in 30-second bursts, stirring after each one - the chocolate is done when it's about 90% melted. Keep stirring and the residual heat should melt any remaining pieces.
- 2. Stir in the extra-virgin olive oil.
- 3. Pour the mixture on to a lined baking tray. Using a silicone or rubber spatula, spread the chocolate evenly over the centre area of the baking tray - aim for a thickness of about 5mm. It won't reach the edges.
- 4. Sprinkle the seeds, mixed nuts, dried mulberries, puffed rice and coconut flakes evenly over the chocolate.
- **5.** Place the tray on a flat surface in the fridge to harden for about 30 minutes until firmly set, then remove and break into pieces. Enjoy!
- 6. Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 2 months. OK!



THE IMPERFECT NUTRITIONIST: 7 PRINCIPLES OF HEALTHY EATING BY JENNIFER MEDHURST (KYLE BOOKS £25) IS OUT NOW





eed a quick health boost? Try hacking into your senses - sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Learning how to zone in to them and find a good balance so we're not underusing any (typically we underuse taste, touch and smell),

is the new wellbeing trend that's fast – and free. And advocates claim "sensehacking" can make you feel happier, more alert, relaxed, motivated, help you sleep better and even stop you overeating.

Professor Charles Spence, an expert in multisensory perception and author of the book Sensehacking: How To Use The Power Of Your Senses For Happier, Healthier Living, explains how it works: "In this digital age, you might find you're using too much 'sight and sound'.

This means there's an under-stimulation of the more 'emotional' senses - touch, taste and smell - and that can affect our health.

"More than just mindfulness, it's about finding a better balance and consciously making some of our senses work harder by making simple

He adds, "It's fascinating to see how senses like touch and sound are working, often without our realising. For example, it's scientifically proven that using a tablecloth makes food taste better and that shoppers spend up to 50 per cent more when slow music is played."

Jasmine Eskenzi, co-founder of the app Zensory, is also passionate about sensehacking.

"Why do we often get our best ideas when we're in the shower or on a walk? We've slowed down and feel more aware of the senses we're using." Zensory is designed to teach you to tune into your senses and regain control of your mind, moods and time. It provides the tools you need to react to different situations as you go about your day, using soundscapes, touchpads, scents, breathing, tapping and taste suggestions.

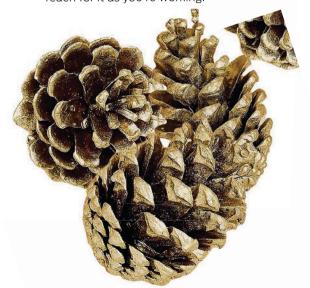
Now it's being used by charities, hospitals and companies to help manage stress and improve focus.

"Not everyone has the time to meditate," says Jasmine. "We're showing people how to manage those micro moments to improve their days with the amazing powers we all have - naturally." Here are some easy sensehacks you can try immediately...

TOUCH

Interpersonal touch is the fastest way to feel comforted. If no one's around for a hug, go solo with a head scratcher or massage chair.

Use a touch of nature to focus more. Keep a stone, pinecone or piece of bark to hand and reach for it as you're working.



SMELL

into Tap familiar scent of a favourite perfume, food or ambience to bring back the

good times. Buv essential oil diffuser for your home office Had stressful а meeting? Change scent immediately afterwards to

an mentally reset.

SIGHT

Feeling tired after lunch? Get out into the open air. Natural light will re-stimulate you.

Ditch the beige! Dopamine dressing in brighter



colours can not only give you a subconscious boost but benefit those around you, too.

introducing ingredients that are beneficial in aromatherapy. Lavender and chamomile don't just have to be smelled – try tasting them too.

SOUND

TASTE

appreciate your food more.

Studies show you can eat up to 30 per

cent more when you're distracted. Turn

off the TV and vou'll be able to taste and

If you're eating late, get calm in the kitchen by

Need to crack on with a job? Ask Alexa to play "binaural beats" rather than your usual playlist. Music without highs and lows or vocals and which



uses certain tones will keep you focused. Let the sounds of nature soothe you. It's scientifically proven that the more species of birds you can hear, the more relaxed you'll feel. M

WORDS: LESLEY JONES PHOTOS: GETTY

TROPICAL PARADISE

Kinza Hashmi shares highlights of her recent trip to Sri Lanka

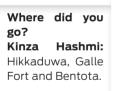












What made you go here?

KH: I was there for shoot with Hussain Rehar. It was for his new summer collection.

What did you pack?
KH: Clothes.

What was your favourite meal/restaurant?

KH: Whenever I travel I like eating the local street foods. In Sri Lanka, I loved their coconut curries and a sweet dish named Helapa.

What was the biggest highlight of your trip/most memorable moment?

KH: I think I enjoyed every moment as it was super relaxing. I also shopped for some sculptures



and paintings, and was super impressed by Sri Lankan art.

What are some spots for a night out?

KH: Unawatuna was a happening place for night out.

Travel essentials?

KH: Sun glasses, lip balm, AirPods and power bank.

Any travel tips you would like to share?

KH: I think less is more so don't take excessive stuff with you when you're travelling.

TEXT: MEHR KASSIM PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF KINZA HASHMI



URBAN VIBE

Filled with ornate churches, world-famous art galleries and dazzling architecture, it's no surprise that Spain's capital is a popular mini-break destination. You can visit Europe's largest palace, the Royal Palace of Madrid, in the morning, lust over designer labels in the Galería Canalejas following a lazy lunch, then enjoy the colourful nightlife after sundown.

But one local advised us otherwise, "The best way to really experience Madrid is by sitting in a bar with a glass of vermouth, just taking in the atmosphere." Sold!

AUTHENTIC EATS

The best spot for people watching is the city's Literary Quarter, with its narrow, paved streets lined with traditional, quirky restaurants and shops. Here you'll find all the good tapas bars (head for those with tiled fronts, which are the 72





You'll also find Plaza de Santa Ana, where Ernest Hemingway used to drink and which is now filled with open-air eateries and has a buzzing vibe. Look out for the Museo del Jamón cafés dotted around the city, instantly recognisable by the hams hanging from the ceilings. If you are vegetarian be prepared to eat a lot of patatas bravas. Even the posh restaurants have limited meat-free options. When it comes to meals, eat like Madrileños and skip dinner. Instead go for the lunchtime "menu of

the day", which is excellent value, then have tapas in the evening. If you're still hungry later at night, pick up churros and hot melted chocolate from one of the 24-hour churros shops. Chocolatería San Ginés is perhaps the most famous.

HIDDEN GEM

Our accommodation, Gran Hotel Inglés, is in the Literary Quarter, conveniently located yet tucked away from the hustle and bustle. Dating back to 1886, it's the oldest hotel in Madrid, and was a hotspot for artists, politicians, bullfighters art-deco glamour, with smartly dressed bartenders who can make anything on (or indeed off) the extensive cocktail menu, and keep bottles of cava on ice. The hotel's Casa Lobo restaurant serves traditional dishes with a modern fine-dining twist, accompanied by live music at night. If you're after further evening entertainment, head to one of the city's flamenco bars. They are quite touristy, but it's an exciting way to experience the high-energy Spanish dance.





and other members of the city's elite at the start of the 20th century. It has recently been restored to bring back some of that oldfashioned elegance. giving guests a luxurious experience that still honours the hotel's heritage. Bedrooms blend tradition with modern luxury - ours had a roll-top bath at the end of the bed, wallto-wall windows and, in the closet, wallpaper made of letters and photographs from the hotel's past.

The bar fully embraces

SEE THE SIGHTS

Skip the modern Almudena Cathedral (locals hate it, apparently) and hunt out historic churches like the Royal Basilica of St Francis the Great and the baroque Church of St Andrew the Apostle. Visiting the city's two most famous art galleries — the Prado Museum and the Reina Sofía National Art Centre — isn't feasible in one day, so we opted for the latter and spent an enjoyable few hours engrossed in the collection of 20th century art, including Picasso's Guernica, huge and haunting.

Stroll down the Cuesta del Moyano, a promenade lined with stalls heaped high with vintage books, to the Royal Botanic Garden and El Retiro Park. Large and lively, there's something happening in every corner of this vast green public space, from rose gardens and Tai Chi lessons to musicians and performance artists.

WORDS: LAURA MULLEY

OK! WORLD IN ACTION









HOROSCOPE & TAROT

IT'S WRITTEN IN THE STARS!

CAPRICORN



Dec 22 - Jan 20 might

moving considering moving during, whether

it's to a whole new state or just down the block. If you're not planning on moving any time soon, try redecorating or rearranging furniture to refresh your space.

TAURUS

Apr 21 - May 21



Direct energy toward your mental health. As a Taurus, you're already a pro at relaxation. So you

should really lean into that right now. Do some journaling or meditation, light calming candles, or try a yoga

VIRGO

Aug 24 - Sep 23



Review your budget (or make one) to make sure you're not overspending, try to cut out any

unnecessary expenses. This is also a good time for you to practice sharing or opening up to the people close to

SAGITTARIUS



Pick up an adult coloring book or go to an art exhibit to let out your inner

Nov 23 - Dec 21

artist. This is a great time to start a new hobby or get back into an activity that you haven't done in a while. Try to focus on just one thing so you don't get too scattered.

AOUARIUS



Jan 21 – Feb 19

uр writing or speaking projects you have because you'll find

that ideas and words flow much more easily right now. You could be doing some traveling, too.

GEMINI



May 22 - Jun 21 Reach out to friends you haven't seen in a while to catch up. You might feel extra

restless to get out

and do things so try not to overbook yourself, and say no to plans when you need to so you don't get overwhelmed.

LIBRA Sep 24 - Oct 23



Try to share how you really feel, good or bad, with your significant other or the person you're seeing. If you're

dating someone new, have a chat with them instead of waiting for their lead. Prepare for a lot of changes in your love life and life in general.

PISCES

Feb 20 - Mar 20



might reevaluating priorities at work. Think about how you

can make the most of your skills and knowledge in your role. Or focus on things you can improve on to make yourself an even more valuable employee.

CANCER Jun 22 – Jul 23



You could get a job offer, be given more responsibility work, or be asked to mentor a new hire.

Think about what you want (and don't want) in a new position or what different projects you'd like to work on in your current role.



Oct 24 - Nov 22 It is the time to head to the gym. Even if you just take a daily walk, getting in some kind of movement

will make you feel so much better. Take time to power through your to-do list, too. And get all your errands out of the way so you can stop stressing about it.

SCORPIO



ARIES Mar 21 – Apr 20



You might feel like changing up your style, but just make sure you think it through before you

decide to chop your hair or get rid of all your clothes. Focus on yourself by doing things that you enjoy. And don't be afraid to try new things

LEO Jul 24 - Aug 23



If there's somewhere on your bucket list that you want to check off, now is a

good time to start planning your trip. Or if there's a particular subject you're interested in, check out courses in your area or online.





MORE INSIGHTS LESS CATFIGHTS MORE GLAMOUR LESS DRAMA







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