

'I realise that viewers are entitled to have whatever feelings they want about the characters they watch. **But as a human being, I'm concerned that so many people react with such venom** – the Breaking Bad star Anna Gunn, in a New York Times op-ed about the negative feedback towards her character Skyler White



'I sit a lot of the time wrestling with metaphor and also balancing entertainment. **Anything I do creatively comes from a place of instinct.** I don't wake up one morning and say: "I want to make a film about wealth discrepancy." It seems to happen organically – Neill Blomkamp, the director of the sci-fi thriller Elysium



Celebrating traditions



Clockwise from far left, Madonna, Om Puri and his ex-wife Nandita; Eminem; and John Abraham. Stuart Wilson / Getty Images; Amrendra Jha / The India Today Group / Getty Images; Joseph Okpako / Redferns via Getty Images; JA Entertainment

■ **Madonna year's top-earning celebrity**

Madonna is the world's top-earning celebrity, according to a *Forbes* list out this week, making an estimated US\$125 million (Dh459m) in the past year, mainly from her MDNA tour but helped by sales of clothing, fragrance and various investments. Steven Spielberg, who had a hit last year with *Lincoln*, was second with earnings of \$100m. No 3 was a three-way tie among the *Fifty Shades of Grey* author EL James, the radio shock jock Howard Stern and the producer Simon Cowell, with earnings of \$95m. Others in the Top 10 included the TV host Glenn Beck, the director Michael Bay and the novelist James Patterson, whom *Forbes* said was the best-selling author of all time. – Reuters

■ **Om Puri missing, accused of violence**

The journalist Nandita Puri has filed a case against her ex-husband, the Indian actor Om Puri, alleging domestic violence. "We have registered the complaint and booked the actor for voluntarily causing hurt by a dangerous weapon," the Mumbai police told *The Indian Express*. The 62-year-old actor is apparently missing. "Om Puri is absconding at present. We will arrest him as soon as we trace him," said the police. – IANS

■ **Eminem to release new album**

Eminem announced this week the release of his eighth studio album, his follow-up to 2010's *Recovery*. The rapper posted a video teaser on his website that an-

nounces the album, titled *MMLP2*, as in Marshall Mathers LP 2, due out November 5. The record is produced by Dr Dre and Rick Rubin. *MMLP2*'s first single, *Berzerk*, is out on Tuesday. Another song from the album, *Survivor*, featured in a trailer last week for the video game *Call of Duty: Ghosts*. – The National staff

■ **Johar full of praise for Abraham**

The Bollywood director Karan Johar has showered praise on *Madras Café* and its lead actor and producer John Abraham. "*Madras Café* is intelligent, well-intentioned, spectacularly shot and edge-of-the-seat! A proud film in every department! Superb," Johar posted on Twitter. "John Abraham emerging as the new-age producer of our times." Directed by Shoojit Sircar, the film is about the Sri Lankan civil war. *Madras Café* is currently showing in UAE cinemas. – IANS

■ **Beckham wants fashion 'empire'**

Victoria Beckham says she has bigger plans for her fashion brand. "I want to get bigger and bigger," the former Spice Girl told *The New York Times* ahead of the unveiling of her spring/summer 2014 collection at New York Fashion Week, which begins on September 5. "I absolutely want an empire." Aside from clothing, Beckham has also branched out into sunglasses, handbags and denim. The 39-year-old mother of four has also created a new, more-affordable diffusion line, Victoria. "I want to reach as many women throughout the world as I can," she said. – AFP

emcees This year's broadcast of the Golden Globes, hosted by Tina Fey and Amy Poehler, fared well with critics and in the ratings — and the producers have reportedly asked the duo to host next year. Deadline reports Fey and Poehler 'have received an informal invitation ... looking to gauge their interest'

Priti Salian meets a Dubai-based filmmaker with an urge to popularise classical Indian theatre forms

Meena Das Narayan is a multifaceted personality. The editor-in-chief of the luxury magazine *Gulf Connoisseur* counts painting and poetry as major interests, but filmmaking is her great passion. Narayan's first film, *Making of a Maestro*, was a documentary about the kathakali legend Kalamandalam Gopi. Kathakali is a classical Indian dance-drama from Kerala.

Narayan's second film, *Darkness of Night*, also concerns a traditional dance and theatre form, yakshagana, from Karnataka. Yakshagana is a mix of dance, drama and music that requires the actors to don dramatic costumes and headgear and express themselves through graceful movement, facial expressions and dialogue. Many mythological stories have been depicted through yakshagana.

Narayan's love of dance goes back to her childhood. "Growing up in Pune, I enjoyed attending dance and art shows my parents took me to," she says.

"But today's urban kids and youth are not getting the same exposure to tradition." It is this concern and her love for yakshagana which led Narayan to produce and direct *Darkness of Night*, which has a story all youngsters will certainly relate to.

The film is about two young men who are IT professionals by the day but yakshagana performers by night. They're passionate about yakshagana and work hard to make time for it.

"The characters value art as much as their profession," says the actor Sneha Bhagwat, who plays Shruti in the film. "And traditions need to be taken across generations," adds Narayan.

The story also has a love triangle and deals with the confusion and emotions any average twenty-



Meena Das Narayan's film *Darkness of Night*, which is about yakshagana, will be shown at Dubai International Film Festival in December. Vinod Paul

something goes through. "That is where the film picks its title from," Narayan says.

Yakshagana has been unable to attract the younger generation in part because of its long, stretched-out stories and dialogue.

"Our film has shown how yakshagana can be modernised to attract the youth," says Narayan.

The characters in the film have shortened the stories and dialogues and brought in more action. Men playing female characters have been replaced with young attractive women.

But the authenticity and the true tradition of yakshagana has been followed throughout the film.

"Keremane Shivananda Hegde, the legendary yakshagana artiste,

I'm already working on my next film, which is a thriller and will be released next year

Meena Das Narayan filmmaker

has been our expert consultant for this film," says Narayan.

Shivananda's father Keremane Shambhu Hegde, a national award-winner for yakshagana, died during one of his performances. Shivananda picked up the mantle and is now taking his father's legacy forward.

Along with his troupe, Shivananda has given hundreds of performances the world over, including in the Middle East. He has acted in *Darkness of Night*, too.

"I believe that film is a great medium to popularise yakshagana," he says.

Shot in Bangalore in 15 days, *Darkness of Night* has been made for an international audience. Narayan employed Richard W

Black, a screenwriter from Hollywood, to script the film.

"I wanted the film to be as natural and close to life as possible," she says. Black's script has given the drama a Hollywood edge.

The film will be in Indian theatres next month, in English, Malayalam and Kannada.

It will be a part of the Dubai International Film Festival this December and will later participate in the Cannes Film Festival.

After two films, does Narayan plan to take a break? "No," says the 53-year-old with enviable energy. "I'm already working on my next film, which is a thriller and will be released next year."

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