

Bono's birthday gift may finally get Penelope Cruz on the road



For most of her adult life, Penelope Cruz has stayed out of the driver's seat entirely. That could be changing— and the reason traces back to a birthday present from a friend with a habit of making grand gestures: U2's lead singer, Bono.

The Oscar winner revealed on the YouTube series "Hot Ones" that Bono gifted her a car for her last birthday, an act she now describes as impossible to ignore. Turning down a car from a rock star, she

reasoned, is one thing. Refusing to even get licensed to drive it felt like a step too far.

Cruz's reluctance isn't casual nervousness— she describes it as a long-standing and specific fear, one severe enough that even sitting in a moving car with someone else driving can bring on anxiety within minutes. Experts distinguish between two related conditions: vehophobia, the fear of driving, and amaxophobia, a broader fear of riding in vehicles altogether. History

The root of that fear appears to date back decades. Cruz has previously said she watched her sister Monica get hit by a car when she was around eight years old—an incident she has called one of the most traumatic memories of her childhood. Monica recovered without lasting injury, but Cruz has said the moment left a permanent mark on how she relates to cars.

She isn't alone in her household on this front. Her husband, Javier

Bardem, has said in past interviews that he barely drives either, despite appearing at motorsport-adjacent events like last year's premiere of "F1."

Whether Bono's gift actually results in Cruz passing a driving test is still unclear. But for an actor who has spent decades avoiding the wheel, the fact that she's even talking about trying again marks a shift.

Rimjhim gire saawan: Celebrities share their monsoon memories, favourite songs and rainy-day rituals



a monsoon vacation in Shillong someday. - Adrija Roy

Finding peace in the rains

I absolutely love the monsoon because it brings a beautiful sense of peace and renewal. The fresh petrichor, cool breeze, lush greenery and soothing atmosphere make me feel like nature is hugging the earth and giving it a new life. During this season, I enjoy listening to music, reading a good book, sipping hot masala chai, watching my favourite movies or web series, clicking monsoon pictures, and writing in my journal. Rimjhim Gire Saawan is my all-time favourite monsoon song, and I also love listening to Bheegi Bheegi Raaton Mein, Ek Ladki Bheegi Bhaagi Si, and Pyaar Hua Ikraar Hua. My favourite monsoon destination is Lonavala. -Anjali Phougat

Monsoon's soulful charm

I love the monsoon because it changes the entire mood, texture and feeling of life. Every city takes on a different character, and the season is not only soothing for the soul but also essential for our soil and farmers. I prefer staying indoors during heavy rains, listening to music, and enjoying quiet indoor activities whenever possible. Rimjhim Gire Saawan is my all-time favourite monsoon song because it beautifully captures the charm of Mumbai during the rains. My staple monsoon meal has always been khichdi with ghee or onion pakoras with papad—it's something I've grown up eating. If I had to pick a perfect monsoon getaway, it would be Darjeeling or Thailand. - Pallavi Chatterjee

Monsoon takes me back to my carefree childhood. I remember running outside, making paper boats, and simply enjoying every drop of rain. A perfect rainy day for me starts with a hot cup of chai while watching the rain from my window. I love reading a good book, watching a feel-good movie, listening to soothing music, and spending quality time with my family. I also enjoy going for a drive because Mumbai looks beautiful during the monsoon.

The first spell of rain always makes me feel like a child again. The smell of wet soil and the sound of raindrops bring back beautiful memories.

Whenever I get time, I love to stay indoors with a cup of ginger tea, read a book or simply watch the rain from my window. Rimjhim Gire Saawan remains my all-time favourite monsoon song, and no rainy day feels complete without hot pakodas and chai. I also enjoy travelling to lush green hill stations during this season. - Shubhangi Atre

I love the monsoon because it brings a sense of calm. The rain takes me back to my carefree childhood days, and those memories always make me smile. On a rainy day, I enjoy staying home with a cup of coffee, reading, cooking or simply doing nothing. Bheegi Bheegi Raaton Mein is my favourite monsoon song, and nothing beats homemade khichdi with ghee, papad, and pickle when it's raining outside. I'd love to spend

Actress Parul Gulati alleges Rs 8 lakh fraud by Nish hair staff in Bengaluru

Actress and entrepreneur Parul Gulati has accused two former employees of her hair-care brand, Nish Hair, of financial fraud of nearly Rs 8 lakh at its Bengaluru outlet.

In a video posted on Instagram, Gulati said she spent an entire day at a police station after uncovering that the store manager and a sales executive had been allegedly routing customer payments into their own bank accounts rather than the company's accounts.

Gulati claimed the duo sold products worth Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000 daily but asked customers to pay the money to their personal accounts. "They sold my product, my packaging, through my name to the customer and then took the whole amount themselves. Toh unhone mujhse bhi churaya hai, aur customers se bhi," she said.

Gulati said she had suspected irregularities for a while but was unable to identify the cause until she made a surprise visit to the outlet.

She claimed the sales executive, who had access to the store's CCTV footage, called in sick that day, while the manager reported to work. History

She alleged that, during questioning, the manager confessed to starting the fraud roughly a month after joining the company, after understanding its operations, and admitted to misappropriating close to Rs 8 lakh. Gulati said the sales executive is yet to be traced.

She estimated the alleged fraud continued for about six months, causing inven-



tory gaps and accounting mismatches, though she said the evidence she currently has covers only that period.

Gulati appealed to other employers not to hire the accused and urged customers in Bengaluru to always insist on a bill and

confirm the payment details before buying to ensure money is transferred to the company's official account.

She said she may never recover the lost money but hopes those responsible are held accountable.

Alpha release: Meet the Haryana brothers powering Bollywood's biggest films

As Alpha, the latest film in Yash Raj Films' spy universe starring Alia Bhatt and Bobby Deol, hits theatres today, audiences get to experience another adrenaline-fuelled soundtrack crafted by one of Bollywood's most accomplished background score duos. Behind the film's pulse-pounding action and emotional highs are Haryana-born brothers Ankit Balhara and Sanchit Balhara, whose music has become the unseen force behind some of Hindi cinema's biggest blockbusters.

Hailing from Killohard village in Sonipat district, the brothers have quietly built an extraordinary career composing background scores for films including Bajirao Mastani, Padmaavat, War, Pathaan, Gangubai Kathiawadi and now Alpha. Their journey from rural Haryana to the heart of Bollywood has made them among one of the industry's most sought-after composers.

Their defining moment came in 2015 when filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali entrusted them with the background score for Bajirao Mastani. The sweeping orchestral compositions became an



integral part of the film's storytelling and won widespread acclaim, including the prestigious IIFA Award. That breakthrough opened the doors to some of Bollywood's biggest productions, and the duo has been on an impressive run ever since. Their work on Gangubai Kathiawadi earned them the Filmfare Award for Best Background Score, reinforcing

their reputation as masters of cinematic music.

The brothers continue to compose for large-scale productions. Their latest project, Alpha, is in cinemas. They are also composing the background score for War 2, directed by Ayan Mukerji. Beyond the big screen, the duo is also giving music for Netflix's upcoming

crime thriller Mandala Murders, showcasing their versatility across formats.

Music has always been part of the Balhara family's identity. Ankit and Sanchit are the sons of legendary Haryana singer and actor Bhal Singh Balhara, one of the most recognisable names in Haryana's cultural landscape. His songs and performances in classics such as Chandrawal continue to enjoy immense popularity decades later. Their mother, Mukta Chaudhary, has an equally inspiring legacy, having been honoured as Haryana's Best Athlete five times.

Despite their success in Mumbai, Ankit and Sanchit have never lost touch with their roots. Recently, the duo celebrated the release of his father's new music video, Yo Mhara Haryana, calling it "a heartfelt tribute to Haryana—its values, pride, culture, people, wit and musical spirit." His message reflected the family's enduring connection with the state that shaped them and their continued commitment to celebrating Haryana's cultural heritage.

In her glamorous appearances, Janhvi Kapoor effortlessly channels the timeless beauty of her late mother, Bollywood icon Sridevi. Each graceful stride and radiant smile pay homage to the legendary actress, evoking poignant memories. Kapoor's poised demeanor and captivating presence on screen echo the elegance that defined Sridevi's illustrious career. While forging her own path in the film industry, Janhvi Kapoor carries forward the legacy of her mother, creating a seamless blend of modernity and classic charm. Through her style, expressions, and innate grace, Kapoor ensures that the spirit of Sridevi lives on, creating a heartfelt connection with audiences who cherish the memory of the late Bollywood beauty.