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(From left) US actor Leonardo DiCaprio, US film director Quentin Tarantino and his wife Israeli singer Daniella Pick, British film producer David Heyman, US producer Shannon McIntosh, Australian actress Margot Robbie, US actor Brad Pitt and the chairman of Sony Pictures Motion Picture Group Thomas Rothman pose as they arrive for the screening of the film "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.



US actor Brad Pitt (left) arrives with US actor Leonardo DiCaprio for the screening of the film "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP photos

# Pitt and DiCaprio: Hollywood heartthrobs who push their limits

The stars were aligned for Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio to put their dashing good looks to use on big-budget films, but both Hollywood golden boys have instead taken on more idiosyncratic career paths—especially in working with Quentin Tarantino. And now for the first time, the actors are starring side by side in Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood", which the American director screened on Tuesday to rapturous reviews at the Cannes film festival. Both men have already starred in past Tarantino films—the 55-year-old Pitt in "Inglourious Basterds" and DiCaprio, 44, in "Django Unchained".

The consummate urbanite DiCaprio was born and raised in Los Angeles, the son of New Yorkers. As a pre-teen, he began pushing to do what he loved: act. Pitt on the other hand grew up in rural Missouri in a family of devout Baptists. To his community's shock, he took off alone one day and drove to Los Angeles, two weeks before receiving an undergraduate degree in journalism.

Despite the age gap between them, they both began making splashes in Hollywood in the early 1990s. Pitt set tongues wagging in 1991 with "Thelma and Louise" and DiCaprio hit the big time in 1993 with "This Boy's Life" and "What's Eating Gilbert Grape," the latter earning him an Oscar nomination.

### Dashing leading men

The two men belong to a timeworn class of dapper A-listers including Paul Newman, Robert Redford and Steve McQueen, who have enchanted audiences with their features and charisma. "People at (the University of) Missouri were really surprised when they found out what Brad was doing," Pitt's friend Chris Schudy told Rolling Stone magazine in 1994.

"But he's always been so charming that it made some sense. The first time my mom met him, she called him a little Roman god." Pitt says that his reputation as a pretty face was something he "used to wrestle with a lot", telling television personality Charlie Rose in 2004 that today, "I accept it pretty much for what it is." Soon after their big breaks, both Pitt and DiCaprio quickly climbed through the ranks thanks to their acting chops and movie



(From left) US actor Brad Pitt, US actor Leonardo DiCaprio and US film director Quentin Tarantino arrive for the screening of the film "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood".



(From left) Australian actress Margot Robbie, US actor Leonardo DiCaprio and US actor Brad Pitt pose as they arrive for the screening of the film "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood".

star looks—but like Johnny Depp before them, they weren't afraid of subverting their mega-watt stardom.

### Far from blockbusters

Even before the theatrical release of "This Boy's Life", Disney had offered DiCaprio a major role. "I don't know where I got those little balls at 16 years old to say: 'No, I'm going to wait it out because I want to audition for this other film,'" he said in 2014 as part of a SAG-AFTRA event. "If there's one thing that I'm really proud of in my entire career, it's that moment." The role in that "other film" was the mentally disabled adolescent in "What's Eating Gilbert Grape", a role director Lasse Hallstrom initially thought DiCaprio was too cute for before taking the actor on.

The film didn't make more than \$10 million but scored the 19-year-old his first Academy Award nomi-

nation, for best supporting actor. Pitt said it was with 1993's gritty "Kalifornia"—several months after "Thelma and Louise"—that marked "the first time I tried to do something away from where I was headed, take a right turn." For both actors, it was the beginning of a meandering trajectory far from blockbusters, even if DiCaprio became a global star thanks to "Titanic", a role that continues to define his career.

### Going rogue

The pair have never shied away from danger or playing the bad guys, with Pitt doing so in "Kalifornia" and DiCaprio going rogue in "Django Unchained". Pitt has worked with boundary-pushers like the Coen brothers, Terrence Malick, Terry Gilliam, Steven Soderbergh and Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu—who heads the Cannes jury this year. DiCaprio has also worked with the Mexican

director as well as the likes of Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg and Clint Eastwood.

It took decades for both men to get their Oscar due, after always falling short despite multiple nominations. DiCaprio finally won best actor in 2016 for Inarritu's "The Revenant" while Pitt took home the statuette in 2014 as a co-producer of best picture "12 Years a Slave". After more than three decades in the limelight, the pair finally teamed up in front of the camera for Tarantino, who won the coveted Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1994 for "Pulp Fiction". "I'm looking for someone with an interesting point of view and a strong voice," Pitt said after working on "Inglourious Basterds". "And that certainly would sum up" Tarantino, the actor said. — AFP

# All dressed up but no film to show: Bollywood 'needs new take' at Cannes



Indian actress Deepika Padukone poses as she arrives for the screening of the film "Dolor Y Gloria (Pain and Glory)" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP photos



Danish-born Indian model Deepika Padukone poses as she arrives for the screening of the film "Rocketman".



Indian actress Huma Qureshi gets ready before attending the screening of the film "A Hidden Life" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes.

It may be bold and booming but Bollywood needs a fresh approach if it wants to gain traction at the world's top film festival in Cannes, a leading Indian actress says. Although Bollywood's beauties maybe turning heads with their extravagant sartorial statements on the red carpet at Cannes, Indian movies have been glaringly absent from this year's lineup. Since the festival began in 1946, Indian pictures have walked away with several major prizes. But it has been decades since the last one was shown in the main competition. And of the 1,845 feature films submitted for the official selection this year, not a single Indian movie made the cut.

Which is a shame, says 32-year-old actress Huma Qureshi, who believes it is time to start pushing the boundaries of cinema in India, which last year churned out more than 1,800 films—more than any other country on Earth. "It's unfortunate that we don't have an Indian film at Cannes this year," she told AFP as she donned an elaborate ruffled silver-grey gown by designer Gaurav Gupta for the red-carpet premiere of Terrence Malick's "A Hidden Life". "The kind of films that come to Cannes are very niche in India, because it's not the quintessential Bollywood film."

Although there have been a lot of Bollywood films competing over the years, Indian cinema's main focus

has been on big-budget hits rather than the more nuanced, art-house pictures that tend to gain traction at Cannes and other international festivals. "We're so obsessed with box office numbers that it will be a long time before that will really change," said Qureshi, who was born to a Muslim family in New Delhi and who first came to Cannes in 2012 with her debut feature "The Gangs of Wasseypur". "I don't think we have the budgets or the willingness for people to actually invest in these kinds of films. We are still more interested in making the quintessential Bollywood film—that's essentially where the market is right now."

### High fashion, luxury and film

But that needs to change, she says. "We have to create a space for small independent films to thrive and grow, and until that happens, we cannot sit back and say: 'We didn't have a film this year'. Because where are the films we're producing that are actually going to have a shot at Cannes or Venice or any of these kinds of festivals?" With so many mainstream Bollywood actresses heading to Cannes, the annual 12-day extravaganza creates a real buzz in the Indian media with its heady mix of high fashion, luxury brands and excellence in film. And as more popular actors and producers have been going to the festival,

things have started to shift. "With the spotlight on Cannes, there's a definite interest. And there's a big movement that's emerging in India, a new wave of people who are looking at different films and a different kind of content," she said. "These are very interesting times."

### A Netflix debut

And she should know. Next month, Netflix releases a six-part Indian thriller called "Leila", in which Qureshi plays a mother desperately searching for her daughter in a dystopian future world obsessed with purity, where people are segregated according to caste, class and religion. "I'm somebody who tries to pick interesting characters and I like to sink my teeth into these intense roles," she grins. "It's such a specific India story, which is, of course, fictional, but I feel it will find an audience and resonance the world over."

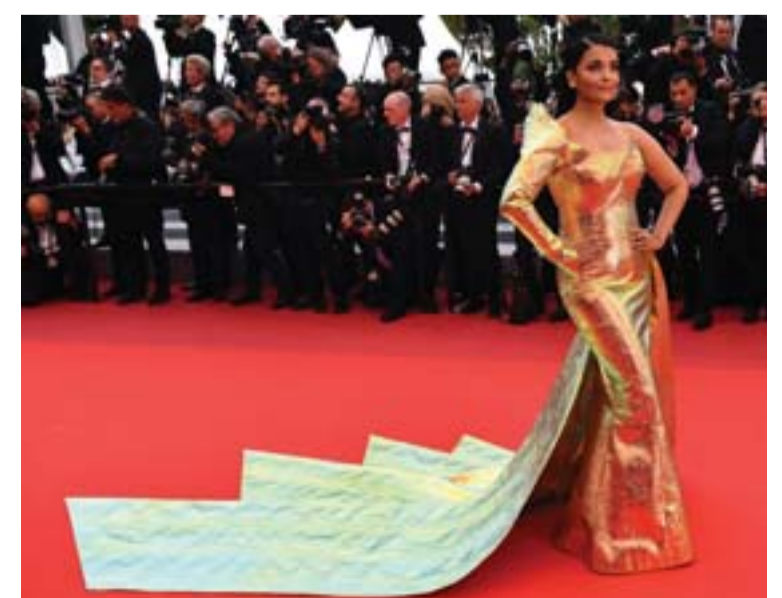
For now, though, the small screen can wait. "The first time I saw myself on the big screen was in a theatre over here which is why I love Cannes," she says, recalling her first visit nine years ago. "First films are special and your first film to come to Cannes is even more special." — AFP



Indian TV actress Hina Khan arrives for the screening of the film "Bacurau" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.



Indian actress and model Priyanka Chopra arrives for the screening of the film "Rocketman".



Indian actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan poses as she arrives for the screening of the film "A Hidden Life" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.