

Anoushka Shankar 'living in fear' after suffering sexual abuse

SITAR player Anoushka Shankar has said she was sexually abused as a child.

The daughter of late sitar player Ravi Shankar spoke while supporting the One Billion Rising Campaign to highlight violence against women on Valentine's Day last week.

She said: "As a child I suffered sexual and emotional abuse for several years at

the hands of a man whom my parents trusted implicitly. Growing up like most women I know, I suffered forms of groping, touching, verbal abuse and other things I didn't know how to deal with.

"As a woman, I find I'm frequently living in fear, afraid to walk alone at night, afraid to answer a man who asks for the time, afraid I'm going to be judged or

treated in ways based on the way I might choose to dress or the make-up I might choose to wear. Enough is enough.

"I'm rising for the child in me who I don't think will ever fully recover from what happened to her."

The campaign invited one billion women around the world to protest against rape and violence against wom-

en after the brutal assault on an Indian student in December. The attack on a bus prompted the government to change the law and introduce fast track courts for swifter justice.

During the campaign, Shankar said she will never be able to recover from the abuse and that women in India are now "together" and "enough is enough".

See Dixit in HD on her new app

ACTRESS Madhuri Dixit has launched an application called *Madhuri Dixit HD* on the iPad to connect with her fans.

The high definition app allows its users to get the latest updates and interact with the *Devdas* actress.

The 45-year-old, who regularly responds to messages on Twitter and Facebook, decided to launch her app so that she can stay in touch with her millions of fans.

"It is really hard staying in touch with all the fans today," Dixit explained.

"It is a very small contribution from my side to acknowledge all the love and adulation that I receive from my fans. I just can't thank them enough."

Sawhney to play one-off concert

ARTIST Nitin Sawhney has announced a one-off show at London's Roundhouse on June 27.

This summer, the award-winning musician will also release his new album *ONEZERO*, which will be a retrospective of his ten solo albums including some new studio tracks.

Sawhney has made a name for himself as a producer, songwriter, DJ, multi-instrumentalist, orchestral composer and cultural pioneer and his music is used in films, video games, dance and theatre.

He has previously been honoured with the Mercury, BBC Radio, Ivor, Mobo, Bafta and Olivier awards.

ONEZERO will be a summary of Sawhney's 20 years of international touring, DJing, orchestral conducting, film scoring, recording and production.

Get tickets for the gig from www.livenation.co.uk or www.ticketmaster.co.uk

Rovers Return blaze revealed

NEW photographs from the *Coronation Street* set show an inferno of flames inside the Rovers Return, one of the most famous pubs in British television.

The script of this episode, which will be broadcast in March, includes the death of Sunita Alahan, played by Shobna Gulati, and the complete destruction of the bar.

Sunita will be accused of being the arsonist because of the unsightly end of her affair with Karl Munro, who is the ex-partner of the public house landlord Stella Price.

In another plotline, Stella's mother Gloria Price, played by Sue Johnston, finds out that her lover Eric Babbage is secretly married.

"She's very straight-talking and just doesn't care what she says and to whom she says it," Johnston said.

"She's the sort of person who takes pride in shooting from the hip. It never wins her any friends but she's not bothered about that."

Student soap role puts Rampersad on *Cloud 9*

TRINIDAD-BORN VALMIKE TAKES UP NEW CHALLENGE IN FIRST DAILY BRITISH ASIAN DRAMA

by ZOHA TAPIA

WHEN Trinidad boy Valmike Rampersad came to London, little did he know he would one day become a part of one of the UK's biggest Asian TV shows.

Playing Ajay Shah in the *Cloud 9* daily series on Zing channel not only gave Rampersad a chance to work with renowned director Gunjan Hazarika, but also an opportunity to get closer to his fans.

Released last month, *Cloud 9* is the first British Asian daily soap to be produced in the UK and features characters of different ethnicities.

Rampersad (pictured) plays a student from India who goes to study in the UK to prove to his girlfriend's parents he will be a good husband.

The 32-year-old actor told *EE*: "The role of Ajay Shah has been incredibly challenging. We sometimes shoot scenes from five different episodes in one day.

"Ajay goes through a huge range of emotions and also interacts with every other character on the show.

"You have to constantly be on top of your storyline, where you have just come from in a previous scene, where you are going to next, and still have your emotions on tap!"

The acclaim he has received for his performance on the UK's first Asian drama has been "hugely rewarding" for him, Rampersad said. "We are really thrilled that the public has taken to the show. It was experimental in that this type of drama hasn't been done before.

"Playing a shy, naive, somewhat geeky character isn't going to appeal to everyone, so I was pleasantly surprised and am grateful for all the kind feedback."

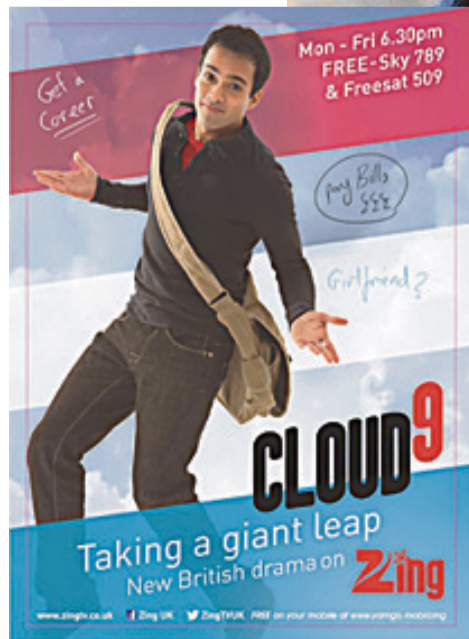
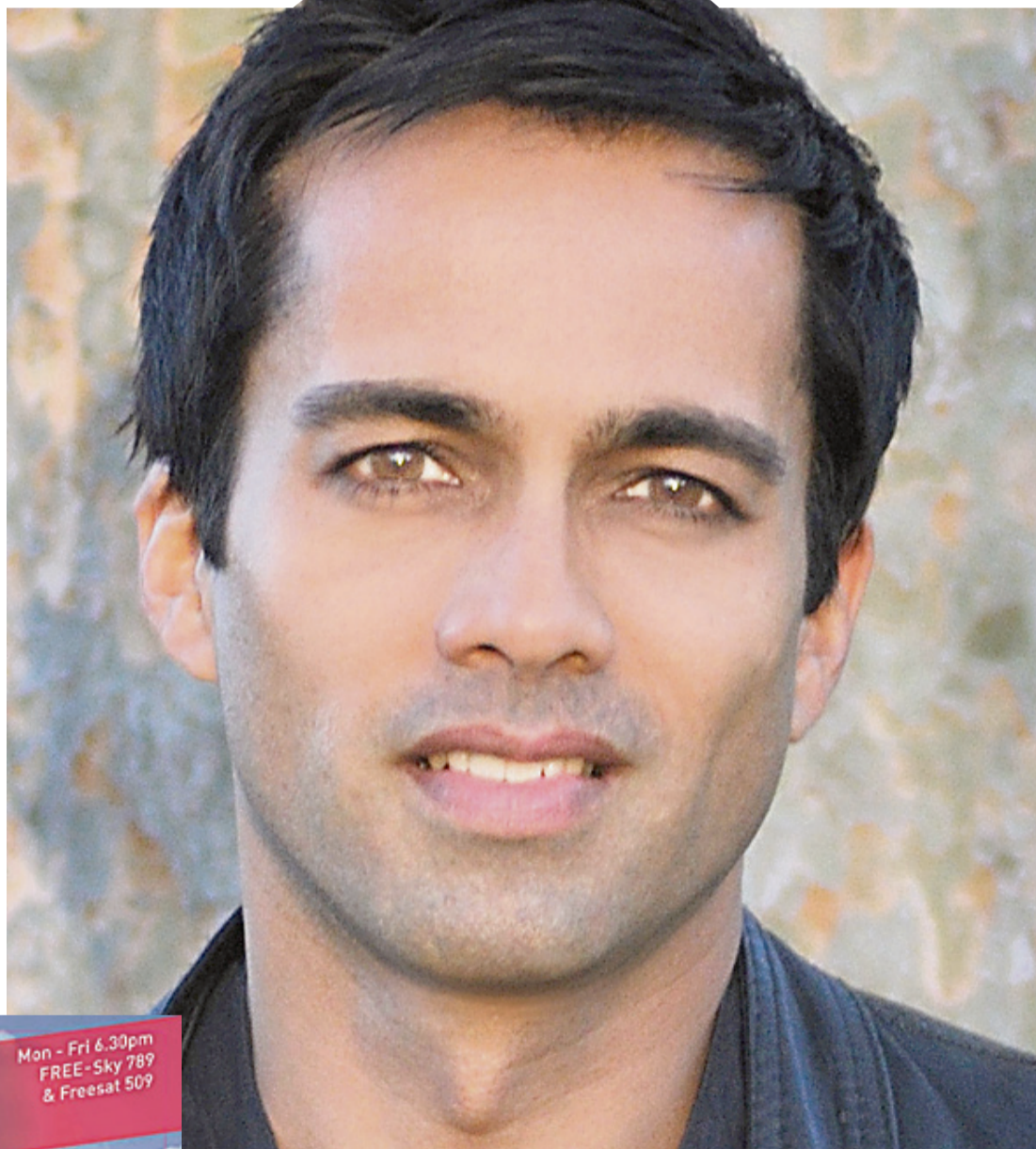
However, the actor's journey to television wasn't an easy one and included a career switch.

Rampersad was pursuing a "normal career" in marketing at Ralph Lauren but used to get nervous when addressing people and giving presentations.

Having done acting classes, he took them up again to "overcome the nerves" which reignited his passion for the craft. Before he knew it, Rampersad was applying to drama schools.

He said: "The first break happened while I was at drama school. I got cast as one of the leads in a feature film called *Right Hand Drive* (nominated for Best British Feature at the British Film Festival LA)."

Having left home at an early age, there were days when Rampersad felt "low" and thought about quitting, but he credits his family's support in persuading him to carry on. Rampersad added: "There have



been so many low moments when I would call my mum and talk about packing it in. She has been very encouraging. I'm glad I listened!"

Fortunately for Rampersad, since he doesn't look "typically Asian", he says he has not been typecast as the stereotypical cab driver, terrorist or corner shop owner, instead playing a variety of characters.

Rampersad said: "I have been very lucky to have had some wonderful experiences with some brilliant actors and directors.

"Playing Art Malik's son and an assassin in *Hotel* (semi-finalist at the Academy Awards) and playing a suicidal manic depressive opposite Saeed Jaffrey in *Open Secrets* (winner, Buffalo San Film Festival) are

two of my favourite so far." Rampersad said he makes sure he does ample research to add a touch of reality for every character he plays.

"When I played a manic depressive, I spoke to people who experience manic depression and doctors," he explained. "I also see my acting coach Amanda Brennan regularly. I always work with her on every role.

"We work more on the physiological side of the character, energy, posture, voice and mannerisms particular to that character."

Currently for Rampersad, life is like "living out of a suitcase" with him juggling careers in London and Los Angeles and family in the Caribbean.

He said: "In LA, the sun always shines, which makes outdoor shoots a joy, and the budgets are bigger. In the UK, we have been shooting *Cloud 9* in sub-zero temperatures, but London is home and I love being here."

While he has his hands full with *Cloud 9*, audiences can also look forward to seeing him in film *London Life* which will be coming out this year.