

Rebecca Lim comes out right on top

2020 may be a bad year, but it's also one where good things happened for the Mediacorp actress, from her hosting the National Day Parade to being named friend of watch brand Longines



Jan Lee

Singaporean actress Rebecca Lim would like to say that she picked up new skills during the two-month circuit breaker period in Singapore which halted production shoots, but the fact of the matter is, the 33-year-old spent most of her time in bed, sleeping.

In a phone interview with The Straits Times, she says: "Honestly, I want to say I've done a lot, but I mainly just stayed at home and slept a lot because I've barely had any breaks in the past four or five years."

"I spent a lot of time with my mum and my family. My little niece arrived just two months before the circuit breaker so she brought us a lot of joy."

The second of three children, she lives with her parents and her elder brother's family.

She did her fair share to help the community right before the circuit breaker, however, hand-delivering care packages to old folks and the less privileged living in one-room flats, migrant workers and taxi drivers.

She has quietly been doing such philanthropic work since four years ago. Each year, she organises a Chinese New Year luncheon and lo hei with old folks living alone and a care package delivery drive in her birthday month of September.

"At first, I just did it with my fan-

club because we'll have gatherings and we wanted to do something meaningful on my birthday," she says.

But as her Chinese New Year luncheon was interrupted by the Covid-19 outbreak this year, she decided to give out care packages for the pandemic period. These are filled with hand sanitisers, daily essential items and supplements like vitamins.

She explains: "It became a two-man show, just my assistant and I - we spent one day packing and two days delivering the packages."

Lim will likely organise another care package drive next month when she has a two-day break in her schedule.

The actress has jumped straight back into work after Covid-19 restrictions were eased to allow production shoots and her schedule has been packed full since June.

She hosted this year's socially distanced indoor National Day Parade (NDP) and is currently hard at work filming her new drama, *Jungle Survivor*.

She says of the NDP gig: "The entire concept is a first for the NDP so to be part of something so historic is a silver lining in the midst of everything."

Being part of the NDP is also a life-long dream for Lim, whose primary schoolmates performed in the annual extravaganza when she was in Primary 5.

"I missed out on it because I had track and field training and a choir concert," she says. "And I never thought I would participate in such a big way, performing and hosting and singing my favourite National Day song, Home. It was very surreal and inspiring."

Recently, luxury Swiss watchmaker Longines named her a friend of the brand.

"It was such a wonderful coincidence because the first timepiece I bought for myself, which is very special to me, was when I won Best Actress in 2018," she says, referring to her Star Awards win for *The Lead* (2017) - a drama centred on the entertainment industry where she played a wannabe actress turned wardrobe assistant.



"I bought a piece from the Longines HydroConquest collection because it was a classic design. I could see my sister and my mother wearing it too so it made economic sense."

She adds: "2020 has been a tough year but, for me, it's also a year where a lot of dreams came true - being in NDP, being an ambassador for a timepiece - which is something I never thought would happen."

This year also happens to mark a full decade in Lim's transition to a full-time actress after graduating from Singapore Management University with an accountancy degree and a major in law.

She pauses when asked how it felt to be entering her second decade of acting.

"I can't believe it's been 10 years, oh my gosh," she laughs.

"It's very easy to rest on your laurels in this industry because people say only good things about you in front of you and no one dares to tell you the hard truth or things you need to improve on. I'm glad that I have a small group of very close friends who are very honest with

me and a close-knit family who ground me."

Her next big role will come in the drama series *Jungle Survivor*, in which she plays a jilted housewife who loses her husband to a career woman and decides to re-enter the workforce, encountering office politics and a messy love triangle.

Off-screen, Lim was dragged into a cheating scandal too. Last year, actor Ian Fang, long linked to the actress, was caught exchanging sexually suggestive messages with another Mediacorp actress Carrie Wong, who has a Taiwanese boyfriend.

Lim, who has refrained from commenting on the scandal, and Fang have maintained that they are just friends.

In the series, Pierre Png will take the role of her unfaithful husband while Felicia Chin will be both her nemesis at work and in love. The show, which is expected to premiere late this year, has been touted as the local version of hit K-drama *World Of The Married*.

"I think people draw comparisons because of the extramarital affair bit, but a large part of the

drama is on office politics.

"My character is a housewife for 12 years until her husband leaves her for his colleague and she goes back to the office."

"There's not that much hair-pulling and shouting - it's more about how my character learns to protect herself. Her growth as a character is very attractive to me."

While preview clips of the series show Lim and Chin trading snipes and insults, in real life, Lim would probably not fight with another woman for a man.

Just portraying the catfights onscreen has tired her out "physically and emotionally".

She says: "It's so competitive. They're always trying to one-up each other and be better than the other all the time. Perhaps it's because I'm a Libra so personally I'm the kind who's more balanced and calm, hence this role was very psychologically draining for me."

"Hopefully Felicia and I can get a comedy or something less catty next time, as best friends or sisters."

Rebecca Lim is currently hard at work filming drama *Jungle Survivor*, in which she plays a housewife who returns to work after her husband leaves her. PHOTO: LONGINES

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