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Sheetal Sheth: Star of ABCD - The Movie

Sheetal adds somewhat of an added attraction to an already complimentary film. The two S's talk it up...

by Saroosh Gull



I first saw ABCD at its press screening about a year ago and it was the first Desi film I had seen that showcased the South Asian American experience. The lead actress, Sheetal Sheth especially caught my attention because she represented the normal (and beautiful) Desi girl living in America. Sheetal has done numerous other films as well and is undoubtedly going to become the face of fame and desire for many aspiring Desis. Sheetal answers some questions posed to her by me, questions about her acting, sex scenes and lots of other things you'll want to know about after you watch ABCD, which releases on November 30th. :)

Thanks for taking the time to do this interview with DesiClub.com Sheetal.

Of course..I have read DesiClub on many occasions myself and enjoy it...

Can you tell us how you got started in acting? How old were you and what inspired you?

I have loved performing all my life...growing up, I was always dancing and continued to have it be a part of my daily routine?! extended that performing when I found acting. I started dabbling with it in community events and then when I got a part in my high school play my freshman year, I got 'the bug'?It became a passion of mine and wanted it to always be a part of my life.

Did you go to school specifically for acting or did you major in something else? Where did you go to school?

I went to the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and majored in drama?! graduated with a B.F.A.

What projects have you worked on besides ABCD?

I have done a number of shorts and independent films (American Chai, Wings of Hope, Indian Cowboy, A Pocketful of Dreams, The Honeymoon)?I played Layla in the NBC TV movie, 'The princess and the marine'.I am in the new campaign of 'TRUTH' commercials?and most recently I just finished filming a pilot for a major network.



Speaking of ABCD, how did you get the role of Nina?

I actually went to go see 'Sakina's Restaurant', Aasif's one man show, at the request of a friend..loved it?met Aasif afterwards and we kept in touch?he called me and told me that he was in ABCD and that they had been looking for a Nina for four months now and would I want to audition? So we all know how that story ends as I ended up getting the part and was privileged to be part of an all star cast who taught me so much.

Tell us about your role and do you think your personal experiences relate to it? And how so?

I play Nina, who is strong-minded, intelligent, stubborn and self-destructive?! immediately was drawn to her when I read the script as I feel like we can all relate to those times in our lives when we are trying to figure out who we are

and feel lost, confused and therefore make some bad decisions?we all make choices and I have certainly made and continue to make some bad ones, but I certainly do not carry the hurt and deep-resentment around that she does internally. This is why she continually ends up making decisions that will ultimately result in her unhappiness..she has a lot of growing up to do.

There are some very sexy scenes with you and your male counterparts, how did you approach those scenes? How do you prepare for them Physically and Mentally?

Uhhhhhhhhhhh... I was sooooo nervous!!! And these things are so awkward for the people involved that you think it would be easier over time but it is not!! I just made sure to be very vocal about what I was comfortable with as Nina and we just remained honest about it all- we laughed a lot and each guy that Nina is involved with has a specific different sexual experience with her which we tried to keep true..the key is to have a sense of humor about it from the beginning which I think we did?thank goodness (winks).

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How did your family and friends react to those scenes?

Oh they thoroughly enjoyed them..yeah right- I think my friends are emotionally scarred to have had to literally see me in those situations..when I have watched the movie with friends there have always been a lot of 'stop! I do not want to see you doing or saying these things' or just turning away in sheer shock?as far as my family, esp with Indian parents, you know how they would have a hard time seeing the scenes.

A lot of people will be extremely surprised to see such emotion and sensuality displayed by a South Asian woman on screen. What would you say to both, the people who will appreciate it and the people who will reject it?

I say, like it or not Nina is an example of a slice of life and is a very real part of society...this is a very honest look at the South Asian experience, and of course not every woman reacts the way Nina does but there are a lot that do ? whichever it may be I just want people to have a reaction and start an intelligent discourse about their lives..whatever it is, positive or negative I think people are too content or apathetic nowadays. I think we need to stimulate intelligent debate - I hope this movie can supplement that.

In making and promoting the movie, do you hope to make a point about South Asians in America or do you want people to view it for entertainment purposes only? What is your objective in playing Nina?

In my opinion, this is one of the first movies that looks at our experiences and story so honestly in that Krutin (the Director) was not afraid to discuss subjects that might seem taboo in our culture?especially with the love scenes being what they are..this movie was made not just for entertainment value, but I feel anyone who sees the movie cannot help but relate with their own experiences somewhat..and for the non-South Asian audience which this was just as geared for, it will finally be a solid part of American history, which we all need to have more of, here is something different to see, learn, and ask about? Nina is a medium in which these stories are talked about..and she is very dear to me..whatever decisions we make and choose you cannot help but hopefully feel for her and learn from her mistakes..or make similar decisions- but in a healthy way.



In ABCD, you work with the wonderful Madhur Jaffrey, how was that experience? Did you learn much from her?

She was absolutely stunning in her work, her stories, and her warmth..I couldn't have had a better experience in my first movie..I cherish the talks that we had and I was lucky enough to benefit from her wisdom.

As an Actress, what are your personal goals. Are you pursuing a career in Hollywood or Bollywood or both? When Sheetal Sheth thinks about herself as an Actress, does she think Indian Actress or does she think Actress?

I think of myself as an Actress period. I was born and raised in the US and am so lucky to have been so but am just as lucky to benefit from such a great culture being as

much as a part of who I am as well?your being inevitably translates in work and in order to do good work you must bring yourself to the table and share your soul which is what I struggle to do no matter which medium and which film industry.

Sheetal, do you have any final messages for the millions of DesiClub.com users worldwide?

Thanks for taking the time to read this and please do not forget to weave into your life the creativity, artistry and spirituality that we often bury but in fact, is such an integral and historic part of our South Asian tradition heritage. Thank you thank you thank you.

Thanks for the interview Sheetal, everyone will be watching you in ABCD on November 30th.

Do you have any thoughts on this? Feel free to send Saroosh an e-mail @ Saroosh Gull.