



SIMPLY SHEETAL

| by Jaya Sharma

Sheetal Sheth, grew up in and around the New Jersey city, burst onto the scene with raves in her debut role, in the movie **SABCD (1999)** - a the role was demanding but guaranteed that she would be remembered. Sheetal acted as a promiscuous young girl struggling with the ties of family and tradition. She discovered her passion for acting in high school and enrolled in the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. After supplementing her education with a summer in Amsterdam as part of the intensive, International Theatre Workshop studying under renowned acting teachers like Kristin Linklater, she graduated with honours. After this, Sheetal has developed a reputation as a thorough professional with an unmatched work ethic. She has starred in many feature films and has become a favorite on the festival circuit, having won many Best Actress Awards. Sheetal continues to tackle a wide range of roles and has developed an impressive body of work with an array of challenging and memorable characters in film, television, and theater.

How were your growing/formative years— where you grew up, what interested you as a kid, what kind of influences affected you as a child that contributed to your becoming an artist

I was born in Phillipsburg, New Jersey and then moved to Bethlehem, PA when I was 12. My older sister, younger brother, and I are first generation Indian Americans who were raised by parents who stressed the importance of education and community. We also spent a lot of summers in India as most of our extended family is there...we have a big family with 14 aunts and uncles' families between both my parents. I had a lot of interests, loved performing but didn't discover my love of high school until high school. I mostly played sports and danced in my free time.

When did you realize you could actually take up acting as a career?

I auditioned for Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and was thrilled when I got in. I moved to New York after high school and training was the most important thing to me at the time..I was committed to figuring out how to make a living doing what I love....actually still figuring that out!

The movies that you have been in, so far, have been and are festival/award winning movies, and sure enough, some of the scripts have had a controversial aspect for some segments of the audience. Can you share your thoughts on this?

I am consistently drawn to a range of material and love being part of stories that entertain and move people...when I read a script, I make decisions based on how it impinges on me at the time. I don't think about 'controversy,' etc. In fact, I find it a shame that some of the issues people have with some of the stories are such hot topics for people...all the more reason to keep making these films. I thrive on debate and discussion and welcome it.

'Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World', 'I Can't Think Straight' and 'The World Unseen' are said to be cult movies. Did these scripts influence you to say yes to the roles?

With 'Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World,' I didn't have a script initially. Albert Brooks kept it under wraps and I never read the whole script until after I got the part. I wanted to do that film because of him. He is a genius and an amazing person and when I met with him and he told me the premise of the film, I was hooked. I loved making that movie with him. As far as ICTS and TWU, yes, both of those scripts moved me in different ways and I loved both Leyla and Amina. Such rich, characters for an actor to be able to sink her teeth into!

Can you share some experiences, especially your fan mail that you received after the movie 'I Can't Think Straight'

The fans have been tremendous...in fact, it's a little odd to even use the word 'fan' as I have met so many lovely people who have shared such inspiring stories, they feel



more like friends and comrades to me. There couldn't be more supportive and loyal people than the ones I have met through my work along the way.

Tell us about your new movie, 'Three Veils'

The film that follows the lives of 3 Middle Eastern women growing up in the US, each with their own secret and struggle. My character, Nikki, is battling demons that make for a very vulnerable and lost young lady. She is an alcoholic, estranged from her father, and is devastated when her best friend isn't allowed to spend as much time with her. She goes on a real journey including very dark moments and the audience is hopefully along for the ride.

How often do you visit India and what brings you to India?

It just varies. When I was younger, we would come as a family every 2-3 years but now it just depends on my schedule and work. I try to get there as much as possible as I truly feel it's a second home to me...I miss my family there and wish I could see them much more.

'First Fear' the movie, was your first movie with Bollywood. Have you been offered any other Bollywood project after that?

Actually, 'First Fear' was not a Bollywood film. It was shot in India due to the nature of the story and locations we needed...we also used lots of local talent and crew but it was a US production. As far as Bollywood, yes, I have been offered several films over the years but just haven't found the right one for me yet. I find some of the directors there are doing some amazing work and I would love to work with them, but the right circumstances and script just hasn't lined up yet.

Is there a potential producer, a director or some other creative aspect in you, along with being an actor, down the road?

I have actually already produced and am continuing to do so with a couple of other projects in development right now... and I have been thinking about directing as well down the line. Again, it needs to be the right project.

Coming to your fitness regime, how hard do you work to maintain your fitness?

Staying active. I work out a lot, especially because I adore food and want to enjoy it. Depending on where I am, it will vary from going to the gym, taking hikes with interval training, playing sports, anything that keeps our body's moving and heart healthy. I hate how I feel when I haven't had time to work out so I make it a priority.

Where do you see yourself five years from now-?

See myself starting a family of my own and hopefully still acting in projects as varied and as interesting as I have been able to work on...also producing and writing more.





FACT FILE: SHEETAL

Graduated with honors from **New York University's Tisch School** of the Arts (Dec 1997) in New York City; Sheetal was also part of the Scholar's Program.

Sheetal is a **vegetarian**.

Loves extreme **sports**.

Loves **Oprah Winfrey** and **Howard Stern**.

Was selected to serve in **AmeriCorps**.

Speaks at panels and conferences for students.

Best Actress for role in The World Unseen at the **Gran Canaria Film Festival**, Spain, 2009.

Best Actress for role in **Wings Of Hope** at **Cinevue Film Festival**, 2003.

Best Actress for role in The World Unseen at the **Festival del Mar**, Ibiza 2009.

Best Leading Performance Award for role in **The World Unseen** at Out Takes Film Festival, Dallas 2009.

Sheetal has an older sister and a younger brother.

First **Indian American Actress** to appear in Maxim.

Women's Voices Now Awards Ceremony



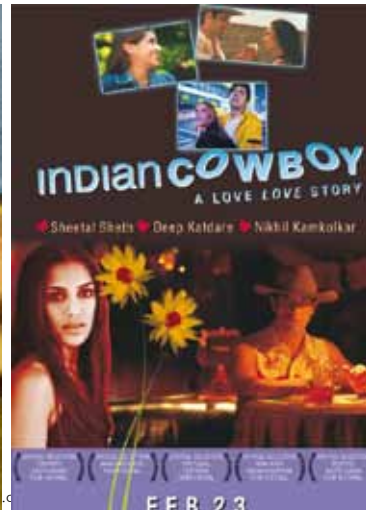
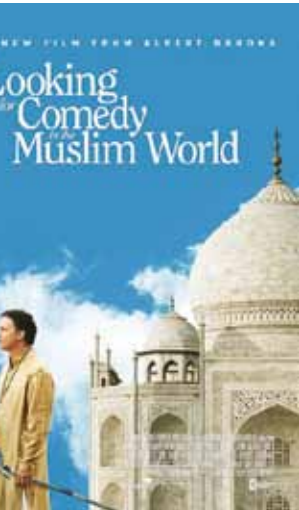
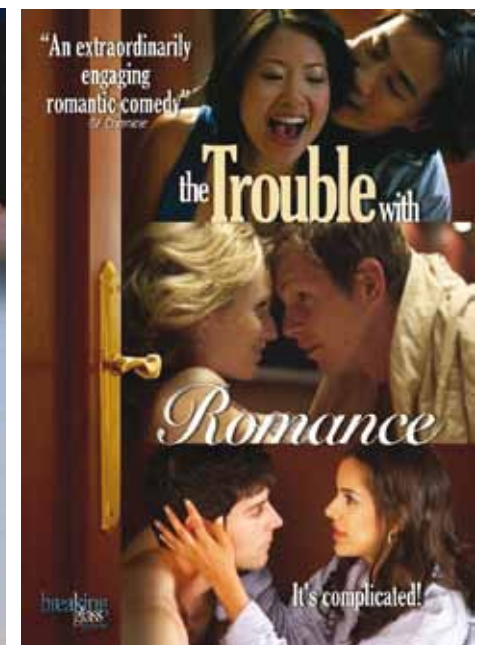
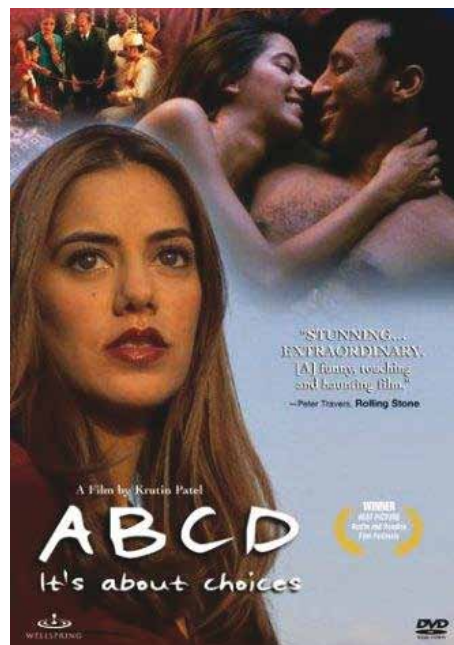
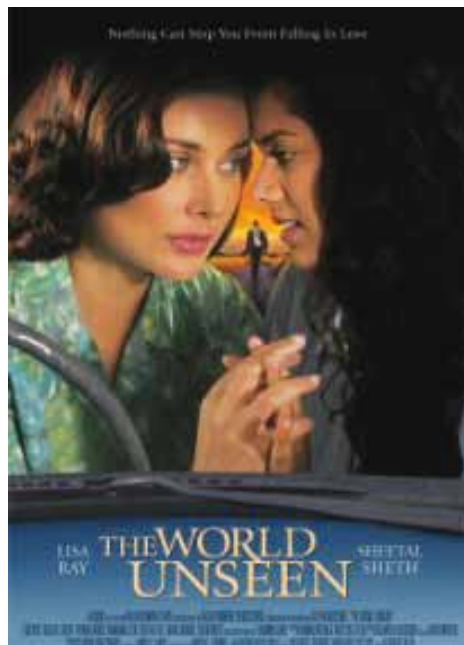
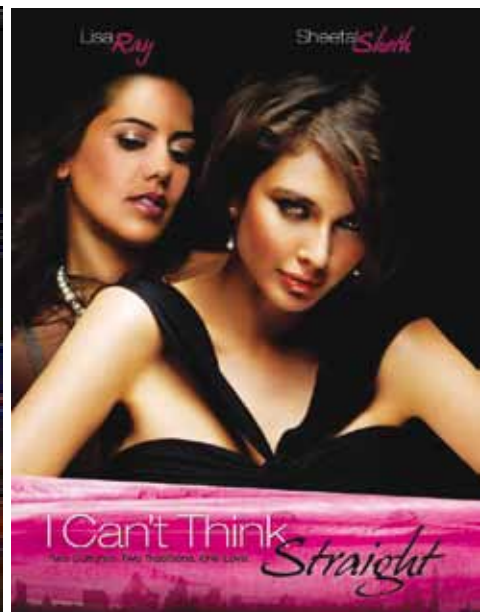
Actor's Panel of "Workin' It in LA" for the 22nd Annual Honolulu Rainbow Film Festival (HRFF22)



Behind the scenes peek at YES WE'RE OPEN....



Panorama



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