

'Reality shows have mass appeal'

Says **Shweta Menon** in a chat with AT

Times News Network

Apart from walking the ramp and participating in the dance reality show *Dancing Queen*, sultry Shweta Menon has several item numbers and ad campaigns to her credit. She might not have managed to grab attention as other item girls did in Bollywood, but Shweta is making a comeback of sorts to burn the dance floor again. Albeit on small screen. Shweta believes that dance is all about feeling "happy within. Moreover, dancers don't age." So was dance the reason for her to take part in the show? "I didn't take up the show for the dancing part. What moved me was the concept involved," she says. Considering it is her first stint in the television industry, what convinced her to switch over to this medium? "Reality shows have a mass appeal and are like stage shows where you get instant feedback on your performance," she avers.

Her Bollywood career took off with *Prithvi* co-starring Suniel Shetty. Commenting on her debut she says, "It was a nice film but it wasn't the launch pad I needed. My first film should have been had me playing a leading role rather than a side-kick to the lead pair. Then *Ishq*, *Bandhan*, *Anarth*, *Market*, and *88 Antop Hill* landed on her platter. She further confesses with honesty that, "I am the only one to be blamed for the wrong decisions taken in my life. That's the way I would like my life to be as I don't

want to shrug off from taking any responsibility."

Speaking about the changing perception about models and their potential to act, Shweta says, "Earlier, models were perceived to be fit for the roles of glam dolls and that they can't act. So they were given those flashy roles. And nobody I know had the courage to break the myth. They just keep on offering us roles which fitted well as a so-called 'selling proposition'. But now, these pre-conceived notions are changing."

With some upcoming projects like Jagmohan Mundhra's *Begunaah*, *Morning Walk* with Anupam Kher in her kitty, Shweta is positive about breaking the clichéd notions. Recounting her experience while taking part in the Femina Miss India pageant, where she had a towering and promising contender like Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Shweta says, "I took part in the pageant because my friends goaded me. A lot of girls dropped out when they saw that Aishwarya participate. But then Ash is Ash. I was not bothered whether I won or not, as I took part for fun."

Maintaining a curvaceous figure isn't tough, Shweta says. She elaborates, "My body language is not dependent on my curves. I can put on as much weight as possible but can still be graceful." A native of Kozhikode, Shweta doesn't possess an accented language owing to her childhood spent in Chandigarh. She came to the city along with her dad, who used to work with the Indian Air Force. That is why she feels, "I'm an Indian," and signs off humming the number, *I'm an Indian* by Noble Savages.

RACHNA BHUTORIA

Shweta Menon sizzles again

No one Khan beat SRK!

Shah Rukh Khan's box-office track record is impeccable

Who's missing? The king. That's how I felt about the whole 'who-is-the-king' controversy created overnight by media savvy and cunning self-crowned superstars, one of whom even had the gall to ask me to join his payroll.

With a lot of hard work, luck and meager talent these wannabe kings are charging exorbitant amounts. Stop it guys!

There's only one king in Bollywood and that's Shahrukh Khan. No two ways about it.

And it's not just about his achievements in cinema. It's about who he is, what he is like as an individual, and how he connects with the audience. I have met all the Khan superstars, spent time with them and never mind if the hour that Amir spent with me in his parent's home was used to narrate a script of a film he wanted to make with Sriveer!

And yes, I have known the only non-Khan superstar Akshay Kumar pretty closely. No one can match up to SRK's genu-

ine charm, humour and intelligence. And I say this in spite of the fact that SRK was quoted in an interview saying that he 'hated' me.

We met after that, much to my dear friend Sushmita Sen's mock-anger. You see, I

GLAM & GLORY

Subhash K Jha

stole time away from her to sneak off for a rendezvous with SRK when he suggested that we meet immediately. She has never stopped reminding me of that betrayal.

The first time I met him he was shooting at Mehboob Studios. He suddenly got up during a break and quickly took me to his home next door where I met his lovely wife Gauri and their dear son. The daughter was not around then.

Our next meeting was at

Film City during the shooting of Farah Khan's *Main Hoon Na*. My daughter who is no one's fan in the whole universe except SRK's wanted to meet him. I remember Shah Rukh's friend Karan Johar who picked us up and drove us to SRK.

My daughter, known for her 'I take no nonsense from anyone attitude', including her parents was reduced to quivering jelly when she saw her dream man.

That's the impact SRK has and no other star since Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bachchan has had such an effect on people; young and old, men and women, alike. He connects with people, especially in a way no star of the post-Bachchan generation can.

So would the pretenders please give up this game? They are not kings and they should stop their publicists who are busy planting pathetic stories of their adventures and daring-do to the press.

It's just not working. Like I had this star, said to have the maximum money riding his shoulders, whispering into my ears about how SRK is

trying to sabotage his career. Another Khan superstar known to be acutely measured in his proclamations put his foot in his mouth by declaring that he had named his dog SRK. Lucky dog!

Then I asked this other Khan superstar how he could compare SRK to Viveik Oberoi. "Whom would he prefer to be compared with, Viveik or a dog?" the bratty Khan left me disgusted with his retort.

But I can understand the jealous resentment. Last week I saw how traffic jams and serpentine queues greeted the release of the new SRK film. The last two films where I saw the same rush of fans were for *Devdas* and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham*.

Please don't 'Rab' this superstar the wrong way.

(Views expressed by columnists in Ahmedabad Times are their own, and not that of the paper.)

RHYTHM DIVINE

Multi-percussionist **Pete Lockett** talks about music and his India connect

Times News Network

"Glad to be talking to an Indian," Pete Lockett says with unmatched enthusiasm in his voice when we greet him on a Thursday morning. *Ahmedabad Times* caught up with Pete Lockett, first-call session man, multi-instrumental uber-percussionist for a chat. Be it capturing the fancy of Hollywood to performing on his long list of instruments, Lockett truly feels the world is his stage. Here's what the tattooed tea-fuelled Portsmouth drum deity had to say. Excerpts from an interview:

THE FIRST STEP

"I used to create 'sound' out of knives and forks as a child. I spent the initial years of my life in Portsmouth and, at 19, while passing by a drum shop I was tempted to take up a drum lesson. The lesson ignited a love for drums that inspired me. But I didn't feel like being a one-band musician and turned to learning about different forms of percussion."

INDIAN SOUNDS

"I was at a London fair with a friend of mine while I got attracted to the sound of tabla. When I went closer, I discovered that the concert was for free, so I went ahead and enjoyed it. It was only when I started learning tabla, did I realise that the legendary Ali Akbar Khan and Ustad Zakir Hussain were playing in the concert. My journey so far in the field of music has been great! A R Rahman creates magic with music! My wife was born in Ahmedabad

and was later brought up in the UK. In spite of this, I haven't been to Ahmedabad yet. But I'd love to explore the city and perform there!"

OTHER PASSIONS

"If not a musician, I would have been a comedian. "I also love to travel and I am a complete movie buff. I am in awe of Indian cuisine. As I love cooking, I have mastered the art of cooking *dal*!"

WORLD MUSIC

"I use drums from every part of the globe, from Indian to Arabic and from Japanese to Latin. Music is something that I am fascinated with. It is hard to quantify music. It's a great sign that a lot of musicians are travelling

across boundaries. We are one species and thanks to the facilities provided by international travel, we are doing some good to humanity by fusing music!"

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

"We are born as an original and we shouldn't try to copy."

JANKI DAVE



Pete Lockett

Hema lauds Vyjayanthimala

The episode tonight of *Dancing Queen* is all geared to set the stage on fire with a double *dhamaka* performance by the sensational mentors with their aspirants. Indeed the battle has begun as the judges Hema Malini and Jeetendra express their expectations of an exciting and entertaining show. Five *jodis* including Anita and Sonali, Mink and Ada, Ishita and Anjali, Sanober and Mrigha, Shweta and



Jeetendra and Hema Malini

Bhoomika attempt to showcase their flair to the celebrated jury. Commenting on her aspirant's performance Anita said, "Sonali needs to work on her looks that includes her costume, make-up." However, Mink said, "I am very happy with my partner, she is graceful and a good dancer."

Mentor Sanober said about her aspirant, "Mrigha is not that fabulous as a dancer, so there's a lot I need to teach her. The judges were full of praises for all the *jodis* and the way they complimented each other. However, they also men-

tioned that even though some aspirants' performances were commendable, some needed to improve and learn more from their mentors. Judge Jeetendra explained, "We are not judging the *jodis* merely on dance but also on the overall look and feel of the performance, plus how well is the mentor grooming their aspirant." Following all the *jodis* performance, mentors asked the judges who they think is the original dancing queen.

Judge Hema Malini said, "Vyjayanthimala, her poise, her eyes, her dance are mesmerising. Even now, her eyes seem to have a life and dance of their own. She's timeless and that's who I think is the real dancing queen who can sustain over the years and is remembered even now."

The remaining five *jodis*, will show their *jalwa* in tomorrow's episode of *Dancing Queen*. So watch the mentors groom their aspirants to gain the best scores from the judges... tonight at 10 pm on Colors.

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Hayden's shopping gift

Hayden Panetiere took patients from Los Angeles' Children's Hospital on a shopping spree recently. The *Heroes* star accompanied five girls, who are currently being treated at the medical facility for problems including aneurysms, strokes, paralysis of the nerves and spine and sickle cell anemia, on a shopping trip. The 20-year-old actress, who is currently dating her Milo Ventimiglia is no stranger to charity. Her determination to save dolphins from slaughter in Japan led to a warrant for her arrest being issued in the country.

Hayden Panetiere

BIZARRE!

Man eats live snakes over a beer

A Chinese man says he likes to relax by eating live snakes and washing them down with beer. Wen Xide, 41, of Wangzhuang village, says he has been eating live snakes for 10 years. He started by eating one to win a bet with friends. "From then on I became addicted to eating live snakes," he said.

Wen demonstrated his habit to a visiting journalist of a Chinese newspaper by chewing two live snakes over a bottle of beer.

"It's a bit smelly, but they're delicious," he exclaimed. Wen says his son is now following him and has eaten eight live snakes. Wang Tianming, a doctor specialising in digestion at a local hospital, said Wen could suffer nerve problems and risked infection from parasites.

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