

RISING STAR

Sheetal Sheth

CURRENT GIG: Sheth plays the female lead in the excellent indie "ABCD," which stands for American Born Confused Desi. As the sexually promiscuous Nina, Sheth turns in a visceral performance full of intelligence, sexuality, and humor. Sheth has three more projects coming down the pipe—*American Chai*, *Pocketful of Dreams*, *Indian Cowboy*, and *Wings of Hope*. **WHY SHE MATTERS:** Sheth's drop dead gorgeous looks and smarts make a potent combination. At the forefront of rising tide of films about contemporary South Asian experiences, Sheth is dedicated to enlightening and entertaining mainstream America on the many faces and experiences of South Asians. "America still only recognizes two Indians in the media—Gandhi and Apu from 'The Simpsons,'" Sheth says. "Well, Gandhi wasn't even an actor and Apu is the stereotypical Indian who works at the local 7-Eleven and speaks English with a heavy accent. These portrayals have nothing to do with the reality of 1st generation South Asians in America." **BACKGROUND:** Born in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, with parents hailing from Gujarat, India, Sheth moved to Pennsylvania at the age of 12 and went on to study at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts before arriving in LA just a couple of months ago. "When you walk around New York, you really feel the community spirit. Here in LA, you really have to work hard at forming connections. The best thing about being here is you can go surfing in the morning, skydiving in the afternoon and end up skiing at night. All in one day!" **EARLY (BAD) CAREER ADVICE:** "I met with numerous agents and managers who all suggested I change my name to something more American. They always told me I wouldn't go very far with my name because it was too 'ethnic.' Fortunately, I have a much different vision of my career and the world." **FIRST IMPRESSION AT AUDITIONS:** "I don't have that classic Indian face so I actually go and read for other ethnicities. When someone looks at me, they usually say, 'You don't look Indian.' But I tell them that if they go to India they'll see a gazillion types that look just like me!" **BALANCE:** Sheth's love of extreme sports and close family ties are crucial in an industry that's inherently self-involved. "I love spending time with friends and family," Sheth offers. "I also love dancing and skydiving. I'm pretty grounded; when you're flying in the air out of an airplane you don't think whether you nailed that audition or not." **WORDS TO LIVE BY:** "Keep your eyes open and your heart close."

—Alex Luu

