

South African actress Sanaa Shaik

By  Emily Stander

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This week, we caught up with Sanaa Shaik - a South African born actress who found success, friends and happiness in the world of film.



Image supplied: Sanaa Shaik

■ ***Tell us a bit more about yourself and your work.***

My name is Sanaa, but all my friends and fam call me Sunny. I am an actor living in Sydney but was born and raised in South Africa. I'm a pretty simple gal, love a drink in the park with my friends, walks with my dog and sitting on the couch getting ready to watch a movie. Even though I work in film, I regrettably have to admit my partner *is* the film buff and definitely gives me a run for my money. I have most recently acted in the Netflix series *Dive Club* and just wrapped up filming an Amazon original series *Class of 07* for Prime Video.

■ ***What's really behind your mask - literally and figuratively?***

Literally, just blood, bones and chocolate. Figuratively, anxiety and badly thought out jokes! But honestly, I'm a big softy and really value deep personal connections. I'm always that person in the corner having deep and meaningful conversations, and simultaneously that awkward person who struggles to make small talk - which is sometimes a really hard thing when having to go from one production to the next.

I love being part of the solution in terms of diversity on screen and having little girls reach out to me on Instagram relating to me and saying they have hair just like mine. It really means a lot to me.

■ ***Growing up, what did you want to be?***

Growing up I really wanted to be a ballerina. All I did at school was dance - morning, night and on the weekends!

▣ ***How did you end up in the industry?***

An acting teacher once told me, the worst way to get into the industry is to 'Bleed into it'... which is exactly what I did, haha!

It's a pretty boring story, when I did my undergrad I took performance as an unofficial minor. Then when I moved to Sydney I thought well, this is where it's at. Did a year of drama school, hated it and then did a bunch of short films - which all my friends laughed at me for doing. I then started working at a finance company and was slowly chipping away at small roles there. When suddenly after three years in finance, I booked a role in a feature film that whisked me around the world to 23 different countries. The rest is history, as they say.

▣ ***What excites you most about your career?***

The unknown. It both terrifies and excites me. It's exciting because as they say in the biz, all it takes is one role to be your big break. It might be right around the corner or maybe it won't come at all, but I am working my butt off towards that.

▣ ***Could you tell us about some career highlights?***

Getting to travel to 23 different countries and every continent on the globe for a film has to be the highlight so far. The film is called *Nomad*, and its going to blow your socks off!

▣ ***How does South Africa inspire you?***

It's the only place that can make me laugh as much as it can make me cry. It's the most contradictory place, what makes it beautiful also makes it heartbreaking, what makes it heartbreaking also makes it hopeful. I love it! It's like the essence of being human - total contradiction. The good and the bad existing all at once.

▣ ***What do you miss most about South Africa?***

THE FOOD! Lord help me, someone ship over a samoosa.

▣ ***When you're not working, what do you do? How do you socialise these days?***

Mostly swoon over roles I'd love to play and skill up! Currently working on some martial arts training and learning new accents.

Otherwise, a lot of sleep and socialising. It gets pretty lonely on jobs, and I tend to miss out on friends and family activities, so I try to make the most of them when I'm not working such as, going to gigs friends are playing at, or spending weekends away on the beach.

▣ ***What are you currently watching/reading/listening to?***

Watching - *Pieces of Her*, *Euphoria*, *The Batman*, *The Witcher*.

Reading - *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* by Toshikazu Kawaguchi

Listening - Oxlade, Tash Sultana, Kaytranada, Nina Simone

▣ ***What is your favourite gif?***



📺 **What does 2022 hold for you?**

Hopefully, a role as a villain in a DC film. Zoe Kravitz has already taken Catwoman - but there are plenty left! But most importantly to keep playing and pretending every day on set.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games

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