

COVER STORY

SHANKHACHIL

BONDING THE BENGALS

Like most children, Kushum Shikder grew up learning to dance and sing. She had a keen interest in singing and was rather successful at it with an album being released in 2001. Her luck took a turn after that with her debut in the "Lux Anandadhara Miss Bangladesh Photogenic" contest, which paved the way for her to foray into acting. Soon she gained popularity through her performances in various TV dramas, and naturally this led to offers for films. She chose to appear in roles offered to her only by the best of the best, and now she's up for a role in Goutam Ghose's "Shankhachil", starring alongside Prosenjit Chatterjee. Starstruck, yet down to earth, Kushum has had a journey worth sharing and we at Star Showbiz met her to bring just that to our readers.

With your involvement in a variety of media, what do you prioritize more?
Even though people associate me with acting, there are two things I absolutely love- writing and singing. Ever since I was young, I've been writing and it runs in the family. I even had a solo album released back in 2001.

How did you start off in acting?
One fine day, I received a call from Anandadhara. They wanted to write an article on my album and conduct a photo shoot as well. That was that. After a few months, they called me again and wanted to get my consent on entering my pictures from the shoot in a contest titled "Lux Anandadhara Miss Bangladesh Photogenic" which has now evolved to the "Lux Channel i

zero experience, I was expecting my co-artists in the industry to fill me in on the basic know-hows, but I was left unaccompanied. I learnt from scratch all by myself to have to come this far.

Tell us about your involvement with Goutam Ghose and Shankhachil.
Most of my career's work has been with Impress Telefilms because they provide me with roles with which I can best adjust. One evening, they called me about a new film which will be directed by Goutam Ghose and starring Prosenjit Chatterjee. I was overwhelmed. They said I had to do an audition, so I immediately agreed, not with aspirations about the film, but because I will be able to work with such an acclaimed director like

limitations and sometimes they're not well looked after or their careers are not nurtured yet. Whereas on the other side of the border, they are pampered and their demands are met, whether it is actors, writers, directors, stylists, fashion designers, etc. If the same could've been done here, I feel the output would've far exceeded than its current state.

Do you have any memorable incident from during your shoot of Shankhachil?
While we were shooting in Satkhira, I was dressed for my role and had to walk a distance towards the set. Interestingly, the huge crowd was yelling my name and wanted to have a glance, but when I walked through them, they did not recognise me. Instead, they pushed me aside so they could



Superstar" event. Since I saw no harm, it was a win-win situation. The next month, they gave me a call to inform me that after the elimination of the many thousands of participants nationwide, I was in the top one thousand. I was summoned for a written and verbal interview along with another photo shoot based on their preferences. To my surprise, I ended up in the top ten, and only then did I take it seriously. Later I was content with being in the top five, but before I realized, I could hear my name being announced as the winner. From then onwards, my career in acting took off.

How was your first experience in mainstream acting?
It was quite appalling. As a new comer with

Goutam Ghose. After a month when I was called back to Channel i, I was prepared for a rejection as many big names had also auditioned for the role. To my utter amazement, I soon learnt that I was chosen.

How has the experience on the first day of the shoot?
The film was shot backwards, meaning, we started shooting with the last scene first. It was a hospital scene and it went well.

Working in collaboration with both sides of Bengal, what do you feel needs improvement on our side?
I feel there is an abundance of talent here, but unfortunately it's a diamond in the rough situation. People in the media are bound by many

get a better view of "me". I was assured that my attire justified my character.

Shankhachil has won the award for the Best Bangla Film at the Indian National Film Awards. How do you think the Bangladeshi audience will embrace it?
No matter where Shankhachil is screened, the audience will be able to relate to it. Since it is in Bangla, I feel the connection will be stronger. Personally, I think there are two kinds of audience- ones who watch a film for the sole purpose of entertainment; and another, who think out of the box and add meaning to what they watch. Shankhachil, I believe, will appease both.

By Minam Haque

