

## Interview with Amena Khan

by Ahmed Hayat

**We hardly see any women behind the camera in Pakistan, but you started a new trend in video-making, what do you have to say about it?**

(Smiles)

**How did you get into this field?**

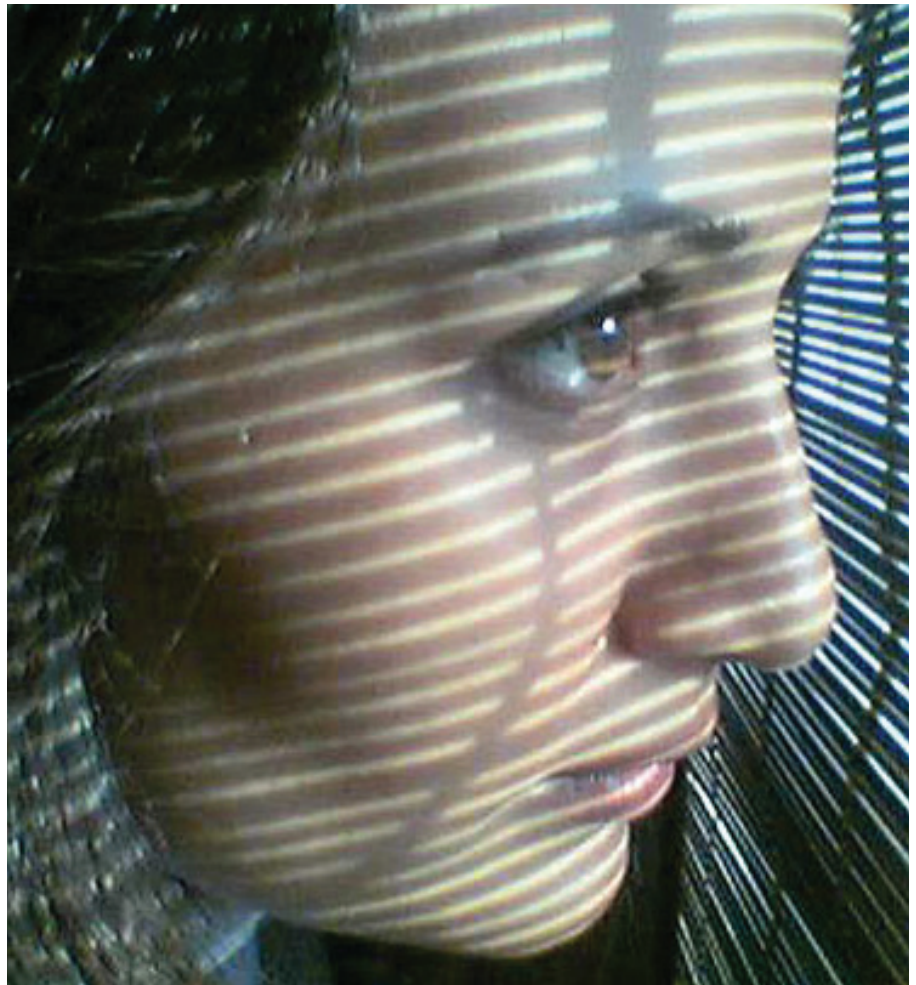
I started off with modelling for an English-Biscuits commercial at the age of 7. Then I got involved with a lot of theatre in school, college, university and with theatre groups like 'Katha' and 'Unplugged'. During the college years I started anchoring music shows like 'VJ' and 'Music Channel Charts', then became Agent-Y, followed by Asst. Director and Assoc. Producer for a TV-series, namely 'Agent-X'. Did some more acting and assisting in the field. Later on Ahsan and I started 'DreamTeam Films'. We directed sitcoms, music videos and eventually TV commercials. My first video as an actor was "Yes Love" by Dr. aur Billa, and my first video direction was "Duppatta" by Hadiqa Kiyani.

**Who's your biggest inspiration?**

Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, M.A. Jinnah, Steven Spielberg, Quentin Tarantino, Mel Gibson ... and I could go on and on.

**How was the reaction of your family when you came into this business?**

Initially my family was not too thrilled about me opting for a career in media, whether it was acting or direction. Like most families they thought bank jobs are so much more stable and prestigious. But with time they saw my work and got interested in my working style and got used to my late hours. I certainly got respect for being career oriented and eventually, safe to say they're all real proud of me. My friends also realise how hard I've worked to get



wherever I am and are totally happy for me.

**Is there any project that you've directed on your own?**

Along with being the DreamTeamFilms partner, I've kept taking on small projects like music videos, documentaries etc, on a side. Now that Ahsan's gone for a month or so, I've recently directed a Samsung X700 commercial featuring a James Bond story.

**Any plans of getting into Lollywood or you just aim for Hollywood Oscars?**

Damn straight, Hollywood Oscars ahoy!

**As there are many newcomers into this field, what would you suggest to them?**

I just say, bring it on!

**Now that there is more competition in this field, how do you see your work in the coming years?**

Cutting edge. Fierce.

**Out of all your videos, which is your favourite and why?**

Dosti. It was the toughest to make. My favourite part is the camera movement used and action shots are where shaheed's mother bows and kisses her motherland's flag.

**What has been the best move you have made in your career?**

Taking up direction. I'm pretty happy with my career choices; very few people get a chance to live a life less ordinary. 'I'm livin it and lovin it'. There are times when I think I could do a lot more! I started out wanting to be a fighter pilot in the air force, applied but didn't get any consideration, because I'm a

female. Wanted to travel the world, act, sculpt, draw comics and make National Geographic and Stephen Spielberg type films. Did my BBA and MBA, tried some dozen marketing jobs, and hated it. Acting and direction were my calling.

## What are your plans for settling down in life?

My career is my life for now. Old friends have disowned me and taken me back several times because there are times when I can have no social life and keep up with everyone. The craziest is when I mix up their kids' names, (Laughs), unintentionally of course. My fabulous social life, when it does activate, highlights "Counter Strike" (and other PC and console games with my 'clan' or gaming friends), movies (I'm a DVD collector), and just fun stuff to unwind. Single and working is an awesome state of being! I think we should value it more than we do!!! Obviously marriage being a commitment will change things some. There'll be a time when the crazy hours will have to stop or be minimized. Then things like sleeping in late will become history, pretty scary. (I have the utmost respect for all good parents of the world!). Marriage would slow down the process in my field of work. Juggling two demanding things could get tricky because here you have to meet deadlines and there you kind of should meet your husband now and then. My prospective partner should preferably be human, with an ability to accept me with most of my shortcomings (like forgetfulness etc.) and love me without reason or question. Obviously he must look like either Tom Cruise or Brad Pitt, that I think goes without saying, all girls know THAT. If all the above apply, marriage or settling down would be cool too.

## How do you see yourself in 10 years time?

Just as nuts.

## Tell us about the 'special formula' used in all Ahsan & Amena videos?

The great thing about working as a team is chances of failure or negatives are

minimal. Two minds working together have the strength of eleven. Though we want to make a lot more controversial or experimental work at times, we mostly get to make videos of friends like Shehzad Roy, Jawad Ahmad, Haroon, Abrar, Najam, Ali, whose songs are love ballads, national songs or bhangra hits. The videos we felt had to always tell the story the song was telling, be of the same feel as the song. Somehow what we visualized for the song seemed to click with the audiences and lead to the word 'special-formula' to pop up in your questionnaire. Also, we tried to take music-videos one notch up every time. First, from digital shooting formats to 35mm. Then, building in storylines that were complete short films within themselves etc.

## Tell us about the equipment used?

You mean the completely electronic and digitally controlled hi-fi camera-mounts and jibs, ultimate cameras and lenses imported straight from Hollywood? (Laughs), all we use is all that's available in Pakistan, and trust me its not enough!

## Why is it so that all your videos are so colourful?

(Smiles) We felt boring ol' TV needed a little splash of color.

## While working as a team what's your main share as a team member?

Heard of WWF Tag-team? That's how we've played. Good Cop, Bad Cop, and then switching roles. We both act, direct, edit, (somehow) sit through meetings, make concepts, design sets and outfits, run the office, watch movies and play video games.

## How is the experience working with Ahsan?

It was great! For all the while it lasted I had a blast. We had killer fights and shared victory in all its glory. We created visuals, told stories and made the impossible happen for us. He's by far one of the most patient & talented editors I've met.

## Anything you dislike about Ahsan?

Sometimes he undermines people, and as he's growing older he loses his temper faster.

## Tell us about upcoming projects?

There's an unspoken rule in this industry: until your camera's rolling and you're calling your first take, the job's not certain.

## Who are your main clients?

Pepsi Cola, Coca-Cola, Nestle (Juices, Soothers, Toffo), Proctor & Gamble Pakistan (Safeguard Soap), Unilever Pakistan (Supreme Tea, Lifebouy Shampoo, Close-up Toothpaste, Surf Excel Washing Powder, Energile, Rafhan Custard & Jelly), Ufone, Paktel, Telenor, DVcom, Samsung mobile, Tetra Pack Pakistan (Dairy Pure Milk), Reckitt & Benkiser (Dettol Liquid), Tapal (Pvt.) Ltd., EBM (Pvt.) Ltd., LU (Pvt.) Ltd., Habib Oils, Pakistan Tobacco Company, Lackson Group (Tetley Tea, Tang, Brite Total Washing Powder, Red & White Cigarette), Cupola Group (KFC Hot-Shots), Hilal Confectionery (Pvt.) Ltd. (Limopani, Thanda Orange, Toffees, Gums).

Shehzad Roy, Abrar-ul-Haq, Jawad Ahmad, Strings, Haroon, Junaid Jamshed, Hadiqa Kiani, Ali Zafar, Najam Sheraz, Pepsi Battle of the Bands - EP (Entity Paradigm), Aaroh.

## As technology is advancing what do you have to say about 3D technology, animated videos etc?

Love them! It took us a while but we made it to the 2D and 3D videos work in Pakistan just last year. I'm very proud of the people who took this challenge on and made them. I've always been an anime fan, hope we can make work in those lines soon too.

## Anything you dislike about the current social system? How would you like to change it? Any message to the nation reading your interview?

You get one life, LIVE IT to the max! The learning graph must never stop. We all know the social vices that infest us; the only way to overcome them is through positivism. Transform to positivism within you and you have the power to change all. If it helps any reader: along the years; I've added on to my sense of humour, ability to exercise and execute creativity. I've proved to myself that there's no such thing as stress-related "severe headaches", "depression" and "tension" that grownups used to crib about when I was younger!!! Cigarette and dope don't enhance creativity! Coffee can't keep you awake long hours if you really want to sleep! I've learnt that along with generally all people, the same people litter in Pakistan who don't litter in other countries because they get fined large sums of money. I know for a fact now that 'common sense is not common anymore'! I've learnt that my belief was true that if you never let the child in you die; you can stay young and happy forever. I live by; 'live and let live', 'Its all in the mind', 'My gut tells the truth' kind of beliefs. And it's all working out fine. I can help anyone without having to ask for my parents' money to do it. I have the opportunity to live a genuinely good life and set good examples and I'm trying to do that everyday. I'm more objective. A big-picture person. and mostly, I think fun is important, in abundance! Everything has its own time, just got to keep trying to get what you want done! Allah works in mysterious ways and it's all good.

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