

[Amrita's interview on www.gmagazine.com](http://www.gmagazine.com)



Almost Famous

Amrita Rao climbs the showbiz ladder

Amrita Rao is in demand. With *Ishq Vishk* being dubbed the first hit of 2003, Amrita's happiness knows no bounds. After bagging Shah Rukh's home production *Main Hoon Na* opposite Zayed Khan, Amrita has also landed a role in Gaurang Doshi's *Deewar* opposite Akshaye Khanna. Though major films are happening for this pretty young starlet, Amrita says success hasn't gone to her head. She intends to keep her feet on the ground. Here's more on the petite beauty.

Ishq Vishk is the first hit of 2003. Did you expect it to do so well?

The response to *Ishq Vishk* has been tremendous. Yeah, I was quite sure of the film from the start. The film was in the making for a while but it was worth it. There were changes in the script but once it was ready we all were positive about it. Ken had done his homework very well. He went through a lot of initial tension but once we started filming he was very confident. He was very calm on the sets unlike other directors who are often hyper and shout while shooting. We were so relaxed that it was like having a picnic on the sets even though so much work was being accomplished. All credit for the film goes to Ken for handling the young cast so well. Even on the outdoor location to South Africa, we were not tense. We went shopping and even managed to catch three films! It was hard work but we partied too. There was a certain positive vibe about *Ishq Vishk* from the beginning.

Do you think teen films are here to stay?

Gone are those days when you saw a thirty-year-old hero coming back from college mouthing lines like 'maa gajar ka halwa kahan hai'. Now people are too smart to accept that. They want actors who look the age of the characters. Now that *Ishq Vishk* has picked up, I am sure like the *Raaz* wave, teen films too will catch on. I am sure script writers are already penning down teen ideas.

Wasn't *Ishq Vishk* supposed to be your debut?

Yes, but it was taking some time and I got *Ab Ke Baras* in the meanwhile. It was a fantastic role so I agreed. Working with Raj Kanwar taught me a lot. My first commercial film experience groomed me for all the other films I'll do in future. I learnt a lot from the failure of the film as well. Ditto for the success of *Ishq Vishk*. Both hits and flops teach you something about life, people and one's work.



Raj Kumar Santoshi's The Legend of Bhagat Singh was another film where you made your mark.

I did, didn't I? People told me not to accept the role but I knew it would make an impact. Rajji was clear about my role from day one. I wanted to be part of this project so I never thought of turning it down. Even today people think of me in the film along with Ajay Devgan.

What do you think of Ajay as an actor and person?

I was really shy on the sets and wouldn't talk to anyone. I would simply listen to people. I know its clichéd when newcomers say 'he made me feel comfortable' but it's true. Ajay would include me in conversations and make me feel at ease. He is really casual and doesn't throw attitude. He is a down-to-earth and sweet person.

Are you happy with the decision of moving from modeling to acting?

Yeah, very much. I knew I could always try and act. I was not so presumptuous as to say I am a natural actress. Nor had I taken any acting and dancing classes. I didn't come from a film background so there was no indication that I would become an actress. But I had confidence that I could act. Actually, modeling happened accidentally and I was noticed in some ads by filmmakers.

Do you view acting differently today?

When you are modeling no one says the Colgate model is better than the Fairever model but in films comparisons are inevitable. Either they put you on top or pull you down so badly that you end up in tears. I think I have been fortunate. I got good response for Ab Ke Baras from places like Chattisgarh etc. People liked me and have great expectations from me. Even the industry has been warm towards me. As an actress I have gained more confidence in front of the camera. I keep discovering new dimensions to myself. Already I've done such contrasting roles. Even I am surprised by my abilities!

What other films do you have on hand?

I've signed Gaurang Doshi's Deewar directed by Milan Luthria co-starring Amitabh Bachchan, Sanjay Dutt and Akshaye Khanna paired opposite me. I play a Pakistani girl in the film. I also have Farah Khan's directorial debut Main Hoon Na with Shah Rukh and Zayed Khan. I am grateful to have films that showcase me in variety of roles.

— A. K.

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