

ELLE *preview*

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(film)

When you meet Shaana Levy, at 5'11" with her raven-black long hair and peaches-and-cream complexion, she seems more the glamorous actress than executive producer. Born to a Kenyan-Gujarati mother and Jewish-Swiss father, she graduated (majoring in theatre) from Columbia University, NYC. Soon after, Shaana interned at Mirabai Films (under Mira Nair) and moved to London. "In hindsight, you never know why things happen. There's a serendipitous journey. Before I moved to Mumbai three years ago, my head was in the clouds. I've learnt many lessons here – in a hard, but good way," says the 26-year-old.

Tired of stereotyped roles and suspect casting approaches, she started acting in Rahul Da Cunha's play, *Chaos Theory*. With time, her interest drifted to 'real' stories, and she co-produced *Living in Emergency: Stories of Doctors Without Borders* (2009) – shortlisted for the Oscars in the feature-length documentary category.

Her latest film, *West is West*, is set four years after *East is East*, reprised with the hilarious patriarch George Khan (Om Puri) at his best. "The film has been selected for the Toronto International Film Festival and hopefully, the 54th BFI London Film Festival," she smiles. Shaana will also kick-start her production company that will focus on women-oriented and multicultural films, and another documentary called *Power*, based on the coal industry. She adds, "Acting will always be my first love, but a sense of control came with production. If you believe in a project, it's easy to sell. In a way, it's like a bullshit filter – I only do things I'm insanely passionate about." ■

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PREVIEW/ONE TO WATCH

SHIFTING GEARS

Executive producer SHAANA LEVY on the sequel to British dramedy *EAST IS EAST*

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