

# Meet Monica Bassi

By: Chhaya Sanghavi

A young, talented, and vivacious film maker, Monica is probably one the most enthusiastic, never-say-never kinda gal. Monica is already making waves with her accomplishments in the TV, Music and Film industry, and she juggles all this each day while she works at her regular job in the IT industry.



song 'In the Name of Love' is featured in Fresh Arrangement, and I'm hoping as the film career progresses that I can incorporate my music into it as well.

**CM:** What inspired you to get involved with music?

**MB:** I'm a vocalist. My inspiration came from the Hindi music sung by Lata Mangeshkar and Anuradha Paudwal, which I loved as I was growing up. More recently I'm fan of Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Shreya Ghosal. It's not just the sound but the poetry in some of the songs which they sing that inspired me to sing. I was also fortunate enough to meet some local music producers, like Jeff Thaal, who heard my sound and wanted to work with me.

**CM:** Tell us about your movie background and what you do.

**MB:** I have been an extra in a local producer, Joe Sanchez's, movies. I do a little bit of everything. I started out

interviewing people involved in the local film scene for a web show called VIP TV. I then went on to co-produce and host a reality show for cable called 'Flavor of the Week'. After learning about how films are made and being on several sets, I knew it was time for me to challenge myself and take the next step to see what I could do in the film world. Now I'm a writer, producer, and actress.

**CM:** Why?

Because I love to challenge myself and explore my own potential.

**CM:** How do you make it happen, meet people to get it all together?

**MB:** Last year I was interviewing people on the red carpet for various film festivals. As I was getting ready to do the same in 2011 it occurred to me that I had the experience and the right people in my life to make a film. While working at a job that I absolutely loathed I became inspired to write a story.

I wrote the story line while at work. (smiles)

**CM:** Please tell us about your background.

**MB:** I was born in Cambridge, Ontario Canada. Lived in Canada for about 14 years before my family (4 of us kids: 2 brothers, 2 sisters, mom/dad) moved to Florida.

After completing high school in Orlando, I went to USF in Tampa to study Management Information Systems at USF in order to have the 'practical' career...and decided to explore my hobbies on the side. Been in Florida ever since.

**CM:** What got you started with TV and how did you break in?

**MB:** I have always had an interest in media. I started out by randomly being cast in a Bud Light commercial while at a party. I was scouted and did my bit in the commercial after which I received a \$50 check in the mail. I guess that could have been the start, though I didn't do anything until a few years after that incident.

**CM:** What are some of the challenges you faced?

**MB:** Being unable to leave Florida! I had

a lot of responsibilities here that kept me from picking up and moving to a city that would be more conducive to entertainment like LA or NYC. Being 'stuck' in Florida, it was challenging to find talented people that shared similar interests and wanted to collaborate.

**CM:** What do you are some of the advantages you had?

**MB:** My optimism! I don't give up when I have a goal in mind, so I stayed on the path until things started going my way. I wouldn't say I'm exactly where I want to be right now, but I'm further than I was a year ago so I can safely say that I'm on my way. I also had the good fortune of meeting the creative minds behind Vansage Productions and iVisiontv. They're local producers, and friends, who are passionate about film making and have supported my endeavors in recent years.

**CM:** Tell us what you are doing in the music field - anything new in the works?

**MB:** I will be collaborating with Ajaxxx, a rapper out of Orlando, in the next few months to work on his new album. My



I went to Chicago that weekend and discussed the story with my toughest critics, my siblings, who didn't think it was half bad. On the flight back from Chicago I wrote the script. I shared it with my friends at Vansage Productions who immediately said they would be a part of the project and support me in any way needed. I then approached friends who I thought would fit the characters well and who I knew would be excited to be in the film. They were thrilled about it and it came across in how easy it was to work with them and how much fun we had on the set. So the cast consists of some of my closest friends, and first-time actors! I like to think I've inspired some of them to explore their potential further as well. Incidentally I had my wisdom teeth extracted one week before filming. Little did I know that it would take more than a week for the swelling to heal. We already had our date set for filming and couldn't change it, so I ended up acting in the film with a slight swelling on the left side of my face. I'm hoping it is not too obvious to anyone! We shot the film in one long 14 hour day at three different locations. I contribute the success of the film to all of my friends who helped me realize one of my dreams. I paid them in pizza and they were happy. Who could ask for a better crew?

**CM:** Are your siblings doing something similar?

**MB:** I have 2 brothers and a sister. My brothers are both engineers and my sister is a doctor. None of them are doing anything like this, though my younger brother has an interest in photography. All of them are supportive of my projects.

**CM:** How do your parents feel about it? How have they helped you, especially considering that most desi parents want their kids to be doctors, lawyers or engineers!

**MB:** My parents think it's great, their only worry is that I spread myself too thin since my weeks are booked before they even begin! They never stop me, they only encourage me to slow down and get some rest every now and then. Rest...what's that? The good thing is that I did the 'desi' thing and got my degree and career in IT is going full swing. I'm hoping to replace the IT career with a career in film/media soon.

**CM:** If money weren't a concern, what is the one thing you would want to do all your life?

**MB:** I have ADD with life. I don't think I could ever be happy doing just 'one' thing. I love film, travel, and volunteer work. I

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could see myself making compelling documentaries in rural countries, like Born into Brothels (which I absolutely loved), that raise awareness on social issues affecting women. I'm sure I could spend a lifetime in India alone doing this.

**CM:** Have you had any experience/exposure in India yet?

**MB:** In terms of film work, I haven't done anything there, but I would love to. I have been to India several times. My

parents first took us there as children, and since then I go on my own initiative. With so many people and so much 'stuff' happening at rapid speed I just feel 'alive' in India. I would love to capture its true essence in film.

**CM:** What would you say are some of your most important accomplishments?

**MB:** Forging meaningful relationships with the people I currently have in my life. I don't think anything is more important in





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sense of identity and stayed on path regardless of popular opinion. A few names that come to mind: Sushmita Sen, Jane Goodall, Princess Diana, Hillary Clinton, and Mother Theresa.

**CM:** Who has influenced your career options the most in your life?

**MB:** No one in particular. The wonderful family and friends I have play their own unique part in influencing and inspiring me.

**CM:** how does it feel to have your film accepted in the India International Film Festival?

**MB:** I was accepted just this year. This is my first acceptance and it is an indescribable feeling. More than my own wonderful sense of accomplishment I'm excited to

tell the entire team about it! It definitely motivates me to continue making and acting in films. This was my first film and being a Virgo I'm very much a perfectionist. I wasn't sure if the film would make it into the festival

as I also happen to be my own worst critic, but someone thought it should so that's a good sign. I'm already thinking of ways to make my next film even better!

**CM:** Please tell us more about the film.

**MB:** Fresh Arrangement is a short film based on the differences between a young Indian woman who is born and raised in America and a young Indian man who has recently come to America from India. With marriage being a strong theme in every Indian person's life, the story depicts the process of the awkward first 'arranged' date. It's a comedic short that is actually an underdog story, with an interesting twist.

**CM:** what is your next project?

**MB:** I have a few projects in the works, one of which is a local documentary.

**CM:** What advice do you have for our readers (music, tv and film!)

**MB:** I would ask film makers this same question when I was hosting VIP TV, and the answer was always something along the lines of 'stay on your path, stick to your dream and be persistent.' I would say that is great advice. What I would add to that is to always maintain your self respect and respect for others in each of your endeavors. Nurture the relationships you have and surround yourself with well-wishers. And also, get some rest every now and then ...

**CM:** Message to our readers?

**MB:** Continue to read CityMasala as it's a great medium for finding out what is going on in your community! I was able to meet Ajaxxx, a music producer/rapper, through a CityMasala article that he was featured in a few years ago. We have been working together on music projects ever since. Also support your local film scene, which you can start doing by attending the 2nd annual Indian International Film Festival in Tampa:)

life than the relationships we keep, and I have friends that I have known since I was 3!

**CM:** Whom do you aspire to be like and why?

**MB:** Any woman that has stood strong in the face of adversity and maintained her

## Shreyas cont'd

only good for passing the next exam, if that. This type of learning is temporary and does not help us develop the artistic expression that we seek to realize. When we learn with spiritual awareness being present in that moment of learning, we are acquiring knowledge. This way of learning helps to not only pass the test, but also to help us master the highest artistic expression of that learning. We advance towards perfection of that action in the artistic expression of it. We do not experience stress, we only experience the joy and serenity of that experience. Progress happens effortlessly. That is

divinity in action. That is when you have truly experienced the joy of performing your action. That is natural to you. Seek it in your self. Learn from watching your children learn from playing. This is the essence of meditation in motion.

You have the opportunity to practice meditation in motion at every moment of life. You can connect with your inner desire to be at one with yourself. Learning with spiritual awareness, taking care of responsibilities with playful attitude, pursuit of artistic hobbies and the performance of every action with the goal of artistic expression are simple but profound ways

to capture meditation in motion. The more you practice, the better you get at it. The better you get at it, the more opportunities you will see to practice it. Until, your life of action gets transformed to life of never ending experience of joy and serenity. You will experience meditation in motion all the time, everywhere and in everything you do. Namaste.

Maulik Trivedi, MD is a MindBody Physician in practice. Please access more information and resources at his website

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