

By: Shaphali Jain

Shriya Saran: The Other End of The Line



Shriya Saran

She is one of the top heroines in Tamil cinema, an emerging one in Bollywood - thanks to films like "Aawarapan", and now she is starring in a Hollywood based Ashok Amritraj production "The Other End of the Line" which is set to release in the US on October 31st. It is a romantic comedy starring Jesse Metcalfe of Desperate Housewives and 25 year old Shriya whose other claim to fame is the hit movie "Sivaji: The Boss" in which she starred opposite Rajnikanth. In "The Other End of the Line", Shriya plays a call center executive in Mumbai who believes in chasing her dream and believes that her dream will come true.

Shriya's other accomplishments in Bollywood are "Mission Istanbul" and the upcoming "Ek". She has also starred in Deepa Mehta's "What Is Cooking" which is to be released soon. "The Other End of the Line" also stars Sara Foster, Anupam Kher, and comedian Larry Miller. CityMasala talks with Shriya to get to know her a little better.

CM: What gave you a break in Bollywood?

Shriya: Well, my biggest breakthrough has been *Sivaji* and because of the success of that movie, doors started opening up for me and I got the role in *Shukriya* and then *Awarapan*. I am really thankful to Rajnikanth sir.

CM: Tell us about your role in "The Other End of the Line" – who approached you for the role?

Shriya: They were looking for a girl to play the role of Supriya and I was given the script. I liked the script because I was able to identify with Supriya. The entire unit felt the same and I got the role!

CM: What was it like to work with Jesse Metcalfe?

Shriya: He's an amazing actor – very young and full of life. He fits the role he's played like a glove and looks absolutely amazing in the film. He was also very helpful and we had a lot of fun preparing for our roles together. He's a really dedicated and hard working actor.

CM: Rumor has it that the two of you are currently an "item"? Would you like to shed some "light" on this?

Shriya: That's just silly. We're NOT seeing each other. It was great to get to know him and to have worked with him and that's all. We're not seeing each other.

CM: Which has been your favorite Bollywood male co-star so far and why?

Shriya: I'm going to answer that question by putting the entire Indian film world under one umbrella – Indian cinema. I think it's really silly to separate the industries within the same country. To answer your question, *Rajnikanth* sir will always be my favorite because there is no bigger star who is also so humble and so honest about who he is. I appreciate him very much. He believes in sticking to his roots and doesn't let fame or ups and downs affect him.

CM: How about a favorite Bollywood female co-star?

Shriya: That would have to be *Tabu*. I am a big

fan of her acting – she is extremely underrated and I find that really unfair. Indian cinema is changing and so many exciting things are happening so hopefully, things will change and these brilliantly talented actors will get their due.

CM: You have starred with Bobby Deol in *Ek*, which is still to be released, and with Vivek Oberoi in *Mission Istanbul*. What were the two of them like to work with and please be honest.

Shriya: I had a great time with both of them. We shot for *Ek* in Chandigarh – I play a Punjabi girl in the movie. *Bobby* is a very sweet and simple guy. We had a good time together. *Vivek* was the same way.

CM: Tell us about "What Is Cooking" – you must have been blown away when you were approached by Deepa Mehta for a role in this movie?

Shriya: Oh! Yes!! I am a BIG fan of her work and was totally blown away when she called me and asked me if I wanted to be a part of the film. She made sure I received a script and then met with me after I had read it. She was very open and wanted me to feel I could bring whatever I wanted to in the film. The film is written and produced by her and directed by her brother, *Dilip Mehta*. She saw *Sivaji* and that's what made her approach me.

CM: You got the chance to work with the likes of Seema Biswas and Lisa Ray in this movie – what are they like and again, please be honest.

Shriya: *Seema* brings a lot to the table and shares a lot about herself, how she grew up and what influenced her. She makes the effort to connect with you as an actor.

Initially, I was really scared at the thought of working with her and when she got to know about it, she laughed. The entire unit was scared of her! She would give me extra time before and after work and she really spent a lot of time with me. She even made sure that we had lunch together.

I met *Lisa Ray* for the first time. Growing up, I had seen her as a model and thought she was beautiful. I told her that I liked her. She would do

CM: Shriya – tell us about yourself – where are you from and where did you grow up?

Shriya: I was born in Hardwar. I had a very simple and protected upbringing. My mom is a teacher and dad is an engineer. They are the most dedicated parents. I also have an older brother and we're all really close. I try to spend most of my holidays with them.

CM: We hear that you're a great Kathak dancer – any movies you've acted in which have given you the opportunity to showcase this talent?

Shriya: I went to Delhi to study for both college and for Kathak. I went to DPS Mathura Road and Lady Shriram College in Delhi. As far as the movies that I've acted in and being able to showcase my talent, I would say that each one of them has given me that opportunity at some level or the other. Kathak still remains my passion so it's good that I'm able to stick with some form of dancing.

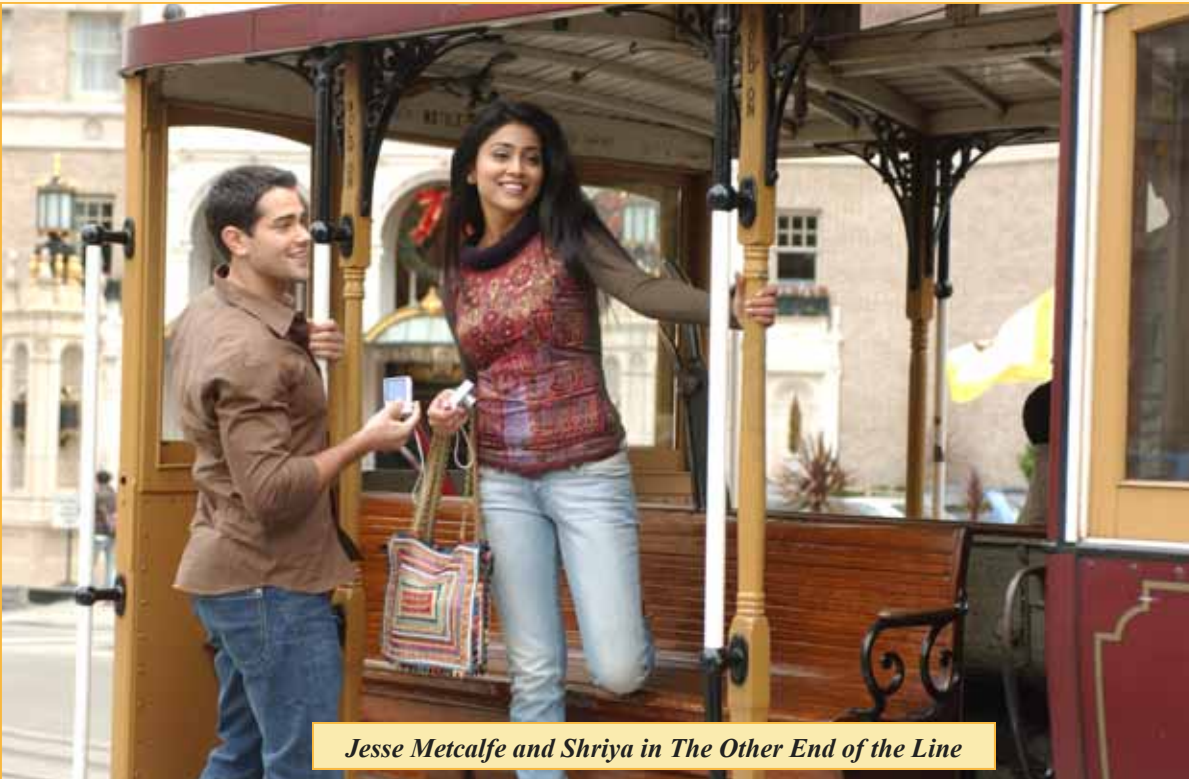
CM: How did you get into the film industry in the south? Did you speak Tamil to begin with?

Shriya: I started by starring in a Telegu film. When I was in the first year of college, they were making a music video and my dance teacher, *Guru Shovana Narayan*, suggested me as one of the dancers. One thing led to another and I kept getting more and more roles. Initially, I didn't speak the language, but I kept learning and now I can speak it quite well.

CM: How did your parents feel when you were given this opportunity at age 17?

Shriya: They have always been amazingly supportive and positive.

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Jesse Metcalfe and Shriya in The Other End of the Line

extra readings with me during the workshops and if I had an idea, she would really encourage me to bring it out. The entire unit was very generous about ideas and help. I don't have too many scenes with Lisa, I have more with Seema, but Lisa connects well with everyone.

CM: When is this movie set to release in the US?

Shriya: I have no idea. They are still working on post production.

CM: OK – on to some “sensitive” topics. Rumor has it that you created quite a buzz with your attire at a silver jubilee function for “Sivaji – The Boss” and that you had to issue an apology for it. Other Bollywood actresses have gone through similar situations. How do you feel about being dictated to as to what you should and shouldn't wear based on religion?

Shriya: Oh! It wasn't such a big deal. It was just a group of people who had a problem. When the media spoke to people in Chennai, the CM's daughter supported me, the CM supported me and so did Rajnikanth sir. I gave a written apology. You know, at the end of the day I like the city and have great respect for the people who live in it. It's deeply rooted in it's culture, the women still wear flowers in their hair and it has some other customs that I am

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not aware of - like you're not supposed to cross your legs and sit on stage – I didn't know that! So, giving an apology because I may have hurt the sentiments of a few people didn't seem like such a big thing for me.

CM: The movie “Sivaji – The Boss” has been a resounding success all over India – how has it been to be a part of such success?

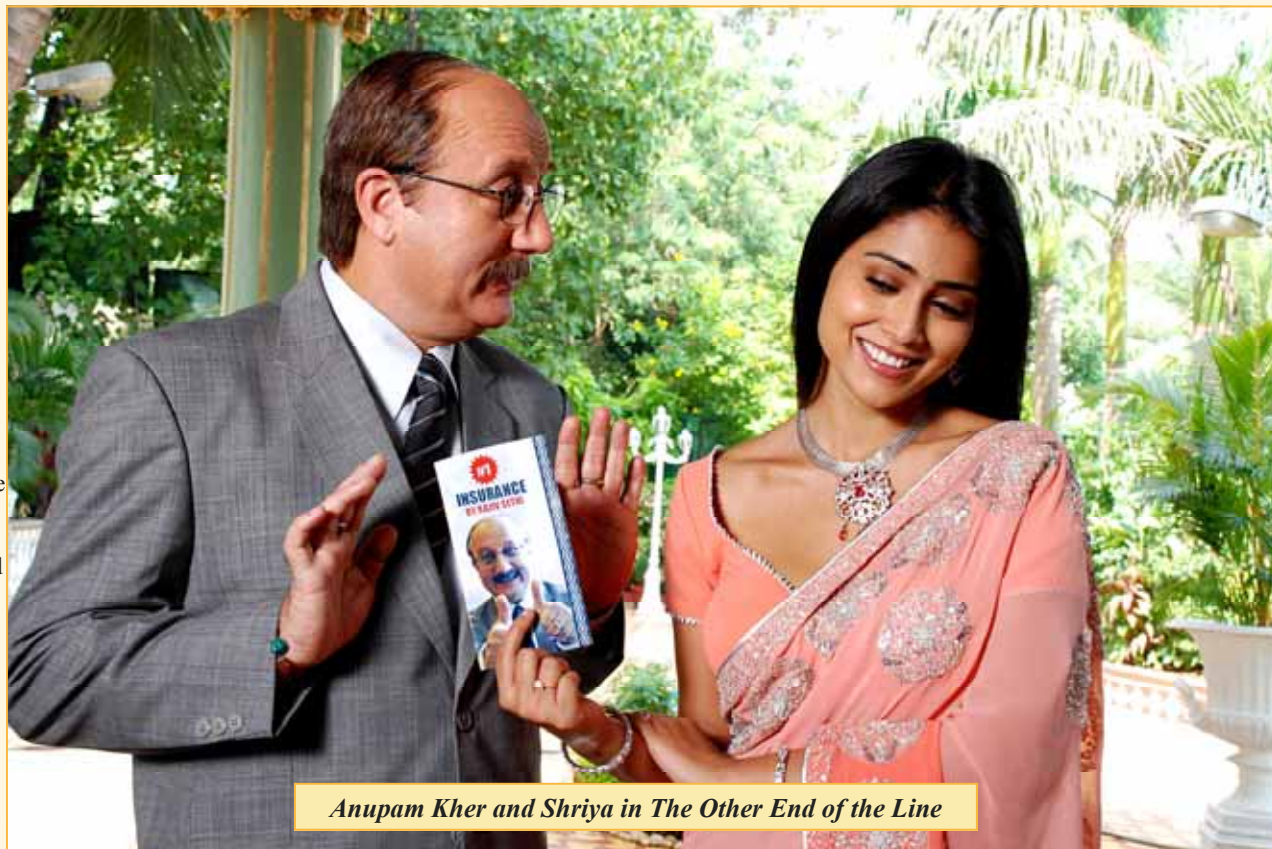
Shriya: It feels really really good! I am so grateful to God. You know this is the first film my dad saw with me and he was so proud of me. The problem is, you get one Sivaji and you want more. God probably thinks – hey, I gave you one - don't keep asking for more! This kind of success makes you believe in yourself and of course, you tend to get more respect from the film fraternity.

CM: Some of your favorite movies...

Shriya: I saw this movie called Wednesday which I really liked - everyone should watch it. From the older ones, I really liked Mandi and I have to give you a Shah Rukh Khan movie – it would have to be Dil To Pagal Hai!

CM: A final message for our readers here in Florida?

Shriya: Try to give back as much as you can to your country whether it is your adopted one or the one you were born in. Give to charity, be positive and spread happiness and don't forget to watch all my movies and make them big hits!



Anupam Kher and Shriya in The Other End of the Line