

Steel appeal

Show director and choreographer Shy Kalra is among the few in the country, who are making their mark in the field. **Shveta Srivastava** caught up with the 'Steel Magnolia' who has carved a niche for herself in the fashion industry

As I walk into the rehearsal area, I hear a powerful voice yell into the mic for the models to fall in line. As soon as the crowd clears, I see a petite Shy Kalra dressed in a white ensemble doing what she does best.

Better known as 'Steel Magnolia' among her team for her warrior-like abilities, Shy is one of the youngest show directors and fashion choreographers in the country today. Though, one might have easily lost her to the world of philosophy. "At the time, fashion was considered to be more of a hobby and most parents did not consider it a viable career option."

She adds, "While my friends were studying at the National Institute of Fashion Technology in Delhi, I was studying philosophy at Delhi University. But my interest in fashion persisted and, somehow, I finished the course with honours."

Shy then interned with one of the top advertising agencies in the country, where she was

exposed to the fashion industry. "There has been no looking back since," she says, adding that she was forced to learn the ropes when she was thrown in the deep-end.

"It seemed apparent to me that there was a need for show directors in India," says Shy, who began to attend workshops abroad on design and fashion in the attempt to educate herself. She went on to study production, lighting and stage design, which compelled those close to her to label her a 'glamorous electrician'. To date, there are no formal courses taught on show direction.

Shy says there is still a dire need for show directors, as the number stands at a mere 25. "You are as good as you teach yourself to be. Most fashion directors and choreographers do not share a show director's sense of space and art, as it's their hard work that makes them who they are."

Shy launched her own company, The Production House, with former



supermodel Feroz Gujral in 2006. With a core team of seven managers and 10 freelancers, she has tackled many a crisis, thanks to her calm demeanour.

Feroz guides and trains youngsters through philanthropy projects, while Kalra does the on-site work.

"We are content being a boutique company at the moment, as it provides us with an edge in the market. We also have a back-line view, which is educating kids from underprivileged backgrounds and bringing them to fall in line with our mainstream work," she says.

The company follows an NGO-like set up where the money made from foreign tours and local shows goes towards funding training programmes for the children, so that they may be equipped with the necessary skills for a career later in life.

Shy will soon team up with designer Wendell Rodricks in a tie-up with the NGO Treasure that educates children from war-hit families in Geneva, where her biggest obstacle will be not knowing the language and still having to make a connect with the locals. We bid her Bon Voyage et Bonne Chance! ♦

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