

Dazzling animations in flat colours

Art Nation
by SHAZIA TALAT 12 July

It is said cartoons represent nearly every facet of life: the superior; the downtrodden; the out-of-luck and the lucky. They have the power to rub shoulders with the rich, the powerful and yet be helpless and, of course, alien. If NCA needed representation in cartoon art, this would come in the personage of Shahryar (Sherry). A graduate of National College of Arts with a degree in Architecture, Sherry, who originally is from Peshawar, decided to step into the charismatic world of Cartoons.

"It was an intentional decision not an accident. People say I have wasted five years studying Architecture. I totally disagree! everything you study from kindergarten to post grad is part of your learning experience. I love Architecture! I still do and always will, but comic art and cartoon animation is a passion for me and if you find a career in what you are crazy about, nothing like it!"

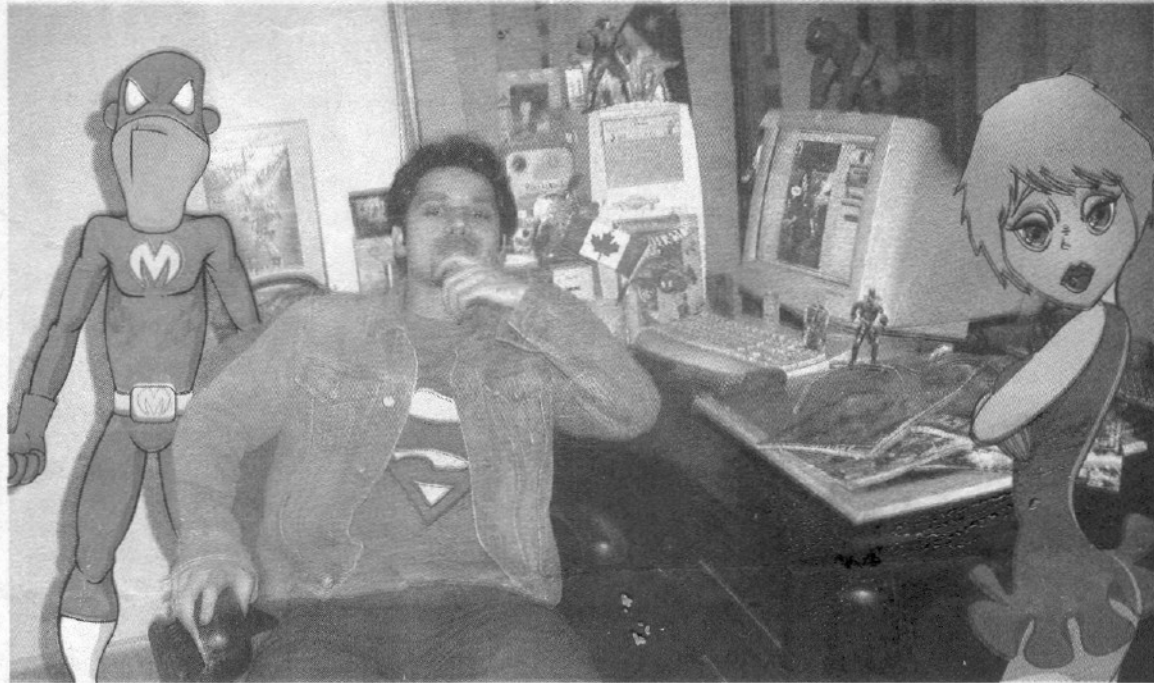
Sherry belongs to a very literate and an art loving family of Peshawar, a family of well-established professionals in the field of medicine, media and education. Therefore, when the idea of Cartoon and comic art became a possibility it rattled the conventional set-up of his family. They wanted him to become an architect which he did, but he had other plans too. However, he never disrespected the family decisions which is why they have always been there in every major decision he made in his life.

"I don't remember a time when I wasn't interested in drawing. My mother tells me that when I was three I used to draw on my legs and knees when I couldn't find anything to draw on."

In his school days, apart from his academics and other activities, drawing was something Sherry was always good at. His extraordinary drawing skills and admirable sense of humor made him quite popular among his school mates. "Yeah that was really cool!", he recalls, "I remember boys coming to me to buy some of my art, stuff like Spider man shooting a web or Rambo in a combat with the giant Python..."

His real time debut in Art was when he was 10 and he entered an Art competition held in Korea in which he stood 3rd. This achievement boosted his confidence in the right direction and brought with it the realization that he has talent.

Sherry was poised to accept a job, designing layouts and



providing sufficient graphics for his School's newsletter. Other schools also used to hire him for similar jobs. Sherry grew with the support of an artistic community. He practiced his drawing and came across many people who inspired his future work. With growing confidence and an expanding portfolio, Sherry took his work to some of the local newspapers. The editors liked his work and gave him a chance to draw some gags on political and social issues. He worked on such projects for a while but drawing political cartoons wasn't meant

for him, instead he turned to comic strips and cartoons to which younger people could relate and be responsive to. He started working on some of his short stories, his father Syed Abdul Jabbar (late), one of the most respectable and influential broadcasters of the Frontier, helped him with the content and the script for the stories. However, the publishers refused to published those stories simply because of the fact that they were drawn by a 12 year old.

But this didn't discourage him at all! His passion for cartoons and music was at its peak. His love for music was as deep as it was for cartooning. However, music couldn't earn him money while cartooning could, so the choice was easy.

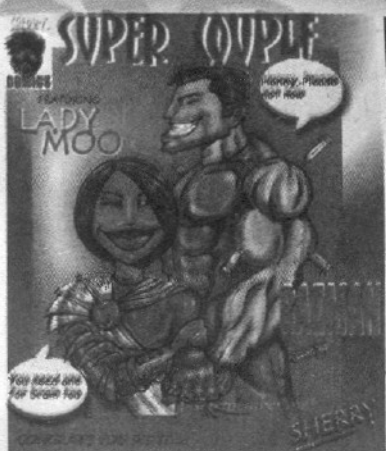
When he was in NCA's 3rd year studying Architecture, Sherry was approached by Sabir Nazar (a renowned cartoonist of Friday times) and Amir Ahmed Khan (Editor Herald) to join forces with them to work on a comic digest "FLASH", Pakistan's first comic digest. The idea was terrific and it was an offer Sherry couldn't refuse. It was probably the first time Sherry was given an opportunity to work on his ideas. It was then that the cool dude "YANKEE SHERRY" was born, a character from one of his comic strips. "I had this story in my mind for quite some time. The original

idea was for a sitcom but then I thought why not a comic strip and I started working on the strip like crazy. I improvised a lot due to some constraints but the end product wasn't that bad. The story was about an 18 year old desi American kid living in New York who was sent to Pakistan by his parents. Here he started living a new life with his Lahori uncle Butt and family. Caught between the two opposite cultures he had the experience of a life time. I took the inspiration for this character from a very close friend of mine Numair (who himself is an awesome cartoonist) who is half Paki half Aussie. When I observed him I thought I've found everything I need for my character."

Unfortunately the comic book project was shelved after releasing two issues due to an unprofitable situation.

Sherry is currently working as a creative manager for a Multi media company in Lahore. "I love my work!" he says. "We specialize in Cartoon animations and that's all I ever wanted to do. I have a great team and in cartoon animation creative team is all that matters."

Describing his art style he says, "I try to keep lines simple and render them in flat colours and that's something I learnt by watching Jim Davis's Garfield. I usually use this technique in



animations in which a lot of art work is required. Therefore, I have worked out a style using simple lines and flat colours, which is simple yet visually very effective. On the other hand, in my illustrations I can be as wild and detailed as Joe Madureira and Joe Quesada."

Commenting on the new technologies being used in animation, especially computerized techniques he says, "They're awesome! I love technology and computers! Great tools. The animations done using these gizmos constantly dazzle me with the wonders we can accomplish using our inherent talents and pairing them with these technologies. However, I still admire the hand-painted backgrounds and looks of traditional animation".

Some of the most renowned surrealists inspire Sherry. "I think they're amazing! I don't know from where their inspiration comes from? It drives me nuts just to think about it! I love Artists like Frank Farzieta, Salvador dali, Brom, Boris Vallejo and Alex Ross etc. I'm crazy about fantasy art, mythical stories and medieval comic characters".

Architect turned cartoonist is blessed with another great talent, music. Sherry has been a music lover since childhood. He is the percussionist of the band *Rumble Fish*, now known as *Groove Guruz*, known for its funky live performances and mind blowing percussion jams. The band, recently, composed and produced original sound track for a film, named *Nadah*, which has entered many international film- festivals worldwide. "I love playing the percussion. I try to experiment to produce some thing unusual but listener friendly at the same time." As far as his future plans are concerned he ultimately aspires to become a 2d cell animator and hopes to pursue a masters in it. He is also in the process of establishing a studio of his own called Tin Face Studio.

The demand for Sherry's work is growing steadily. Without a doubt, he is one of the most gifted talents in comic fine art today and we wish him the very best in all his future endeavors. ■