

Interview with

Ella Mika

By Evie Herndon

Armenian actress and upcoming superstar Ella Mika stars in the new TBS series "Chad." The sitcom was created by Nasim Pedrad, who also portrayed lead character Chad. Mika stars as "Niki," Chad's younger sister in the series. The show airs Tuesday nights at 10:30/9:30c on TBS and we were able to virtually interview the young actress to talk about life, fun facts, filming during covid, and the new show.

Where are you from and how old are you?

I'm originally from Armenia. I moved here when I was one year old. I originally moved to Hollywood and then I moved to Glendale around six years old. I'm now 14 and I've been living in Glendale for around eight years.

How exactly did you get your start in acting?

So, my dad used to be an actor back in Armenia and he did a bit of acting here as well. I once went behind the scenes with him and it was inspiring. I went home and looked up videos of actors and actresses doing their work. Seeing how it was behind the scenes on set just inspired me to pursue my own career.

What is it like being an up-and-coming actress, but also a student?

It can get really difficult sometimes to balance it all. Especially whenever I have to film for long periods of time, like I did with "Chad," which took around three months. It can be a little difficult to balance out the schoolwork and the acting, but I'm really dedicated to both. I'm a perfectionist, so I like to do both as best as I possibly can.

What was your very first acting job?

My very first professional acting job was a commercial. I can't remember what it was for, maybe for a TV or a computer, and I was just in the background. But my next opportunity was a big commercial for My Little Pony. It was called the cute crew and was my great step forward for me.

Tell me about some of your other acting experiences, specifically your favorite and your least favorite experience?

I think my favorite project that I've done so far is "Chad" because of how flexible they were and how kind the entire team was. The whole experience was so positive. We were able to add a little bit of improv and just have fun with it on set, which was great. Also, I filmed a Red Robin commercial, which was definitely an interesting experience because my dad and I always used to go to Red Robin, so that was cool to do. My least favorite experience was acting in "The Wedding Coordinator." In the film, I was playing a much younger role, so it was difficult to look and act a lot younger than I was.

Apart from acting, do you have other hobbies you're really interested in?

I definitely love swimming. I've loved it from a young age. I love water. I also love drawing, sketching, painting, and dancing. Dance is a huge part of my life. I take dance classes which is really a great way for me to relieve stress and express myself. I also love baking and cooking.

Do you have any secret talents?

I am really great at the game Piano Tiles and I am a very fast reader!

What is your dream role?

I would really like a role that challenges me, an emotionally pushing role. The genre is unimportant, it could be from horror to drama, but I would love to play a character that really pushes my boundaries and helps develop my acting skills. Troubled characters must be difficult to act... For example, in Johnny Depp's "Secret Window," his character was amazing!



Or Leonardo DiCaprio's character in "Shutter Island" was also thrilling to watch. Those types of character must be such a thrill to play.

What would you say has been the most challenging part of being a young actress specifically?

I think being able to balance everything out without being overwhelmed is a challenge because the schedules can get really busy. Things get really piled on top of one another with auditions, self-tapes, interviews, and other meetings and projects. I have learnt how to manage my time so that I don't get overwhelmed. I have a reminder app in my phone now, which helps so much because I can make lists to feel organized and calm.

So let's talk a little bit about Chad. Can you tell me a little bit about the show?

Nasim Pedrad wrote the show, she's an executive producer. Nasim stars in it as the young awkward teenage boy, Chad, who is having his first year in high school. The show is really focused on cultural identity and heritage. Basically, Chad is trying to fit in at school but he's foreign, so it's a little more difficult for him and he gets embarrassed by his religion and cultural identity. Unfortunately, he tries to become super American to fit in. Throughout the series, he complains about problems on top of problems that are thrown at him but he eventually realizes his mistakes and embraces his identity. We see him build connections with kids in school and develop his relationship with his family throughout the show.

How has that been playing opposite a female who is acting as a teenage boy?

I think it's really important that it's a female adult woman who is playing this awkward boy because, number one, it pushes the comedic aspect a lot more than just having a regular teenage boy play the part. Secondly, Nasim has to really channel this teenage boy and I think you're able to really see the character development because of it. She plays with her own experiences as a foreign immigrant in the character as well.

What has it been like working with Nasim Pedrad?

It's been really great. She's really funny off screen and on screen. She's super sweet, she has such a big heart and she's really thoughtful. She was always making sure that we felt safe while we were filming during the Covid pandemic. She made sure that we had a say in some of the creative content for the show and that we had some freedom to add our own little touches to the character and really transform them.

Was working on improv for the show something that was new to you?

Absolutely! Usually on the projects I've worked on in the past, we really stuck to the script and there wasn't much flexibility. On set for "Chad," we had so much flexibility, it was great. It wasn't an overwhelming amount where I had complete control over my lines, but it was nice to be able to add to the script. We really made the characters our own and I think that comes through a lot in the show.

How was it to film during a global pandemic?

We were filming from January until March, and then filming had to stop because of the pandemic. We continued to film again around August 20th, but before we flew back

to Oregon to film again, we all quarantined for two weeks prior to flying out. It was important to make sure we were safe to do everything. We were tested in LA after quarantine before flying to Oregon, then we were tested once we arrived and quarantined again for a few days in the hotel room. It was a very different experience for all of us. For fittings, the clothes were dropped off at the hotel room. We tried them on in the room and took pictures and sent the clothes back with the pictures in them. We had to wear masks all the time. We only took it off when doing makeup and right as we were on set and about to film. Safety was their number one concern, and they made sure that everyone was getting tested at least three times a week. We also had zones. We also took daily tests on our phones to monitor if we had any symptoms. With all those safety protocols, it definitely took a longer time to make progress, which is why when we had four episodes left to film, Nasim felt that we only needed to finish two of them. So that's what we did.

Here at Dreamlette we love to feature the girl bosses of the future. What does it mean to you to be a Dreamlette?

I really want to show people that you can still be a force. Growing up, I didn't see very many Middle Eastern people, especially women and girls, that were represented on the screen. And so I think it's really important for people to see representation of different cultures. You can have a different cultural background and still be a really powerful person and be able to do what you love.

Do you have any other words of encouragement for our readers?

In the acting industry there are many people that are so talented at what they do that it is easy to feel scared when going into the industry yourself. You might worry that you are going to be judged or feel nervous that you are not confident enough to make it in the industry. I just want to say that you know yourself and you know who you are. Why let someone else's opinion affect how you think of yourself? If you truly enjoy doing something, then there is nothing that should stop you from achieving it.

