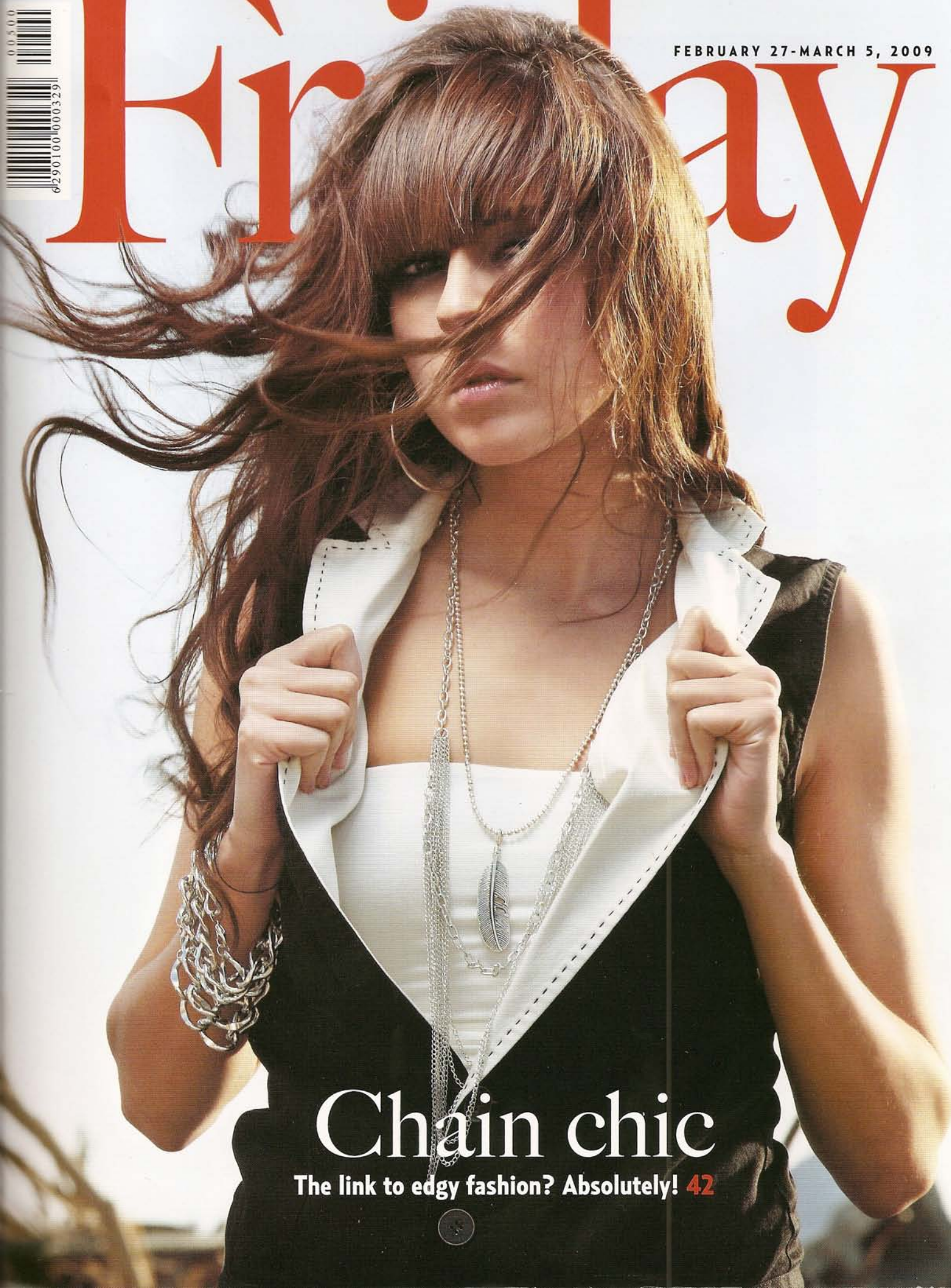


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FEBRUARY 27-MARCH 5, 2009



## Chain chic

The link to edgy fashion? Absolutely! 42

MY WORLD

NEENA RAI, artist, model and participant in *The Amazing Race, Asia 2008*

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SUCCESS IS NOT THE REASON FOR HAPPINESS – happiness is the reason for success. If you do what makes you happy, you will taste success in life.

*I fell in love with modelling when I was in my teens.*

In August 2008, I was the Jane Norman Catwalk Star at the show held at the Kempinski Hotel in Dubai. I was also voted the model of the week for Dubai-based men's magazine *IQ* in September 2008. I was seen in the advertisement for Breast Cancer Awareness-Breast Friends. I was also offered an exclusive contact with a good agency in Dubai to get to travel for international assignments.

*Modelling led me to take part in the reality show called *The Amazing Race* in Asia.*

It was the third series of this show and it aired on AXN TV channel. It is extremely popular in the US, Asia and Australia. When the search for Season III participants was on, I applied and got through. I was already a fan of the show and I love an adrenaline rush. I convinced a cousin of mine to enter with me. We created a CD, which was a requirement to participate before sending it to the producers. My cousin and I have always been great friends and he has a great sense of humour. We had loads of fun. I loved the race and the roadblocks, detours and the fierce competition. I also loved the crazy places we travelled to and the things we ate.

# Race to the top

SUPPLIED PHOTOS

The show started with the racers being revealed in September last year. The show continued until November 27. All the racers were invited to Thailand for the final. I've been interviewed by various magazines and TV stations because of my participation in the show.

The show had its fair share of surprises. I didn't know that we were going to eat maggots and insects. It was not a fun task. Now every time I think about the maggots I ate, it spoils my appetite. I can't separate the image of maggots from my memories of the race.

**The show helped me to re-establish faith in myself, even though I didn't win.**

I now feel like I can do anything if I put my mind to it. Whenever I find myself in a self-criticising mode, I remind myself that I took part in the show and conquered many obstacles that previously I would have never have thought I could. This helps restore my confidence.

I love having discussions about art.

As an artist, I love discussing the struggles of impressionist painters. I have a deep admiration for this genre of artists in particular. Had they not given up their style because of the negative criticism during those times, the world would have never seen the masterpieces of famous cubists, modern and abstract painters. Sometimes you need to ignore criticism and follow your heart.

I am inspired by the words of E.H. Gombrich who wrote: "Every picture is a venture on a voyage of discovery. Embark on it with fresh eyes and there's no telling what one might bring home from such a journey."

**I often refer to myself as an art school reject.**

There was only one art school I wanted to go to but I was not prepared for the entrance exam.

As a result, I was not accepted. So after my bachelor's degree at college, I decided not to pursue fine art but pursued media and communications as a way of expanding my horizons. I completed a postgraduate diploma in advertising and public relations from the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC). I studied layout, photography, digital art and advertising. My favourite subjects were creativity and branding (a part of marketing) as they integrated the creative element in refreshingly innovative ways. This part of my education has served me well.

After completing my studies at IIMC, I worked with advertising agencies in New Delhi. I then moved to the Middle East. I was initially in Bahrain and then moved to Abu Dhabi in 2006. I also lived in Egypt with my parents when I was younger. So I have spent over six years in the Middle East. I never imagined that I would spend such a significant portion of my life in the region.

**I have three art collections at the moment.**

The first collection includes landscapes and seascapes. My second collection is a riot of colour implementing a technique called 'post painterly abstract'. My third collection includes textural abstracts.

**I have integrated my love for travelling and adventure in my paintings.**

My first exhibition called 'A Dot, A Dash and A Dot' consisted of coloured abstracts inspired by the cities of the world as well as my love for different cultures and people. During my extensive travels I often found myself lost in every culture I experienced. In each place I encountered a different side of myself.

My last exhibition in April 2008 at

the Ghaf Art Gallery in Abu Dhabi consisted of paintings inspired by the UAE. I was chosen as one of the upcoming international artists in the UAE to participate in an exhibition called The First Drop of Rain. This exhibition is the brainchild of Jalal Luqman, one of the owners of the Ghaf Art Gallery. Luqman sponsored the event in order to promote art in the UAE. The first step to setting up the exhibition was with Jalal's art trip. We went to a particular location or country in the Middle East to be inspired. We then returned to Abu Dhabi to work for two months in time for the exhibition. In the near future, I'd like to focus on Dubai and India as possible locations for a solo exhibition.

People often ask me how I am able to coordinate my artwork, modelling and publicity as a result of *The Amazing Race*. I do not need to blend them - they are like the branches of a tree. They all have the same source and that is me. Both painting and modelling have taken over my life in an enormously positive way. Had I not taken them up as professions, I would have been studying for my MBA with majors in marketing because I wanted to have my own business. At some point, I would still love to have my own business.

**I have been wanting to set up a charity organisation for a long time.**

When the Mumbai terrorist attacks happened in November last year, I decided that the time was right for me to make my dream a reality. I am in the process of setting it up and I've already raised around Rs180,000 since I started. It is going well and I hope that I can make a difference. God has been very kind to me. This charity is one way I can help others. **F**

Visit [www.neenarai.com](http://www.neenarai.com)

- As told to Preethi Janice D'Sa,  
a Dubai-based freelancer

## SNAP SHOTS

### When it comes to painting,

I can't start work until my surroundings are clean and organized. Everything has to be in its place. Even my paints are catalogued and put in different boxes or shelves according to their type and colour.

### When it comes to the kitchen,

I hang all the kitchen knives in

such a way that they point downward and in descending order. It annoys me if the alignment is disturbed!

### When it comes to animals,

my cats Prince Leopold and Lucky are the apples of my eye. Prince Leopold has a regal demeanour. Lucky is rough around the edges. They are brothers from different mothers.



Angkor Sunset  
by Neena Rai.