“I would love to play a dentist in a movie”

An interview with actor Nick Shen, Singapore

Nick Shen is a well-known actor, singer and entertainer from Singapore who rose to fame when he won Star Search Singapore, a TV talent show, in 1999. In addition to having acted in more than 20 drama series during his career, the 35-year-old has a deeply rooted passion for Chinese opera, which he regularly performs on stage and at workshops. During a dental visit to Singapore’s Specialist Dental Group, Dental Tribune Asia Pacific had the opportunity to speak with Nick about the importance of aesthetic teeth and the portrayal of dentists in movies.

DT Asia Pacific: Mr Shen, do you like visiting the dentist?

Nick Shen: A great smile is extremely important for me as an actor and thus I do not mind making regular trips to the dentist. I always make a point of seeing a dentist twice a year to ensure that all my teeth and gums are in top condition.

Have you paid more attention to your teeth since you won Star Search Singapore?

Definitely! A great smile can make such a big difference in one’s overall appearance. I have invested a great deal of time and effort in my career, and I am constantly working on improving myself, whether in the areas of gaining more knowledge, honing my craft or ensuring that I am looking and feeling my very best. However, what I did not realise until more recently was that healthy teeth and gums are also closely related to the health of the rest of the body.

How important are aesthetic teeth for an actor nowadays?

In the entertainment industry, always looking your best is a necessity. Being camera ready with a great smile plays an important role in presenting an actor in his best light.

With regard to your appearance (including good teeth), do you consider yourself a role model?

I do consider myself to be a positive role model especially when it comes to a healthy lifestyle. For example, I was lucky, as a Singapore artist, to be able to endorse healthier meal choices and health supplements such as Avalon Ginseng for my fans. In addition, I also worked as ambassador for the Anti-Smoking Campaign of the Health Promotion Board in Singapore.

Many dental patients in the US are longing for the so-called Hollywood Smile. Have you noticed similar trends here in Singapore or elsewhere in Asia?

Indeed, the trend is spreading rapidly in Singapore, as well as in other regions in Asia, such as Japan, China and Korea. I’ve noticed that in recent years a greater number of dentists are beginning to offer cosmetic dental solutions in response to increasing interest from people here.

Have you ever considered undergoing cosmetic dental treatment in the US?

I have not considered traveling so far afield for my cosmetic dental treatment. Considering the distance, time off work needed, and the fact dentists here are also able to offer high quality dental work, I’ve decided to have my dental treatment done in Singapore. In fact, many patients from the region travel to Singapore for complex dental treatment.

Cosmetic dental procedures are booming in Singapore. Are you aware of the recent developments and techniques?

Nowadays, people in this country are more aware that good oral health can enhance their appearance and boost their confidence. The public is more educated on dental solutions, although we might not be in a position to decide whether such treatment would be suitable for us without seeing a professional.

As a consumer, I am definitely more knowledgeable going in for a consultation today than I was several years ago, when there was not so much information available on the Internet, for example. However, I learnt more about the recent developments and techniques in cosmetic dental procedures when I went through these procedures myself. My veneers, which I had done in a neighbouring country, failed and I had to consult specialists here in Singapore.

Have you ever had an accident (on set or on stage) that involved your teeth?

No... and I hope never to experience this! In movies, dentists are often portrayed as being antisocial or psychopaths. Could you imagine playing a dentist yourself?

Sure, I would love to play a dentist in a movie. That would be quite a challenge. However, from my interaction with dentists, I found that this picture of dentists in movies is just wrong. Real dentists are neither antisocial nor psychopaths. They actually take away the pain, and if people were to go for their check-ups more regularly, it is most likely that they would be pain free, as there would not be any major dental problems to resolve.

Your last movie was nominated for Best Short Film at the Cannes Film Festival in 2009. What other projects are you working on at the moment?

I am going to appear in the comedy My Ghost Partner, which is scheduled to be released in Singapore theatres soon. In this movie, I play a triad leader, and I had to dye my hair red for this role!

Thank you very much for the interview and good luck for the future!

Nick Shen, Singapore

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