

# I was a Bollywood extra with Kylie

When writer **Amy Fallon** visited Mumbai, she never realised she'd end up on set of a Bollywood hit with Kylie

**K**ylie Minogue is standing on a stage on the set of the Bollywood film *Blue*, wearing a dazzling silver mini dress with sequins, surrounded by one of Bollywood's leading men, Akshay Kumar, and scores of dotting western extras — and she's being told off.

Yes, the pint-sized Australian superstar, whose stellar career has lasted over two decades, is being slightly bossed around.

"Kylie, I want to see those tassels move now!" barks legendary Bollywood choreographer and musical director Farah Khan.

The singer, looking poised in her showgirl-style outfit made by Indian designer Manish Malhotra, with her blonde hair flowing, just nods.

But myself and my Australian friend sitting on the lounge right behind her are flabbergasted.

Not only did we manage to get ourselves cast in the Bollywood film in Mumbai, but we're watching one of the world's most famous stars being shouted at.

"She can't boss Kylie around like that!" my friend exclaims.

I'm also feeling very defensive for the girl whose songs I've been singing since I was little.

And also a little nervous: it is the 100 extras — besides myself there are several other Australians who have been transformed from holiday-makers and travellers into glamorous guests partying in what is supposed to be the Bahamas — who are the most star-struck at being just metres away from one of our most famous celebrity exports.

In fact when Kylie walks past me and some other nervous extras and says to us, "Just pretend it's fabulous, it's fabulous", I really do feel like I'm spinning around.

Understandably, despite all our hard work and our own prospects of

stardom, our pay isn't anything like hers. Kylie is reportedly taking home a staggering \$1.55 million for just two days of rehearsals and five days of shooting.

In contrast, we've pocketed 500 Rupees — about \$14 — each per day, as well as lunch and dinner.

Then again it's hard work being a Bollywood actor, I've discovered.

We're suffering through gruelling 13 hour days in a sweltering studio, and this is the norm.

For her million-plus salary, Kylie is in Mumbai for just a week's work, and isn't even the main star of *Blue*, which is an epic about a friendship marred by betrayals endured during a search for hidden treasure.

Kylie is, however, famous enough, even in India, to play herself. Cameo appearances, unrelated to the plot, are a trend in Bollywood movies. Rumour has it Madonna and Rihanna were approached by director Anthony D'Souza before Kylie.

In the scene we're filming, three days into the shoot at Mumbai's Film City, Kylie is dancing provocatively with Kumar to the song she has recorded with Bollywood singer Sonu Nigam in London.

She's recorded the track, composed by A.R. Rahman, who won two Oscars for his *Slumdog Millionaire* soundtrack.

Those involved in the production are being tight-lipped about the song, but we did catch a little of the tune: it's a Western, Hindi and Punjabi pop mix, with catchy phrases such as "chicky wicky". Kylie sings in English, while Nigam sings in Punjabi and Hindi.

Kylie also stars in several scenes with the main cast, including Bollywood stars Sanjay Dutt, Lara Dutta and Zayed Khan.

As well as Mumbai, scenes have been filmed in the Bahamas

and others in Bangkok. In the scenes filmed on the first day, though, which I was also part of, the pop princess is dancing on a stage in a pretend Caribbean resort, complete with outside pool.

Hovering around her are male Bollywood dancers, dressed in black sequined vests and gold pants.

At one stage in the scene, tiny Kylie is even tossed up in the air by one of the dancers, before looking startled and running off the stage.

Despite not being an Indian household name, she is clearly a hit with the rest of the cast. Dancer Feroz Khan tells me that he loved dancing up close with his now very good friend Kylie.

Kylie may well be Bollywood's highest paid foreign celebrity, but as for me, I'm not giving up my day job just yet.

**Blue is released worldwide in August. Kylie launches her new fragrance, Couture, next week.**



Extra special: Writer Amy Fallon with Bollywood dancer Vicky Mahaskar