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CHHOTA CHETAN

SPORTING LEGENDS DOCUMENTED

Trailing the life of seven Indian sporting legends as they compete in some of the biggest sporting events across the globe is almost an inconceivable ambition. However, former model-actor Bikramjeet Saluja not only visualised such a dream but also made it come true in his 7-part TV series 'Travelling With Pros'.

"I am a sports player. I used to play tennis earlier and was familiar with what goes into the making of a sports player. I had done a coffee table book – An Actor's Inspiration in 2009, based on THE GOD FATHER and RAGING BULL and after that, I have been toying with the idea of getting into direction. And I always wanted to go back to my roots and do something about sports. That's when this idea clicked. I shared it with my wife and my friend Mahesh Bhupathi... both loved the idea and supported my dream," he says. Bikram has gone behind the scenes, to put together a one of its kind television documentary series featuring some of India's most talented sports personalities. Ace shooter and Olympic gold medalist Abhinav Bindra, flag bearer of Indian golf Jeev Milkha Singh, tennis star Mahesh Bhupathi, badminton champion Saina Nehwal, motor sport and India's first F-1 and NASCAR driver Narain Karthikeyan, wrestling world champion Sushil Kumar, and professional billiards



Bikram Saluja

champ Pankaj Advani are all part of this engaging docu series. 'Travelling With Pros' also brings together seven destinations synonymous with the sport played and the film serves as a travelogue as well, as the city is essential to the backdrop of the narrative.

Abhinav Bindra



Saina Nehwal



"Each and every sportsperson strongly believed in the project, hence it could see the light of day," says Bikram. "They liked the concept and saw merit in it. They trusted me mainly because I too have a sports background and I completely understand the hard work they had to go through to be in the position they are today."

Getting the athletes on board wasn't as difficult as seeking permissions from governing sports bodies across the globe. "Getting permissions from NASCAR, PGA and other governing bodies was a nightmare," says Bikram, adding, "but eventually everyone agreed as they saw potential in the project."

Various sports governing bodies have given unrestricted access to shoot the sportsmen live in world sporting events. The sports properties range from the prestigious PGA Tour event in golf to the ATP Masters event in tennis to the World Wrestling Championship, and the legendary NASCAR race to a Super Series event in badminton.

Not only this, even the sports persons have opened up and bared their lives on the tour for this series. They also shared their thought processes about their respective sports. As such, the docu series in a way presents an opportunity for the viewers to go on a personal journey with them on the tour and be able to get an insight into the sport from their perspective.

It took Bikram nearly two years to finish this documentary. "I started working on it in March – April 2010. I have to agree it was cumbersome, taking permission, shooting, editing, and finding sponsors... I had to do everything. Finally, I am happy with the end product," says Bikram with the broadest smile.

The film has captured the sport personalities in rare and candid moments with their friends and has engaging interactions with their family as well. The film breaks away from the glam associated with sports and the athletes and focuses on their grueling training sessions, pre-match rituals, the hard work that each and every sportsperson puts in before he goes for the final game. Not taking the conventional route of releasing his documentary at various festivals, Bikramjeet Saluja's docu series is currently being aired on ESPN channel every Saturday/ Sunday as a 7-part series.



Mahesh Bhupathi

THE WRITE WAY!

The inaugural Mumbai Mantra Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab 2012 was a big success. In an interesting Club Mahindra environment, 9 Indian screenwriters got an opportunity to engage in one-on-one meetings with 11 Creative Advisors from across the globe. They gained indispensable lessons in the craft, a fresh perspective on their work and a platform to fully realise their material. Now applications are invited for the Mumbai Mantra Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab 2013. It means a chance to be one of the 6-8 fellows who will be selected for a 5-day intensive workshop with Creative Advisors who are acclaimed global screenwriters and directors. All one needs is a synopsis, the first five pages of your screenplay, an artistic statement and cover letter. The last date for open submissions is July 1, 2012.

Following the template of the world renowned Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab that is held at Park City, USA, the Indian Screenwriters Lab is a five-day writer's workshop that gives independent screenwriters the opportunity to work intensively on their feature film screenplays with the support of established screenwriters in an environment that encourages innovation and creative risk-taking.

For more queries related to Mumbai Mantra Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab 2013, email labqueries@mumbaimantra.com.

RARE GEMS

What an idea, sirji! Soumyadip Choudhury, a blogger based in Ghaziabad, has kicked off a project to upload old Hindi films, which are no longer under copyright, for free, legal viewing. As part of the Indian Public Domain Movie Project, Choudhury will put up films that are now out of copyright in the public domain, on his blog. According to Indian Copyright Act, 1957, films come into the public domain on the first of January, 60 years after their release. Which makes Indian films released before January 1, 1952 part of the public domain! The 1944 film KISMET is currently available for viewing, a film that Bhaichand Patel called "unequaled" in its success, "before or after in Indian cinema until SHOLAY came thirty-two years later. It ran for over two years in Bombay and Calcutta. Ashok Kumar played a debonair cigarette smoking anti-hero, a pickpocket who had run away from a wealthy home when he was a child. Reformed by a dancer who had been disabled and was on hard times, he reunites with his parents at the end. The songs, written by Pradeep and set to music by Anil Biswas, were part of the film's magic." Another treat for HiFi fans is RAJA HARISHCHANDRA, directed by the father of Indian cinema, Dhundiraj Govind Phalke. This, India's first feature film was first screened on April 21, 1913. The complete film (3700 feet) no longer being available, up for viewing are the first and last reels. Savour the experience!