


society dubai

The Film Issue
#32 December 2006 | Dhs5
A Motivate Publication

A photograph of four men dressed in black suits, white shirts, and dark ties, all wearing sunglasses. They are walking in a parking lot under a bright blue sky with scattered clouds. The man in the center is holding a camera. The background shows some industrial buildings and a yellow container.

When the sun goes down on DIFF 2006, will these local directors be the **next Tarantinos?**

Features: fancy making a short film? + local movie hotshots

Travel: explore the streets of sleepy Alexandria + postcard from Beirut

Beauty: how to become red carpet worthy + spa heaven



DHRUV DHAWAN

Dhruv Dhawan burst onto the film-making scene in 2005 with *From Dust*, a feature length documentary about corruption and aid relief in the aftermath of the Asian tsunami. Reuters called it a "classic tale", *Variety* described it as a "timely and enlightening film," and for *The Times* it was an "eloquent film and shocking documentary." *From Dust* was nominated for the best international documentary award at the Tribeca Film Festival and at Hot Docs in Canada. Since then it's been accepted by 22 international film festivals where it gained access to distribution in those countries.

Produced and directed by Dhawan, the documentary delves into Sri Lanka's devastated coastline and investigates why the government stopped many of the survivors from rebuilding their homes. The grim exposé shows how some people exploit the suffering of others for their own financial gain. Which, after benefiting both professionally and financially from the film himself, leaves Dhawan on tricky moral terrain. "That is not lost on me," says Dhawan. "I'm fully aware of benefiting from the victims I portrayed in my film and there is not a week that

goes by when I don't help these victims of the tsunami in some way." Dhawan says one of the most rewarding ramifications of his film has been that one of the characters documented in the film receives in excess of 100 emails a week from concerned viewers.

Presently the Indian-born, Dubai-based Dhawan is making a commercial documentary on the fashion industry in India and doing a corporate film for the Landmark Group in Dubai. His current slate represents the commercial focus of Dhawan's work right now, a focus he is unashamed of. His business uses the

feature and documentary film-making models to make quality corporate productions locally. "Although local film-makers are all fired up to make and sell our films there are no broadcast distributors here to represent us. I recently sold my film to the Showtime Network (without the help of a distributor – because there are no broadcast distributors here in the UAE). This was a real challenge as I had to sit with these corporate lawyers for 10 days and battle out their 38-page contract with them. So while we are all driven to make our films, is the industry really ready for us?"

