



VARIETY

FILM

Posted: Tue., Dec. 27, 2005, 4:59pm PT

From Dust

(Docu -- United Arab Emirates)

A Film Real production. (International sales: Film Real, Dubai.) Produced, directed, written by Dhruv Dhawan

By **DEBORAH YOUNG**

This review was updated on Jan. 3, 2006.

For anyone wondering how Asia's tsunami survivors fared in the aftermath of the Dec. 26, 2004, disaster, "From Dust" furnishes some unsettling answers. Young U.A.E. documaker Dhruv Dhawan travels to Sri Lanka and records the appalling lack of reconstruction despite generous aid from the world. Beyond its political implications, doc brings viewers into close emotional contact with three men who survived the tragedy and offers insight into how it changed their lives. An educated English [voiceover](#) should help this timely and enlightening film throw a bridge to foreign viewers.

Until the tsunami hit, killing many and leaving many more homeless, Sri Lanka never enforced a law that prohibited people from building their homes within 300 feet of the coast. Afterward, authorities became so strict that many survivors had no choice but to relocate to the hills. For fishermen like Ravi and Siril, this policy meant a second heartbreak.

The suspicions of Australian aid worker Cameron that the government is planning to launch a massive real estate development on the now-cleared coastline is later

confirmed on camera by an official spokesman, who defends the need for tourism in the island's economy. At the end of the film (shot in October), Ravi and Siril are still homeless while new hotels are going up.

Helmer Dhawan and editor Nirmal Chander build an almost fictional structure around the three characters — the thoughtful, philosophical Ravi, who is now fearful when his son plays in the water; the elemental Siril; and Cameron, the disillusioned altruist.

Though the film hardly intends to discourage aid to disaster zones, it is highly critical of the way local governments handle crises, including taxing humanitarian aid and forbidding the U.S. Marine Special Forces who were deployed to the island from rebuilding a single home.

Attractive DV camerawork brings out the island's colors and poetic beauty.

Camera (color, DV), Dhawan; editor, Nirmal Chander; music, Emma Kennedy; sound, Niranka Abesooriya. Reviewed at Dubai Film Festival (Cinema From the Subcontinent), Dec. 12, 2005. Running time: 71 MIN.
(English, Sinhalese dialogue)

Variety is striving to present the most thorough review database. To report inaccuracies in review credits, please [click here](#). We do not currently list below-the-line credits, although we hope to include them in the future. Please note we may not respond to every suggestion. Your assistance is appreciated.

Date in print: Wed., Jan. 4, 2006, [Los Angeles](#)

PRESS