

Directing a Dream

"Filmmaking has given me my identity," says the talented filmmaker Gauri Chaudhri. Her documentary *Gawah* has won awards already and is set to be showcased at prestigious festivals in the US this year.

Born in New Delhi, India in 1996, Gauri Chaudhri moved to Dubai, UAE at the tender age of three. Studying the camera of her videography photographer father around the world, she grew up with a desire to explore life with a different vision.

In the early days of her filmmaking hobby, it was her friend her calling, the world of "Creative Trinity", after graduating from the Bachelor's University of Miami in Film and Theatre Studies, Gauri then proceeded to enroll in the prestigious MFA Film School at Easting Teachers in London.

There was no turning back. After spending in the beating city of Mumbai and shuffling between Bollywood and Hollywood projects such as *Mumbai: Impossible - Ghost Protocol* and *Garib of the Month*, Gauri Chaudhri now has a collection of six short films, a short feature and a documentary to her credit. We speak to the talented lady about her independence cinematic journey.

How was it growing up in Dubai?
My childhood in Dubai was like a dream. I was safe and nurtured and exposed to a melting pot of varied cultures as a very young age. I miss that old Dubai charm.



What got you interested in filmmaking?
My interest in filmmaking developed as a young age while I was pursuing my education at a boarding school in the west. I can't pinpoint the exact moment but in a seeming instant my whole perception of the world had changed as I did. Since that day I have committed to walk down the path and no matter how difficult have never given up the idea. Filmmaking has given me my identity and my very heart.

Can you tell us about your experience at the Bhopal International Film Festival?
Bhopal was an incredible experience. We were very proud to have won the Best Documentary Film award. The people of Bhopal are very welcoming, warm and kind, perhaps it's because they too have been through. Gauri has been officially selected for the Arizona International Film Festival 2014, the Dubai Future Media Film Festival 2013, and the prestigious Beverly Hills Film Festival 2012 and to take place inside the Christie Theatre.

Do you plan on making full-length feature length films or do you want to stick to documentaries?
Absolutely I am in the process of writing my feature film which can be very diverse. I have also made a collection of four short films, of which I am pushing one, *Gawah*, through the international film festival circuit.

How long did it take you to make *Gawah*?
Gawah has definitely been an arduous journey. As we are dealing with real life events and situations, there was a lot of something that could not be a filmmaker. This film is spread out over three years, the completion was largely dependent on getting accessibility to stories that could be related.

What were the challenges you faced while making the documentary?
As *Gawah* explores real life events, there were situations I could not do away with the hardest part of the journey was carrying the weight of being a leader. We are all human beings at the end of the day and the inevitable from that develops between

local spotlight



"Working on Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol was a fantastic experience"

new strangers when talking about pain, has been the most challenging yet rewarding part of my journey.

How different is making a documentary from a fiction film?
The genre of documentary filmmaking is very different from making a fiction film. In fiction, you have the luxury of time to give your narrative whatever, in documentary filmmaking the narrative is there for you to grab. It's not your director to plan the story narrative but the stories are out there waiting for you. It is really about listening.

Can you tell us more about your Hollywood projects and your experience working on them?
Working on *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol* was a fantastic experience. It was absolute madness but incredibly fun. From our costumes and chase sequence on the streets of Mumbai, I will have the eye to your imagination.

Who is your all-time favourite director and why?
My guru is Alfred Hitchcock. It is his work that inspired me those days of film. His commitment and loyalty towards his vision is beyond imagination. He was, without a doubt, the greatest of all time who stayed true to his vision, which is why I find his films about the best of time. "There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it" - what more needs to be said!

What are your all-time favourite movies in Bollywood and Hollywood?
There is no doubt in my mind. I would say *South* by Neelam, *George Clooney's Changeling*, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, *Life is Beautiful*, *Cherise D.*, *Shogun of Cambodia* and *Water for Elephants*. I could go on. In Bollywood, I would say *Bandha Kaandhar*, *Chakras* and *Chandigarh* to name a few.

You judged the All-Near School Film Festival recently. What do you think about the talents in Dubai?
There is so much talent. Not only talent in the UAE, but talent in every city. The way by creating a larger film community here at the moment is not just a dream but a reality. Inspiring filmmakers and would help them understand how to turn their passion into a career. We have such great infrastructure here that we need to nurture it as a grassroots level.

What advice would you give to aspiring filmmakers?
I don't do that much! There is nothing more important that I can say. Your own passion and your own go for it, but be 100 per cent as you can be, be sure to put in and the best of you will be revealed to the world.

Can you tell us about your future projects?
I am currently very busy pushing *Gawah* through the international film festival circuit and am in the process of writing my feature film. I will also continue to build my company. *Chasing Dreams Productions* with an array of corporate & independent film work. Life is good so I am working hard at building my foundation!

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