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STUDENTSPEAK

BEST SHOT

Aakriti Kohli and Sandeep Singh talk about the advantages of being student filmmakers

Poonam Jain/TNN

Student filmmakers, such as us, have to tread a fine line between convenience and constraints; of course we have more convenience at our disposal and just limited constraints. Ease in accessing equipment and post-production facilities is the biggest advantage, novices like us, benefit from. And, while being student filmmakers, there is continuous support from the faculty members and technical specialists who help us through almost any Herculean difficulties.

Last year, while we were students at the School for Media and Cultural Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, we made the most of the institutional support offered to us. We also had the privilege to be guided by our teachers, Anjali Monteiro and KP Jayasankar, also practicing filmmakers. Under their tutelage, we successfully made a short documentary titled Breakin Mumbai. It is about a dance form that started way back in the 70s in the Bronx, New York, called 'Breaking.' Our film focuses on how this dance becomes a site of expression of subaltern youth cultures in the city of Mumbai.

We had a lot of liberty to make mistakes and keep learning in the process. As students, we could go in the field with a certain sense of ease and look for subjects. As student filmmakers, we are not in it for commercial gains and this puts a lot of our subjects at ease. While making this film, our biggest concern was portraying our subject for what they were without clouding it with our judgement. Even though we were trained in the finer nuances of how we should perceive people and events, it was in fact a very difficult process when we actually started shooting. We also learnt that much of the work begins after the film is completed — even for a student. We had to 'talk' about our film at film festivals and private screenings. We had to learn to be in a position to explain our vision and justify our choice for the subject we chose. At the same time we learnt how to 'theorise' on our film and locate it within the larger debates of documentary film practice.

Perhaps one of the biggest privileges we had as makers of a student film was the use of copyright music and archival footage. Sadly, as soon as one passes out of a film school, it is difficult to find similar support structures. We are trying to find avenues for funding and continue to remain hopeful for the many ideas we have.



Aakriti Kohli and Sandeep Singh