

An Interview with Director Navneet Prakash on 'Sons of Speed', A Racing Documentary With Freddie Hunt & Mathias Lauda

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['Sons of Speed' promises to be a sports documentary that'll have you hooked, and the team's also giving away some pretty sweet rewards for contributing to the campaign. Click here to chip in and be a part of this film's journey.]



After digging a little deeper into veteran filmmaker Shyam Benegal's pioneering tryst with [crowdfunding](#) with his 1976 film 'Manthan', we turn to a more contemporary film in the making that is looking for some support. 'Sons of Speed' is a documentary on a less-discussed sport that's tearing up the tarmac in India — auto racing.

We caught up with Navneet Prakash, writer and director of the film, to tell us a little bit about what working on the film has been like, and why the team turned to crowdfunding for the passion project.

Q. Tell us a little bit about you and your team's background in filmmaking, and your passion for racing. How did the idea for Sons of Speed come along?

I've been working in the field of non-fiction content for about 6 years now, and it's a medium that I'm very comfortable with. I've also followed motorsports for the longest time; I attend rally racing events, and I'm very keen on the sport.

Racing in India is a pretty small circle; I have a producer on the team, Divya Menon, with whom I have a common friend - Jose Pottamkulam Ootta. A motorsports enthusiast himself, Jose has actually been running a team in Kerala calling M&N Racing and participates in rallies.

All of us would hang out and discuss films and sports, when Jose mentioned that he was getting Freddie Hunt and Mathias Lauda together to race for the championship last year, in 2014. That's when we decided on creating a simple television film being made for local and national sports channels, about the legendary rivalry between them.

We couldn't find sponsors for the project, but once we started shooting - I realised that this was not a PR event or a corporate AV, it was a really interesting story that needed to be told. That's when we decided that we'd make this a proper standalone film.

Q. Tell us a little bit about what each of you were in charge of, and how you came up with the name.

All the creatives have been handled by me, while Divya has worked on the ads, production and logistics aspects. Jose is our go-to guy in case we need to clear up technicalities about the sport. I was thinking of writing a treatment for the film, and 'Sons of Speed' just had a great ring to it, and we really believed in it.

The film is about racing, but also about them being sons of legends in the international racing circle.



Q. What is the approach you've taken for the documentary, and how do you feel it sets it apart?

Initially, we were very focused on numbers, on who was winning and lap times and such. When we met Freddie Hunt and Mathias Lauda and started talking, though, the two turned out to be very nice, regular guys who had no airs about them. They were easy to work with and had a great story to tell.

Their fathers being world champions in their own right, Freddie and Mathias were born with a lot of expectations from them, and it was interesting to explore the father-son relationship in this unique way. This also gave the racing documentary a more human angle.

Q. How easy was it to incorporate such personal stories into the film's narrative, how did you go about that?

We had a broad outline in mind that we were looking to shoot, and as interesting as a racing documentary is — fathers are much more of an icebreaker. (laughs)

There's a pretty nice line in the documentary that sums it up, 'No matter where you are on the racetrack, these two will continue to get compared to each other because of the families they come from. This kind of fame is a double-edged sword.' To be living with so much pressure on you all the time is not easy, and the fact that they're handling it so well is interesting to observe and document.

Q. How did you chance upon crowdfunding?

Finance was a big challenge — a documentary is a scary word, particularly in India. People expect something slow and boring; there are various kinds of documentaries and you can have a non-fiction role on a very interesting topic, yet it remains a fairly unpopular idea. I was very glad that Kunal found the idea as interesting as I did, and that he agreed to host our campaign on Ketto.



The easiest thing to do in this process is actually making the film — the backend is very difficult to navigate and because of the funding issues, it's often tough to mount the project.

I did a crowdfunded project in 2013 called 'Shweta's Kranti', about a girl from Bombay's red light area, that was also made for Ketto. It really worked, and I think crowdfunding is a great

idea — it should be more popular here as it's so accessible. It gives good films a chance to see the light of day, and to actually reflect the people's (or the backers') interests and beliefs.

Q. What have been your favourite moments working on the film so far?

We were lucky to travel to some of the best racetracks in the world, and got a chance to shoot with Nicki Lauda — Mathias' father and the original racing world champion. He's a legendary man, who also happens to be extremely down-to-earth. That was a great shoot, but I think we had fun every day that we were shooting.

Thanks to crowdfunding, with the right vision and the right people, a dream documentary project like this is actually possible today. Besides funding our campaign, you can help spread the word by sharing our campaign page on Facebook and other social media.



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