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Sprocket Science: Films M 69 Palm Islands Jumeriah, Dubai, UAE, Shiva Tapi, 2104 Hughes Road, Bombay 7, India.  
[info@sprocketscience.net](mailto:info@sprocketscience.net) – [www.threadsoftradition.com/crossfirecreativity](http://www.threadsoftradition.com/crossfirecreativity)

Outsource is the 'chosen' profession in Sri Lanka, as its US \$ 2.5 billion garment industry provides employment for over 50% of its workforce. Local universities churn out faceless fodder for the industry, as it's poised to go from sweatshops into Design Production Units. Focusing on hiking labor wages and improving working conditions, they claim to create 'garments without garment'. It seems all good, so what is missing in this picture? No one dare asks 'why a country fuelling global retail does not have a single local label'.

Steeped in outsource, riddled by weak government policies, the country's minimal infrastructure provides cheap solutions for international high streets, whilst its own streets are filled with mass market rejects or ridiculously priced 'international brands' – that have been produced in Sri Lanka for US \$ 4, exported, and re-imported back with 100% tag and tax additions- a heavy price Sri Lankans pay. Caught in consistent crossfire of civil wars, the country buffets rapid globalization and sectarian violence is taking its toll.

A few pre-thinkers struggle to keep local traditions and talent alive. Barbara Samsoni, nurtures dying weaves, turning close-down convents into weaving centers for local women, dreaming in Technicolor creating Barefoot Ceylon the country's first local retail experience. Inspired by her work, Ajai Vir Singh launches 'Colombo Fashion Week', to raise awareness by marrying manufacturing to local talent. D-day arrives; the collections are on the ramp, the audiences jubilant but an air strike cripples the event; what emerges is an amazing portrait of courage under crossfire- the fashion fraternity insists 'The Show Must Go On'!

Under the shutterbugs – Fahad 'Middle Finger', Darshi Buddhi Batiks and KT Brown surprise the nation with their signature style. Resonating with local elements, weaves and cultural motifs, their collections are not about what's the next trend it's a reflection of their reality. Sharing spaces with them, we realize it's about daring bombs and barricades on their way to work, without access to locally produced fabrics and accessories, they are rejected by their own garment factories who are enslaved in sweatshop mentalities, until they reach a breaking point where they challenging government policies that aid exports but tax local labels.

Darshi battles keep her crumbling heritage of rare Batiks alive. KT Brown's fights for her intellectual copyrights and Fahad raises Middle Finger with the same rebelliousness, he raises his voice on unjust national policies. For the first time they have a chance of going international, as Miami Fashion Week and Russia Fashion Week give Kanchana an award, but without sans subsidy, sans support, with less than three weeks, does she have a hope? We share her spaces in her cross-country run to fulfill her dream of being Colombo's first international label.

Ceaselessly for three years, this nascent fraternity, fronted by Ajai Vir has struggled to create Sri Lanka its own local solutions. In 2010, recession makes the garment industry uncompetitive; now they need the value addition of design to raise 'tag-brag'. It's now that the design fraternity who takes on the onus and what emerges is a heartwarming story of courage, certitude, as the human spirit shines–UNDER CROSSFIRE!

## DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Brought up in the multicultural environments of India, London and Dubai, trained in Psychology with a minor in economics, Soniya Kirpalani acquired her initial media training through Trinity College's external program and under Bollywood Veterans for direction and acting. Commencing her career, essaying a lead role in two mainstream Bollywood movies, she continues her relationship with media through her writing. A leading lifestyle and fashion editor for several reputed publications across the world - both online and offline- Soniya is an advisor on convergence, her expertise lies in meshing traditional and new media platforms.

Starting her career in electronic media, working on shorts and corporate videos for leading Luxury groups - ZimZam for Carrefour, Aesthetics and Genesis Colors - she swiftly moved into designing 360 Degree projects alongside the teams of Sony Entertainment Television - TeleLife, jointly developing their reality series "FACES" - which she staged, scripted and directed. Delivering India's first cross cultural, cross media, cross border production 'Henna On My Hands' for Geo TV & Femina, won her accolades for doing the impossible.

Realizing her passion for synopating sensitivities of Asia, Arabia and Africa, Soniya commenced an independent career to give a voice and visual to the emerging stories of the East. Committed to creating documentaries that educate, empower, engage and raise awareness, she hopes to share heartwarming stories from the evolving east. Her first independent project 'Threads of Tradition' won the prestigious Cannes Documentary Co Fund Award (The MipDoc Co Production Challenge)- For 4 Documentary Features- 'DoBuy- The Fabric of Faith' (UAE), 'Silken Synergy' (Bangladesh) 'Indiavism' (India) 'Between Bombs and Burqas' (Pakistan) **which** are all set for release in 2010.

Continuing her passion for journalism, she serves as a cross media strategist for SONY TeleLife, Khaleej Times, AirTel, Capital Talk, Asian Leader (Guardian Unlimited), Asian Lite and Center Stage. Working towards the development of creative communities in the East, Soniya works in an honorarium capacity with Emerging Councils of Design for Arts & Fashion across Asia and Arabia. This affords her a deep insight and unparalleled access to lifestyle programming from the emerging East. Working towards bridging the South East Asian cultures, through 'An Artist Within' and 'Celebrating Cultures' she is working to create cross platform-cross media design exchanges to bridge cultural differences through culture & creativity.

**GENERAL INFORMATION:**

THE FORMAT –DV PAL PROGRESSIVE –SHOT AT 25P

RUNNING TIME 1 X 69 MINUTES FESTIVAL VERSION  
1 x 52 MINUTES V/O Version for Broadcast

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ENGLISH

COUNTRY OF PRODUCTION INDIA/ UAE

COUNTRY OF FILMING SRI LANKA/ USA

PRODUCER SPROCKET SCIENCE FILMS

DIRECTOR SONIYA KIRPALANI

EDITOR EMILY HARRIS

USA ASST-DIRECTOR CHRIS ARAN

USA/ RUSSIA PRODUCER IRANTHI ABEYASINGHE

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY SAURABH VISHWAKARMA / SATYA RAI NAGPAUL/ CHRIS ARAN

ASSISTANT EDITOR TROILUS D'SOUZA

STATUS: SRI LANKA/ USA/ RUSSIA

**Post Production: September-October 2010**

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