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**Upon learning that the actors had to 'let it all out' after a moving scene in Arivind Abraham's latest project S'Kali, FARIDUL ANWAR FARINORDIN checks out the digital video movie for himself.**

JUST minutes before the premiere screening of S'kali, a DV (digital video) movie by three-time Malaysian Video Awards winner Arivind Abraham, I came across a list of behind-the-scenes information on the release.

Among others, it described that one particular scene, an argument between on-screen lovers Ravin and Sze Huey, was so "intense" and "emotionally overwhelming" that after the filming, actor Jayaram Nagaraj threw up and his co-star Davina Goh broke down sobbing.

Boy, was I intrigued to find out what that scene was all about.

So I sat through the RM100,000 production, presented by Asa'ad Entertainment and Perantauan Enterprise, being screened at Cineleisure Damansara until today.

The film, inspired by Arivind's own experiences with his close friends, is an introspective journey of self-discovery which addresses friendship, love, loss and forgiveness.

As much a socio-commentary as it is autobiographical, it revolves around five friends who are in transition into adulthood.

S'kali was fun, cynical, thought-provoking and critical, but at times it may also come across like an endless whine. But the raw, empathic and aching experiences come through in a neat package.

By the time the scene with the two quarrelling lovers came on, I was choking. The actors managed to convey heartfelt sincerity in dealing with prejudices and inter-cultural relationships, portraying emotions so raw that you'd feel their pains and frustrations.

It was, in short, a powerful scene.

S'kali is Arivind's debut for a feature film. According to the 23-year-old: "I prepped Goh and Jayaram separately for the scene and they only began to have contact once they got into the car and played out the scene.

"These things don't happen twice. The scene was taken from two angles, which means we only had two takes. There was no way the actors were going to be able to re-create the emotional intensity, so I instructed the crew to be on their toes," he explained.

Other cast members include Derek Ong (Tzao), Angeline Rose (Tehmina) and Zimy Rozan (Bahir), with special guest stars Jason Lo (in a scene that mocks the industry's fascination with Mawi) and

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Yasmin Ahmad, in a matronly role as herself.

Arivind, who is a fan of Yasmin's work, said the scene featuring her was written shortly after the latter's debut feature film *Seput* was released.

"I knew that I wanted a scene where a so-called 'mentor' archetype would meet the character Ravin (an aspiring filmmaker in the movie). At the same time, my producers wanted me to cast a big name to play a cameo role. So that's how I came up with the scene."

A graduate in Writing and Direction from the University of West of England in Bristol, Arivind envies the way Yasmin manages to "straddle her movies between the more artistic aspects of indie filmmaking in Malaysia and the mainstream elements of a commercial movie."

However, he stressed that "the way in which I conceive and make movies are very different from hers. Contrary to what people think, she does not bear that huge an influence on my work."

Arivind, who is based in London, said plans are underway to have *S'kali* released in the independent cinema circuits in Britain and Australia.

"We are also sending copies of the movie to film festivals all over the world."

What are his upcoming projects?

"For the next two years, I will be busy working on two films — a slapstick comedy very much in the vein of *Napoleon Dynamite* and *Nacho Libre*, and a drama based on the opera *The Pearl Fishers* by Bizet."

*S'kali* will be released in VCD format in November. It is also scheduled to be screened on Astro soon.

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