



A scene from the movie.

BY NASA MARIA ENTABAN

Strangely familiar

FIVE minutes into *S'kali*, I forgot I was watching a film and almost jumped up at the screen to order a *teh tarik* for myself.

The characters reached out from where they were, got my attention and pulled me into a scene which to me, and perhaps to many other Malaysians, is disturbingly familiar.

Familiar because the characters are so real and their concerns are reminiscent of our own – scenes taking place in a typical *mamak* restaurant with the metal chairs and the five friends sitting around talking about life, the world or absolutely nothing at all.

That was exactly what the production company, Perantauan Pictures, wanted to achieve – a story about real Malaysians, told by fresh faces and raw talent.

One day four years ago, first-time filmmaker Arivind Abraham, 22, got his four best friends together with an idea for a story, a project they approached cautiously, but with much enthusiasm.

“My parents were like, ‘Yeah that’s nice’ when I told them we were making a movie,” says 23-year-old associate producer Jason Lim.

Production manager Bahir Yeusuff’s parents had a flippant response to the news – “If you’re going to screw up it might as well be now,” but they were supportive all the way.

However, it wasn’t until the actual production, when they were carrying their equipment out and shooting on location did their friends and family finally start believing them.

Young, new and untested, the toughest part of getting the movie going was finding a sponsor willing to take a gamble on a group of young people (who were at the time barely out of high school).

“It was tough to get people to believe in us. More often than not they turned us down,” says Bahir, who quit his job to work on the production full-time.

“We were very lucky to have Asa’ad Entertainment come on to fund the entire pro-

ject. We did not have the kind of capital needed so they fronted the entire budget which was a huge leap of faith on their part,” says Arivind.

Management was handled by Perantauan, but they outsourced for their photography, editing and camera work. The film is just over an hour long, but that is enough to speak volumes – not only on the strong bonds of friendship between the characters but it also addresses issues that concern our youths such as inter-racial relationships, education and social issues.

There were rough patches throughout the whole project, and there was a point of time when each one of them felt like giving up, but the five friends came out of it unscathed.

“Whenever any one of us broke down, everyone else came to back up,” says Jason.

As it turns out, the movie received good

response from its young viewers, who found they could relate to the characters and the issues brought up in the movie.

“At the premiere, there were people who came up to us and said ‘I grew up with people like this’, and some even said they got all choked up and sentimental,” says associate producer Keith Leong.

Their parents are proud of them, relieved and happy that they pulled through, and are looking forward to future projects.

“We’d like to get to know more people who are interested in film,” says Jason, to which Bahir responds, “Give it a shot – to anyone who wants the experience, check out www.perantauanenterprise.com.”

If you haven’t seen *S'kali* yet, don’t fret as it will be out in DVD soon and scheduled to air on Astro.

The cast of *S'kali* (from left): Davina Goh, Derek Ong, Zimy Rozan, Jayaram Nagaraj and Angeline Rose.

