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- / Friday, May 01, 2020

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- [Home](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Community](#)
- [Featured](#)
- [Bollywood](#)
- [Sport](#)
- [Book Reviews](#)
- [Indian News](#)
- [Arts](#)
- [Australian News](#)
- [Biz India](#)
- [Body Mind Spirit](#)
- [Directory](#)
- [E-Paper](#)
- [Eating Out](#)
- [Editorial](#)
- [Fashion](#)
- [Hindi](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Recipes](#)
- [Matrimonials Down Under](#)
- [Mailing List](#)

- [About](#)

Pankaj Upadhayay's euphony as a cinematographer and a film maker



By Manju Mittal

The multitalented Pankaj Upadhayay is not only an accomplished Cinematographer, but also a film maker, podcaster, editor and writer. Originally from Calcutta, Bengal, Pankaj belongs to a family infused with creative literary genes but he stands apart. Pankaj also leads his expertise and manages entertainment website 'Euphony', his extensive portfolio that covers everything from art related shows, community events, festivals and Sydney's tourist attractions.

I recall when I first met Pankaj last year at one of the event, he impressed me instantly with his ethics, enthused with artistic and technical ability. His dedication and unique passion can be seen in his work and acknowledged by many.

This month I had the privilege of interviewing Sydney's own very talented artist. He was gracious enough to talk with me and answer my questions, my moments with him felt precious when he shared his personal journey, his passion for cinematography and views on Indian Cinema as we touched many other aspects of his busy life. Following is our conversation will tell you more about Pankaj.



Pankaj, would you mind telling us a bit about your background and journey, and what drew you into film making?

I was born and grew up in Kolkata and arrived in Australia 5 years ago. I have always been very passionate about art and film making and come from a family of art and literary background. My parents always motivated me to do creative things and encouraged me since I was kid. Unfortunately I lost both my parents in my twenties.

My passion kept growing and I did graduation in film making from Chitrabani Communication Centre in Kolkata in 2001, and made first student short film-co director-In transit. I had financial difficulties in the family and after one year of my graduation I moved to Delhi and then to Bombay as I had always dreamt of moving in Bollywood city in search of new opportunities. My desire was to be a cinematographic film director, but financial issues in the family, changed my profession to help my family. I was offered a job in the Bank and I did an MBA in Finance while working and dedicated myself to it for many years.

In 2007 I moved to UK, after living there for a few years I decided to move to Australia to pursue my passion of Film making. I lived in Canberra for one year where I met a friend who encouraged me to attain my ambition. I began making films in 2017 and my first short film 'Smile' was screened at Canberra Short Film Festival (CSFF) in 2018 and my second short film 'Not alone' was one of the semi finalists at the SF3 in 2019. I felt humbled by the acknowledgement.

How do you juggle producing a podcast, reciting poems and family, when do you get time for your photography & video shoots?

It is a constant juggle for me, but if you have a supportive family it works out beautifully. I guess it's mostly about being organised and about prioritizing in life. I am a proud father of two daughters and have always tried to prioritise spending time with my family. I have been very fortunate in that my family has always

been very supportive and always allowed me to grow. I love my video shoots and that's my priority too, to be out with my camera, so I make sure my time for that.

Who influenced you the most when starting out in film making and who have you learnt the most from?

Well, I learn from people, learn from life. I get inspiration from so many places in the world. I have always been very interested in art, writing, grew up watching my favourite series *Malgudi days*, *Byomkesh Bakshi*, *Fauji* and *Mahabarat*, all inspired me a lot. I am highly influenced by Film makers such as Steven Spielberg, James Cameron, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Ram Gopal Verma, Anurag Kashyap, Balu Mahendra and Maniratnam, Rajkumar Hirani and Cinematographers such as Roger Deakins, Santosh Sivan and Ravi Varman and the list goes on.

My most favourite films are 'Pursuit of Happiness', *Back to future series*, 'Sholay', 'Jo jeeta wahi sikandar', 'Satya' and greatest actors of all time such as Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Naseerruddin Shah, Nana Paterkar, Rekha and Hema Malini.

Besides movies, I also like to read literature Maithilli Sharan Gupt poetry, Premchand, Frederick Forsyth and Charles Dickens. It had influenced me deeply and helped me most significantly.

I am a huge admirer of my two friends in Sydney Manbir Singh Kohli and Taufeeq Ahmed Sheikh, it is so much fun working with them. I have learnt a lot from them lately.

Do you have your favourite video shoot you took and what elements do you feel make a really good video shoot?



I have made many videos, and situations in which I had to justify what I was doing. Yes, all my works are close to my heart but 'Lakemba's Ramadan' shoot is very special to me because I did something that I had never done before and live on the streets at nights for a faith was a very special experience. My second most special video shoot was Poetic Evening with Deepti Naval. I must say I can never forget the experience I had with that poetic concert last year.

I try to be as natural as possible. Sydney is potentially suitable for interesting shots. This art form has become a passion of mine and a language through which I can finally express myself.

Tell us about your future dream projects?

My future goal is to make short and feature length films with socially relevant message and entertainment. I am very excited about my upcoming projects.

The journey for Pankaj is like climbing a mountain. He has a creative mind that is determined to generate innovative ideas. 'Smile' being his first film screened at Canberra festival, Pankaj, is smiling and sure footedly moving forward to explore himself, his skill and of course, Sydney.

Short URL: <https://indiandownunder.com.au/?p=15069>



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- [Books](#)
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- [Hindi](#)
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- [Biz India](#)
- [Events Calendar](#)
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- [Eating Out](#)
- [Recipes](#)
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- [Editorial](#)
- [Profile](#)
- [E-Paper](#)
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- [Arts](#)
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