

SONALI FERNANDO

DIRECTOR

sonalifernando.com
[DRAMA SHOWREEL](#)
[GENERAL SHOWREEL](#)

SUMMARY

Sonali Fernando is an award-winning filmmaker acclaimed for her visual flair and engaging storytelling across a range of genres. With a track record for directing flagship documentary series, drama-documentaries and dramas for the BBC and Channel 4, she has also worked in the humanitarian and development sector, making hard-hitting advocacy films for charities and campaign groups, and now focuses on drama.

FILMOGRAPHY

DOCUMENTARIES, DRAMA-DOCUMENTARIES, DRAMA & CAMPAIGN FILMS

CAMPAIGN FILMS

Oct 2014 - Present

Filmmaking, communications consultancy and content creation for various clients, such as campaign films shot in Africa for Europe's biggest humanitarian NGO, Sweden's Svenska kyrkan, including an [Ethiopia-shot fundraising film](#) about a project that has re-greened an area devastated by the 1984 drought, a stop-frame animation/live action film explaining how the community recovered, and a public information film showing the hidden face of hunger. One [South Africa-based film](#), about a group of women working to end child mortality in one of Africa's largest townships, helped to raise 45 million Swedish kronor (USD \$ 5.3m) for the organisation, a rise of more than \$700,000 on the previous year, was seen by over 1m people in cinemas, with an 80-90% approval rating, and received 200,000+ social media views.

NINE DAYS THAT SHOOK LONDON, BBC2 (75' doc)

PRODUCER DIRECTOR

Flagship long-form BBC [documentary](#) about the extraordinary week of the G8 summit, Make Poverty History, Live8, the Olympics bid win and the London Bombings.

"An excellent film - gripping, moving, stylish and provocative - exactly what the BBC should be doing". Alan Hayling, former Head of Documentaries, BBC.

WHEN BRITAIN WENT BANANAS, BBC4 (60' drama-doc)

WRITER DIRECTOR

Ealing comedies meet The Third Man in this [drama-doc](#) about postwar hunger, rationing and the return of the banana after a 5-year ban. Pick of the Day: Observer, Times, Telegraph, Mail on Sunday, Independent.

"A deliciously curious hour about a forgotten period in our history." The Observer

MARY SEACOLE:

THE REAL ANGEL OF THE CRIMEA, C4 (50' drama-doc)

WRITER DIRECTOR

[Drama-documentary](#) about Mary Seacole, Jamaica's answer to Florence Nightingale.

Pick of the week: Radio Times, Guardian, Observer, Independent, Telegraph, Time Out, Mail, MoS, Express.

"This film reconstructs [Seacole's] life with flair and aplomb: the dramatisations are inventively put together using various devices to give the piece a pace and spin sorely lacking in televisual biographies. A treat." Time Out.

I LIKE TO WATCH, C4 (50' doc)

PRODUCER DIRECTOR

A richly layered and unsettling documentary for C4 Science on voyeurism and the meaning of consent. Pick of the Day: Guardian, Independent, Telegraph, Times, Sunday Times, Observer, Time Out.

"Bringing together the law, ethics, sexuality and psychology, I Like to watch is an illuminating and sensitively constructed documentary that shines an infrared light on a complicated issue." The Times.

CARTHAGE: THE ROMAN HOLOCAUST, C4 (2hr doc series)

SERIES PRODUCER/DIRECTOR

The battle-to-the-death of two superpowers, Rome and Carthage. Filmed in Tunisia, Sicily, Sardinia, Spain. Pick of the Day: Independent, Observer, Guardian, Times, Daily and Sunday Express, Time Out.

DOCTORS, BBC1 (3 x 30' dramas)

DIRECTOR

Three very different episodes of the BBC drama series, combining humour and poignancy:

JUST NERVES (30') - a young woman rebels against her mother's fixation with a lavish marriage

COMPROMISING POSITIONS (30') - a couple painfully realise that they no longer share the same values

ONE LIFE (30') - the death of a teenager

INDIA CALLING, C4 (50' doc)

EXEC PRODUCER/DIRECTOR

Tragicomic observational film about India's call centre industry serving the British market. The film, which candidly shows how the industry enforces cultural colonisation, was used in expert submissions to the Sri Lankan government and brought about a change in governmental policy on call centres.

"The brilliant documentary India Calling...It's staggering stuff, full of economic hard truths, humour and wonderful characters." Sunday Telegraph

"This fascinating, beautifully-made film explores the strange world of the Indian call centre industry...It is an eye-opening piece of work." Mail Weekend

"The first and still the best documentary about the modern-day call centre, this is a deliciously ironic portrait of a David Brett-style Australian boss who has arrived in Delhi to effect a self-proclaimed revolution in the working practices of twenty-something Indian graduates. Acclaimed film-maker Fernando ensures that the black comedy is leavened with a probing and deeply empathetic study of the yearning, aspirational call agents themselves." Zeeshan Suhail, Asian Underground Festival, NY.

AWARDS:

Finalist in the EMMA Awards

Finalist in BBC2's Mega Mela Awards

SUPERSTAR ON TRIAL, C4 (50' doc)

DIRECTOR

Disturbing documentary shot in Mexico and Brazil showing how Sergio Andrade, the predatory paedophile svengali behind Mexican pop superstar Gloria Trevi, was able to abuse her underaged groupies.

AFFAIRS OF EMPIRE, C4 (50' drama-doc)

PRODUCER DIRECTOR

Sumptuous drama-doc shot in Calcutta, Benares and Lucknow about interracial love in British India from the liberal 1780s to apartheid 1880s.

Pick of the Day: Independent, Guardian, Daily Telegraph, Express.

GREAT EXCAVATIONS, C4 (6 x 1hr doc series)

SERIES DIRECTOR

Flagship 6-part series shot in 14 countries on archaeology's evolution from glorified plunder to reputable science.

"An utterly fascinating history of archaeology...Packed, brisk yet lucid...it's enough to restore your faith in television archaeology." Telegraph

"Great Excavations...was a thoroughly engrossing and thoughtful explanation of how the science of archaeology has developed...and an eloquent justification of its importance. Channel 4 abandons shock value for proper history? Now there is a surprise." Independent
"Smashing fun...a grand global walkabout handled with panache." Observer

THE FINE ART OF CRIME, C4 (1hr drama-doc)

DIRECTOR

Arts film shot in Sicily, Rome, Umbria, Atlanta and Dublin, on how international mafias use works of art. Critics Choice: Guardian, Independent, Observer, Time Out, Daily and Sunday Telegraph.

"From its outstanding opening titles (a lovely pastiche of Sixties art-theft films) to end credits that began with a list of 'still missing' (nine Caravaggios, 245 Chagalls, 350 Picassos...), Sonali Fernando's film was a gloriously stylish addition to this reliably enjoyable series....Fernando covered an immense amount of ground...but amid all the dark talk of Cosa Nostra and Colombian cocaine cartels she also found time for humour. All round, an enjoyable and fascinating piece of work". Daily Telegraph.

LITPOP series 1 & 2, C4 (5 x 3' Short films)

DIRECTOR

Fast-paced dramatised rap poetry shorts for Channel Four's LITPOP2 series

"Sonali Fernando's film is an exemplar of how to film poetry, a far cry from the static and sonorous approach that usually reaches our screens. Fernando uses various techniques including quick-cutting and time-lapse photography to give her piece texture and pace, and Agbabi's verse is a wonderful subversion of Western cultural myths". Time Out.

AWARDS:

Audience Prizes for The Black, the White and the Blue and Rapunzel, Cine-Poetry Festival, San Francisco.

KALA PANI, C4 (25' drama-doc)

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR

Offbeat musical documentary about the Gaelic-speaking Pakistanis of the Outer Hebrides.

Pick of the Day: Time Out, Observer, Independent

THE ENGLISH PAYMENT, C4 (1hr arts development commission) DIRECTOR

AWARD: Winner of Channel 4 TV25 Live Pitch Award, Edinburgh International TV Festival

THE BODY OF A POET, C4 (30' Drama)

WRITER & DIRECTOR

Biopic of the late civil rights activist and Poet Laureate of New York, Audre Lorde, filmed in Los Angeles.

"Sonali Fernando's stylish tribute to the black political activist Audre Lorde, who was Poet Laureate of New York State, is both an appreciation of the woman's legacy and a partial biopic. Fernando mixes film techniques and jumps between black and white and colour to produce a visually accomplished piece which is both atmospheric and highly polished. Fernando has shown a strong directorial hand and a talent for capturing a striking image". Time Out

"A beautifully shot film about memory and desire...a critically and visually alluring portrait of a modern day poet". Isaac Julien, filmmaker and critic.

AWARDS:

Audience Award for Best Documentary Film, Imagginaria Festival, Bologna;

Audience Award for Outstanding Short Fiction, Los Angeles Film Festival;

Jury Experimental Award, Prized Pieces Festival, Berkeley;

ICA UK Biennial 1997 - 'one of the notable films of the past two years'.

SHAKTI, CANAL+ (15' Drama) WRITER & DIRECTOR

Short film made for the BFI New Directors Scheme and screened at Metro cinema and on Canal+ (16mm).

AWARDS:

Canal+ Award for Best Short Film at the Cherbourg International Film Festival.

National finalist, The Prince's Trust National Film And Video Awards.

SKILLS

Professional-level French - Distinction in C1 exam required for French-medium jobs in Switzerland
Excellent Italian
Good Spanish
Stills photography and self-shooting on DSLRs
Editing

EDUCATION

University of Oxford
MA Oxon, BA (Hons) Oxon, English Language and Literature

St Paul's Girls' School, London