The Elephanta Suite

DIRECTOR'S NOTES BY JOSEPH MATHEW
This journey began in the summer of 2008 at a bookstore in Mumbai. There, I came upon the latest book by Paul Theroux, The Elephanta Suite. Over the years, his stories have taken me to distant lands and opened new worlds. I instinctively picked it up. By the time I finished reading, I knew I had to somehow try and adapt it for the screen.

Paul Theroux is one of America’s great writers. He is the winner of many of the biggest awards in literature and some of his travel writing are considered classics of the genre. His books have previously been made into films, most notably, The Mosquito Coast starring Harrison Ford.
In 2009, I got the rights to the story and the long journey to a screenplay began. So here we are in 2015, ready to embark on the most important leg of the journey—the making of the film.

The story of Dwight Huntsinger, an American businessman, who has a life transforming experience in India, struck a chord with me. It touches on themes that attract me as a filmmaker: the peculiarities of living in a globalized world and the opportunities it provides us to recognize the common humanity that binds us all. I also felt uniquely qualified to tell this story as it bridges my two worlds: America, where I live and India, the country of my birth.
is India’s teeming megalopolis and city of dreams, Mumbai. Every day, people pour into Mumbai from all over India, drawn to its bright lights and glamour. They mostly come penniless but with the dream of one day making it big. The city is a kaleidoscope of contrasts. Slum-dogs jostle for space with some of the wealthiest people in the world. Tenement chawls and shanty-towns abut modern high-rises. One thing Mumbai is not, is dull. It’s extreme in its exuberance. It is also vivid; in a technicolor on stimulants kind of way. It really is maximum city.
and genre of The Elephanta Suite have been grist for the mill for many great films. When Dwight Hunstinger arrives in India he’s a fish-out-of-water, confined within the comfy corridors of business and his five-star hotel suite. But one day, by accident, his life collides against an unknown world—that of a troubled young prostitute. It’s edgier and darker. The encounter shakes him to the core and he has a transformative experience that completely changes his priorities and outlook on life.

Reference films:
Lost in Translation
American Beauty
The Quiet American
of the film will be informed by the need to capture Dwight’s experience in a truthful and authentic manner. The audience has to go along on the journey with Dwight. Therefore, a premium will be put on realism and believability. The film will unfold from his point-of-view. Hand-held and fluid tracking shots will help us be “in the moment” with his experiences. There will also be opportunities to explore film-noir like setups as Dwight’s journey descends into darkness.
of the film will be in line with the highest international standards and we will push ourselves creatively in every aspect of production and post-production. Shooting in India provides more ‘bang for the buck’ and that will help us achieve a finished look of a film with a much higher budget. For reference and inspiration, we will be drawing from a vast canvas of films, photography, music, art and Indian mythology to shape the tone and feel of the film.

Production values

A high caliber crew of international and local artists will be involved in the production and some of the finest musicians from the sub-continent and the U.S will collaborate to create a cutting edge soundtrack with Indian influences. Ultimately, every aspect of production will be aimed at creating a powerful story experience that is universal, accessible and unique.
of the film will be targeted toward a mainstream audience that embraces strong narratives, fine acting and the craft of good cinema. The film is intended for distribution by companies including:

Fox Searchlight
The Weinstein Company
Sony Pictures Classics
IFC
will be spearheaded by Shyam R. Singhania, the Chairman of The ENARR Group of Companies including ENARR Capital, a boutique investment bank. He has more than thirty years of experience in various sectors including finance, media and entertainment. He is also a lauded philanthropist and runs the NGO, The Nana Nani Foundation.

The Production Rounding out the production team will be Sanjay Bhattacharjee and Jai Khanna. Sanjay is a pioneering veteran of commercial independent cinema in India and heads the production house, Seven Islands Studios based in Mumbai. Jai Khanna is an accomplished industry professional with Brillstein Entertainment Partners, Los Angeles. Between the three of them, they will bring a ton of experience and skill in putting together The Elephanta Suite.
Joseph Mathew eschewed a career in finance to pursue a lifelong dream of becoming a photographer and filmmaker. After moving to the U.S. in 1994, he started out as a freelance photojournalist with the Associated Press before directing feature documentaries. He first got recognized for his groundbreaking documentary, Crossing Arizona. Almost three years in the making, it is the definitive film on immigration along U.S.’s southern border. It premiered to great acclaim at the Sundance Film Festival in 2006 and has won numerous awards and distributed around the world. In 2009, Joseph made his first feature narrative, the award-winning Bombay Summer. The Elephanta Suite will be Joseph’s first mainstream American film. He will bring a demanding work ethic, exacting standards and an ambitious visual aesthetic to the film.