



STORIES THIS WAY

JOACHIM ZUNK

R
RENAISSANCE
HOTELS

vip

SOCIETY

A photograph of a person playing a keyboard instrument, likely a harpsichord or clavichord, on a boat deck at night. The person is wearing a patterned dress and has their hair tied back. The background shows a city skyline with lights reflected in the water. The overall mood is intimate and artistic.

The only things in life
that rival true love
are travel and music.

— Nina Simone



Dear Gus, Rebecca, Steve & Sasha—

Before I was a director, or even a cinematographer, I was a musician. I spent my late teens and early twenties recording and touring with bands throughout Germany. Along the way, and largely because of my experiences making music videos, I fell in love with film. Today these passions for music and film are inseparable. They go hand in hand. With that in mind, you can understand why I see this project as such an tremendous opportunity. Rarely in advertising do we have the chance to approach something so freely, so open, and that gives us a chance to not only strut our stuff cinematically, but to potentially capture some magic too— lightning in a bottle that makes the audience truly feel something.

This is an amazing project and I would be honored to be your navigator.

Jojo



Part One

INSPIRATION

It's fun to be foreign when you know a local.

My goal with this project goes beyond beautiful visuals and choreography. To make this video compelling for the full length of the song, we need to create excitement and fun, a thrill ride for the viewer.

It's important to note that having access to "local knowledge" when you're traveling is about more than just getting a good meal. It's about the high you get when you feel like you have special access. The food tastes better that way.

If you've ever had a backstage pass to a music festival, or an invitation to a secret afterparty, you know the feeling I'm describing. Our goal should be to show that emotion, not just the journey.





Knowing Where We Want To Go

Lot's of big brands try to pretend they have local credibility, and it usually feels quite phony. We can do better here, and the “navigators” concept sets us up well.

The type of knowledge travelers want comes from a friend, not a corporation, and this film will separate itself by illustrating that.

My priorities from the beginning were...

- *How do we keep interest building for the duration of the song?*
- *How do shoot both the best hotel and the best city for the film?*
- *How do we get as much shooting time as we need within the budget?*
- *How do we truly convey the feeling of travel, and not just dancing in a city?*

My team and I looked at options from Toledo to Dubai in finalizing this approach, and ultimately we feel our recommendations delivers most on our priorities.



Chicago

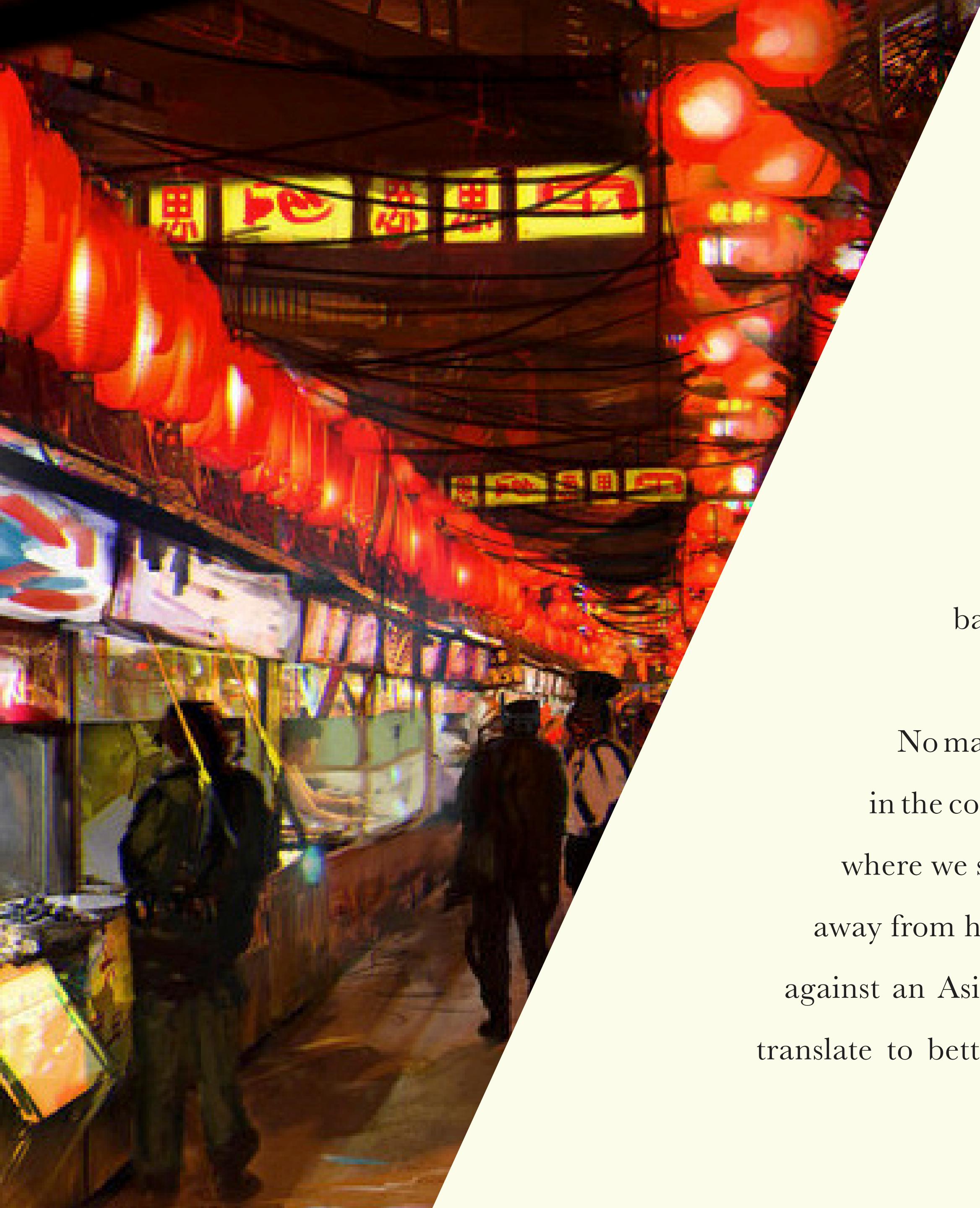
You can probably tell by just flipping through the treatment pages that my recommendation is to shoot this in two cities. Bangkok is compelling not only for its aesthetic, but it also affords much more shooting time within the budget. Chicago however provides the most up to date Renaissance hotel. I believe we can have the best of both worlds by shooting in both cities.

Please know up front that I would be very pleased to shoot the whole film in Chicago if that is the clients preference. The spirit of the scenes I'm describing can easily be translated to that film.

That said, there have been commercials made recently that feature dancing in US cities, and also many commercials that feature cool local restaurants, urban art pieces, and underground bars. I believe shooting our exteriors in Bangkok will allow us to capture more adventurous footage, and also emphasize the travel theme which is a critical association for the Renaissance brand.



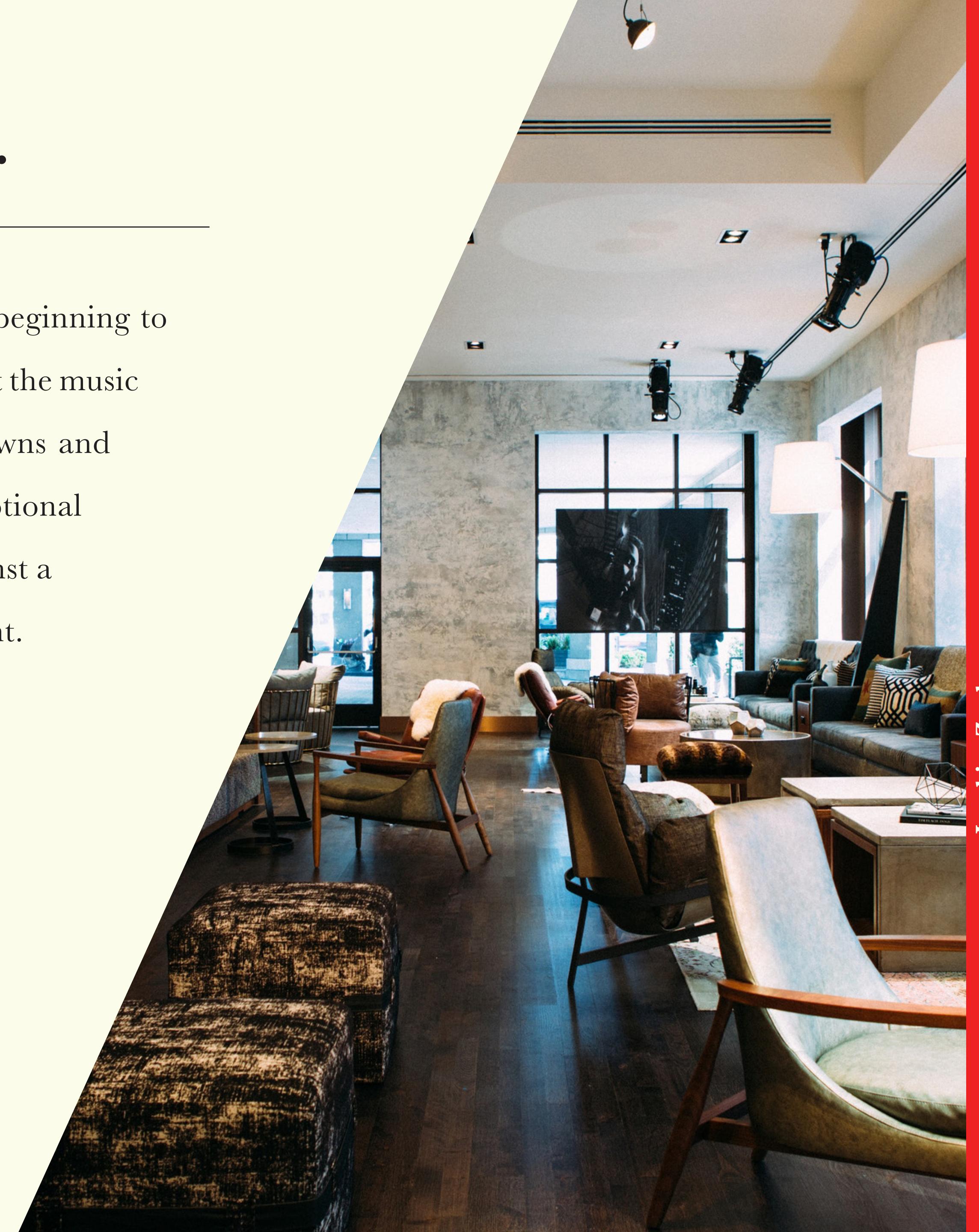
Bangkok

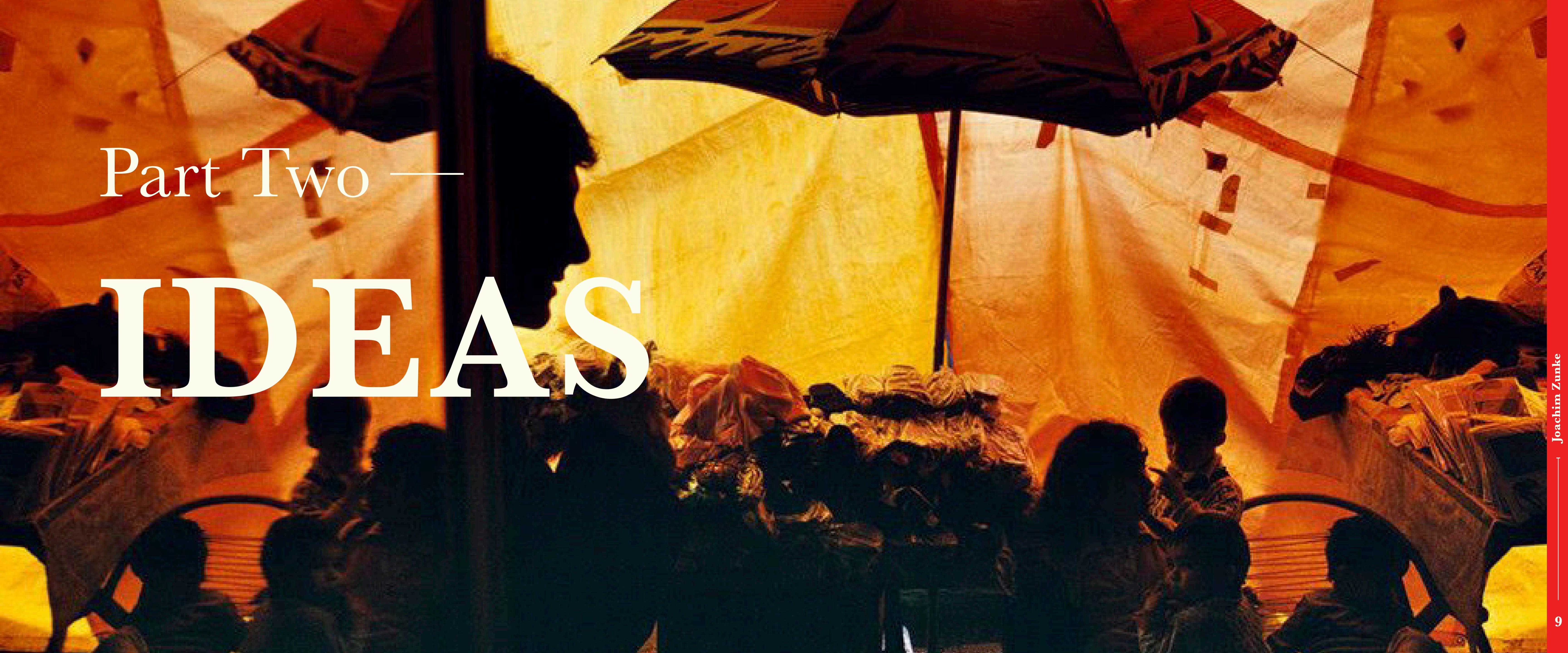


The Greatest Version...

The best version of this film will be thrilling to watch from beginning to end, on another level than most music videos. From the moment the music starts we should feel constantly in motion, through ups and downs and twists and turns. We should be able to follow the story and see the emotional transformation of the protagonist from beginning to end, all set against a backdrop of dazzling locations and interesting, choreographed movement.

No matter where we shoot, we should avoid shooting recognizable locations in the conventional way. My goal is not for the audience to know specifically where we shot the film, but rather to identify with the feeling of being far away from home. From that perspective I feel that shooting our exteriors against an Asian backdrop is the more dramatic choice, and will likely translate to better production value and more compelling storytelling.





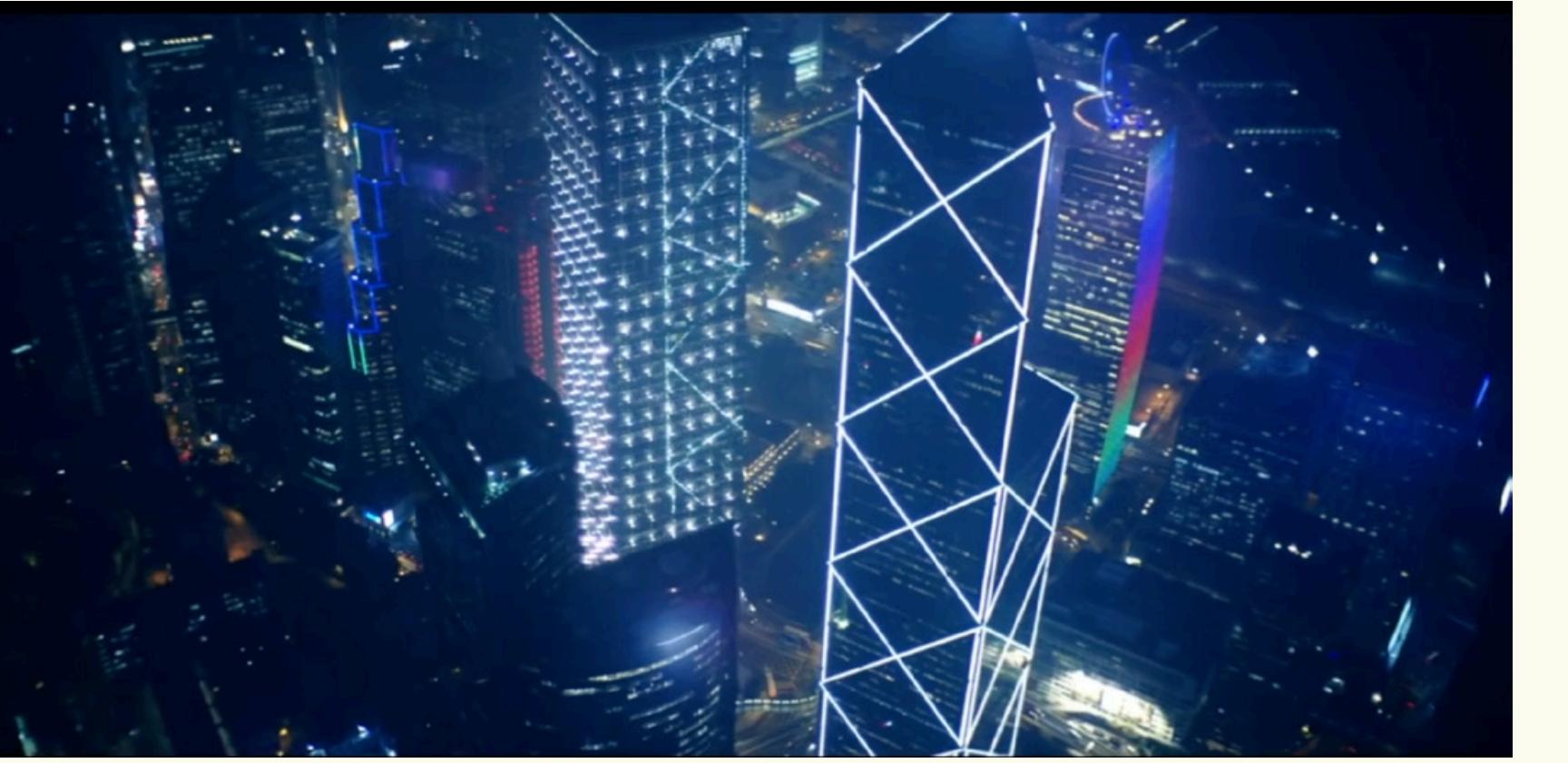
Part Two —

IDEAS

Watch This Mood Reel!

When I'm preparing a pitch I often spend a lot of time at the computer editing found footage together, making discoveries about pacing and mood. This short mood reel I've cut should be viewed as a conversation starter, and not taken so literally. I find it is useful in testing music and timing and vibe as we go through the preproduction process. I'm looking forward to hearing your thoughts!

To see the reel, click here: <https://wdrv.it/787b7c88c/list>



Our Characters

Our protagonist is a businessman on a sales trip, between 35 and 45 years old. At first glance he comes across as an average guy in a suit, but the more you get to know him you realize how cool he is. In his younger days he was the life of the party, but in recent years the pace and monotony of travel has muted his personality somewhat. He works a lot, and is guilty of going on autopilot when he's uninspired. That will change during the course of this film.

Throughout the film we learn more about his soul. He's a really good dancer, and won contests in his youth. He's social and loves interacting with people. He eats healthy and plays sports. He loves to sing but mainly to himself in the shower. His favorite food is healthy streetfood, seafood and sushi. As a sociable guy, he also likes to drink, but knows how to behave. He's a gentleman and treats people respectfully.





The Psychology Of The Business Traveler

A dark, moody photograph of a man sitting at a desk in a hotel room. He is seen from the side, looking out a window. The window looks out onto a city skyline at night, with lights reflecting on the water. The room is dimly lit, with most light coming from the window and some from a lamp on the desk.

Whether you are a singer or a sales person, people who travel for work usually agree that the thrill wears off after a few years. Even when you have an expense account and nice accomodations, travel for business is very tiring and often lonely as well. When you are young and traveling for the first time it is incredibly energizing, and you are naturally motivated to seek out the most special experiences. But over time business travel actually becomes very enervating, and

often times travelers choose room service or even dinner from a vending machine just to avoid having to make a decision about where to go. I bring this up because I believe it presents an opportunity to give our lead character a real arc, starting off fatigued and uninspired, but through the course of the film (and the help of the navigator) rediscovering his passion and enthusiasm for seeing the world and trying new things.

Intro Scene: Hotel Room

We open on our hero in his hotel room. He could be in a shower or sitting on the edge of his bed. In the background we hear “guided meditations” of the [self-help variety](#).

We hear knocking. As he opens the door he is surprised by the footsteps on the ground of the hallway. He looks briefly around, but no one is there. He has no choice but to cautiously follow the footsteps down the hall.

Hard cut to:





Discovering The Hotel

After he exits the elevator he seems to find the groove a bit more. People can see him now, so he needs to hold it together! The footsteps become more and more complex, and we recognize that this is not an ordinary path, but a sequence of dance moves. A hotel bellhop with his hands full drops the luggage as he sees our guy dancing through the lobby.

Our guest passes beautiful decor or a great stairway in the lobby. He rumbles a guy with his shoulders by accident and spins around before continuing the journey.

A bartender is mixing a cocktail, doing magic tricks with bottles. He looks directly at the bartender but is not recognized. An older lady at the bar is looking at him and starts to smile gently as she sees our hero dancing through the hotel bar and toward the exit.

Heading Out...

Our hero looks almost surprised as the dance thrusts him out the door of the hotel and onto the sidewalk. The footsteps continue and he follows them. They lead him through the city to urban places and hidden treasures of this city.

We see him dancing on the sidewalk and negotiating his way skillfully through crowds. He passes a restaurant, where we see his dance from an onlooker's point of view.

(The music volume gets lower as we see him dancing from the POV of the onlooker)





Stops Along The Way...

Along his way people begin to interact with him. A young guy starts a conversation with him, perhaps just asking for directions, and the music drops out before abruptly restarting again and thrusting him onward.

He dances into a barber shop and comes out with a new haircut. Camera stays outside / one shot. Same happens with his clothes. He sashays into a small shop, comes out with a new beautiful suit. One shot - camera stays outside.

Outdoor Food Vendor

He needs to eat something, and along the way encounters a special food vendor — maybe a truck or a cafe. Perhaps we follow our hero through the kitchen where we see the chef is rotating the pans. We see flames, super crowded kitchen, stress. He sits down for a second and eats something while the music still continues in the restaurant.

Three seats behind our hero some young people are singing along with the verse or chorus. In front of him on another table is really beautiful young woman. For a short moment they look deep into each others eyes.





Street Dancers

There are some dancers in the street in an impromptu dance circle. He stumbles into them and is immediately and somewhat by accident in the middle of the circle. All eyes on him. The music stops.



With confidence he starts a groovy dance and the crowd gets really amused by the moves he is doing. The people love it! He got checked out from another dancer. The music kicks back in at full force! He moves on quickly.

(Alternate idea for this scene would be karaoke.)

Biking Through The City

At this point in the journey it would be cool to take some other means of transportation—a bicycle, gondola, ricksha or even a taxi. The footprints are changing to a line he follows now. The taxi driver is singing the verse or chorus. For a moment they sing together. Suddenly the taxi driver stops somewhere. Our hero jumps out.





Music Venue

Our hero skips up on the sidewalk and approaches a glowing venue. Suddenly he stumbles a bit, tripping over a crouched person he didn't see. It's the navigator, and her feet have been creating footprints the whole time. Sheepishly she looks up to him, stands, and opens the door to our last location. Our hero shoots her a knowing, appreciative look.

Entering the venue we reveal the source of the music. The band is playing his song at the venue and the girl from the diner smiles at him. He looks into the camera and shrugs his shoulders.

An aerial photograph of a city at night, showing a dense grid of skyscrapers and streetlights. The scene is filled with the warm glow of city lights, creating a vibrant and dynamic atmosphere.

Part Three —

ITINERARY

Why Bangkok?

The simplest and most straightforward reason that I want to go to Bangkok is that I have a feeling that if we go there with the right team, the best tools, and open minds, we can't help but come back with something really, really special. The combination of additional shooting time plus much less regulation is attractive as well, allowing us more freedom to get the most stunning shots. I like the combination of eye-catching, and a little rough around the edges too. The claim that Renaissance is making is that their Navigators know truly special places, off the beaten track. I feel that shooting in an Asian city subconsciously reinforces that notion. In the states it's quite easy to seek out special destinations, but in a foreign country it takes a little more effort and insider connections.





How We Shoot It

Our production will utilize techniques from different kinds of filmmaking. To make our film truly interesting for the duration, we will combine the usual tricks of a music video but in the context of true narrative storytelling. We will use a combination of in-camera and editing techniques to communicate the passage of time. We'll stage long "one-take" shots and planned sequences to move throughout the city. We'll integrate diverse camera perspectives, skillfully capturing the journey of our guest from many points of view.

Look & Feel

All of the exteriors in the film play in blue hour or night, after the sun has gone down.

Our light sources will primarily be the lights of the city. The look of the film should never look artificial. We're going for something modern, natural, moody, lively, authentic, and cinematic. We are close to our protagonist and experience with him his journey and share his feelings during his way through the new city. I could imagine to shoot anamorphic to give our film a more cinematic look.





Featuring The Hotel

I totally understand the need to make the hotel look clean, modern, and fantastic wherever it appears. The hotel is the product in this film and I won't forget that. Having a dedicated hotel shoot in Chicago will help, allowing us to tailor our equipment needs to that specific task.



Handling The Footsteps

We should have an in depth conversation about how the footsteps are handled. Although it is possible to shoot them practically and we are planning for it, a key limitation of that approach is that it forces the footprints to be always static, not dynamic. In an ideal world it would be nice to see the footprints appear and dissapear, giving life to the role of the navigator. Because the camera will always be moving it would be far too combersome to handle this effect as stop motion or composited footage, and the correct solution for making them dynamic would be to execute them in post. Perhaps it is possible to do a combination of practical and cgi? Let's talk about it and come up with a solution. One idea we had for building the footsteps practically (crudely represented in the pictures) is to make them out of reflective tape, and shining light over them so they glow selectively throughout the journey. Another idea would be to create them with chalk.





Bangkok location ideas.



Chicago location ideas.



Part Four —

BEYOND



The Team

In order to stay fast and flexible, we will utilize a small but intensely skilled team. I plan to DP the project myself, and to travel my first and second AC. With the camera always on a Steadicam it's absolutely critical that we have an outstanding operator and focus-puller, so I will travel my most reliable assistants.



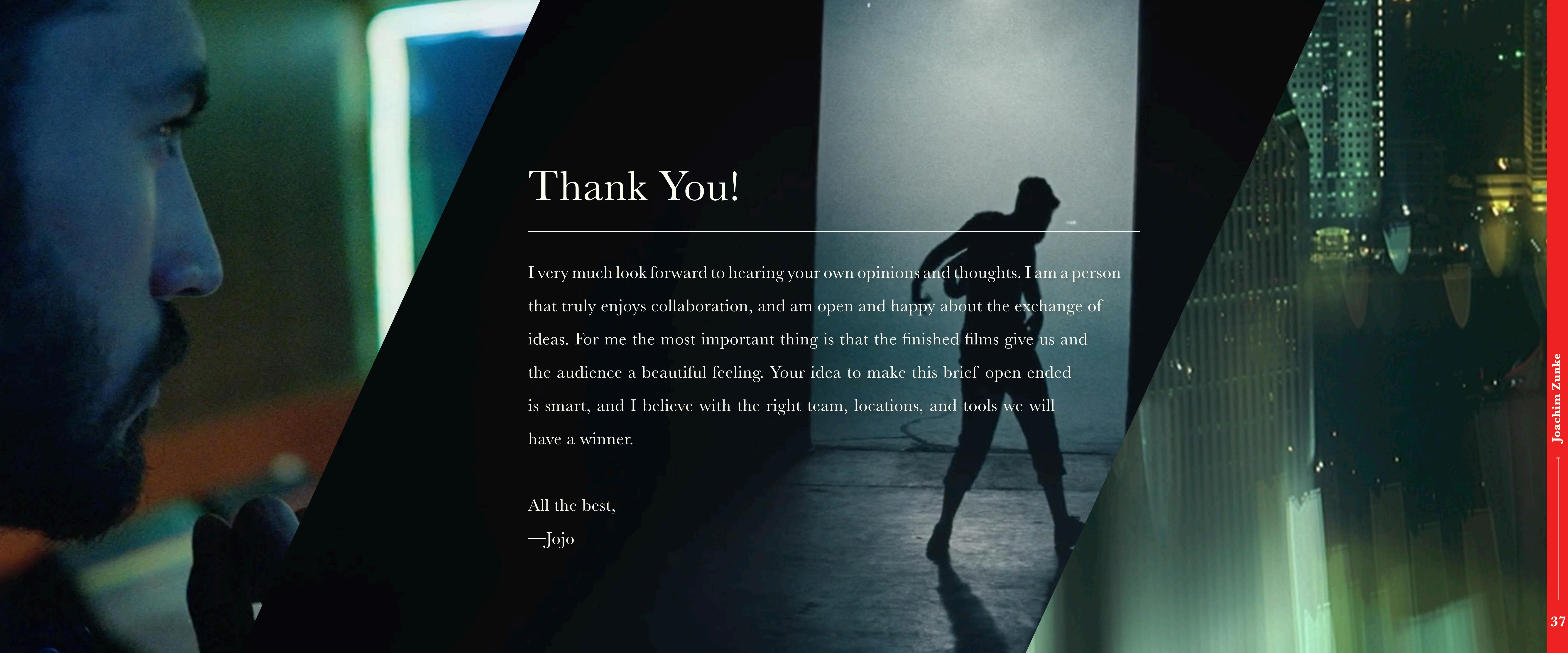
Tools Of The Trade

My team and I prefer to work on the Arri Alexa mini, a Movi or Steadicam stabilization system, and vintage lenses. This combination of equipment will keep us nimble, without sacrificing even one degree of cinematic quality. It will be so beautiful! In addition to our a-camera, we'll bring a drone to capture top down shots and wides.

Addressing The :30s & :15s

As we're blocking and choreographing the music video, we'll of course need to consider which sections can be lifted for the :30s and :15s. The approach we're taking to camera movement and storytelling lends itself very well to these lifts. I feel that the strongest way to edit these is to accept that time passes between hard cuts, creating mini stories that have a beginning, middle and end. We'll tailor the short form pieces to feature the footprints prominently, so that the metaphor is clear, and find an end message that drives home the navigator idea. Of course these scenes will be carefully planned, but I anticipate that we'll end up with a treasure trove of assets from which we can edit somewhat improvisationally too. The beauty of a music video style shoot is that we stay loose enough to generate special, unexpected moments. I think many of those types of moments may end up being the highlights of the short form pieces.





Thank You!

I very much look forward to hearing your own opinions and thoughts. I am a person that truly enjoys collaboration, and am open and happy about the exchange of ideas. For me the most important thing is that the finished films give us and the audience a beautiful feeling. Your idea to make this brief open ended is smart, and I believe with the right team, locations, and tools we will have a winner.

All the best,
—Jojo



S O C I E T Y