



# modern love

written & directed by sonia bhalla



## The Pitch

MODERN LOVE will engage audiences worldwide as it takes them on a romantic journey from the sunny beaches of Venice, California to the majestic city of New Delhi, India.

The quest is an arranged marriage, the prize is a husband, the surprise is self-love and self-identity.

MODERN LOVE weaves together characters that are authentic, charming, broken and searching. Depicted through a comedic lens with a heart-warming filter, MODERN LOVE will have you laughing, enjoying, and quite possibly dancing in your seat.

# Synopsis

## The Premise

Leena "Lee" Rai, American born East Indian, smart, sassy and "whiter" than most of her Caucasian friends, has dreamt of two words her entire life: MARRIAGE and KIDS. At the ripe age of 35, Lee believes her live-in boyfriend Brad is going to propose and her life in Los Angeles will be sunny and beautiful.

When Brad breaks up with her to pursue being "Party Brad," Leena is devastated beyond reason. Making matters worse, her literary agent informs her that he can't sell the novel she's been working on for three years; it's good, but lacking the most important element...her voice.

Dreams shattered, confidence crushed, and her biological clock in "alarm" mode, Leena feels the intense urge to get away from it all. INDIA. A place she's been only once when she was a child. INDIA. A country she's never wanted to admit she's from, a heritage she's refused to acknowledge. INDIA. Time to discover who she really is.

INDIA. Where there's a sure fire way to keep her hopes and dreams alive: an arranged marriage!! Why not? After all it worked for her parents, her cousin and has truly stood the test of time.





## Act I

In New Delhi, Leena's Aunt and cousin graciously welcome her into their modern and lavish home. Excited to explore the city, Leena is immediately overwhelmed by the noise, smells, population, and the culture of India. She is baffled by the cell phone-toting servants, the creepy men on the street who leer at her, and the chic nightclub scene. Every turn in the city is a contradiction. As her Aunt prepares for Leena to meet the arranged marriage prospects she has carefully selected, Leena silently questions her decision to come to India, feeling more lost than she's ever felt before.

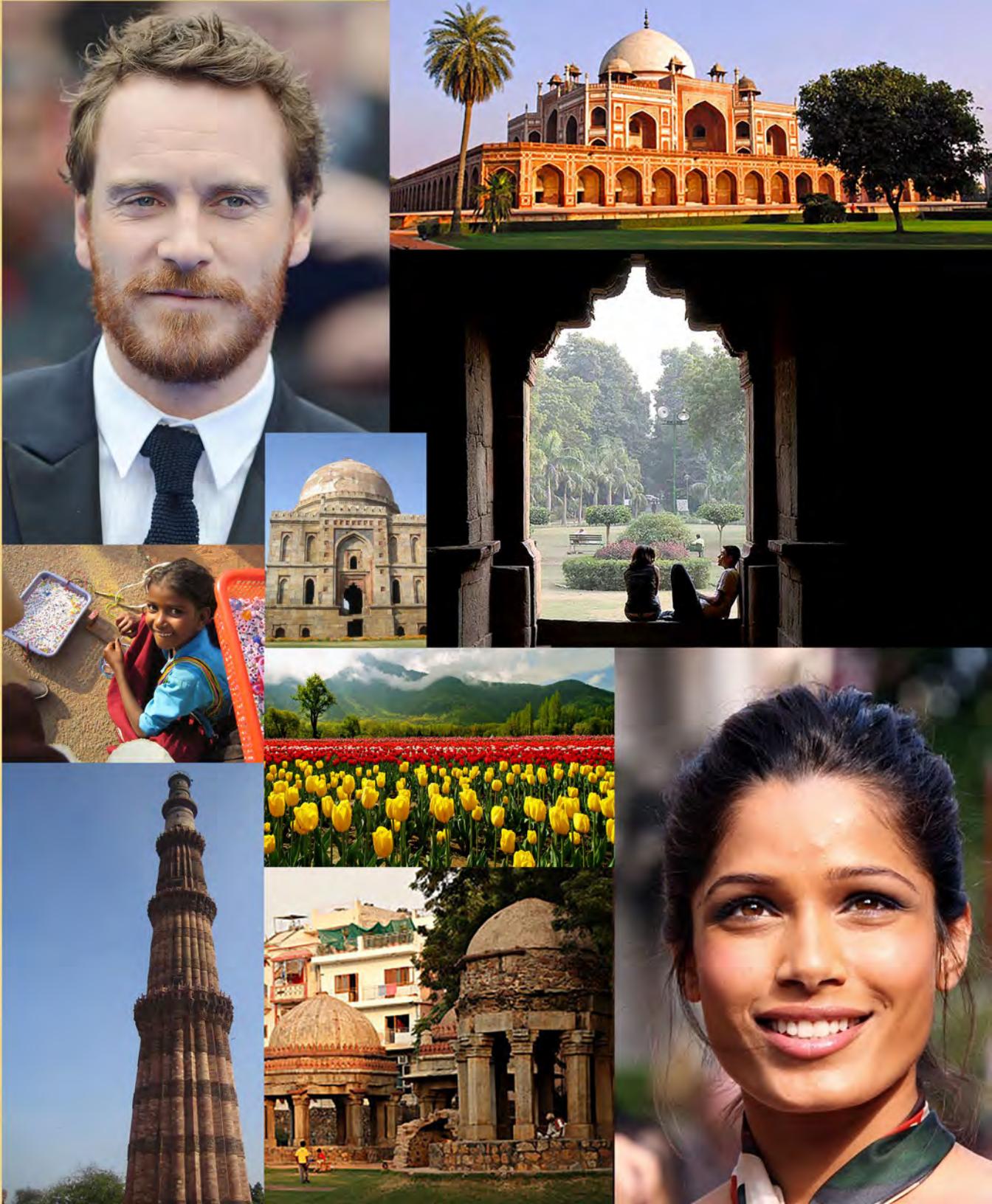
  
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## Act II

As her Aunt arranges for Leena to meet prospective Indian “grooms,” Leena tours New Delhi with British expat Andrew Briggs, a close family friend, and self-proclaimed bachelor.

Though a strong physical attraction between the two is apparent, they immediately square off. Leena finds his “high and mighty” English attitude insulting, and he scoffs at her spoiled American ways.

Agreeing to put their differences aside, Andrew shows Leena her country through his eyes. With an insatiable curiosity, she delights in the wonders of the city and slowly embraces her heritage. As their friendship grows, Andrew gently guides Leena in finding her “voice.” And she encourages him to go deeper in his heart, to feel what it’s like to be truly “in love.”





## Act III

Shawn Batra, an “arranged marriage match,” is smitten with Leena. From trendy restaurants, to the Polo Fields, from the high-end shopping malls, to a friend’s wedding, Shawn excitedly shows Leena his “childhood city.” The compatible duo, develop a fast friendship, and before long Shawn whisks Leena to the enchanting city of Udaipur and proposes!!

Torn between the two men, Leena must make a decision. Will she choose a safe, steady marriage with Shawn? A man with whom she’s promised to get what she so desires; a husband and kids? A man she likes but doesn’t love. Or will she choose Andrew Briggs, a man with whom she shares a love connection unlike anything she’s felt before? A man who can’t offer her marriage, but wants to share his life with her.

# Themes

Self-identity, Self-acceptance, Self-love.

As Leena discovers the magic and beauty of India, her walls come down. Exposing her vulnerabilities. Daring her to grow.

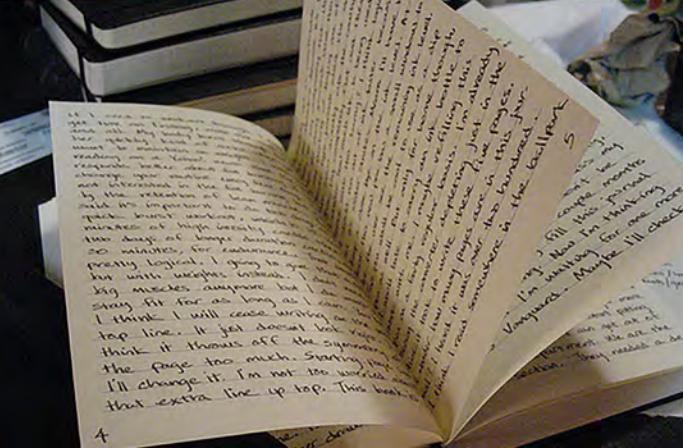
With the help of Andrew, Shawn, her Aunt, cousin, and house-cook Baljeet, Leena embraces her heritage, letting go of the shame she felt, growing up as brown, and “different” in white suburbia.

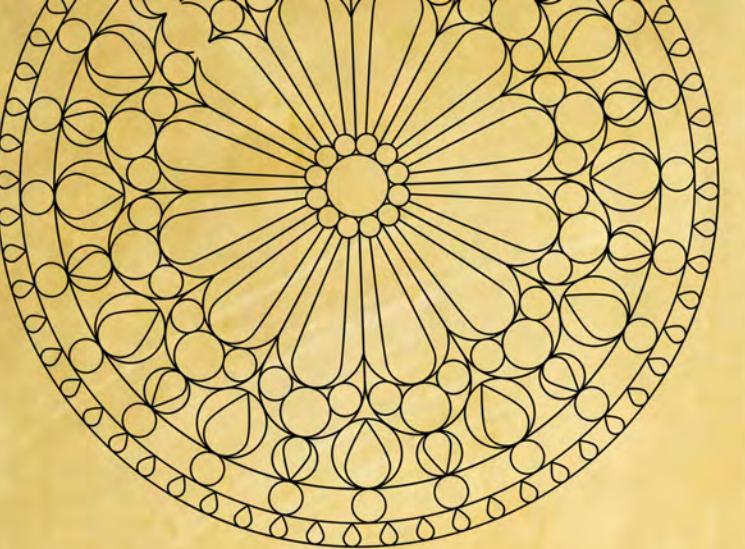
Through this journey Leena discovers her “voice.” That “voice” which represents love for one’s self and love for life. That “voice” of inner wisdom, that comes from one’s heart. That “voice,” which when trusted, will guide one in making the best choices and decisions for one’s self.

Leena’s “voice” becomes apparent when it comes through in her writing. And it’s her “voice” she follows when she must choose between Shawn and Andrew.

# Tone

Like a gem, MODERN LOVE is a multi faceted love story, projecting wit, warmth, strength and brilliance. The colorful tone is playful, vibrant and fun!





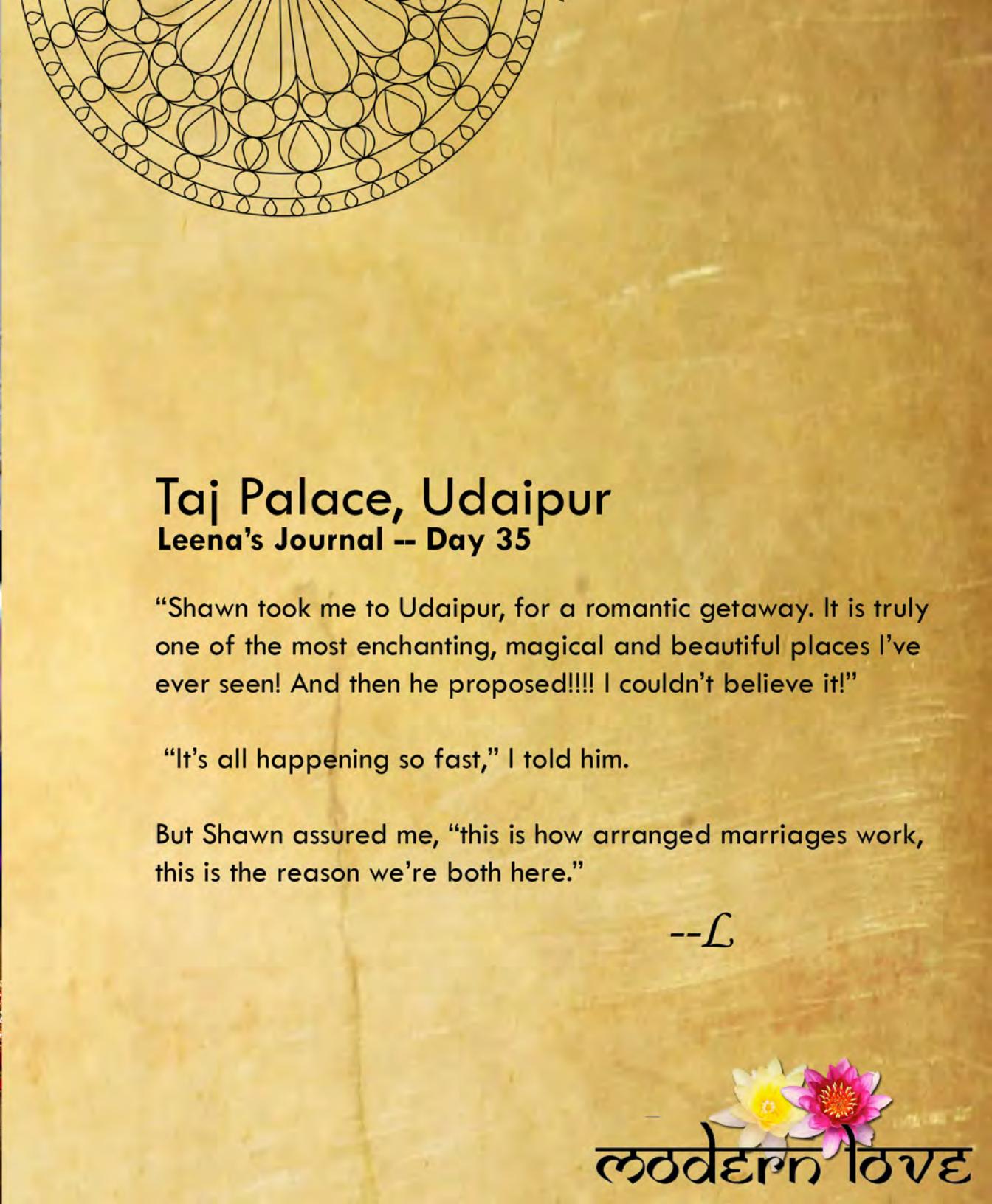
## Bogdola Village, India

Leena's Journal -- Day 20

"Andrew surprised me with an excursion to a local village! It was incredibly humbling and inspiring. The villagers welcomed me with smiles of kindness and humility. It was amazing to witness their strength, resilience and patience as they went along their daily chores. Despite their difficult living conditions, and having so little, they posses a sense of content and appreciation for life. I now realize how foolish I was to be ashamed of all of this. As I let go of this shame, I feel a sense of freedom. A sense of joy, as I recognize this beauty, this passion, this resilience, resides within me."

--L





## Taj Palace, Udaipur

Leena's Journal -- Day 35

"Shawn took me to Udaipur, for a romantic getaway. It is truly one of the most enchanting, magical and beautiful places I've ever seen! And then he proposed!!!! I couldn't believe it!"

"It's all happening so fast," I told him.

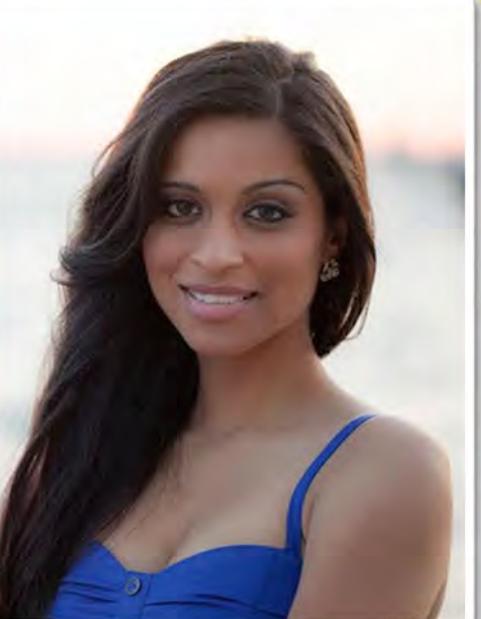
But Shawn assured me, "this is how arranged marriages work, this is the reason we're both here."

--L

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Frieda Pinto



Lilly Singh



Mouzam Makkar



Azita Ghanizada

# Leena

LEENA “LEE” RAI; Freida Pinto, Lilly Singh, Mouzam Makkar, and Azita Ghanizada, are a few of today’s leading ladies who posses the emotional range, and talent to bring Leena to life.

In Los Angeles, Leena convincingly appears to be self-confident and self-assured. In India, her walls come down exposing her vulnerabilities. As she discovers and embraces her heritage, she exhibits a true sense of awakening, delight and childlike innocence. Shedding her fears and insecurities, Leena ultimately experiences the joy of self-love and emotional intimacy.





Michael Fassbender



Andrew Lincoln



Damian Lewis



Michael Goode

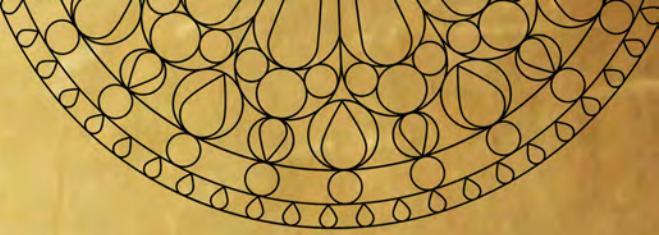
# Andrew

Michael Fassbender, Andrew Lincoln, Damian Lewis, and Michael Goode are several of today's leading men who possess the talent to bring the engaging and romantically elusive Englishman Andrew Briggs to life.

Dr. Andrew Briggs, a visiting Professor from England, is a globe trotting renaissance man who is curious about the world. While he professes a profound love and respect for humanity, his heart is closed to romantic commitment. A self-proclaimed bachelor, he does not believe in marriage. However upon meeting Leena he feels a "spark" and is immediately taken with her spirit and spunk.

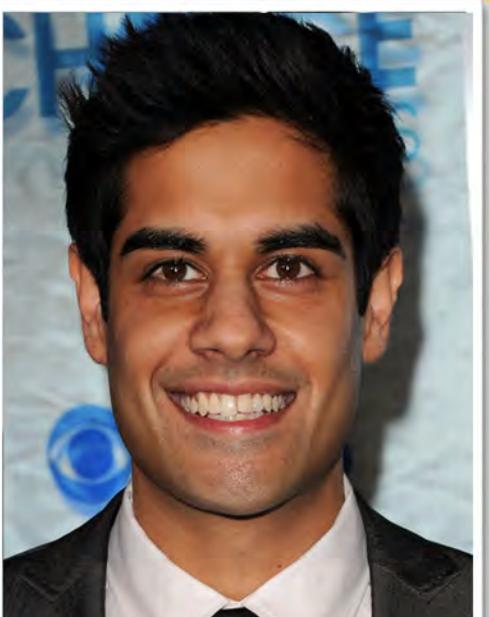
After an initial disconnect, Andrew and Leena connect at many levels. He shows empathy to her vulnerability, and she responds to his generosity with great kindness and respect. They help each other to grow and learn. As he guides her in finding her "voice" she guides him in opening his heart.

In MODERN LOVE, Professor Andrew Briggs is the teacher as well as the student. His arc is compelling and will resonate with all audiences, as they root for him to recognize what it is to be "truly in love."





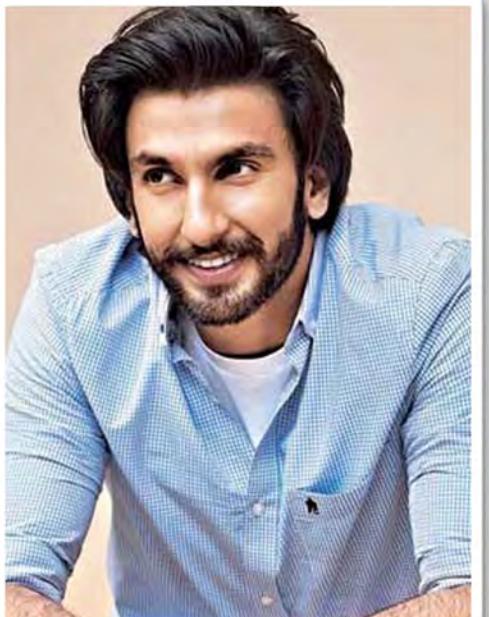
Kal Penn



Sacha Dhawan



Manish Dayal



Ranveer Singh

## Shawn

SHAWN BATRA; Kal Penn, Sacha Dhawan, Manish Dayal, and Ranveer Singh all possess the talent to bring “arranged marriage match” Shawn to life.

They are charming, witty and confident. They are able to depict certain “Americanisms,” while showing respect for their Indian heritage. They carry with them a sense of entitlement and are used to getting what they want.



# Visual Concept

In MODERN LOVE, multi-dimensional characters, rich luscious locales, a vibrant color palette, and a lively musical score come together to create a cinematic sensation.

My vision is to shoot “cinema verite,” allowing the audience to feel and experience Leena’s journey as truthfully and honestly as she does. We will be hand-held in the crowded city streets, markets, nightclubs, parties and restaurants, allowing the audience to soak in the atmosphere, feeling the high energy, momentum and spirit of these venues.

Wide angle and long lenses will be used to capture the awe-inspiring monuments and vistas in New Delhi, the village and Udaipur. Thus allowing the audience to breathe in the beauty, grandeur and history of these locales. We will use natural light wherever possible.

For the emotional scenes between the actors, the camera will hover quietly: elegantly capturing the tiny facial nuances, emotive eyes, and subtle body movements, which convey the unspoken, yet deeply felt emotions of the talented cast.

While being “verite,” composition will still be key, and in comedy the biggest laughs, play small, not wide.

Every frame is integral to the story and will be thoughtfully considered. And we will always be prepared to capture the spontaneous, unexpected, and unrehearsed moments; the magic kernels of the story telling process!





## Music

The sound design of MODERN LOVE will be as fresh, unique, and inspiring as the film itself. The score will enhance the mood and tone of the scenes, and shall serve as the thread which ties the film together. In Los Angeles, the score will be more of an American influence: piano, strings, and brass. While in India, it will reveal more of an Indian influence: sitar, drums, and flute.

The songs will be a mix of soulful ballads, playful happy “falling in love” tunes, and high-energy dance party songs reflecting both American and Indian artists. Much of the music will be a hip blend, of traditional Indian favorites, mashed up with American “pop” and “rock,” and vice versa. For example, when Leena first lands in India I envision Tom Petty’s rock ballad, “American Girl,” interwoven with Bollywood style drums and strings, as she is torn between the old world and the new.

The MODERN LOVE soundtrack will introduce audiences to an exciting array of sound, infused with familiar tunes and Indian beats.

# Costume Design

In MODERN LOVE, Costume Design is integral to telling the story, as wardrobe selections compliment and define our evolving characters.

When we first meet Leena her wardrobe depicts a beach chic, somewhat traditional vibe. In India, she starts to compliment her western wardrobe, with exotic Indian tunics and accessories. As she learns to love India and herself, her wardrobe selections reflect her joy, and confidence. Choosing to wear vibrant Indian Langas, and sexy Indian dresses, her personality “pops,” and her beauty becomes more alive, and captivating.

English expat Andrew Briggs, a scholar and world traveler, chooses tailored cotton button down shirts, t-shirts and comfortable linen kurtas to reflect his personality and ease with the world. He is understated in his sophistication. His color palette is primarily neutral, with pops of navy and brown.

Shawn Batra dresses on the trendy side. He is handsome and stylish in both his Western and Indian clothes. He wears expensive designer jeans, with hipster t-shirts and bright button downs. He looks dashing in his designer Indian kurtas, and fancy Polo Johdpurs.

In India we will showcase the finery of modern day Indian silk, chiffon, and cotton designs. These elegant, vibrant, clothes are truly a feast for the eyes, and enhance the sensory experience of MODERN LOVE.

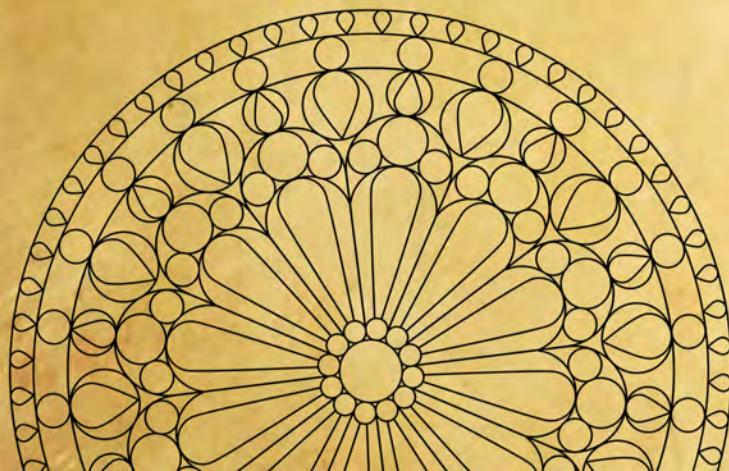


# Director's Statement

MODERN LOVE is a unique cross-cultural look at defining and searching for “the one,” in today’s dating climate.

As a child, growing up in the United States being “brown” and “Indian” was the bane of my existence. To me, it meant being chosen last for kickball, being taunted for carrying mangoes in my lunchbox, and being teased about the saris my grandmother wore. But none of that holds a candle to the trials of being a single woman, dating in Los Angeles!

When close relatives suggested an arranged marriage, I decided to explore everything about this ancient, traditional and very successful form of matrimony. I was blown away by the virtues of arranged marriages and the surprising similarities with on-line dating. As I discussed these notions with friends, I knew I had a story to explore.



“Growing to love” your mate after tying the knot, in an arranged marriage, versus “falling in love,” and then getting married, became a fascinating point of argument. Was one way better than the other? If so, why?

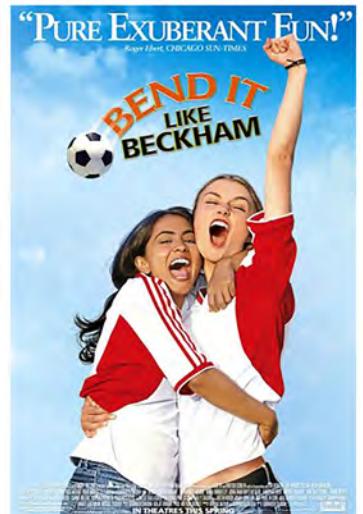
The idea further evolved with the notion of having to choose between two prospects: a man who’s ready to commit to marriage and kids, a man you can “grow to love,” or a man who doesn’t believe in marriage, yet you both share a connection unlike anything you’ve felt before.

Simply stated: “love” or “marriage”? Which would you choose?

With MODERN LOVE I am excited to showcase my talents as a cinematic storyteller.

My entire adult life, the film “set” has been my home, and the film “crew” has been my family. Making movies is part of my DNA. I truly enjoy the collaborative filmmaking process and nothing excites me more than encouraging and embracing the talents of all cast and crew involved in making the film.

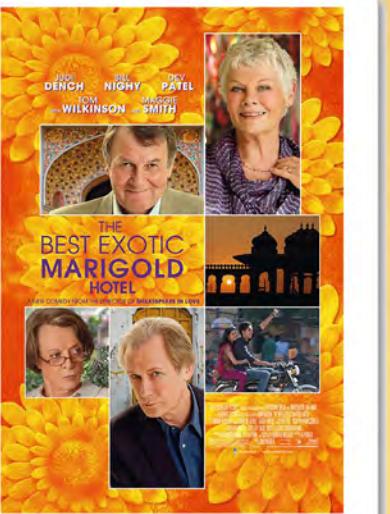
# Comparable Films



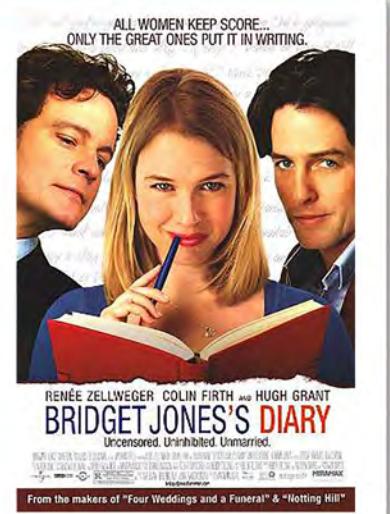
Bend it Like Beckham



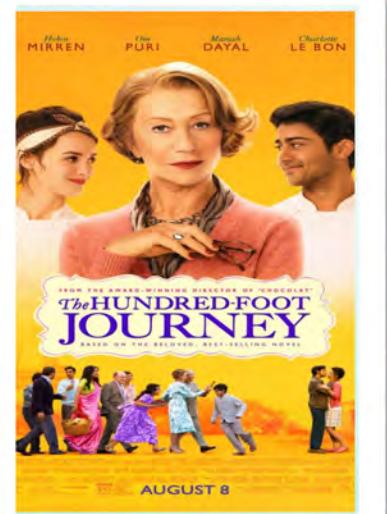
My Big Fat Greek Wedding



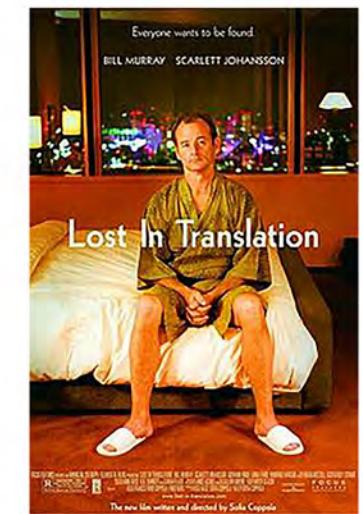
The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel



Bridget Jones's Diary



The Hundred-Foot Journey



Lost in Translation

Keira Knightley  
David Beckham  
Budget: \$5.8M  
Gross: \$33M

John Corbett  
Nia Vardalos  
Budget: \$5M  
Gross: \$356M

Judi Dench  
Tom Wilkinson  
Budget: \$10M  
Gross: \$134M

Renee Zellweger  
Hugh Grant  
Budget: \$26M  
Gross: \$254M

Helen Mirren  
Om Puri  
Budget: \$22 M  
Gross: \$88M

Scarlett Johansson  
Bill Murray  
Budget: \$4M  
Gross: \$119M



# The Team



Sonia Bhalla

**Sonia Bhalla – WRITER/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER**, As a Director member of the Directors Guild of America, (DGA) Sonia worked her way up through the Guild ranks, choosing her projects carefully. Her talents, personality, and leadership skills earned her the highly demanding and coveted team position of Assistant Director alongside Academy Award winning and nominated Directors; Ron Howard, M. Night Shyamalan, Paul Thomas Anderson, and Jason Reitman. The DGA has nominated Sonia twice for her work on “The Sixth Sense” and “Up In The Air,” starring George Clooney. Sonia has also worked on numerous hit television comedies including NBC’s “OUTSOURCED”, where she served as a Producer/Assistant Director bringing her Indian background, culture and comedic sensibilities to the show and the rest of the world. Sonia was selected from a highly competitive pool of over 1,000 Director applicants as a Comedy Television Director for the high-profile ABC/DISNEY Television Directing program. (2012-2014) Sonia presently serves as a board member for Pratham, a non-profit organization which provides quality education to underprivileged children of India.

Ms. Bhalla is repped at William Morris Endeavor (WME), Agent Mike Esola (310.859.4333.) She holds a BA in Political Science from Syracuse University.



Molly Conners

**Molly Conners, PRODUCER**-- Molly Conners has produced or executive produced numerous notable feature films including 4 time Academy Award winner, “Birdman”, starring Michael Keaton, Emma Stone, Naomi Watts, Zach Galifianakis and Edward Norton; John Hillcoat’s “Triple Nine,” starring Chiwetel Ejiofor, Casey Affleck, Woody Harrelson and Kate Winslet; Justin Chadwick’s “Tulip Fever,” starring Christoph Waltz, Dane DeHaan and Judi Dench; Daniel Espinosa’s crime thriller, “Child 44”, starring Tom Hardy, Noomi Rapace and Gary Oldman; Eli Roth’s horror thriller, “The Green Inferno”; James Gray’s period drama, “The Immigrant”, starring Marion Cotillard, Joaquin Phoenix and Jeremy Renner; Guillaume Canet’s crime thriller, “Blood Ties”, starring Clive Owen, Billy Crudup, Marion Cotillard, Mila Kunis, Zoe Saldana and James Caan; and William Friedkin’s black comedy, “Killer Joe”, starring Matthew McConaughey, Emile Hirsch, Juno Temple, Gina Gershon and Thomas Haden Church.

Prior to this, Ms. Conners worked in procurement and legislative lobbying for diverse sectors. Ms. Conners holds a B.A. in Psychology from the George Washington University and is a member of the Producers Guild of America and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts.



Amanda Bowers

**Amanda Bowers, PRODUCER**-- Amanda Bowers is an experienced producer and film executive in New York City. She was Vice President of Production for 5 years at Worldview Entertainment, a leading film finance and production company, where she handled all day to day production work on 6-8 films a year, including sales strategy, marketing, structured financing and physical production. Amanda is a co-producer on Zach Braff’s Wish I Was Here, Eli Roth’s horror thriller, The Green Inferno, and Kim Farrant’s Strangerland, starring Nicole Kidman; and an associate producer on David Gordon Green’s drama, Manglehorn, starring Al Pacino, Atom Egoyan’s crime thriller, Devil’s Knot, starring Colin Firth and Reese Witherspoon; Kate Barker-Froyland’s drama, Song One, starring Anne Hathaway; and Ti West’s horror thriller, The Sacrament, presented by Eli Roth. Other credits include Alejandro González Iñárritu’s Academy Award nominated, Birdman, Guillaume Canet’s crime thriller, Blood Ties, Daniel Espinosa’s crime thriller, Child 44, James Gray’s period drama, The Immigrant, and David Gordon Green’s drama, Joe, starring Nicolas Cage.

Ms. Bowers is a member of the Producers Guild of America and holds a B.A. in English Literature from the University of Virginia.