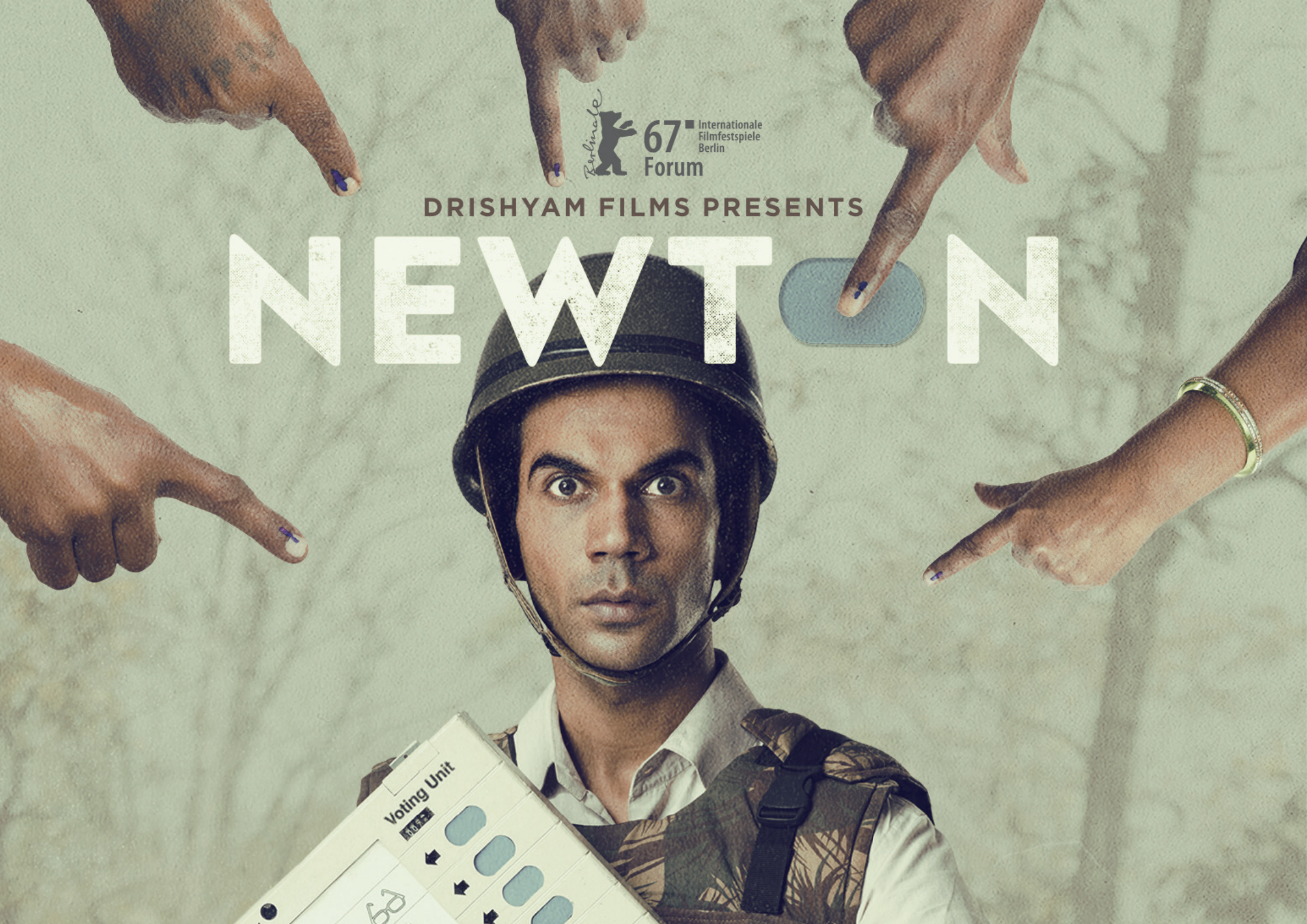




67th Internationale
Filmfestspiele
Berlin
Forum

DRISHYAM FILMS PRESENTS

NEWTON






India is the World's Largest Democracy
The Indian Election of 2014 was the Largest Election
in the History of Mankind

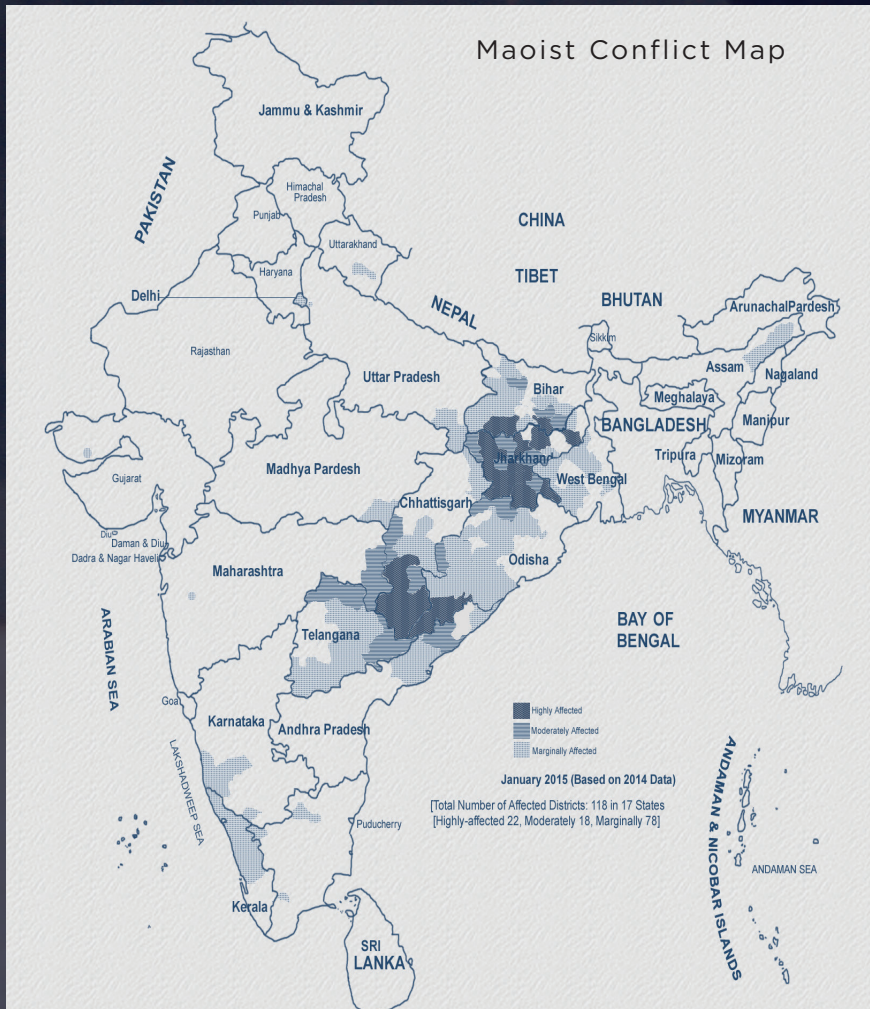
814,500,000
voters.

930,000
polling stations.

\$ 5,000,000,000
budget.



Newton, a rookie clerk on election duty in the conflict ridden jungle of Chhattisgarh, tries his best to conduct free and fair voting despite the apathy of security forces and the looming fear of an attack by Maoist rebels.



SYNOPSIS

As India, the world's largest democracy, braces itself for another general election- with 9 million polling booths, more than 800 million voters, and costing nearly \$5 billion -- Newton Kumar, a rookie government clerk finds himself entrusted with a task that appears deceptively simple: conducting elections in a remote village in the jungles of central India. The bushes teem with Communist guerrillas, who have been waging a decades old war against the state, even as the indigenous tribals live without any access to mainland amenities. Conducting 'free and fair' elections in a minefield like this is no child's play, as Newton learns over the course of this eventful day. Unfazed with the cynicism and danger all around him, Newton is determined to do his duty. But, as they say in the jungle, 'The more things change, the worse they will get'.

Source: Institute for Conflict Management, South Asia Terrorism Portal

NEWTON

PRINCIPAL CAST

RAJKUMMAR RAO

Rajkummar Rao plays Newton, a young rookie clerk on election duty in the jungles of Chhattisgarh. Rajkummar's star is on the rise following strong, highly appreciated performances in films like Aligarh (Hansal Mehta, 2016), Trapped (Vikramaditya Motwane, 2017) and Queen (Vikas Bahl, 2014). He won the National Award for Hansal Mehta's Shahid in 2013. His breakout role was in the Hindi drama film Kai Po Che (Abhishek Kapoor, 2013), which had also made its world premiere at the Berlinale Panaroma.

PANKAJ TRIPATHI

Pankaj Tripathi plays Atma Singh, the head of security at the polling booth, often at loggerheads with Newton. Pankaj, an alumna of the prestigious National School of Drama, is known for his performances in internationally acclaimed films such as Masaan (Neeraj Ghaywan, 2015) and Gangs of Wasseyapur (Anurag Kashyap, 2012).

ANJALI PATIL

Anjali Patil plays Malko, a local Gondi clerk also working on the election with Newton. A film and theatre actor, Anjali has earned rave reviews for her work in films such as Chakravayuh (Prakash Jha, 2012) and With You Without You (Prasanna Vithanage, 2012). She is also trained in various Indian martial arts dance forms like Kalari, Chhau and Thang-Ta as well as the classical dance form of Kathak.

RAGHUBIR YADAV

Raghubir Yadav plays Loknath, an easygoing clerk in Newton's election team. He is a doyen of Indian theater, film and folk music, having worked in pivotal roles in international films like Salaam Bombay (Mira Nair, 1988) and Bandit Queen (Shekhar Kapur, 1994). He's also a flautist and makes his own Bansuri flutes from bamboo reeds.

NEWTON



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When political discourse becomes dull, democracy is in danger. When I voted for the first time I thought my job was done. I had surrendered my destiny in the hands of a stranger and expected him to bring about change. It took me a while to realise the difference between democracy and electioneering and to understand that true democracy will come only when people become political beings and not mere voters. Newton is a dark comedy about an idealist in a less than ideal world. India, which boasts to be the world's largest democracy takes elections rather seriously, and in conflict areas, it becomes an opportunity for the state to show its "tough love". As Newton tries to find order in chaos, we find underlying elements of humor and absurdity. I have structured the film around Newton's three laws of motion -- the film begins with inertia, sets into momentum in the middle act, and ends with an equal and opposite reaction.



[DIRECTOR'S BIO

Mumbai-based Amit V Masurkar has written for sketch comedy shows and Bollywood films. His directorial debut, the uber low-budget comedy, Sulemani Keeda (89 min, 2014, India-USA) was an indie sleeper hit. Newton is his second film.

NEWTON



[PRODUCER'S BIO

Manish Mundra is a producer and the founder of Drishyam Films. After a chance interaction with Indian filmmaker Rajat Kapoor on Twitter in 2013, Manish agreed to finance his film Ankhon Dekhi. The film went on to win three Filmfare Awards and three Screen Awards, and there has no looking back for the corporate leader-turned-film producer. Since then, Manish has pursued his passion for content-driven cinema by setting up Drishyam Films, a global motion-picture studio that has produced international award-winning films such as Masaan, Umrika, Waiting and Dhanak. Manish is also known for establishing the Drishyam-Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab for aspiring Indian screenwriters.



THE GONDI TRIBE

The Gondi or Gond people are the indigenous people of the forests of Central India, spread over the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. With more than ten million people, they are the largest indigenous tribe in Central India, and one of the largest tribal groups in the world.

Encompassing over 50 sub-groups, the Gond tribe is ethnographically, linguistically, geographically and culturally diverse. Over the centuries, they have continued to retain their close connection with the forest, which is reflected in their cultural history.

The Gonds paint their walls with vibrant depictions of local flora, fauna and gods. Traditionally made on festive occasions, the unifying theme in Gond art is the pervasive presence of nature. The artists use natural colors derived from charcoal, coloured soil, plant sap, leaves, and cow dung. This unique art form is created by putting together dots and lines. The imaginative use of the line imparts a sense of movement to the still images depicting Gondi folklore.

The prime language spoken by the Gond Tribe is Gondi, a south-central Dravidian language, with a dynamic history of oral literature. Gondi people also appear in The Jungle Book by Rudyard Kipling. Ironically, a Gondi hunter is one of the victims in the story 'The King's Ankus', and a Gondi diviner advises the local villagers that their village is completely lost and they should just move somewhere else.



ABOUT THE FILM

How did you come up with the idea?

Ever since I read the preamble of the Constitution of India, I wanted to make a film about democracy. The gap between what is written and what is practiced is huge. And such a gap is felt not just in India, but all over the world, including in developed countries. The only day a common person feels truly a part of democracy and its decision-making process is on the election day when their vote is counted. And so a film set in the polling booth felt like an interesting idea to explore. It made more sense to set the film in a conflicted area where the staging of an election is a way for the government, and the stalling of the election is a way for the rebels, to show who's in charge. The film is from the point of view of a rookie government officer who is obsessed with finding order in this chaos, and is adamant about doing his duty.

The theme dictated the content and style.

How was it shooting in Chhattisgarh?

We shot the film in and around the mining town of Dalli Rajhara, on the fringes of the Maoist controlled jungle. Because we were a film crew, we were advised that we would be safe from both the Maoists and the police, as long as we kept to ourselves and stayed within our limits.

Since we had a large army of actors in camouflage, carrying fake guns, there was always a danger of getting mistaken for the real paramilitary and getting ambushed. We were very careful to make it known that we were a film crew and had no other agenda.

The people in Dalli Rajhara were very warm. They were excited that a film crew from Mumbai had come to their town to shoot and opened their hearts and homes to us. The film would not have been possible without their support.

ABOUT THE FILM

Why a film on this topic?

In remote parts of Central India, a war is raging for decades between Communist guerrillas known as Maoists and the Indian state. The Maoists want to overthrow the government and establish a communist state. Some of their bases are in the jungles of Chhattisgarh.

The indigenous people, Gondi Adivasis, who live in this jungle are forced to take sides between these two powerful entities or face repercussions. They are not allowed to have a third view and their basic human rights are being violated. The discovery of minerals and iron ore in the jungle has intensified this struggle, as mining conglomerates have come into the picture and want the land where the Adivasis live, vacated. The conflict is actually helping displace people from their own land. The situation is disturbing and I wanted to create awareness about what is happening there. My co writer, Mayank and I used Newton's Laws of Motion as the structure around which we built the story of the government clerk, Newton. The first act is about inertia, in the second act there is momentum, and in the third act there's an equal and opposite reaction.

How were so many first time actors cast?

There is a large cast of first time actors in NEWTON especially Gondi tribals and CRPF constables. The casting director, Romil Modi went to Chhattisgarh, lived there for a month and auditioned people who lived in the settlements in the jungles. Many people we cast had never watched a movie before, nor had any idea about the camera. But these actors were as good as professional actors. We started with a series of improvisational acting exercises in which some of the shooting crew also participated. Since they were playing themselves, there was no need for any more workshops.

With respect to the Paramilitary -- we connected with private institutes that train candidates for police exams. We hired an ex Army man to train them and a retired CRPF commandant was the on set consultant to ensure authenticity.

Then there were theatre actors from the group, IPTA Raipur and IPTA Raigarh who are playing some of the smaller parts in the city. We were not finding a suitable actor to play Newton's mother. So a day before the shoot, Romil got frustrated and sent his own mother's audition. She had no acting experience but ended up playing that part.

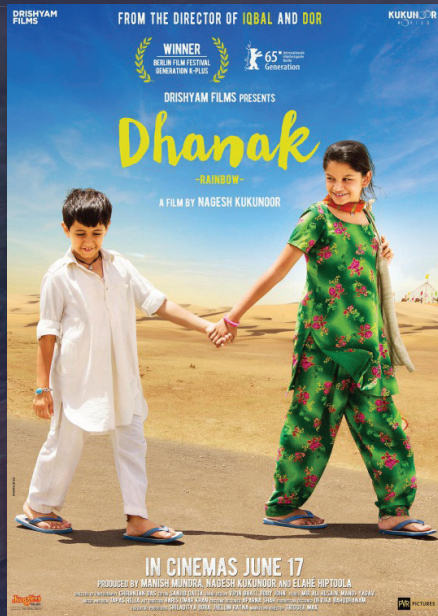
[P R I N C I P A L C R E W]

Director	Amit V Masurkar	Sound Design	Niraj Gera
Producer	Manish Mundra	Location Sound	Anish John
Executive Producer	Raghav Gupta	Production Design	Angelica Monica Bhowmick
Associate Producer	Shiladitya Bora	Casting	Romil Modi, Tejas Thakkar
Screenplay	Mayank Tewari Amit V Masurkar	DI Colorist	Siddharth Meer
Story	Amit V Masurkar	Line Producer	Ganesh Shetty
Cinematography	Swapnil S Sonawane	First Assistant Director	Pankaj Dayani
Editing	Shweta Venkat Mathew	VFX	Drishyam VFX
Music	Naren Chandavarkar, Benedict Taylor	Marketing & Communications	Shraddha Chauhan Jahan Singh Bakshi Ritika Bhatia
Lyrics	Varun Grover		



[FILM S P E C S]

Country	India
Language	Hindi
Genre	Black Comedy
Duration	104 min
Format	Digital
Frame Rate	24 fps
Aspect Ratio	2.39 (or Anamorphic)
Sound	5.1
Shot On	Arri Alexa XT with Cooke Anamorphic lenses



ABOUT DRISHYAM FILMS

A company born out of love for cinema, Drishyam Films aims to build a platform for unique voices of Indian independent cinema and create global content with rich Indian flavours.

Our journey started with the award-winning film *Ankhon Dekhi* directed by Rajat Kapoor. Its success was followed by *Umrika* directed by Prashant Nair, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival 2015 and bagged the Audience Choice Award. Soon after, *Dhanak* directed by Nagesh Kukunoor won the Grand Jury prize (Gen K-Plus) at Berlinale 2015, and *Masaan* directed by Neeraj Ghaywan picked up the FIPRESCI Prize as well as the Promising Future prize (Un Certain Regard) at Cannes 2015. Our last film *Waiting* directed by Anu Menon, premiered at the Dubai International Film Festival 2015 to much acclaim.

Our upcoming films include Atanu Mukerjee's *Rukh* starring Manoj Bajpayee and Amit V Masurkar's *Newton* starring Rajkummar Rao.

NEWTON



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