

# ISLAND CITY

*A film by Ruchika Oberoi*

India | Hindi (English subtitles) | Comedy-Drama | 111minutes | Cinemascope 1:2.35 | 5.1 | Colour | 2015

Premiere Status – World Premiere at Venice Film Festival, 2015 in the Venice Days Section

## SYNOPSIS (SHORT)

The film follows three comic-dramatic stories set in Mumbai. The first one is about a middle-aged man who wins the office ‘Fun Committee Award’, which entitles him to a whole day full of fun. He is most reluctant to leave the safety of his cubicle but he has to. Prescribed fun modules have to be completed and non-compliance is not an option...

The second story begins with a domineering pater familias, Anil, who is on life support. Seeking some relief, his family decides to buy a TV, which Anil had banned; now every night the family plugs into a popular soap whose hero is a man ideal in every way... The third one centres on Aarti whose repetitive existence is slowly making her more and more mechanical and numb. Deep inside ferments a disconnect and unease that she is unable to articulate to anyone. Then one day there arrives a most intimate letter and everything changes.



## **SYNOPSIS (LONG)**

The film follows three comic-dramatic stories set in Mumbai.

**Fun Committee** – A middle-aged man stuck in a boring, number-crunching job wins the office ‘Fun Committee Award’, which entitles him to a whole day full of fun. He is most reluctant to leave the safety of his cubicle to go to claim this award... but fun is now compulsory policy since the analysts’ reports say company profits are going down because the employees are too listless and dispirited. Armed with a special module that has been designed for maximum fun in the shortest possible time, he sets off... Prescribed fun rules have to be followed and non-compliance is not an option...

**The Ghost In The Machine** – Anil is on life support and his family, deep in sorrow and desperate for some relief, guiltily decides to bring home a TV, which he had banned. The family now, each night, plugs into the popular TV soap ‘Purshottam – The Ideal Man’ and each family member gradually begins to replace the domineering Anil with this handsome, loving, fictional paragon. Then, suddenly comes the news that Anil’s condition is improving... that he will be home soon. Amid the happiness some niggling questions remain... What will happen to their freedoms? What about the TV? Will they have to let ‘Purshottam’ go?

**Contact** – The daily grind of Aarti’s repetitive existence is slowly making her more and more mechanical and numb. Deep inside ferments a disconnect and unease that she is unable to articulate to anyone... Then, one day, there arrives a letter from someone who knows her most intimate thoughts, who deeply understands her soul... someone who has noticed her and knows that she is special... Who could this soul-mate be?

## **DIRECTOR’S NOTE**

Mumbai starts affecting you from the moment you set foot here and I did so many years ago as a single, young, impressionable woman. Many moons and bitter-sweet experiences later, certain observations and interactions with different quarters stayed with me and I was keen to string them together to see if I could create an impression of these times of transition.

I chose three that offered me the opportunity for some lightness as well as drama. There was the brush with certain slightly humourless upper caste people, known for their correctness, frugality and Brahminical purity, and I thought about doing something that disturbed their stoic sense of morality in a quirky sort of way.

In my couple of years spent in living in a slum rehabilitation colony, travelling up to five hours daily to reach work and back, hearing the stories of my working class neighbours; I got a glimpse of and wanted to weave a story around a heartless system that crushes the most vulnerable.

And then there was this emergence of a new kind of parallel world and work culture that sucked all the fun out of life only to try to reintroduce it in a corporatized, regimented fashion. Mixed up in all of these were snatches of brainwashed terrorists, larger-than-life soap operas, mall culture, technological boost and romance.

Control, the loss of agency and the heroism of resistance, however insignificant or futile... at some level each of the three stories connect with these themes. Shifting between absurd, comic and tragic, they allowed me to explore, in a light-hearted as well as deeply emotional way, several contradictions and take them into make-believe territory.

There is also the idea of a systemic movement away from the natural more and more into the artificial... alienating, liberating, oppressive. And somewhere within all these themes, there also lurks the machine...

- **Ruchika Oberoi**

## CAST & CREW

<b>Artist</b>	<b>Character</b>
Vinay Pathak	Suyash Chaturvedi
Amruta Subhash	Sarita Joshi
Tannishtha Chatterjee	Aarti Patel
Chandan Roy Sanyal	Jignesh
Sameer Kochhar	Purshottam
Uttara Baokar	Ajji
Ashwin Mushran	COO Anil Sharma
Sana Amin Sheikh	Vaidehi
 <b>Crew</b>	
Director	Ruchika Oberoi
Screenplay	Ruchika Oberoi
Cinematography	Sylvester Fonseca
Film Editor	Hemanti Sarkar
Sound Design	Niraj Gera
Music	Sagar Desai
Art Direction	Krishnendu Chowdhury
Costumes	Anirban Haldar and Rajesh Kumar
Casting	Mansi Multani
Executive Producer	Vikramjit Roy
Associate Producer	Sahab Narain
Producer	Nina Lath Gupta
Production Company	National Film Development Corporation

### Director Profile – Ruchika Oberoi



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Ruchika Oberoi is an alumnus of the Film and Television Institute of India. *Island City* is her debut feature film. The script of *Island City* participated in the NFDC Screenwriters' Lab 2012, which was held in Venice alongside the Venice Film Festival, 2012 and Goa, alongside the Film Bazaar.

## CAST BIOS

### Vinay Pathak

Vinay Pathak is an Indian film, television, and theatre actor. A theatre graduate from the State University of New York with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, he started his career doing only theatre until Deepa Mehta offered him a cameo in the first of her trilogy *Fire*. He appeared in her last, the Oscar nominated *Water* as well.



A quirky, serious, sedate, negative, circumspect and not to mention an overzealous clown have been most of his indulgences as myriad characters in the various film roles (close to fifty by now) he's done. He turned a household name with a sleeper hit of the year *Bheja Fry*, and turned producer with his home production, *Dasvidania*.

He's known more for his off beat movies like *Khosla Ka Ghosla*, *Johnny Gaddar*, *Mithya*, *Raat gayi Baat Gayi*, *Straight*, *Pappu can't dance sala*, etc. He's also been seen in some of the mainstream bollywood features like *Rab Ne Bana di Jodi*, *Aaja Nachle*, *Badlapur*, *Jism*, *Hum dil de chuke Sanam* etc. There are more critically acclaimed films in his kitty than a commercial blockbuster. *Antardwand* and *Gaur Hari Dastan* to name a few.

He's currently touring with two of his plays. *Nothing Like Lear* an adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear* into a one man performance art piece, and also *Hamlet - The Clown Prince* a clown ensemble's attempt to the tragedy!

### Tannishtha Chatterjee

Tannishtha Chatterjee is known for her work in films like *Brick Lane* (for which she was nominated for the Best Actress in the British Independent Film Awards along with Dame Judi Dench and Anne Hathaway), German Director Florian Gallen Berger's *Shadows of Time*, *Dekh Indian Circus* (for which she won the National Film Award) and her more recent work in Canadian film *Siddharth* which was in Venice and Toronto in 2013 and *Monsoon Shootout* which premiered in Cannes in 2013.

Her other notable works include *Road Movie* which premiered in Toronto, Joe Wright's *Anna Karenina*, *Bhopal - A Prayer For Rain*, *Bombay Summer* (for which she won the Best Actress in NYIFF).

She has just finished shooting two Australian films. *Lion* which is directed by Garth Davies and co-stars Nicole Kidman and Dev Patel and *Unindian* co-starring ex-cricket Brett Lee. *Parched* directed by Leena Yadav is another significant film of Tannishtha's which will be premiering in Toronto 2015.

**Filmography**

2015 *Rough book* 2015 *Feast of Varanasi* 2015 *UnIndian* 2015 *I love New Year* 2014 *Chauranga* 2014 *Sunrise* 2013 *Bhopal: Prayer for Rain* 2013 *Siddharth*

2013 *Monsoon Shootout* 2013 *Gulab Gang*, 2013 *Dekh India Circus* 2012 *Anna Karenina* 2012 *Jalpari: The Desert Mermaid* 2012 *Jal* 2010 *Road Movie* 2009

*Bombay Summer* 2009 *Barah Aana* 2008 *White Elephant* 2007 *Brick Lane* 2006 *Strings* 2006 *Bibar* 2005 *Divorce* 2005 *Shadows of Time* 2004 *Have Aney Dey* 2004 *Bas Yunhi* 2003 *Swara*.

**Amruta Subhash**

After graduating from the National School of Drama, Amruta has acted in more than 25 films. She won the National Award for her Marathi film *Astu* in 2014. She is a trained singer and dancer and has acted in musicals like *Tee Fularani*, based on *My Fair Lady* in which she played the character of Eliza Doolittle. Her film *Killa* won the Crystal Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. This is her first visit to Venice with her film *Island City*.



### Chandan Roy Sanyal

Chandan Roy Sanyal has been acting in theatre and films for the last ten years and has also produced and directed plays in Hindi. He has been part of some successful Hindi films like *Kaminey*, *Prague*, *D-Day* as well as a few critically acclaimed films in Bengali. Between 2006 and 2009, he has also been part of the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and travelled all over the UK, USA and Europe with it.

He has recently written and directed short films like *Hiroshima*, which has been shown in various film festivals. His next film, 35mm, which is currently in post-production, has been extensively shot in Benaras and Mumbai.

### CREW BIOS

#### CINEMATOGRAPHER – Sylvester Fonseca



Born in Mumbai in 1986, Sylvester Fonseca trained as a cinematographer at the prestigious Film and Television Institute of India (FTII).

His student film, *Open Cafe v2.5* (2011) won him the 'Most Promising Indian Cinematographer' award at the Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) 2012 and the Silver at Cut.In Students' Video Festival, Mumbai 2011.

*Makara* (2013), his Student Diploma film, premiered at the 8th Rome Film Festival that year.

Few of his other projects, *Man from Maldeo* (2012), *5 o'clock Accident* (2013), *Just Friends* (2013) have won several awards and been screened as part of many film festivals.

Recently completed work includes *Island City* a feature length film produced by National Film Development Corporation of India and directed by Ruchika Oberoi. The film will have its World Premiere at the 72nd Venice International Film Festival as part of the Venice Days section.

**CREW BIOS****Music – Sagar Desai**

Indian-American film composer and pianist Sagar Desai has scored over twenty feature films, including Rajat Kapoor's *Ankhon Dekhi* and Aparna Sen's *The Japanese Wife*. He has also scored for hundreds of television commercials, games, and other digital media, and is getting ready to debut his first album, Vimana, where psychedelic rock meets Indian classical music. With a heart firmly rooted in both the East and the West, his music is an ongoing reflection of diverse cultural influences. In the last few years, Sagar's reach has extended from art films to mainstream Bollywood and international cinema.

**Editor – Hemanti Sarkar**

After graduating from FTII, Pune, Hemanti worked on many award winning features and documentaries notably *Peepli Live*, *English Vinglish* and *Parineeta*

**FILMOGRAPHY**

*Shamitabh* (2015), *Bakrapur* (2014), *Mcream* (2014), *Daughters of Mother India* (2014), *Riders of the Mist* (2014), *Kaphal* (2013), *English Vinglish* (2012), *Kuch Luv Jaissa* (2011), *Peepli Live* (2010), *Sankat City* (2009), *Barah Aana* (2009), *Lilkee* (2006), *Maati Mai* (2006), *Parineeta* (2005), *Dansh* (2005), *Strings* (2004), *Filmstar* (2004), *Sur* (2002)

**Sound Designer – Niraj Gera**

Niraj Gera is a Sound Designer and an Acoustician. In 2008 he co-founded a prolific Sound Post-Production Studio 'Aural Mayhem', Mumbai. In a span of ten years, he is recognized and known for dozens of Feature Films, Documentaries & Short Films such as *Valu-The Bull*, *B.A. Pass*, *Fireflies*, *Sulemani Keeda*, *Gulabi Gang*, *Stahniya Sambaad*, *Laxmi and Me*, *Superman of Malegaon*, *The Dewarists*.

His work has been exhibited at IDFA, IDPA, The Norwegian Film Festival - Grimstad, The New York Film Festival, Karlovy Vary International Festival, DOCFEST-Munich, Warsaw International Film Festival, Birds Eye View Film Festival-London, Dubai Film Festival, MIFF, IFFI.

In his continuous quest for the unknown, he is currently working on 3 Dimensional sound for VR 360 videos.

An alumnus of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), he has also been a guest lecturer for sound design programs/ workshops at the institute.

**Casting Director – Mansi Multani**

Actor, singer and overall performance addict, Mansi Multani has been a part of several theatre productions such as *Piya Behrupiya* and *Stories in a Song*, the first of which has crossed 130 shows and been performed all over the world from The Globe Theatre in London for the Cultural Olympics in 2012 to the Shake Nice Festival in France and Santiago A'Mil Theatre Festival in South America, to name a few. She has also acted in several advertisements, docu-dramas on television and comedy sketches on YouTube with All India Bakchod. She is the Casting Director for *Island City* and claims that understanding performance closely through her everyday work helped a great deal in wearing this hat for the very first time.

**CREW BIOS****Associate Director – Pranjal Dua**

Pranjal Dua is a national-award winning filmmaker who studied at the Film & Television Institute of India (FTII). His films stem from an overwhelming sense of wonder at the absurdity of the world around him.

Hailing from the capital city of New Delhi, Pranjal has been witness to a dynamic process of transformation - of his country and its people. With his films, he hopes to examine his own identity within the context of contemporary India. He is 30 years of age and currently resides in Mumbai.

**Producer****National Film Development Corporation**

The National Film Development Corporation of India is the central agency established to encourage the good cinema movement in the country. The primary goal of the NFDC is to plan, promote and organize an integrated and efficient development of the Indian film industry and foster excellence in cinema. Over the years NFDC has provided a wide range of services essential to the growth of Indian cinema. The NFDC (and its predecessor the Film Finance Corporation) has so far funded/produced over 300 films. These films, in various Indian Languages, have been widely acclaimed and have won many National and International awards.

**AWADHESH KUMAR**

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