

COMPASS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

# Calorie

A FILM BY **Eisha Marjara**



Ellora  
**PATNAIK**

Shanaya  
**DHILLON-BIRMHAN**

Anupam  
**KHER**

Dolly  
**AHLUWALIA**

Ashley  
**GANGER**

# Calorie

***A bittersweet drama follows three generations of women whose present and past lives collide during an emotionally packed summer in India.***

## PRODUCTION DATA

PROJECT STATUS: In postproduction  
TITLE: CALORIE  
GENRE: Drama  
FORMAT: 4K  
RUNNING TIME: 105 minutes  
FILMING LOCATION: Montreal, Amritsar  
LANGUAGE: English  
STATUS: In Postproduction  
COMPLETION DATE: July 2025  
PRODUCER: Joe Balass  
Compass Productions Inc.  
(Montreal, Canada since 1997)  
SCREENWRITER: Eisha Marjara  
SCRIPT DRAFT: Final Draft, Original Screenplay (from an original concept by Eisha Marjara)  
SCRIPT LANGUAGE: English  
DIRECTOR: Eisha Marjara  
CAST: Ellora Patnaik, Anupam Kher, Shanaya Dhillon-Birmhan, Dolly Ahluwalia, Ashley Ganger  
TARGET AUDIENCE: South Asian, Women 20s to 60s  
REFERENCE FILMS: *Lion, Incendies, The Namesake, Amu*

# Eisha Marjara

## Director, co-writer

With a background in photography, Montreal-based **Eisha Marjara** first drew attention with the witty and satirical *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN*. But it was her feature NFB docudrama [DESPERATELY SEEKING HELEN](#) (2000) that established her as a groundbreaking filmmaker. The film received the *Critic's Choice Award* at the Locarno Film Festival and the *Jury Prize* at the München Dokumentarfilm Festival. It has been described as “one of the most auspicious film debuts on the Canadian scene.” Her new short *AM I THE SKINNIEST PERSON YOUVE EVER SEEN?* (2024) just won the award for Best Canadian Short at Hot Docs, and her transgender dramas *HOUSE FOR SALE* (2012) *VENUS* (2017) both received multiple awards at critical success. Her photo series and essay on the Air India tragedy of flight 182 *Remember me Nought* was featured in Descant magazine. Marjara has also authored her debut novel [Faerie](#), (Arsenal Pulp Press) about a teenager struggling with anorexia. *Faerie* has received rave reviews in Canadian and American press.

Marjara was selected for the 2017 TIFF Studio. She is in postproduction on her second feature *CALORIE* with Compass Productions. *CALORIE* was also selected for the 2016 Goa Film Bazaar coproduction market and for the Praxis Screenwriters Lab where Marjara was mentored by screenwriter Guinevere Turner (*American Psycho*, *The Notorious Bettie Page*).



# Director's statement

*Calorie* is a female driven film that spans continents, cultures, and generations. It exposes the deep, affecting and conflicted relationship daughters have with their mothers. It's a journey which has roots in memory, especially for the protagonist Monika, a single mom with secrets, regrets, wounds and two unmanageable teenaged girls. One whom she fears will follow in her footsteps, the other she dreads she may lose, as she lost her own mother when she was a teen.

The look of *Calorie* is driven by conflict. Conflict between mother and daughter, past and present, Canada and India. Hope and fear. Good girl and bad girl.



*Ellora Patnaik*

The film challenges the audience to consider new and alternative definitions of both community and family.

The story of *Calorie* is loosely inspired by my own family history. My family arrived in Canada, from India in 1971, and settled in Sainte-Foy. My father had come on a scholarship to study at Université Laval in '69 and my mother arrived two years later with me and my sisters. She had never set foot outside her village in Punjab. My mother was the closest role model I had of what it meant to be a woman. She was eager to adapt and belong and make Québec her home.

The belonging did not happen in the way she had hoped. As a young girl, I saw her long for her family and ache to return to India the more she faced hardship here. She had one foot here and one foot there.



*Anupam Kher & Dolly Ahluwalia*

Then in 1985, my mother and younger sister were killed in the bombing of Air India flight 182 which was headed to India from Montreal, a flight that I was fated to be on, as well.

*Calorie* flashes back in time, to the 80's in Montreal. The flashback scenes have no distinguishing features except for the cues in art direction, costume and music, which are markers of the era. They are treated with the same cinematic approach as the rest of the film. My intention is to obscure the lines between time and cultures and generations. By moving fluidly between the past and the present, between mother once daughter, not only are transitions felt more smoothly, but we live inside the character's head as she experiences the immediacy of her past memories in the moment and their effect on her present day reality.



*Ashley Ganger & Shanaya Dhillon-Birmhan*

*Calorie* is not a “historical thriller” or drama based on “true people or events”, excepting for the Air India tragedy.

The film is designed to explore and illuminate and to do so in a way that is both emotionally affecting and evolving for the audience, but which is also entertaining, as well as thought-provoking.



# Joe Balass

## producer

**Joe Balass** founded **Compass Productions** in Montreal in 1997. He works in both fiction and documentary. He has produced and directed a number of award-winning films including: *Nana, George & me* (1997), *The Devil in the Holy Water* (2002), *Baghdad Twist* (2007), *Venus* (2017) and *The Affairs of Lidia* (2022). He is known for blend of seriousness and humour in his work. His films have screened at TIFF, Tribeca, IDFA, and Torino. Both the Cinémathèque québécoise and the Toronto Jewish Film Festival have honoured him with a retrospective of his work. Balass recently completed shooting in India on *Calorie* by Eisha Marjara. Balass also has three features in development, *Mother Mary* and *Santo Cabron*, by Bruce LaBruce, and *Farida*, based on the the award-winning novel by Canadian-Iraqi writer, Naïm Kattan.

In addition, Balass organises the *Journées du cinéma québécois en Italie*, a festival dedicated to screening francophone Canadian work in Italy, now in its twentieth edition.





# Contact

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