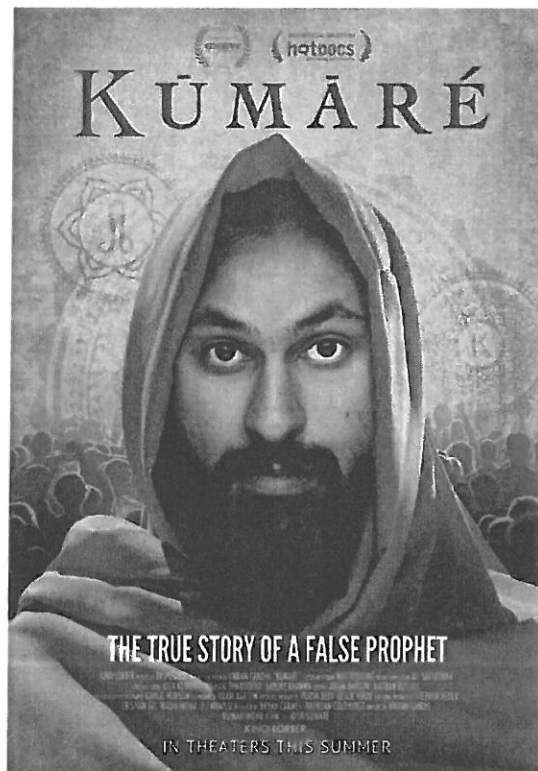


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Technical Info:

2011 / 84 minutes / US / In English / Color
Aspect Ratio: 1:85 : 1 / Sound: Dolby Digital

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Please download photos from the website below:
www.kinolorber.com/press

KINO LORBER

KUMARÉ THE TRUE STORY OF A FALSE PROPHET DIRECTED BY VIKRAM GANDHI

SHORT SYNOPSIS:

Kumaré is an enlightened guru from the East who builds a following of loyal disciples in the West. But Kumaré is not real. He is an American filmmaker named Vikram Gandhi, who has transformed himself into Kumaré as the centerpiece of a social experiment designed to explore and test one of the world's most sacred taboos.

Concealing his true identity from all he meets, Kumaré forges profound, spiritual connections with real people from all walks of life. At the same time, in the absurdity of living as an entirely different person, Vikram the filmmaker is forced to confront difficult questions about his own identity. At the height of his popularity he reveals his greatest teaching: his true self. A playful yet genuine and insightful look at belief and spirituality, the film crosses a line few have dared to cross, all to discover: from illusion comes truth.

EXTENDED SYNOPSIS:

Sri Kumaré is an enlightened guru from the East who has come to America to spread his teachings. After three months in Phoenix, Kumaré has found a group of devoted students who embrace him as a true spiritual teacher. But beneath his long beard, deep penetrating eyes, and his endless smile, Kumaré has a secret he is about to unveil to his disciples: he is not real. Kumaré is really Vikram Gandhi, an American filmmaker from New Jersey who wanted to see if he could transform himself into a guru and build a following of real people. Now, he is conflicted. Can he unveil the truth to these disciples with whom he has spent so much time, and who now look to him for guidance?

Vikram takes us back to where his story began. From an early age, he questioned the meaning of religion and spirituality. Was it all just make believe, or was there something real beyond the realm of our understanding? As a young adult, Vikram found himself perplexed that, just as he was leaving his Hindu faith behind, America was embracing Indian spirituality in the form of yoga studios and gurus who claimed to be on a higher spiritual plane. When he began filming these gurus for a documentary, he discovered there was nothing special about who they were or what they did -- they were no more holy than anyone else. In order to prove this, Vikram decides to transform himself into one of them: Sri Kumaré, a guru of his own creation. If he can build a following as Kumaré, wouldn't it demonstrate that spiritual authenticity is just an illusion that we create? So he grows out his hair and beard, acquires the bells and whistles of Indian mystics, affects an accent, and transforms himself into the wise Indian Guru Kumaré.

Kumaré sets off to Phoenix, Arizona to build a following. He takes with him two disciples -- Kristen to teach yoga and Purva to book events -- who will become Kumaré's first followers and greatest public messengers. At first it is easier than he imagined -- everywhere he goes, people revere him because of how he looks and behaves, despite his lack of a substantive teaching.

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When people ask to be blessed, Vikram invents a blessing and starts to deliver it: a blue light that he imagines in his head and shoots out onto people, with their foreheads pressed against his. Then something amazing happens. People really start to feel the blue light. It might be something Vikram made up, but it's very real to those who experience it.

More and more people begin showing up to his events, and soon a core group of devoted students emerge. The powers and temptations of being a Guru soon become clear to Vikram. But it is all fun and games until people start to put serious faith in him -- and pour their hearts out to him. Vikram finds that if he isn't careful, he might just overstep his bounds and significantly change the course of his disciples' lives in ways that are beyond his control. What can he say when a woman comes to him for advice about whether to leave her husband, or when a former drug addict begins to look to upon him as a role model? Would they feel the same way about Vikram that they do about Kumaré?

If Vikram is really going to push Kumaré to his infinite potential, he'll need to teach something he believes with his entire being. He builds his teaching around the one thing he feels strongly about: that his disciples don't need a guru -- that the guru is inside each of us. He calls his teaching The Mirror -- Kumaré is only a mirror that people can use to gaze upon their own infinite potential, which is already deep inside themselves. Kumaré begins to proclaim this message, and all who hear it are receptive.

At the same time, something happens which Vikram could never have anticipated: for the first time he starts to feel the blue light himself. Vikram forms deep attachments to many of these students, but all the while he wonders why he had to take on this other persona just to connect with people? Vikram makes a promise to himself: soon he will unveil his true identity to his disciples in order to prove his point. He spends more time with his disciples relating to them one-on-one and teaching them to embrace their gurus within. He asks them each to make promises to themselves -- whether it's following through on promises to a loved one, committing to a healthier diet, or learning how to respect themselves. Vikram is awed when his students take his guidance very seriously, and he starts to see them making the first steps towards positive changes in their lives.

By the time he is to unveil, Vikram realizes why other gurus don't unveil themselves: he cares too much for his disciples who have now made serious and substantial changes to improve their lives, and they claim it is all because of Kumaré. When Kumaré reveals his greatest teaching of all: his true self, the reaction will shock, surprise, and even inspire all who see it.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT/PRODUCTION NOTES: by Vikram Gandhi

Six years ago, I filmed a gang of Sadhus (spiritual ascetics) smoking heroin on the banks of the Holy Ganga in Northern India. Their leader, Ragu Ram, stepped away from a young European woman meditating under a banyan tree, and approached me, machete in hand. "You want to know about gurus?" He popped a squat, and lit up a bidi. "All those big gurus you see, they are not spiritual people. All they want is money. It's not that easy man... Living a spiritual life is very difficult."

Back home in New York City, I filmed the world around me embracing the spiritual life, or at least one packaged into a healthful 90-minute alternative to happy hour. The modern definition of yoga is convoluted as the postures yogis aspire to. Symbols, smells, words, icons, and religions of the East became an easy aesthetic for branding and marketing. Was the culture I grew up in becoming just a marketing scheme for a flourishing industry? In yoga class, was I the only one who wasn't feeling the vibe of getting enlightened? And why were people all of a sudden bowing down to people in robes with expensive philosophies and the promises of happiness? I became skeptical of anyone who sold a spiritual product, anyone who claimed to be holier than anyone else, anyone who said they had the answer.

Kumaré was the center of a social experiment testing what we coined 'The Spiritual Placebo Effect.' Can a fake religion have the same effect as a real one? If you know the facts are not real, does it make the experience any less real? Sometimes it's easy not to question what feels right - people think you're being a downer, or a cynic. But to me, asking questions, breaking down icons and idols, and destroying the illusions our society is built on are highly spiritual acts. I suppose even the word "spiritual" is a matter of interpretation.

As Kumaré, I rediscovered my country. America is a lonely place. Technology both connects us and distances us. The value of family has decayed. Globalism feeds at once our fantasies and worldview. We desperately want to bond with others. We seek our parents and siblings out wherever we can get them. We outsource our teachers, our dreams, our identities. Our prosperity only makes our lives easier, not happier.

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BIOGRAPHIES AND FILMOGRAPHIES:

Vikram Gandhi - Director

Vikram Gandhi is a New York-based filmmaker and a graduate of Columbia University. He has directed and produced commercial campaigns for American Express, Yahoo!, Puma, and Energizer as well as music videos, promos, and documentary pieces with recording artists from Katy Perry to Au Revoir Simone and Lil'Wayne to LCD Soundsystem. When not in New York, Vikram is a freelance video-journalist reporting on terrorism, natural disasters, the economy, and human rights internationally for the Economist.com, Time.com, ABC, and CNN. Kumaré the Guru is a manifestation of his ideal self; 'Kumaré' the Movie is his first feature length film.

Bryan Carmel - Producer

Bryan Carmel is a film and television writer/producer who specializes in documentary hybrid comedy. Most recently, he was the showrunner for I-Swear: A History of Dirty Words, a two-hour documentary special for The History Channel, hosted by comedian Adam Ferrara. Bryan is a partner in Disposable Television, a boutique creative production company he founded along with fellow Kumaré producer Brendan Colthurst and director Vikram Gandhi.

In his eight years with Disposable, Bryan has written and produced viral campaigns and short-form comedy videos for Microsoft, Yahoo, Snickers, Trojan, Match.com, HBO, Fox Atomic, Hearst Media, and MTV Networks. He has directed music videos and web campaigns for Katy Perry, KoRn, Michael McDonald, Nelly, Varsity Fan Club, and Ashanti. Bryan has written for U-Pick Live (Nickelodeon), All Things Rock (MTV), Total Request Live (MTV), XYZ Minute spots (ABC Family), and produced Pop-Up Video and Pop-Up Culture (VH1), The Greatest Things About Being Blonde (Bravo), The Greatest Things About Being A Red State (Bravo), Courage Countdown 25 (OLN), This Is Your Sex Life (SPIKE), and Toss-Up (ESPN).

Bryan holds a B.A. from Columbia University in Religious Studies and an M.F.A in motion picture producing from USC's prestigious Peter Stark Producing Program. He received the Jack Oackie Fellowship for Comedy in 2007. He is based in New York and Los Angeles.

Brendan Colthurst - Producer

Brendan Colthurst is a founding partner of Disposable Television, a production company in New York City. Through Disposable, Brendan has produced and directed short-form comedy content for HBO, Comedy Central, VH1 and brands including Energizer, Trojan, Microsoft, Yahoo, V8, Bayer, Match.com, Nokia and Snickers. Brendan has also produced or directed numerous comedy web-series featuring comedians Nick Kroll, John Mulaney, Chelsea Peretti, Dave Hill and Becky Drysdale. Before founding Disposable, Brendan co-founded the software company IBG Wine and grew it into the leading ecommerce platform in the wine industry. Brendan received his B.A. in Film Studies from Columbia University, where he was a member of the improv troupe Six Milks.

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Stephen Feder - Executive Producer

Stephen Feder is a film and television producer/writer based in New York and Los Angeles who specializes in documentary-style hybrid comedy. Recently, he worked with Sacha Baron Cohen and Larry Charles on the film BRUNO and has worked with British Comedian Marc Wootton on the hybrid-comedy/reality series LA LA LAND for Showtime. Previously he served as the Series Producer for the NBC syndicated comedy, SPORTS ACTION TEAM, featuring members of Chicago's "Second City" and "Improv Olympic". Before delving into comedy, he directed, produced and developed television content for MTV, History Channel, Discovery, A&E, The Weather Channel, and National Geographic. He also had a stint producing for "The Jerry Springer Show" which provides for endless stories over cocktails.

Stephen received his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Illinois in Media Studies and Religion and his MSc from the London School of Economics in New Media. He was a founding member of the award-winning White Horse Theater Company in Chicago.

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KUMARÉ CREDITS:

Directed by Vikram Gandhi
Produced by Bryan Carmel and Brendan Colthurst
Executive Producers: Stephen Feder, Cristian Gil, Nadia Muna, Eli Nhaissi
Co-Producer: Adam Barton
Associate Producer: Leslie Yoon
Tour Manager and Associate Producer: Purva Bedi
Yoga Teacher: Kristen Calgaro
Edited by Adam Barton and Nathan Russell
Assistant Editor: Shane Reid
Director of Photography: Kahlil Hudson
Additional Camera: Brendan Colthurst, Adam Barton
Production Sound Mixer: Tyrone Chu
Director of Photography (India Unit): Daniel Leeb
Field Coordinator (India Unit): Nicole Jacquis
Costume Designer for Kumaré: Maytinee Redding
Production Legal: Zac Locke, Esq.
Music Supervisor: Ali Sachedina
Original Score: Alex Kliment, Hisham Bharoocha, Sanjay Khanna
Chef: Theresa Morelli
Production Assistants: June Eng, Rebecca Kerzer, Layla Koshnoudi, Meghan Malloy, Kim Eden Neugarten and Daniel Rollingher
Props: Jeffrey Lopez, Kam Metal
Final Event Additional Camera Operators: Steve Wargo, Rick MacDonald.
Final Event Sound Mixer: Roger Weidebach
Sound Editor: Lidia Tamplenizza
Sound Re-Recording Mixer: Alexa Zimmerman
Opening Titles: Stephen Ellis
Color Grading: Prime Focus, New York
Colorist: Alex Berman
Online Editor: Eugene Lehnert
Sales Representation: Dana O'Keefe, Cinetic Media
Publicity: Chris Libby & Clay Dollarhide, Ginsberg / Libby
Festival Marketing: Meera Deepak
Interns: Simone Egipciaco, Julianne Pinto and Melissa Witkin.

This film is dedicated to all the students of Sri Kumaré.

In memory of Shanti Devi Saberwal

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