

## Keeping it real

As a director, Sholder is cautious about not sensationalising the poverty in the film and wants to tell Haslam's story as authentically as possible. "That's [slums in Kolkata] just the world in which the story takes place. [We're] not trying to make it picturesque or exotic. It's just a human story that could take place anywhere in the world and it just happens to be here," said Sholder, whose previous work includes A Nightmare On Elm Street 2: Freddy's Revenge (1985) and The Hidden (1987). He adds how important it was to see the places which Haslam has described in her memoir. "It was very important to get a feel for the city. The city is a character in the film. It's also to spend a lot of time around Jillian. We'd read her memoir but we found that it was only the tip of the iceberg. There was so much more that happened! A lot of the things she describes in the book have a lot more nuance, detail and depth than we imagined," he elaborated. With previous writing and producing credits to his name like Fancypants (2011), OMG (2011) and Dog Jack (2010), it's Russell's first trip to India. "It [Kolkata] feels very frozen in time. You have a really nice brand new Audi in the street next to a hand-pulled rickshaw filled with heavy stuff. Also, in just the way that the traffic just flows together that Westerners cannot imagine but it works incredibly well! I was watching very carefully to see if anyone got ran over and nobody did. It was impressive. Telling the story truthfully also means including these environmental factors that affect it," explained the writer.

Sharing his vision for the untitled biopic which is tentatively planned to release by mid-2020, Russell emphasised the uniqueness of the film, "One aspect that is very important which you don't really get unless you include it, is the way the community played a vital role in sharing what little they have to make sure they take care of the others. That combined with Jillian's discovery of her voice and power makes this story a cocktail that is empowering and heartbreaking at the same time."

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