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'Gandhi' Powerful in its Simplicity

Hindi-Speaking Ajay Mehta Stars in

'G.I. JOE: RETALIATION'

By LISA TSERING
India-West Staff Reporter

SAN FRANCISCO — Busy Indian American actor Ajay Mehta is no stranger to roles of authority — he's played a Wall Street billionaire (in HBO's "Too Big to Fail") and innumerable doctors, politicians and stern

release, "G.I. Joe: Retaliation," which opened in 3D Mar. 29. The big-budget action spectacular is directed by Jon M. Chu and is a followup to the 2009 blockbuster "G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra," which grossed over \$300 million worldwide. It stars Dwayne Johnson, Bruce Willis, D.J. Cotrona, Byung-hun Lee, Adrienne Palicki, Ray Park, Jonathan Pryce, Ray Stevenson and Channing Tatum.

Mehta appears in a climactic extended scene near the end of the film, as the Indian president and a select group of other nuclear-armed world leaders come face to face with the terrifying power of a high-tech villain before the Joes arrive on the scene to save the world.

Around half of his lines are in Hindi — and unsubtitled — which Mehta says adds an air of authenticity to his role. He

was invited to improvise his lines, he told **India-West** in a recent e-mail interview.

The 72-day shoot began outside of Baton Rouge in a massive



man-made sandpit that served as the deserts of Pakistan, said a spokesperson.

"I auditioned for [G.I. Joe: Retaliation] in Los Angeles in 2011 and went to New Orleans to shoot it in October and again in November. I had a lot of fun working on it, and the director Jon Chu [he

was 32 then] was a cool guy. It's an excellent ensemble of actors, as you will see," said Mehta.

The film was originally shot in 2D but "since action thrillers are more fun in 3D with the explosions and other special effects," Paramount made a wise decision to convert it to 3D — "on the heels

of the success of 'The Avengers,' I'm sure," he added. This is his first 3D film.

One of the best things about appearing in "G.I. Joe: Retaliation" was that it offered Mehta the chance to experience New Orleans and other centers

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Ajay Mehta is one of the busiest Indian American actors working in Hollywood today.

Indian fathers among many other film and TV credits.

Now, you can see him as no less a personage than the president of India in the new Paramount

Louisiana. "I loved the city, food and music; and folks are warm and friendly," Mehta explained. "My hotel was next to the French Quarter, and it was great walking everywhere savoring what this historical city has to offer."

In addition to this big-screen role, Mehta is as always fully booked with TV and commercial spots; he appeared in the Mar. 25 episode of the CBS comedy "Rules of Engagement" (the episode, titled "Catering," can be viewed in its entirety for free at CBS.com) and will be seen in numerous episodes as a convenience store owner in "Rectify," a new series debuting April 22 on the Sundance Channel.

Born in New Delhi, Mehta has always been drawn to acting.

"My father, who was a colonel in the Indian Army and the commanding officer of the historical 1st Sikh Regiment, enjoyed

"World in 80 Days" opposite Peter Ustinov; that job took him to New York, where he decided to stay to pursue a fulltime career.

shows.

On the big screen, his credits include "Spider-Man" and "Lakeview Terrace," but he is also willing to



In "Rules of Engagement," Ajay Mehta (2nd left) plays the father of Timmy (Adhir Kalyan) in the "Catering" episode, which can now be viewed for free online at CBS.com. (CBS photo)

Since then, he has appeared on TV in a recurring guest star role as a Middle Eastern ambassador on "24," a comic neurosurgeon on "Eli Stone," an uptight real estate tycoon on "Royal Pains," and a

work in smaller, independent films made by Indian Americans, such as "Ocean of Pearls," "Troublemaker," Ajay Naidu's "Ashes" and "Americanizing Shelley."

Mehta urges **India-West** read-