

# ALCHEMY

Presents

## MEET the PATELS

Written by Geeta V. Patel, Ravi V. Patel, Billy McMillin, and Matthew Hamachek

Produced by Janet Eckholm & Geeta V. Patel

Directed by Geeta V. Patel and Ravi V. Patel

### Press Notes

In Theaters September 11, 2015

Runtime: 88 minutes

Rating: PG

Press materials available on EPK.TV

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## SYNOPSIS

MEET THE PATELS is a laugh-out-loud real life romantic comedy about Ravi Patel, an almost-30-year-old Indian-American who enters a love triangle between the woman of his dreams ... and his parents. Filmed by Ravi's sister in what started as a family vacation video, this hilarious and heartbreaking film reveals how love is a family affair.

Fresh out of a breakup with his secret white girlfriend, who his parents knew nothing about, and freaked out that he's almost 30 and single, Ravi goes on a family vacation to India with his head and heart spinning.

Ravi is willing to do whatever it takes to find love—but there's one tricky detail to consider: In his family, everyone has the last name Patel. Patels marry other Patels. It's not incest, it means they are from the same 50-square mile radius in India. Struck with how overwhelmingly happy the marriages are of his Patel family and friends, Ravi enters a fool-proof Patel matchmaking system and embarks on a worldwide search for another American Patel just like him.

A well-oiled machine, the Patel network is instantly alerted of Ravi's availability through his legendary matchmaker mother and his life-advice-spouting father, both of whom expertly quarterback Ravi's love life through a system that has brought love into the lives of all of Ravi's cousins. During this process, Ravi can't seem to shake his documentarian sister who follows him around, inserting unhelpful commentary at every whim. Over the course of a year, Ravi's parents send him on a whirlwind of dates around the United States via the "Biodating" system, a chain of weddings, online matrimonial websites, and the "Patel Matrimonial Convention." Witty and brutally honest, this comedy explores the questions with which we all struggle: What is love? How do we find it? And even then, how do we keep it?

Directed by siblings Ravi Patel and Geeta Patel, this award-winning film comes to you from Producer Janet Eckholm (AMERICAN SPLENDOR), Academy-Award-winning Executive Producer Geryl Dreyfous (BORN INTO BROTHELS/THE SQUARE) and PBS. With unique animation and a soulful soundtrack that will have audiences dancing in their seats, MEET THE PATELS melds the documentary and narrative form. Geeta and Ravi, along with their quirky parents keep audiences entertained and glued to the screen. MEET THE PATELS is a film everyone can relate to regardless of gender, age, or cultural background — after all, we have all been there.

MEET THE PATELS also uses humor to address a timely social issue: In early 2009, the directors, sister and brother team, Geeta and Ravi Patel, began to explore and document the societal pressures of marriage in their first-generation Indian American family. Through research in India and America, they discovered that their "Indian Issue" was more of an "American Issue": the majority of Americans with strong cultural and religious roots shared a serious psychological conflict when it came to dating (and marrying) outside of their skin color, culture, religion, and ethnicity.

## DIRECTORS Q&A

RP: We made MEET THE PATELS as a coping mechanism for something every human being suffers from: Family.

GP: Whereas I tend to cry and sort of curl up into a ball and call friends with my problems, Ravi has always joked about his. This film started with that.

RP: I was working in comedy and doing a hosting gig at an Indian Lawyers Convention. I ran out of material, so I started talking about my mom trying to set me up with Indian girls with the same last name as me: Patel. Patels marry Patels in our culture. It's so weird, and yet so normal in my world.

GP: And mine. The point is, the crowd was laughing like CRAZY...

RP: I had made people laugh before, but this was different. I had never seen an audience so emotional and engaged in a way that was deeply personal. This was a cathartic laugh that reached down deep into parts of their body they hadn't even heard of—

GP: Afterwards, people came up to Ravi and asked him to write a book, do a comedy tour, anything.

RP: And then I was like, wait a minute! When does any Indian Lawyer need another Indian Lawyer? Like, you're sitting in court and you're like, "Excuse me judge, I need to get another Indian Lawyer on this case, I'll be right back..." No! This convention was a total façade. I asked the crowd, "Who here is single?" They all raised their hands.

GP: A few months later, we were in India on vacation and Ravi was babbling on about making some kind of Morgan Spurlock-like documentary about the internal pressure of first-generation Indians to marry within their own culture. I was like NO WAY IN HELL. I had just spent 7 years making a documentary about a war zone and I had no car, no money, and no bowel movements.

RP: Geeta was trying to teach herself how to use a camera (which she never learned, as you can see in the film) and so she was filming our family trip. I had just broken up with my "secret white girlfriend" that Mom and Dad knew nothing about. They were trying to set me up with Patel girls in India...

GP: Thank God, they had given up on me...

RP: Anyway, we showed PBS our footage and they loved it.

GP: As we made the film and tested it with audiences, we knew that this film was not about the "Indian Issue"— It was about family. About relationships, the moment when you think your relationship with your spouse, your mom, your dad, your friend, sister, brother -- you think that relationship is never going to get better, that this person is never going to understand me.... This film is about getting to the other side of that. About trying so hard and realizing that people do change, and relationships are the most magical and important parts of life.

RP: We kept testing the film and Americans of all backgrounds - whether Jewish, Christian, first-generation Vietnamese, etc., all responded with intensity.

GP: Everyone seemed to relate.

RP: Funny enough, the more specific we got with our personal story, the stronger the impact and universality. So many times we wanted to quit — but we kept going because we knew this was the film we wish we had when we were going through our struggles.

GP: We made this film about family because there are not enough films out there about this amazing and challenging experience we all share. We made this film about relationships because having a great one with your brother, parents, kids, friends -- it's the most important thing in life!

RP: We all want to give love, be loved, and remain in love. This film is also about transcending the lines of race and color and culture in all our relationships -- something this country seems to slowly be learning. However, this film takes it to audiences through the most intimate and telling test in all our lives: who we choose to love and bring into our families.

GP: So...we spent 6 years making the film, and when we were finally done... ready for this?

RP: Nobody wanted it.

GP: Nobody. We got rejected from festivals for a year.

RP: So we re-cut the film for another year and took it from what was in our eyes, "good" to "great." And guess what?

GP: We got rejected again. It was almost like our film was a metaphor for our pathetic love lives.

RP: So then we finally begged our way into a festival and premiered, and guess what? The show sold out!

GP: We showed the film around the world for a year and every show was sold out with lines around the theaters. It kept winning Audience Awards. In fact, it was the first film in the history of Michael Moore's Traverse City Film Festival to win both the Audience Award and the Founder's Grand Prize for Best Film—

RP: UTA came on board... and finally, Alchemy decided to take the film to theaters in a wide release!

GP: People were calling the film the next BIG FAT GREEK WEDDING and the Hollywood Reporter named it an Oscar contender!

RP: But this was the icing.

GP: Yeah, because what we went through making this film was the greatest experience of our lives

RP: I almost killed Geeta in the course of making this film.

GP: Seriously we almost lost our relationship while making this film. Ravi is impossible to work with.

RP: But, since I couldn't fire my sister, I had to love her more. And if you've seen the film, you know that this story completely changed our relationship with our parents. It changed our lives.

GP: I will never forget the day we finished the film for good, and Ravi said to me, "Geeta, I don't know if this film will see the light of day, but it was worth it because of my relationship with you and Mom and Dad." Awww.

RP: I still feel that way... But um... it really would be awesome to crush it in theaters!

Love,

Ravi and Geeta

## ABOUT THE ANIMATION

RP: The biggest challenge, outside of working with Geeta's constant snacking habit, was the animation.

GP: The animation came out of a big problem—

RP: We didn't want to have a camera in our parents' faces when they were going through some really tough stuff. We decided early on that our family would always come first. This meant that sometimes what was best for the film, wasn't best for the family.

GP: So we thought, do we make the film or not?

RP: And then we thought-- How can we not shoot these key moments and yet still convey what happened without sacrificing the quality of the film? We experimented with all sorts of storytelling techniques for these plot points -- kind of Woody Allen-type, me talking to camera comedy, stand-up comedy moments like in Seinfeld and that didn't quite work as well. We also did an entire shoot with a white background that represented my mind and I was hosting a talk show with all these experts and we would run off to do sketches.

GP: That shoot took a year and tons of money-- and we ended up throwing it away! In the end, it didn't mesh well the home video quality of the film. Finally, we both thought about the idea of radio. With This American Life, the storytelling is so strong that you don't even need video, right?

RP: There are some animations that This American Life does and we're also big films of this film called AMERICAN SPLENDOR.

GP: So we studied radio form and spent a year structuring Ravi's audio storytelling to be as strong as could possibly be. Only after we felt the audio could stand-alone like radio, did we add the animation component.

RP: When we got the first storyboards we put them into the film, we realized that we didn't want to "finish" the animations and color then in, etc. They fit perfectly being raw!

GP: It made sense tonally with how the rest of the film looks and feels. Then we spent a couple years to get that tone right and finding animators who could pull it off. We went through a lot of animators to get through it because many animators felt that this unfinished, raw sketchy quality of animation looked unprofessional. They were afraid that people would think that they were bad animators. We were like, no, no, no, this is what we want.

RP: The expressions and details took another year and daily toil. We drove everyone to their limits and they were generous and passionate enough to give this everything they had. Our animation team really went above and beyond.

GP: It took so many people to make that animation work. We couldn't be more thankful to our entire production team for the opportunity to fail so many times in order to find the voice of this film. That kind of support makes or breaks a film like this.

## ABOUT THE CAST AND CREW

### **Ravi V. Patel – Director, Writer & Editor**

Ravi's directoral debut is the real-life romantic comedy MEET THE PATELS. Executive Produced by Academy Award Winner Geryl Dreyfous. The film features Ravi's family and his comedic take on a sequence of events that involve his mother and his love life. The film has been recently acquired by Alchemy for national theatrical release this September.

As an actor, Ravi is most recognized for his work on SCRUBS, IT'S ALWAYS SUNNY IN PHILADELPHIA, TRANSFORMERS, POWDER BLUE, THE NEW NORMAL, and is currently co-starring the Fox Series GRANDFATHERED alongside John Stamos, which premieres this September.

Ravi also serves as Co-CEO of THIS BAR SAVES LIVES, which he founded with actors Ryan Devlin, Todd Grinnell, Kristen Bell, Jimmy Kimmel, Emily Blunt, John Krasinsky, Kunal Nayyar, Alyssa Milano, Susan Sarandon, and many others. TBSL gives a life-saving meal packet to a child in need for every fruit and nut bar they sell. Ravi also co-manages an investment group which focuses primarily on health, wellness, and social enterprises.

Prior to joining the entertainment industry, Ravi was an investment banker and later founded the popular poker magazine ALL IN. He graduated from The University of North Carolina with double majors in Economics and International Studies.

### **Geeta V. Patel – Director, Writer, Editor & Cinematographer**

Geeta is known for her emotional, form-pushing, and nontraditional style that merges documentary and dramatic forms.

She is writer and director of the upcoming action/thriller MOUSE, produced by Grant Hill (THE MATRIX, TREE OF LIFE), choreography by Jeff Imada (FIGHT CLUB, BOURNE IDENTITY). Geeta also directed the real-life comedy MEET THE PATELS, Executive Produced by Academy Award Winner Geryl Dreyfous. Prior to this, Geeta made her directorial debut with the documentary war thriller, PROJECT KASHMIR, which led to directing fellowships at Sundance and Tribeca.

Geeta started as writer's assistant in TV, and then served as Associate Screenwriter for big-budget production rewrites for Universal Pictures, ABC, NBC, and Twentieth Century Fox on titles that include THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS and BLUE CRUSH.

A graduate in Comparative Area Studies from Duke, Geeta was inspired to enter storytelling by Anthony Minghella, who she met while studying in Berlin. Geeta was recently Visiting Artist in Belarus and Turkey as one of 29 filmmakers chosen for President Obama's film delegation.

### **Janet Eckholm - Producer**

Independent producer Janet Eckholm has worked in documentary and feature production and post-production for twenty years. She worked freelance for HBO Films on the features AMERICAN SPLENDOR - winner of the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance and nominated for an Oscar for Best Adapted Screenplay, TAKING CHANCE - winner of an Emmy Award for Editing, Golden Globe Awards for actor Kevin Bacon and Best Television Movie, and a Directors Guild Award for Ross Katz, ROCKET SCIENCE - winner of the Best Director award in the Dramatic Competition at Sundance, A DOG YEAR, and DANCING IN SEPTEMBER, and the documentary GOOD HAIR - winner of a Special Jury Prize at Sundance.

Janet's other feature credits include THE PUNISHER - for Lionsgate, Gale Anne Hurd's Valhalla Motion Pictures, and Marvel Entertainment, TRADE - for Roland Emmerich's Centropolis Entertainment, and SMOKE SIGNALS - winner of the Audience Award and Filmmakers Trophy at Sundance. Janet was also a producer on the documentary SECRET ORIGIN: THE STORY OF DC COMICS – for Warner Bros.

She began her filmmaking career in Alaska, producing documentaries, commercials, and THE BOX OF DAYLIGHT - a short feature depicting the Tlingit myth of creation.

### **Geralyn Dreyfous – Executive Producer**

Geralyn Dreyfous has a wide, distinguished background in the arts, extensive experience in consulting in the philanthropic sector, and participates on numerous boards and initiatives. She spent an early part of her career at the Philanthropic Initiative in Boston, which guides families of wealth in strategic giving opportunities, and taught Documentary and Narrative writing with Dr. Robert Coles at Harvard University.

Geralyn is the Founder and Board Chair of the Utah Film Center, a non-profit that curates free screenings and outreach programs for communities throughout Utah. In 2007, she co-founded Impact Partners Film Fund with Dan Cogan, bringing together financiers and filmmakers so that they can create great films that entertain audiences, enrich lives, and ignite social change. Since its inception, IP has been involved in the financing of numerous award-winning films, including: THE COVE, which won the 2010 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature; THE GARDEN, which was nominated for the 2009 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature; FREEHELD, which won the 2008 Academy Award for Best Documentary Short Film; THE GHOSTS OF ABU GHRAIB, which won the 2007 Emmy Award for Best Documentary Special; and HELL AND BACK AGAIN, which was nominated for the 2012 Academy Award for Documentary Feature.

Geralyn's executive producing and producing credits include Academy Award winning BORN INTO BROTHELS; 2014 Oscar Nominated, THE SQUARE; 2013 Oscar Nominated THE INVISIBLE WAR; Emmy nominated THE DAY MY GOD DIED; and multiple film festivals winners such as KICK LIKE A GIRL, IN A DREAM, DHAMMA BROTHERS, PROJECT KASHMIR, MISS REPRESENTATION, CONNECTED, THE CRASH REEL, and ANITA.

### **Dan Cogan – Executive Producer**

Dan Cogan is the Executive Director and Co-Founder of Impact Partners, a fund and advisory service for investors and philanthropists who seek to promote social change through film. Since its inception in 2007, Impact Partners has been involved in the financing of over 50 films, including: THE COVE, which won the 2010 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature; THE GARDEN, which was nominated for an Academy Award for Documentary Feature in 2009; HELL AND BACK AGAIN, which won the Documentary Grand Jury Prize and Cinematography Award at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, and was nominated for an Academy Award for Documentary Feature in 2012; and HOW TO SURVIVE A PLAGUE, which was nominated for an Academy Award for Documentary Feature in 2013.

Mr. Cogan co-founded Gamechanger Films, which launched in September 2013. Gamechanger Films is the first for-profit film fund dedicated exclusively to financing narrative features directed by women. Mr. Cogan has spoken on documentary film and film finance at film festivals, conferences and classes around the world, including Sundance, Toronto, Hot Docs, Tribeca, the IFP's Independent Film Week, Film Independent's Filmmaker Forum, and Columbia University.

Mr. Cogan received his B.A. from Harvard University, Magna Cum Laude, and attended the Film Division at Columbia University's Graduate School of the Arts.

**Vijay Vaidyanathan – Executive Producer**

Vijay Vaidyanathan's day job is CEO, Optimal Asset Management based in Los Altos, CA. He holds a Ph.D in Finance and MSc in Finance (Risk & Asset Management) from EDHEC Business School, France. He also holds a MS in Computer Science, SUNY Albany, MSc (Tech) from BITS Pilani (India).

Vijay is actively involved as an Executive Producer with a diverse slate of independent films. His recent film credits include: AN HONEST LIAR (Tribeca 2014, Hot Docs 2014), MAD AS HELL: THE RISE OF YOUNG TURKS (Hot Docs 2014), MEET THE PATELS (HotDocs 2014), POINT AND SHOOT (Winner of "Best Documentary" Tribeca 2014, Hot Docs 2014) directed by (two-time Academy Award nominated) Marshall Curry, and WAYS OF LISTENING (Telluride 2013) a film portrait of British writer and thinker John Berger, which is currently being expanded to a four part series of documentary essays directed by Colin Maccabe and Executive-Produced with Academy Award winner Tilda Swinton.

**Vasant K. Patel- Executive Producer**

Executive Producer Vasant Patel has a diverse background in careers spanning from engineering to the arts. After receiving his degree in Mechanical Engineering from Michigan Tech University, Vasant spent over 40 years in roles including Design Engineer, Financial Advisor, and Career Consultant. In 1989, he founded the career-consulting firm CPRResume, which within 3 years, expanded to four branches becoming the largest in the Carolinas.

In his semi-retired life, Vasant serves as the Founder and President of social club Life Is Great (LIG), which means to live a happy and meaningful life by maintaining a positive attitude toward life. He is also the Writer and Producer of the upcoming untitled romantic comedy... and his children and all their friends refer to him as "Yoda".

**Niraj Bhatia – Executive Producer**

Originally from Dallas, Texas, Niraj Bhatia was born with a fascination of business and a passion for entertainment. During high school, Bhatia developed a keen interest in financial planning and analysis, both on the macro and micro levels. These interests lead him out to Los Angeles, where he earned his degree in Economics from the University of Southern California.

Niraj Bhatia and his production company Om Films have built a strong track record of producing quality, engaging films. SPACE STATION 76 is the latest addition to a library that includes the P.G.A. award-winning documentary BEATS, RHYMES, & LIFE: THE TRAVELS OF A TRIBE CALLED QUEST; the embarrassingly funny MORTIFIED NATION!; and CAUCUS, a unique, behind-the-scenes look into the 2012 GOP caucus in Iowa.

**Billy McMillin - Editor**

Billy McMillin is an award-winning editor and writer for feature-length narrative and documentary films. This is his second collaboration with director Geeta V. Patel, as he was editor of her previous film PROJECT KASHMIR. Billy's most recent films include the feature length documentaries THE SHORT GAME, which premiered at SXSW Film Festival and received the Audience Award for Best Documentary, WEST OF MEMPHIS, for which he was nominated by the WGA for Outstanding Documentary Screenplay and the American Cinema Editors (ACE) for Best Edited Documentary, and Academy Award Nominee for Best Documentary, IRAQ IN FRAGMENTS, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and garnered three awards including Best Editing. His narrative features include EVERY SECRET THING, directed by Amy Berg, and THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF LITTLE DIZZLE directed by David Russo, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival.



**Matthew Hamachek - Editor**

Matthew Hamachek began his career working on the Oscar-nominated documentary STREET FIGHT with Marshall Curry and went on to collaborate with Curry again on RACING DREAMS (Best Documentary, Tribeca Film Festival) and IF A TREE FALLS, which won the Documentary Editing award at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary. Hamachek went on to win the editing award at the 2013 Sundance film festival for GIDEON'S ARMY. Since then he has edited MISTAKEN FOR STRANGERS about the band The National and CONSOLE WARS (executive producers Scott Rudin and Seth Rogen) about the battle between Sega and Nintendo in 90s. He is currently editing Matthew Heineman's (ESCAPE FIRE) film CARTEL LAND.

**Dhevi Natarajan – Editor & Associate Producer**

Dhevi Natarajan is an editor and associate producer. Natarajan has worked closely with award-winning Sundance and Tribeca filmmaker Geeta V. Patel on FEMI (ITVS) and MEET THE PATELS (ITVS/PBS), which is Executive Produced by Academy Award Winner Geryl Dreyfous. Natarajan recently edited the feature documentary ANCHOR BABY produced by Leanna Creel and Mason Funk and for programs with The Scripps Network and The Food Network. Previously, Natarajan worked in the editorial department for the VH1 production of NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK, A BEHIND THE MUSIC SPECIAL at Universal Studios. Also a cinematographer, Natarajan served as camera operator for MTV Networks' LAST NIGHT AT THE COMEDY CENTRAL STAGE. Natarajan received a B.S. in Radio/TV/Film and a B.A. in Hispanic Studies from The University of Texas at Austin in 2007.

**Trishya Screwvala – Co-Producer**

Trishya Screwvala graduated with a Master's degree from USC's Peter Stark Producing Program where she received the Robert S. Ferguson Marketing Award. Back in Mumbai, she produced the documentary BOLLYWOOD: THE GREATEST LOVE STORY EVER TOLD with Academy Award Nominated Shekhar Kapur that screened at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. Currently, she is developing feature film MOUSE with Sundance Fellow Geeta Patel. Trishya is also an active trustee of SWADES Foundation that is committed to rural empowerment through interventions in water, health, agriculture, livelihood and education and is active in 117 villages across Maharashtra. She is also founder of Raindancer, a not-for-profit organization that aims to inspire urban Indian youth to affect change.

**END CREDITS**

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&  
RAVI V. PATEL

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GEETA V. PATEL

**Edited by**  
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MATT HAMACHEK

**Edited by**  
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RAVI V. PATEL  
DHEVI NATARAJAN

**Co-Producer**  
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**Associate Producer**  
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AUDREY ALISON WAUCHOPE

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RALI AMIN	DHARMINDRA AND ARUNA PATEL
SUNKRISH BALA	DIP PATEL
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RAJ KARNIK	VINAY PATEL
MONICA THAPAR	SARITHA PERURI
RAMESH AND SANTOSH KHATRI	RUSSELL PETERS
LENA KUMAR	MEREDITH PHILPOTT
BEN MCMILLAN	ARUN PONNUSAMY
NUPUR MEHTA	DAISY AND NISHEN RADIA
PANKAJ AND MINA MISTRY	NADINE RAJABI
VIJAI NATHAN	ADITYA RAO
AJIT AND MANISHA PATEL	JORDAN RIDER
AMIT AND BONNA PATEL	RAMESH AND KIRTI SARAIYA
ANARI AND ISHAN PATEL	ARTI SHAH
ASHOK PATEL	KOSHA SHAH
BHAVANA PATEL	STERLING SULIEMAN
BHAVIT PATEL	PEJ VAHDAT
CHIMAN AND SAVITA PATEL	KIRAN VUTLA
MANHARBHAI AND PUSHPA PATEL	
PALAK AND JULIANA MORENO PATEL	
DHEVI NATARAJAN AND JENS RAFAELSEN	
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Production Sound Mixer	STEVE NELSON
Second Camera Operators	MARK MORRIS
	BRUCE E. SCHERMER
First Assistant Camera	PAUL GUGLIELMO
Second Assistant Camera	JOSIAH PATROW
Gaffer	DWIGHT D. CAMPBELL
Best Boy	A. SEBASTIAN AMIRI
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BB Grip	JAMES MONROE THARP
Swing	MATT ARDINE
Boom	CHRIS SILVERMAN
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