

Brokeback Mountain

An Ang Lee Film

*Winner of the Golden Lion Award for Best Picture
at the 2005 Venice International Film Festival*

A Focus Features Release

Production Notes

Brokeback Mountain

Synopsis

From Academy Award-winning filmmaker Ang Lee comes an epic American love story, *Brokeback Mountain*, the winner of the Golden Lion Award for Best Picture at this year's Venice International Film Festival. The film is based on the short story by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Annie Proulx and adapted for the screen by the team of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana. Set against the sweeping vistas of Wyoming and Texas, the film tells the story of two young men -- a ranch-hand and a rodeo cowboy -- who meet in the summer of 1963, and unexpectedly forge a lifelong connection, one whose complications, joys, and tragedies provide a testament to the endurance and power of love.

Early one morning in Signal, Wyoming, Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger) and Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) meet while lining up for employment with local rancher Joe Aguirre (Randy Quaid). The world which Ennis and Jack have been born into is at once changing rapidly and yet scarcely evolving. Both young men seem certain of their set places in the heartland – obtaining steady work, marrying, and raising a family – and yet hunger for something beyond what they can articulate. When Aguirre dispatches them to work as shepherders up on the majestic Brokeback Mountain, they gravitate towards camaraderie and then a deeper intimacy.

At summer's end, the two must come down from Brokeback and part ways. Remaining in Wyoming, Ennis weds his sweetheart Alma (Michelle Williams), with whom he will have two daughters as he ekes out a living. Jack, in Texas, catches the eye of rodeo queen Lureen Newsome (Anne Hathaway). Their courtship and marriage result in a son, as well as jobs in her father's business.

Four years pass. One day, Alma brings Ennis a postcard from Jack, who is en route to visit Wyoming. Ennis waits expectantly for his friend, and when Jack at last arrives, in just one moment it is clear that the passage of time has only strengthened the men's attachment. In the years that follow, Ennis and Jack struggle to keep their secret bond alive. They meet up several times annually. Even when they are apart, they face the eternal questions of fidelity, commitment, and trust. Ultimately, the one constant in their lives is a force of nature – love.

A Focus Features and River Road Entertainment Presentation. An Ang Lee Film. Heath Ledger, Jake Gyllenhaal. *Brokeback Mountain*. Linda Cardellini, Anna Faris, Anne Hathaway, Michelle Williams, and Randy Quaid. Casting, Avy Kaufman, C.S.A. Costume Design, Marit Allen. Music Supervision, Kathy Nelson. Music by Gustavo Santaolalla. Edited by Geraldine Peroni, Dylan Tichenor, A.C.E. Production Designer, Judy Becker. Director of Photography, Rodrigo Prieto, A.S.C., A.M.C. Co-Producer, Scott Ferguson. Executive Producer, Alberta Film Entertainment. Executive Producers, William Pohlad, Larry McMurtry, Michael Costigan, Michael Hausman. Producers, Diana Ossana, James Schamus. Based on the short story by Annie Proulx. Screenplay by Larry McMurtry & Diana Ossana. Directed by Ang Lee. A Focus Features Release.

Brokeback Mountain

Voices of *Brokeback Mountain*

Marit Allen, costume designer

Judy Becker, production designer

Michael Costigan, executive producer

Tim Cyr, rodeo rider/technical advisor to film

Joy Ellison, dialect coach

Scott Ferguson, co-producer

Jake Gyllenhaal, actor (“Jack Twist”)

Anne Hathaway, actress (“Lureen Newsome”)

Heath Ledger, actor (“Ennis Del Mar”)

Ang Lee, director

Shane Madden, rodeo rider/technical advisor to film

Larry McMurtry, screenwriter/executive producer

Diana Ossana, screenwriter/producer

Randy Quaid, actor (“Joe Aguirre”)

James Schamus, producer

Michelle Williams, actress (“Alma”)

Ang Lee: To me, *Brokeback Mountain* is uniquely, and universally, a great American love story.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Annie Proulx’s short story “Brokeback Mountain” was first published in The New Yorker in 1997. It won a National Magazine Award, among other accolades. The story was subsequently published in Ms. Proulx’s 1999 collection Close Range: Wyoming Stories. The screenplay adaptation was written by the team of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana.

Diana Ossana: In October 1997, I was in Texas staying with Larry McMurtry and some friends, one of whom had given me The New Yorker with Annie Proulx’s short story. Two-thirds of the way through reading the story, I began to sob, and I sobbed all the way to the end. I was floored. Emotionally exhausted, I went to sleep, got up the next morning and read it again because I wanted to see if it affected me as much in broad daylight as it did in the middle of the night. Its effect on me was even more profound. I took the magazine downstairs and asked Larry to read the story.

Larry McMurtry: In 1997, Diana brought The New Yorker downstairs and asked that I read Annie’s story. I don’t read fiction much anymore, so I was reluctant. But in her tenacious way, she asked that I humor her and read it. After I was finished reading it, the first thing I thought was that I wished I had written it. It was a story that had been sitting there for years, waiting to be told, and Annie finally wrote it. It is one of the finest short stories I’ve read. The place, the landscape, the men and the way they speak are drawn precisely and convincingly.

Diana Ossana: He read it and said it was the best short story ever published in The New Yorker. “Well, do you think it would make a screenplay,” I asked. And he replied, “I think it might.” And I said, “Why don’t we write Annie a letter?” And he said, “Okay.”

Larry McMurtry: We wrote Annie a short letter, asking her to option the story to us so that we could adapt it for a screenplay. She responded within a week, and we launched into writing. So by the end of 1997, we had a screenplay.

Diana Ossana: We immediately optioned her short story with our own money. That’s the only time Larry and I have spent our own money on an option. We wrote the screenplay in less than three months, and have been attached to the project ever since. That was how this all started. We tried for nearly seven years to get it into production. Various directors came on board at different times, and several actors wanted to be in the film, but no actors would commit. Then Focus, Ang and James became fully involved in late 2003. And now here we are.

Tim Cyr: When I read the short story, I could identify with the traits and feelings that the characters had, especially coming from a background of ranching – where everything out there is looked upon as being different if it’s not traditional.

Shane Madden: Being raised on a farm, yeah, you had to hide it. It hurt to try and hide it. There were times I used to bang my head against a wall. [I read the story, and] I was losing it after the first six pages. It hit me deep inside.

Judy Becker: The short story made me cry, and the script made me cry too. *Brokeback Mountain* is a love story, and it’s also about whether or not you have the inner strength to fulfill your life.

Randy Quaid: In 1997, I was in a gym, on a treadmill, and I was looking for something to read. I saw a copy of The New Yorker, opened it up, and started reading this story. I was just so taken with it that I swiped the magazine, took it home, and finished the story. I think what impacted me the most was the fact that we’re all alone in this world, and we all have that same human need for love – to find somebody that fulfills us.

Annie Proulx is a fabulous writer, and her classic love story always stayed with me. When I read it, I thought it’d be perfect for Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana to write [the screenplay adaptation]. [Later,] I heard they were.

Diana Ossana: I think the thing that startled me the most was the emotions the story made me feel. It affected me as a woman, and I felt it would surely affect anyone else, no matter what their sexual preference. The feelings are universal – love, loss, pain, regret. Through the centuries, people haven’t changed in their wants and needs and desires.

Annie trusted Larry and me very much. Larry and I have written two novels, and many more screenplays and teleplays, together. The West is rich in character, experience and the history of our country, and we like that. We talk about what we're writing quite a bit before we start. The process is pretty straightforward. We discuss things a lot; we argue, but the arguments usually result in good things.

We're really very different from one another. That's clear just by the way we write; he's on a manual typewriter and I'm on a computer. He seems more interested in the women characters than the men, and seems to feel that I have more intuitiveness about the men than he does. He's strong in dialogue – that's clear from his books – and character. I feel that my strengths are the inner life of the characters, and how to convey that through the dialogue. I have a real strong sense of what's going on with them inside, always.

James Schamus: Larry and Diana's screenplay took a spare, brief, and intense short story and managed to maintain its purity while vastly increasing its scope – not an easy task.

Michael Costigan: In Hollywood, Larry and Diana's script was known as one of the great unproduced screenplays. I had read the story, which was incredibly moving. I too thought, "How do you do this [as a movie]? How do you depict this?" The script broke me in half when I read it the first time. I gave it to my wife, who had the same reaction. I think people were afraid of it; these emotions run really deep. Each person who would read the script was deeply affected. The hope was to make the movie and have people be impacted and affected by these characters and by their story, the way all of us were by just reading the script. It's a movie that had to be done well, or not at all.

Diana Ossana: As powerful as the story and script were, with good parts for actors, I knew that it would take actors who were smart and brave to commit to this and go places emotionally that they'd never gone before – and a director who would understand this, and who would be willing to make this challenging movie on a modest budget.

I never really lost faith, but I didn't think it would take seven years. I think I was more frustrated by the fact that people wouldn't truly commit. They'd read it, they'd love it, they'd waver or anguish about it – and then something that paid more money or whatever would come along, and they'd just let it go. And then I'd simply press on, contacting more directors and actors, sending it to people to read and to consider. It was a long, hard, rocky road to get to this point. James Schamus read the script and expressed interest in helping get it made while he was still with Good Machine, trying repeatedly to get a studio to give it the go-ahead, but none of them would.

Ang Lee: If a project is not scary and sensitive, then it's probably less interesting to me. After *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, we were on our way to make our next project, and James Schamus mentioned to me that he just came upon this interesting material. I read the short story, which I wasn't aware of when it was first published. I had tears in my eyes at the end, and it

stayed with me. I [then] read Larry and Diana’s screenplay, and it was a very faithful and great adaptation.

James Schamus: In many ways, it’s a truly grand, old-fashioned movie about two heroes, fighting against all odds to preserve their love. We always approached *Brokeback Mountain* as nothing less than an epic American story.

Ang Lee: Two years later, I asked James, “What happened with *Brokeback Mountain*? Did it get made yet?” He said, “We haven’t been able to make that movie.” Lucky for me. I said, “You know, it’s stuck with me over the years. I can’t get it out of my mind.”

James Schamus: I tried for years, as an independent producer, to make the film, but could never get any studio to give us the green light. Then, one day, I woke up and thought, “Hey, isn’t it David [Linde]’s and my job to get movies greenlit here at Focus?” Then I knew I was in trouble!

Ang Lee: James got the rights, and I started thinking about making the movie right away. Before I knew I could physically do it, I jumped on. I just knew, in the bottom of my heart, if I let it go, I would regret it for the rest of my life.

Legendary writers who are very much alive and still working – that’s a lot of pressure. In the back of my head was, “This will not please them; this will; that will...” Structurally, this was very challenging; it’s an epic short story. But, as a filmmaker, you’re creating a special enclosed space and time – your own world.

James Schamus: One of the great things Ang brings to the story is the humanity and attention devoted to every character. This isn’t just a story about our leads; it’s about their wives, their children, their communities.

Ang Lee: I decided to take a risk and go with a younger cast. It’s a 20-year story, and you cannot recreate youth that easily. I decided to go with [actors in their] younger 20s. The young have innocence and freshness, and believe in what they’re doing. They make the effort, and you don’t over-instruct them. Nothing’s more rewarding for a filmmaker than when young actors listen and [then] come [up] with great results.

Jake Gyllenhaal: I met with a [different] director about the movie years ago. At the time, I was a teen, so it wasn’t a realistic prospect. I was immediately drawn to *Brokeback Mountain* because love stories haven’t been told this way in a long time. Movies I’ve seen in recent years have avoided the struggles and the trials that it takes to actually be in love and keep that going. When I heard that Ang Lee was going to make it, I thought, “I have to do this movie.”

Diana Ossana: Larry and I were very impressed with Jake’s versatile and intuitive work in *The Good Girl* and *Donnie Darko*.

Ang Lee: I already knew him as a great young actor. I met Jake in New York, and he said, “I want to be in this movie so badly.” He was totally motivated.

Anne Hathaway: An actor friend of mine said, “Read this script.” I did, and it was a heartbreaking and very real love story. I thought, “I’ve got to be a part of this.”

I went to a bookstore and found Close Range. I read “Brokeback Mountain” first and then went back and read the rest of the stories. Annie Proulx revealed a part of American history to me that I didn’t know existed.

There’s a line in the short story, and the screenplay: “If you can’t fix it, you gotta stand it.” Although the story is Ennis and Jack’s, and they’re the best example of it, that line really applies to all the characters in the movie; it’s a human truth.

This screenplay shows that not having the freedom to be who you are doesn’t just affect you; it affects the people that you let into your life. I didn’t know this [at first], but “Ennis” means “island.” Ennis is a man unto himself, and he keeps to himself the most of anybody in *Brokeback Mountain* – and that still affects people. He can’t access his emotions and be with the person he loves most in the entire world.

Heath Ledger committed to play Ennis Del Mar for Ang Lee without having met or spoken with the director.

Heath Ledger: I trusted that story in Ang’s hands. I loved the script because it was mature and strong, and such a pure and beautiful love story. I hadn’t done a proper love story [prior], and I find there’s not a lot of mystery left in stories between guys and girls; it’s all been done or seen before.

James Schamus: Heath brings an astonishing combination of vulnerability and strength to the part of Ennis.

Larry McMurtry: In my youth, I would sometimes watch five or six movies a day. Now I don’t watch movies much anymore, but when Diana asked that I watch the first twenty minutes of *Monster’s Ball* to see Heath’s performance, I said all right. That’s the only performance of his I’d seen. After seeing him in that role, I felt certain that he had what it would take to play Ennis Del Mar – he was that powerful.

Diana Ossana: Larry and I had actually imagined Heath in the role for a long while. It’s a serious gift having him play it.

Ang Lee: I feel very fortunate to have Heath in the movie. He’s a natural. He has great coordination, he’s very dedicated, and he does his preparation. He meticulously aims towards a certain target and firmly believes in what he’s doing.

He and I talked about how Ennis doesn't speak much. Deep inside, he has a big fear from a childhood traumatic experience, and from his awakening to his own sexuality, which is not allowed to be expressed in the West. Ennis has to cover that up with his attitude and, sometimes, violence. He can get very violent, because of how scared he is. So he's a scared kid inside, playing a Western kind of cool. Heath not only had to carry his own character and the whole character of the West, but carry the movie – and he underplayed powerfully.

Michael Costigan: A lot of what Annie Proulx wrote has been captured in Larry and Diana's screenplay, and certainly by Ang, in terms of the landscape and how it plays subtly – and then not so subtly – into the story of Ennis and Jack. They are able to find each other in an idyllic place, Brokeback Mountain, that's very much outside of society. They then have to go back down into society, into the world. Their bond is so strong – yet absolutely fragile.

Randy Quaid: Two human beings make a connection, and realize that they affect each other in a way that no other human being affects them.

Ang Lee: Everyone has a yearning for love. Maybe you have that taste of it that you keep wanting [to get] back; maybe you never have that. It's a poignant story – “would have, should have, could have...”

Marit Allen: After reading the script, I was so haunted by it that I had to do it. The whole idea of love that never resolves itself – I think everybody has something like that in their lives. It was very important to me that people see this as a universal story. The screenplay is very true to the short story, with added depth to the central love story.

Michael Costigan: Because of the story, and then the screenplay, we got great actresses for the supporting parts. The female characters are sometimes right and sometimes wrong, which adds to the complexity of the story.

Michelle Williams: [My character,] Alma has been expanded upon [from the story], but faithfully translated and cared for. Diana was a great guide if you ever got a little lost, because she'd lived with these people for seven years and takes them very seriously – as seriously as if they were real. She was able to talk about them as if she'd met them.

Diana Ossana: Adapting Annie's story was extremely easy and yet extremely difficult. It was easy in the sense that we had the blueprint right there with her writing – of the story itself, of the characters, of the specific way they speak, of the specific place they were from, and the landscape that formed them. The difficult part was to stay true to all that while turning this into a feature-length film. First we scripted the entire short story, and then we imagined and proceeded to flesh out the female characters so they would have depth and a presence on-screen. We also continued to build upon the stories of Ennis and Jack, many times creating an entire scene based upon a single sentence in the story.

Jake Gyllenhaal: I was surprised at how similar the script and the story were, although Lureen’s story was not as substantial as it is now.

Anne Hathaway: One day, I was playing a scene where Lureen is a bit older and slower and her voice has dropped a bit. Diana Ossana came up to me and said, “You know what? You’re Kristal; you’re the girl who works in Larry McMurtry’s book store in Texas, and you’re just her.” To hear that I was anything that resembled a real person from Texas made me feel good, because I’m from New York.

Diana Ossana: Anne is quite a young lady. She’s very well-mannered and refined. She went into character and just embraced Lureen. She had the accent down, she had the stance down, she had the gestures down. She looked like somebody straight out of Texas A&M University.

Ang Lee: She’s an amazingly sophisticated actor for her age. [For Lureen,] everything’s great when she’s young, [but when] she turns bitter, her makeup starts to get thicker and her hair gets higher – and lighter, too. Each time she shows up, the hair is a different ‘do and a different color, so we’re charting the character accordingly.

Anne Hathaway: I loved [having] the blonde hair [for the later scenes]; I got so into it that I was Farrah Fawcett-ing all around the set. I couldn’t get out of character when I was in the wig; I couldn’t stop talking in the accent.

Joy Ellison was wonderful. We would do exercises where she broke down all of Lureen’s dialogue into basic Texas syllables. We would say the lines together.

Jake Gyllenhaal: Joy set up three voices, three separate marks in the script, for Heath and I. Our voices change; they get progressively deeper.

Joy Ellison: Ang and I spent a lot of time talking about the voices and the accents, because he was very concerned about the authenticity of this – as he is with everything. We divided the periods into three sequences, which was a challenge for the actors because shooting was out of sequence. They had to maintain continuity. We named the voices Voice One, Two, and Three. In one day, the actor might shoot a scene in Voice Three – the older, deeper, slower voice – and then the next scene might be Voice One, which had more vitality and was perhaps higher.

Diana Ossana: A true luxury would have been to shoot the movie in continuity, but we didn’t have that luxury. This is a very specific story, with very specific dialogue. The way they spoke, the timbre of their voices, had to be realistic.

Joy Ellison: Ang’s attention to detail is phenomenal. Every so often [during the shoot], he’d turn to me and say, “Joy, was that a little thick on the accent?” And he was usually dead-on. It’s a rare privilege to find a director who’s so careful and keen about the authenticity of something.

Diana Ossana: I'm obsessively detailed, and I liked seeing that in Ang as well. What made him so good for *Brokeback Mountain* was, if you look at his other movies – *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and even *The Ice Storm* – take place over vast physical and emotional landscapes, but the stories are very intimate. They have a wide scope and a very narrow scope at the same time.

Larry McMurtry: As I said, I don't watch movies very much anymore, but Diana and I watched *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* together – I think it was her fourth time watching it, she tends to do that when she loves a film – and Ang's visuals of the great landscape of China, as well as his touch with the intimate stories of the characters, gave me confidence that he could do justice to the nuance, the details, and the subtleties of our screenplay.

James Schamus: Creatively, Ang's biggest challenge was always holding in balance the big, sweeping, and epic side of the story with the intense and intimate emotional journey that is at the core of the film. Luckily, with these writers behind him, he had fellow artists who have also mastered that balancing act.

Michael Costigan: The sensitivity that Ang shows to relationships in his movies brought us actors who were very excited to work with him and go to places that they hadn't been before.

Anne Hathaway: Working with him is pretty much as good as it gets. You pray that you give him what he wants, and then you know that if he says he has the shot, then he has the shot – and it's probably going to be some of the best work you've ever done.

Randy Quaid: Like all great directors, Ang is an actor's friend and he attracts all the best people – the best makeup, the best costumers...So you just want to do your best in that kind of environment. Once he's cast the part, he lets the actor go and create. If there's something that he wants to see that is not being given by the actor, then he'll discuss it and we'll try it differently. He's very accommodating. As an actor, I can learn something from him.

Heath Ledger: We all spent time with Ang talking about and rehearsing our characters' stories. His attention to detail is microscopic; he doesn't miss a beat. He's a wonderful filmmaker who always seems to know exactly what he wants. He slips into possession of the story he's telling with ease.

Anne Hathaway: He won't let things not be truthful in his films. He understands the importance of subtlety. This was interesting for me because my background is largely from comedy, where you can get away with not necessarily having the most honest moments on film. In this story, dealing with these big emotions, if we went over the top with them then we would lose exactly what we were trying to do.

Jake Gyllenhaal: This is the first time I've ever played a character spanning a long period of time. Ang said, it's not only the makeup and the wardrobe but

also the voice and the movement and the behavior – everything combined into one. He made me feel empowered.

Marit Allen: Ang Lee understands characters' emotions completely. Nothing escapes his notice, and he uses every piece of the frame to tell his story.

Michael Costigan: Ang felt that this was a story that he wanted to tell, about people who feel something so strongly but live in a time and place where they are not allowed to have those feelings – and, if they had them, could not articulate or express them. I think Ang also saw in it what you see in a lot of his films; people who are extensions of where they are from and where they live, and are products of their environment. To do what they want to do, to have what they want to have, they must break out of that environment or out of the elements in their lives that are convincing them that they shouldn't be doing those things or having those emotions.

James Schamus: Ang is both a revolutionary and a profound conservative – he is respectful of the past, of tradition, of people; while at the same time, his heroes and heroines, from *Sense and Sensibility* through *Crouching Tiger*, and now in *Brokeback Mountain*, are always those who somehow don't fit into society's categories and who always have to fight for their individual freedoms.

Ang Lee: To make a great romantic story, you need great obstacles. Ennis and Jack are in the American West, which has macho and traditional values. So, everything they feel, they have to keep private. It's precious, and something special that they cannot articulate. That's very dramatic for me.

Diana Ossana: When Ennis met Alma, there may have been a physical attraction, but also a sense that, "this is what I'm supposed to do – get married and have children." Ennis cares for Alma and loves her, but his love for her is not passion. It is nowhere near what he feels for Jack.

Alma is a girl from a lower-middle-class family with normal expectations. The two men in the story really don't have a context for understanding and articulating their feelings for each other. I also don't think Alma has any context for grasping Ennis's and Jack's relationship.

Michelle Williams: Initially, Alma has exactly what she wanted – what she's been raised to want all of her life; a family and a home, a husband and children. When she sees her husband and Jack together, she probably doesn't even know exactly how to identify it at first, 'cause it's so out of the realm of her consciousness, of her world. She's too afraid to speak [of] it, so she holds onto it and it boils and brews inside of her.

Diana Ossana: As Annie says in the story, "A slow erosion occurs." For Alma, it's a process. It becomes widening water between her and Ennis.

Jake Gyllenhaal: Between Jack and Lureen, I think there's real love – but it's real love without that sexual bond, which I think is somewhat [closer to] friendship. He probably makes a decision to go be with her because that's his

mask, going with what society says is the right thing to do. All this time, there's this aching to be with Ennis and to have a life with him.

Anne Hathaway: When Lureen and Jack meet, they are young, and excited about being with each other. But as the story progresses, they have less and less in common. Lureen is in a marriage with Jack that is based on a certain kind of love, but not passion; it doesn't go as deep as the connection he has with Ennis. I was interested in exploring what that would do to a person, how that would turn them. When she's younger, Lureen is sassy; I decided that she leads with her belt buckle. Later, she becomes bitter. I think that, as she gets older, she knows that Jack is keeping something from her.

Jake Gyllenhaal: Oh, I think she knows; she probably has an idea of it – that something's going on.

Shane Madden: Same thing that I've gone through; I fell in love with somebody, cared for a guy and we hid it from everybody. Society told me not to do it. Met a girl. Started dating the girl. Fell in love with her. Wasn't happy because I wasn't me.

Jake Gyllenhaal: The question of identity, whether it's sexual or whatever, is what makes this movie so powerful. My own struggle with who I am, and who I am to other people, and what masks I put on, is hopefully interlaced with this character.

Ang Lee: We all have secrets. But we are societal animals, and we need to live with other people and have to fit in. You could easily say that Ennis and Jack live in a lie, but they had to. I don't think they knew any other ways to survive as human beings. It's not like they had other choices.

Jake Gyllenhaal: Heath and I trusted each other enough to take risks. It was wonderful creating an intimacy with him. He made me feel comfortable; he made me want to be present, and that's the best thing you can ask for from someone you're acting with.

Heath Ledger: It was great working with Jake. He was a very brave and talented actor to work with.

James Schamus: The wonder of the boys' performances is how they relate and grow off each other as the film progresses. We see them age over the course of two decades, and watch the weight of their experience accumulate sometimes in the most quiet, intimate ways as their relationship changes.

Anne Hathaway: Heath and Jake are taking the weight of a lot of people on their shoulders; they're enacting a story that people should hear. They totally put themselves aside and became the characters.

Michelle Williams: My hat is off to both of them; Heath was totally supportive, selfless, and helpful [in our scenes together].

Randy Quaid: *Brokeback Mountain* is a courageous choice for both of these actors. They're at a critical phase of their careers, establishing themselves. It's a real credit to them, not only as actors but as people, to take on these roles.

Heath Ledger: I had fear going into it, but that was all the more reason to do it; it was exhilarating when I committed to [the movie].

Diana Ossana: This may sound like a common adjective, but they're truly wonderful. And they've really gone the extra mile.

Joy Ellison: Michelle Williams and I took a trip through Wyoming and Montana. We went to some biker bars, and I taped people all the way. This is [now] decades later [than the movie's periods], so accents are a little watered-down, but you can still get an essence. When an actor hears a tape of a rhythm from a native speaker, we can pick out sounds and work on them individually.

Michelle was born in Montana and left at an early age, but she still has that background and so she has a good sense of the rhythms and quality of the speech. Like a lot of trained actors, she let go of her regionalisms to be more flexible in other things they're doing, so this was bringing her back.

Diana Ossana: Landscape – the place where they grow up – is what forms people; they can move away and live in other places, but they're always drawn back – at least emotionally – to the place where they're from.

Michelle Williams: I suppose Montana is in my bones, though when I told my mother that we were working on our accents 'cause we're [playing characters] from Wyoming, she said, "What are you talking about? We don't have accents." It was an interesting accent to work on and pin down, because it's not as typical as a Southern accent. You haven't heard it a lot in film. The danger was to overdo it.

I met Joy in Billings, Montana and we drove down to Riverton, Wyoming. I soaked up the atmosphere and looked at people and places. It was so wonderful to be on a project where they allowed you to do that. I've never come across that [before]; "Yeah, sure, take a rental car, follow whatever path you want for a couple of days, get what you can, and come back to us." It was great.

Diana Ossana: Michelle's a powerful presence, and she's very moving as Alma. I have been impressed with her ever since *Dawson's Creek*; I thought she brought a weight to that show that it otherwise didn't have. Because of what Michelle brought to *Brokeback Mountain*, I think we get a true appreciation for Alma and her dilemma and loss.

Heath Ledger: Michelle's ability to dive deep within her soul never ceased to amaze me. She's a brilliant actress.

Ang Lee: It's a very sad situation, and Michelle is very genuine about [portraying] it; she should rip your heart [out]. I like making dramas about

conflict, through which you examine humanity – the complexities in human relationships – and see where we’re at. Dramatically, this was like a gold mine to me.

I went down to Texas to visit Larry, who’s like the authoritative father figure in that world. I had the privilege to be toured by him to all of [the real-life] *The Last Picture Show* places. We went to the ranch where he grew up. I took photos, and he talked to me about the West. He’s very generous about sharing his experiences – and his books, for art department research.

He also gave a list of places to visit in Wyoming. So I went all over Wyoming, [where] Annie Proulx [also] spent some time with me. Doing the research, and being there in Wyoming, really helped a city person like myself.

Marit Allen: Ang wanted to reflect the reality of the story, the places, the people and their economic situations. Ang, [cinematographer] Rodrigo Prieto and myself all studied Richard Avedon’s book Photographs of the American West. He took photographs in the 1960s, and revisited [the subjects] twenty years later. There was a photograph in the Avedon book that we took as the template for Alma. Michelle Williams understood it, and embraced it immediately.

Ang Lee: Rodrigo is a great DP. He’s very quick. I love his work from Alejandro González Iñárritu’s movies; also from Alejandro’s crew, I took [composer] Gustavo [Santaolalla]. The movie is poignant and stark, so we needed sparse music here and there, and his fits perfectly. Each time we could not afford a song, he would write us one.

Michael Costigan: Judy Becker connected with the story and wanted to depict it in a way that felt true.

Judy Becker: Right from the start, Ang made it clear that he wanted *Brokeback Mountain* to be in a realistic setting, in order for the audience to believe in the characters. But you have to imagine a way to create reality on film in a way that’s different from real life. In general, I try to let the sets be a naturalistic background to the actors. That’s one of the ways in which you have to try to transform what reality is into something that becomes the reality of the movie.

It’s annoying to me when I see a “period movie,” and there’s a Life Magazine with John Kennedy on the cover – “Here we are, it’s 1962.” When I started working on this film and hired my crew, I told them that I wanted to find subtle ways to show the year or the period that we’re in.

When I met with Ang the first time, we talked about making the color palette slightly de-saturated and somewhat subdued for most of the movie. *Brokeback Mountain* represents a freedom that Ennis and Jack don’t feel in their towns.

Diana Ossana: *Brokeback Mountain* is Ennis and Jack’s magical place. It’s where they fell in love. They never go back there, which may be unconscious

on their parts; it's their idyll, and they don't want to spoil it. It's like Jack says, "All we got's Brokeback Mountain."

Ang Lee: The dramatic core is finding Brokeback Mountain. It is elusive and romantic. It is something that you keep wanting to go back to – but probably never will. For Ennis and Jack, it was their taste of love.

Judy Becker: Ang and I, and Rodrigo, talked about how the towns would be a strong contrast to the mountains – colorless and cluttered. We didn't have the resources to build a huge amount of the sets. The biggest challenge was finding the right locations. During prep, when we found an apartment and a diner that I could transform into the places that I had envisioned in my head and discussed with Ang, that was a great feeling.

I did an enormous amount of research, both into the periods and the locales. The 1967 supermarket sequence, for example, was a very specific process; researching what products were available, what the labels looked like, what the advertising looked like, what the supermarket looked like.

I looked at imagery of small towns. One thing that struck me, which Ang and I discussed early on, was that although the movie takes place mostly in the 1960s and 1970s, the towns still looked like they could be in earlier decades. We went to Wyoming and Texas to do some research and, even now, so much detail and architecture is left over from pre-World War II. Change happened very, very slowly in small towns in the West.

Jake Gyllenhaal: There's a metaphor of the whole West, how the West was changing at the time from the Old West to the New West. Ang likes to say that Jack represents the New West, and Ennis represents the Old West. They're two people, two landscapes.

Judy Becker: We found documentary references for the [1960s] campsites. Those haven't changed very much; they look pretty much the same today as they did 40 years ago. Then, with the later [1970s/1980s] campsites, we wanted to show the social and economic changes for the characters. Jack becomes fairly wealthy during the course of the movie; we wanted to show that he enjoys spending the money, almost trying to impress Ennis with it.

Joy Ellison: People often think Wyoming and Texas accents are the same, but they're really quite different. But "get" becomes "git" in both. The Wyoming one has more of a rhythm, and it's much more subtle; you put phrases together and sometimes make a bit of a strange pause where you normally might not. You never say "-ing"; you say "walkin'" and "talkin'" and "thinkin'" and "drinkin'." The Texas one has stronger sounds and stronger uses of the vowels. This movie had a beautiful script, written very accurately, I might add.

Randy Quaid: Over the years, I've done a lot of Westerns and been around my share of ranches and farms.

Diana Ossana: Larry and I had Randy in a miniseries some years back, *Streets of Laredo*. Here, he's perfect as Joe Aguirre; he brings a realistic presence for that time and place and an undercurrent of threat.

Randy Quaid: Aguirre is a cards-close-to-the-vest type; he looks at Ennis and Jack as expendable.

I'm from Texas, so I had [to do] a Wyoming accent for this. They do tend to phrase their sentences in a more terse, shortened manner of speaking than Texans do.

Michael Costigan: Marit Allen has worked with Ang [before], and had a great time finding what these people would have been wearing and how they would look in Wyoming and Texas then.

Diana Ossana: When Marit showed me photographs of Heath and Jake in wardrobe, they looked so real, so much like the characters we had envisioned, that I had to go outside and compose myself. I was that moved.

Marit Allen: I always work with the actors; we find things together. We used earth tones almost entirely for Ennis. Heath was deeply involved with his character. He worked with his clothes, using everything he wears to convey Ennis' repression – the jackets, done up; the cowboy hats, to hide behind. Between him and Jake, the hats became an integral part of what they were doing.

Ang Lee: Cowboys are so shy; they don't know what to do with their hands. They don't talk that much; you can't dig anything out of them.

In the first scene, when Ennis and Jack arrive looking for a job, there's no dialogue. We staged how they positioned themselves, and used the space – how comfortable they are with each other in the distance.

Joy Ellison: Their mouths would be [closed more], which worked well for the characters and the whole feeling, because the bigger picture is an idea of people who can't communicate. They are in a period of time where, there may be a sexual revolution going on in the country but in that particular part of the country, it's a much more conservative, bottled-up, and uncommunicative society. It would be very difficult for people to be open and communicative about these things. Ang was particularly careful about all of it.

Ang Lee: That bottled-up feeling – Larry had written me about the nonverbal culture in the West. I'd done [a movie about] a verbal culture with *Sense and Sensibility*. In some ways, this was harder, because, if they are not verbalizing their feelings and being level in their communication, then how do you express their feelings in cinema? You have the Western elements; the landscape, the sky, the animals – whom they're nurturing, actually.

Diana Ossana: Ennis and Jack are very poor country boys. Because of the difficulty of where they've grown up, it's always about survival for them; not

just financially, but physically, with the snow and the wind and the rain and the harsh landscape.

Brokeback Mountain is very removed from the rest of the world and from the rest of life. It's private up there, there's no intrusion, and they feel comfortable. When they come back down off of Brokeback and they're back in their small towns, everything closes in on them again.

They complement each other, Ennis and Jack. Jack is more open to the possibilities of life than Ennis; he's adventurous, friendlier, and has a ready smile. Ennis is very closed off, and does not access his emotions easily, if at all. When he brings up to Jack about the incident he saw as a young boy, that's one of the few things we know about Ennis, other than that his parents were killed when he was teenager, and he's been pretty much alone all his life. His tragedy is how terrified he is of feeling. He has developed a hard shell; inside, he's very vulnerable and easily damaged.

Heath Ledger: I think Ennis punishes himself over an uncontrollable need – love. Fear was installed in him at an early age, and so the way he loved disgusted him. He's a walking contradiction.

Diana Ossana: Jack is the first person that Ennis truly connects with. It's emotional first, and then it becomes physical. It's the most intense thing that's ever happened to Ennis in his young life.

Jake Gyllenhaal: The way Ang described Jack, and the way it's been written, is, he's more open to his emotions – and to a relationship. Ennis is more withdrawn. Jack, to me, tries really hard to hold on to the one thing that he knows is real in his life – his love for Ennis. Somewhere in him he has enough courage to say, "Let's try this. Let's take this risk, but I need you to take it [with me]. I can't do it alone." There comes a time, I think, in every relationship, where you have to say, "Are you gonna make this sacrifice or not? And if you're not, then I'm gonna find somebody else who is maybe more willing."

Michael Costigan: Heath and Jake are extraordinary actors who really understood who Ennis and Jack were, what their emotions were about, and their wanting to find love – which is what the entire story is about.

Filming began in Alberta in May 2004. Shooting locations in the region included the Canadian Rockies, Cowley, Fort MacLeod, and Calgary. Members of the Calgary Gay Rodeo Association advised and consulted with the production, and also appear in several sequences.

Tim Cyr: We're the only gay rodeo association in Canada, but it's part of a huge circuit throughout the U.S. We have the best turnout of the circuit, and to be a part of it is a great feeling.

Michael Costigan: We really were in cowboy country. So when people would come to be in sequences, they looked the part because they were the part. This was not a movie where there were a lot of fancy trailers, and

catering and perks. It wasn't a Hollywood production, but we accomplished so much in terms of scope. I think people will see it all up there on the screen, thanks to the crew that we've been working with.

Diana Ossana: One of the wranglers said an interesting thing to me about Jake. He said, "Wow, what a quick learner. He's a natural; you tell him something once and he remembers it, and does it absolutely that way the next time."

Jake Gyllenhaal: Heath has known how to ride since he was a little kid, and he's already done movies where he's ridden a horse. I knew nothing about riding horses. I came up a month before we started shooting, for, as we called it, "cowboy training camp." Getting on a bull wasn't too freaky; I trusted the guys to give me a bull that wasn't too rowdy. I learned how to ride horses, how to wrangle sheep, and how to do the cowboy things.

Ang Lee: Heath went [to camp], too. He and Jake needed to feel comfortable and find a chemistry – and Jake needed to get blisters and bloody hands, chopping wood, hauling bales of hay, putting up fences...

Michael Costigan: On every movie, Ang does a Chinese good luck ceremony that he leads everybody through. Everybody lights incense and then has to bow to the four corners.

Diana Ossana: Everyone worked so hard and rarely complained. No matter how difficult the terrain or the scene, they went for it. 80 percent of this film is outside, and the weather could, and did, change in 15 minutes. Mornings might be bitter cold, and by the afternoon the sun would be blazing down on us.

Ang Lee: We didn't have good luck with weather – we had sleet, hailstorms, and it was always cold – and mountains are not controllable [, either]. Logistically, it was a stretch, and the budget was modest – this was an independent film, and the cheapest I've made since *Eat Drink Man Woman* – but sufficient to make my vision come true.

Working on *Brokeback Mountain*, I feel I was relearning my love and enjoyment for filmmaking – and learning something about myself and my own relationships.

James Schamus: This was probably the most pleasant film shoot that Ang and I have ever worked on. There was almost an inverse proportion between our lack of money and the abundance of spirit in our crew and cast. Everything was done simply – not only because we didn't have the budget but also because, artistically, everything needed to be honest, direct, and clear...from the rawness and vulnerability of our actors to the presence of the natural environment.

Heath Ledger: It was a focused vibe on-set. Everyone there wanted to work hard on telling the story properly.

Scott Ferguson: Everybody on the film felt lucky to be there. Working with Ang Lee was a privilege. It was long hours and hard work; some of the places we went were either a long drive or a long hike with a lot of gear. A number of us working on the film came from either New York or Los Angeles, and sometimes we'd call ourselves the SOB's – the "south of the borders." But we were all making a movie together, it didn't matter who was Canadian and who was American.

Heath Ledger: The crew in Calgary were the most wonderful group of people I have worked with to date.

Randy Quaid: It was my first time in Calgary; I've filmed, I guess, everywhere else in Canada. I loved the mountains, and even the wind; it's gorgeous big sky country.

Ang Lee: You realize, when you place the camera you have to tilt it up a little bit; the sky is so grand. It's not only the big landscape, but the big sky.

Principal photography on Brokeback Mountain was completed in August 2004. Post-production was finished in the spring of 2005, marking the culmination of the story's eight-year journey to the screen.

Judy Becker: In my mind, *Brokeback Mountain* is like a Shakespearean tragedy. It expresses so many things about human nature, and the nature of being.

Marit Allen: To me, *Brokeback Mountain* has the look of a classic Western. And the Western is one of the last great romances; the loneliness and the strength of these men who embody hard work and integrity...we're always hoping that those values are still out there somewhere.

Michael Costigan: I think the film shows an American way of life and experience that we haven't seen very often, or depicted with realism on-screen. Not from that place and time.

Ang Lee: We know the West from movies, as the romanticized world of gunslingers. But the real West, I don't think people around the world know [about] that much. People like me, coming from Taiwan, outside of America, think [of] America [as] New York and the West Coast. But there's this big chunk of rural American life that we don't really know too much about. It's a love story about those people.

I think people need to know about that side of America. Like everybody, they have a heart – and they don't talk too much about it. You have to really dig to discover it, and share that experience.

Diana Ossana: *Brokeback Mountain* is not so much a Western as it is a story about the West. The media and the film industry tend to talk about how the Western is out of vogue or in vogue – but it never goes out, really, because it's America's history, it's our heritage. That is why we continue, to this day, to

connect with the Western: the good ones are compelling, true-to-life stories, with raw, flawed, human characters mostly operating in a harsh, unforgiving landscape.

Marit Allen: What I hope most is that the film will help people to understand the nature of love. There are as many different kinds of love as there are people.

Tim Cyr: Everybody has a right to love. Everybody should be loved. And if two guys get together or two girls get together, [there] should be no difference in it. Every movie that comes out where people are up there on-screen like this is a push towards more equality and understanding.

Diana Ossana: I hope that our film will move people the same way in which reading the short story moved me. I want the audience to feel the same things I felt when I first read that story. For me, releasing our film *Brokeback Mountain* is sort of like sending one of your children out into the world: your hope is that they succeed, and that they're accepted, and finally, treated with respect.

Shane Madden: I'm happily married, to a guy. He means the world to me. I'm hoping the film can tell people, believe and respect who you are and not what everybody wants you to be.

Scott Ferguson: Some of the obstacles to Ennis and Jack's happiness were real, in society, and some were inside the two of them. Hopefully, people will learn a little about finding your own way to accept yourself, to take a chance on who you are. When we shot the last scene of the movie, I'd say about three-quarters of the crew was in tears. It had a powerful effect on us, and I hope also [will] with audiences.

Jake Gyllenhaal: What really tears me apart is, Ennis and Jack are two people who actually found love. If you have love, you should hold onto it.

Heath Ledger: *Brokeback Mountain* is a love story for this generation.

Michael Costigan: Great love stories don't come very often. I hope audiences, after seeing the film, can think about their own lives and the choices they've made.

Ang Lee: It could be my wishful thinking, but if the feelings we're portraying are real, if the actors believing what they're playing appear to be real, and emotion is created with the audiences watching, then maybe issues won't be [had]. Biases might disappear when you look into the heart of people. I hope that's the case with our love story.