

“HOWL’S MOVING CASTLE”

Production Information

Academy Award®-winning director Hayao Miyazaki (“Spirited Away”) takes moviegoers on an amazing new animated adventure that celebrates the power of love and the resiliency of the human spirit in the face of adversity, with his latest artistic achievement, “Howl’s Moving Castle.” Brimming with a blend of imagination, humor, action, and romance, the film played to great acclaim at the 2004 Venice Film Festival and has become one of the biggest blockbusters of all time in Japan (surpassed only by “Spirited Away” and “Titanic”). “Howl’s Moving Castle” has already earned more than \$210 million at the international box office.

A distinguished cast of actors, directed by Pixar Animation Studios’ Pete Docter (“Monsters, Inc.”) and Disney’s Rick Dempsey, lent their vocal talents to the English-language version of “Howl’s Moving Castle.” Pixar’s John Lasseter (“Toy Story,” “A Bug’s Life,” “Toy Story 2”) served as executive producer of the English-language production. Sophie (voiced by Emily Mortimer), a diligent teenage girl working in her family’s hat shop, finds her life thrown into turmoil when she is literally swept off her feet by a handsome-but-mysterious wizard named Howl (voiced by Christian Bale). This innocent encounter engages the vain and conniving Witch of the Waste (voiced by screen legend and Oscar® nominee Lauren Bacall), who transforms Sophie into a 90-year-old woman (voiced by screen legend and two-time Oscar® nominee Jean Simmons). Sophie’s efforts to break the curse bring her to Howl’s magical moving castle, where she befriends Markl (voiced by Josh Hutcherson), Howl’s apprentice, and the hot-headed fire demon Calcifer (voiced by Billy Crystal). Her love and support have a major impact on Howl, who can be maddeningly self-indulgent and singularly noble: He defies royal orders to participate in a meaningless war and risks his life to bring peace to the kingdom. Extraordinary characters, inventive imagery, and stunning artistry make this latest masterpiece from the visionary Miyazaki an unforgettable filmgoing experience.

“Howl’s Moving Castle” was produced by Toshio Suzuki (“Spirited Away”), a longtime friend and associate of Miyazaki who co-founded Studio Ghibli in 1985 and has served as producer on some of the most popular and innovative Japanese animated features of all time. Joe Hisaishi, a frequent Miyazaki collaborator and an Annie Award winner for his musical contribution to “Spirited Away,” composed the film’s powerful and evocative score. Miyazaki himself wrote the Japanese-language screenplay, based on the popular novel by prolific British author Diana Wynne Jones.

Overseeing the production of the English-language version of “Howl’s Moving Castle” for Walt Disney Pictures were two of the leading experts in the field of voice recording and dubbing—Disney Character Voices veterans Rick Dempsey and Ned Lott. Dempsey and Lott both served as producers of the film, played a key role in casting the voice talent, and helped to guide the dubbing process. Cindy Davis Hewitt and Donald Hewitt, whose credits include English-language adaptations of “Spirited Away” and seven other Studio Ghibli films, wrote the screenplay adaptation for “Howl’s Moving Castle.”

Although Miyazaki and Suzuki generally shun publicity, preferring to let their film speak for itself, Suzuki offered this insight in a Reuters interview: “In short, the gist of the film is this: A young girl named Sophie, who thought that life is all hard work and boring, has a spell cast on her by a witch, and by being turned into an old woman, she learns some things about herself. If I say so myself, this is an entertaining and well-made film. Hayao Miyazaki is now 64 years old. How can he understand how young girls today feel? I have been working closely with the old scoundrel for more than 26 years, and he is still inscrutable to me. The rest, I will leave up to you.”

In a rare interview earlier this year with Margaret Talbot for *The New Yorker*, Miyazaki observed, “Sophie, the girl, is given a spell and transformed into an old woman. It would be a lie to say that turning young again would mean living happily ever after. I didn’t want to say that. I didn’t want to make it seem like turning old was such a bad thing—the idea was that maybe she’ll have learned something by being old for a while and, when she actually is old, make a better grandma. Anyway, as Sophie gets older, she gets more pep. And she says what’s on her mind. She is transformed from a shy, mousy little girl into a blunt, honest woman. It’s not a motif you see often, and, especially with an old woman taking up the whole screen, it’s a big theatrical risk. But it’s a delusion that being young means you’re happy.”

According to Lasseter, “Miyazaki is such a great director. He has been a tremendous influence on my career, and on most animators and animation directors around the world. This guy is one of the greatest that’s ever lived, and to have an opportunity to work on one of his films and bring it to English-speaking audiences is very exciting.

“Miyazaki’s work has a very classic look, but it’s so magical,” he adds. “Rarely do you find a film where you can watch and see something you’ve never seen before. In his films, generally there are so many things that you’ve never seen before. His imagination is phenomenal. One of the things that’s missing from a lot of animated films today is heart. Miyazaki has tremendous heart in all of his films, but also a very special message. I’m hoping that the world can discover Miyazaki’s films because they’re so entertaining, they’re so full of action and wonderment, but most of all they touch the heart.”

Docter says, “Miyazaki is an amazing director and brilliant storyteller. His films are so cinematic. They definitely have a spectacle and scope to them, but they also have these smaller wonderful nuances that show you the inner workings of the characters. ‘Howl’s Moving Castle’ has these amazing battle scenes and a huge monstrous castle lumbering over hills, and then you have a small bit where a character is playing with a stick. There’s an emotional depth to the characters, and there’s never just one layer to things. It’s very complex.

“I think one of the things that I really respond to in this film and Miyazaki’s other films is his sense of innocence and truth,” he adds. “He puts it all out there in a way that I think most other filmmakers have become afraid to do. It’s a scary thing to open yourself up and hope audiences will cry, or respond emotionally. But he does that, and it’s a really bold thing. In creating the English-language version, we tried as hard as possible to stay true to the original vision, but also to make it as approachable as possible so that other moviegoers around the world would be able to understand it and respond to it emotionally.”

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

GRANDMA SOPHIE/SOPHIE (Voiced by Jean Simmons and Emily Mortimer): Life feels dull and ordinary to this 18-year-old girl who considers herself plain-looking. Her vivacious younger sister, Lettie, is employed at Cesari's, the finest bakery-café in town, where she attracts many customers with her charm. Lettie asks Sophie, "Do you really want to spend the rest of your life in that hat shop?" As the oldest daughter, serious Sophie believes it's her duty to slave over hats, even as she wonders what she really wants to do.

All that changes when she meets the magical Howl and finds herself transformed into a 90-year-old woman by the Witch of the Waste. Climbing aboard his moving castle launches her on the adventure of a lifetime.

HOWL (Voice of Christian Bale): This mysterious and handsome master of the moving castle is rumored to devour the hearts of beautiful young women, but in reality he is an emotionally complex wizard who can be maddeningly vain and strikingly gentle. A singularly powerful magician, Howl isn't quite himself anymore, and his strange bargain with the fire demon, Calcifer, seems to lie at the very heart of the matter. When Grandma Sophie enters his life and takes up residence in his castle, she also ends up having a big impact on his life and his ability to overcome his personal demon.

WITCH OF THE WASTE (Voice of Lauren Bacall): Once a magnificent sorceress who served at the Royal Palace, this conniving conjurer fell prey to a demon of greed. From her hideout in the Wastelands, she searches for Howl and won't tolerate anyone standing in her way. When summoned to the Palace for an encounter with Madame Suliman, this overstuffed troublemaker is in for a few surprises of her own.

CALCIFER (Voice of Billy Crystal): This fiery little demon keeps things moving in Howl's castle by powering the furnace and other utilities. Bound to the master's fireplace by a contract, he offers to return Sophie to her original form if she can help unlock the secret of his servitude. For Calcifer, home is definitely where the hearth is, and that makes him one hot-headed fellow.

MARKL (Voice of Josh Hutcherson): Howl's young apprentice calls the castle his home and considers Howl his only real family. A master of disguise, he is quick to transform himself into a bearded old man when customers come to call for magic potions and other wizardly supplies.

MADAME SULIMAN (Voice of Blythe Danner): His Majesty's head sorceress and the Royal Wizard of Kingsbury, this shady lady has great magical powers and much influence in the Royal Palace. Howl's refusal to obey the King's orders to lend his magical powers to the war effort lands him in hot water with this mystical Madame and sets the stage for the film's powerful final act.

TURNIP: This scarecrow with a turnip for a head is a handy character to have around, as Sophie comes to appreciate in her time of need. When Sophie lends this

bouncy fellow a helping hand in the Wastelands, he returns the favor by finding her a place to live and serving her faithfully when the occasion demands.

THE ARTISTIC AND FANCIFUL WORLD OF MIYAZAKI

In each of the nine feature films that he has directed, Hayao Miyazaki has transported moviegoers into worlds of fantasy unlike any they've experienced before or since. His artistry is superb and his storytelling is always exciting, original, and full of surprises. In April 2005, Miyazaki was chosen by *Time* magazine as one of "The World's 100 Most Influential People" and lauded by the legendary Stan Lee for taking "the art of anime to new heights through an inimitable vision and sense of storytelling." His latest film, "Howl's Moving Castle," will delight the filmmaker's loyal fans around the world.

Although Miyazaki's films take place in different settings, the trees and mountains and lakes aren't just backdrops, they almost become characters. Nature is never very far away in these landscapes, and the viewer senses that magic can take place at any time.

"Princess Mononoke" took place in the forests of the Muromachi period (1392-1573). Yubaba's bathhouse in "Spirited Away" was partially inspired by a park in Tokyo. Miyazaki said, "The setting of 'Spirited Away' is an older Japan, one that existed until a few decades ago. Many adults cried when they saw that kind of almost-forgotten scenery."

The landscapes in "Howl's Moving Castle" were inspired by Alsace, but Alsace in a reimagined vision of the early 20th century: bustling towns, pristine mountain vistas, fields of wildflowers. Sophie, who has always considered herself unattractive, is moved to tears by the beauty of the lakeside where the castle comes to rest. She and the audience gain insights into Howl's character when they see the old mill house where he spent a lonely childhood. The needless destruction of this natural beauty gives added impact to the horrors of the war Howl struggles to end.

At a time when American studios are abandoning traditional, hand-drawn animation, Miyazaki remains devoted to the art form and possibilities. His attitude was summed up in the sign he posted outside the background department for "Spirited Away": "Do everything by hand, even when using a computer."

Producer Ned Lott observes, "Rules are thrown out the window when you watch a Miyazaki film. You're never quite sure of the exact setting or where the characters come from. It's all great fantasy, and it flows from his wonderful imagination. He is consistently able to come up with the most fantastic things, like a talking fire in 'Howl's Moving Castle.'"

Donald Hewitt observes, "His stories are amazing. You watch each scene and you wonder how he's able to make the audience just come on board with the story when it's such a wild and crazy tale. It goes here, it goes there, and yet you're able to follow it and care deeply for these characters. There's a great richness to everything. And I think that's what makes him one of the greatest filmmakers in the world.

"Another thing that Miyazaki does that you rarely see in films these days is that he takes the time to slow things down so that you can really see and enjoy these beautiful vista shots," adds Cindy Hewitt. "He shows you gorgeous landscapes, and you just love sitting there, basking in them. It's like you're in Tahiti and looking at the ocean or

something beautiful. Most movies today are so fast-paced, as if you have to keep everybody excited, or they're aimed at kids who watch too many video games."

"Howl's Moving Castle" is perhaps Miyazaki's most sophisticated and impressive artistic achievement to date. From the richly detailed European-styled city where Sophie begins her journey to the dreamy sun-soaked panoramas, the wildflower Alpine landscapes, the barren Wastelands, to the powerful battle scenes, the film showcases some of the master filmmaker's most daring and beautiful work.

PRODUCING AND CREATING THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE VERSION

To help make Miyazaki's latest animated masterpiece as accessible as possible to English-speaking audiences all over the world, Disney assembled an expert team of creative talent to adapt the work faithfully and respectfully. Two of the filmmaker's most ardent admirers—Pixar's John Lasseter and Pete Docter—jumped at the opportunity to work on the project. Lasseter had personally directed the voice actors for the English-language version of the Oscar[®]-winning "Spirited Away" and assumed executive producing duties for this film. Docter, a Pixar veteran who received acclaim for his direction of "Monsters, Inc.," directed the vocal sessions for all of the other actors, in collaboration with Rick Dempsey. Ned Lott, a Disney casting executive, joined the team as producer and lent his expertise in finding the right cast. Cindy Davis Hewitt and Donald Hewitt once again lent their writing skills to the English-language adaptation.

"The first step in the translation process is to get the literal words translated from Japanese," explains Docter. "It ends up being a very interesting challenge, because some words are longer in Japanese and shorter in English. We try to make sure the lines are written to fit the characters' mouth movements. Beyond just the translation, you discover a lot of subtle nuances as you get deeper and deeper into it. There are all these levels to the film that you have to understand in order to have it work for American audiences. Adapting the screenplay is a difficult and tricky task. Our job is to make it conversational and truthful, while maintaining the integrity and meaning of the original. Cindy and Don have done a fantastic job with the dialogue, and our incredible group of actors has brought so much of themselves to the film."

Dempsey observes, "We really try to do a great artistic job to ensure that audiences feel that this is not just a dub, but a universal adaptation of the film. We want them to get totally engrossed in the characters, and engaged in their personalities and different nuances. We look at this as a full production. We don't just come into the recording studio and try to crank out some quick performances to cover the dialogue or the subtitles. We really tweak every word and every performance to make sure that it brings the characters to life.

"At Disney, we typically dub our animated films into about 36 different languages, and it's a genuine thrill to see people enjoying them in their individual cultures," he adds. "Our process with 'Howl's' is different in that we're doing the reverse. Here, we're bringing a Japanese film that's been such a cultural phenomenon in Japan and bringing it to other parts of the world. At the end of the day, we want to offer a great, entertaining experience with this adaptation of the film. The key is to make the local language version

really come alive and become its own production. Our goal is to have English-speaking audiences identify with the film and feel like it could've been created in English.

“Working with Pete and John Lasseter on this project has been a real privilege,” notes Dempsey. “Pete has such great sensibilities and insights, and his respect for Miyazaki’s work is enormous. He also knows how to get the talent motivated and helps put them in the right place. John has become great friends with Miyazaki, and he really wanted to be involved in the production of this version. He had a lot of input and ideas for casting and the adaptation, and he also did a fantastic job directing Billy Crystal’s performance. We had the benefit of leveraging John’s creative expertise, which took the film to a whole other level.”

Cindy and Donald Hewitt, a husband-and-wife writing team who have adapted eight Studio Ghibli films for Disney, explain, “Getting the dialogue to sound natural is the biggest challenge for us. In the case of ‘Howl’s Moving Castle,’ it’s kind of a period piece, so you have to avoid really contemporary-sounding dialogue, and yet you don’t want it to sound too stiff either. There’s a whole balance of just getting the right sound and then still trying to fit it into the characters’ mouths and have a natural rhythm to it.

“We discovered that Japanese audiences tend to be more accepting of open-ended movies, whereas American moviegoers generally prefer to have all the loose ends tied up for them,” adds Cindy. “We have to try and bridge the gaps for them and help bring out the story a bit more. Sometimes, just a subtle difference between one word or another can make a huge difference. We just keep watching the movie over and over and think of all the possible ways to say things. The smallest change in a word or two can suddenly open it up, and you start to understand much more clearly what Miyazaki intended.”

Donald notes, “Miyazaki’s films are so rich and complicated that there’s almost no way you can get it the first time you see them. So much comes from multiple viewings, and you begin to understand all the different levels that are going on. He is one of the greatest filmmakers of our era. Being a part of this process is like attending a super film school where you get to watch the movie over and over and break it down. You learn so much about what he does and how he tells a story. It’s inspired us with our own screenwriting too.”

CASTING AND RECORDING THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE VERSION

Casting played a critical role in creating an entertaining and satisfying English-language version of “Howl’s Moving Castle.” With guidance from two of Disney’s casting experts—Rick Dempsey and Ned Lott—along with valuable input from Pixar’s Lasseter and Docter, an amazing ensemble was brought together for this project.

“It’s so great working with the quality actors that we have on this film,” says Docter. “They were able to infuse a lot of subtle nuance into their performances. A great voice can give you such a rich palette to draw from and even offer suggestions about the dialogue itself. For this film, we had some of the very best actors working today. In directing them, Rick and I tried to set up the motivation so that they would understand the scene and the line. We then encouraged them to create a performance around that scene that would really work. We didn’t want them to just read the lines. We wanted the character to come from the performance.”

Lott observes, “In the acting community, there is this huge respect for Miyazaki, his art form, and his storytelling genius. The actors just love being a part of it. We wanted to give our cast the freedom to help create the character by taking their great acting skills and translating that into their role.”

For the pivotal role of Sophie, the U.S. production team turned to two top British actresses whose careers span two eras of filmmaking.

“Jean Simmons was just so perfect to play Grandma Sophie,” explains Lott, “because when you look at her past work and amazing credits, she always had this kind of lilting younger voice and was often the love interest. Even at her current age, she has a young feel in her voice. Sophie is a complex character because even when she’s 90 she acts much younger. And, as the movie progresses, you actually see her physical expressions change in a way that she’s 90 one moment, then she’s 65, and then she’s 18 again. It’s tricky to have the acting reflect this age difference, and Jean did a great job.”

Docter adds, “I was a little scared at first to be working with a screen legend like Jean. She was the love interest in ‘Spartacus,’ and she worked opposite Marlon Brando in ‘Guys and Dolls.’ She’s done everything. But she came in and was such a warm and giving person—not the Hollywood diva type at all. I think her incredibly rich career infused the character of Sophie. When Sophie falls under the curse and becomes old, she finds the confidence and sense of self to do what she really wants, and Jean’s real-life experiences and acting skills make that believable.”

According to Simmons, “I’m kind of semi-retired, but when my agent called to ask if I’d do this film, I said yes. They showed me the film, and I couldn’t wait. I just simply couldn’t wait to do it or have a try at least. It’s a totally different experience from anything I’ve ever done before. This is not merely dubbing a film. There’s something deeper here. You really become a character, and I’m loving it. The film is beautifully done, beautifully drawn, and so brilliant.

“The character of Sophie runs the gamut of emotions, and she gradually becomes stronger from her experiences of being old,” adds the actress. “She becomes more positive, and it changes her attitude. She’s always been a kind person, but when she is suddenly thrown into this body that is aching with pain, bent over, and has difficulty moving and breathing, she becomes a very loving and caring woman. To me, this whole thing is just magical.

“I was very excited when I heard that Lauren Bacall was going to be doing a voice too,” says Simmons. “I knew Betty many years ago, back when Humphrey Bogart was still alive. On this film, we didn’t really get a chance to work together, but it’s fun to be in a film with her just the same.”

For Emily Mortimer, the talented young actress who plays the younger incarnation of Sophie, working with Jean Simmons was also a big draw.

“It was just fantastic to be rung up and asked to do this part, knowing that Jean was going to be me as an older voice,” says Mortimer. “I remember watching ‘Great Expectations’ when I was a child, and just being completely entranced by her. She really struck me with that amazing mixture of incredible vulnerability and sort of doll-like presence. There was also a steely strength to her that made for a powerful combination. There are moments in the film where the Sophie characters literally morph together. In mid-sentence, she turns from young to old, and vice versa. The filmmakers really had to

get voices with a similar feel and timbre to them, and apparently mine came closest to Jean's, and I'm grateful that it did. It was a wonderful surprise to be asked.

"When I watched the movie, I found it incredibly affecting, this notion of a woman becoming an old lady and, somehow through doing that, being liberated from herself," she explains. "She essentially finds her youth in her old age. Once she's stopped worrying about what she looks like and just resigns herself to the fact that she's an old lady with gray hair, she starts to really enjoy herself and have fun. I think there's a life lesson in that. I also came to realize that all the characters in the film have had a spell cast on them in some shape or form. And they're all waiting for it to be lifted. I suddenly thought, 'That's a lot like everyone; that's like life.' We've all got some spell cast on us, something from our childhood that's sort of torturing us or holding us back in some way. Watching this movie, I came to realize what a genius Miyazaki is.

"The characters are very eccentric; that was what I really responded to," concludes Mortimer. "They're not clichéd movie characters. They're deeply flawed, complex, and confusing. They're also incredibly drawn and so expressive. Doing the voice of Sophie for the English-language version was thrilling as well as scary. You have to dredge up this intensity of emotion without any kind of run-up. Suddenly the lines are going and the beeps are going, and you're in that moment that you have to be there. That's quite hard and takes quite a lot of getting used to. You don't have anything to go on apart from just panic."

Christian Bale, a multi-talented actor who has the coveted title role in this summer's big-screen return of "Batman," is heard as the voice of the powerful young wizard, Howl.

"We started listening to Christian's voice, particularly a sample recording of his Batman performance that his agent provided," recalls Lott. "We put that up against the picture of Howl, and we were completely convinced that he was the right guy for the role. He just seemed to fit the character of Howl, because he's very suave and all the girls love that bit of bad-boy side to him. We knew that he was an actor who took his craft seriously and could really bring a lot to the character. He has some of the most incredible dialects of any actor I know."

Docter adds, "Christian's performance adds a lot to the Howl character and gives it both the sense of someone with a strong mind of his own, as well as a commanding, regal presence. I see Howl as a promising young wizard who was probably at the top of his class and then sort of took this strange turn when he made an agreement with this powerful fire demon, Calcifer. It's eating him away, and he's not himself anymore."

The Witch of the Waste provided a rich opportunity from a casting standpoint, and the production team got everything they wanted and more from the legendary Lauren Bacall.

"We wanted to find a voice that would provide a good contrast to Sophie's," says Lott. "Lauren Bacall has a rich alto sound with a lot of texture and depth. She gave a great performance and proved to be a great complement to Jean and Emily's voices."

Blythe Danner gives a delightful turn as Madame Suliman, the ambiguous head of the royal wizard corps.

"My character has such a majestic demeanor," observes Danner. "She is a very enigmatic and mysterious character who can be quite covert at times. Madame Suliman is in love with Howl and tries to control him, but it just won't happen. It was great fun and a wonderful exercise to play this character who is confined to a wheelchair, but has a very

strong personality. I'm a tremendous Miyazaki fan, and this film is a real work of art and storytelling that goes beyond ordinary animation. I wanted to be as perfect as the film. I can't wait to hear Jean Simmons, Lauren Bacall and myself in the same film. This is a dream come true."

Billy Crystal has done just about everything there is to do in show business, except play a fire demon. So when John Lasseter approached the busy actor about taking on the role of Calcifer, it was an offer he couldn't refuse.

"With 'Monsters, Inc.,' we created as we went, and I would lay down the voice, and they would animate to that," explains Crystal. "It gave me much more of a chance to improvise and put things in. The animators then brilliantly made it look like me even though he was just this one big eye. With 'Howl,' the animation was already done, so I had to fit my English words into what was originally said in Japanese. The challenge in doing this character was to just get it close to being right and to find a voice that fit this little ball of flame. Calcifer complains a little bit, but that's okay. He moves the story along. He makes things happen. He's a tough little guy, which I admire. I can't wait to see this movie."

Lasseter notes, "The role of Calcifer is really very special. It's very funny, but it also has quite a bit of magic in it. And Billy is such a magical guy, I knew that he could take fire and give it heart. He also brought a lot of humor to this character. Even though the animation was done first, he was still able to do a lot of ad-libbing. He's so great at that, and he also added some very funny puns. Miyazaki himself always does the animation before he records the dialogue, so this process isn't all that different from how they did it for the Japanese version."

HAYAO MIYAZAKI AND STUDIO GHIBLI

Japanese animation has emerged as a separate and popular film genre in recent years. Although Japanese animation can be dated back to 1917, most of that country's animation prior to the 1950s (excluding wartime propaganda cartoons) consisted of personal short films made by individual animators.

Japan's first professional postwar animation studio was Toei Animation Co., whose first feature was released in October 1958. Toei's early theatrical features follow the Disney approach of adapting classic fairy tales and legends, but they worked from Asian sources rather than European literature. One of the most popular was imported into America in 1961 as "Alakazam the Great." The latter was based on a comic-strip adaptation of the ancient Chinese Monkey King legend, drawn by Osamu Tezuka, Japan's most prolific cartoonist during the 1950s. Tezuka had created dozens of comic strips and books, including the authorized Japanese adaptations of Walt Disney's "Pinocchio" and "Bambi." His best-known creation was "Astro Boy," which was later syndicated to American television.

When Toei licensed Tezuka's "Alakazam" comic strip for animation, Tezuka got the idea of starting his own production of animation for TV. "Astro Boy" debuted on New Year's Day 1963 and was an immediate success. Three other animation studios opened by the end of that year. Hayao Miyazaki's early TV work included cartoon-series adaptations of the literary favorites, *Heidi* and *Anne of Green Gables*.

Born in 1941, Miyazaki acknowledges Tezuka as one of his earliest influences. Even as a young artist, he wanted to develop his own stories and visual style, rather than imitate others. Upon graduating from college in 1963, Miyazaki joined the staff of Toei Animation and was assigned to the new TV cartoon production unit.

As an in-betweenner at Toei, Miyazaki met and became close friends with fellow animator Isao Takahata. By the late 1960s, they had both gained enough experience and seniority that Takahata was made director of the studio's 1968 feature, "Little Norse Prince Valiant," with Miyazaki named as Scene Designer and key animator. They were given considerable freedom to emphasize strong characterizations and character interaction, and the result was Toei's most popular and critically acclaimed movie at that time.

Following the success of "Little Norse Prince Valiant," Miyazaki sought more creative control over his projects. This ironically meant an initial step backward as he and Takahata left Toei to work at smaller studios that specialized in TV animation. Miyazaki also started his first story as a comic-book creator.

The feature "The Castle of Cagliostro" (1979) first brought the director to the public's attention. Miyazaki breathed new life into Lupin III, a character created by manga artist Monkey Punch in 1967. Lupin is a master thief, the direct descendent of Arsene Lupin, the hero of a series of French mystery novels by Maurice Leblanc. His off-the-wall escapades spoof the adventures of James Bond and similar heroes. Miyazaki was given carte blanche to write the story, redesign the characters and direct. He personally sketched the storyboards and many of the key animation drawings.

In 1979, Yasuyoshi Tokuma, head of Tokuma Publishing Co., Ltd., one of Japan's largest publishing companies, agreed to publish one of Miyazaki's science-fiction stories, "Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind," as a manga (graphic novel). The first installments, personally written and drawn by Miyazaki, drew such a positive response that Tokuma quickly became interested in financing a feature based on the material. Miyazaki worked with a small animation staff to produce the film, drawing the storyboards and much of the key animation himself.

"Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind," released in March 1984, became Japan's most successful animated feature at that time, attracting almost a million viewers. It convinced Tokuma Publishing to finance the establishment of a new animation studio to be managed by Miyazaki and his friend/colleague Isao Takahata. The new studio, which opened in 1985, was named Studio Ghibli. The first production under that banner was 1986's "Laputa Castle in the Sky."

Since 1985, Studio Ghibli has produced an average of one feature per year, usually alternating between films created by Miyazaki and Takahata. In the late 1980s, the two began grooming a brilliant protégé and assistant on all their films, Yoshifumi Kondo, to become a third partner. Kondo directed Ghibli's 1995 release, "Whisper of the Heart." Kondo died tragically in January 1998 at the age of 47.

Miyazaki's theatrical features created at Studio Ghibli include "Laputa Castle in the Sky" (1986), "My Neighbor Totoro" (1988), "Kiki's Delivery Service" (1989), "Porco Rosso" (1992), "Princess Mononoke" (1997) and "Spirited Away" (2001). His creative influence can be felt throughout the studio's entire output.

Disney began its association with Studio Ghibli in 1996 when it agreed to distribute "Princess Mononoke" and all the earlier Ghibli films. "Kiki's Delivery Service," the first

video title released, entered the Top Ten on Billboard's sales chart and sold over a million copies. In 1999, Miramax Films offered a theatrical release of an English-language version of "Princess Mononoke." The film received critical acclaim and was released on home video the following year. Walt Disney Pictures presented a theatrical release of Miyazaki's masterpiece, "Spirited Away," in 2002, and the film went on to win Best Animated Feature at the following year's Oscar® telecast. Buena Vista Home Entertainment has subsequently released other prestigious Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli titles in English-language versions for the DVD and video markets.

THE FILMMAKERS

HAYAO MIYAZAKI (Director/Writer) won an Academy Award® in 2003 for his animated masterpiece "Spirited Away" and was recently named one of "The World's 100 Most Influential People" by *Time* magazine. Considered one of the modern masters of Japanese cinema, he has created some of the most admired and respected animated films of recent decades. He made his feature film directing debut in 1979 with "Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro" and has gone on to direct such impressive films as "Laputa Castle in the Sky" (1986), "My Neighbor Totoro" (1988), "Kiki's Delivery Service" (1989), "Porco Rosso" (1992), "Princess Mononoke" (1997) and "Spirited Away" (2001). The latter became the most successful film ever released in Japan.

Born in Tokyo in 1941, Miyazaki graduated from the prestigious Gakushuin University in 1963 with a degree in political science and economics. As a university student, he became deeply interested in children's literature and read a wide variety of books written for children all over the world. Miyazaki became interested in animation after seeing Taiji Yabushita's "White Snake Enchantress" (1959) and Lev Atamanov's "The Snow Queen" (1957). Combining superb draftsmanship with his academic credentials, Miyazaki joined Toei Animation Company and launched his filmmaking career, beginning as an inbetweeners on the feature "Watchdog Bow Wow" (1963).

Miyazaki worked his way up through the studio ranks doing animation, storyboards and designs for numerous TV series and feature films, often in collaboration with his friend and mentor, Isao Takahata. He went on to direct episodes for many series, including "Conan, The Boy in Future" (1978), "Lupin III: Albatross: Wings of Death" (1980), "Lupin III: Aloha, Lupin!" (1980), and "Sherlock Hound" (1984).

"Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind" (1984), a feature based on his popular manga series, established Miyazaki as one of the most talented directors in the burgeoning Japanese animation industry. In 1985, Miyazaki and Takahata founded Studio Ghibli in conjunction with Tokuma Shoten Publishing Ltd. "Laputa Castle in the Sky" (1986) began his unbroken string of hits, culminating in the record-breaking films "Spirited Away" (2001) and "Howl's Moving Castle" (2004). "Spirited Away" became the first animated film to win the prestigious Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival, and Miyazaki will be the first animation director to be honored at the Venice Film Festival later this year.

TOSHIO SUZUKI (Producer) has been one of the leading figures in the world of Japanese animation for over two decades and served as producer of the 2003 Academy Award®-winning feature, "Spirited Away." He was born in 1948 in Nagoya, Japan, and

graduated from Keio University's Literature department in 1972. After graduating he joined Tokuma Shoten Publishing Company and began working at their weekly magazine "Asahi Geino." In 1978 he helped found the monthly animation magazine "Animage," starting as an associate editor and later becoming Editor-In-Chief. In the mid-1980s Suzuki became increasingly involved in the productions of Miyazaki and Takahata and in 1985 helped co-found Studio Ghibli.

Throughout the last half of the 1980s, Suzuki continued working in publishing while simultaneously helping produce features for Studio Ghibli, including "Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind" (1984), "Laputa Castle in the Sky" (1986), "Grave of the Fireflies" (1988), "My Neighbor Totoro" (1988) and "Kiki's Delivery Service" (1989). He went to work full-time for Studio Ghibli in 1989.

Suzuki produced "Only Yesterday" (1991), "Porco Rosso" (1992), "Pom Poko" (1994), "Whisper of the Heart" (1995), "Princess Mononoke" (1997), "My Neighbors the Yamadas" (1999), "The Cat Returns" (2000), and "Spirited Away" (2001). He was also co-producer of Oshii Mamoru's "Innocence: Ghost in the Shell 2" (2003) and co-executive producer of Hideaki Anno's "Ritual" (2000).

JOE HISAISHI (Composer) was born in Nagano, Japan, in 1950 and studied composition at the Kunitachi College of Music, where he began composing contemporary music. His first film score for Hayao Miyazaki was for 1984's "Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind," for which he garnered wide acclaim.

Hisaishi's scores for movies directed by Miyazaki include "Laputa Castle in the Sky" (1986), "My Neighbor Totoro" (1988), "Kiki's Delivery Service" (1989), "Porco Rosso" (1992), "Princess Mononoke" (1997) and "Spirited Away" (2001). He has also contributed haunting original scores to many of the films of maverick director "Beat" Takeshi Kitano, including "A Scene at Sea" (1992), "Sonatine" (1993), "Fireworks" (1997), "Kikujiro" (1999), and "Brother" (2000).

The veteran composer has won the award for Best Music at the Japan Academy Awards ceremonies in 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1999. Hisaishi is an active concert pianist, has released numerous CDs of his own work, and is credited as a producer of the 1998 Nagano Special Winter Olympics. His directorial debut, "Quartet," was released in Japan in 2001.

DIANA WYNNE JONES (Author) was born in London in 1934, where she had a chaotic and unsettled childhood set against the background of World War II. Her family moved around a lot, finally settling in a village in Essex, full of bizarre personalities. Here, deprived of books by a father "who could beat Scrooge in a meanness contest," she decided she would have to write them herself.

Jones went on to study English at Oxford University, where she attended the lectures of both C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. It was at Oxford that she met her future husband, John Burrow. They married in 1956 and now live in Bristol, where he was Professor of Early English Literature at the University. They have three sons.

Her first children's book, *Wilkin's Tooth*, was published in 1973. Since then, she has written over 40 books, which have been published in more than 17 languages. Described as "hotter than Potter" (*The Guardian*), she is recognized internationally as a major writer of fantasy.

PRODUCTION TEAM— ENGLISH-LANGUAGE VERSION

JOHN LASSETER (Executive Producer) made motion picture history in 1995 as the director of the first feature-length computer-animated film, “Toy Story” (for which he received a special achievement Academy Award®), and has gone on to further acclaim as the director of “A Bug’s Life” (1998) and “Toy Story 2” (1999).

An award-winning director and animator, Lasseter continues to serve as Executive Vice President of Creative for Pixar. He has written and directed a number of short films and television commercials at Pixar, including “Luxo Jr.” (a 1986 Oscar® nominee), “Red’s Dream” (1987), “Tin Toy,” which won the 1989 Academy Award® for Best Animated Short Film, and “Knickknack” (1989). Among his other big-screen credits, Lasseter also designed and animated the stained-glass knight in the 1985 Steven Spielberg production, “Young Sherlock Holmes.”

Lasseter was born in Hollywood and grew up in Whittier, California. His mother was an art teacher, and as early as his freshman year in high school, he fell in love with cartoons and the art of animation. While still in high school, he wrote to The Walt Disney Studios about his passion, and he began studying art and learning how to draw human and animal figures. At that time, Disney was setting up an animation program at CalArts, an innovative center for studying art, design and photography, and Lasseter became the second student to be accepted into their start-up program. He spent four years at CalArts and both of the animated films he made during that time (“Lady and the Lamp” and “Nitemare”) won Student Academy Awards®.

During his summer breaks, Lasseter apprenticed at Disney, which led to a full-time position at the Studio’s feature-animation department upon his graduation in 1979. During his five-year stint at Disney, he contributed to such films as “The Fox and the Hound” and “Mickey’s Christmas Carol.” Inspired by Disney’s ambitious and innovative film “Tron,” which used computer animation to create its special effects, Lasseter teamed up with fellow animator Glen Keane to create their own experiment. Their 30-second test, based on Maurice Sendak’s book *Where the Wild Things Are*, showed how traditional hand-drawn animation could be successfully combined with computerized camera movements and environments.

In 1983, at the invitation of Pixar founder Ed Catmull, Lasseter visited the computer-graphics unit of Lucasfilm and was instantly intrigued. Seeing the enormous potential that computer-graphics technology had for transforming the craft of animation, he left Disney in 1984 and came to Lucasfilm for what was to be only a one-month stay. One month turned into six, and Lasseter soon became an integral and catalytic force at Pixar. Working closely with Pixar’s Bill Reeves, Lasseter came up with the idea of bringing believable characterizations to a pair of desk lamps, which became the genesis of “Luxo Jr.”

Lasseter is the recipient of an honorary degree from the American Film Institute. He is currently in production on his next directing effort for Pixar, “Cars,” which is due in theaters summer 2006.

Lasseter and his wife, Nancy, have five boys. They live in Northern California.

PETE DOCTER (Director) made his feature film directing debut on “Monsters, Inc.” following an illustrious career as one of Pixar Animation Studios’ pioneering creative talents. A protégé of filmmaking pioneer John Lasseter, Docter began his association with Pixar in 1990 and has been hooked on computer animation ever since. As part of the original story team that helped to write and board “Toy Story,” he worked on the project for four and a half years and also took on the role of supervising animator. His other Pixar credits include animating and directing commercials for Tropicana Fruit Juice, Tetra-Pak drink-box recycling and Lifesaver Holes at the beach.

Docter’s interest in animation began at age 8, when he made his first flip book. He went on to study character animation at CalArts (California Institute of the Arts) in Valencia, where he produced several student films (“Winter,” “Palm Springs” and the Student Academy Award®-winning “Next Door”). Prior to joining Pixar, he was involved in creating hand-drawn animation for Disney, Bob Rogers and Company, Bajus-Jones Film Corp. and Reelworks in Minneapolis.

Docter and his wife, Amanda, have two children.

RICK DEMPSEY (Producer/Director) is the senior vice president of Disney Character Voices and Disney Character Voices International. He joined The Walt Disney Company in 1988 as a founding member of Disney Character Voices, which ensured character consistency and integrity for all character assets company-wide, reporting directly to Roy Disney.

During his 16-year tenure with Disney, Rick has directed over 5,000 recording sessions with some of Hollywood’s biggest names, including Tim Allen, Glen Close, Phil Collins, Billy Crystal, Danny DeVito, Dakota Fanning, Jennifer Garner, Anne Hathaway, Charlton Heston, James Earl Jones, Michael Keaton, Demi Moore, Uma Thurman, Patrick Stewart, Robin Williams and James Woods, to name a few.

Dempsey reflects, “Sometimes I feel like I have the best job in the world! I have the privilege of overseeing everything the most famous characters in the world say, from Mickey Mouse to Mr. Incredible. I also am blessed to work with some of Hollywood’s best talent in an extremely creative and fun environment.”

On a global level, Dempsey creatively oversees the foreign-language adaptation and dubbing of all Disney products around the world, having worked on such hits as “The Lion King,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Tarzan,” “Toy Story 1 & 2,” “Finding Nemo,” and most recently “The Incredibles,” as well as such live-action films as “Pearl Harbor,” “Pirates of the Caribbean,” and “National Treasure.” Disney’s animated films have been localized in as many as 40 languages.

Some of Dempsey’s most recent directorial and production projects include the successful English adaptations of Studio Ghibli and Hayao Miyazaki films, including “Porco Rosso,” “Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind,” “The Cat Returns,” “Whispers of the Heart,” and “My Neighbors the Yamadas.”

Dempsey is married and has five children, the youngest of which was just recently adopted from China.

NED LOTT (Producer/Casting) is senior manager of Disney Character Voices, where he has served over the last five years as a voice director and casting director on numerous Disney projects. He recently played a key role in producing and casting eight

Miyazaki English-adaptation dubs for Studio Ghibli, including this theatrical release of “Howl’s Moving Castle.” The other titles include “Porco Rosso,” “Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind,” “The Cat Returns,” and the upcoming “Whispers of the Heart,” “My Neighbors the Yamadas,” “My Neighbor Totoro,” and “Pom Poko.”

Lott graduated from Biola University. He and his wife, Tamara, have five children and live in Simi Valley.

CINDY DAVIS HEWITT and **DONALD H. HEWITT** (English Language Adaptation) met at a screenwriting workshop at UC San Diego. After writing for Pixar and Working Title as well as selling a screenplay to Miramax, the team achieved distinction for writing the English-language screenplay for Hayao Miyazaki’s Oscar®-winning film “Spirited Away.” They have gone on to write the English-language screenplays for other Miyazaki films: “Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind,” “My Neighbor Totoro,” and “Porco Rosso.”

THE VOICE TALENTS

JEAN SIMMONS (Grandma Sophie), a screen legend and two-time Oscar® nominee, brings her vast experience and a wide range of emotion to the role of an old woman caught in a witch’s curse.

Simmons was born in London, England. At the age of 14, she was cast in her first feature film, “Give Us the Moon.” Capturing British audiences, she went on to star in such major British productions as “The Blue Lagoon,” “Great Expectations,” “Black Narcissus,” “So Long at the Fair,” and “Hamlet,” playing Ophelia to Sir Laurence Olivier’s melancholy Dane. The latter production earned Simmons her first Academy Award® nomination.

Moving to the United States, Simmons signed with then 20th Century Fox Studios. In a short time, she was starring in such major films as “Androcles and the Lion,” “Angel Face,” “Affair with a Stranger,” “The Actress,” “The Egyptian,” and “Demetrius and the Gladiators,” all in one three-year period. One of her best-remembered roles was Sarah Brown in “Guys and Dolls,” for which she won a Golden Globe® award, co-starring with Frank Sinatra and Marlon Brando. Her other films of the period included “Hilda Crane,” “Until They Sail,” “The Big Country” and “This Earth Is Mine.”

Writer-director Richard Brooks cast Simmons as Sister Sharon Falconer opposite Burt Lancaster in “Elmer Gantry,” a memorable adaptation of the Sinclair Lewis novel. That same year, she co-starred with Kirk Douglas in Stanley Kubrick’s “Spartacus” and played a would-be home-wrecker opposite Cary Grant in “The Grass Is Greener.” Simmons captivated moviegoers with her performance as the mother in “All the Way Home,” an adaptation of James Agee’s “A Death in the Family.”

Her other films include “Life at the Top,” “Mister Buddwing,” “Divorce American Style,” “Rough Night in Jericho,” and “The Happy Ending,” for which she received her second Academy Award® nomination for Best Actress. Her most recent film work includes “How to Make an American Quilt.”

On television, some of Simmons’ notable performances include the miniseries “Beggarmen, Thief,” “The Thorn Birds,” which earned her an Emmy®, parts one and two of “North and South,” and “Perry Mason: The Case of the Lost Love.” Ms. Simmons was

reunited with Kirk Douglas, playing Lucy Brady to his Matthew Harrison Brady in “Inherit the Wind.” She returned to Charles Dickens to play the role of Miss Havisham (dovetailing with her performance as Young Estella earlier in her career) in “Great Expectations.”

Her other voice-over narration roles include “Mysteries of the Bible” and “American Masters: On George Cukor.”

CHRISTIAN BALE (Howl) plays the vain and mischievous wizard who crosses paths with Sophie and sweeps her away into a world of fantastic adventure.

Though barely in his thirties, Christian Bale already has a near 20-year professional career spanning a unique variety and range of characters. Born in Wales, Bale grew up in England, Portugal and the United States. He made his feature film debut in Steven Spielberg’s World War II epic film version of J.G. Ballard’s novel *Empire of the Sun* in 1987. The actor drew both critical attention and a special National Board of Review award for Best Performance by a Juvenile Actor for the role.

He continued to garner praise for his memorable portrayals of the passionately frustrated Ned Rosier in Jane Campion’s “The Portrait of a Lady” (1996), a Victorian teenager in Christopher Hampton’s “The Secret Agent” (1996), a mentally slow runaway in “All the Little Animals” (1998) opposite John Hurt, a cynical journalist in the glam-rock epic “Velvet Goldmine” (1998), and Demetrius in Michael Hoffman’s film of Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” (1999).

In 2000, critics were unanimous in their acclaim for his gruesomely comic turn as a yuppie serial killer in the controversial “American Psycho.” He went on to memorable turns in “Shaft” (2000) opposite Samuel L. Jackson, “Captain Corelli’s Mandolin” (2001) with Nicolas Cage, the intimate drama “Laurel Canyon” (2002) featuring Frances McDormand, the apocalyptic fantasy adventure “Reign of Fire” (2002) and “The Machinist” (2004).

Bale will also be seen this summer in the highly anticipated prequel “Batman Begins” from director Christopher Nolan. His other upcoming features include “The New World,” scripted and directed by Terrence Malick, in which he portrays English tobacco planter John Rolfe, and “Harsh Times” from writer/director David Ayer.

LAUREN BACALL (Witch of the Waste), a screen legend and Oscar® nominee, brings her enormous talent and unmistakable voice to the role of this corpulent, acid-tongued witch who creates chaos for 18-year-old Sophie when she turns her into an old woman.

Bacall’s acting career began with Saturday morning classes at the New York School of the Theatre, followed by, at age 15, a year of study at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. An introduction to *Harper’s Bazaar* editor Diana Vreeland led to a brief modelling career. For Bacall’s second appearance in the magazine’s pages, Vreeland captioned a photo with a mention of the 18-year-old’s acting ambitions. The inside double-page spread, and the now-famous Red Cross cover shot by photographer Louise Dahl-Wolfe, caught the attention of Slim Hawks, wife of director Howard Hawks.

Upon his wife’s recommendation, Hawks brought Bacall to Hollywood to test for a contract and subsequently signed her. Some six months later, he tested her for the lead in his 1944 film “To Have and Have Not,” opposite Humphrey Bogart. The couple quickly

fell in love, and they went on to co-star in “The Big Sleep,” “Dark Passage” and director John Huston’s “Key Largo.” Married in 1945, they appeared together in the 1955 live television presentation of Robert E. Sherwood’s “The Petrified Forest.”

Having made her Broadway debut in a walk-on part at age 17, Bacall returned to the stage with starring roles in 1959’s “Goodbye Charlie” and “Cactus Flower” in 1965. In 1970, she made a triumphant musical comedy debut as Margo Channing in “Applause!” based on the film “All About Eve,” winning her first Tony award before embarking on a year-long national tour. She went on to play the role for over a year at London’s West Majestic Theater, a performance recognized with an Evening Standard Award.

After a 1977 summer tour of the musical “Wonderful Town,” she returned to Broadway in 1981 to star in the Peter Stone-Kander & Ebb musical “Woman of the Year,” again winning a Tony award followed by a national tour. In 1985, Bacall starred in Tennessee Williams’ “Sweet Bird of Youth” at London’s Haymarket Theatre, directed by Harold Pinter. She then toured the play for five months across Australia. Bacall returned to Broadway in 1999 for the revival of Noel Coward’s “Waiting in the Wings.”

Her lengthy film career includes “Bright Leaf,” “How to Marry a Millionaire,” “Woman’s World,” “The Cobweb,” “Blood Alley,” “Written on the Wind,” “Designing Woman,” “Flame Over India,” “Sex and the Single Girl,” “Harper,” “Murder on the Orient Express,” “The Shootist,” “H.E.A.L.T.H.,” “The Fan,” “Appointment with Death,” “Mr. North,” “Tree of Hands,” “Misery,” “All I Want for Christmas,” “Ready to Wear,” “My Fellow Americans,” “Presence of Mind” and “Diamonds.” Her work in “The Mirror Has Two Faces” garnered her an Academy Award® nomination as well as Golden Globe® and Screen Actors Guild™ awards. Most recently, she performed in Lars von Trier’s “Dogville” and Jonathan Glazer’s “Birth” and will appear in von Trier’s upcoming film “Manderlay.”

A recipient of numerous lifetime achievement citations, Lauren Bacall was named one of the American Film Institute’s top 25 film legends of the century and in 1997 was chosen to receive the Kennedy Center Honors in recognition of her extraordinary contributions to American culture.

BLYTHE DANNER (Madame Suliman) plays the King’s wizard, a powerful and controlling magician of uncertain allegiance.

Blythe won a Tony award for her Broadway debut, “Butterflies Are Free,” and earned Tony nominations for “A Streetcar Named Desire,” Harold Pinter’s “Betrayal,” and, most recently, “Follies.”

She has appeared in numerous films including “Prince of Tides,” “The Great Santini,” “Meet the Parents,” and most recently, “Meet the Fockers.” In television, she earned an Emmy® nomination for Joyce Carol Oates, “We Were the Mulvaneys,” and can be seen in Showtime’s “Huff” and as Will’s mother on “Will & Grace.”

EMILY MORTIMER (Young Sophie) plays the unhappy young seamstress whose life turns upside down when she crosses paths with a handsome wizard.

Mortimer was born in London, England, in 1971. She is the daughter of famed writer John Mortimer and Penelope Glossop. After attending the highly respected St. Paul’s Girls School in Barnes, London, she went on to study English and Russian at Lincoln College, Oxford, from 1990 to 1994.

With no formal training behind her, acting was, according to Mortimer, “something I pretended I didn’t want to do as I was growing up.” She won her first public role in the miniseries “The Glass Virgin,” made for British television in 1995. In the six years that followed, she appeared in a variety of telefilms, including “Noah’s Ark,” and also won parts in the feature films “The Ghost and the Darkness,” “The Saint,” “Elizabeth,” “Notting Hill,” “Scream 3,” “Love’s Labour’s Lost” and “The Kid.”

Her breakout role came in 2001 playing a self-doubting actress named Elizabeth in Nicole Holofcener’s critically acclaimed comedy/drama “Lovely & Amazing.” The bittersweet tale of four hapless yet resilient women keeping up with the demands of their neuroses brought Mortimer great acclaim, and she won an Independent Spirit Award for her performance.

In 2003, Mortimer appeared in two much-anticipated features, “Bright Young Things,” the directorial debut of writer/actor Stephen Fry in which she played Nina Blount, a society girl in a fast-paced party set who finds a genuine relationship difficult to maintain, and “Young Adam,” an indie drama co-starring Ewan McGregor, playing a role that earned her nominations in the Best British Actress category at the 2004 Empire Awards and in the Best British Actress in a Supporting Role category at the 2004 London Film Critics Circle Awards.

Most recently, she has appeared in “Dear Frankie” (2004), playing an impoverished single mother who risks her relationship with her deaf son when she persuades a complete stranger to pretend to be the boy’s long-lost father; the upcoming “Match Point” (2005), a comedy from Woody Allen and the first of the director’s films to be shot outside the U.S.; and “The Pink Panther” (2005), playing Inspector Clouseau’s hapless secretary in the comedy prequel starring Steve Martin, opening later this summer.

Mortimer married actor Alessandro Nivola in 2002, and their first child was born in 2003. They currently divide their time between their homes in London and Los Angeles.

JOSH HUTCHERSON (Markl) plays Howl’s young apprentice, an untidy and outgoing youth who dresses up as a wizened old man to sell spells to the public.

Hutcherson already has enough credits on his resume for one to mistake him for a long-time veteran. The 12-year-old’s career is marching full steam ahead with a variety of projects scheduled for release in 2005. In addition, Hutcherson is currently in production on Sony Pictures’ feature, “RV,” starring as Robin Williams’ son, for director Barry Sonnenfeld.

His current credits include Universal’s “Kicking and Screaming” in which he co-stars with Will Ferrell and Robert Duvall. Later this summer, Fox will release “Little Manhattan” with Hutcherson in the starring role. In November, he can be seen starring opposite Tim Robbins in Sony Pictures’ Jon Favreau-directed adventure film, “Zathura.” In 2004, the young actor shared duties with Tom Hanks as the character of Hero Boy in Warner Bros.’ “The Polar Express,” a groundbreaking film using motion performance capture for its characters.

Hutcherson’s other film credits include the indie favorite “American Splendor,” which won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival and the Fipresci Award at the 2003 Cannes International Film Festival, and “One Last Ride,” executive produced by Ang Lee.

The actor is no stranger to the small screen; his credits include the TNT telefilm “Wilder Days,” the Animal Planet feature “Miracle Dogs” and guest appearances on NBC’s “ER,” Lifetime’s “The Division” and ABC’s “Line of Fire.” His hobbies include extreme rollerblading, remote-control cars and soccer. He is currently learning how to play the guitar and is trying his hand at writing songs. Hutcherson resides with his mom, dad, and little brother, Connor, in Kentucky.

BILLY CRYSTAL (Calcifer), one of today’s most popular and gifted performers, adds plenty of vocal fuel to this cantankerous fire demon who warms the hearth and drives the engine inside Howl’s castle.

Crystal has distinguished himself in practically every area of the entertainment spectrum, finding success in front of the camera as performer on film and television and behind the scenes as writer, director, and producer. His eight stints hosting the Academy Awards® telecast have won him further acclaim and added to his popularity all over the globe.

His father, Jack, produced concerts by the era’s great jazz performers, including the legendary Billie Holiday, and exposure to these great stars helped Crystal develop a knack for stand-up comedy, mimicry and satire as well as an ability to create enduring characters that are both funny and touching.

After touring with such stars as Billy Joel, Barry Manilow, Neil Sedaka and Sha Na Na, Crystal became a regular on the popular series “Soap,” playing the first openly gay character on network television. He met with phenomenal success alongside fellow performers Christopher Guest and Martin Short during the 1984-5 season of “Saturday Night Live.” A gaggle of memorable characters and catch lines live on from the era, including his classic imitation of Sammy Davis Jr.; unflappable raconteur Fernando (“You look mahvelous!”); and Willie the Masochist, prone to hitting himself and crying, “I hate it when that happens.”

He has starred in the films “Running Scared,” “Throw Momma from the Train,” “The Princess Bride,” “When Harry Met Sally,” “City Slickers” and “City Slickers II,” “Mr. Saturday Night,” “Forget Paris,” “Hamlet,” “Deconstructing Harry,” “Father’s Day,” “My Giant,” “Analyze This” and “Analyze That,” and “America’s Sweethearts.” In 2001 he added his voice to the loveable, cyclopean Mike Wazowski in Disney/Pixar’s record-breaking blockbuster hit “Monsters, Inc.”

In recent years, he has enjoyed successes on television and film on both sides of the camera. He created, wrote and produced the critically acclaimed HBO series “Sessions,” and his film “61*” for HBO Films showcased Crystal as both director and executive producer. “61*” was based on the true story of the pursuit of Babe Ruth’s home-run record by New York Yankees stars Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris. It garnered 12 Emmy® nominations, including nods for Best Director and Best Made for Television Movie, and also earned him a prestigious Directors Guild nomination.

Crystal made his Broadway debut this winter in “700 Sundays,” a play he wrote and performed. “700 Sundays” is an autobiographical journey in two acts in which Billy plays numerous characters that have influenced who he is today, from his youth to growing up in the jazz world of Manhattan to his teenage years and adulthood. It opened to stellar reviews and broke box-office records. To date, Crystal has won six Emmy® awards, six American Comedy Awards and seven Cable Ace awards.

Harper Collins released Crystal's first children's book, "I Already Know I Love You," in April 2004. Written in honor and anticipation of the birth of his first grandchild, the book describes the parade of feelings washing over a first-time grandfather. The book went on to reach the number-one position on the New York Times Best-Seller list.

A dedicated human-rights advocate, he has co-hosted all eight of HBO's "Comic Relief" telethons with Robin Williams and Whoopi Goldberg, bringing the plight of the nation's homeless to the public and helping raise over \$40 million for homeless housing and medical care.

Billy Crystal has been married for 34 years to his wife, Janice. They have two daughters, Jennifer and Lindsay, and one granddaughter, Ella.