

NORTH COUNTRY

- Production Information -

When Josey Aimes (Academy Award winner CHARLIZE THERON) returns to her hometown in Northern Minnesota after a failed marriage, she needs a good job. A single mother with two children to support, she turns to the predominant source of employment in the region – the iron mines.

The mines provide a livelihood that has sustained a community for generations. The work is hard but the pay is good and friendships that form on the job extend into everyday life, bonding families and neighborhoods with a common thread.

It's an industry long dominated by men, in a place unaccustomed to change.

Encouraged by her old friend Glory (Academy Award winner FRANCES McDORMAND), one of the few female miners in town, Josey joins the ranks of those laboring to blast ore from rock in the gaping quarries. She is prepared for the back-breaking and often dangerous work, but coping with the harassment she and the other female miners encounter from their male coworkers proves far more challenging.

Times are tough. The last thing the miners want is women competing for scarce jobs – women who, in their estimation, have no business driving trucks and hauling rock anyway. If these newcomers want to work the mines they'll have to do it on the terms set by the veteran workforce and it won't be easy. Take it or leave it.

When Josey speaks out against the treatment she and her fellow workers face she is met with resistance – not only from those in power but from a community that doesn't want to hear the truth, her disapproving parents and many of her own colleagues who fear she is only making things worse. In time, even her friendship with Glory will be tested, her already difficult connection with her father, a lifelong miner, will be pushed to its limit and elements of her personal life exposed to scrutiny. The fallout from Josey's battle to make a better future for herself and her children will affect every aspect of her life, including her relationship with her young daughter and her sensitive teenage son, who must first cope with the embarrassment of his mother's sudden notoriety and then face harsh details of her past she was hoping he would never have to know.

Through these struggles Josey will find the courage to stand up for what she believes in – even if that means standing alone.

Inspired by a true story, *North Country* follows Josey's journey on a road that will take her farther than she ever imagined, ultimately inspiring countless others, and leading to the nation's first-ever class action lawsuit for sexual harassment.

Warner Bros. Pictures presents, in association with Participant Productions, a Nick Wechsler Production of a Niki Caro Film: Charlize Theron and Frances McDormand star in *North Country*, also starring Sean Bean, Richard Jenkins, Jeremy Renner, Michelle Monaghan, with Woody Harrelson and Sissy Spacek. *North Country* is directed by Niki Caro and produced by Nick Wechsler, from a screenplay by Michael Seitzman, inspired by the book titled "Class Action: The Landmark Case That Changed Sexual Harassment Law," by Clara Bingham and Laura Leedy Gansler. Helen Bartlett, Nana Greenwald, Doug Claybourne and Jeff Skoll are executive producers. Chris Menges is the director of photography; Richard Hoover, the production designer; and David Coulson, film editor. Music by Gustavo Santaolalla. *North Country* will be distributed worldwide by Warner Bros. Pictures, a Warner Bros. Entertainment Company. This film is rated R by the MPAA for "sequences involving sexual harassment including violence and dialogue, and for language." Soundtrack album on Columbia/Sony Music Soundtrax.

www.northcountrymovie.com / www.participate.net/standup

The Simple Beginnings of a Life-Changing Journey

When Josey Aimes (Academy Award winner Charlize Theron) takes a stand against the mining company where she works, “she isn’t looking to become a leader or make a statement,” says *North Country* director Niki Caro, whose insightful direction and screenplay for 2002’s magical *Whale Rider* earned accolades worldwide. “She just wants what every parent wants, to make a decent life for herself and her family.”

It starts out just that basic and personal. “She doesn’t realize she is launching herself into the battle of her life.”

Josey Aimes is a single mother of two. Newly separated and with nowhere else to go, she returns to her childhood home in Northern Minnesota, where her parents (Academy Award winner Sissy Spacek and *Six Feet Under*’s Richard Jenkins) receive her with mixed emotions. Strong on tradition and mindful of their reputation in the small community, they believe she should reconcile with her husband instead of striking out on her own, but for Josey – this time – there is no going back.

Determined to get back on her feet as soon as possible, Josey enters the job market and finds limited opportunities, until a chance meeting with an old friend, Glory Dodge (Academy Award winner Frances McDormand), opens up an enticing possibility she hadn’t even considered – the local mine.

As one of the very few women on the mining crew and the only female union rep since her devoted partner Kyle (*Lord of the Rings*’ Sean Bean) was injured at work and permanently sidelined, Glory offers an honest picture of the pros and cons of the job. It’s tough, exhausting physical labor that will leave her muscles aching. The plant is grimy and dank, the pit can be treacherous and the air thick with soot, but that’s not the worst of it. The predominately male workforce isn’t exactly welcoming.

Although many are decent and most have at least the courtesy to keep their opinions to themselves, there are a volatile few who take every opportunity to remind the women they're not wanted there, with a steady stream of insults, innuendo, vulgar remarks and pranks that tread – and often push – the line between locker-room humor and out-and-out harassment. “The mine is like a free zone for them,” says Caro, “where they can say and do things they might not say or do in town. The way they see it, these women have invaded their territory. If they don't like it, they can quit.”

She'll have to be tough, Glory warns. Don't show that it gets to her. Learn to give it right back to the guys or at least keep her mouth shut and go about her business. Come payday, she says, it's all worthwhile. There isn't a job in town that can match what Josey will make at the mine. With that kind of income, she might even be able to buy her own home.

Encouraged by the promise of self-sufficiency, Josey signs up, despite her mother's hushed but grave misgivings and her father's clear opposition. A lifelong mining veteran himself, and one of those who staunchly oppose the integration of female workers, Hank takes his daughter's decision as a personal affront and all but stops talking to her. It's her first indication of what to expect on the job.

Though forewarned, Josey is still caught off-guard by the level of tension at the mine. Even more unsettling is her discovery that one of the worst offenders is someone she crossed paths with years ago and who might still harbor unresolved feelings about an incident in their past – her former high school classmate Bobby Sharp (Jeremy Renner, of *S.W.A.T.* and *Dahmer*), now a shift supervisor and one of her bosses. But she doesn't have long to worry about Bobby; there are more immediate concerns, like what kind of unpleasant surprise might turn up in her locker or maybe in her lunchbox at break time.

“The story investigates a grey area of male/female interaction and the gradations between the innocuous and the offensive,” Caro explains, noting that while *North Country* is fictional, it is inspired by real-life experiences. “It isn't a black-and-white scenario or reverentially politically correct. What happens to Josey and her colleagues has a cumulative effect and *North Country* explores that from many angles. It's not simple. These are issues of actions and responses that are part of human nature. A man tells a dirty joke, a woman tells a dirtier one, then there is an explicit remark or maybe something physical....at what point does this do damage? Where do you draw the line?”

When Josey feels that line has been crossed, she takes action. Starting with her immediate supervisor and then moving all the way up the chain to the company president, she voices her concerns and is consistently ignored, patronized or invited to resign. The problem is, she doesn't want to resign. She wants to work.

Meanwhile, she begins to face resistance and hostility from a completely unexpected quarter – her female co-workers, the very women she is trying to help and whose support she was counting on. In many ways still an outsider, Josey struggles to realize that these women, Glory and her friends and even young newcomer Sherry (Michelle Monaghan, of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*) have made their own accommodations to the situation for better or worse and resent her stirring things up. Each of them, for reasons of their own, have accepted these difficult but lucrative positions and will fight to protect them.

The more Josey complains, the more the harassment escalates and the more personal it becomes.

In time, even her friendship with Glory will feel the strain and the repercussions of her battle for respect will spill out into the community, affecting her children at school and her parents' relationships with their friends and with each other.

Perhaps the harshest thing that happens to Josey is not the treatment she receives from the rogue element at the mine, but the moment when she turns to the other female miners for help and they turn away, Caro observes. "This isn't a story in which all the men are evil and all the women are good because I know that's not the case; that would be a huge disservice to the complexities of human relationships. There are instances here in which both men and women behave appallingly and others in which they show great compassion. This is one of the reasons why I found the project so interesting and honest."

Cast as Josey Aimes, who ultimately becomes the lightning rod for the fear, anger, uncertainty and hope of so many people, Charlize Theron sees the conflict as largely a question of survival. "Josey enters a world where tensions are already high and where the existing workforce, predominantly men, is threatened by what they see as women coming in and taking their jobs. Bottom line, when survival is at stake, I think people will do what they have to do, and that applies to everyone at the mine, including Josey."

Referencing an early scene between Josey and Glory that takes place after Josey's first difficult week on the job, Theron notes that as physically spent as she is, Josey can't help

admitting that, “she’s tasted true independence for the first time in her life and the satisfaction of her own paycheck. It’s the first time she’s really felt alive and it’s a feeling she will fight hard to hold onto.”

In part because of Josey’s own personal history, some of which will come to light in the course of events, Caro suggests that, “you begin to understand why she acts as she does, why it is so important for her to fight this case and why it’s just not an option for her to put up with the abuse as some of the other women choose to do.”

Josey’s growing commitment to be heard finally finds an unexpected ally in Bill White (Academy Award nominee Woody Harrelson), a hometown lawyer newly returned from his own personal and professional disappointments in New York. Knowing she has little chance of winning on her own, White attempts to break legal ground with Josey by filing an unprecedented class action lawsuit for sexual harassment – if only they can get others to join.

The kinetic, non-linear structure of Michael Seitzman’s script illustrates how, as Caro explains, “things that have happened in the past, especially in a small community like this, are inevitably brought to bear upon the present.” Says Seitzman (*Here on Earth*), whose screenplay opens with a brief courtroom scene to anchor the action before reaching back to reveal key episodes leading up to it, “the courtroom serves as an engine for the story, helping to navigate us through Josey’s life, as well as reinforcing the ways in which the events of her past shape not only Josey’s story but also the stories of those closest to her.”

As it offers a look into life on the Iron Range, and the personal battles waged by some of the workers against the management and against one another, *North Country* also touches upon the connections between Josey Aimes and the residents of this tightly knit community, offering insights into what sustains them and what keeps them together.

“The dynamics of the characters really drive the story,” says Caro, citing some of the conflicts that play out against the backdrop of the mines: “Josey’s difficult relationship with her father, her father’s initial rancor towards her and then his gradual comprehension of what things are like from her side; Josey’s struggle as a single mother, and in particular with her teenage son who suffers the fallout of her lawsuit from the other kids at school; her friendship with the other women and their growing opposition to her once she decides to take on the establishment; and the tense interplay between Josey and Bobby Sharp. There’s a lot of electrical current that passes between these people.”

“I see it as two stories unfolding concurrently,” offers Seitzman. “One is about a woman going to work in the iron mines and the men who don’t want her there. The other is about a woman coming to terms with her past, and how that affects her family and her future.”

Given the potential nuance and impact of these interlocking dramas, and the necessity above all to keep the story grounded, *North Country* producer Nick Wechsler was very specific in selecting a director – choosing Caro from the very beginning for, “her ability to convey complex emotional stories in a way that is never melodramatic. Her tone is always genuine, very organic,” he says.

Wechsler, whose own filmmaking career encompasses some of the most provocative and interesting films of the past 15 years (*Requiem For a Dream, Quills, Eve’s Bayou, The Player, The Rapture, Drugstore Cowboy, sex, lies and videotape* and the recent Tribeca Film Festival headliner *Fierce People*), notes that, “one of the extraordinary aspects of *Whale Rider* was that it explored the culture of an indigenous society that was not her own with true empathy. Niki’s first film, *Memory and Desire*, also delved into an unfamiliar culture and told an intricate and tragic love story with wonderful clarity and heart. When I met with her about *North Country*, she had a remarkable passion for it. She was immediately as connected and committed to it as I was.”

“What is ultimately so uplifting about the story,” Caro concludes, “is Josey’s instinct and courage to challenge the mine and bring these experiences to light even when she has no support. It’s her willingness to take it all the way that draws us to her side.”

***Family, Friends, Co-workers and a Surprising Ally – Lives Touched
and Challenged by Josey’s Battle with the Mine***

As much as they concurred on the themes of the story, Wechsler and Caro found themselves similarly in sync when it came to selecting actors for leading roles. “We cast the movie together,” says Wechsler, “and I don’t think either of us ever came to a decision that was more than a few degrees from the other person’s point of view.”

Acknowledging the stellar cast *North Country* attracted, Caro says, “We have three Oscar-winning women working together: Charlize Theron, Frances McDormand and Sissy Spacek.” Equally important, she says, is the subtle poignancy that Michelle Monaghan brings to

the spirited character of Sherry and the range of male roles brought to life by Sean Bean, Richard Jenkins, Jeremy Renner and Woody Harrelson. “Although some of the men in this story behave horribly, there are many good ones and we have these first-class actors who brilliantly bring out their flaws and their virtues.”

In casting Charlize Theron as Josey Aimes, Caro cites her body of work (*The Cider House Rules*, *Curse of the Jade Scorpion*, *The Italian Job*) as well as the power of Theron’s widely acclaimed performance in the 2003 crime biography *Monster*, which earned the actress both Academy and Golden Globe Awards as well as a BAFTA nomination. “A lot of attention was given to her physical transformation in that film, but it was what she was doing emotionally that most impressed and moved me,” Caro says. “It was truly no contest – I wanted Charlize in this role. She proved to be a real collaborator, completely invested in telling the story.”

At about the same time, Theron saw *Whale Rider* and loved it, prompting in her a keen interest in working with Caro. “I asked my agent to try setting up a meeting with her for whatever she was doing next and then, unbelievably, five days later I got the call for *North Country*,” Theron relates. “I was ecstatic. I’ve been completely overwhelmed and inspired by the whole experience; there isn’t a word in the dictionary to explain how it felt for me to be a part of this picture.

“I’m fascinated by people who don’t realize they have incredible internal fortitude and ability. They discover it only when they get themselves into situations that require it or realize some truth that others are not seeing. That’s Josey to me,” says Theron, describing one of the reasons she was attracted to the story and its heroine. “The road she takes is a very lonely one and not one she is obligated to choose, but she does and she paves the way for others who are going through the same difficult circumstances. That takes a special, strong person and I love the way Josey finds this inner reserve of courage that I don’t think she even realized she had.”

Another aspect of the film that appealed to Theron was the disarmingly straightforward way in which Caro approached it. “What I like about Niki’s direction is that she doesn’t complicate anything that doesn’t need to be complicated. There is something beautiful in the simplicity of her style; the way she sees the world and people in general, and these people and their struggles in particular and how she taps into that. She understands that it all comes down to wanting to keep your head above water. I came into this project with enormous respect for her and that respect has only grown.”

Frances McDormand, who takes on the role of Josey's self-assured friend Glory, a worker and union rep at the mine, offers a similar perspective and was especially interested in Caro's treatment of the script. "For me, this is a movie about human dignity," she says, emphasizing *human over female*. "Niki Caro is a smart person and an incredibly insightful filmmaker. I can trust that her storytelling comes from an original place, as opposed to a sappy, sentimental one, and that she would make this a story about people, not just women."

McDormand's versatility has shone through a wide range of screen, stage and television performances and been recognized with a plethora of awards and honors including an Oscar for *Fargo* and Oscar nominations for *Mississippi Burning* and *Almost Famous*. As Caro attests, McDormand was the clear choice for Glory, a characterization that begins in one way and transforms into something different as the strong and self-sufficient woman is diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) and begins to fight, then slowly succumb to her progressive illness while trying to hold onto her job and position in the community. "Everything about Fran was right for the part," says Caro. "I wanted an actress who was uncompromising and unsentimental, who could really make that journey without any fuss."

The natural interplay between Glory and Josey is portrayed with similar restraint. "What's great about the arc of our scenes together is that although they are emotional and deeply connected to emotional truths in the story, they are not overly sentimental," says McDormand, who recently wrapped the sci-fi thriller *Aeon Flux* with co-star Theron. "There's one scene that takes place in the women's locker room at the mine after Josey has just gone through some harsh treatment and Glory finds her crying. Instead of comforting her with a big sweet hug, Glory says, look, you just have to get over it. If you give in, you're doing exactly what they want you to do and at the end of the day we all have a job to do. It's tough love – one friend to another."

As close as the two are, she points out, the women have different reactions to their situation. "Glory's been working in the mine longer than Josey. She has an established position in the community and she's the female union rep so she's earned a certain amount of respect from her fellow miners. Part of the reason she remains above the fray is also because she's learned to overlook the pranks and the innuendo. That's something Josey simply won't do."

As much as McDormand warmed to the character, the story and Caro's interpretation, the truth, she admits with a laugh, may have been more basic: "It was the truck. At the end of my first meeting with Niki, with excellent dramatic timing, she said 'oh, by the way, this is a picture

of the truck Glory drives,' and she produced a photo of this truck," McDormand relates, remembering the image of that mammoth vehicle as big as an office building and weighing several tons. "I just couldn't shake the idea of my getting to drive that truck."

As Glory's illness progresses, she relies more upon Kyle, played by British actor Sean Bean, well known to American audiences for his role as the warrior Boromir in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (which earned him a SAG Award) and as Odysseus in *Troy*, as well as a series of memorable villains in *GoldenEye*, *Patriot Games* and *Don't Say a Word*.

Kyle is introduced in the film as the stay-at-home partner in the relationship, sidelined some time earlier by a mining injury at the same company where Glory now "drives truck." In a traditional role reversal that a less confident man might not have been able to accept, Kyle maintains their home and keeps a low profile – as well as taking the occasional potshots from his former crewmates with grace – while Glory gains momentum at the mine. Then, as Glory develops ALS and starts to lose control over elements of her life, their roles shift again and Kyle takes charge. As McDormand says, "he rises and becomes her voice."

"Sean has such sensitivity as an actor," says Caro. "I'm surprised that he's played so many bad guys on screen. His Kyle is tireless and genuine, every woman's dream; a confident man who is also incredibly gentle. His story is entirely subtextual but vital and very moving. The relationship between Kyle and Glory is one of love and romance. Sean brings a powerful humanity to the character and his situation."

Another character experiencing significant change is Josey's taciturn, hard-line traditionalist father, Hank, played by Richard Jenkins, a SAG Award nominee for his role as Nathaniel Fisher in the popular HBO drama *Six Feet Under*. A mining veteran and committed union man his entire adult life, Hank is loyal to a fault – but seemingly to his buddies and co-workers first.

"Hank doesn't believe women should be miners, first of all. Secondly, he doesn't approve of his daughter leaving her husband, taking the kids and getting a job. He thinks she should try to work things out with her husband, regardless of what the problem was," says Jenkins. "So he's starting from a place that is somewhat stuck in time, on top of which he seems to feel that Josey has taken a job in his mine just to provoke him."

"For a man like Hank to see his daughter come to work in an environment that he has dominated for 30 years is very unsettling. You see how difficult it is for him to accept her there

and then even more difficult to see her treated badly by his fellow miners,” offers Caro. In theory, he may share their point of view but, as Jenkins points out, “when it happens to one of his own it’s very hard. She’s still his daughter. Eventually he has to step up and start looking at things differently, but at first only because his wife pressures him. It’s a crisis that makes both parents examine their relationship to each other, their daughter and their community before taking a stand.

“What I like most about Niki’s approach,” says Jenkins, “is that she’s interested in finding the possibilities in everyone rather than just saying ‘this is who this guy is, period,’ because the truth is, even people in their 40s and 50s and beyond are still not quite sure exactly who they are and there is always an opportunity for exploration.”

In the role of Hank’s soft-spoken but surprisingly strong-willed wife Alice is Sissy Spacek, whom Caro calls “iconic,” a 1981 Oscar-winner for her leading role in *Coal Miner’s Daughter* and recipient of five additional Oscar nominations in a remarkable career spanning 30 years, as well as the prestigious AFI Actor of the Year Award for 2002’s *In the Bedroom*.

Alice is torn between love and loyalty to her husband and her daughter and has to make some very difficult decisions. “Hank and Alice are both very reserved people and Alice is accustomed to deferring to her husband on most things. But through the course of this story Alice discovers a quiet courage and strong sense of honor,” says Spacek, who sensed those same qualities in the personalities of many people she met in the Northern Minnesota community prior to filming. Like many of her cast-mates, she found that time spent in the community helped her find her way into the character. “Meeting and spending time with some of the women whose husbands work in the mines was very inspiring and had a profound effect on me. They were very helpful and extremely open...and they taught me how to make a mean strudel.”

Another technique the actress employed as a touchstone for the character was wholly her own and deceptively simple: “my glasses,” she jokes, “that was the final piece of the puzzle. Sometimes I start with the shoes; this time it was the glasses.”

“Sissy had a deep dedication to getting the accent and the mannerisms right,” says Caro, citing the importance of detail in a role that, though essential, takes relatively little screen time. “Alice is not a woman accustomed to expressing herself or talking much, so there was much Sissy needed to convey with her tone and expression.”

Jeremy Renner, best known for his gripping performance in the title role of the 2002 independent feature biography *Dahmer*, takes on the complex character of Bobby Sharp, Josey's former high school classmate and now a supervisor at the mine.

Like many of his crew, Bobby is opposed to women taking mining jobs but his animosity and aggression towards Josey in particular is not only a product of his environment and economic concerns – it's very personal, rooted in a traumatic incident from their youthful past that neither will openly acknowledge. Although Josey appears to have moved on, it's clear that Bobby has not and Josey's sudden re-appearance in his daily life ignites in him long-dormant feelings of anger, confusion and shame.

"Jeremy's role as Bobby Sharp is a good example of the range of issues this story brings out," observes Caro. "On the surface he behaves despicably. In a lesser actor, someone unwilling to explore the psychological depth of such a man, it could be one-dimensional. But in Jeremy's hands he's not a mustache-twirling villain, he's a very conflicted man. We worked very hard, together, at understanding Bobby now and the boy that he once was. His motives and his actions are complicated and Jeremy brings all of that to the fore. He was an absolute joy to work with."

Says Renner, "What I find fascinating about the human condition is how people respond to certain things; that interests me more than the outcome of what Bobby actually says or does to Josey. What fuels that kind of behavior? I believe it stems from his inability to communicate his strong attraction to this woman as well as his guilt over the past. Luckily for Bobby, he has a perfect cover for his actions – to hear him talk, 'it's all about the union and keeping solidarity,' and he bolsters himself with that rhetoric but inside he's miserable. Everyone can be silenced by something bigger than they are. It takes a lot of courage to go up against that."

Among Josey's female co-workers, courage takes many forms. Michelle Monaghan, a series regular on *Boston Public* and co-star in the recent hit features *The Bourne Supremacy* and *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, stars as Sherry, a high-spirited young woman who literally wears her individuality on her sleeve.

"It's a hard job. There's nothing pretty or easy about it," says Monaghan. As far as Sherry is concerned, donning coveralls and doing her part to haul and break rock in the quarry is enough concession to the spartan surroundings, "so she always goes to work in full makeup and with her hair and nails done. Sherry tries to maintain her femininity in a masculine environment,

not only in the way she looks and the clothes she wears to and from the locker room but in the way she interacts with people both on and off the job. Those things may seem silly to others but they are important to her. Her style is her way of declaring her determination to be herself.”

In another setting, Sherry could be her pretty, fun-loving, vivacious self without censure, but at the mine her outgoing nature is too easily misconstrued as flirtatiousness by her male co-workers and frowned upon by the other women. Unwilling to suppress her personality, Sherry finds the cost is high. In time, she becomes the prime target of some of the nastiest pranks and innuendo the miners can deliver, a situation which only escalates when Josey starts to call out for change.

“Sherry is like a lot of people in this world who are different and are criticized and penalized for it,” says Monaghan. “Anyone can be bullied. Ultimately this is a story about some people who stood up and demanded respect for themselves and I think everyone can identify with that, male or female.”

Stepping up as Josey’s first real ally, albeit reluctantly, is hometown attorney Bill White, played by Oscar- and Golden Globe-nominated Woody Harrelson (*The People Vs. Larry Flynt*). Recognized worldwide for his memorable comedic performances on both big and small screen, Harrelson also shone in Terrence Malick’s World War II saga *The Thin Red Line*, following an impressive dramatic debut in Oliver Stone’s provocative *Natural Born Killers*. “Woody worked at a great depth in this part and he was simply amazing; he cannot do a single thing wrong on screen,” says Caro. “He has the strength in his own character to truly explore Bill White’s vulnerabilities and that helps to avoid the whole black-and-white polarization, which is of paramount importance to a story like this.”

Bill’s vulnerability is based in part on his own profound self-doubts, both as a lawyer and a person. Initially, the prospect of trying Josey’s case is as daunting for him as it is for her.

“Bill has returned to the Iron Range after having left for New York where he joined a big law firm, got married and then divorced,” Harrelson explains. The one-time high school hockey star who left town to pursue his dreams now finds that, “his career and personal life haven’t turned out the way he expected and he’s in a bitter funk when we meet him. He’s hesitant to take Josey’s case against the mine for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that his expertise at the law firm was in negotiating settlements, not going to trial. But Josey won’t let him do that.”

At the same time, Harrelson notes, White is intrigued by the idea of breaking legal ground with the nation's first-ever class action sexual harassment suit. Forced to rise above his own misgivings, he takes the case all the way to trial and, "gets the chance to rediscover his self-respect and his sense of justice."

"It's a powerful script and I feel privileged to be a part of this movie" says Harrelson, for whom the story's themes truly resonate. "It's truly the Little Guys against The Machine."

One tough but often entertaining assignment the cast shared was learning to deliver their dialogue in a credible Northern Minnesota cadence. "It's a very subtle and specific accent, and it was my number one challenge," says Harrelson, who was heard to joke during production, "I think it's finally come together now and we have, what, a week and a half left to shoot?" All agree that the extra time spent in the region and mingling with the community before and during production helped immensely, as did sessions with an on-set dialect coach and conversations with the numerous local residents hired as extras on the film.

Spacek's schedule originally called for a week of filming, but her dedication to mastering the timbre of her character's speech led to an additional two weeks' stay on the Iron Range location. "This accent was so foreign to me," says the Texas-born actress. "I finally got it down and then the morning of my first day of work I woke up with laryngitis!" she says with a laugh. "So, most of the time I was just struggling to find a note that would come out. It was really kind of funny, like the movie gods were playing a dirty trick on me."

Rounding out the main cast are Rusty Schwimmer (*The Perfect Storm*) and Jillian Armenante (*Judging Amy*) as Big Betty and Peg, two strong-willed miners; and fourteen-year-old Thomas Curtis (*Sweet Home Alabama*, *Red Dragon*), taking on the role of Josey's son Sammy, whose troubled relationship with his mother reaches a crisis during her legal battle with the mining company.

Getting to Know the Mines, the Community and the Minnesota Winter – A Commitment to Authenticity Sets the Tone for Production

Production began in Northern Minnesota, to capture the region's unique geography and legendary frigid, icy winter. The Iron Range had only recently weathered record-breaking cold,

but when cast and crew arrived, temperatures had mercifully risen to about 19 degrees, a veritable heat wave for the locals but still cold enough to freeze sensitive camera equipment, requiring special heater units on the set.

Caro felt strongly about filming in the towns of Eveleth, Virginia, Hibbing and Chrisholm, regarding the story's location almost as another character. "Since we're working in a very specific landscape and part of the world, Niki wanted that landscape to have its own strong interplay with the performances of the actors. Her intention is to be honest to the place where the story occurs and that requires as much location shooting as we can possibly accomplish," says Wechsler, who was on board for the cross-country maneuvers.

"I take this approach with all my films," says Caro, a native of New Zealand, who was as enthusiastic about immersing herself into the Minnesota communities as she was about exploring the Maori culture in *Whale Rider*. "I'm endlessly inspired by real people and real landscapes."

In addition to the essential Minnesota locations, production secured a number of practical sites in Silver City, New Mexico, where they had access to the Phelps-Dodge Company's Cobre and Chino copper mines. Cobre, conveniently, was a closed mine and so easily became a movie set, while the fully functioning Chino facility provided not only camera-ready trucks and equipment but safety and technical support for the production personnel.

North Country cast and crew took an educational field trip to the New Mexico site prior to beginning principal photography in Minnesota, for a hands-on tour of the mines, a requisite safety course and an opportunity to get comfortable with an arsenal of heavy machinery designed to move and crush rocks the size of Volkswagens.

Lillian Medina, Phelps-Dodge Senior Safety and Health Specialist and one of their guides for the crash course, became a role model for Rusty Schwimmer's characterization of Big Betty. Schwimmer was taken with the way the efficient, direct Medina, dressed in plain work shirts and steel-toed boots, favored distinctly feminine, slender Capri cigarettes, and incorporated that stylistic detail into her portrayal.

It was here that Frances McDormand finally got her chance to climb into the cab of the massive truck she would be driving as Glory. "To start you honk once, to go forward you honk twice and to reverse you honk three times," McDormand displays her knowledge of the protocol. "Actually, it's not that hard to drive," she admits, "it's fully automatic. The scary thing is that you have so little visibility so I could actually be squashing people very easily if it wasn't for our

fabulous crew watching out for me. I had never been in a mine before, and even though this isn't a documentary, it truly was a great benefit to shoot it in actual mines and for us to work with people who have this kind of experience."

Not only did the cast and crew familiarize themselves with mining operations, they took time to get acquainted with their host community back in Minnesota. On the agenda were regular winter activities like ice fishing, snowmobiling, dog sledding and the region's #1 sport – hockey, while Spacek also worked on her strudel technique with help from the women at the local Slovenia Hall.

Says Renner, "it's great to learn what a stacker is," but beyond the technical education, "as an actor, I've always enjoyed observing people and find it extremely valuable to go sit in a restaurant or bar and listen to what people will tell you, especially in small towns. I'm from a small town myself and it has always fascinated me how you will learn more about a place by talking with people than you'll ever learn from any newspaper or national monument."

Production recruited Iron Range residents as extras in the film, either to populate mining sequences or scenes shot in town, and in particular the emotionally charged Union Hall scene. Shot in a cavernous Elks Lodge in Eveleth, with its pastoral pale green wall murals, this is where Josey unsuccessfully attempts to explain to her fellow miners why she is bringing suit against the company and how it was never her intention to shut down the mine. The assembled crowd is clearly agitated, fearful of losing their livelihood and not in any frame of mind to listen.

In casting approximately three hundred area men for the scene, Caro explained the circumstances that brought the action to this juncture and emphasized the need for them to express the kind of heated anger it required. Initially tentative, their ad-libbed catcalls became louder and more spirited with each take. Those who remained somewhat uneasy in this volatile atmosphere proved equally valuable as Caro was able to combine their range of expressions with those of their more vocal comrades and the few uncomfortably tight-lipped female attendees into a realistic rendition of the event. Simultaneously, one camera remained focused exclusively on Charlize Theron as Josey, trying to hold her own amidst the barrage of opposition.

Richard Jenkins, whose character, Hank, makes a pivotal decision in this scene, credits his Minnesotan colleagues as "great guys who really rose to the challenge. They were being asked to say things that weren't pleasant, and that they didn't necessarily want to say, but they

delivered. They did it. It really added a sense of reality that you couldn't get anywhere else – you just had to be there.”

Not all scenes shot in Minnesota were as intense as the Union Hall confrontation. Several days of the shooting schedule were devoted to action at a local hockey rink, where approximately 2,000 extras posed as cheering fans.

Like many of the cast and crew who were acclimatized to warmer zones, Caro prepared for the weather with zeal, spending much of the chilly Minnesota shoot wrapped in down parkas, thick boots and a giant fur hat an Eskimo might envy. Theron, born and raised in temperate South Africa, also found the cold bracing but not without its rewards. “The fresh fallen snow was gorgeous, especially in the morning,” she recalls. “It looked like icing on a cake and I loved the sight of it...although ideally from the inside of a house! Through a window it was quite dazzling. It was a bit harder to appreciate when I was standing in it.”

Capturing the Look: Realistic and Down to Earth But With its Own Beauty

“It was always my intention to make a very beautiful film from this material but also to present it realistically and that was the challenge,” says Caro. “I didn't want it to become too gritty. I wanted to convey the beauty, not in a plastic, Hollywood sense, but in the true sense of what this place and these people offer and all the complexities of life in this world, in this astonishingly rich landscape.”

With this in mind, it's not surprising that Caro was drawn to acclaimed cinematographer Chris Menges, Academy Award winner for *The Mission* and *The Killing Fields* and an Oscar nominee for *Michael Collins*. “He photographs settings and characters with great integrity and heart,” she says. “There's an undeniable beauty and honesty to his work,” dramatically evident in shots of *North Country*'s vast expanses of snow-covered hills under stark open skies, and in the dark and light contrast of snow with the black ore and dim interiors of the mine.

Caro particularly liked Menges' ability to provide her with a set almost entirely free of movie lights. For *North Country*, Menges gravitated toward natural lighting whenever possible. Only when that wasn't feasible would he create an artificial source through inventive use of bounces, a light-board known as MEL (“Million Eye Lights” for its multitude of bulbs) and tiny

lights wrapped in plastic and attached to a panel – all blended seamlessly with natural light. He cleared the set for Caro by hiding lights above sets or pre-rigging locations so that illumination poured in from windows or seemed to emanate from actual, practical lights in the scenes themselves, often set with dimmers so they could be discretely and rapidly adjusted.

“Of all the stellar DPs I met, Chris was the one who spoke the plainest and promised to get all the lights off the floor so that the actors and I would be free to move anywhere,” Caro recalls of their initial conversations. “Typically, when you remove lighting from the floor you can get a very flat effect but Chris’ photography is so insightful there was no concern about that.”

Menges elected to shoot in Super 35 widescreen, to capture the spacious Minnesota landscapes and accommodate as many of the cast as possible in a frame in certain scenes. That broad canvas allowed Caro and the actors to explore their positions in the frame with greater latitude. As Caro explains, “I will not commit to camera positions and movement until I’ve seen the scene’s focus and emotion and know how to best serve it with the camera. The important thing about Chris is that his operation is so sensitive. A lot of the filming was done with hand-held cameras and that provides an immediate response to the actors so that we can really breathe with them and capture all the subtle moments in their performances.”

Toward that end, much of the camerawork has a cinema vérité quality. Caro and Menges often “covertly rolled” film to document the spontaneous reactions of the many extras filling out key scenes.

In keeping with the director’s commitment to authentic and natural settings, production designer Richard Hoover (Emmy nominee for his work on the HBO drama *Live from Baghdad*) incorporated existing structures whenever possible. In addition to the Eveleth Elks Club meeting room standing in for the film’s Union Hall, a local hockey arena served as a set for its cinematic counterpart and Josey’s house was an actual two-storey clapboard residence – temporarily vacant – that Hoover discovered during the production’s stop in New Mexico.

The hockey rink, already painted a bright yellow, became the linchpin in the film’s color scheme. “We had trucks at the mine painted yellow,” says Hoover, “and we repeated that color in a more subdued way in Josey’s childhood home, where Alice and Hank still live, in the floral wallpaper in the kitchen. We added some touches of pink, green and blue but yellow was the

defining hue. It's also in the kitchen of Josey's new house, as if she is seeking to recreate what she remembers from her parents' home."

Hoover extensively studied the area's traditions and population, the history and the mines. "We had certain images in our collective consciousness," he explains, "but sometimes things just happened organically. We found a house in Las Vegas, New Mexico that resembled a style from the early 1900s in Minnesota because so many people from that region had moved west and settled there with the influx of the railroads. Plus, it had wall-to-wall paneling that was just right and echoed the darker wood with somewhat stronger lines than was in the parents' house. So our research and the locations meshed perfectly."

Like Hoover and his team, costumer designer Cindy Evans (*Memento*, *Laurel Canyon*, *Lords of Dogtown*), did extensive research and scoured neighborhood thrift shops for ideas as well as for actual pieces. She also found inspiration in Richard Avedon's photographic collection In the American West. Even though the photographer's subjects are not from Minnesota, Evans found his portraits of hard-working people (some of them miners) in everyday life from the late 1970s evocative and adaptable.

Evans, who previously worked with Charlize Theron on the 2001 romantic drama *Sweet November*, concentrated on texture rather than color and assembled a rich and practical wardrobe of carefully aged plaid flannels, rough denim and thick sweaters that layered.

The palette was muted and Evans avoided faddish fashion with one conspicuous exception: Michele Monaghan's wardrobe as Sherry. Unlike the other women at the mine, the nineteen-year-old makes every effort to dress up, even if her taste is often questionable, arriving and leaving her shift in pieces favoring feminine silhouettes or details like purple high-heeled ankle boots that taper into matching legwarmers, and then really cutting loose at the local bar after-hours in more provocative outfits.

"Sherry loves her clothes," notes Monaghan, who jokes that she was hoping to take the character's wardrobe home after production wrapped. "She really likes her short skirts, snug little sweaters and those fantastic boots. She wears makeup and jewelry with a real sense of fun. In time, though, and because of some of the things that happen to her, Sherry's spirit is broken and that begins to change everything about her; her personality and the clothes she wears," a transformation Evans helps convey by toning down her wardrobe by degrees. "Unfortunately, it makes her feel like less of a woman, and that's a very sad thing for her."

ABOUT THE CAST

Oscar-winning actress **CHARLIZE THERON** (Josey Aimes) is known for her powerful performances. Theron has tackled roles that range from a Savannah socialite to a working class New Yorker, proving time and time again that she is much more than just another pretty face. This incredibly talented actress began her career as a model in her native South Africa before coming to the U.S. as a ballerina with the Joffrey Ballet, before beginning her journey into the world of film.

Moviegoers were introduced to Theron's charm in her feature film debut *2 Days in the Valley*, with James Spader, Eric Stoltz and Jeff Daniels. Theron played Helga, Spader's partner and love interest, a woman unable to resist the allure of the danger that surrounds her. Even among such a powerhouse ensemble cast, Theron gave a standout performance.

In early 1997, Theron starred in Jonathan Lynn's *Trial and Error* opposite Michael Richards. By the fall of that same year she appeared on the big screen again, co-starring with Al Pacino and Keanu Reeves in the thriller and box office smash *The Devil's Advocate*.

Getting a glimpse of Theron's extraordinary drive and amazing talent was all it took for Tom Hanks to cast Theron in his directorial debut *That Thing You Do!* The two-time Academy Award-winning actor brought this story to film from the script he authored about a small town rock band, The Wonders, and the hit song that brought them fame. Theron portrayed Tina, Guy's (Tom Everett Scott) hometown girlfriend, a woman who is less than dazzled by The Wonders' overnight success and its repercussions.

In 1998, Theron starred in Woody Allen's *Celebrity*, for which she received rave reviews, and followed with *Mighty Joe Young*, opposite Bill Paxton. In 1999, audiences saw her star in the Oscar-nominated *The Cider House Rules*, based on the acclaimed novel by John Irving, and in *The Astronaut's Wife*, opposite Johnny Depp. *The Cider House Rules* stellar cast was honored with a nomination for "Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Theatrical Motion Picture" by the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

In 2000, the much in-demand Theron tackled back-to-back roles in Robert Redford's *The Legend of Bagger Vance* with Will Smith and Matt Damon, *Men of Honor* with Robert De Niro and Cuba Gooding, Jr., John Frankenheimer's *Reindeer Games* with Ben Affleck, and *The*

Yards, co-starring Mark Wahlberg, Joaquin Phoenix, James Caan and Faye Dunaway. In 2001, Theron illuminated the screen in the Warner Bros. Pictures' tearjerker *Sweet November* alongside Keanu Reeves, as well as in Woody Allen's *Curse of the Jade Scorpion*, co-starring Helen Hunt, Dan Aykroyd, and David Ogden Stiers.

In the fall of 2002, *Waking Up In Reno* was released, which cast Theron opposite Patrick Swayze, Natasha Richardson and Billy Bob Thornton in a lovers' crossroads. *Waking up in Reno* refers to more than just the alarm clock when these two married couples take a road trip – and an unexpected emotional detour – from their hometown of Little Rock to the “Biggest Little City in the World” for a monster truck rally.

The feature *Trapped*, directed by Luis Mandoki, in which Charlize joined costars Kevin Bacon, Courtney Love, Stuart Townsend, Pruitt Taylor Vince and young award-winning talent Dakota Fanning was also released in the fall of 2002. When their (Theron and Townsend) daughter (Fanning) is kidnapped by experienced kidnappers (Bacon and Love), the Jennings' (Theron and Townsend) turn the tables on this seemingly foolproof plan with unexpected results.

In 2003, Theron illuminated the screen in the exciting caper movie *The Italian Job*, co-starring Mark Wahlberg and Edward Norton and directed by F. Gary Gray. Her next movie *Monster*, co-starring Christina Ricci and directed by Patty Jenkins, hit theatres that fall to rave reviews and critical acclaim. Theron captivated as female serial killer Eileen Warnos. She has since won the Independent Spirit Award and the National Broadcast Film Critics Association Award, as well as winning the Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild, San Francisco Film Critics Circle, New York Film Critics Online and Southeastern Film Critics awards, the Breakthrough Performance Award from the Nation Board of Review and the Academy Award – all for her emotionally devastating performance in *Monster*.

Following *Monster*, Theron starred in the feature *Head In The Clouds* opposite Penelope Cruz and Stuart Townsend. Theron next captivated audiences in HBO's *The Life And Death of Peter Sellers* opposite Geoffrey Rush, for which she received a Best Supporting Actress nomination from the Golden Globes, Screen Actors Guild Awards, and the Emmys.

Theron recently finished filming the action adventure *Aeon Flux* for director Karyn Kusama, based on the MTV animated series.

She resides in Los Angeles with her beloved dogs.

FRANCES McDORMAND (Glory) has established a worldwide cinema audience with roles in a variety of films including her Academy Award winning portrayal of Marge Gunderson in the acclaimed Coen Brothers' film, *Fargo*. Other films include Cameron Crowe's *Almost Famous* (for which she was nominated for a Golden Globe, BAFTA Award and Academy Award, and for which she won several Critics Awards), Curtis Hanson's *Wonder Boys*, Michael Caton-Jones' *City By the Sea* opposite Robert De Niro, *Madeline*, *Primal Fear*, John Sayles' *Lone Star*, Sam Raimi's *Darkman*, Ken Loach's *Hidden Agenda*, Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*, John Boorman's *Beyond Rangoon*, Bruce Beresford's *Paradise Road*, and Alan Parker's *Mississippi Burning* (Oscar nomination).

With the Coen Brothers, McDormand has made three additional films: *Blood Simple*, *Raising Arizona*, and *The Man Who Wasn't There*. In 2002, she starred in the critically acclaimed *Laurel Canyon*, and the holiday blockbuster *Something's Gotta Give* opposite Jack Nicholson, Diane Keaton, and Keanu Reeves.

She has also starred in the television movies *Crazy in Love*, directed by Martha Coolidge, *The Good Old Boys*, directed by Tommy Lee Jones, *Talking With...*, directed by Kathy Bates, and *Hidden in America*, opposite Jeff Bridges (for which she received an Emmy nomination).

McDormand studied at the Yale School of Drama. Stage successes include her Tony-nominated performance as Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Sisters Rosenzweig* at Lincoln Center, *The Swan* at The Public Theatre, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (this time as Blanche) at the Gate Theater in Dublin, and Dare Clubb's *Oedipus* at the Blue Light Theater Company opposite Billy Crudup. She spent two years with The Wooster Group workshopping and then performing *To You, The Birdy!* In 2004, she starred in Caryl Churchill's *Far Away*, directed by Stephen Daldry at the New York Theatre Workshop.

McDormand recently completed work on the movie *Aeon Flux*, also opposite Charlize Theron and set to open in late 2005. Other upcoming films include Nicole Holofcener's *Friends with Money* with Jennifer Aniston.

SEAN BEAN (Kyle) gained international recognition for his work as Boromir in the Academy Award-winning *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, starring in both *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers*. But while Boromir may be his best known role to date, that portrayal is

only one in a career that includes 40 films, acclaimed stage performances, and one of the most successful television franchises in British television history.

Originally from Sheffield, Bean worked with his father as a welder before turning to acting, and even in his most sophisticated roles he retains the hard masculine edge of a man who once sweated for a living. After graduating from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London, he joined the Royal Shakespeare Company, and then moved to film and a breakout role in 1990's *The Field*, opposite Richard Harris, in the unforgettable and critically acclaimed drama. In 1992, he won rave reviews in *Patriot Games*, starring opposite Harrison Ford in a provocative and complex portrayal of the tragic antagonist.

A detour from feature films came when he was cast as Bernard Cornwall's beloved hero of the Napoleonic Wars, Richard Sharpe. Like the novel on which it was based, the 1993 telefilm *Sharpe's Rifles* was so popular that it spawned sequel after sequel, and by 1997, with 15 *Sharpe* films completed, Bean was one of the best known and most sought after stars in the UK, with legions of fans and a thousand websites devoted to following his every move.

After the last *Sharpe*, it was back to feature film, where he dazzled audiences in films as varied as *Tom & Thomas*, *Essex Boys*, *Ronin* and *Anna Karenina*. He most recently starred in the blockbuster *National Treasure*, opposite Nicolas Cage for director Jon Turteltaub, and in *The Island* with fellow Brit Ewan McGregor. Other recent films include a most heroic Odysseus in Wolfgang Petersen's epic *Troy*, with Brad Pitt, Eric Bana and Orlando Bloom; the independent *The Big Empty*, with Jon Favreau; the sci-fi thriller *Equilibrium* with Christian Bale; and *Don't Say a Word*, opposite Michael Douglas.

On stage, he won rave reviews last year in London's West End in an acclaimed production of *Macbeth*, in which he starred opposite Samantha Bond. Classically trained, he also recently worked in *Henry VIII* for Granada, opposite Ray Winstone and Helena Bonham Carter, and has appeared in many productions at The Royal Court Theatre, Glasgow Citizen Theatre, and the RSC.

His upcoming films include *Flightplan*, with Jodie Foster and Peter Sarsgaard, set for fall 2005; and *Silent Hill*, opposite Radha Mitchell, to be released in early 2006.

Voted by readers of *Empire Magazine* "the second sexiest man in England," Bean escapes madness by working non-stop in films around the world, and rooting for Sheffield United wherever satellite reception allows.

RICHARD JENKINS (Hank) has a prodigious and impressive list of credits. He recently completed the upcoming features *Fun with Dick and Jane*, starring Jim Carrey and Tea Leoni, as well as Rob Reiner's *Rumor Has It...*, starring Jennifer Aniston. Jenkins can currently be seen on the HBO hit series *Six Feet Under* as the wry, advice-dispensing (if deceased) Nathaniel Fisher. *Six Feet Under* was nominated for the Screen Actors Guild Awards in 2002 for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series.

Jenkins has appeared in over 40 films and over 20 television movies. His feature credits include *Shall We Dance*, *Cheaper By The Dozen*, the Coen brothers' *Intolerable Cruelty* and *The Man Who Wasn't There*; the Farrelly brothers' *Say it Isn't So*, *Me, Myself and Irene* and *There's Something About Mary*; Mike Nichols' *What Planet are You From?* and *Wolf*; *One Night at McCools*, Sydney Pollack's *Random Hearts*, *The Mod Squad*, Clint Eastwood's *Absolute Power*, *Flirting with Disaster* (for which he was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award), *The Indian In the Cupboard*, *It Could Happen To You*, *How to Make an American Quilt*, *Little Nikita*, *Sea of Love*, Lawrence Kasdan's *Silverado*, and Woody Allen's *Hannah and her Sisters*, among many others.

His television work includes the telefilms *The Sins of the Father*, *Into Thin Air*, *The Boys Next Door* and *The Band Played On*.

Born in Dekalb, Illinois, Jenkins lives in Rhode Island where he was the artistic director of the Trinity Square Repertory Company in Providence for four years.

JEREMY RENNER (Bobby) was most recently seen in theaters as part of the ensemble cast of *The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things*, directed by Asia Argento, as adapted from the critically acclaimed novel by J.T. LeRoy. Prior to that, he starred in the summer 2003 hit *S.W.A.T.*, opposite Colin Farrell and Samuel L. Jackson. Since completing those films, Renner has been on a fast-paced production schedule with several projects set for release in 2005.

Renner completed back-to-back productions on the independent films *12 and Holding* and *A Little Trip to Heaven*. In *12 and Holding* Renner demonstrates his dramatic range playing Gus, a firefighter who moves to a new town after the haunting loss of a young girl in a fire and finds redemption by helping a girl in his new town cope with her own loss. *A Little Trip to Heaven* then finds Renner refining his skill for dark troubled characters that earned the actor an Independent Spirit Award nomination for his breakout role in the title role of *Dahmer*. Starring

opposite Julia Stiles, Renner portrays a diabolical con man who breaks out of prison to find his partner-in-crime/lover murdering her current lover, faking his own death, and convincing her to join him in a new scheme. Renner will also be seen starring opposite Gabrielle Union in the independent film *Neo Ned*, which screened at the 2005 Tribeca Film Festival.

Renner also made a special appearance in *Lords of Dogtown* for director Catherine Hardwicke, and Aura Entertainment's independent film *Love Comes to the Executioner*, written and directed by Kyle Bergersen. *Lords* is a fictionalized version of the documentary *Dogtown and Z-Boys* by Stacy Peralta. *Love* tells the tale of a recent college graduate who becomes the star executioner at the local prison where his own brother is slated to die.

With a background in theater, Renner keeps in "shape" by performing in plays throughout the Los Angeles area. His most memorable was *Search and Destroy*, which he not only starred in but also co-directed, and was produced by Barry Levinson to stellar reviews.

Between film and theater, Renner finds the time to write, record, and perform his own brand of contemporary rock. He has written songs for Warner Chapel Publishing and Universal Publishing.

Rising young star **MICHELLE MONAGHAN** (Sherry) will burst onto the big screen this fall in two major roles, both for Warner Bros. Pictures.

Aside from her role in *North Country*, Monaghan will also appear in *Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang*, starring with Robert Downey Jr. and Val Kilmer for writer/director Shane Black.

Monaghan made her movie debut in *Perfume*, directed by Michael Rymer. She next played Richard Gere's secretary in *Unfaithful*, directed by Adrian Lyne; starred opposite the Douglas family in *It Runs in the Family*, directed by Fred Schepisi; and co-starred with Anthony LaPaglia and Allison Janney in *Winter Solstice*.

Recently, Monaghan appeared in *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* for director Doug Liman.

She is currently shooting *Mission Impossible 3*.

An accomplished actor in film, television and on the stage, **WOODY HARRELSON** (Bill White) has received Academy Award, Golden Globe, and Screen Actors Guild Nominations as Best Actor for his critically acclaimed portrayal of controversial magazine publisher Larry Flynt in Milos Forman's drama *The People Vs. Larry Flynt*. Harrelson was most recently seen in Brett Ratner's *After the Sunset* with Pierce Brosnan and Salma Hayek.

Upcoming films include Mark Mylod's *The Big White*, with Robin Williams and Holly Hunter; Richard Linklater's *A Scanner Darkly*, with Keanu Reeves, Robert Downey, Jr. and Winona Ryder; and Jane Anderson's *The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio* with Julianne Moore. Past film credits include *Play it to the Bone*, *The Thin Red Line*, *The Hi-Lo Country*, *Ed TV*, *Wag the Dog*, *Welcome to Sarajevo*, *Kingpin*, *Natural Born Killers*, *Indecent Proposal* and *White Men Can't Jump*.

A committed environmentalist, Harrelson joined his activism with his film efforts in Ron Mann's *Go Further*, a road documentary following Harrelson and friends on their bicycle journey down the Pacific Coast Highway from Seattle to Santa Barbara.

Harrelson first endeared himself to millions of viewers as a member of the ensemble cast of NBC's long-running hit comedy *Cheers*. For his work as the affable bartender Woody Boyd, he won an Emmy in 1988 and was nominated four additional times during his eight-year run on the show, as well as once in 1993 when he reprised the role on *Frasier*. He later made a return to television with a recurring guest role on the hit NBC series *Will and Grace*.

Balancing his film and television work, in 1999 Harrelson revived a career long commitment to the theatre by directing his own play *Furthest From the Sun* at the Theatre de la Juene Lune in Minneapolis. He followed next with the Roundabout's Broadway revival of the N. Richard Nash play *The Rainmaker* in 2000, Sam Sheperd's *The Late Henry Moss* in 2001, John Kolvenbach's *On an Average Day*, opposite Kyle MacLachlan in London's West End in the fall of 2002, and in the summer of 2003, Harrelson directed the Toronto premiere of Kenneth Lonergan's *This is Our Youth* at the Berkeley Street Theatre.

Along with being daddy to his two beautiful daughters, closest to his heart is www.voiceyourself.com, a website Harrelson co-created with his wife Laura Louie which promotes and inspires individual action to create global momentum towards simple organic living and to restore balance and harmony to our planet.

SISSY SPACEK (Alice) has been one of the industry's most respected actresses for more than three decades. Her many honors include an Academy Award, five additional Oscar nominations, three Golden Globe Awards and numerous critics' awards.

She first gained the attention of critics and audiences with her performance in Terrence Malick's widely praised 1973 drama *Badlands*, in which she starred opposite Martin Sheen. In

1976, Spacek earned her first Academy Award nomination and won a National Society of Film Critics Award for her chilling performance in the title role of Brian De Palma's *Carrie*, based on the Stephen King novel. The following year, she won the New York Film Critics Circle Award for her work in Robert Altman's *Three Women*.

In 1980, Spacek starred as Loretta Lynn in the acclaimed biopic *Coal Miner's Daughter*, winning the Oscar and Golden Globe Award for her performance. Spacek also swept the New York Film Critics Circle, Los Angeles Film Critics, National Board of Review, and National Society of Film Critics Awards for her portrayal of the country music legend.

Spacek received another Golden Globe nomination the next year for her work in *Raggedy Man*, directed by her husband, Jack Fisk. She earned her third Oscar and Golden Globe nominations for her role in Costa-Gavras' 1982 drama *Missing*, opposite Jack Lemmon, and her fourth Oscar and Golden Globe nominations for her work in 1984's *The River*, in which she starred with Mel Gibson.

In 1987, Spacek gained her fifth Academy Award nomination and won another Golden Globe and the New York film Critics Circle Award for her performance in the dark comedy *Crimes of the Heart*. Her most recent Oscar nomination came for her portrayal of a mother grieving for her murdered son in the drama *In the Bedroom*, for which she also won a Golden Globe Award, an Independent Spirit Award, and an AFI Film Award for Best Actress. In addition, she garnered Best Actress Awards from a number of critics' organizations, including the Los Angeles, New York and Broadcast Film Critics. Her work in *In the Bedroom* also brought Spacek two Screen Actors Guild Award nominations, one for Outstanding Lead Actress and another for Outstanding Cast, shared with the rest of the film's ensemble.

Spacek's other film credits include *A Home at the End of the World*, *The Straight Story*, *Blast From the Past*, *Affliction*, *The Grass Harp*, *JFK*, *The Long Walk Home*, *Night, Mother* and *Marie*. She has several films upcoming and next stars in *Nine Lives*, which premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival.

Spacek has also been honored for her work on the small screen, where she has starred in several highly praised longform projects. She received Emmy Award nominations for her portrayal of Zelda Fitzgerald in *Last Call* and for her work in Tommy Lee Jones' Western *The Good Old Boys*, as well as SAG Award nominations for her performances in *Midwives* and *A*

Place for Annie. Her additional television credits include *If These Walls Could Talk*, *Beyond the Call*, *Streets of Laredo* and *A Private Matter*.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

NIKI CARO (Director) is one of the most original and inventive filmmakers to emerge from New Zealand in recent years. Her first feature film, *Memory and Desire*, was selected for Critics Week at the Cannes Film Festival in 1998. It was voted Best Film in the 1999 New Zealand Film Awards, also winning a Special Jury Prize for Caro's work as both writer and director. Her short films have been similarly honored: *Sure to Rise* in competition in Cannes in 1994; and *Footage* at the Venice Film Festival in 1996.

Caro completed a BFA at Elam School of Fine Arts in Auckland and a Postgraduate Diploma in Film from Swinburne in Melbourne. Returning to New Zealand, she wrote and directed several highly regarded television dramas: *Plain Tastes*, a one-hour television drama commissioned by the prestigious Television New Zealand Montana Sunday Theatre slot; *The Summer the Queen Came*, a half hour television drama; and a half-hour episode for the 1995 New Zealand Film and Television Awards best drama series winner, *True Life Stories*.

Caro has received global recognition for her internationally acclaimed and multi-award-winning feature film *Whale Rider*. Caro wrote the screenplay for *Whale Rider*, adapting Maori author Witi Ihimaera's acclaimed novel of the same name. She also directed the film. *Whale Rider* has become New Zealand's most financially successful movie, playing in Australia, America, Europe, Asia, and South America.

Caro and *Whale Rider* have won or been nominated for over fifty international awards, including audience awards at prestigious international film festivals including Toronto, Sundance, Rotterdam, San Francisco, Seattle, Maui and Lake Placid. Caro was also awarded the Audience Choice Best Director Award at Seattle. Most recently, she won a Humanitas Award, an American-based prize for film and television makers whose work offers insight into contemporary society. Her screenplay for *Whale Rider* also won the Sundance Feature Film Category.

She is married to architect Andrew Lister, and the couple recently had their first child.

NICK WECHSLER (Producer) was a founder and co-chairman of Industry Entertainment (formerly Addis-Wechsler and Associates) and recently left Industry to focus exclusively on production.

Wechsler recently produced *Fierce People*, directed by Griffin Dunne and written by Dirk Wittenborn, based on his novel. *Fierce People* premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and stars Diane Lane, Donald Sutherland, Anton Yelchin and Kristin Stewart.

He is an executive producer on the upcoming *The Fountain*, directed and written by Darren Aronofsky and starring Hugh Jackman, Rachel Weisz and Ellen Burstyn.

Wechsler's producing and executive producing credits include a distinctive and award winning mix of independent and studio movies including: *sex, lies and videotape*, winner of the 1989 Cannes Film Festival Palme d'Or; *Drugstore Cowboy*, winner of the 1989 National Society of Film Critics Best Film; *The Player*, winner of the 1991 Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture Comedy; *Little Odessa*, winner of the 1995 Venice Film Festival Silver Lion Award; *Love Jones*, winner of the 1997 Sundance Film Festival Audience Award for Best Film; *Eve's Bayou*, winner of the 1998 Independent Spirit Award for Best First Feature; and *Quills*, winner of the 2000 National Board of Review Award for Best Picture.

More recently, Wechsler executive produced Spike Lee's film *25th Hour*, starring Ed Norton, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Barry Pepper. He also executive produced *Requiem For A Dream*, the follow-up film to Darren Aronofsky's award winning *Pi*.

MICHAEL SEITZMAN (Screenplay) has been very busy since writing the script for *North Country*. He is currently adapting Mary Doria Russell's classic space epic *The Sparrow*, for Warner Bros. Pictures, which is set to star Brad Pitt; writing an adaptation of Robert Ludlum's *The Chancellor Manuscript*, to star Leonardo DiCaprio; as well as an adaptation of the upcoming book *Storming the Court*, which Seitzman will write and direct next year, also for Warner Bros. Pictures.

Prior to *North Country*, Seitzman wrote the original screenplay for the teen romance *Here On Earth*, starring Josh Hartnett, Chris Klein and Leelee Sobieski, and wrote and directed the heist film *Farmer & Chase*, starring Lara Flynn Boyle and Ben Gazzara.

Originally from New Jersey, Seitzman currently resides in Los Angeles, California.

Born in Washington, D.C., **HELEN BARTLETT** (Executive Producer) went to Madeira School and then to Trinity College. At Trinity, she created an interdisciplinary major in creative writing and dance, where she graduated with Honors in 1981 and won the John Curtis Underwood Memorial Poetry and Trinity Fiction prizes. She was chosen to be the Trinity Poet at the Glascock Poetry Reading, Mount Holyoke College and also studied poetry with poets Galway Kinnell and Sharon Olds at New York University's MFA Creative Writing Program.

In the film business, she was Vice President of the Mount Company and Paul Maslansky Productions at Warner Bros. Pictures. Since 1993, she and Tony Bill have partnered in Barnstorm Films. Bartlett produced *Untamed Heart*, starring Christian Slater and Marisa Tomei in 1992; associate produced *A Home of Our Own*, starring Kathy Bates in 1993; produced *Beyond the Call*, starring Sissy Spacek and David Strathairn for Showtime in 1996; and *The Fixer*, starring Jon Voight for Showtime in 1998.

In 2001, Bartlett executive produced *In the Time of the Butterflies*, based on the award-winning novel by Julia Alvarez. Also in 2001, she produced *Last Call* with Jeremy Irons, Neve Campbell and Sissy Spacek.

Before her involvement with film, Bartlett was a journalist and a published poet. She worked for *The Paris Review*, where she continues to be a contributing editor and has written articles for *Los Angeles Magazine* and *The Los Angeles Times*.

As for Bartlett's hobbies, she prints on an 1889 Chandler & Price letterpress and raises Bantam chickens. She collects first editions of 20th century American Women's fiction and has soloed in a Tomahawk single-engine plane. Other productions – also in association with Tony Bill – include daughters Madeline and Daphne.

NANA GREENWALD (Executive Producer) worked as an in-house production executive/producer at Industry Entertainment from 2002-2004. Before joining the company, she worked at Kopelson Entertainment from 1989-1995 as Executive Vice President and from 1997-2001 as President of Creative Affairs, where she co-produced *Don't Say A Word*, *A Perfect Murder*, *Seven*, *Outbreak*, the Academy Award-nominated *The Fugitive* and *Falling Down*. She was also a production executive on *U.S. Marshals* and *Eraser*, and produced a Showtime movie, *Past Tense*, starring Scott Glenn and Lara Flynn Boyle. Between her Kopelson tenures, she

served as Vice President of Production at Paramount-based Douglas-Reuther Productions. While there, she worked on *The Ghost and the Darkness*, *The Rainmaker* and *Face/Off*.

Greenwald began her career at Vestron Pictures in Stamford, Connecticut and Los Angeles, where she was involved in numerous film projects including the independent hit *Dirty Dancing*; the remake of *And God Created Woman*, directed by Roger Vadim; and *Parents*, directed by Bob Balaban. She is currently developing several Industry projects including *Sealand* and *World Record Man* at Warner Bros. Pictures.

DOUG CLAYBOURNE (Executive Producer) came into the film business from a background of advertising and art direction studies. Thereafter, came two years of post graduate study at the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles before Claybourne turned to film. It took a six month stint as an assistant art director on *The City of San Francisco* magazine and a working relationship with its owner, Francis Ford Coppola, to convince Claybourne to make the switch official.

Early in 1976, during his first semester of film school, Claybourne offered to work for Coppola “at no charge” for the next eight weeks, just to find out if the movie business was something he really wanted to pursue over the long term. The film was *Apocalypse Now* and eight weeks turned out to be 3 ½ years. Claybourne’s mentor association with Coppola and Zoetrope continued through the years with *The Black Stallion* (assistant director), *The Escape Artist* (producer), *The Black Stallion Returns* (producer/assistant director), *Rumble Fish* (producer), *Peggy Sue Got Married* (assistant director) and *Jack* as executive producer. The Zoetrope relationship also produced the 1992 Emmy and ACE award winning documentary *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse*, which Claybourne conceived with George Zaloom and executive produced with his long time associate Fred Roos.

In July of 1998, Claybourne completed work on *The Mask of Zorro*, which was nominated for two Golden Globes, including Best Picture and Best Actor for Antonio Banderas.

Claybourne met Rob Cohen during the making of *The Legend of Billie Jean*. This meeting led to a three picture producing association with the Taft/Barish Company and to the first picture in the franchise of *The Fast and the Furious* with Cohen directing. Other movies with Cohen were *Light of Day* and *The Serpent and the Rainbow*.

In 2003, Claybourne executive produced his 23rd feature, the family adventure *Duma*, directed by Carroll Ballard in over 60 locations in South Africa.

Claybourne also actively develops projects for his own production company, Poetry & Pictures Inc., while pursuing his passion for writing poetry and painting in watercolors. Since 1995, he has written some 25 books of poetry, only one of which has he taken time to publish, One Hundred Love Sonnets and One Sad Poem.

JEFF SKOLL (Executive Producer) founded Participant Productions in January, 2004 and serves as Chairman and CEO.

Skoll has been a leader in technology and philanthropy for many years. In 1996, Skoll joined eBay as its first president and first full-time employee, and developed the business plan that the company still follows.

In the months before eBay went public in 1998, Skoll led the company's effort to give back to the community, creating the eBay Foundation through an allocation of pre-IPO shares, an innovation that inspired a wave of similar commitments nationwide.

But Skoll didn't stop there. In 1999, he launched his own philanthropic organization, the Skoll Foundation for which he serves as chief visionary and chairman. He created the foundation in alignment with his core belief that it is in everyone's interest to shift the overwhelming imbalance between the "haves" and "have-nots." The foundation takes up this challenge by focusing on social entrepreneurs – people who couple innovative ideas with extraordinary determination, tackling the world's toughest problems to make things better for us all. In five short years, Skoll and the foundation have emerged as social sector leaders; in 2002 through 2004, Skoll was recognized as one of today's most innovative philanthropists by *Business Week*, and he is frequently cited for his leadership in advancing the work and field of social entrepreneurship.

Skoll also serves on the Board of Directors for the eBay Foundation, the Community Foundation Silicon Valley, and is a member of the Advisory Board of the Stanford Graduate School of Business, among others. He holds a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from the University of Toronto, and an M.B.A. from the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

His recent honors and awards include Canada's 1999 Leafy Award for his contributions to high technology; a 2001 Visionary Award from the Software Development Forum; the 2002

Outstanding Philanthropist Award from the Silicon Valley chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals; the 2003 Outstanding Philanthropist Award from the International Association of Fundraising Professionals; and, in 2003, an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Toronto. In 2004 the Commonwealth Club Silicon Valley awarded him its National Leadership Award.

Classmates **CLARA BINGHAM** and **LAURA LEEDY GANSLER** (Book Authors) graduated from Harvard University in 1985. Currently a freelance journalist, Bingham has served as White House correspondent for *Newsweek* and is also the author of Women on the Hill: Challenging the Culture of Congress. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband and their three children. Gansler has taught law at American University and is now counsel for a dispute resolution firm. She lives in Chevy Chase, Maryland, with her husband and sons.

CHRIS MENGES (Director of Photography) has lent his cinematography talents to film for over three decades. He is a two time Oscar winner for Best Cinematography for his work on *The Mission* and *The Killing Fields*, for which he also won the BAFTA Award. Menges was also nominated for an Academy Award for his work on *Michael Collins*.

Menges' numerous credits as director of photography include *Criminal; Dirty Pretty Things*, for which he was nominated for Best Cinematographer at the European Film Awards; *The Good Thief; The Pledge; The Boxer*, for which he was nominated for an ASC Award; *Shy People; Marie; Kes*; and *Local Hero* and *Angel*, both of which were Evening Standard Award winners for Best Technical Achievement.

His upcoming films include *Tickets* and *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*.

Menges also directed the film *A World Apart*, which won the Grand Jury Prize and three Best Actress Awards at the 1988 Cannes Film Festival. He received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the British Independent Film Awards in 2001.

RICHARD HOOVER's (Production Designer) designing credits encompass film, television and stage. Currently, he is working on the feature film *Drunk Boat*.

Hoover most recently designed HBO's *Lackawanna Blues*, *Blind Horizon* and HBO's *Live From Baghdad*, for which he earned both an Art Directors Guild Award and an Emmy Award nomination in 2003.

Hoover's other recent feature film credits include *Mothman Prophecies*, *The Prime Gig*, *Girl Interrupted*, *The Cradle Will Rock*, *Payback*, *Twilight: Los Angeles*, *Apt Pupil*, *Blackout*, *Nightwatch*, *Dead Man Walking*, *Panther*, *Ed Wood*, *You So Crazy*, *Dream Lover*, *Bob Roberts*, *Storyville*, *Torch Song Trilogy* and *It Takes Two*. His credits as art director include *Checking Out*, *Miracle Mile*, *In the Mood* and *The Sure Thing*.

For the small screen, Hoover has worked as a production designer on *Numb3ers*, *Hamburg Cell*, *Entourage*, *Street Boss*, *Failsafe*, *Twin Peaks* and *Heat Wave*, among many others.

In theatre, Hoover's design talents on *Not About Nightingales* won him a Tony Award, Evening Standard Award and Critics' Circle Award, as well as nominations for an Olivier Award and a Drama Desk Award.

Additionally, Hoover has worked on music videos for Bruce Springsteen and the Traveling Wilburys. Other music video and commercial credits include collaborating with directors such as David Lynch, David Fincher and Mark Pellington, to name a few.

DAVID COULSON (Film Editor) most recently worked on Niki Caro's critically acclaimed *Whale Rider*, winner of the Sundance Film Festival Audience Award in 2003 and an Independent Spirit Award in 2004.

Coulson's credits as editor include *Broken English*, *Desperate Remedies*, *The Footstep Man*, *User Friendly*, *Illustrious Energy*, *Trespases* and *Strata*. He won New Zealand Film and TV Awards for Best Editing for his work on *Broken English*, *The Footstep Man* and *Illustrious Energy*, and was nominated for his work on *Whale Rider*. For television, he edited *Amazon High*.

Coulson has also edited numerous documentaries including *Man of the Trees*, *Every Dancer's Dream*, *I'm in Concert*, *The Fastest Gun Downunder*, *Cold Feet*, *Gold Sheep*, *Inquiry*, *Mikhail Lermontov*, *Haka*, *American Pie*, *Behind Closed Doors*, *Peter Peryer – Portrait of a Photographer* and *Visible Evidence*.

In February 2005, **GUSTAVO SANTAOLALLA** (Music) was awarded the British Academy Award for outstanding achievement in film music for *The Motorcycle Diaries*.

In 2004, he was awarded the music industry's most prestigious award, the Grammy, for his work as a producer of *Café Tacuba's* "Cuatro Caminos." He also won a Latin Grammy for

his work with *Café Tacuba* and was nominated for Producer of the Year for his work with Juanes, Molotov, Bersuit Vergarabat and countless other influential artists, as well as his own critically-acclaimed project *Bajofondo Tango Club*.

Santaolalla solidified his reputation as one of America's premiere record producers in 2003 by virtue of three Grammy nominations. Between himself and his label, Surco (a joint venture with Universal), his nominations included albums by Juanes and Orishas in the Latin Rock / Alternative Album category and as producer of the Kronos Quartet album *Nuevo* as best Classical Crossover Album.

Santaolalla settled in the U.S. from his native Argentina in the 1980s. In 1995, he released the album *Gas* featuring the smash hit "Todo Vale," which was frequently rotated on MTV Latino. His breakthrough as a solo artist came with the release in 1996 of the album *Ronroco* by the prestigious Nonesuch Label. The album earned rave reviews and put Santaolalla at the forefront of the Latin music world. As a producer, Santaolalla has also worked with such artists as The Gypsy Kings, Maldita Vecindad and many others.

Santaolalla has become a sought-after film composer, writing original scores for such films as the Oscar-nominated *21 Grams* and *Amores Perros*, as well as *The Motorcycle Diaries* and Ang Lee's upcoming *Brokeback Mountain*.

He has also been featured on the original soundtracks for the films *Shrek 2*, *The Insider* and *Star Maps*.

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