

# SYRIANA

## *Final Production Notes*

“Corruption charges...corruption? Corruption is government intrusion into market efficiencies in the form of regulation. That’s Milton Friedman. He got a goddamn Nobel Prize. We have laws against it precisely so we can get away with it. Corruption is our protection. Corruption keeps us safe and warm. Corruption is why you and I are prancing around in here instead of fighting over scraps of meat out in the street. Corruption...is why we win.”

- Tim Blake Nelson as Danny Dalton to Jeffrey Wright as Bennett Holiday

From writer/director Stephen Gaghan, winner of the Best Screenplay Academy Award for *Traffic*, comes *Syriana*, a political thriller that unfolds against the intrigues and corruption of the global oil industry. From the players brokering back-room deals in Washington to the men toiling in the oil fields of the Persian Gulf, the film’s multiple storylines weave together to illuminate the human consequences of the fierce pursuit of wealth and power.

The intrigue takes place against the backdrop of an oil-producing Gulf country, where young, charismatic and reform-minded Prince Nasir (ALEXANDER SIDDIG) is seeking to change long-established relationships with U.S. business interests. Nasir, the apparent heir to the throne, has just granted natural gas drilling rights – long held by Connex, a Texas energy giant – to a higher Chinese bid. This is a huge blow to Connex and American business interests in the region. Killen, a smaller Texas oil company owned by Jimmy Pope (CHRIS COOPER), has just won the very competitive drilling rights to coveted fields in Kazakhstan. This makes Killen very attractive to Connex, who now needs new territory to maintain its production capacity. When the two companies merge, the pending deal attracts the scrutiny of the Justice Dept., and Sloan Whiting, a powerful white-shoe Washington law firm, is brought in to perform due diligence.

Bob Barnes (GEORGE CLOONEY) is a veteran CIA agent nearing the end of a long and respectable career, with a son headed for college (MAX MINGHELLA) and the possibility of spending the latter days of his service in a cushy desk job. A devoted company man, Bob’s always been a true believer that his work benefits his government and makes his country a safer place.

In Bob’s last assignment, an assassination of two arms dealers in Tehran, a Stinger missile

falls into the hands of a mysterious blue-eyed Egyptian. On his return to Washington, Bob is promised a promotion after one last undercover mission – assassinating Prince Nasir. But when one of his field contacts turns on him and the assassination attempt goes terribly awry, Bob is scapegoated by the CIA, betrayed by the organization to which he has devoted his life. As he searches to understand what has happened, he begins to realize that he has been lied to – used as a pawn and never privy to the real motivation for the assignments he has blindly carried out for years.

Bennett Holiday (JEFFREY WRIGHT) is an ambitious Washington attorney at Sloan Whiting, in charge of the delicate task of guiding the Connex-Killen merger through the deep waters of D.C. He needs to give the Justice Department enough material to make their case against Killen for its shady dealings in Kazakhstan without jeopardizing the entire deal. It's in the company and the country's interest that the merger go through. It also serves Bennett's ambitions – ambitions fueled by a father (WILLIAM C. MITCHELL) he is constantly at odds with.

Energy analyst Bryan Woodman (MATT DAMON) is a rising star at an Energy Trading Company, living with his wife Julie (AMANDA PEET) and their two young sons in Geneva. When he attends a party thrown by Prince Nasir's family, a tragic accident results in the death of Bryan's young son. Nasir attempts to make amends for what happened, offering Bryan a business opportunity to help the young leader realize his reformist ideas – an opportunity Bryan embraces, to the dismay of his grieving wife.

Dean Whiting (CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER), Bennett's boss, the head of Sloan Whiting and one of the most powerful men in Washington, is trying to undo Nasir's deal with the Chinese. He knows that Nasir's younger, more callow brother, Prince Meshal (AKBAR KURTHA), will be more amenable to American business interests and he pressures the aging Emir to choose his younger son to succeed him, effectively engineering Nasir's political demise.

At the other end of the wage scale in Nasir's country are the migrant laborers toiling in its energy fields, whose lives are directly and drastically affected by the royal family's policies and the vagaries of the industry. Connex workers Saleem Ahmed Kahn (SHAHID AHMED) and his son Wasim (MAZHAR MUNIR) have just been laid off from their jobs in the fields when the Chinese take them over, and their future becomes increasingly uncertain as they search in vain for work before their visas run out. Saleem dreams of someday returning to Pakistan; his son hopes for a better life but quickly becomes disillusioned and angry at the way he and his father are treated as immigrant workers in the Gulf. Wasim and his friend Farooq (SONNELL DADRAL) find solace

at the local madrassa, a place where they are treated with dignity in an otherwise bleak and unfamiliar world. At the madrassa, Wasim and Farooq are taken under the wing of a charismatic and dangerous recruiter – the blue-eyed Egyptian with the missing Stinger missile.

Sheiks and field workers, government inspectors and international spies, rich and poor, the famous and infamous – each plays their small part in the vast and complex system that powers the industry, none realizing the true extent of the explosive impact their lives will have upon the world.

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Warner Bros. Pictures presents, in association with Participant Productions, a 4M film, a Section Eight production, GEORGE CLOONEY, MATT DAMON and JEFFREY WRIGHT in *Syriana*. The film also stars CHRIS COOPER, WILLIAM HURT, MAZHAR MUNIR, TIM BLAKE NELSON, AMANDA PEET, CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER and ALEXANDER SIDDIG.

Written and directed by STEPHEN GAGHAN, the film was suggested by the book See No Evil by ROBERT BAER, and is produced by JENNIFER FOX, MICHAEL NOZIK and GEORGIA KACANDES. The executive producers are GEORGE CLOONEY, STEVEN SODERBERGH, BEN COSGROVE and JEFF SKOLL. The director of photography is ROBERT ELSWIT, A.S.C.; the production designer is DAN WEIL; and the editor is TIM SQUYRES. Music by ALEXANDRE DESPLAT.

*Syriana* will be distributed by Warner Bros. Pictures, a Warner Bros. Entertainment Company.

This film has been rated “R” by the MPAA for “violence and language.”

[www.syrianamovie.com](http://www.syrianamovie.com)

[www.participate.net/oilchange](http://www.participate.net/oilchange)

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## CAST AND CHARACTERS

**GEORGE CLOONEY / Bob Barnes:** Veteran CIA operative working out of the Middle East

**MAX MINGHELLA / Robby Barnes:** Bob's son

**JAMEY SHERIDAN / Terry George:** Deputy CIA Chief

**TOM McCARTHY / Fred Franks:** Bob's superior at the CIA

**WILLIAM HURT / Stan Goff:** Retired CIA agent, longtime associate of Bob Barnes

**VIOLA DAVIS / Marilyn Richards:** Deputy National Security Advisor

**JANE ATKINSON / CIA Division Chief**

**Killen:** Small Texas oil company that is being considered to merge with oil giant Connex

**Connex:** Powerful Texas oil company that wants to buy Killen in order to gain the smaller company's drilling rights in Kazakhstan

**CLI:** Committee to Liberate Iran

**JEFFREY WRIGHT / Bennett Holiday:** Lawyer investigating Connex/Killen merger

**WILLIAM CHARLES MITCHELL / Bennett Holiday, Sr.:** Bennett's father

**NICKY HENSON / Sydney Hewitt:** Connex's Washington counsel

**CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER / Dean Whiting:** Head of the Sloan Whiting law firm that Sydney Hewitt and Bennett Holiday work for. Member of the CLI

**CHRIS COOPER / Jimmy Pope:** Owns Killen Oil

**ROBERT FOXWORTH / Tommy Thompson:** Connex President

**TIM BLAKE NELSON / Danny Dalton:** Texas oilman working with Jimmy Pope. Member of the CLI

**PETER GERETY / Lee Janus:** Chairman of Connex Oil. Member of the CLI

**DAVID CLENNON / Asst. Attorney General Donald Farish III:** A former law professor of Bennett Holiday's, Farish is investigating the Connex/Killen merger

**MATT DAMON / Bryan Woodman:** Energy analyst at an energy trading company, living in Geneva with his wife and two young sons.

**AMANDA PEET / Julie Woodman:** Bryan's wife

**ALEXANDER SIDDIG / Prince Nasir Al-Subaai:** Reform-minded Gulf Prince, next in line to become Emir of his country

**AKBAR KURTHA / Prince Meshal Al-Subaai:** Nasir's younger brother, second in line to the throne

**NADIM SAWALHA / Emir Hamad Al-Subaai:** Nasir & Meshal's father, soon to step down as Emir

**MAZHAR MUNIR / Wasim Ahmed Khan:** Young migrant worker from Pakistan trying to find work with his father in the oil fields of Prince Nasir's country. He and his father were recently laid off from their jobs in the Connex oil fields when the Prince granted drilling rights to a Chinese corporation

**SHAHID AHMED / Saleem Ahmed Khan:** Wasim's father

**SONNELL DADRAL / Farooq:** Wasim's friend who first introduces him to the cleric at the madrassa

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## **ABOUT THE FILM**

“We are living in complex, difficult times and I wanted *Syriana* to reflect this complexity in a visceral way, to embrace it narratively. There are no good guys and no bad guys and there are no easy answers. The characters do not have traditional character arcs; the stories don't wrap up in neat little life lessons, the questions remain open. The hope was that by not wrapping everything up, the

film will get under your skin in a different way and stay with you longer. This seemed like the most honest reflection of this post 9-11 world we all find ourselves in.”

- Stephen Gaghan

*Syriana* was written and directed by Stephen Gaghan, winner of the Academy Award for Best Screenplay for *Traffic*. Gaghan started thinking about the machinations of the global oil industry while doing research for that earlier film. He had met a host of powerful people in Washington, including those at the Pentagon who enforce America’s anti-narcotics policies. It was then that he began noticing some interesting parallels between the trafficking of drugs and the power plays of the oil industry.

“At that time,” says Gaghan, “the Pentagon’s anti-terrorism and anti-narcotics branches were the same branch. And I started thinking that maybe the biggest addiction in our country is how we’re hooked on cheap foreign oil. And that our easy access to oil is what gives us a good deal of our edge.”

When *Traffic* director Steven Soderbergh, actor/producer George Clooney and their production company, Section Eight, introduced Gaghan to See No Evil, a memoir written by former CIA agent Robert Baer, it was a perfect way for Gaghan to develop this interest. The book chronicles Baer’s experiences working out of the Middle East as a case officer for the Central Intelligence Agency’s Directorate of Operations from 1976 to 1997. “Steve Gaghan once said to me that he thought oil was the world’s crack addiction,” says Soderbergh, “and I knew he would find a novel way of exploring that idea.”

While the book provided the initial impetus for *Syriana*, Baer’s experiences as a CIA field officer are what really served as a jumping-off point for the broader story that the filmmakers wanted to tell. “The book itself was fascinating,” says Clooney, “and the more time we spent with it, the more we discovered there was actually another story to be told beyond the one in the book. We saw the potential for *Syriana* to be made in the fashion of the films of the mid-60s and early 70s that were willing to discuss the failures of government as if they were failures of *all* of us, not just a particular party or group.”

“I think what we’ve done is preserve the essence of Bob, even though his storyline is fictional,” Gaghan says. “He also helped me understand the web of players in the Middle East and in the oil business that ultimately led to the choice to tell this story through multiple narratives.”

Gaghan researched the film for a year before beginning work on the screenplay, investigating

the inner workings of the industry in the United States, as well as journeying to the UK, France, Italy, Switzerland, Lebanon, Syria, Dubai, and North Africa to speak with people at every level of the power chain that makes up the petroleum industry.

Bob Baer himself took Gaghan to explore the regions of the Middle East where he worked gathering intelligence for 21 years, introducing the director to a multitude of figures that exist on all sides of the industry, including oil traders, CIA operatives, arms dealers, and the leader of the Islamic movement Hezbollah. “I discovered really hospitable people with very articulate points of view,” says Gaghan of his travels. “I found that if you ask the same question to five different people, you get five different stories – and it’s still not the whole story. Starting from there, I tried to focus in on how this whole world of clandestine information worked.”

After his intensive travel and study, Gaghan began work on the screenplay, in which he would weave together multiple independent storylines that illuminate the inner workings of the industry and the figures who keep it running, whether through the wielding of their considerable influence, the force of their will or the exploitation of their labor.

The filmmakers’ chief intent was to tell a compelling story that also reflected the complexity and ambiguity of our current situation – one that that explores diverse points of view, while not championing any one perspective as the truth. “We’re not trying to preach to anyone with this film,” says Clooney. “Movies, at their best, can initiate discussions – obviously, in this case, discussions about world dependency on oil, but *Syriana* also opens discussions about corruption, about the effectiveness of the CIA, about any number of things. You want people to be standing around the water cooler the next day talking about it, saying *here’s what I agree with* or *here’s where they’re wrong*. We need that discussion.”

Gaghan also hopes *Syriana* will make issues and characters that seem alien and distant to American audiences much more accessible. “Any time the lens by which you’re viewing the whole can also be the lens by which you view the specific, you’re in better shape,” says Gaghan. “We’re able to go from Wasim, working with his father in the Persian Gulf, where he says, *someday we’ll get a real house and get your mother here*, to Robby Barnes visiting a college campus with his dad, Bob. The power of those specific images next to each other is that you hopefully start to feel connections that show you the whole: how we all inhabit the same world, and we all just want better lives for our children.

“This movie uses ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances to explore the idea that

personal responsibility does matter, that our daily choices contributes to where we are on a global level,” continues Gaghan. “Bob Barnes is ultimately a company man who’s trying to do his job well and put his son through college. Bryan Woodman’s got a wife and two children, and then he faces the worst thing a father can go through when he loses his son. Bennett Holiday has a very difficult relationship with his father, so he’s trying to deal with these complicated issues in his work while also holding it together at home – which is a situation we all find ourselves in. So it’s through these characters’ everyday lives that we’re able to enter into a world that at first blush seems abstract to most people, but is incredibly relevant because this nexus of oil interests, terrorism, and the possibility of democracy in the Middle East powerfully affects our economy as well as our psyche and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

“While ‘Syriana’ is a very real term used by Washington think-tanks to describe a hypothetical reshaping of the Middle East, as our title it is used more abstractly. ‘Syriana,’ the concept – the fallacious dream that you can successfully remake nation-states in your own image – is a mirage. *Syriana* is a fitting title for a film that could exist at any time and be about any set of circumstances that deal with man’s unchecked ambition, hubris, and the fantasy of empire.”

## GLOBAL CASTING

With over 70 speaking parts in *Syriana*, the filmmakers cast roles with talented actors culled from over a dozen locations around the globe, including Los Angeles, New York, London, Cairo, Bahrain, Dubai, Kuwait and Damascus. Gaghan’s absorbing script enticed a host of exceptional performers to come together as part of a large ensemble – esteemed actors such as Oscar-winners Chris Cooper and William Hurt were eager to join the cast. “Gaghan’s such an excellent writer that when we sent the script out, the first thing that happened was everyone we sent it to wanted in,” says Clooney. “And that doesn’t happen very often. We were saying to actors who were used to carrying movies, *Listen, it’s not a large part*, and they’d come back saying, *I don’t care. I just want to be in this*. It’s truly an ensemble piece. The star of this film is the screenplay that Gaghan wrote.”

For his part, Gaghan feels that the actors’ performances were instrumental in taking his script to the screen in such a stellar fashion. “You get actors of this caliber and they just bring so much to the script with their performances,” he says. “It happened with the whole cast throughout shooting.”

Clooney plays veteran CIA operative Bob Barnes, who made his career working deep within

the Middle East in the 1980s. As a member of a rapidly dwindling number of operatives in the Middle East, Bob is one of only a handful of agents capable of infiltrating on that level.

“One of the aspects of Bob’s storyline is the systematic deconstruction of the CIA and what the effects of that are,” says Clooney. “It results in there not being many Arab-speaking operatives left in the Middle East, which is a danger. The idea is that we are finished with the Cold War and that we don’t need surveillance anymore, we don’t need boots on the ground, i.e., CIA operatives. And so Bob gets caught in what is basically a downsizing.”

Bob has always put his career first, even before his family, not only out of dedication and a belief in the value of what he is doing, but also out of necessity. “CIA officers lie to everybody, for their entire careers,” Gaghan points out. “They lie to their families, they lie to their children, they lie to their wives, they lie to their friends. They lie everywhere they go.” As a result, Bob is estranged from his wife and has a difficult relationship with his son Robby, who resents the life he’s been made to lead, constantly moving and having to start a new life everywhere his father travels. As Robby prepares to go to college, Bob fears he may finally be losing his son forever.

However, no matter how much he’s sacrificed along the way, Bob’s dedication to his work and his intricate understanding of the region mean nothing if he is not willing to play the game in Washington – i.e., telling powerful people what they want to hear, even if it’s not the truth he’s witnessed in the field. And when his honesty becomes a liability, his government has no problem cutting him loose.

“Bob is a fascinating character because he’s a true believer,” says Clooney. “He’s not a cynic – he believes that his work is the right thing to do, that it helps his country. But he becomes disillusioned because, basically, the company he’s devoted his life to lets him down.”

While Robert Baer served as the departure point for the character of Bob Barnes, Clooney did not base his characterization on Baer. Rather, he took the essence of the CIA foot soldier and interpreted it into an unique character that isn’t strictly beholden to any real-life model.

“We wanted to let the character serve the story rather than the other way around,” says the actor. “That freed me up quite a bit because I was no longer playing a living person; instead, I was dealing directly with the issues that the movie brought up. I didn’t have to be concerned with an accurate depiction of a particular person, so I could concentrate more on reacting honestly to the broader questions that we’re raising.”

Clooney's appearance also served to define his character, as the actor put on 30 pounds in 30 days and grew a thick beard for his role as the middle-aged agent nearing the end of his career in the field. "The thing about CIA officers is that they blend in everywhere," explains Gaghan. "They disappear inside a role, just like an actor. A CIA officer is a guy who can walk into a bar in Macao, or a mosque in Riyadh, and you're not going to recognize him because he blends in. This is the exact opposite of what movie stars do – people are drawn to movie stars precisely because they *don't* blend in. George is a great actor, but he's also a very glamorous guy. But once he gained that weight and grew the beard and shaved his hairline back, he just disappeared inside of the character. He was completely believable as this very unglamorous man."

"It was interesting being completely anonymous," says Clooney. "I've tried other disguises before and they haven't worked. But put on 30 pounds and grow a beard and you can walk into any restaurant in town and not get a table."

While Barnes is trying in vain to tell the players in Washington truths that they don't want to hear, corporate lawyer Bennett Holiday is furthering his career by taking on a prestigious assignment investigating a business transaction that could prove extremely lucrative for a great many people in power. Bennett, played by Golden-Globe and Emmy Award-winning actor Jeffrey Wright, is an up-and-coming attorney in the prestigious Washington law firm of influential D.C. power player Dean Whiting, played by venerated actor Christopher Plummer. Bennett has been assigned to investigate the merger of oil giants Connex and Killen – with the tacit understanding that he will do everything in his power to ensure that the deal goes through.

"Bennett has the conscience of the moment to some extent," says Wright, who first came to audience's attention with his riveting performance in *Basquiat*. "He's not unlike a lot of folks who try to fit themselves into a certain profession or institution to become part of the military-industrial machinery. He's ambitious and this assignment marks a very critical point for him in his career – he's a lawyer who's supposedly investigating the merger of two oil companies, but who has actually been hired by the companies to protect them."

It's when Bennett comes across some incriminating information that threatens to jeopardize the merger that he genuinely begins to understand how the industry functions, and what his role in the hierarchy truly is. "What happens to Bennett," Wright explains, "is that he finds himself in a dangerous situation in which the pressures that were originally exerted on the companies are potentially exerted on him, and he has to extricate himself from that. So his job becomes as much

about protecting himself as protecting the company.”

Wright sees parallels between Clooney’s character and his own. “Bennett and Bob both realize at some point in the film that there’s a machine at work that doesn’t necessarily have their best interests at heart, when in fact they had thought they were a very respected and much needed cog within that machine. I think that’s the nature of the world in which the film takes place – it’s a murky, powerful world, and it’s much larger than the individuals who are a part of it.”

Bennett’s upward mobility is complicated by his difficult relationship with his father, an alcoholic who faults his son for working for the establishment. While he has always denounced his father as a failure, as Bennett is drawn deeper into the morally ambiguous world of the industry, he starts to doubt his right to judge his father’s character.

“I think their relationship is a wonderful reminder of the larger cultural struggle that Bennett is a part of,” says Wright. “As a lawyer, Bennett has to probe, to look into dark places, and as someone who is trying to become a part of the private sector of the oil industry, he’s going to discover parts of himself and parts of the world that he might not necessarily have wanted to discover. He goes through this journey to uncover the truth about this merger, and simultaneously goes on a journey in becoming a player in that network of power.”

George Clooney’s *Ocean’s Eleven* and *Ocean’s Twelve* co-star Matt Damon plays Bryan Woodman, a rising oil industry analyst who has been steadily climbing within his firm, living in Geneva with his wife Julie and their two young sons. It’s a great honor when he is asked to represent the company at a gala event at the estate of the powerful Emir of an oil-rich Gulf Coast country. Bryan hopes to share some of his ideas with the Emir, but when he arrives, rather than getting an audience with the Emir, he is instead asked to briefly sum up his remarks to two of his representatives.

“At the Emir’s event, Bryan basically pitches him the same ideas that the guy gets pitched by eight other companies every day,” says Damon. “Bryan does have these other ideas that are a little more radical that he might put forward if he had the courage or the will, but he’s afraid of getting thrown out of the guy’s estate, so he doesn’t.”

But during the party, Bryan’s young son is killed in a tragic accident, spinning him and his wife into turmoil and setting Bryan’s life on an unexpected new path. In the wake of his devastating loss, Bryan throws himself into his work and becomes increasingly alienated from Julie, played by Amanda Peet. “At the beginning of the story, Julie and Bryan are very much in love and have a

beautiful little family,” says the actress. “Then, our son’s death makes Bryan want to run away and fix things from the outside. He gets preoccupied with his career and it starts to consume him. I think a lot of marriages don’t survive the death of a child and I think it’s probably because one person wants to run away, and even being in the same room as their spouse brings out the remembrance of the loss.”

Trying to consume himself with his work, Bryan remains lost in his grief until he is invited to come speak with the Emir’s son, Prince Nasir, who in an attempt to apologize for his family’s role in Bryan’s loss, makes a lucrative offer to work with Bryan’s company. Stung by the implications of the deal, Bryan confronts the Prince, chastising him for the ways in which his royal family has been squandering their incredible resources.

“There’s a kind of reckless nihilism to him once he loses his son,” says Damon. “At that point he’s willing to basically just say *the hell with it*, and tells him what he really thinks.”

What Bryan scathingly points out to Nasir is that by selling their oil cheaply to powers like the United States, Russia and China, who in turn sell it to other nations, they are allowing these foreign nations to reap the benefits of a natural resource that rightfully belongs to the Arabs. This setup benefits the royal family, which is made wealthy by their dealings with foreign powers, but robs Nasir’s people of wealth that could vastly improve the quality of their lives. Bryan suggests that if Nasir’s country instead refines and transports the oil themselves, they could set their own price, taking the power away from other nations and rebuilding their country into the superpower it once was. However, Bryan doubts that Nasir has any interest in helping his people when he himself benefits from the current scenario, which favors the wealthy elite.

But the Emir’s son turns out to be quite different than the decadent royal Bryan took him to be. Intrigued by Bryan’s ideas, Nasir begins to share with him his own hopes for his people. “Bryan’s very judgmental of Nasir at first,” says Damon, “thinking he’s just another one of these royals who are squandering their country’s resources and spending the money they’re making in dealing with foreign countries to pay for their opulent lifestyles. But he comes to understand that he’s much, much more and Bryan actually ends up becoming really inspired by him.”

The visionary Prince Nasir is played by actor Alexander Siddig. “Nasir has so many new ideas he would like to implement,” says the actor, “such as freedoms for women, freedom of the press, all of these very progressive ideas that this new plan could make a reality. These two characters find each other at this one moment in their lives where they really catalyze each other.”

Nasir's ambitions are complicated by outside pressure from the foreign corporations whose massive profits depend on business as usual. The Emir is getting on in age, and soon will have to name his successor. Nasir has worked at his father's side for years, building hopes for a stronger country and better lives for his people when he ascends to the throne. But the Emir has been made vulnerable by strife within the royal family, and when Nasir becomes more vocal about the empowering future he sees for his people, American interests are quick to step in and put pressure on his father to name Nasir's more materialistic, compliant younger brother Meshal as his successor.

"Meshal is willing to be more of a puppet," says Akbar Kurtha, who plays the younger prince. "He's quite happy to play that game. He and Nasir don't have a very comfortable relationship. While Nasir is pro-reform, Meshal would probably prefer to have an even more flamboyant lifestyle than he already has. And there's a resentment there, because while Nasir has been groomed all his life to be king, Meshal has pretty much been left by the wayside."

As soon as he read the script, Alexander Siddig was eager to take on the role of Prince Nasir. "I unashamedly chased down this part because Nasir is the voice of the Arab world that I wanted to represent right now," he says. "It's the sense of humanity that he has. Some contemporary Arab leaders have an enormous humanity, but in the West, it's a point that's easily missed these days. When I grew up, the only time you would see Arabs onscreen would be in something like *Sinbad* where they're climbing over the side of the ship with a saber in their mouth. When you have the opportunity to speak through a character like this who wants to use his power as a force for good, for real progress, you have a chance to let the Western world know that men like these exist in the Arab world. That's the kind of contribution to a greater dialogue an actor doesn't often get a chance to make."

Damon felt similarly compelled to be a part of such an ambitious film. "Stephen gave me a lot of background reading for the movie and I used it as an excuse to learn as much as I could in a short time," says the actor. "It's an interesting subject and it's set in a fascinating part of the world. The more I know about it, just as a human being, the better off I am."

The film's final storyline follows the trajectory of Wasim, a young Pakistani who, along with his father, has been fruitlessly trying to earn a living in the oil fields of Nasir's country, but finds nothing but poverty, disappointment and alienation at every turn. When they are laid off from their jobs working in the field, their situation turns more desperate.

Their story mirrors that of the thousands of Pakistani laborers who have left their homes

and families to try and find work in the Gulf. When they are met with job scarcity, sub-human living conditions, and struggles with immigration officials to stay in the country long enough to find employment, the disillusioned young men are drawn to the madrassas, or Islamic schools, some of which may seek to indoctrinate them into a radical interpretation of Islam. A number of these boys may become involved with terrorist organizations, and a few are ultimately persuaded to sacrifice their lives as suicide bombers. Such is the path that Wasim finds himself on as his life in the Gulf unfolds.

When his friend Farooq introduces him to a cleric at a nearby madrassa, for the first time Wasim feels he has a place in the unfamiliar country, and becomes more and more drawn into the cleric's radical teachings. He and Farooq are soon preparing themselves for a deadly act from which they will not return.

Wasim is played by Mazhar Munir, a young actor making his major motion picture debut in *Syriana*. Born and raised in London, he has appeared on several British television series, including the award-winning *Doctors*. "Wasim is no different from any other teenager," says Munir of his character. "But where someone of his age should be concerned about the new pimple growing on his forehead, he has to worry about making money to feed his family, and just trying to survive. He understands that there is more to life and wants better things for himself and his family, but each time he makes an effort to improve his life, forces beyond his control prevent him from doing so."

There were several days of shooting in Dubai during which Munir and the rest of the production got a firsthand look at the quality of life experienced by immigrant workers like Wasim and his father. "It was scary," recounts the actor. "There were six or seven men and boys squashed into these freight containers that were converted into some form of housing quarters, in 100 degree heat and with no adequate ventilation systems and very little light. I hope when audiences see what the lives of such people are like, they'll understand what draws them down such a road and try to understand and not judge Wasim. Hopefully, the film will enable viewers to begin to understand how people are manipulated into performing such horrible acts."

"To me, the audience's greatest emotional connection in the film is through these two young boys," George Clooney muses. "I think it's a really interesting thing when you take the two most likeable characters in the film and then watch as they're sucked into this fundamentalist group. And you begin to understand how something like that could happen. It's not an excuse for it at all, but it is saying that you can't just categorize things. They are human beings and they make decisions –

some of them wrong, but we understand what led to those decisions.”

That Munir made his motion picture debut in a complex and thoughtful film like *Syriana* made his experience that much more fulfilling. “The story of Wasim needs to be told, and I don’t think this story has ever been told in this way. For the first time you get to see the entire process of how one gets involved in such terror. It’s really sad how such evil minds recruit and play God with these children, using religion as their justification. Knowing that there are boys like Wasim who are subjected to this kind of manipulation made it quite emotional for me to play this role. I’m glad this movie has been made, and working alongside great artistic minds like Stephen Gaghan was a treat.”

Gaghan has similar feelings about his experience working with his entire ensemble of talented actors. “One of the incredible things about this cast,” says Gaghan, “is that every time you’re working on a storyline that involves one of these guys, you want to see what happens when he walks out of the room. Christopher Plummer, playing this über-lawyer, you look at him in his black tie at this Washington party and you want to know who’s on his phone list, who he’s calling. I can’t imagine anybody working with Chris Cooper who wouldn’t walk away saying *I’ve got to write a movie for this character*. I had a clear image of one scene that William Hurt does with George Clooney in a theater, and the way these guys played it was 50 times better than the way I’d envisioned it. Working with this cast was an amazing experience.”

## **BREAKING LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

Throughout the making of *Syriana*, it was of the utmost importance to everyone involved that the film achieve the greatest degree of realism and cultural and regional accuracy possible. Throughout the film, many of the characters speak fluently in their native languages, while others speak languages other than their own, but inflected with the appropriate accent for the character’s place of origin. Great care was taken to ensure that not only the words but the accents and inflections were accurate.

“It was important to all of us that the Arabs in this movie be portrayed as realistically as possible,” explains producer Georgia Kacandes. “We were sensitive to the fact that people’s language is a point of pride to them and we wanted to show that respect to the Arabic people who would be watching this movie. Otherwise, it would be like having someone who’s supposed to be from Brooklyn speak with an accent from Mississippi. At the very least, it takes you out of the

reality of the movie; at worst it makes it appear the filmmakers didn't care about the people they were representing."

The production hired a team of translators and dialect coaches. Some of them took on the task of working with the English-speaking actors of Arabic decent – some of whom had never set foot in the countries of their parents' birth. While most of the Middle Eastern-bred actors were able to speak some Arabic or Urdu, there was one actor who would be required to speak Arabic and Farsi who had grown up in Kentucky and likely never heard the language anywhere except on television.

The job of teaching George Clooney how to speak fluent Arabic fell to Samia Adnan, a Sudanese linguistics professor from London who served as the film's main dialect coach. "It's interesting, you know, because there's no Latin derivative, nothing you can latch on to," Clooney relates. "If you're speaking Italian, which I'm trying to learn, or any of the European languages, there are words, there are sounds that are sort of familiar. I had to learn some Farsi; I had to learn to say some things in Arabic which, at first, I just learned phonetically. But it can't just be this disconnected jumble of words. So, you have to find ways to connect them, to make them expressive. It was tricky. It was also interesting – and fun."

For Samia Adnan, teaching the English-speaking actors to speak an Arabic dialect as if it was their second language was understandably easier than teaching those playing Arabic characters how to sound as natural as a native speaker. "Prince Nasir and Prince Meshal, for example, are two of the most important native Arabic roles in the movie," she explains, "but neither of the actors knew Arabic before they began, and Alexander Siddig did not know the Arabic alphabet. Both were raised in England and first had to overcome their English accent. They both worked very hard, not only to speak with a standard accent, but also to sound like princes."

"Being an English actor," says Alexander Siddig, who plays Nasir, "my challenge when delivering lines in Arabic was that an Arabic audience will not only understand what those lines mean, they will understand all the nuances of this prince character that culturally is part of their mindset. So in a way, it necessitated employing two acting styles for different idioms at the same time."

The young oil worker characters Wasim and Farooq are Urdu-speaking Pakistanis. Mazhar Munir, who plays Wasim, speaks several languages including Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi, but not

Arabic. “Part of their story was that they speak broken Arabic,” says Samia Adnan. “Well, that wasn’t hard: I taught them Gulf Arabic and just let them break it by their nature.”

While Matt Damon speaks English throughout the film, as expert oil analyst Bryan Woodman he was faced with some sophisticated industry dialogue that needed a bit of translation. Damon made sure he understood every word that came out of his mouth. “Even if ninety percent of the people who see the movie believe you, the two percent who you really want to believe you are the experts in the field,” notes the actor. “I wanted the people who actually do Bryan’s job to look at the movie and feel like everything was believable.”

## **COSTUME DESIGN**

Authenticity was just as vital when it came to costuming the actors, and the filmmakers took great care in ensuring that the many cultures represented in *Syriana* were accurately depicted throughout the film. That considerable responsibility fell to costume designer Louise Frogley, whose previous films include *Traffic*, *Spy Game* and the acclaimed television movie *Live From Baghdad*. Frogley was charged with maintaining authenticity while creating an enormous, international array of wardrobe changes that crossed cultural and class lines.

“We made great effort to be as ethnically correct with our costumes as possible, because each state, each country is so incredibly different,” explains Frogley. “For example, in the madrassa scenes, the boys are mostly Pakistani. So we made contact with a man in Pakistan and bought some sportswear from his factory. He also went into the village and bought lots of second hand clothes, which he then shipped to us, so it was all authentic.

At times, it was important *not* to include details that would call out a particular segment of society. “We also created a number of generic looks,” explains Frogley, “either because we didn’t want to offend a particular group – for example, we might not have wanted all the terrorists to look Saudi, so we dressed them as generic Arabs – or because we wanted to avoid getting too specific with the region being represented – for instance, if you’re in a specific part of Pakistan, you might see a lot of jeweled hats.”

Wardrobe was reflective not only of region, but specific to the characters’ personalities and histories. For instance, Prince Nasir and his brother Meshal were educated in Europe, and so while their father wears traditional Arab clothing, his sons dress in a distinctly western style. Nasir’s wife wears a headscarf and covers her arms and legs, but did not wear a traditional burka, in a nod to her

and her husband's progressive views in regards to women.

George Clooney as Bob Barnes was dressed down in cheaper suits, while industrious lawyer Bennett Holiday displays a distinctly sharper style. "We thought Bennett's character would be a very snappy dresser," says Frogley. "He's the type of person who would probably line up his pencils in a row, so we extended that attitude to his style. And it worked."

Frogley's department created over 2,000 costumes for characters whose origins ranged from corporate America to the slums of the Gulf States.

## PRODUCTION DESIGN

*Syriana* was filmed on location, rather than on a soundstage, with production traveling around the globe to capture the inimitable essence of the landscape and societies they would be depicting. "For example, the light in the Persian Gulf is pretty irreplaceable," says Gaghan. "There's so much construction going on all the time in Dubai that it throws an immense amount of dust into the air. So whether you're there in summer or winter, the sky is really leaden. You can't recreate that in the states."

The locations also served to focus the actors and filmmakers on what they were attempting to capture. "The minute you go on location you sense exactly what you're trying to do," explains Clooney. "Being in a Third World country, for example, is not a feeling you can capture filming on a soundstage. You're in Morocco and five times a day a siren goes off and everybody stops their cars and gets out in the middle of the streets and kneels down and prays. Being in a place informs any artistic work that's set there."

Giving the film's interweaving storylines a visual continuity was cinematographer Robert Elswit, whose credits include *Magnolia*, *Tomorrow Never Dies* and *Boogie Nights*, who shot the entire movie using a pair of hand-held cameras. This unusual cinematographic approach was intended to give the film a quasi-documentary style, providing a sense of backroom intimacy and ripped-from-the-headlines urgency that slicker, mounted-camera shots couldn't provide.

Production designer Dan Weil (*The Bourne Identity*, *The Fifth Element*) spanned a multitude of national and economic boundaries in creating sets ranging from an Emir's palace to the humble barracks where itinerant oilfield workers are housed.

A crew of approximately 200 and a cast of more than 100 covered three continents over a

period of five months to complete filming of *Syriana*. Production began at a game preserve that location manager Todd Christensen found in Hondo, Texas, about an hour west of San Antonio. The 777 Ranch has one of the largest herds of exotic animals in North America on its 15,000 acres. It has been a destination resort for hunters and photographers for over 40 years and features over 50 species of deer, antelope, gazelle, oryx, ibex, goat, sheep and bison, among other animals from plains, jungles and forests around the globe.

Filming moved to the eastern U.S. locales of Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Annapolis where George Clooney and Matt Damon began filming.

Despite heavy post 9/11 security, the production was allowed to shoot on the streets of D.C., not far from the White House and Capitol Dome. The filmmakers had hoped that the political balance of the script would help in negotiating permissions to film in the politically sensitive environment of the nation's governing nerve center. Location manager Christensen had to meet with a panel of 12 personnel from the Justice Department who would decide if and how filming would occur in D.C. While all the locations involved certain restrictions, the company was able to achieve what it wanted within those parameters.

The production also gained a rare permission to film around the Maryland State Capitol building in Annapolis. Other U.S. locations included the Enoch Pratt Library in Washington which served as Donald Farish's Justice Department office, a 1940s diner in downtown Baltimore called the Sip 'n Bite where Bob Barnes has an intense late night meeting with Dean Whiting, and the woody setting of the Piper Rudnick law firm, which served as CIA headquarters. The company also created the Tengiz oil field out of an industrial construction site in southern Baltimore.

Production then left the country to begin shooting in Casablanca. Morocco's largest city and commercial capital, Casablanca rests on one of the biggest and busiest man-made ports in the world. Although Islam is the dominant religion – with the grandest Muslim temple besides those found in Mecca – Casablanca boasts a large and vibrant Jewish community as proof of its tradition of tolerance. In 2003, on the day after suicide bombers attacked multiple targets in the city, including a Jewish-owned business and a Jewish cemetery, two million people took to the streets to protest radical fundamentalism. *Syriana* was the first movie to film there since the bombings and security measures were extensive.

Casablanca would fill in as three different locales where filming would not be possible for even greater safety reasons: Tehran, Beirut and an unnamed, oil-producing Persian Gulf country.

Interestingly, Casablanca is almost identical to Beirut in its layout, a city on a bay with dominantly French architecture. Much of Beirut has been rebuilt and looks like a modern city, which might've been difficult to duplicate in Morocco, but Gaghan wasn't interested in doing 'postcard' establishing shots, opting instead to capture an environment that was close in feeling to the older parts of Beirut.

Likewise, Tehran is more of a stripped down version of Casablanca but surrounded by huge mountains that can be seen from any part of the city. Production wasn't looking for vistas, but rather for buildings that evoked the feeling of Tehran without any specific identifying characteristics. The greatest challenge in re-creating Tehran in Casablanca involved the stripping away of layers of French and Moroccan influence.

The production did have to put up a poster of the Ayatollah Khomeini in a particularly populated portion of the city, which raised a few eyebrows in this secularly-governed Islamic country. Other details also had to be tended to in order to authentically re-create a country governed by orthodox religious laws. A playing card motif in a kabob shop had to be removed because gambling would not be allowed in Iran, and actresses had to remember to put scarves on their heads before going out on the streets.

There were also some political sensitivities that the filmmakers had to work around. Taking down Moroccan flags and putting up Lebanese flags was acceptable, but putting up the Iranian flag was problematic. Production also had to get permission to put an oil tanker in the harbor near Morocco's biggest refinery and close it down for three days, which required quite a bit of diplomatic maneuvering.

Parisian-based production designer Dan Weil has had a good deal of exposure to the Middle East and incorporated much of what he had observed in his travels in establishing the realism that Gaghan demanded. Weil, whose designs have run the gamut from the super-stylistic *The Fifth Element* to the very cinéma vérité *The Bourne Identity*, explained the importance of shooting on location rather than building sets on a stage for *Syriana*.

"Beirut was quite easy to shoot in Casablanca, but using the city to stand in for Tehran was more complicated," the production designer notes. "We in the West have this idea of Tehran as an Arabic city when actually it's more like a Ukrainian city. When you look at photos, it reminds you more of Kiev or Odessa. Also, the people are Muslim but they are not Arab."

Among the locations utilized in Casablanca were an historic French military headquarters in the Old Medina, a beachfront along a resort coastline, the city's government buildings, and an inner

city neighborhood where most of the inhabitants didn't own TVs and many didn't have electricity.

After wrapping in Casablanca, production moved on to Geneva. Despite its physical beauty and historical importance, there hadn't been a major movie shot in this European city since *GoldenEye* had filmed a few days there a decade earlier.

The Presidential Suite in the grand Hotel President Wilson, adjacent to the site of the former League of Nations, was the setting for several scenes in which the Emir and his sons conduct business.

Scenes were also set in the English Garden, created in 1854 and set on the left bank of Lake Geneva against the backdrop of the city's trademark Le Jet D'Eau. Other key scenes were shot in a bank that stood in for the brokerage where Bryan Woodman works, and at a private house that served as the home where the Woodmans lived happily before the tragedy that transforms their lives. That particular neighborhood included homes owned by the eldest son of the founder of Saudi Arabia and an Indian prince. The production also utilized the city's largest cemetery, Cimetiere des Rois (King's Cemetery), founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, as the site of Max Woodman's funeral.

From Geneva, the company moved to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. The Emirates is one of the world's newer nations, officially declaring the unification of its nation-states as a single national entity in 1971 when seven Emirs ruling seven different portions of adjacent territory joined forces under an enlightened leader to form the United Arab Emirates, of which Dubai is one state.

The terrain of the U.A.E., combined with its pro-Western inclinations, makes an ideal location for movies. Dubai, in particular, has all the elements a movie might wish to incorporate into its narrative: beach, mountains, desert and a mega-modern city.

There had never been a major Western movie filmed in Dubai with official permissions. Michael Winterbottom had broken new ground with shooting some of his futuristic *Code 46* in and around the concrete corridors of this rapidly expanding metropolis, but it was mainly guerilla filmmaking, without permits and certainly without the high-tech equipment and high profile of *Syriana*.

The film packed a unique load of potential diplomatic dynamite for a trailblazing movie production in this Arabic country: The Emirates are close allies with Yemen, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, whose governments might not take kindly to some of the portrayals of Islamic fundamentalism and discontent among the migrant labor pool.

Further, the movie would be shooting there during the holiest of Muslim holidays: the month-long festival of Ramadan, the month of fasting and prayer during which no food or drink, smoking or gum-chewing are permitted in daylight hours. Many members of the crew, as well as the locally-cast extras, were observing the holiday, and production made every effort to be respectful and accommodating. Special tents were set up where non-observing members of the production team could eat and drink out of sight of those who were fasting, and as soon as the sun went down, production slowed and a break-fast meal was served before shooting continued.

The fact that there was no precedent upon which to gauge possible outcomes from filming was cause for the filmmakers' initial hesitation in committing to filming in Dubai. But the growth of Western business interests in the U.A.E., an enlightened leadership and the presence of an experienced television commercial production company in Dubai combined to give the production confidence they could make it work.

While it presented unique challenges, Dubai also offered cinematic opportunities that couldn't be found anywhere else in the world. In fact, while initially *Syriana* was only going to be in Dubai for about four days, with the city serving primarily as city backdrops, once the producers got a look at all the city had to offer, they decided to extend four days shooting into four weeks.

"It's a very interesting place in that it's a very modern city – perhaps the only major city to have been built in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," says Weil. "I found it interesting that it looks very much like certain modern American cities like Houston – also built around oil riches. But you couldn't shoot this in America because there is a specific look to the Gulf States that you don't find anywhere else."

The civic authorities of Dubai, an independent governing body from the U.A.E., had some concerns about the film's content and timing that had to be overcome. But they ultimately concluded that giving permission for the company to shoot – even during the Holy month of Ramadan – would benefit the state more than it would hurt it. Dubai wants to develop its film industry and its leaders wanted to demonstrate that they were open to a large degree of freedom of creative expression. "Dubai is really unique," says Gaghan. "They're undertaking a pretty amazing experiment. They're trying to build an economy that's not dependent on oil – they're pursuing this idea of trying to make it a technological center."

Dubai proved its versatility for several key scenes. The Royal Mirage Hotel, the grandest resort on Dubai's Jumeira Beach, served as the Marbella Estate home of the Emir. The Al-Maha Resort, set on a 225 square kilometer reserve and billed as the "first Arabian eco-tourism resort,"

was the setting for Prince Nasir's catalytic meeting with Bryan Woodman. The Shangri-La Hotel not only housed the cast and crew but was used for several of the interior scenes, as well as a part of a climactic sequence at the Emir's party.

Production also incorporated the vast desert, as well as the opulent city backdrop, the creek which divides Dubai from adjacent Deira, and a barracks near a construction site where migrant workers are housed. In the scorching heat of the desert, at times temperatures hit 120°.

\* \* \*

## ABOUT THE CAST

**GEORGE CLOONEY** (Bob Barnes) has gone from television actor to motion picture actor to producer, executive producer, and writer and director in both mediums.

Clooney is partnered with Steven Soderbergh in the film and television production company Section Eight. The company most recently produced *Good Night, and Good Luck*. Clooney co-wrote, directed and co-stars in *Good Night, and Good Luck*, a feature about the renowned broadcaster Edward R. Murrow's legendary on-air confrontations with Senator Joseph McCarthy – confrontations that helped bring down the infamous politician.

Section Eight also produced *Ocean's Twelve*, *Ocean's Eleven*, *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, *The Jacket*, *Full Frontal* and *Welcome to Collinwood*. Clooney was an executive producer of two critically acclaimed Section Eight films, Warner Bros. Pictures' *Insomnia* and *Far From Heaven*.

Clooney also works with Section Eight's television division. He was an executive producer and directed five of the episodes of *Unscripted*, a reality-based show that debuted on HBO in January. He also was an executive producer and cameraman for *K-Street*, also for HBO.

Clooney made his directorial debut in 2002 with *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, for which he won the Special Achievement in Film Award from the National Board of Review.

Clooney starred in the Warner Bros. Pictures' blockbuster hits *Ocean's Twelve* and *Ocean's Eleven*. He also starred in the Coen brothers' *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and won the 2000 Golden Globe Award as Best Actor in a Motion Picture Musical or Comedy.

Clooney earned critical acclaim in the award-winning drama *Three Kings* and in the Oscar-nominated *Out of Sight*. His previous feature films include *Solaris*, *The Peacemaker*, *Batman & Robin*, *One Fine Day* and *From Dusk Till Dawn*.

He has starred in several television series but is best known to TV audiences for his five years on the hit NBC drama *ER*. His portrayal of Dr. Douglas Ross earned him Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild, People's Choice and Emmy nominations.

Clooney was executive producer and co-star of the live television broadcast of *Fail Safe*, an Emmy-winning telefilm developed through his Maysville Pictures. *Fail Safe* was nominated for a 2000 Golden Globe Award as Best Miniseries or Motion Picture Made for Television. The film was based on the early 1960s novel of the same name.

**MATT DAMON** (Bryan Woodman) is one of Hollywood's most sought-after talents. He is currently filming *The Good Shepherd* for director Robert De Niro, in which he stars with Angelina Jolie. Most recently he completed shooting *The Departed* for director Martin Scorsese, starring alongside Leonardo DiCaprio and Jack Nicholson.

Earlier this year audiences saw Damon in *The Brothers Grimm*, starring with Heath Ledger for director Terry Gilliam. He also recently reprised his roles as Linus Caldwell in *Ocean's Twelve* for director Steven Soderbergh, and as Jason Bourne in the box office hit *The Bourne Supremacy*, the second installment in the series following *The Bourne Identity*.

In 2004, Damon starred with Greg Kinnear in the Farrelly Brothers comedy *Stuck on You*, and in 2002, in *Gerry* with Casey Affleck for director Gus Van Sant.

In 2000, audiences saw Damon star in *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, for director Robert Redford and in the film version of the Cormick McCarthy book *All the Pretty Horses* for director Billy Bob Thornton.

In 1999, Damon starred in Anthony Minghella's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, for which he received a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actor. That same year he rejoined *Chasing Amy* director Kevin Smith and pal Ben Affleck in *Dogma*, a film about a pair of outcast angels.

In 1998, he won an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay with longtime friend Ben Affleck for the critically acclaimed drama *Good Will Hunting*, a coming-of-age story about a young mathematical genius who, due to his upbringing in inner-city Boston, can't live up to his potential. Damon also earned an Academy Award nomination for Best Actor for his work in the title role. In addition, both he and Affleck received a Golden Globe Award for their screenplay, and Damon also garnered a Golden Globe nomination for his performance. The film, directed by Gus Van Sant, received seven additional Oscar nominations, including one for Best Picture and a win for Robin Williams for Best Supporting Actor.

In the same year, Damon starred in the title role of the World War II drama *Saving Private Ryan* for Academy Award-winning director Steven Spielberg, and in John Dahl's *Rounders*, about a reformed gambler who is drawn back into New York's underground poker world to help a recently paroled friend pay off loan sharks.

In 1997, Damon made a cameo appearance in Kevin Smith's *Chasing Amy*. In the same year, he starred as an idealistic young attorney in Francis Ford Coppola's *The Rainmaker*, based on the best-selling novel by John Grisham.

Damon first gained the public's eye in 1996, when he gave a vivid performance in *Courage Under Fire*, in which he portrayed a guilt-ridden Persian Gulf War soldier tormented by an incident that happened in the heat of battle.

The versatile young actor made his feature film debut in 1988 in a small role in the critically well-received *Mystic Pizza*. He went on to play Brian Dennehy's medical school dropout in the TV movie *Rising Son* (TNT, 1990) and gained further attention when he returned to the big screen as a fascist preppy in *School Ties* (1992).

For director Walter Hill, Damon enjoyed a sizeable supporting role as the green second lieutenant new to the West who narrates *Geronimo: An American Legend* (1993), and in 1995 he appeared in *The Good Old Boys*, directed by Tommy Lee Jones for TNT.

In 1998, Damon and Affleck partnered with *Good Will Hunting* associate producer and longtime friend Chris Moore to form Pearl Street Productions, now known as LivePlanet. This unique company produces feature films, television series and new media projects. LivePlanet has produced three Emmy-nominated seasons of *Project Greenlight*, the documentary series chronicling the making of an independent feature film by a first time writer and director. The three *Project Greenlight* films produced have been *Stolen Summer*, *The Battle of Shaker Heights* and *Feast*. Damon's latest LivePlanet project is *Running the Sahara*, a documentary about three men running across the Sahara Desert, directed by Academy Award-winner James Moll.

Damon, who attended Harvard University, first gained acting experience at the American Repertory Theatre as well as other Boston-based theatre venues.

**JEFFREY WRIGHT** (Bennett Holiday) is recognized as one of the most talented and versatile actors of his generation. He recently won Emmy, Golden Globe and Black Reel Awards for his supporting role in the acclaimed HBO miniseries *Angels in America*. He also won a Tony Award for his performance in the stage version of *Angels in America: Perestroika*.

Wright previously starred as Martin Luther King in the HBO production *Boycott*, for which he won the AFI Actor of the Year Award for Male Actor in a Movie or Miniseries. Most recently, he costarred in Jim Jarmusch's *Broken Flowers*, Jonathan Demme's *The Manchurian Candidate*, and he played photographer Howard Bingham in Michael Mann's *Ali*. He recently completed filming M. Night Shyamalan's *Lady in the Water* and is currently filming *The Visiting* with director Oliver Hirschbiegel.

The native of Washington, D.C. made his big screen debut in the title role of *Basquiat*, the true story of the graffiti artist who became one of America's most successful and influential painters of the 1980s. He followed this with a starring role in Ang Lee's *Ride with the Devil* and subsequently starred as Peoples Hernandez in the 2000 remake of the classic *Shaft*.

On stage, Wright recently earned another Tony nomination in the critically lauded *Top Dog, Underdog*. He often performs at the New York Shakespeare Festival where he earned high praise for his portrayal of Marc Antony in the Shakespeare in the Park production of *Julius Caesar* and also completed a long, successful run on Broadway in the award-winning celebration of African American rhythms and history *Bring in da Noise, Bring in da Funk*. On television, he starred in the Emmy-winning HBO miniseries *Lackawanna Blues*.

Wright graduated Amherst College in Massachusetts with a B.A. in political science and received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from his alma mater in 2004. He currently lives in Brooklyn, NY with actress Carmen Ejogo and their two children.

One of the most respected character actors of our time, **CHRIS COOPER** (Jimmy Pope) was recognized in 2003 with an Academy Award and a Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actor for his portrayal of John Laroche in *Adaptation*, written by Charlie Kaufman (*Being John Malkovich*) and directed by Spike Jonze. The film, loosely based on Susan Orlean's novel The Orchid Thief, followed a sexually frustrated screenwriter's attempts to adapt Orlean's anecdotal novel for the screen. Cooper was also recognized for his performance in this film by numerous critics associations including the Broadcast Film Critics, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association and Toronto Film Critics Association.

This fall, along with *Syriana*, Cooper appears in two additional films: *Capote*, for director Bennett Miller and *Jarhead*, for director Sam Mendes, which will release in November. Up next, Cooper will soon begin production on the film *Breach* for director Billy Ray (*Shattered Glass*), in which he will play the lead character of Robert Hanssen, a former FBI agent turned traitor, based on a true story.

Cooper was most recently seen in *Silver City*, a political drama and murder mystery that chronicles the story of a small town in Colorado and the events leading up to a local election. Written and directed by John Sayles, the impressive cast includes Maria Bello, Thora Birch, Richard Dreyfuss, Tim Roth, Daryl Hannah and Billy Zane. The film screened at the Toronto Film Festival.

In 2003, Cooper starred in *Seabiscuit*, based on the best-selling novel. Cooper was nominated for a Screen Actors Guild Award for his portrayal of Seabiscuit's trainer, Tom Smith. *Seabiscuit* was directed by Gary Ross and also starred Tobey Maguire and Jeff Bridges. In the same year, Cooper was nominated for an Emmy Award for his supporting performance in the HBO film *My House in Umbria*, starring Maggie Smith.

In 2002, Cooper was seen in *The Bourne Identity* in the strong supporting role as the mastermind of the CIA's controversial clandestine operation, Treadstone. In 2004, he appeared in the flashback scenes in the second installment, *The Bourne Supremacy*.

In 2000, Cooper portrayed Colonel Burwell opposite Mel Gibson in *The Patriot*, a Revolutionary War epic directed by Roland Emmerich. In the same year, Cooper appeared with Jim Carrey in the comedy *Me, Myself & Irene*, for directors Peter and Bobby Farrelly.

In 1999, Cooper received a Screen Actor's Guild Award for his supporting performance alongside Kevin Spacey and Annette Bening in the Academy Award-winning film *American Beauty*. In a stunning and dramatic display, Cooper portrayed a stern ex-Marine Colonel who persistently monitored his son's every move.

In 1999, Cooper starred as the father of an amateur rocket enthusiast in the acclaimed coming-of-age drama *October Sky*, which was screened at the 1999 Venice and Deauville Film Festivals with great notice. He had previously earned a Best Actor nomination in 1997 from the Independent Spirit Awards for his work in John Sayles' *Lone Star*. Nearly a decade earlier, Cooper made his feature film debut in Sayles' *Matewan*.

Among his film credits are Robert Redford's *The Horse Whisperer*, *Great Expectations*, *A Time to Kill*, *Money Train*, *This Boy's Life*, *Guilty by Suspicion* and *City of Hope*.

On the small screen, he has starred in a number of longform projects, including the miniseries *Lonesome Dove* and *Return to Lonesome Dove*. He most recently starred in HBO's *Breast Men*, and includes among his other credits *Alone*, *One More Mountain*, *Ned Blessing*, *Bed of Lies*, *Darrow*, *In Broad Daylight*, *A Little Piece of Sunshine*, *Law and Order* and *Journey to Genius*.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, Cooper attended the University of Missouri School of Drama and started his professional career on the New York stage. His theater credits include *Of the Fields Lately* on Broadway, *The Ballad of Soapy Smith* and *A Different Moon*.

Cooper resides in Massachusetts.

**WILLIAM HURT** (Stan Goff) trained at Tufts University and New York's Juilliard School of Music and Drama. He spent the early years of his career on the stage between drama school, summer stock, regional repertory and off Broadway, appearing in more than fifty productions including *Henry V*, *5th of July*, *Hamlet*, *Richard II*, *Hurlyburly* (for which he was nominated for a Tony Award), *My Life* (winning an Obie Award for Best Actor), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Good*.

Hurt was last seen in David Cronenberg's *A History of Violence*, starring Viggo Mortensen and Maria Bello. In the film, an average family is thrust into the spotlight after the father commits a seemingly self-defense murder at his diner. The film screened at the 2005 Cannes International Film Festival. Also this year at Cannes, Hurt appeared in James Marsh's controversial film *The King* with Gael García Bernal. The film is about a troubled man (Bernal), recently discharged from the Navy, who returns to his childhood home in Texas to reunite with his father (Hurt).

Hurt has also completed production on the ensemble independent film *Neverwas*. The impressive cast includes Sir Ian McKellen, Alan Cumming, Nick Nolte and Aaron Eckhart. The story follows a Yale graduate (Eckhart), who gets a job at the mental institution where his novelist father (Nolte) spent some time as a patient. Once there, he meets an inmate (McKellen) who proves a mysterious link to his father's hugely successful fantasy novel, Neverwas.

In 2004, Hurt was seen in M. Night Shyamalan's thriller *The Village*, opposite Joaquin Phoenix and Sigourney Weaver. In the same year, he appeared in The Hallmark Channel's miniseries *Frankenstein*, opposite Donald Sutherland, and was also seen in the independent film *The Blue Butterfly*.

In 2002, Hurt appeared in *Tuck Everlasting*, directed by Jay Russell, which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival. He also starred in the title role of the CBS miniseries *Master Spy: The Robert Hanssen Story* and had a cameo appearance in *Changing Lanes*, starring Samuel L. Jackson.

In 2001, Hurt starred in the independent film *Rare Birds*, co-starring Molly Parker, which was nominated for best film at the Genie Awards; and he was also seen in a supporting role in Steven Spielberg's *A.I.* Also in 2001, he starred opposite Brian Benben and Elizabeth McGovern in *The Flamingo Rising* for CBS, which was based on the novel by Larry Baker and directed by Martha Coolidge; and *Varian's War* for Showtime. *Varian's War* was directed by Lionel Chetwynd, produced by Barbra Streisand's Barwood Films and co-starred Alan Arkin, Julia Ormond and Lynn Redgrave.

In 2000, Hurt delivered a memorable performance in *Sunshine*, opposite Ralph Fiennes.

Directed by István Szabó, *Sunshine* received three Genie Awards, including one for Best Motion Picture. In addition, Hurt also appeared in *The Simian Line* with Lynn Redgrave and Eric Stoltz and *Dune* for the Sci-Fi Channel.

In 1980, Hurt appeared in his first film, *Altered States*. He received a Best Actor Oscar nomination for *Broadcast News* and *Children of a Lesser God*. For *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, he was honored with an Academy Award as well as Best Actor Awards from the British Academy and the Cannes Film Festival.

Among his other film credits are *Body Heat*, *The Big Chill*, *Eyewitness*, *Gorkey Park*, *Alice*, *I Love You to Death*, *The Accidental Tourist*, *The Doctor*, *The Plague*, *Trial by Jury*, *Second Best*, *Smoke*, *Confidences à un Inconnu*, *Jane Eyre*, *Michael*, *Dark City*, *The Proposition*, *The Big Brass Ring* and *One True Thing*.

For radio, Hurt read Paul Theroux's *The Great Railway Bazaar*, for the BBC Radio Four and *Shipping News* by E. Annie Proulx. He has recorded *The Polar Express*, *The Boy Who Drew Cats* and narrated the documentaries *Searching For America: The Odyssey of John Dos Passos*, *Einstein - How I See the World* and the English narration of Elie Wiesel's *To Speak the Unspeakeable*, a documentary directed and produced by Pierre Marmiesse.

In 1988, Hurt was awarded the first Spencer Tracy Award from UCLA.

The son of a carpenter and a seamstress, **MAZHAR MUNIR** (Wasim) was born and raised in London by his Kashmiri immigrant parents. He makes his major motion picture debut in *Syriana*.

Though mainly self-taught as an actor, he began his career by attending weekly drama workshops at the Theatre Royal Stratford East. It was here that he was contacted by the prestigious Hampstead Theatre in London and offered his first important stage role in *Local Boy*. It was during this production that he landed an agent. He appeared on several British television series including *The Bill*, *Mile High* and the award-winning *Doctors*, while earning a marketing degree from Middlesex Business School.

Munir speaks several languages including Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi as part of his mixed British and Kashmiri heritage.

When he is a resting actor he continues to educate himself in the arts, takes part in modeling engagements and works closely with children at local primary schools and nurseries.

**TIM BLAKE NELSON** (Danny Daulton) has appeared in over twenty-five films including *Warm Springs, Meet the Fockers, Holes, The Good Girl, Wonderland, Minority Report* and *O Brother Where Art Thou?*. Nelson will soon be seen in *The Moguls, The Big White, Come Early Morning* and *Fido*.

Nelson's *The Grey Zone*, which he wrote and directed, starred Harvey Keitel, Steve Buscemi, Mira Sorvino, David Arquette, Allan Corduner and Natasha Lyonne. The film premiered at the 2001 Toronto Film Festival and opened in October 2002. *The Grey Zone* is a dramatic story of the Sonderkommandos, special squads of Jews who processed corpses in the crematoria at Birkenau. Shot in Bulgaria, *The Grey Zone* is based on his Award-winning play. The National Board of Review (2002) honored *The Grey Zone* with a "Special Recognition of Films that Reflect the Freedom of Expression."

Nelson also directed *O*, a contemporary adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello*, starring Martin Sheen, Julia Stiles, Josh Hartnett and Mekhi Phifer. *O* premiered at the 2001 Seattle Film Festival, where Nelson was awarded Best Director.

Nelson wrote and directed the film *Eye of God*, starring Martha Plimpton, Hal Holbrook and Kevin Anderson, which appeared at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival, and was released theatrically in the United States later that year. The film received the top award at the 1997 Seattle Film Festival, as well as the Tokyo Bronze Prize at the Tokyo Film Festival.

As a playwright, Nelson's produced plays include *The Grey Zone, Eye of God* and *Anna Darke*. He has also acted extensively in New York theatre. Most recently he starred in the critically acclaimed play *Beard of Avon*, portraying William Shakespeare at the New York Theatre Workshop. Nelson's other credits include *Oedipus*, with Frances McDormand and Billy Crudup, *Troilus and Cressida, Les Bourgeois Avant-Garde, Mac Wellman's Dracula, The Amazon's Voice, An Imaginary Life, The Baltimore Waltz, Mad Forest, The Innocents' Crusade, Richard III* and *Twelfth Night*.

Nelson was born and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He is a graduate of Brown University and the Julliard Theater Center. He resides in New York City with his wife and two sons.

**AMANDA PEET** (Julie Woodman) is an accomplished and versatile film actress who, along with her engaging wit and sense of style, is best known for her diverse choice of roles in romantic comedies, dramas and thrillers. In addition to working with numerous Academy Award-winning and nominated filmmakers including Woody Allen, Stephen Gaghan and Nancy Meyers, she is capable of holding her own in films opposite such acclaimed actors as Jack Nicholson, Diane

Keaton, Morgan Freeman, Will Ferrell and John Cusack. Though her work is primarily in film, she has also starred in leading roles in theatrical productions. On the horizon for next year, Peet has a number of high-profile film roles ready for release, and she is set to make her Broadway debut in *Barefoot in the Park*.

Peet will next be seen in theaters opposite John Cusack in the drama *The Martian Child* and with Zach Braff and Jason Bateman in the romantic comedy *Fast Track*. She is currently in production on *Griffin and Phoenix* with Dermot Mulroney.

Peet most recently starred in the Neil LaBute off-Broadway play *This is How it Goes*, opposite Ben Stiller and Jeffrey Wright, for which she earned critical acclaim and garnered stellar reviews from *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *Variety*, to name a few.

In December 2005, Peet will begin rehearsals for the Broadway revival of Neil Simon's comedy *Barefoot in the Park*, in which she and Patrick Wilson star as newlyweds who move into a small Greenwich Village apartment in the 1960s. Other co-stars include Tony Roberts and Tony Award-nominee Jill Clayburgh. This will be Peet's Broadway debut.

On screen, Peet most recently starred alongside Ashton Kutcher in *A Lot Like Love*. Directed by Nigel Cole, the story revolves around a guy and a girl who manage to resist their mutual attraction over the years, only to see fate throwing them back together. She also co-starred in Woody Allen's *Melinda and Melinda* opposite Will Ferrell. Other cast members include Chloe Sevigny, Jonny Lee Miller and Radha Mitchell. *Melinda & Melinda* had its world premiere at the 2004 San Sebastian Film Festival in September 2004.

Peet reprised her role opposite Bruce Willis and Matthew Perry in Warner Bros. Pictures' *The Whole Ten Yards* for director Howard Deutch. The film is the continuation of *The Whole Nine Yards*, the box office hit from 2000. In 2003, Peet was seen in director Nancy Meyers' *Something's Gotta Give*. Peet plays the much younger girlfriend of Jack Nicholson's character, who proceeds to fall for Peet's character's mother, played by Diane Keaton. Frances McDormand and Keanu Reeves round out the cast. Also in 2003, Peet starred alongside John Cusack and Ray Liotta in the thriller *Identity* for director James Mangold. In 2002, Peet starred with Morgan Freeman and Ashley Judd in the thriller *High Crimes* for director Carl Franklin, and in *Changing Lanes*, opposite Samuel L. Jackson, Ben Affleck and Sydney Pollack. That same year, she appeared as Jeff Goldblum's mistress, a beautiful and privileged young woman who is hooked on drugs, in *Igby Goes Down*, directed by Burr Steers.

Television audiences warmed to her when she starred as Jack on the WB drama, *Jack and Jill*.

A native of New York, Peet graduated from Columbia University with a degree in American History. While there, she also studied acting under Uta Hagen, which ultimately led her to pursue acting as a career.

**CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER** (Dean Whiting), who has recently completed his Tony-nominated performance as King Lear in Sir Jonathan Miller's much lauded production at Lincoln Center, has enjoyed 50 years as one of the English speaking theatre's most distinguished actors and as a veteran of international renown in over 100 motion pictures.

It was in his hometown of Montreal that Plummer began his professional career on stage and radio in both French and English. After Eva Le Gallienne gave him his New York debut (1954) he went on to star in many celebrated, prize-winning productions on Broadway and London's West End including Elia Kazan's production of Archibald MacLeish's Pulitzer-winning play *J.B.*, and the title role in Anthony Burgess' musical *Cyrano* for which Plummer won his first Tony. Apart from *King Lear*, his most recent Broadway success was as *Barrymore* for which he won the Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics' Circle Award, The Edwin Booth Award, the Boston Critics' Award, Chicago's Jefferson Award, and Los Angeles' Ovation Award as best actor 1997-1998. He was also a leading member of Britain's National Theatre under Sir Laurence Olivier, the Royal Shakespeare Company under Sir Peter Hall, and in its formative years, Canada's Stratford Festival under Sir Tyrone Guthrie and Michael Langham. He has played most of the great roles in the classic repertoire.

Plummer's eclectic career on screen began when Sidney Lumet gave him his movie debut in *Stage Struck*. Since then he has appeared in a host of notable films which include the Academy Award-winning *The Sound of Music*, *The Man Who Would Be King*, *The Battle of Britain*, *Waterloo*, *The Silent Partner*, *Dragnet*, *Daisy Clover*, *Star Trek IV*, *Malcolm X*, *Dolores Claibourne*, *Wolf*, *Twelve Monkeys*, *Murder by Decree*, *Somewhere in Time*, Douglas McGrath's *Nicholas Nickleby*, and a host of others. Plummer's recent successes are Michael Mann's Oscar-nominated *The Insider*, playing television journalist Mike Wallace, for which he won the Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago and Las Vegas National Critics' Awards; as well as Ron Howard's Academy Award-winning *A Beautiful Mind* and Etom Egoyan's *Ararat*.

He was most recently seen in Gary David Goldberg's *Must Love Dogs*.

Plummer's upcoming films include Terrence Malick's *The New World*, Alejandro Agresti's *The Lake House*, Charles Beeson's *Four Minutes* and Spike Lee's *Inside Man*.

**ALEXANDER SIDDIG** (Prince Nasir) is best known for his starring role as Dr. Julian Bashir in the long-running series *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. He made his feature film debut in Stephen Frears' comedy *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*. More recently, he co-starred in Ridley Scott's epic *Kingdom of Heaven*, the action-adventure *Vertical Limit*, and the BBC's provocative series *Spooks*.

Siddig was born in Sudan and raised there until political turmoil forced his British mother to flee to the U.K., where she sent for him a short time later. His English schooling was financed by his uncle, actor Malcolm McDowell. Siddig attended a university to study geography and anthropology, thinking the future ability to help his native country might lie in the sciences, not on the stage. But during school, he became interested in acting and directing and left his university to begin studies at the prestigious London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts.

Being one of the few trained dramatic actors of Arabic descent in London at the time, he was soon cast as a young Palestinian in the television miniseries *The Big Battalions*, which led to his winning the role of Faisal in *A Dangerous Man: Lawrence After Arabia*. That movie was subsequently broadcast on American television and his performance caught the attention of *Star Trek* producer Rick Berman.

Siddig spent the first part of this year co-starring in the London West End production of *Whose Life Is It, Anyway?* starring Kim Cattrall.

## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

**STEPHEN GAGHAN** (Director / Writer) ranks among Hollywood's most respected screenwriters and, with *Syriana*, takes a big step toward establishing himself as a director of similar regard. Since being recognized for Best Dramatic Writing at the 1997 Emmy Awards, Gaghan has gone on to collaborate with a number of prominent filmmakers, culminating in his Academy Award, British Academy Award, WGA Award and Golden Globe for Best Adapted Screenplay for Steven Soderbergh's multiple award-winning *Traffic*, a gritty glimpse into the high stakes and high risks of the drug trade. The film became something of a cultural phenomenon, provoking serious debate

about our nation's drug policy while grossing over \$200 million worldwide and earning four Oscars, including Best Director and Best Supporting Actor for Benicio Del Toro. It was Gaghan's most ambitious project – before tackling an even greater challenge in *Syriana*.

Gaghan got his start as a screenwriter in 1997 when he set up his insightful teen drama *Havoc* at New Line Cinema. While doing research for *Traffic*, Gaghan took time out to write *Rules of Engagement* for director William Friedkin and producers Richard Zanuck and Scott Rudin. Based on a story by former Secretary of the Navy James Webb, the taut military drama starred Tommy Lee Jones and Samuel L. Jackson and was released to favorable reviews in 2000. In 2002, he wrote and directed the psychological thriller *Abandon*.

After getting himself expelled from high school on the last day of his senior year for driving a go-cart through the administration building, Gaghan knocked around Europe, India, Nepal, Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand, and worked a series of odd jobs, including graphic designer, assistant to a National Geographic photographer and political fundraiser. Gaghan also worked at the prestigious literary journal *The Paris Review* and published short fiction in journals such as *The Iowa Review*.

Following a move to Los Angeles where he sold a spec script to producer Joel Silver at Warner Bros. Pictures and wrote a freelance episode of *New York Undercover*, Gaghan landed a job on ABC's critically acclaimed *American Gothic*, writing seven of the series' 21 episodes. Shortly after, Gaghan began working with writer Michael Tolkin (*The Player*) on a satiric comedy about Bill Gates and Microsoft for HBO. The project ultimately evolved into a feature script called *\$20 Billion* that was sold to Paramount and earned a place on *Premiere's* "10 Best Unproduced Screenplays" list. Gaghan also wrote several episodes of David Kelly's award-winning drama *The Practice*, and his *NYPD Blue* episode, "Where's 'Swaldo?," won the 1997 Emmy Award for Best Dramatic Writing.

While attending NYU, **JENNIFER FOX** (Producer) was a reader for a number of New York-based production companies, including American Playhouse. In 1997, she became a Director of Development at Universal Studios. In 1999, she was promoted to Vice President of Production. At Universal, she worked on several films, including Steven Soderbergh's *Erin Brockovich*.

In 2001, after Soderbergh partnered with George Clooney to form Section Eight, their Warner Bros. Pictures' based production company, he approached Fox about leaving Universal to join them as president. She is currently overseeing a number of projects, including Tony Gilroy's

directorial debut *Michael Clayton*, starring George Clooney; Scott Burns' directorial debut *PU-239* and Richard Linklater's *A Scanner Darkly* (based on the novel by Philip K. Dick); as well as Soderbergh's two upcoming Section Eight films *The Good German*, starring George Clooney; and *The Informant*, starring Matt Damon.

Most recently, Fox served as executive producer on *Criminal*, directed by Gregory Jacobs; *The Jacket*, directed by John Maybury; *Good Night, and Good Luck*, directed by George Clooney; and *Rumor has it...*, directed by Rob Reiner.

Section Eight has produced *Ocean's Eleven*, *Welcome to Collinwood*, *Far From Heaven*, *Insomnia*, *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, *Criminal*, *Ocean's Twelve*, *The Jacket*, *Good Night, and Good Luck* and *Rumor has it...*

**MICHAEL NOZIK** (Producer), a producing partner at newly formed financier Serenade Films, most recently executive produced two upcoming films – *Twelve and Holding*, directed by Michael Cuesta; and *Game 6*, directed by Michael Hoffman. Last year, Nozik produced Walter Salles' critically acclaimed *The Motorcycle Diaries*, which won the BAFTA for Best Film not in the English Language as well as the Academy Award for Best Original Song for "Al Otro Lado Del Rio."

A veteran of 14 years of producing, Nozik received an Academy Award-nomination for his work as the producer of *Quiz Show*, directed by Robert Redford and starring Ralph Fiennes.

Nozik produced *People I Know*, starring Al Pacino, Kim Basinger and Tea Leoni; the Redford-directed *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, starring Matt Damon and Will Smith; *How to Kill Your Neighbor's Dog*, starring Kenneth Branagh and Robin Wright Penn; *Slums of Beverly Hills*, starring Alan Arkin and Marisa Tomei; and *She's the One*, starring Edward Burns, Cameron Diaz and Jennifer Aniston.

Other producing credits include three films for award-winning director Mira Nair – *The Perez Family*, *Mississippi Masala* and the Academy Award-nominated *Salaam Bombay* – as well as *Thunderheart*, starring Val Kilmer; and *Crossing Delancey* with Amy Irving.

Previously, Nozik was Robert Redford's producing partner and was president of his film production companies – Wildwood Enterprises and South Fork Pictures.

**GEORGIA KACANDES** (Producer) has worked with many celebrated directors, including John Sayles (*Eight Men Out*, *City of Hope*, *Passion Fish*), Steven Soderbergh (*King of the Hill*, *The Underneath*), Martin Scorsese (*Casino*), and Francis Ford Coppola (*The Rainmaker*).

Since completing *Syriana*, Kacandes has served as executive producer on the upcoming feature *Tenacious D in the Pick of Destiny*.

Among her other credits, Kacandes was executive producer on Ted Demme's *Blow* and *Criminal*, directed by Gregory Jacobs. She served as line producer on Andrew Niccol's feature debut *Gattaca*, and *Girl, Interrupted*, directed by James Mangold.

**ROBERT BAER** (Book Author) was a case officer in the Directorate of Operations for the Central Intelligence Agency from 1976 to 1997. He served in places such as Iraq, Dushanbe, Rabat, Beirut, Khartoum and New Delhi, and received the Career Intelligence Medal in 1997. He now divides his time between Washington, D.C., and France.'

**GEORGE CLOONEY** (Executive Producer) Please refer to Mr. Clooney's biography in the cast section, above.

**STEVEN SODERBERGH** (Executive Producer) not only works behind the camera as a director but behind the scenes as a producer for a variety of projects. In 2000, Soderbergh and George Clooney formed Section Eight, a film production company based at Warner Bros. Pictures. After their inaugural production, *Ocean's Eleven*, they executive produced *Far From Heaven*, written and directed by Todd Haynes. The critically acclaimed homage to 1950s melodrama starred Julianne Moore and Dennis Quaid.

In 2002, Section Eight released three additional films: *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, directed by and starring George Clooney with an ensemble cast including Sam Rockwell, Drew Barrymore and Julia Roberts; *Insomnia*, directed by Christopher Nolan and starring Al Pacino, Robin Williams and Hilary Swank; and *Welcome to Collinwood*, written and directed by brothers Anthony and Joe Russo. The ensemble comedy's cast included William H. Macy, Isaiah Washington, Luis Guzman, Jennifer Esposito, Sam Rockwell and Clooney.

*Syriana* is one of three Section Eight films opening in the fall of 2005. Additionally, *Good Night, and Good Luck*, directed by and starring George Clooney from a script by Clooney and Grant

Heslov, premiered at the Venice Film Festival and was released domestically on October 7<sup>th</sup>. The film also stars David Strathairn, Robert Downey, Jr., Patricia Clarkson, Frank Langella and Jeff Daniels. Strathairn received the Osella Cup for his portrayal of legendary CBS anchorman Edward R. Murrow, while Clooney and Haslov received the award for Best Screenplay. On December 25<sup>th</sup>, Section Eight will also release *Rumor has it...*, directed by Rob Reiner and starring Jennifer Aniston, Mark Ruffalo, Kevin Costner and Shirley MacLaine.

Other Section Eight productions include *The Jacket*, directed by John Maybury and starring Adrian Brody, Keira Knightley and Jennifer Jason Leigh; *Ocean's Twelve*, which reunited the entire cast of the 2001 hit plus Catherine Zeta-Jones and internationally acclaimed actor Vincent Cassel; and *Criminal*, starring John C. Reilly, Diego Luna and Maggie Gyllenhaal. Gregory Jacobs, who had collaborated with Soderbergh on ten prior films, made his directorial debut on the film, which was screened at the 2004 Venice, Deauville and London Film Festivals.

Soderbergh's other credits as producer include Greg Mottola's *The Daytrippers* (1997) and Gary Ross' *Pleasantville* (1998). He was executive producer on David Siegel and Scott McGhee's *Suture* (1994), Godfrey Reggio's *Naqoyqatsi* and Lodge Kerrigan's *Keane*, which recently played at the Telluride, Toronto and New York Film Festivals.

In 2003, Section Eight and HBO produced the television docudrama / political reality program *K Street*, starring real-life political consultants James Carville and Mary Matalin. Co-starring were a mix of actors including John Slattery and Mary McCormack, as well as real-life politicians. This past January, Section Eight and HBO premiered the fiction series *Unscripted*, which details the lives of a small group of aspiring actors.

**BEN COSGROVE** (Executive Producer) graduated from Columbia University and then worked in New York in book publishing at The Free Press, then an imprint of MacMillan Publishing. His first job in the movie business was as a freelance reader at TriStar Pictures, where he ultimately became Director of Creative Affairs.

At TriStar, Cosgrove worked on numerous projects including *Jumanji*, *The Mask of Zorro* and *Devil in a Blue Dress*. Following his tenure at TriStar, he joined Maysville Pictures, George Clooney's Warner Bros. Pictures' based production company. When Clooney partnered with Steven Soderbergh to form Section Eight, he became president of the new company.

Section Eight has produced *Ocean's Eleven*, *Welcome to Collinwood*, *Far From Heaven*, *Insomnia*,

*Confessions of a Dangerous Mind, Criminal, Ocean's Twelve, The Jacket, A Scanner Darkly, Rumor has it... and Good Night, and Good Luck.*

**JEFF SKOLL** (Executive Producer) founded Participant Productions in January, 2004 and serves as Chairman and CEO. He most recently served as executive producer on the films *North Country* and *Good Night, and Good Luck*.

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 2005, 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 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.

In April 2005, Skoll launched the Gandhi Project in partnership with Silicon Valley entrepreneur Kamran Elahian. Working with Palestinian voice actors and artists, an award-winning director dubbed the epic film into Arabic. It is being screened throughout Palestine in order to advance civil society goals of peaceful resistance, self-reliance, economic development and local empowerment, and plans are underway to expand screenings throughout the Arab world.

**ROBERT ELSWIT, A.S.C.** (Director of Photography) just completed work on Paul Weitz's *American Dreamz*. Prior to that, Elswit lent his cinematography talents to George Clooney's *Good Night, and Good Luck*.

Throughout the course of his impressive career, Elswit has worked with numerous acclaimed directors including Paul Thomas Anderson, David Mamet, Don Roos, Joel Schumacher, Curtis Hanson, Stephen Gyllenhaal and Rob Reiner, among others. His cinematography credits include *Runaway Jury*, *Gigli*, *Punchdrunk Love*, *Imposter*, *The Heist*, *Bounce*, *Magnolia*, *8 Millimeter*, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, *Boogie Nights*, *Boys*, *The Pallbearer*, *Hard Eight*, *The River Wild*, *A Dangerous Woman*, *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle*, *Waterland*, *Paris Trout*, *Bad Influence*, *Killing in a Small Town*, *Amazing Grace* and *Chuck*, *Desert Hearts* and *The Sure Thing*.

**DAN WEIL** (Production Designer) most recently lent his design talents to *King Arthur* and Doug Liman's *The Bourne Identity*, for which he was nominated for an Art Director's Guild Award. Up next for Weil is *Blood Diamond* for director Edward Zwick.

Weil's other credits as production designer include *Le Libertin*, *The Dancer*, *Belle Maman*, *Le Cousin*, *The Fifth Element*, *Total Eclipse*, *The Professional*, *Moi Ivan*, *Toi Abraham*, *Hors La Vie*, *Jesuite Joe*, *La Femme Nikita*, *Moitié-moitié*, *The Big Blue*, *Kamikaze*, *Black Mic Mac* and *Tristesse et Beauté*.

**TIM SQUYRES** (Editor) most recently edited *The Hulk* for director Ang Lee and Robert Altman's *Gosford Park*, for which he was nominated for an ACE Eddie Award for Best Edited Feature Film (Comedy or Musical).

Squyres' other collaborations with Lee include: *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, for which he was nominated for an Academy Award, a BAFTA Award and an ACE Eddie Award; *Ride With the Devil*; *The Ice Storm*; *Sense and Sensibility*; *Eat Drink Man Woman*; *The Wedding Banquet* and *Pushing Hands*.

Squyres is also credited as editor on *Lulu on the Bridge* and *Blowback*. He was supervising sound editor on *Anna*, *Dogfight* and *True Love*.

His documentary editing credits include *Going Upriver: The Long War of John Kerry*, *Bill Moyers: What Can We Do About Violence?*, *Moyers on Addiction: Close to Home* and *American Heroes*.

After composing the music for over fifty European films and being nominated for two Cesar Awards, **ALEXANDRE DEPSLAT** (Composer) burst onto the Hollywood scene with his evocative score to *Girl with the Pearl Earring* (2003), which earned him Golden Globe, BAFTA and European Film nominations. His reputation was solidified by his score to Jonathan Glazer's film *Birth*, starring Nicole Kidman, which received uncharacteristic praise from major film critics and universal acclaim.

Following in close succession, Desplat wrote the scores to *The Upside of Anger*, starring Joan Allen and Kevin Costner, and *Hostage*, starring Bruce Willis. Desplat is currently composing the original music to Lasse Holström's film *Casanova*, starring Heath Ledger and Jeremy Irons.

Balancing his busy Hollywood schedule, Desplat still makes time to lend his talents to select European films. His most recent score for *De Battre Mon Coeur s'est Arrêté* (*The Beat that My Heart Skipped*) earned him a Silver Bear Award for Best Score at the Berlin Film Festival in 2005.

Desplat's Greek mother and French father met while attending college at Berkeley in the United States. The multilingual Desplat was classically trained, but fed a constant diet of American Jazz and Hollywood movie scores. These influences have been fused in his music to create a fresh and unique new voice in film music.

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