



SUMMIT ENTERTAINMENT AND IMAGI STUDIOS PRESENT

# ASTRO BOY

STARRING

FREDDIE HIGHMORE, KRISTEN BELL, NATHAN LANE, EUGENE LEVY, MATT LUCAS, BILL NIGHY, DONALD SUTHERLAND AND NICOLAS CAGE AS "DR. TENMA"

"ASTRO BOY" MANGA CREATED BY TEZUKA OSAMU

DIRECTED BY DAVID BOWERS

STORY BY DAVID BOWERS

WRITTEN BY TIMOTHY HARRIS AND DAVID BOWERS

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Set in the future, **Astro Boy** is a classic superhero origin story. The all-new, CG animated feature film tells the story of a young robot with incredible powers and his adventure-filled journey in search of his identity and destiny.

Presented by Summit Entertainment and Imagi Studios, **Astro Boy** is directed by David Bowers (*Flushed Away*) and stars Freddie Highmore (*The Spiderwick Chronicles*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*), Kristen Bell ("Heroes," "Veronica Mars", *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*), Nathan Lane (*The Lion King*, *The Birdcage*), Eugene Levy (*Over the Hedge*, *American Pie*), Matt Lucas (*Shaun of the Dead*), Bill Nighy (*Flushed Away*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*), Donald Sutherland (*Fool's Gold*, *The Italian Job*), Samuel L. Jackson (*Lakeview Terrace*, *Unthinkable*) and Nicolas Cage (*G-Force*, *National Treasure*, *The Ant Bully*) as "Dr. Tenma". With a screenplay by Timothy Harris (*Kindergarten Cop*, *Space Jam*, *Trading Places*) and David Bowers, from a story by Bowers, the film is based on "Astro Boy," the manga created by Osamu Tezuka. Producer is Maryann Garger (*Flushed Away*). Cecil Kramer (*Wallace & Gromit The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*), Ken Tsumura (*Curious George*), Paul Wang (*TMNT*) and Francis Kao (*TMNT*) are executive producers. Music is by John Ottman (*Valkyrie*). In the futuristic world of Metro City, a gleaming metropolis in the sky, the brilliant scientist Dr. Tenma creates Astro Boy to replace the son he has lost, programming his creation with the best of human characteristics and values, as well as endowing him with extraordinary super powers. Cast out when he cannot meet the grieving father's expectations, Astro Boy is dealt a cruel double blow – he is also crushed to learn he is a robot, not even a human being.

Astro Boy, who carries within himself the Blue Core, a power source made of positive "blue" energy, is sought out by the troops of the militaristic President Stone, obsessed with obtaining the Core for the "Peacekeeper" robot, in fact invented to be used as a weapon to dominate Earth.

Fleeing from the military, Astro Boy crashes to the surface of the Earth. Lost and unsure of his identity, Astro Boy simply seeks to fit in. Denying his true nature, he tries to pass himself off as a human being with a gang of child-vagabonds. He falls naively under the sway of their leader Hamegg, in whom he sees a father figure. To Astro Boy's horror, Hamegg exposes him as a robot and tries to turn him into a robot-gladiator.

In the Battlebot arena, Astro Boy is forced to face wave upon wave of robots. Refusing to fight, but only disabling his opponent when the safety of spectators is threatened, Astro Boy's nobility wins the crowd over. Alerted by the Core's power surge, the military swoops down and captures Astro Boy, who resigns himself to his fate. As Dr. Tenma, the man who created him, removes his energy source, Astro Boy forgives him for what he is doing. This display of innate goodness finally opens Dr. Tenma's eyes to the terrible mistake he has made. Reconciled to the son he had wrongly rejected, he allows Astro Boy to escape. The destructive Peacekeeper, which has been given the incredibly dangerous negative Red Core energy by presidential order, is out of control and causing havoc in Metro City. Astro Boy returns to help the citizens, fighting the Peacekeeper and saving Metro City from crashing to Earth. In the climactic battle, the strands of the story come together as Astro Boy accepts his mixed human-robot nature and finds his destiny as mankind's savior.

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Few animated characters have made as powerful or as lasting an impression on international popular culture as Astro Boy. The little robot first appeared in 1951 as a character in Osamu Tezuka's legendary *manga* (Japanese comic book) and became an instant icon. In 1963, he starred in a black and white television series produced in Japan.

With his large expressive eyes, Astro Boy became the standard for a new form of animation that has become world famous as *anime*.

The original series also garnered a devoted following when it debuted in the U.S. that same year. Astro Boy continued to inspire fans in a 1982 television series, and then again in an American-made series that debuted in 2003. Airing in 40 countries, including Japan and the U.S., this third series appeared on the WB and Cartoon Network, winning first place in its time slot for two years running.

Tezuka has been honoured as both the "god of manga" and "father of anime," and Astro Boy and his creator became such enormous celebrities in their native Japan that they even appeared on postage stamps. In 2004, Astro Boy was inducted into the Robot Hall of Fame alongside *Star Wars'* C-3PO and Robby the Robot from *Forbidden Planet*.

Astro Boy's story, with its themes of displacement and the need to belong, touched director David Bowers. "***Astro Boy*** is a timeless story in the tradition of *Pinocchio* or *Oliver Twist*," he says. "It's very Dickensian, but at the same time, it's very modern. He is a child created to replace the son that a father has lost. The father comes to realize that the boy can't truly replace his lost son. The boy, who thought he was a real kid, finds out he's a robot, and from there his life just goes crazy.

"Thinking back to films I've loved and that have really influenced me over the years, I realized that the first movie I saw in a theatre was *Pinocchio*," says Bowers, an animation veteran who previously directed *Flushed Away* for DreamWorks and Aardman Features. "My father took me to see it and it had an enormous impact. 'When You Wish Upon a Star' makes me cry to this day." Then, when he was researching ***Astro Boy***, Bowers learned that Osamu Tezuka was highly influenced by the work of Walt Disney. "It was easy to see where Astro Boy came from. There are all sorts of similarities with *Pinocchio*—except he's improved it with giant fighting robots!"

Staying faithful to the original "Astro Boy" while updating its sensibility for a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience was a central concern for everyone involved with the film, says

Maryann Garger, the film's producer. "Astro Boy is a national treasure in Japan. He is their Mickey Mouse. We wanted to create that same excitement and passion for the character in Western audiences. "I think viewers who know the character will see Astro Boy's story in a way they haven't seen it before," she adds. "On the other hand, if you're new to Astro Boy, it's an incredibly emotional story. It's sort of *Pinocchio*, but it's also *Star Wars*. And it's not just for kids. It's for grownups, too, and hopefully moviegoers around the world will discover that."

Bowers is confident that long time fans will be happy with this updated ***Astro Boy***.

“He is still the Astro Boy we know and love, except this is the first time on the big screen, so it’s a much bigger story. It has much more scope and much more scale, even in things like the emotional aspects of Astro Boy’s journey.”

But while ***Astro Boy*** has a poignant side, the filmmakers have not skimped on the action—or the humour, says Bowers. “We have Astro Boy flying down the streets, cars blowing up, buildings collapsing. We have flying cities crashing to the ground. It’s heart-warming, but at the same time very exciting and very funny, too.”

While Garger admits she did not grow up with Astro Boy, she says it was love at first sight. “His is a very enriching story, a wonderful emotional journey and a great, great character. It’s easy to understand how he became a worldwide icon.”

Actor Freddie Highmore, who voices the pint-sized superhero, points toward Astro Boy’s innate altruism as one reason for his enduring popularity. “He’s a real superhero in that he uses his powers for good,” says Highmore. “There are so many people in the world who are very clever or talented in some way. They usually use their gifts for their own benefit. Astro Boy never puts himself first. He goes to save the whole world.

“Astro Boy is the individual who sets out to change the society,” the actor continues. “In our world, just like in his, there are so many rules and restrictions that make it hard for the individual to make a difference, but that’s what Astro Boy always tries to do.”

The opportunity to direct ***Astro Boy*** was too good an opportunity for Bowers to pass up, he says. “My job, first and foremost, is to be a storyteller. I helped harness the creative energies of all these amazing people surrounding me to get the story out there as something that people can enjoy. I hope that it’s something that will be around for a while. If we can move people, if we can make people laugh and make people cry, then I think we’ve done our job. If we can excite them and have them at the edge of their seats, too, then we’ve done our job really well.”

Putting together the best project possible meant assembling an all-star creative team, says the director. “We managed to get these amazing talents to work on our film.

Everybody was committed to making ***Astro Boy*** the most spectacular, fantastic, exciting and funniest film movie that we could possibly create.

The film is produced by Imagi Studios, a Hong Kong-based animation studio with a creative development and production facility in Los Angeles and an office in Tokyo.

The company’s first major CG-animated theatrical movie, *TMNT*, was released domestically March 23, 2007 by Warner Bros. and opened No. 1 at the box office.

“Imagi has all these great artists from around the world who are very passionate,”

Bowers adds. “A lot of top creative people that I worked with at other studios are there, so it really felt like we were getting the band back together. I was thrilled to be reunited with Maryann Garger, who was the co-producer of *Flushed Away*.”

Garger echoes his enthusiasm. “Imagi is especially exciting for me because we have an opportunity to help build the studio,” she says. “That was something I loved doing when I was at DreamWorks. Because Imagi is a start-up studio, there’s a lot of artistic energy which translates to the screen. We have made a film that we’re very proud of that will compete in today’s global marketplace.”

The film's screenplay is by Bowers and Timothy Harris, a seasoned writer whose credits include such hits as *Trading Places* and *Kindergarten Cop* as well as the blockbuster animated action comedy *Space Jam*.

Bowers says that as a parent, he was particularly excited to be making *Astro Boy*. "My daughter is only two years old, but when I started sketching at home and thinking of ideas for *Astro Boy*, she asked me what it was. I told her and now, when I come home at night, I have to draw Astro Boy for my daughter. "When kids go to the movie theatre to see *Astro Boy*, I hope it will be an amazing experience for them," the director says. "But when they come out of the movie theatre, I want that experience to expand into their everyday lives. That's how Astro Boy is in Japan, and I'd love for it to be that in the United States."

### GIVING VOICE TO ASTRO BOY

At the age of 17, Freddie Highmore has a resume any actor would envy, but *Astro Boy* is his first foray into superhero status. Working on the film was an education for Highmore, who was not initially familiar with the character. "It was exciting to learn about this whole new world," he says. "Sometimes I feel like we know this huge secret, and we're about to go and tell all these people about it."

Highmore voices both Toby and Astro Boy in the movie, giving him the additional challenge of creating two similar, but distinct, characters. "It was really interesting to play," he says. "They are quite different. "All great characters change through the course of a movie," he notes. "Astro Boy definitely learns many things about himself and about how to live in the world. He realizes that he has all these amazing powers. As he discovers his powers, the audience discovers them as well and hopefully they go through the emotions with him."

One of the things that attracted Highmore to the project was its innovative approach to animation. "It's quite original and it's got a modern feel to it," he says.

"They kept some of the traditions of manga, but altered them slightly. Everyone has their own image of Astro Boy and so nothing is going to be exactly like the manga or exactly like the TV show, but the original core of the characters is still there. It is definitely something new, but fans will be able to recognize the old faces and see the characters come to life in a different way."

Nicolas Cage, who voices Dr. Tenma, Astro Boy's father, says he grew up watching the original black and white "Astro Boy" television series. "There was a tremendous amount of emotion in those little Japanese cartoons," he remembers. "I couldn't take my eyes off of it. There was this marvellous charm in seeing somebody that small be that powerful. I think that's something that a lot of children can get in step with."

Cage once hoped to make a live action feature based on the character. "It wasn't something that ever got off the ground," he says. "But Mr. Tezuka sent me a little wooden clock with all his characters carved into it. Even though I never met the man, I had personal connection to him, which was part of the reason I chose to participate in this movie."

The key to Astro Boy's popularity, says Cage, is his inherent humanity. "I love Astro Boy's good-heartedness, his wanting to belong, wanting to be loved, even

though he's this little robot. You can't help but adore the character, because you feel so much for him. Those things separate Astro from other anime."

Cage also has compassion for the character he plays, although Tenma initially rejects his creation. "Dr. Tenma is a tragic character. He has lost his child and he thinks he can use his knowledge of robotics to bring Toby back. Instead, it becomes painful for him to look at Astro Boy, who looks just like Toby, but will never be him. It makes for an additional layer of complexity, because it gives Tenma and Astro Boy a place to go in terms of healing the relationship."

He acknowledges a sense of obligation to make a movie that lives up to the original "Astro Boy." "I think everybody involved has a feeling of responsibility for it," he explains. "We want it to be a moving experience, because we are connected to the material. My hope is that audiences receive this movie they way did earlier classics like *Pinocchio* or *The Iron Giant*. Those movies are fun to watch, but they also bring so much emotion with them. **Astro Boy** tries to do more than to just wow you with special effects.

It tries to get you to feel something on the most poetic and sublime levels."

Kristen Bell, who voices Cora, a young runaway from Metro City with a thorny exterior, says being in a movie with a cast that includes Nicolas Cage, Nathan Lane and Bill Nighy is a dream come true for her. "The film is going to be wildly entertaining and really heart warming," she says. "The images are so beautiful. There's a lot of heart behind this movie because there's a lot of heart behind this little boy. Everything has gone wrong for him and you really root for him because you know that he's true to himself."

"When I was growing up, I secretly wanted to be in a cartoon musical," she reveals. "I didn't get to sing as Cora, but this ended up being such a wonderful experience. For me, it was all new and exciting. Each time I went in to record, I saw new sequences cut together and, thought, oh, wow, we're really making a great movie!"

Bell saw a number of parallels between **Astro Boy's** underlying themes and major issues facing society today. "What you walk away with depends on what's important to you," says the actress. "One of the things I liked in the script was the whole idea that robots are second-class citizens and they shouldn't be looked at like they have feelings or rights. People who fight for equality will recognize the robots versus human aspect.

People who care about the environment will recognize the need to cherish this world and clean it up a little bit, before it's too late." The actress says she found much of what she needed to create her character on the page, but also put a lot of herself into the role. "I loved Cora's attitude and her sarcasm and her ability to be witty," Bell says. "At the same time, she takes good care of the kids that she lives with. She's really tough, but she would never betray them or want to be betrayed by them. She gets her sense of family from those kids." Tony winner Nathan Lane plays Hamegg, an earth-side entrepreneur that Lane compares to Fagin in *Oliver Twist*. "He employs all of these children to help him run his business, which is pitching gladiator-style combat between robots. Hamegg pays them to find robots and robot parts for him to use. "It's a good story, a classic story and I think people will have a great time watching it," says Lane. "The artwork is very impressive and true to the original, and at the same time very high-tech and new. They have created a world that seems very real. **Astro Boy** is good, solid family entertainment."

Actor Bill Nighy admits to being very impressed by the international phenomenon surrounding Astro Boy. "He is so beloved in Japan," Nighy marvels. "There are statues of him, as well as whole stores devoted to Astro Boy. Not only is he exciting as an adventure character, but he's also terribly chic. I love the whole experience of *Astro Boy*."

Nighy is a prolific actor whose many memorable roles have included debauched glam rocker Billy Mack in *Love Actually* and Viktor, the vampire king, in the *Underworld* franchise. He plays two characters in *Astro Boy*: Dr. Elefun, a scientist and colleague of Tenma, and Robotski, a rebel robot. He signed on knowing that David

Bowers, who directed him in *Flushed Away*, was helming the project. "I was reassured that I was in safe hands."

About his characters, Nighy says, "Dr. Elefun is the conscience of the movie. He's the man that they should all listen to and don't. He is also Astro Boy's best friend, and the good spirit within the movie. On the audience's behalf, he counsels well and in good faith, while up against enormous odds."

"Robotski looks a bit like a filing cabinet on legs," he continues. "He is part of the Robot Revolutionary Front, a collection of good-hearted idiots with a reasonably good excuse to make noise. They want robots to have the same rights that humans enjoy and to be set free to wander in the world. Robotski has one role with the RRF and one role only—muscle. He's not overly bright, he is good-hearted and he is quite strong."

Playing two characters meant coming up with two distinct voices for Nighy. "The process that David Bowers and I employ is that I come in with some inappropriate and appalling ideas and then he rehabilitates me and allows me to do it properly," says Nighy, a distinguished theater actor whose other film credits include *Pirates of the Caribbean's* Davy Jones. "I had a series of ideas for Dr. Elefun that I thought were funny. When David recovered from that, he asked me if I could do it as myself more or less, and do it with some dignity. Robotski had to be very different from Dr. Elefun and his voice needed to indicate that he is not perhaps the full ticket upstairs, as it were." For Nighy, the strength of the film lies in the audience's identification with the leading character. "It's an action movie, but it's an action movie with heart and comedy," he says. "I love the idea that Astro Boy is a robot so beautifully designed that he approaches humanity. It addresses questions of finding out who you are and how to deal with the fact of yourself."

The actor says he cannot imagine anyone having a reaction to the film other than extremely positive. "It has everything an audience likes. It's funny, it's exciting, and it concerns itself with things that are in all of our lives. It's dramatized beautifully and the whole idea is very powerful, but also very witty."

As Orrin, a robot working in Dr. Tenma's household, Bowers cast Eugene Levy. "Orrin's kind of a nervous type," says Levy. "One of the things that makes him nervous is the fact that the kid in the house, Toby, doesn't necessarily treat him with respect. Robots in Metro City are a kind of appliance and they're treated the way you would treat a toaster or an oven."

Levy has lent his voice to animated films including *Over the Hedge* and *Curious George*. He says that he enjoys doing voice work in part because it brings him back to his professional beginnings in Toronto. "When I started acting, there was

a lot of radio commercial work being done and that's how actors made a reasonably good living."

Although Levy's distinctive voice has become something of a calling card for him, he says he has never viewed it as a strength. "There have been times when I wished

I had a voice like Christopher Plummer, deep and resonant. But ultimately, it is up to the brain trust that put this thing together to hear it. An actor has to give them a range of options for line readings and stay totally flexible. It's a great exercise and it can really be a challenge."

When Levy was first approached to do ***Astro Boy***, the filmmakers sent him a meticulously assembled binder of characters and illustrations. "When I looked through this amazing book, I saw images that were spectacular and characters that looked quite endearing. It was very impressive. In the finished product, the animation is just as incredible, but it's the emotional current that runs through this very impressive-looking work that becomes very moving."

That presentation also impressed two-time Golden Globe winner Donald Sutherland, who plays President Stone. "It was so compelling," he says. "Then I saw the realized footage. It was absolutely thrilling and everything that I imagined. In fact, it was way beyond what I imagined. The look of it, the energy of it, the joy of it, the sincerity of soul is extraordinary. It's a monumental work."

The process of voicing an animated character doesn't differ greatly from acting on camera, he says. "It is creating the character and then coming into a recording studio and voicing him. The character and his reality are there. When I come into the studio, I like to imagine I'm a singer like Peggy Lee or Anita O'Dea."

Sutherland owns up to having a statue of Astro Boy in his house. "He's perfect," says Sutherland. "He has honour and a heart of gold. He's smart and innocent and exquisitely loveable. What more could you ask for?"

British comedian Matt Lucas provided the voice of Sparks, leader of The Robot Revolutionary Front. "He's actually the self-appointed leader," says Lucas.

"Sparks is a very intense and intelligent robot. He's just not quite as intelligent as he thinks he is, which makes him good fun to play. The writer gave him some truly funny lines and I was given a bit of free rein as well to improvise."

For the voice, Lucas harked back to classic British sitcom stars like Leonard Rossiter. "He is best known in the U.S. for his work on 'Rising Damp' and 'The Fall and

Rise of Reginald Perrin,'" says Lucas. "I tried to incorporate some of his vocal tics into the performance."

The actor says it was flattering to be included in such a distinguished cast—although he has yet to meet any of them. "I'm afraid that at the premiere, I'll say, 'Hello!

How are you?' and they'll go, 'You're being a bit over-familiar. If you stay behind the barrier, please, I'll sign an autograph for you.'"

While Lucas says ***Astro Boy*** will be a treat for longtime fans of anime, it is also a perfect entry point for people who haven't yet discovered the art form. "The visuals are brilliantly realized. David has taken the best of what exists and put a new contemporary twist on it.

"Astro Boy's a great role model for young people today," Lucas observes. "He's a lovely character, he's got a good heart and he has a fabulous work ethic. He's a *mensh*."



## CREATING A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SUPERHERO

Imagi Studios' mission is to produce extremely innovative and original animated films, according to Paul Wang, the studio's executive vice president of development and executive producer of *Astro Boy*. Wang says that concentrating on unusual properties gives Imagi the potential to rival the big studios in time. "We are especially interested in superhero movies, like *Astro Boy*," he says. "At Imagi, we are willing to take on that kind of challenge. We've gathered an eclectic group of artists. Each of them dreams about doing films that are influential and event-driven. They still want to make big feature films, but they want to make artistic films at the same time. So this is a chance for them to realize that dream." Francis Kao, founder and chief creative officer of Imagi Studios, grew up in Hong Kong where Japanese anime was a staple. "I had the best of both worlds as a kid in Hong Kong," says Kao. "I was able to see anime series in their original Japanese formats, as well as the versions made for Western audiences. When I started Imagi Studios in 2000, I wanted to create entertainment that brings together the best of East and West—the enduring, popular characters and stories of Japanese anime and the Hollywood expertise in making movies that resonate with audiences around the world.

"From day one, we've moved forward with love and respect for Osamu Tezuka's original manga which serves as the core for the movie," adds Kao. "We have been

working very closely with Tezuka Productions and with the creator's son, Macoto Tezuka, to ensure we got everything right."

Erin Corbett, president of Imagi Studios U.S., says that it has been gratifying to see how warmly fans and media alike have embraced this motion picture since it was first announced. "Making **Astro Boy** has been an amazing journey for Imagi Studios," according to Corbett. "He is a legendary, beloved superhero who has captured hearts around the globe for over 50 years and we're honoured that we've been entrusted with taking this iconic property to a new global stage." The film's designers aspired to create a world that would resemble nothing that audiences have ever seen before. Much of the inspiration for **Astro Boy**'s world comes from the work of Isamu Noguchi, the famous 20<sup>th</sup> century Japanese-American artist and landscape architect.

Noguchi's work with abstraction inspired them to use simple shapes which they brought to life using the most advanced computer lighting, texturing and modelling techniques available. The results go far beyond the souped-up, fuselage-based spacecrafts or flying cars with fins already seen in a host of 20<sup>th</sup> century films.

The designers also turned to Japan for ideas for the film's backgrounds. They turned to the work of 19<sup>th</sup> century woodblock artist, Katsushika Hokusai as a jumping off point. Hokusai's work takes a simple approach to landscapes, eliminating visual clutter in favour of distilling an image to its essence.

Actor Bill Nighy calls the look of **Astro Boy** "very modern, very 21<sup>st</sup> century. It has been modified from the original and yet retains the Japanese influences beautifully integrated into a kind of Western look and feel."

According to Wang, the film is representative of the kind of movies that Imagi wants to build its reputation on. "I think we have an appetite to take things that are more interesting and more original, and we can do that because we are light on our feet."

The creators of the new **Astro Boy** movie know they have set the bar high for themselves by taking a well-known, beloved property and presenting it to audiences in a new form. "Astro Boy is the original anime property," says producer Maryann Garger.

"He was first introduced in America back in the 1960s, but we have the opportunity to reintroduce him to the world as a new icon who can hold his own with the biggest blockbusters out there."

## ABOUT THE CAST

**FREDDIE HIGHMORE (Astro Boy, Toby)** has worked with some of the industry's most celebrated directors while amassing an enviable body of work in his young but illustrious career. Now just 17 years old, the British actor was cast after thousands were considered for the twin roles of Simon and Jared in the *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, an adaptation of the bestselling novels. This year, as well as continuing his academic studies, Highmore has been in South Africa shooting the title role in the apartheid-era film *Master Harold...and the Boys*.

Highmore's other leading credits include the title role in Tim Burton's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* opposite Johnny Depp. His performance was honoured with a Best

Young Actor Award from the Broadcast Film Critics for the second year in a row. Remarkably, Highmore was nominated for this honour in four consecutive years. His previous victory came after his first teaming with Depp in Marc Forster's *Finding Neverland*, costarring Kate Winslet and Dustin Hoffman. The Oscar-nominated film was revered worldwide and Highmore not only swept the board

for young performers' awards, but was also nominated for a SAG Award and in the U.K., won the Empire Award for Best Newcomer.

Beginning his career with roles in a number of television productions, Highmore was seen in the BBC film "Happy Birthday Shakespeare" and ITV's miniseries "I Saw You" as well as TNT's "The Mists of Avalon" in the U.S.

In 2005, Highmore appeared in two films shot in France, the first being Ridley Scott's *A Good Year*, co-starring Russell Crowe, Albert Finney and Marion Cotillard.

That same year, he also starred in Luc Besson's *Arthur and the Invisibles*, opposite Mia Farrow.

Highmore's first American feature was *August Rush*, alongside Robin Williams and Terrence Howard. For the lead role in the Oscar-nominated film, he not only had to learn an American accent, but also play the guitar and the organ as well as conduct an orchestra.

Highmore also voiced the lead role of Pantalaimon in *The Golden Compass*. Other film credits include Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Two Brothers* and *Women Talking Dirty* as well as *Five Children and It*, starring Kenneth Branagh.

**KRISTEN BELL (Cora)** was recently seen in the title role in the highly successful comedy *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, opposite Jason Segel, Jonah Hill and Paul Rudd, produced by Judd Apatow. Next she will be seen in the lead role in the romantic comedy *When in Rome*, opposite Josh Duhamel, Danny DeVito and Dax Shepard, which is scheduled for an August release. She recently finished filming the romantic comedy *Couples Retreat* opposite Vince Vaughn and Jason Bateman, slated for an October bow.

Bell will soon start production on *You Again*, directed by Andy Fickman. Bell stars as a girl who tries to break up her brother's impending marriage when she finds out his bride-to-be is the very girl who made her life a living hell in high school.

Bell was recently seen on NBC's hit series "Heroes" as the mysterious Elle Bishop. An agent of The Company, she possesses the power to generate and manipulate electricity. For three seasons, Bell starred in the title role of the Joel Silver-produced CW series "Veronica Mars," playing a smart, fearless apprentice private investigator dedicated to solving her wealthy seaside town's toughest mysteries. Recently, Bell starred in the sci-fi thriller *Pulse*. Her previous film roles include playing the kidnapped daughter of the President in the David Mamet thriller *Spartan*, opposite Val Kilmer. She also appeared in the independent feature *Fifty Pills*, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Bell starred in 2004's camp musical "Reefer Madness" on Showtime, which was based on the hit play in which she also starred Off-Broadway. Previously, she was best known for her recurring role in the HBO series "Deadwood." Other television credits include lead roles in the critically acclaimed made-for-television movie "Gracie's Choice," opposite Anne Heche and Diane Ladd, as well as "The King and Queen of Moonlight Bay" with Tim Matheson, Sean Young and Ed Asner. She has also had gueststarring roles on such series as "American Dreams," "The Shield" and "Everwood."

On stage, Bell appeared in the Los Angeles Opera's all-star production of the Stephen Sondheim musical "A Little Night Music." Previously, she starred in the

Broadway revival of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" with Liam Neeson and Laura Linney, the Broadway production of "Tom Sawyer" and played the title role in the World Premiere production of the musical "Sneaux." Originally from Detroit, Michigan, Bell attended New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. She currently lives in Los Angeles.

**DONALD SUTHERLAND (President Stone)** is one of the most prolific and versatile of motion picture actors, with an astonishing resume of well over 100 films ranging from the biting political satire of Robert Altman's *M\*A\*S\*H* to the intimate drama of Robert Redford's *Ordinary People* to the subtle intricacy of Alan J. Pakula's *Klute* to the eccentric romanticism of Fellini's *Casanova*. Sutherland has made films with Bernardo Bertolucci (*1900*), Nicolas Roeg (*Don't Look Now*), John Schlesinger (*The Day of the Locust*), Brian Hutton (*Kelly's Heroes*), Paul Mazursky (*Alex in Wonderland*), Robert Aldrich (*The Dirty Dozen*), John Sturges (*The Eagle Has Landed*), Herbert Ross (*Max Dugan Returns*), Louis Malle (*Crackers*), Philip Borsos (*Bethune*), Ron Howard (*Backdraft*), Richard Marquand (*Eye of the Needle*), Euzhan Palcy (*A Dry White Season*), Richard Pearce (*Threshold*, for which Sutherland won the 1983 Genie Award as Best Actor), Oliver Stone (*JFK*), Fred Schepisi (his adaptation of John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation*), Robert Towne (*Without Limits*), Clint Eastwood (*Space Cowboys*), and John Landis (a memorable cameo in National Lampoon's *Animal House*). Sutherland has appeared as Nicole Kidman's father in Anthony Minghella's *Cold Mountain*, as Charlize Theron's father in F. Gary Gray's *The Italian Job* and as Keira Knightley's father in *Pride and Prejudice*. For the latter role, as Mr. Bennett, he received a Chicago Film Critics nomination. In the past few years, Sutherland has starred in Andy Tennant's comedy *Fool's Gold*, with Matthew McConaughey and Kate Hudson; Griffin Dunne's *Fierce People*, with Diane Lane; Robert Towne's *Ask the Dust*, with Salma Hayek and Colin Farrell; *American Gun* with Forest Whitaker; *An American Haunting*, with Sissy Spacek; *Land of the Blind*, with Ralph Fiennes; and *Aurora Borealis*, with Louise Fletcher and Juliette Lewis. He is part of a sterling ensemble of on-camera readers in the biographical feature about the life of Dalton Trumbo, *Trumbo*. On television, Sutherland co-starred with Peter Krause in the ABC drama series "Dirty Sexy Money." For his performance as the family patriarch, Tripp Darling, he was nominated for a 2007 Golden Globe as Best Supporting Actor. Prior to that, he co-starred with Geena Davis in ABC's "Commander in Chief" and was nominated for a Golden Globe as Best Supporting Actor for his portrayal of House Speaker Nathan Templeton. At the same time, he was nominated for a Golden Globe as Best Actor for his performance opposite Mira Sorvino in Lifetime Television's much-lauded miniseries "Human Trafficking." Sutherland won Emmy® and Golden Globe awards as Best Supporting Actor for his performance in the HBO film "Citizen X" and also won a Golden Globe for his portrayal of Clark Clifford, advisor to President Lyndon B. Johnson, in the HBO historical drama "Path to War," directed by the late John Frankenheimer. On stage, Sutherland starred with Justin Kirk and Julianna Margulies in a soldout, critically acclaimed Lincoln Center engagement of Jon Robin Baitz's "Ten Unknowns." For this performance, he received an Outer Critics Circle Award

nomination for Best Actor. He also starred in the London, Toronto and Los Angeles productions of "Enigmatic Variations," an English language translation (by his son Roeg Sutherland) of Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt's French play. Sutherland was appointed an officer of the Order of Canada in 1978 and an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres in France five years later.

**BILL NIGHY (Dr. Elefun)** was recently seen in the World War II film *Valkyrie* with Tom Cruise, and the supernatural actioner *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans*. Upcoming releases include the animated fantasy *G-Force*, Richard Curtis's *The Boat That Rocked* and action-comedy *Wild Target*, opposite Emily Blunt and Rupert Grint.

Nighy has also recently finished filming Stephen Poliakoff's 1939. Nighy's role as a middle-aged Treasury official rejuvenated by love in *The Girl in the Cafe* won him a Golden Globe Award for Best Actor in a Miniseries and widespread praise from critics. In 2003, he won four Best Supporting Actor awards from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association for his performances in *AKA*, *Lawless Heart*, *I Capture the Castle* and *Love Actually*. His stellar performance as pirate captain Davy Jones—half squid, half-human—in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* was reprised in *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*.

Nighy was born in Caterham, Surrey in 1949 and trained for the stage at the Guildford School of Acting. He made his professional stage debut at Newbury's Watermill Theatre and subsequently gained experience at regional theatres including the Edinburgh Traverse, the Chester Gateway and the Liverpool Everyman. It was in Liverpool that he formed a touring theatre company with Julie Walters and Peter Postlethwaite, which played at a variety of venues. He made his first appearance in

London in "Comings and Goings" at the Hampstead Theatre in November 1978. Nighy's long association with the work of David Hare began in the early 1980s when he was cast in "Dreams of Leaving," a BBC film written and directed by Sir David.

They next worked together on "A Map of the World," which Hare both wrote and staged at the National Theatre in London. When Hare was asked by Peter Hall, the National's artistic director, to form a company of actors, Bill became a founding member of the ensemble that also included Anthony Hopkins.

Hare's first production for the new company was "Pravda," a merciless satire on the British newspaper industry, which he co-wrote with Howard Brenton. Hopkins played the role of ruthless media tycoon Lambert Le Roux with Nighy cast as his equally unscrupulous associate. The two actors were again reunited for Hare's production of Shakespeare's "King Lear" with Nighy playing Edgar and Hopkins in the title role. A decade later, Nighy starred in Hare's "Skylight," which won him a Barclays Theatre

Award and which played very successfully for a season at the Vaudeville Theatre in the West End of London. He also received critical acclaim for his role on Broadway in Hare's production, "The Vertical Hour."

The actor has regularly appeared at the National Theatre in a succession of new plays by leading British writers. In 1993, he starred as an ambitious academic in Tom Stoppard's "Arcadia," in a production by Trevor Nunn. Seven years later he won enormous critical acclaim for his performance as psychiatrist Dr. Robert

Smith in "Blue/Orange," written by Joe Penhall and directed by Roger Michell. It was a performance that brought Nighy a Best Actor nomination in the prestigious Olivier Awards.

Other theatre credits include two revivals of plays by Harold Pinter, "Betrayal" at the Almeida Theatre and "A Kind of Alaska" at the Donmar Warehouse Theatre. Nighy was also seen as Trigorin in a National Theatre production of Chekhov's "The Seagull" opposite Judi Dench. Nighy previously worked with Dame Judi on "Absolute Hell" (BBC) and they were recently reunited for the critically acclaimed feature *Notes on a Scandal*, which stars Cate Blanchett and was directed by Richard Eyre.

Nighy's long list of television credits includes virtually every major drama series on British television, but it was his work on "The Men's Room" (BBC) in 1991 that brought him particular attention. More recently, he won a BAFTA Best Actor Award and a Royal Television Society Best Actor Award for his performance as a newspaper editor in the miniseries "State of Play," recently adapted to the big screen. Nighy has starred in two television films for writer and director Stephen Poliakoff in "The Lost Prince," for which Nighy won a Golden Satellite Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role, and the extraordinary "Gideon's Daughter."

The actor made his big screen debut in the early 1980s with appearances in such films as *The Little Drummer Girl*, and it was *The Constant Gardener*, another John le Carre adaptation, which won him Best Supporting Actor at the British Independent Film Awards in 2005. But it was *Still Crazy* and his performance as aging rock vocalist Ray Simms that established Nighy's cinematic profile and which won him the Peter Sellers Award for Best Comedy Performance, given by the *London Evening Standard*. He landed a second Peter Sellers Award for his enormously popular performance as washed-up pop star Billy Mack in *Love Actually*, which also won him a London Film Critics Award and a Best Supporting Actor BAFTA.

Other cinema credits include *Underworld*, *Underworld: Evolution*, *Shaun of the Dead* and *Enduring Love*.

**EUGENE LEVY (Orrin)** has appeared in over 40 motion pictures, seven of which having topped the \$100-million-dollar mark. His box office success in films like *Bringing Down the House*, *Cheaper by the Dozen 2*, *Father of the Bride Part II* and *Over the Hedge* has established Levy as one of Hollywood's most popular comedic character actors. But it was his role as Jim's dad in *American Pie* and its sequels that cemented his reputation as being America's favorite dad. Most recently, Levy appeared in Ang Lee's *Taking Woodstock* and provided the voice of Albert Einstein in *Night at the Museum 2: Battle of the Smithsonian*.

Teaming up with Christopher Guest, Levy earned critical acclaim for co-writing and co-starring in *Best in Show*, *Waiting for Guffman*, *For Your Consideration* and *A Mighty Wind*. His work in *A Mighty Wind* garnered him a Grammy Award and a New York Film Critics Circle Award along with a Golden Globe nomination for *Best in Show*.

Levy started his career on the popular late night comedy series "SCTV," where he won two Emmy Awards for writing. His early films include *Splash*, *Club Paradise*, *Armed and Dangerous* and *Multiplicity*.

**NATHAN LANE (Hamegg)** is equally successful on stage, screen and television. Lane was most recently seen on the big screen in Disney's *Swing Vote* with Kevin Costner. Last July, he finished a six-month run of David Mamet's hit comedy "November" on Broadway. Nathan was previously seen on Broadway starring in the title role as "Butley" in 2006. He also starred in the blockbuster Broadway production of Neil Simon's "The Odd Couple" and in Stephen Sondheim's adaptation of Aristophanes' "The Frogs" at Lincoln Center, for which he wrote the book. His wildly acclaimed portrayal of Max Bialystock in "The Producers" on Broadway won Lane the Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Tony Awards for Best Actor in a Musical. He also won the Olivier Award for his performance in "The Producers" in London.

Lane is currently in The Roundabout Theatre Company's Broadway production of "Waiting for Godot" at Studio 54, alongside Bill Irwin and John Goodman.

Lane will next be seen on screen in *Nutcracker: The Untold Story*, opposite John Turturro and Elle Fanning. The film is based upon Tchaikovsky's famous ballet and is directed by Andrei Konchalovsky.

Film audiences fondly remember Lane's triumphant performance in Mike Nichols' *The Birdcage*, which helped catapult the film into a major blockbuster hit. The role earned Lane a Screen Actors Guild Award and a Golden Globe nomination. He also earned a Golden Globe nomination for his role in the movie version of *The Producers*. Additionally, he won great acclaim as the voice of Timon the meerkat in the smash hit *The Lion King*. Lane has also starred in such box office successes as *Stuart Little* and *Mousehunt*.

Broadway audiences have long embraced Lane as one of the shining lights of the theatre. In 1996, his performance in "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," directed by Jerry Zaks, earned him Tony, Outer Critics Circle and Drama Desk awards.

Among Lane's other Broadway credits are Terrence McNally's "Love! Valor! Compassion!" (Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Obie awards), Neil Simon's "Laughter on the 23rd Floor," "Guys and Dolls" (Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle awards, Tony nomination), "Present Laughter" (Drama Desk nomination) and "On Borrowed Time" with George C. Scott, "Merlin," "The Wind in the Willows," "Some Americans Abroad" and the national tour of Neil Simon's "Broadway Bound."

Early in the 2001 Broadway season, Lane starred in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of "The Man Who Came to Dinner." Off-Broadway credits include Terrence McNally's "Lips Together, Teeth Apart," "The Lisbon Traviata" (Drama Desk and Lucille Lortel awards) and "Bad Habits" at the Manhattan Theatre Club, "The Film Society" and "In a Pig's Valise" at Second Stage, "The Common Pursuit" and "She Stoops to Conquer" at the Roundabout and "Measure for Measure," directed by Joseph Papp, at the NYSF. Lane also starred Off-Broadway in Jon Robin Baitz' acclaimed "Mizlansky/Zilinsky" and played Dalton Trumbo, in the Off Broadway staging of "Trumbo." Most recently, Lane starred in the Huntington Theatre Company's production of "Butley."

Lane was recognized with two Daytime Emmy Awards for Outstanding Performer in an Animated Program for his work in "The Lion King's Timon and Pumbaa" and "Teacher's Pet," both Disney productions. Additional film credits include *Isn't She Great?*, *Trixie*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Addams Family Values*, *Life with Mikey*, *Frankie & Johnny*, *He Said, She Said*, *Ironweed*, *The Lemon Sisters*,



*Jeffrey*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Win a Date with Tad Hamilton!* Lane's television appearances include Terrence McNally's "The Last Mile," the Hallmark Hall of Fame presentation of "The Boys Next Door" and the recent "Laughter on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Floor."

**SAMUEL L. JACKSON (ZOG)** is respectfully labelled one of the hardest working actors in Hollywood and an undisputed star, as demonstrated by the fact that his films have grossed more in box office sales than any other actor in the history of filmmaking. He recently completed filming the drama *Unthinkable*, directed by Gregor Jordan and co-starring Michael Sheen, which has been slated for a fall release. Jackson also filmed a supporting role in the drama *Mother and Child*, directed by Rodrigo Garcia. Jackson made an indelible mark on American cinema with his portrayal of Jules, the philosophizing hitman in Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. In addition to earning unanimous critical acclaim for his performance, he received Academy Award and Golden Globe nominations as Best Supporting Actor as well as a Best Supporting Actor award from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA).

In 2008, Jackson's films included the Neil LaBute thriller *Lakeview Terrace*, which premiered at the Deauville Film Festival, followed by the comedy *Soul Men*, alongside the late Bernie Mac. He recently starred in the Frank Miller action drama *The Spirit*, in which he portrayed the hero's charismatic nemesis, the Octopus.

Jackson made a surprise cameo appearance in the 2008 blockbuster hit, *Iron Man* and has signed on to reprise this role as the Marvel character Nick Fury (head of the secret crime-fighting organization S.H.I.E.L.D.) in Marvel's next nine films. He also starred in Doug Liman's sci-fi action film *Jumper*.

In 2007, Jackson played a starring role in the acclaimed drama *Resurrecting the Champ* and a co-starring role in the very successful horror film *1408*, based on the Stephen King novella. Earlier that year, Jackson starred in Craig Brewer's drama *Black Snake Moan* and Irwin Winkler's war drama *Home of the Brave*.

In 2006, Jackson starred in New Line's *Snakes on a Plane*, directed by David Ellis. He also starred opposite Julianne Moore in Revolution Studio's *Freedomland*, directed by Joe Roth, based on the best-selling novel of the same name. He also appeared in New Line's *The Man*, opposite Eugene Levy.

The previous year, Jackson topped the opening weekend box office charts with his drama *Coach Carter*. Jackson portrayed real-life high school basketball coach Ken Carter, a dedicated role model and advocate for students succeeding in the classroom as well as on the basketball court. *Coach Carter* was screened as the opening night film of the prestigious Palm Springs Film Festival. Jackson received the festival's Career Achievement Award for Acting.

Also in 2005, Jackson starred opposite Juliette Binoche in John Boorman's independent film *In My Country*, based on the best-selling novel *Country of My Skull* by South African writer Antjie Krog. Jackson reprised his roles as Agent Augustus Gibbons in *XXX: State of the Union* and as Mace Windu in *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*. To the surprise of no one, the final *Star Wars* film made an incredible impact at the box office, breaking numerous opening day records.

In 2004, Jackson voiced the character Frozone in the animated action-adventure film *The Incredibles*, which was released to record box office results. The film,

written and directed by Brad Bird, earned a Golden Globe nomination for Best Picture as well as two Academy Award nominations.

Other film credits include *S.W.A.T.*, co-starring Colin Farrell and Michelle Rodriguez; *Changing Lanes*, alongside Ben Affleck; *Formula 51*, with Robert Carlyle; *XXX*, starring Vin Diesel; *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones*; *Unbreakable*, with Bruce Willis; and *Shaft*, in the title role opposite Christian Bale and Vanessa Williams.

Jackson also starred in the courtroom drama *Rules of Engagement*, directed by William Friedkin and co-starring Tommy Lee Jones. Both *Shaft* and *Rules of Engagement* were screened at the 2000 Deauville Film Festival, where Jackson was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Jackson's career began upon his graduation from Morehouse College in Atlanta with a degree in dramatic arts. He went on to perform in numerous stage plays including "Home," "A Soldier's Play," "Sally/Prince" and "The District Line." He also originated roles in two of August Wilson's plays at Yale Repertory Theatre. For the New York Shakespeare Festival, Jackson appeared in "Mother Courage and Her Children," "Spell #7" and "The Mighty Gents."

While still a student at Morehouse, Jackson made his film debut in *Together for Days*. In 1991, he made movie history with his portrayal of a crack addict in Spike Lee's

*Jungle Fever* when he was awarded the first and only Best Supporting Performance Award ever given by the jury at the Cannes Film Festival. He also won the New York Film Critics Award for Best Supporting Actor for that performance.

Jackson starred opposite Sandra Bullock, Matthew McConaughey and Kevin Spacey in Joel Schumacher's 1996 adaptation of a John Grisham novel, *A Time to Kill*.

For his performance, Jackson received a Golden Globe nomination and an NAACP Image Award. He also starred opposite Bruce Willis in *Die Hard: With a Vengeance*, the top-grossing movie internationally in 1995. In 1997, Jackson starred in *Jackie Brown*, his second film with director Quentin Tarantino. He received a Golden Globe nomination and the Berlin Film Festival's Silver Bear Award for Best Actor in a Comedy.

Jackson starred in Kasi Lemmons' *The Caveman's Valentine*, also serving as an executive producer on the project. The most successful independent film of 2001, was

Jackson's second project with Lemmons; the first was the applauded 1997 drama *Eve's Bayou*, which he also produced.

Other film credits include *Deep Blue Sea*, *Star Wars Episode One: The Phantom Menace*, *The Negotiator*, *The Red Violin*, *187*, *Twisted*, *Sphere*, *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, *Hard Eight*, *Kiss of Death*, *Losing Isaiah*, *Amos & Andrew*, *Ragtime*, *Sea of Love*, *Coming to America*, *Ray*, *Do the Right Thing*, *School Daze*, *Mo' Better Blues*, *Goodfellas*, *Strictly Business*, *White Sands*, *Patriot Games*, *Jumpin' at the Boneyard*, *Fathers & Sons*, *Juice*, *Fresh* and *True Romance*.

On the small screen, Jackson serves as executive producer for the Spike TV animated series "Afro Samurai," which premiered in 2007 and returned for a third season in January 2009. The first edition of the "Afro Samurai" video game launched in

February 2009. In 2008, Jackson secured a first-look television deal with CBS and their properties to develop and produce future projects. Jackson starred in John Frankenheimer's Emmy-winning "Against the Wall" for HBO. His performance earned him a Cable Ace nomination as Best Supporting Actor in a Movie or Miniseries and a Golden Globe nomination.

**NICOLAS CAGE (Dr. Tenma)** is an Academy Award®-winner and one of the most versatile actors of all time, equally known for his poignant portrayals in both drama and comedy. Cage wrapped production in October of 2008 on Werner Herzog's reimagining of the critically acclaimed 1992 film *Bad Lieutenant*, in which he plays the title role. He lent his voice to the animated feature *G-Force*, due in theatres in July. Cage recently wrapped production on the medieval epic *Season of the Witch*, which filmed on location in Budapest, and then went straight into his next feature collaboration with Jerry Bruckheimer, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*.

Cage also appeared in the Pang brothers' *Bangkok Dangerous*, an action thriller. In 2007, Cage starred in the worldwide box office success *National Treasure: Book of Secrets*. It marked Cage's fifth collaboration with producer Jerry Bruckheimer following *The Rock*, *Con Air*, *Gone in 60 Seconds* and *National Treasure*.

Cage's memorable performance as an alcoholic drinking himself to death in the drama *Leaving Las Vegas*, directed by Mike Figgis, earned him an Academy Award as well as a Golden Globe, and Best Actor awards from the New York Film Critics Circle, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, the Chicago Film Critics and the National Board of Review. Cage further solidified his leading man status when he received

Academy Award, Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild and British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) nominations for his dual role as twin brothers Charlie and Donald Kaufman in Spike Jonze's quirky comedy *Adaptation*, which also co-starred Meryl Streep and Chris Cooper.

Cage portrayed Johnny Blaze in *Ghost Rider*, a 2007 film based on the Marvel Comics character that was written and directed by Mark Steven Johnson. The film immediately set a new record with the highest-grossing opening for a President's Day weekend. Cage's other recent starring roles include Neil LaBute's *The Wicker Man* and Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center*, both released in 2006, and Gore Verbinski's *The Weather Man* and Andrew Niccol's *Lord of War*, both released in 2005. He was also heard as the voice of Zoc in the animated film *The Ant Bully*.

Cage was raised in Long Beach, California and lived there until his family moved to San Francisco when he was 12. Cage began acting at age 15 when he enrolled in San Francisco's American Conservatory Theatre. He later moved to Los Angeles and while still a high school student, landed a role in the television film "The Best of Times." He made his feature film debut in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.

It was Cage's portrayal of a tormented Vietnam vet in *Birdy* that first established him as a serious actor. Directed by Alan Parker, *Birdy* won the jury prize at Cannes. Cage then received a Golden Globe nomination as Best Actor for his role as Cher's lover in *Moonstruck*. David Lynch's *Wild at Heart*, starring Cage and Laura Dern, won the Palme d'Or at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival.

Some of Cage's other honours include a 1993 Golden Globe nomination for his role in *Honeymoon in Vegas*, the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the Montreal World Film Festival in 1996, the first ever Distinguished Decade in Film Award at ShoWest in 2001 and honours from the prestigious American Cinematheque in 2001.

In 2002, Cage made his film directorial debut with *Sonny*. He cast an impressive group of actors, including Golden Globe winner James Franco, Mena Suvari, Brenda Blethyn and Harry Dean Stanton. The film was accepted at the 2002 Deauville Film Festival. Cage's production company, Saturn Films, also produced the 2002 drama *The Life of David Gale* and the critically acclaimed 2000 film *Shadow of the Vampire*. Cage's many other film credits include roles in *Next*, *Matchstick Men*, *Windtalkers*, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, *The Family Man*, *Bringing Out the Dead*, *8MM Eight Millimeter*, *Snake Eyes*, *City of Angels*, *Face/Off*, *Kiss of Death*, *Guarding Tess*, *It Could Happen to You*, *Red Rock West*, *Honeymoon in Vegas*, *Raising Arizona*, *Vampire's Kiss*, *Peggy Sue Got Married*, *Valley Girl*, *Racing with the Moon*, *The Cotton Club* and *Rumble Fish*.

### ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

**DAVID BOWERS (Writer and Director)** shared a BAFTA nomination for *Flushed Away*, the DreamWorks/Aardman Animation co-production on which he contributed writing and directing services.

Originally from Stockport, Cheshire in the U.K., Bowers studied animation at West Surrey College of Art and Design in Farnham but left after his first year to work on *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* under Oscar®-winning animator Richard Williams. Next, he worked at the famed British studio Cosgrove Hall on the cult television shows "Danger Mouse" and "Count Duckula" before moving to London to join Steven Spielberg's Amblimation, a studio set up to take advantage of European talent Amblin discovered during the making of *Roger Rabbit*.

Bowers next worked as an animator on *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West* before going freelance and working on commercials and features. He returned to Amblimation as a story artist and served as a supervising animator on *Balto*. When DreamWorks was founded, Bowers relocated to Los Angeles and worked as a story artist on *The Prince of Egypt* and *The Road to El Dorado*. During this period, he met filmmakers Nick Park and Peter Lord, who needed help storyboarding their feature *Chicken Run*. It was the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship with Aardman Animation. A six-week contract became 14 months as Bowers helped conceive and storyboard many of the film's major set-pieces, including its climax.

After the completion of *Chicken Run*, Bowers moved between Los Angeles and Bristol as a key creative on various DreamWorks and Aardman projects including *Shark Tale* and the Oscar winner *Wallace & Gromit The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*.

**TIMOTHY HARRIS (Writer)**, credited with such box office hits as *Space Jam*, *Kindergarten Cop*, *Twins* and *Trading Places*, has been authoring screenplays for almost 30 years. His credits also include three noir novels featuring a Los Angeles private detective, Kyd for Hire, Goodnight and Good-Bye and Unfaithful Servant. In addition, Harris produced *Falling Down*, directed by Joel Schumacher,

which was selected for the official competition at the 1993 Cannes International Film Festival.

**MARYANN GARGER (Producer)** was a co-producer of *Flushed Away*. She began her career in animation as production coordinator on *Pocahontas*. She was the 14<sup>th</sup> employee hired at DreamWorks in 1995 and served as a production supervisor on *The Prince of Egypt*, production manager on *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* and *Madagascar* and production executive on *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas*. She also produced the DreamWorks short film *First Flight*. Garger hails from New Hampshire and attended Syracuse University.

**CECIL KRAMER (Executive Producer)** is vice chairman of Imagi Studios and has more than 20 years of production experience in various fields within the entertainment industry. She produced the critically acclaimed animated feature *Flushed Away* and recently served as an executive producer on the 2005 Academy Awardwinning stop-motion comedy *Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (Best Animated Feature). Previously, she held the post of co-head of production for DreamWorks Animation, where she oversaw the development of such animated features as *Antz*, *The Prince of Egypt*, *The Road to El Dorado*, *Chicken Run* and the Oscar winning smash *Shrek*. Previously, Kramer produced visual effects for live-action films such as *Crimson Tide* and *Cabin Boy*. She also served as the post-production supervisor on *Honey, I Blew Up the Kid*. She was also a production executive at Buena Vista Pictures, Walt Disney Imagineering and Film Finances. Kramer began her career as a feature film costumer and later worked as a production manager on TV commercials and in the field of public broadcasting.

**KEN TSUMURA (Executive Producer)** is executive vice president, production, Hong Kong, at Imagi Studios. Prior to joining Imagi, he was senior vice president, production & technology at Vancouver-based Mainframe Entertainment (now Rainmaker Animation). A 22-year animation veteran, Tsumura's numerous production credits include executive producer on Universal Pictures' feature *Curious George*, producer on DreamWorks' CG-animated television series "Father of the Pride" and executive producer on Columbia Pictures' *Adam Sandler's Eight Crazy Nights*. He also served as animation co-producer on the Fox Television series "The Simpsons" and "The Critic."

**PAUL WANG (Executive Producer)** has been involved in filmmaking and computer graphics for the last 20 years. After running Four-D, his own boutique animation house in New York, Wang entered the computer-generated visual effects industry, where he created special visual effects for such movies as *Batman Forever* and *The Peacemaker*. He went on to PDI/DreamWorks, where he did pioneering work on animated motion pictures such as *Antz*, *Shrek* and *Madagascar*. He also worked on the theme park ride *Shrek 4-D* and DreamWorks Television's CG-animated television series "Father of the Pride." Wang was a producer on Imagi Studios' hit feature *TMNT* and is executive vice president, development at Imagi.

**FRANCIS KAO (Executive Producer)** is the founder and chief creative officer of Imagi Studios. He founded Imagi in 2000, bringing to life his vision of a world-class CG animation studio in Asia. Kao sets the creative direction for Imagi Studios and is the ultimate decision-maker for its movie slate. Focusing on motion picture development and production, he is also responsible for the management of the company's intellectual properties. Presently, Kao is also supervising the development of *Gatchaman*, based on the hit 1970s television series.

Kao served as executive producer on Imagi Studios' first feature film, *TMNT* (2007), which opened number one at the U.S. box office, and on *Highlander: The Search for Vengeance* (2006), the critically acclaimed action-fantasy film from Japanese anime master Yoshiaki Kawajiri. Kao graduated from California State University, Sacramento with a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance Management. He then joined Boto, Imagi's predecessor company, in 1999 to embark on a number of new initiatives designed to create a brand for the manufacturing company.

**PILAR FLYNN (Line Producer)** began her animation career at DreamWorks, where she worked for eight years on the development and production of such films as

*The Road to El Dorado*, *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas*, *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*, *Madagascar* and *Flushed Away*. She also co-produced DreamWorks' first

CG-animated short, the multiple award-winning *First Flight*.

Most recently, Flynn served as associate producer of the animated feature film *Mean Margaret* for IDT/Starz Media.

**IMAGI STUDIOS** is a leading producer of CG-animated feature films with operations in both the U.S. and Hong Kong. The company has successfully created an animation studio that allows Imagi to produce high-quality CG animated motion pictures developed outside of the traditional lock-step pipeline and rivaling the high-quality content from leading Hollywood animation studios. Imagi's latest production, *Astro Boy*, will be followed by *Gatchaman*, currently in development and based on the popular 1970s television series.

Fusing its Hong Kong heritage with world-class Hollywood talent, Imagi has created a filmmaking platform that allows them to develop quality motion pictures with greater efficiency. Utilizing the latest in CG technology, Imagi is also able to successfully pioneer new approaches to animation and storytelling not found in the conventional school of animation. Imagi first gained major industry notice in 2007, when their animated feature *TMNT* opened No. 1 at the North American box office, a first for an Asian animation outfit.

Imagi came on the scene in Hong Kong in 2000 under the leadership of founder and chief creative officer Francis Kao. Since 2000, the animation house has grown exponentially, expanding its operations to include offices in Los Angeles and Tokyo.

Imagi International Holdings Limited (Stock Code 585, OTCQX: IINHY) is a listed company on the main board of The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong. Imagi's CG production studios are located at its Chai Wan, Hong Kong corporate

headquarters with development and marketing operations based in Los Angeles, California, and an office in Tokyo. For further information, please visit [www.imagi.com.hk](http://www.imagi.com.hk).

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