



MADMAN

From the producer of PARIS, JE T'AIME



NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU

Press Kit

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View the trailer: <http://www.newyorkiloveyouthemovie.com/#/video>

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NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU

Synopsis:

Since the birth of movies, New York has long been cinema's dream city – its teeming populace of one-of-a-kind characters, its stone-and-glass skyscrapers rocketing towards the heavens, its subterranean cultures and its rooftop love affairs all making for the perfect backdrop to all manner of action, comedy, drama and poetry. The city has been immortalised on screen in hundreds of different ways in thousands of movies. But now comes a fresh, diverse and unabashedly romantic window into the city, this time seen entirely through the eyes of love -- love in all its varieties, from first love, tough love and momentary love to love remembered, love denied, love yearned for and love that lasts forever – from a collaboration of young, impassioned filmmakers from around the world.

Directed by an eclectic group of some of today's most imaginative filmmakers that includes **Jiang Wen, Mira Nair, Shunji Iwai, Yvan Attal, Brett Ratner, Allen Hughes, Shekhar Kapur, Natalie Portman, Fatih Akin, Joshua Marston** and **Randy Balsmeyer**, **NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU** invites the audience into the intimate lives of New Yorkers as they grapple with, delight in and search for love.

In the Diamond District, an intercultural romantic fantasy transforms the purchase of a precious stone. Meanwhile, in Chinatown, a desperate artist pursues a reluctant muse. Within an Upper East Side hotel, a sophisticated guest and a mysterious bellboy journey outside of time. After an unexpected night in Central Park, a young man's prom date has a surprising revelation. Traveling towards the Village, two lovers speed by taxi, subway and foot to meet for the first time after what they thought was a one-night stand. In Tribeca, a pickpocket finds the tables turned when he follows an alluring girl. And in Brooklyn, a moment of Coney Island bliss envelops an octogenarian couple. These stories and more are all woven together to form a colorful, lyrical collage not only of the city – but of the deep yearning for love and human connections that sustain everyone within it.

Bringing to life the film's host of unforgettable New York characters is an all-star cast that includes **Bradley Cooper, Justin Bartha, Andy Garcia, Hayden Christensen, Rachel Bilson, Natalie Portman, Irrfan Khan, Emilie Ohana, Orlando Bloom, Christina Ricci, Maggie Q, Ethan Hawke, Anton Yelchin, James Caan, Olivia Thirlby, Blake Lively, Drea de Matteo, Julie Christie, John Hurt, Shia LaBeouf, Ugur Yucel, Taylor Geare, Carlos Acosta, Jacinda Barrett, Shu Qi, Burt Young, Chris Cooper, Robin Wright Penn, Eva Amurri, Eli Wallach** and **Cloris Leachman**.

Following on the heels of the acclaimed **PARIS JE T'AIME**, the project is the second episode of the "**Cities of Love**" series of collective feature films conceived by **Emmanuel Benbihy**, who produced this film with Marina Grasic (CRASH).



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NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU

a collective feature film

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION:
IN LOVE WITH A NEW YORK IN LOVE

"You know what I always like about New York . . . these little moments on the sidewalk, smoking and thinking about your life... you can watch the buildings, feel the air, look at the people and sometimes you meet someone you feel like you can talk to."

-- Yvan Attal Segment, NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU

In the city that never sleeps, no one ever stops dreaming of love. These dreams come to life in **NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU** – a collaboration of storytelling from some of today's most exciting international screen artists and a global, all-star cast, who together create a kaleidoscopic view of the spontaneous, surprising, electrifying human connections that drive the city's heartbeat. Sexy, funny, haunting and revealing encounters erupt across the Manhattan landscape -- from Tribeca to Central Park to Harlem – forging an interconnected love story as diverse and unifying as the very fabric of New York.

Following on the heels of its critically acclaimed predecessor, **PARIS JE T'AIME, NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU**, is the second in a series of films that producer Emmanuel Benbihy calls **CITIES OF LOVE**, which will take audiences on far-reaching journeys through the world's most beloved and culturally influential cities via the sheer power of indelible, heartfelt emotions. The next cities in development are Rio and Shanghai for 2010, Jerusalem and Mumbai in 2011. If grand cities are a society's receptacle of untold stories, Benbihy has set out, like a butterfly collector, to amass those beautiful, momentary tales that are filled with desire, connection and hope – and thus explore the things that bring us all, no matter our background, nationality or view of life, closer together.

"My idea was always to make a collection of movies that would illustrate the universal idea of love around the world," says Benbihy. "I started with Paris because that is where I am from, but I always intended to do something similar for all the mythic cities, of which New York of course had to be a part. New York is a city that has the potential to make anybody who sees it start to





dream. I first came to New York when I was 7 years-old in the 1970s and I have ever since had my own personal love affair with the city.”

With **NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU** Benbihy takes his concept of the multi-director movie not only into Manhattan’s iconic neighborhoods, from the Upper West Side to Soho, but also a step further, across new boundaries – and into what he dubs “*collective filmmaking*.” While the film features stories from different filmmakers of wholly different backgrounds and creative visions, the quest was to weave them all into a singular, intertwined narrative that serves as an ode to primal human connectedness – *not only in substance but in form*.

“This movie is absolutely not an anthology,” Benbihy unequivocally states. “The ambition of this format is not to string a bunch of shorts together, but rather, to make a singular feature film experience that just happens to be created by many different directors. We wanted the characters not just to live inside their own stories but to bump into each other, cross paths and form a community, so that from that diversity comes a sense of unity. It is similar to other films made by a single director – CRASH, MAGNOLIA, BABEL, SHORT CUTS, films with storytelling that audiences have reacted very strongly to – but the difference is that we have many directors.”

Benbihy notes that he and all the artists who have participated in his films are still in the very beginning stages of exploring the full potential of what the exciting future of collective filmmaking might look like. “It remains an ambitious concept for which there is no real precedent and one that is still full of hurdles and challenges,” the producer admits, “but it’s something that was very exciting to the filmmakers we approached and is becoming a reality.”

Early on, the idea certainly captured the imagination of producer Marina Grasic, who has long been a force in the independent film world and was an executive producer on the Academy Award® winning CRASH, perhaps the most acclaimed of the multi-narrative, intertwined films that Benbihy was so intrigued by structurally. When the two met at the Cannes Film Festival, a partnership was quickly forged.

“When I met Emmanuel, I was really excited to hear that he was planning to do a New York movie just like PARIS JE T’AIME,” recalls Grasic. “In turn, I think he was interested in me because I have been involved in movies that are on the cutting edge in structure and format. It was a serendipitous meeting.”



But after trying to jumpstart the project from Los Angeles, it was strongly recommended to Benbihi that he up the intensity of his approach – New York style. “Anthony Minghella called me and said ‘I am in New York, where are you?’ If you want to make a movie in New York, you should be here; and if you want to work with me, we should meet.” So he picked up his roots and moved to New York the next day to be in the very midst of the subject at hand, which was all the inspiration he needed to put things into rapid-fire motion. “I owe a lot to Anthony” Benbihi admits.

He also began searching for just the right chemical mix of up-and-coming filmmakers. “I didn’t want to go to the usual New York suspects, to Spike Lee or Woody Allen or Martin Scorsese, because we all already know their way of seeing New York so intimately. Instead, I searched for directors who would view the city in ways yet to be seen,” he explains.

“I consciously went to younger, newer directors from all around the world, directors who are edgy in their approach, who are pushing cinematic borders, who might be able to see New York not as it used to be but as it really is *today*, right now. In some cases, this film was the director’s first taste of filmmaking in New York. For others it was a chance to revisit the city from a different perspective. The final group is full of diversity, a collection of men and women with very different styles and very different visions of relationships, yet what they each share is an original eye from which to view love, life and New York.”

Benbihi was gratified that the filmmakers he approached responded with passionate enthusiasm. He says: “I think they were drawn by the freedom, rare now in the movie-making world, to try something new at many different levels – to work with actors they’ve always dreamed of working with, to be involved with a production that was completely open to their personal desires and fantasies and, most of all, to give audiences experiences they might not have had before.”



MADMAN

NEW YORK RULES: HOW 11 DIRECTORS SHOT ONE FILM IN 8 WEEKS

To kick-start the intensively creative, not to mention intensely fast-moving, process of making **NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU**, each one of the film's 11 directors was initially provided with a set of simple but inviolable mandates for their screenplays, including:

- ❖ Each story had to be visually identified with one or more New York neighborhoods;
- ❖ Each story had to involve some kind of love encounter, broadly defined;
- ❖ There would be no fades to black at end or beginning of any segment.

Soon Benbihi found himself in development on eleven amazingly intricate stories simultaneously. Though each narrative was only about 8 minutes long, they were full of epiphanies and epic ideas that merited long conversations and debates with their impassioned creators.

Once the screenplays were finalized, came another set of shooting rules:

- ❖ Each director, along with his chosen DP and cast, would shoot for 2 days and 2 days only.
- ❖ Then, that director would head to the editing facility with his or her chosen editor for 7 days, while a new director and cast would start shooting.
- ❖ The production designer, costume designer and all below-the-line crew remained consistent throughout the entirety of the exhausting, albeit exhilarating, 8 week shoot.

"We shot continuously from day one, without a break, revolving straight through the directors," explains Benbihi. "The organization required for doing this was extremely challenging and very specific. There just doesn't exist a structure in filmmaking for making a movie with more than 2 directors, so it has its own unique process. This meant that there had to be really good communication between everyone on this new production format."

At the same time, the approach was always to be open to creative accidents and the fruits of collaboration. Comments Grasic: "We were very fortunate in that we were working out of a building in the West Village where we were able to have the production office on one floor and an editing room on another. So we had one director getting ready to shoot while another was editing, which made for a really inspirational and creative environment. We had all these artists kind of looking in on each other and interacting in a way that only further added to the cohesiveness and community we wanted on this film. It felt almost like a film workshop."





At one point, for example, the German-Turkish director Fatih Akin was working next door to his long-time American favorite, Allen Hughes. “It was really exciting, even just to go ask to borrow some cream for the coffee,” laughs Akin.

Meanwhile, the team was also shooting the transition sequences that tie together the individual stories of the film – via the story of a New York videographer moving around from neighborhood to neighborhood (played by the French American actress Emilie Ohana, VATEL) -- into a singular experience. These were directed by Randy Balsmeyer, best known for his collaborations with the likes of Spike Lee, the Coen Brothers, David Cronenberg and Robert Altman in creating unforgettable title sequences.

“The transitions became an interesting way to engage the audience and to challenge them with new information about the characters they’ve met as well as introducing a group of what we called ‘community characters,’” explains Benbihi. “One of the wonderful ideas that Randy Balsmeyer brought to us was that of using a videographer – an artist whose work unifies the people all around her – to unify our stories.”

Production on the wild and woolly streets of New York is always an exhilarating challenge but with NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU that challenge was intensified by several magnitudes, as the directors collectively traversed every inch of the city – shooting outdoors, indoors, on street corners, in bars and apartments -- coming into contact with every conceivable obstacle and situation, while trying to complete their films in the allotted 48 hours.

Thankfully, throughout, New York City itself stood behind the project. Notes Grasic: “There was a real appreciation that this movie is a love letter to the city and the City infrastructure was very generous in its support. That meant a lot to us because this production was nothing if not logistically challenging. Just the transportation alone was mind-boggling! We had directors and cast flying in and out of the country constantly, and there were immigration challenges and hotel challenges and the amazing thing is, that daunting as it was, everything turned out as well as we could possibly have hoped for. New York was completely welcoming and, of course, always inspirational.”



As carefully strategized as the epic production was, Benbihy and Grasic knew that with so many creative balls flying through the air at once, they would have to flow with the unpredictable nature of the enterprise.

Summarizes Benbihy: “When you’re making a movie such as this, things are constantly evolving and shifting and the key is to always be ready for the opportunity to open the door into something else. In the end, the final film is a balance of so many elements: merging the fun and the upbeat with the edgy and poetic. It’s a journey into New York different from what audiences are used to, but filled with the excitement of love and lots of fresh air.”

NEW YORK: LOVE STORY BY LOVE STORY

JIANG WEN IN CHINATOWN

A pickpocket (Hayden Christensen, STAR WARS, JUMPER) discovers the picture of a beautiful girl (Rachel Bilson, JUMPER, “The O.C.”) in a wallet he pilfered, and he soon finds himself in a battle with her current beau (Academy Award® nominee Andy Garcia, THE UNTOUCHABLES, OCEANS THIRTEEN) to steal her heart, among other things.

Jiang Wen, often called China’s most famous actor, wrote and directed this segment. Wen is perhaps best known for his internationally acclaimed leading role opposite Gong Li in Zhang Yimou’s RED SORGHUM. He first became renown in China for his starring role in the television series “A Native of Beijing in New York.” His acting credits further include HIBISCUS TOWN, BLACK SNOW, THE EMPEROR’S SHADOW, THE SOONG SISTERS and Yimou’s STAY COOL. He made his directorial debut with IN THE HEAT OF THE SUN, which won the Best Actor Prize at the Venice Film Festival as well as six Taiwanese Golden Horse Awards, including Best Director. He next directed DEVILS ON THE DOORSTEP, which won the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival, and most recently directed THE SUN ALSO RISES, which showed in competition at the Venice Film Festival in 2007.

Benbihy was gratified to have Jiang Wen’s participation. “He is basically the Robert DeNiro of China,” he notes. “He’s a major actor but he’s also a very, very daring director. I had wanted to





work with him on PARIS JE T'AIME® and the circumstances didn't work out, but he very much insisted on being part of NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU."

Rachel Bilson, well known to television viewers for her role as Summer Roberts on the popular "The O.C.," jumped at the chance to take on the role of a woman whose heart is literally put into play in the middle of a Manhattan bar. "I loved PARIS JE T'AIME, so I was very intrigued by the idea of doing something similar in New York," she says. "And this story takes an almost cliché New York moment – when someone steals your wallet – and puts a great romantic twist on it. When I read it, I felt like the feel of the city really came across in it."

Bilson was also excited to reunite on-screen with Hayden Christensen, with whom she recently starred in the action thriller JUMPER. "I love working with Hayden because I think he's so talented and this was a fun way to have that chance again," she says.

Most of all, though, Bilson was attracted to working with Jiang Wen, a rare opportunity for an American actress. "His visual ideas are really cool. He has a great eye and he's very smart," she comments. "It's always a pleasure when a director understands being on the other side of the camera and as an actor, Jiang Wen has that quality. We worked with him through a translator but even so, there was always a really great feeling of communication. That's what this project was all about – bringing people from all over the world together in a collaborative effort to capture a great city."

MIRA NAIR IN THE DIAMOND DISTRICT

An Indian diamond seller (Irfan Khan, SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE) and a bride-to-be (Academy Award® nominee Natalie Portman, CLOSER, PARIS JE T'AIME) experience an intimate connection in the middle of a tense diamond negotiation. He is a devout Jain. She is a Hasidic Jew. Yet, as they flirt with each other's cultural beliefs, from banned foods to shaved heads, they suddenly come to a singular moment of profound – and lingering – connection.

This film, shot in Manhattan's Midtown Diamond District, is directed by Mira Nair, whose debut feature SALAAM BOMBAY! revealed the underbelly of Mumbai in ways never before seen, garnering a nomination for an Academy Award® for Best Foreign Language Film, among many other accolades. Nair, who now lives in New York, would go on to direct MISSISSIPPI MASALA, THE PEREZ FAMILY, KAMA SUTRA: A TALE OF LOVE, MY OWN COUNTRY and THE





LAUGHING CLUB OF INDIA. Her tale of a complicated Punjabi wedding, MONSOON WEDDING, was honored with the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival and a second Academy Award® nomination for Best Foreign Film. She then directed the HBO film, HYSTERICAL BLINDNESS, which resulted in a Golden Globe for star Uma Thurman. Most recently, Nair directed two very different adaptations: one of the Thackeray classic VANITY FAIR and the other of Jhumpa Lahiri's contemporary novel THE NAMESAKE.

Nair's NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU story was shot by cinematographer Declan Quinn, who most recently won acclaim for his visceral, hand-held work on Jonathan Demme's RACHEL GETTING MARRIED.

Says Emmanuel Benbihy of Nair's film: "Mira's story is very provocative and gets to the heart of the most unpredictable, inexplicable moments that just happen in a city like New York. She's created a beautiful dream between a Jain diamond dealer and a Hasidic bride that shows that, even with all their codes and rules, these two people can still find a bond that goes beyond all that. It's something very unusual and resonant and her images stick with you."

Adds Marina Grasic: "This story was so much fun from a creative point-of-view and an exciting exploration of how different cultures come together in New York. Since Mira lives in New York, she knows the city so well, and was able to bring nuances to the nuances. The wedding scene was especially fun to shoot and this tremendous pageantry was accomplished in a shockingly short amount of time. Natalie and Irrfan are both so talented and gracious, working with them was just a pleasure."

Irrfan Khan recently worked with with Mira Nair on THE NAMESAKE and could not resist doing so again. "It's always an adrenaline rush working with her, like a roller coaster, and this time was no different," says Khan. "I love both the story and the storyteller."

He also relished working with Natalie Portman for the first time and, through her performance, understood exactly what his character experiences in their fleeting moment of shared desire. "Working with Natalie was a brief and beautiful experience, like the film itself," he observes. "When my character sees this Hasidic bride's shaved head for the first time, he sees an innocent diamond. He is taken most of all with her vulnerability."



Portman had never worked with Nair before, and indeed notes that she has never worked with any female director, other than on a student film, at all. “Mira was a true inspiration to me,” says Portman. “She’s so straight-forward, clear and very in control without sacrificing any of her femininity. It was great luck to have this chance to work with her just before my own directorial experience on the film.”

The story also swept Portman up in the surprising scope of its feelings, reached in mere minutes. “Although I’m Jewish, I am not very religious, so this was whole new world for me to investigate,” she explains. “It was very intriguing to me how Orthodox Jews have created their own cultural bubble inside the city and I admire that kind of self-stewardship. But I think the piece also reflects the unexpected paths that cross in the city. For example, my great-grandfather was a Ukrainian-Jewish immigrant living in Brooklyn at the turn-of-the-century and yet, he spoke Mandarin because he did door-to-door sales in Chinatown. New York is astonishing in that way and this story captures that special quality of connection.”

SHUNJI IWAI ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE

Holed up in a dingy uptown apartment, a young musician (Orlando Bloom, PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN) works feverishly to finish the score for an animated film – while staying in contact with the outside world only through phone calls and e-mails with the director’s mysterious and unseen assistant (Christina Ricci, MONSTER, SPEED RACER). When the assistant relays the message that he must read two Dostoyevsky novels in order to understand his creative task, the musician struggles with the strange request; but when the assistant shows up at his doorstep to help him read, all their different disembodied modes of communication – from music to cell phones to literature – add up an astonishingly raw moment in the here and now.

Shunji Iwai, one of Japan’s most popular and influential directors, contributed this section of the film, which was written with esteemed playwright and screenwriter Israel Horovitz (SUNSHINE). Iwai’s visual style is so well known in Japan it is known as “Iwai Aesthetics.” Among his feature films are LOVE LETTER (released in the US as WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES); SWALLOWTAIL BUTTERFLY; APRIL STORY; ALL ABOUT LILY CHOU-CHOU; the popular short film HANA AND ALICE; and A FILMFUL LIFE.

Benbihiy was drawn to Iwai’s very 21st century perspective. “He’s a young director who is loved by the younger generation,” he comments. “He’s a complete artist who does everything on his





films – not just the directing but the music and the editing – and he has a very original and somewhat irrational way of looking at the world.”

The film also suggests a 21st century route to love, via technology. “You watch a relationship being forged out of all this media – the computers, the cell phone, the animated images, the answering machine, the music, the books,” observes Benbihi. “It’s a virtual world in many ways, yet you see a real bond being formed. I love that the segment ends at the start of a relationship because there’s a lot of hope and anticipation to it.”

True to his ethos, Iwai built most of the sets from scratch on soundstages with great attention to detail and then set his two actors, Bloom and Ricci, loose in this slightly unreal world. “Orlando and Christina had a really interesting time because this was something so different,” says Grasic. “I especially don’t think people have seen Orlando like this before – all down and grungy – and I think he really related to this experience of an artist having a very, very romantic moment. When he and Christina finally meet, it’s one of the most surprising and fun moments in the film.”

YVAN ATTAL IN SOHO

A fast-talking romancer (two-time Academy Award® nominee Ethan Hawke, TRAINING DAY) engages in a provocative seduction of a ravishing woman (Maggie Q, MISSION IMPOSSIBLE III, LIVE FREE OR DIE HARD) on the curb outside a Soho restaurant... only to discover, as the tables are turned, that she’s not the kind who can be seduced. What the man calls “quite an intimate situation” turns out to be more of a unique encounter than he ever expected.

This comic New York moment is one of two in NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU that have emerged from the vision of Israeli-born French director and actor Yvan Attal, who collaborated on the screenplay with the young French writer Olivier Lécot. Attal began his career as an award-winning actor (and continues to act, recently starring in Steven Spielberg’s MUNICH and Brett Ratner’s RUSH HOUR 3) and made his directing debut with MY WIFE IS AN ACTRESS, starring Attal’s real-life wife, Charlotte Gainsbourg. He followed that with the critically praised dramatic comedy AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER starring Johnny Depp and Gainsbourg. Both parts of Attal’s segments were shot by French cinematographer Benoit Debie (JOSHUA, IRREVERSIBLE).



Benbihiy recalls that Attal came to the project brimming with ideas. “He proposed a number of different stories that all involved encounters by people smoking cigarettes in a restaurant,” he says. “The two we used are very complementary, and they support the unity of the film. They both start with the same naughty, sexy feeling and they each end with something different from what you expect.”

Indeed in the first segment, what appears to be a man’s seduction turns into a unique encounter. “For every girl who has ever been at the other end of that kind of hard pitch, it’s great to see Maggie Q get the last laugh,” says Grasic. “But the piece is also wrought with a lot of interesting themes about how people meet and how hard it is to make the first move. I think a lot of people will really relate to Ethan Hawke and enjoy his outrageousness in this piece.”

Despite the quintessential New York situations Attal was shooting, this marked the first time Attal ever filmed in New York. “Yvan is a great collaborator,” notes Benbihiy, “and everyone loved working with him. He is very sensitive to actors and he hinged his pieces on the performances.”

Maggie Q was attracted to the chance to work in such a collaborative environment – and to her feisty character. “Collaborating at this level with all the people involved in this project was so different and exciting,” she says. “I also liked that my segment was so funny. Love is so serious most of the time, and it’s nice to have a laugh. Women getting the upper hand in a really smart and funny way always kills me. Is it a quintessential New York moment? The women of New York often have a level of toughness and a quick wit, so I think you just have to say yes.”

A second New York moment from Yvan Attal starts much the same way as his first, with a man and woman bumping into one another while stepping outside of a restaurant for a smoke. This time it is the woman (Robin Wright Penn, STATE OF PLAY, FOREST GUMP) who is the seductress and the man (Academy Award® winner Chris Cooper, AMERICAN BEAUTY, BREACH) who is taken aback by the urgency of her come-on. Yet, when both return to their seats in the restaurant, the secret they share is revealed.

“I love this piece because it completely surprises you,” says Grasic. “We talked about ending it with tears and also with ending it with a laugh but it was Yvan Attal’s stroke of genius to combine both. Yvan really leaves you wanting to know more about these people. The way he shoots,



everything is very carefully balanced and creatively wrought. It's so entertaining and accessible you don't realize all that went into making it."

BRETT RATNER IN CENTRAL PARK

When the neighborhood pharmacist (Academy Award® nominee James Caan, *THE GODFATHER*, *MISERY*) suggests an enthusiastic and recently heartbroken teenager (Anton Yelchin, *CHARLIE BARTLETT*, *STAR TREK*) take his beautiful daughter (Olivia Thirlby, *JUNO*) to the prom, he is in for a night of wild surprises in Central Park. Upon meeting her, the boy is surprised to find she is in a wheelchair. Undeterred, he escorts her to the prom, but when they are forced to walk home through the park, the night will shift into a magical, romantic mode, that will make a perfect dream come true.

This youth-charged view of New York comes from leading American director Brett Ratner, who made his debut with the major action hit *RUSH HOUR*, starring Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker – and has since directed two more *RUSH HOUR* movies. Other notable films from Ratner include the third movie in the *X-Men* series, *X-MEN: THE LAST STAND*; *THE RED DRAGON* with Anthony Hopkins, Edward Norton and Ralph Fiennes; and *AFTER THE SUNSET* with Pierce Brosnan and Salma Hayek. He also produced the hit television series "Prison Break." Ratner brought with him the Polish director of photography Pawel Edelman (an Academy Award® nominee for *THE PIANIST*) to shoot his segment.

It was Ratner who first approached Emmanuel Benbihy, having heard about the project from his friend, Yvan Attal. Benbihy loved the idea of involving a dynamic, action-oriented director from within Hollywood. "I like that he has a style that represents the vein of current American cinema, and at the same time he's a very sharp and talented director," says Benbihy. "It's also nice to have this burst of American comedy right next to some of these more poetic pieces. It's surprising and light and a lot of fun. Brett was really excited to join this project and he brought a great deal of energy and moviemaking knowledge to the process."

Ratner, who made a number of innovative short films before becoming one of Hollywood's leading directors, loved the down-and-dirty filmmaking style of **NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU**. "I loved that there were rules and parameters, that you could only shoot for two days, which for me was a lot of fun," Ratner says. "It was such a completely opposite experience from doing





something epic and vast like X-MEN[®], where you have to walk in knowing exactly what you want. Here I was free to experiment. There was something liberating about it, but also very challenging in its own way.”

He developed his story with his longtime screenwriting partner, Jeff Nathanson (RUSH HOUR 3, THE TERMINAL, CATCH ME IF YOU CAN), based on a tale of youthful indiscretion he admits is semi-autobiographical. “The story is part autobiographical, part urban legend,” Ratner quips. “But what I like about it is that it is different in tone from all the other pieces. In a movie about love, you want to both laugh and cry, and I was excited to go for the laugh. I’ve always been drawn to movies that capture a feeling of youth and I wanted to bring that kind of quality.”

Marina Grasic believes that Ratner’s segment does just that: “Brett brings in the youngest characters in the movie and explores what I’ve since learned is a surprisingly common experience in New York – Central Park moments of sexuality and love. One of the wonderful surprises for us of this shoot was Olivia Thirlby who was so in control of her character and worked beautifully with Anton Yelchin. They nailed all the awkwardness and humor in the story.”

As a native New Yorker, Thirlby says she was thrilled to be part of NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU. “I was already a big fan of PARIS JE T’AIME, so I was excited at the prospect of participating,” she says. Once on the set, things became even more interesting. Thirlby continues: “Brett and I had a wonderful working relationship because we both like to use improvisation. We worked together to try to make our piece as sweet and funny as possible, and hoped that the audience would be as charmed by its silliness as we were.”

Surprisingly, this segment of NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU involved some of the greatest logistical challenges. It turns out that when shooting in Central Park, the City of New York strictly prohibits the touching of greenery and trees – which meant that the production had to haul in their own tree for a key sequence.

Thirlby says: “For me personally, the biggest challenge was having to shoot that scene in cold March weather wearing a thin cocktail dress!”

Sums up Ratner: “In some ways everything that could go wrong in the two days of our shoot, did go wrong! But it was exciting to try to be ambitious within that framework. In the end, I was so



happy with the casting and the way it all came together. I love that our funny story fits inside this eclectic form of storytelling.”

ALLEN HUGHES IN GREENWICH VILLAGE

Two anguished lovers (Drea De Matteo, “The Sopranos”; Bradley Cooper, THE HANGOVER, WEDDING CRASHERS) speed towards one another across Manhattan – one by subway, the other on foot – as they try to figure out if their one night stand meant something before they meet a second time. Fears, anxieties, excuses and defenses accompany them on their cross-town journeys, until all of their pretenses fall away the minute their eyes lock again.

The fast-paced urban feel of this segment came from the combined artistry of up-and-coming writer Xan Cassavetes and director Allen Hughes. Allen, along with his brother Albert, made an indelible mark on the film industry with their debut feature MENACE II SOCIETY, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival and became an influential cultural phenomenon. They followed that with DEAD PRESIDENTS, the feature-length documentary AMERICAN PIMP and FROM HELL, their stylish take on the Jack the Ripper tale starring Johnny Depp. Scottish cinematographer Michael McDonough (QUID PRO QUO) joined the Hughes Brothers on the creative team for this segment.

For the producers of NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU, the chance to have Hughes’ participation was an exhilarating route to expanding the film’s stylistic terrain. “Allen’s work is a spectacle fused out of music, visuals and voiceover,” says Benbihi. “The Hughes Brothers are known for more urban filmmaking but here, Allen chose to go in a very unexpected direction and created a very sophisticated musical piece about the beginning of love from a very cinematic script by Xan Cassavetes. I really enjoyed working with Allen. He’s shy and private, yet at the same time he’s firm in his visual intentions, a real example of an iron fist in a velvet glove. And his brother is an amazing editor – pulling together really complicated cuts in the smoothest way.”

Grasic was equally impressed. “The Hughes Brothers could clearly do anything in any genre,” she says. “This story brings in so many nice contrasts – downtown and uptown, the subway and the street – and captures the real-life feel of being in the city at night. That last shot where the two lovers finally kiss is one of the most beautiful and original I’ve seen.”



A long-time friend of the Hughes Brothers, Bradley Cooper was ready to come on board from the minute he read Xan Cassavetes' script. "The minute I read it, I thought 'I've been this guy,'" he recalls. "We've all encountered those moments when anxiety keeps us from seeing what's really going on, when time and space diffuse our connection with someone until we are confronted with the power of them face-to-face. I also loved how the story used New York as a character, how the city becomes the conflict and the barrier between these two lovers. And I knew the way it would be done, it would be very interesting and unorthodox with that great Hughes rhythm."

Cooper also enjoyed working with Drea De Matteo in such an intense fashion: "We had never met each other until we went to dinner the night before we shot. Immediately, I felt so lucky because she is fantastic. It was great that we hit it off because the shoot was like a race against time. We had 2 days and a story that goes from dawn to dusk, but it all worked because Alan knew everything he wanted to capture and always had new ideas."

SHEKHAR KAPUR ON THE UPPER EAST SIDE

In one of NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU's most surreal and haunting tales, a former opera singer (Academy Award® winner and four-time nominee Julie Christie, AWAY FROM HER, AFTERGLOW) checks into her favorite Manhattan hotel only to share a glass of champagne with her boyish bellhop (Shia LaBeouf, TRANSFORMERS, INDIANA JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL) . . . and suddenly, through the veil of a curtained window, events play out that might be real, imaginary or a heartrending tear in the fabric of time.

Shekhar Kapur directed this segment from a script by the late Anthony Minghella, who had intended to direct it but passed away before NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU was completed, and to whom the film is dedicated. Khapur started his career in Bollywood and garnered international acclaim with BANDIT QUEEN in 2004. He went on to direct the Academy Award® winning period film ELIZABETH with Cate Blanchett and Joseph Fiennes, followed by THE FOUR FEATHERS starring Wes Bentley and Kate Hudson and ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE with Blanchett and Clive Owen. As an executive producer, his projects include THE GURU and the Bollywood-themed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, BOMBAY DREAMS. Kapur worked in this segment with cinematographer Benoit Debie, who also shot the two Yvan Attal segments.

This segment became one of the most heartfelt and poignant for everyone involved with NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU when Anthony Minghella, who had planned from the earliest stages to direct





the segment he wrote, tragically became ill in the midst of the project. It was Minghella who chose his own replacement director, going in a rather unexpected direction.

“He was the one who brought up Shekhar Kapur,” recalls Benbihy. “He told me they had met and had a long conversation about life and death and that they didn’t agree at all on anything – and then Anthony added that he thought that this made him a great candidate because he would take a different approach, yet one he was sure would be very true to Shekhar’s own vision. Anthony always respected someone who had their own authentic vision, even if it was in conflict with his. And we were lucky that Shekhar was available and said yes.”

Kapur notes: “At first I was hesitant to do this film, as I had just begun a spiritual retreat for 6 months in India. But I pulled myself out; first, because of my friend Anthony Minghella’s illness, and also, because of an interest I have had for a long time in directing short films. Long form films are subject to the discipline of three-act structures, of plot and definitiveness, of beginnings and rounded endings. I do not see life as a beginning or an end but as a series of questions, one leading to another, and each creating a strong yearning for understanding.”

Kapur was faced with a story that flirts with shifting elements of time, memory and imagination. “It’s a story that is abstract, mysterious and also related to death,” notes Benbihy. “The journey of making it was sad in so many ways, but I think Shekhar was able to do something that would have made Anthony very happy and, for all of us, it is a very special part of the film.”

For Kapur, the key was finding his own way into the mystery-laden hotel room created by Minghella. “When I read the script, I asked Anthony, ‘what does it essentially mean?’ I immediately realized the power of that question. For I had to discover the meaning of the film in the making of the film - and then create a film that allowed the audience to search for the meaning of the film in the experience of the film. That’s where the genius of Anthony’s script lay.”

He continues: “Anthony said the film was a love story and that is what was about the idea that we must value life more than we do; we are too careless with it. And when he so tragically died, these statements took on an even greater meaning for me. In order to make this film I imagined Anthony smiling down at me and laughing at my perplexity on how to shoot this film and challenging me to find solutions instinctively. That is how I directed this film. Finally, when I showed the film to Carolyn, Anthony’s wife and long time creative partner, she said ‘Thank you



Shekhar, this is a perfect book end to Anthony's body of work.' But I hope not. I would hope there are other bits of writing from this genius that left us too early. I hope there are other films to be made."

The cast was as wrapped up in the poignancy of the screenplay as Kapur. "The actors approached the film with the same reverence as did I," the director says. "We felt the film was sacred and that we were responsible for keeping its sanctity. While John Hurt and Julie Christie are known to have created winning performances that have made film history, Shia created something that no one had seen before. My first meeting with Shia was a bit startling. He was waiting for something like this to come to him. He knew it would come. When I met him he had already practiced the walk and was already thinking of his accent. I would call this Destiny."

NATALIE PORTMAN IN CENTRAL PARK

On a sunlit afternoon at a Central Park fountain, a little white girl (Taylor Geare) plays with her attentive black "manny" – a male nanny - (Carlos Acosta), but as the day comes to a close and the "manny" returns the girl to her mother (Jacinda Barrett), he reveals in a literal leap of passion that skin-deep appearances are not always what they seem.

Acclaimed actress Natalie Portman begins her directing career with this story, which she also wrote. Portman made her movie debut as an actress at the age of 12 in Luc Besson's THE PROFESSIONAL. After a number of roles in her teenage years, she received a Golden Globe nomination for her performance in ANYWHERE BUT HERE. While pursuing a degree in psychology at Harvard University, she starred in the STAR WARS prequel trilogy of movies, which were filmed while she was on summer break. After graduating from Harvard, she portrayed a small role in Anthony Minghella's screen version of COLD MOUNTAIN, then starred in the hit indie film GARDEN STATE. This was followed by CLOSER, for which she garnered both Golden Globe and Academy Award® nominations. Her recent roles include V FOR VENDETTA, HOTEL CHEVALIER and THE OTHER BOLEYN GIRL. Portman worked with director of photography Jean-Louis Bompont who is best known for his long-time collaboration with Michel Gondry, most recently on THE SCIENCE OF SLEEP.

Portman had earlier taken a role in PARIS JE T'AIME and had agreed to star in Mira Nair's film – but, with thoughts of ultimately branching her career into directing, she was especially pleased to also join the roster of filmmakers. "It seemed like a great opportunity to try directing a short in a





unique format that has an audience,” she says. “So many shorts now seem relegated to obscurity. I love the concept for PARIS JE T’AIME and NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU because they offer a very open way to allow many different artists to give first impressions about a city from varying vantage points, all of them love stories.”

Benbihy did not know what to expect from Portman as a new filmmaker but was quite impressed with the screenplay she submitted. “She’s a beautiful writer,” he says. “Her characters are very developed and the story is quite sweet and moving.”

Inspiration came for Portman in the changes she saw in the city in 2008 during the election season. “This was a year in which New Yorkers were often found debating race versus gender because of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama – and, amid this, I heard a true story from a friend about a man whose race had trumped his gender for a certain group of women. So that was the beginning, but I also wanted to reflect something about escaping the city’s choking presence through art. The child’s eye game and the father’s dance stand in contrast to the buildings which are so aggressive in their assertion that people are meant to be stacked.”

Still, Portman faced some of the film’s most trying conditions, starting production just as a spell of inclement weather hit the city. “This segment takes place entirely outside, and she had to face rain and wind and cold,” says Benbihy. “She also was working with very unpredictable elements – with a child actress, a non-professional actor (dancer Acosta) in her lead role – but she did a fantastic job. I think she demonstrates a lot of fresh talent.”

Says Portman of the trial-by-fire experience: “It was very challenging, and of all the challenges, the biggest was nature. The weather changed 40 times during our 2-day shoot! My DP, Jean-Louis, was having heart attacks every three minutes because of it. But our cast – including Carlos who had never acted professionally before; Jacinda, who was right off a flight from Australia; and Taylor, who is 6 – were so perfect and inventive and true, they made dealing with the weather that much less frightening.”

FATIH AKIN IN CHINATOWN

Inspiration strikes an artist (Turkish actor, writer and director Ugur Yucel, YAZI TURA) when he spies a delicate, reticent young Chinese woman (Taiwanese star Shu Qi, THE TRANSPORTER) working in an herbal tea shop and tries to make her his muse. At first he tries to paint her from





memory, but her eyes defy his recollection, so he returns to ask if she will model for him. Touched but confused about why he has chosen her, she refuses. But fate changes everything when the artist becomes ill – and the Chinese woman discovers his final works, portraits of her missing one crucial element: the expression in her eyes.

The Turkish-born German director Fatih Akin, whose films have explored love and identity amidst hybrid cultures, directed this piece. He made his feature film debut with *SHORT SHARP SHOCK*, the story of a Turkish-Greek-Albanian youth gang, which won the Bronze Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival, followed by *IN JULY*, the documentary *WE FORGOT TO RETURN* and *SOLINO*. Akin made a breakthrough with *HEAD ON*, his acclaimed love story between Turkish immigrants in Germany, which won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. He followed with the documentary *CROSSING THE BRIDGE –THE SOUND OF ISTANBUL* and most recently wrote and directed *THE EDGE OF HEAVEN*, which won the Best Screenplay at the Cannes Film Festival in 2007. Akin worked with American cinematographer Mauricio Rubenstein (*BERNARD AND DORIS*) on the segment.

“Fatih is a true artist with a highly personal voice and a very raw and visceral style,” says Benbihy. “He really knew the characters in his piece, knew everything they had done all their lives and that allowed him to give a lot of depth to them in a short span of time. It’s another story of two very different worlds encountering each other that is full of mystery and beauty. I think it was exciting for Fatih to work with Shu Qi, who is a huge movie star in the Chinese world and attracted crowds clamoring to see her in Chinatown.”

Akin had wanted to be a part of *PARIS JE T’AIME* but circumstances didn’t allow him, so he was elated when Benbihy asked him to join the team of *NEW YORK I LOVE YOU*. Although he has never lived in New York, his travels in the city have left an indelible impression. “The city and its energy have had a great impact on me,” he says. “I couldn’t think of a better reason to return to New York than to make a movie there. It’s the best reason there is.”

Early in developing the story for his segment, Akin had lunch with the Turkish actor Ugur Yucel, with whom he knew he wanted to work. He recalls: “I asked him this question: what can we say about love that hasn’t been told before? He told me that he would like to tell a story about the impossibility of love between an old man and a young woman. I told him I’d like to tell a story about an artist’s love for his art. So the story we came up with connected these two ideas – it’s



about a dying man whose art survives even after his love goes unreturned. The story felt like it fit with New York because it is such an artist's city."

Akin then searched for an actress to play the role of the artist's muse. "We looked at a number of names from Chinese cinema. I had seen Shu Qi in a few films and she had really affected me," he says. "We didn't really have a common language, but there was little need to talk, because we understood each other so well in a visual and emotional way. And once you put the camera on her, it is Shu Qi who is directing you. Her work was very moving, erotic and sensitive – everything I love about Chinese movies." Shu Qi was also a member of the 2009 Cannes Festival Jury.

Also moving for Akin was shooting for the first time on the streets of New York City. "I have heard the saying that wherever you put the camera in New York, you have a shot, and that is completely true. But you have to be careful not to fall into the trap of creating a postcard," he comments. "I was very inspired in this film by some of my favorite New York filmmakers, especially John Cassavetes."

The production itself, he says, went by in a flash. "It was a very beautiful time, waking up to work in New York for those few days. But it didn't last long enough. Before I knew it, the filming was over and I had the feeling I had only just gotten started. I hope to return again to shoot in New York."

JOSHUA MARSTON AT BRIGHTON BEACH

A veteran New York couple, Abe (Eli Wallach, THE HOAX) and Mitzie (Academy Award® winner Cloris Leachman, THE LAST PICTURE SHOW), make their way slowly, stubbornly, proudly down a Brooklyn sidewalk – all the way to the boardwalk and a moment of poignant bliss, the kind that only a lifetime of love can create.

The closing segment of NEW YORK I LOVE YOU is directed by New Yorker Joshua Marston, whose first feature film, MARIA FULL OF GRACE, the story of a yearning young Columbian woman who becomes a drug mule, drew global acclaim and awards. Among the many honors it received are the Alfred Bauer Award at the Berlin Film Festival, the Audience Award at Sundance, the Grand Special Prize at the Deauville Film Festival and Best First Screenplay at the Independent Spirit Awards. The cinematographer for the segment is Andrij Parekh, who is of





Ukrainian and Indian descent and was recently named by Variety as one of “Ten Cinematographers to Watch.”

Marston fell in love with the overall concept for the film. “Living in the city, I’m constantly noticing little moments or relationships that would make wonderful small films, but there isn’t much support to shoot and distribute those little movies,” he notes. “I loved the opportunity to tell a short New York story.”

He found himself with enough ideas to make a dozen shorts on his own. He explains: “The way I approached the project was to write a different short script every day for about two weeks. Some were based on ideas I’d had floating in my head for a while, while others were completely new. One of the things I liked about the approach of NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU was that it asked me to think in terms of neighborhood. So I had stories for Jackson Heights, Williamsburg, the Upper West Side -- and then I remembered Brighton Beach. When I think of that area I think of the older folks you see sitting out on the boardwalk, watching the world go by. So that was the jumping off point for this story.”

Marston enjoyed the notion of exploring a part of love often ignored at the youth-oriented movies, yet the ultimate goal for all love affairs – lasting to the very end. “Too often, and mostly for commercial reasons, we’re bombarded with movies about kids in their twenties, characters who don’t know anything about the world,” he notes. “The older people are, the more life experience they have. I am interested in that and I’m interested in the habits and dynamics that couples and families form over time. So all those things, plus a memory of my own grandparents, contributed to the creation of this piece.”

As for working with actors who are his elders, Marston says: “Working with Cloris and Eli was a complete treat. They had met and worked together in the Actors Studio. depending on which one you ask, 50 or 60 years earlier but hadn’t seen each other since. So it was a sort of reunion.”

He continues: “At 82, Cloris Leachman is unbelievably alive, with an uncontainable energy. She was completely committed to creating a character, which meant spending time with a Jewish family in Brooklyn, working on an accent, developing a hair style. She truly formed her on-screen character. And Eli was full of a thousand stories about all the great actors and directors he had worked with. At one point, as we were losing light and struggling with are our opening master





shot, he pulled me aside, wagged a finger at me and said, 'Let me tell you how Elia Kazan directed...' That was the best part of the entire experience, getting a lesson on directing from Elia Kazan, transmitted by way of Eli Wallach. When I look at Eli and Cloris on screen I see the embodiment of the characters I imagined when I wrote the script, and there is no greater pleasure than that."

Almost as soon as Benbihi first read Marston's piece, he knew it would become the last thread in the tapestry of **NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU**. "I always knew it would end the movie because it is such a touching story, such a human story, such a different story from any other in the film and yet so New York," says the producer. "Joshua always has a real social dimension to his work, he's very comfortable working with different social backgrounds and cultures. Most of all this is a story that reveals how love operates at any age."

NAVIGATING THE CITY AND ITS STORIES: ABOUT THE TRANSITIONS

While each individual episode of **NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU** could conceivably stand alone, they are tied together into a single feature film narrative by a series of carefully choreographed transitional elements that unite the stories into one. Like the short pieces themselves, these transitions follow the rules of a sharp narrative order intended to build story-telling drama and emotion.

Explains Emmanuel Benbihi: "For the entire 'Cities We Love' series, our hope is to optimize the emotional, dramatic and thematic elements in each segment while still paying equal respect to the progression of the film as a whole. With **NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU** the segments have been fused together implementing transitions that allow us to create a stronger unity -- a smoother, more cohesive and harmonious 'assembly.' The transition scenes are designed to move the audience from one world to another, from one location to another, from one point of view to another, enabling each segment to flow into the next."

These interstitial transitions were directed by **NEW YORK, I LOVE YOU**'s 11th director, Randy Balsmeyer. Balsmeyer utilized both the characters created and brought to life by the segment directors and one character that was specifically created for the transitions, known as the "Recurrent Character." Played as a probing New York videographer by the French-American actress Emilie Ohana (VATEL), the Recurrent Character can be found anywhere in the city at any





time, and always with a good reason to connect or interact with any of the segments' characters, thereby weaving all the strands of the film into a singular fabric.

Summarizes Benbihy: "The transitions, and the absence of credits inside the film, are essential to the unity and the fluidity of the overall experience. In our final scene, a narrative epilogue allows the audience to watch again some of the segments' characters of the film in a single unifying moment."

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