



# MADMAN

Presents



A Film by VINCENZO NATALI

Starring ADRIEN BRODY, SARAH POLLEY and DELPHINE CHANEAC

**IN CINEMAS AUGUST 19<sup>th</sup> 2010**

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## SHORT SYNOPSIS

Clive and Elsa are scientist superstars, famous for splicing DNA from different animals to create bizarre hybrids. They are as in love with each other as they are with their work. And they want to go the next step: splice HUMAN DNA. But when their corporate financiers refuse, they decide to experiment in secret. The result is Dren: an amazing creature whose rapid life cycle takes her from baby to adult in a matter of months. As Clive and Elsa struggle to keep Dren a secret, their connection to their creation evolves from scientific to personal. Ultimately, Dren exceeds the couple's wildest dreams – and their most terrifying nightmares.

## SPLICE PRODUCTION OVERVIEW

***Splice*** is the dark vision of the world of genetic engineering co-written and directed by Vincenzo Natali (*Paris, je t'aime*, *Cube*) starring Adrien Brody (*The Brothers Bloom*, *King Kong*, *The Pianist*), Sarah Polley (*Dawn of the Dead*, *Secret Life of Words*, *Mr. Nobody*) and newcomer Delphine Chanéac (*Madame Hollywood*, *Brice de Nice*). Principal photography began on December 3, 2007 and wrapped on February 21, 2008 in Toronto, Canada.

***Splice*** is a Copperheart Entertainment and Gaumont co-production, produced by Steven Hoban of Copperheart Entertainment and executive produced by Sidonie Dumas and Christophe Riandee of Gaumont. Guillermo del Toro, Don Murphy and Susan Montford of Angry Bull and Yves Chevalier will also serve as Executive Producers. The screenplay was co-written by Natali, Antoinette Terry Bryant and Doug Taylor. Cinematography by Tetsuo Nagata (*La vie en rose*, *Paris, je t'aime*), production design by Todd Cherniawsky (*Ginger Snaps* trilogy), costume design by Alex Kavanagh (*Repo! The Genetic Opera!*, *Young People Fucking*), and Visual FX by C.O.R.E. Digital Pictures (*The Tudors*, *X-Men*, *Silent Hill*, *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*) and Special Makeup FX by Oscar-winning KNB FX Group (*The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Sin City*, *Kill Bill Vol. 1 and 2*).

***Splice*** is an official Canada-France treaty co-production produced with the financial participation of Telefilm Canada and the Ontario Media Development Corporation. Distribution in Canada by E1 Entertainment, International sales are handled by Gaumont.

Copperheart Entertainment is a Toronto-based live-action and animation production company, most recent releases include the comedy *Young People Fucking* and the animated short *The Spine*. The company is currently developing the feature adaptation of the worldwide bestselling *Dragonriders of Pern* series of novels.

Gaumont has been one of the main European production companies since 1895. It handles the release and the International selling of 10 to 20 French and English language films a year which are produced internally, co-produced or acquisitions. Gaumont is also one of the main shareholders of Europalaces, which combines Gaumont and Pathé theatres.

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

***"This is a 'ripped from the headlines' kind of story"***  
**–Producer Steve Hoban, Copperheart Entertainment**

Chinese scientists at the Shanghai Second Medical University in 2003 successfully fused human cells with rabbit eggs. The embryos were reportedly the first human-animal chimeras successfully created.

– *National Geographic News, January 25, 2005*

Irving Weissman of Stanford University and his colleagues pioneered chimera experiments in 1988 when they created mice with fully human immune systems for the study of AIDS. Later, the Stanford group and StemCells, Inc., which Weissman co-founded, also transplanted human stem cells into the brains of newborn mice as preliminary models for neural research. And working with fetal sheep, Esmail Zanjani of the University of Nevada at Reno has created adult animals with human cells integrated throughout their body. – *Scientific American June 27, 2005*

Plans to allow British scientists to create human-animal embryos are expected to be approved tomorrow by the government's fertility regulator. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority published its long-awaited public consultation on the controversial research yesterday, revealing that a majority of people were "at ease" with scientists creating the hybrid embryos. – *The Guardian September 4, 2007*

Britain's first human-animal hybrid embryos have been created, forming a crucial first step, scientists believe, towards a supply of stem cells that could be used to investigate debilitating and so far untreatable conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's and motor neuron disease. Lyle Armstrong, who led the work, gained permission in January from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) to create the embryos, known as "cytoplasmic hybrids". His team at Newcastle University produced the embryos by inserting human DNA from a skin cell into a hollowed-out cow egg. An electric shock then induced the hybrid embryo to grow. The embryo, 99.9% human and 0.1% other animal, grew for three days, until it had 32 cells.

– *The Guardian April 2, 2008*

## **GENESIS OF *SPLICE***

In 1998, Vincenzo Natali was riding high on the astonishing success of *Cube*. Ready to move on to his next feature, he had shown a script for a short film called *Mutants*, written in 1995, to producer Steve Hoban. They had become friends while Natali had worked for Hoban as a storyboard artist on *Blood & Donuts* and *Ginger Snaps*, and took the relationship to the next level when Hoban had produced Natali's Canadian Film Centre short, *Elevated*. Hoban, whose corporate Zen-like nature is to wait for the right project at the right time, offered friendly counsel, but felt the story was far from camera ready. By 1999, the script had morphed from short format to theatrical, complete with a name change to ***Splice***, and attracted the interest of Robert Lantos, who had just left Alliance Atlantis and opened Serendipity Point Films. ***Splice*** was a contender for their inaugural film, but was sidelined in favour of *Men with Brooms*.

For years the project languished, largely because, according to Natali, the special effects associated with creating Dren at the time were greater than the budget allocated to the film. It was not until 2005 when Hoban was in Los Angeles visiting Natali, that the frustration finally reached a breaking point. The two men had crossed paths repeatedly over the years. They had teamed up as director and producer on *Nothing* in 2003, at which point their friendship truly blossomed. But Natali had gone off on his own to make *Cypher* while Hoban had completed the *Ginger Snaps* trilogy as well as the short film, *Ryan*, directed by Chris Landreth, that went on to win an Oscar. One afternoon, they decided to hike up to the Hollywood sign and by the time they got to the top, Natali blurted out, “Why aren’t we making *Splice*??”

“Up to that point, I wasn’t ready to jump on the project,” said Hoban, “but I was excited about working with Vincenzo again. We looked at his contracts with Serendipity and figured there was a way, financially, to make this work. The next thing we did was to take the previous drafts of the script, put Vincenzo together with his writing partner and they turned out a new draft in 2006. It worked. It was a modern day Frankenstein with depth and it captured all the ambitions of his original inspiration. It was at that point, we brought on co-writer Doug Taylor and I became officially involved.”

Ultimately, the dark cloud of delay was in fact the silver lining. “What changed was the sophistication of digital technology. In 2000, digital effects, such as widening Dren’s eyes, would have been time-consuming and, consequently, prohibitively expensive,” explained Hoban, who came from an IMAX background where he established and ran their R&D facility to create and design computer animation technology, at which point he produced *Cyberworld 3D* in 2000, lauded by Roger Ebert as ‘remarkable not only for what it shows us, but for the wider world of 3-D animation it predicts.’ “In the intervening years,” Hoban continued, “visual effects had also much more convincing.” The creature which Natali had envisioned – part live action, part CG - was ‘Before Gollum’, the revolutionary character in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* which was completely CG (using motion-capture, the actor’s movements were recorded and applied to a digital character). What Natali wanted to do was even more advanced than that.

And to that end, Steve Hoban was the producer Natali wanted on this film. “Steve has all the skills necessary to make the kind of movies I want to make and one of those skills is to understand special effects and new technologies. I trust him. He’s like the other half of my brain. He grounds me and helps make the best choices. And it’s all about making the right choices. He’s a great ally,” he said.

## **THE TEAM**

Within the next three months, everything that had not happened in the previous years, began to happen in quick succession. Don Murphy, who Natali had met after *Cube*, had just formed a production company, Angry Bull, with Guillermo del Toro. “I knew Don was the real thing when I walked into his office and it could have been a toy shop. He’s the genuine article, pure geek. He’s not a Hollywood guy.” Over the years, Murphy had given Natali scripts to consider, but he had always turned them down. In 2005, Natali met Del Toro at Fantasporto in Portugal where *Nothing* won its only award, and after talking long into the night over dinner, Del Toro has said

he would like to work with him. This time, Natali decided to turn the tables and sent ***Splice*** to Murphy. "We had a conversation about the script after Guillermo read it. He helped me so much by putting his name on it and that gave us the stamp of legitimacy. It's a great marriage because Guillermo loves monsters and this is a movie where we empathize with our monster." Guillermo's feeling was that he found it to be, "...incredibly powerful, morally ambiguous, dangerous... in so many ways it crossed the line, which I think is part of what the horror/science fiction genre should do is to cross those lines and the reason why I felt uncomfortable with it is the reason why I ultimately decided to participate in ***Splice***."

With Steve Hoban of Copperheart Entertainment and Guillermo del Toro and Don Murphy of Angry Films on board, Natali was ready to move ahead when out of the blue, he received a call from Yves Chevalier at Gaumont, the oldest film company in the world and France's largest film production and distribution company. Chevalier wanted to know if Natali had a script they might consider. He sent two and after some deliberation, Gaumont became the co-production company on ***Splice***. All three components fell into place between December, 2005 and March, 2006.

### **THE FILMIC INFLUENCES OF *SPLICE***

A multitude of influences came together to inspire the story and the filming of ***Splice***. As a child, Natali was bewitched by monsters. During his 'Plasticine Age,' he would make models of dinosaurs. By 12 years old, he had his first camera, a Super 8, and had taken a children's course on stop-motion animation, and started to make movies of giant monsters trouncing cities. "I'd need a psychiatrist to explain my relationship with monsters," recalled Natali. "I've been obsessed with them since I can remember." He was a devoted follower of the Universal horror films, favouring the James Whale films, in particular, *Frankenstein*, also popular with Guillermo del Toro. In some ways, these movies would be considered predecessors to ***Splice*** because they were influenced by the German Expressionists.

Natali appreciates that his filmic influences are many and contradictory. "I'm a *Star Wars* baby. I saw it when I was eight years old. That's the movie that made me want to make movies. It really tapped into a spiritual yearning that was lacking in films at that time. It's all about the hero's quest and getting in touch with a higher power, the force, and good and evil and the choices you make in life." With Lucas, Natali was affected by the 'whizbang' factor, but it was with Spielberg where he learned about storytelling. He saw *Raiders of the Lost Ark* when he was 12. "With *Star Wars*, I wasn't thinking about who George Lucas was and I was just involved with the story, but when I saw *Raiders*, it was the first time I became aware of the director guiding events."

The work of Stanley Kubrick is where Natali learned about style and composition, specifically symmetry, although he regards it as a bit of an affectation. "Vincenzo has a really strong inclination towards balanced compositions that play on symmetry and asymmetry," explained ***Splice*** Production Designer Todd Cherniawsky. "He likes to play with a very strong one-point perspective composition which is essentially shooting straight down the middle of a room, straight into a wall so everything converges into one point and the eye is drawn to one central point. Gridding things is a kind of composition that creates a fear of 'the man,' fear of the machine, which again is a theme that runs in all of Vincenzo's movies. For a relatively young guy who's done only a few movies, he's got a strong point of view."

Working very closely with the award-winning cinematographer, Tetsuo Nagata (*La vie en rose*), Natali saw *Splice* as going through an evolution from a very modernist kind of style to something more Gothic and romantic towards the end, which is in the zone of the German Expressionists' type of framing. "*Splice* begins in a more clinical way," explained Natali. "More detached and not evocative of an emotion. As the psychology of the characters becomes more twisted, then it naturally follows that the camerawork becomes a little more twisted to exemplify the state of mind. The compositions become less symmetrical and a little more off kilter as the story moves from two main characters to three."

### **A CLINICAL GARDEN OF EDEN - CLIVE AND ELSA**

*Splice* begins with Clive and Elsa Kast, two young Turks in the genetics field. Not only are they a team, but they are also a couple. Together, their work in creating Fred and Ginger, two fully functional animal hybrids, a combination of an invertebrate and a vertebrate, has been groundbreaking and they are celebrated for it. Intoxicated by their success, but stymied by Newstead's decision to close down their project (to focus on isolating the protein is CD-356, which has powerful medicinal value for live stock and is a potential goldmine for the company), they secretly create a new creature - Dren, a combination of animal and human DNA. "Dren effectively becomes their child," said Hoban. "And we are able to explore parenting issues in a way that has never been done before which is a primary theme in the film." Paralleling that is the theme of morals and monsters. Natali believes that the creation of Dren is a catalyst for the darker urges of Clive and Elsa that ignite a downward spiral of scientific ideologies obscured by the moral imperatives of parenthood. It turns the genre on its head by making the lucid and sentient scientists, rather than the creature, the monsters.

#### **ELSA**

None of her animal components have predatory characteristics.

#### **CLIVE**

Well... there's the human element.

"*Splice* is a movie where we watch the people turn into monsters, whereas the creature remains quite innocent. It really is a psycho-drama as much as it is a creature flick and that's what distinguishes it from all the *Frankenstein* clones. *Splice* is also a critique of the X/Y generations, which Clive and Elsa typify. They are smarter than they are wise, and while they can play with the building blocks of life, they really don't have any deep understanding of what life is. You could say this is a 'coming of age' film, in that Clive and Elsa are forced to grow up and become responsible parents. And of course, Dren goes through her own growth/transformation. On some level this is also about humanity growing or evolving to the next step," explained Natali.

"What I love about this story is that it shows how young people can be so enthusiastic about something and, theoretically, it is a very positive thing, but history has proven that young people are careless," said Adrien Brody who plays Clive Nicoli.

"There's something horrific about what we are capable of doing right now as humans in terms of science. There's also something fantastic and magical about it and ultimately really hopeful.

This film is useful because it explores the worst that can happen; and it's important to explore the worst possible scenario because it helps to assuage some of our fears about it and then we can put that away and think rationally," noted Sarah Polley who plays Elsa Kast.

The casting objective in ensuring that the message is delivered effectively was a three-part strategy. "*Splice* is character-driven, so we needed strong actors who had done quality work and possessed the 'cool' factor," according to Hoban. "We were also looking for actors with significant box office fame. And finally, because this is a 'ripped from the headlines' kind of story, reality is a critical component of this movie. We had to have actors who were 100% believable as scientists. 90% would have been failure. By that, we didn't mean not beautiful, but we wanted to avoid the situation of Denise Richards playing a nuclear scientist in the Bond film, *The World is Not Enough*." The traditional movie gambit of throwing a pair of heavy-rimmed glasses on the actress to convey IQ was not an option (at one point, Polley did ask to wear glasses and the idea was declined for that reason).

"Adrien and Sarah are fantastic actors," said Hoban. "They both strike me as smart people. When they speak, they have intelligence behind their eyes. What we didn't know was that they'd be so easy to work with."

"My first career goal in life was to be a space scientist. I wanted to explore the unknown," admits Adrien Brody. "Sadly, my math skills weren't up to par." By becoming an actor, Brody was able to do his exploring. He first got a taste for the magic of science-fiction movies with *King Kong* and with *Splice*, he had the opportunity to return to the genre. "It's a wonderful script that's funny, scary and dramatic. Initially, I felt a lot of pressure because the genetics and the technical aspects which are very complicated, so the research I did was important. It involved going through the stack of reading material which Vincenzo gave me, which included 'Genetics For Dummies.'" The actors' preparation also included several days of working on human cancer cells in the genetic laboratory of Mt Sinai Hospital in Toronto alongside of geneticist George Charames.

"Clive is a genius, much smarter than I am," remarked Brody. "He's a young guy, successful in his career, very intelligent, and that aspect of his life came very easy to him. He ends up in a situation that throws his life into a tailspin, one he's unprepared for. Both Elsa and Clive are unprepared for a lot of things in life." While Clive loves his work and believes devoutly in the power of science and their ability to create, Brody felt his character is less ambitious than Elsa. "She drives Clive to a place that he probably wouldn't go on his own."

"Adrien's performance is fantastic," said Hoban. "He's believable, he's magnetic, and you care about him. What Adrien did in *Splice* is possibly the closest representation of himself that he has ever done on film. What he was doing on camera is the same person we got to know off camera. With Sarah, she was also creating someone who was not very different from herself."

Not simply another love-in-the-workplace story, it is Sarah Polley's assessment that Elsa is fortunate to have found Clive. "It's unlikely that Elsa could be with anyone who wasn't totally immersed in that world. Elsa and Clive press each other forward, they feed off each other, they make each other more passionate about what they do." Quickly, their fame begins to define them, creating a sense of invincibility. Motivated, ostensibly, by the good of medical research, but unconsciously on the part of Elsa because she desires children, they create Dren.

“Elsa is extremely ambitious and extremely focused,” observed Polley. “She’s a cannonball of life and energy, yet there is much in her life that she has not dealt with that’s ruling her. She’s bursting with far too much life for one human being to contain so she pushes things to their final conclusion whether or not they are good for her or everyone else.”

When Natali first wrote the script, Clive and Elsa were in their early 20s. While he did not have an actor in mind for Clive, he had given some thought to Sarah Polley (who was in her late teens at the time) as Elsa. As the script changed over the years, it made more sense for the two leads to be older and so, in an odd way, Polley actually grew into the part (by the time the film went to camera, Polley was 29). Polley said it was the only part she has ever fought to get, and Hoban was witness to that effort. “We were getting calls on a daily basis from Sarah’s agent at ICM, telling us that she really wanted the part, asking us about what they could do to make this happen.”

Natali and Hoban knew they had made the right choice in casting as early as the first rehearsals. The chemistry was there. The repartee was there. The laughter was there. “Adrien and Sarah really got the material, so much so that Adrien came up with the fateful line of dialogue, “What’s the worst that can happen?”” said Natali.

Just as importantly, the respect for the director was there. “I have such belief in Vincenzo and his vision for the film. He knows this film and these characters inside-out because he’s been living with them for so long. His direction is so incredibly useful and practical. It’s very rare when you actually feel someone consistently change your performance for the better,” said Polley.

Adrien Brody was equally impressed by his experience on set. “Vincenzo is a remarkable human being. He’s probably the kindest director I’ve worked with. He’s incredibly sweet and generous and gives great direction, so it’s a very lovely combination. He gives me a lot of freedom with choices.”

## **AND THEN THERE WERE THREE - DREN**

**“I think it’s one of the most memorable Frankenstein type of monsters in the history of film.” - Guillermo del Toro, Executive Producer of *Splice*.**

Traditionally, science fiction positions scientists as the solution to the problem, the fixers. In *Splice*, they, by their own actions, become the source of the carnage. Dren, their creation, the product of Clive and Elsa’s ambition to push the technology by blending human and animal DNA to create something that may be a step up on the evolutionary ladder, has an angelic, primitive purity. She is not a monster nor is she a predator, but she suffers from raw instincts and emotions: love, envy and joy, which inevitably make her a tragic figure. “On the surface, the message is about what happens when you play with genetics, but at a deeper level, the message is about being responsible for the things that you make,” said Natali.



It is a great responsibility to bring a new creature into the world of science fiction and Dren ('nerd' spelled in reverse) is no exception. In doing so, Natali was confronted by his own belief that after H.R. Giger's *Alien*, subsequent movie creatures felt derivative. He wanted to develop something fresh, visually and conceptually. His approach was subtractive, rather than additive. "Most monsters take the human form with add-ons," Natali explained. "Our entire approach, with thanks to Bob Munroe at C.O.R.E. and Howard Berger at KNB FX Group, has been to actually pull things away."

The inspiration for Dren is a fusion of science and the Greek mythological chimera, a lion in the forepart, a goat in the middle, and a dragon behind. What is unexpected about her is her delicate beauty. In the pantheon of seductive female creatures in film, she has few peers. Sil, from *Species*, another Giger creation, is the most obvious comparison, but she was only beautiful in her human form before changing to an armor-plated killing machine. The remaining list is short: T-X (or Terminatrix) in *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machine*, the Borg Queen in *Star Trek: First Contact*, Elizabeth von Frankenstein in *The Bride of Frankenstein*, Countess Marya Zaleska in *Dracula's Daughter* and predating them all, the Maria Robot in *Metropolis*.

"I wanted Dren to be a creature whose humanity we fall in love with," Natali continued. Indeed, it is her bewitching innocence and her primitive sensuality that creates a strange desire in Clive. "That we are attracted to something that's not human is what takes us back to mermaids and angels and the notion of bonding with something that's greater than us. What happens in *Splice* is that Clive crosses the line and has sex with this being who he has watched grow from a small child to adulthood." The transgressional nature of this turn is not uncommon in science fiction literature. Award-winning author Philip José Farmer revolutionized the genre with his story, "The Lovers" which tested the boundaries of acceptability by incorporating sexual themes with a human and a non-humanoid alien. And it is Natali's belief that horror, by definition, has to violate basic moral codes "because it pushes us to places that we're unable or afraid to go in real life."

Dren is played by two actors, Delphine Chaneac as adult Dren and Abigail Chu as toddler Dren. "Even though we did extensive R&D on the creature development, the concept is so subtle that there was no way to complete Dren without having Delphine and Abigail there. You couldn't draw it," said Natali. Unlike Gollum in *Lord of the Rings*, where that actor was completely replaced by a CGI version of the creature, Dren was never intended to be fully digital (which is what made *Splice* impractical a decade ago). From a dramatic standpoint, it would be impossible to create the necessary degree of emotional connection if she was completely artificial.

In early 2007, Steve Hoban and Vincenzo Natali were walking up Charles de Gaulle Boulevard in Paris on their way to the Gaumont offices to begin their auditions for Dren. "We saw this beautiful woman standing outside on the sidewalk having a cigarette and did the math: This has to be one of our Dren's," recalled Hoban. The woman was Delphine Chaneac. "She was spectacular, but she was the first. We continued to audition actresses, but with each new audition, Delphine became the gold standard which no one else could reach. In addition to being beautiful, Delphine is slightly androgynous, and she has the remarkable ability to play a character ranging from a young girl to an adult female. She is also deceptively strong and became her own stuntwoman."

Parisian-born Chanéac found the role to be both guileless and yet highly complicated, because in addition to the dramatic aspects of Dren, it was necessary to accommodate for having triple-

jointed legs, three fingers, a tail, and wings. Although she has no dialogue, Chanéac devised her own language of trills and purrs to communicate a wide range of emotions. “For me, this is a love story. Dren wants to love and to be loved, but she is also kept at a distance because she is not normal,” said Chanéac. “She’s quite sensitive and pure, like a child, yet very aggressive at the same time. I love these feelings because it’s a little like me. It took a great deal of concentration to play this emotions because of the extra physical demands.”

Adrien Brody regarded Chanéac as a luxury to have on set because of the difficulties associated with acting opposite inanimate special effects creatures. Sarah Polley noted that she had never been in a film where she’s had such a close connection with a creature. Aside from the fact that she found herself strangely attached to the puppet version of Dren (patting it between takes), she said: “It’s interesting to develop a relationship with something that is not entirely human; there are different parts of your humanity that this brings out.”

### **WINGS AND A TAIL AND JUNK DNA – THE HARD SCIENCE BEHIND *SPLICE***

Bluntly put, of times the relationship between real science and science-fiction is like the relationship between a warm puppy and a hot dog. In the ten years it took Natali to bring it to camera, developments in genetics turned the core idea of his drama from science fiction into science fact. “When I first wrote this in 1995, people weren’t talking about cloning. In 1997, the world heard about Dolly, the cloned sheep, and then in 2001 the human genome was mapped out, which shows you how long it took me to make this film.” Truth, as it was playing itself out, was stranger than any fiction he could invent.

“I have kept the science as real as possible because there was no reason for it not to be real,” explained Natali. Because *Splice* is a drama and not a documentary, fact is stretched to fiction in specific areas, such as it took hundreds of attempts to create Dolly while Clive and Elsa manage to create Dren much more quickly. Their splicing technique is not real, but according to the geneticist, George S. Charames, who took time out from his work at the Centre for Cancer Genetics - Bapat Lab, Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute at the Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto to be the consultant on the film, it is a possible technique. And ‘B.E.T.I.’ the *Biomechanical Extrautero Thermal Incubator* does not exist at the moment, but it could in the future. The factual bottom line is that nothing in *Splice* is impossible.

Looking at the theory behind the recipe that produced Dren more closely, the vast majority (90%) of the human genome (collectively, the DNA from all the cells in a human would easily stretch from the earth to the moon) contains information accumulated through the evolutionary process, but remains uncoded. These sequences are sometimes referred to by the misnomer ‘junk DNA’. Without knowing what these can lead to, it is impossible to foresee or control the results of splicing them together. The hard science explanation of Dren is that she is the end result of DNA taken from different species, including human, made up into a primordial soup. The soft science answer is that Dren is greater than the sum of her parts. “Everything related to Dren is like biological Gestalt and somehow, by mixing different components together, it accidentally triggers genetic developments that Elsa and Clive couldn’t anticipate,” noted Natali.

“People probably didn’t realize that the creation of human-animal chimeras is actually happening now around the world. If science were able to solve the issues such as inter-species immunology, and the ethical barriers associated with the procedures, we are not far away from *Splice* being reality,” noted Charames.

## **SPLICE- EFFECTS**

Oscar-winning special effects designer, Howard Berger, who handled of all the Dren, creature and practical makeup effects, first read the script for *Splice* at the insistence of Guillermo del Toro. Having previously worked with Hoban on *Ginger Snaps 2* and *3*, Berger was enthusiastic about working with Natali and the conceptual art that had been developed as it gave him the opportunity to do things KNB had not done before. Del Toro was equally pleased that KNB was on board, according to Berger, “because he trusts us and knows the quality of work we do. And because we’d worked for Steve (Hoban) before, he knew that the practical creature work would be handled properly and Vincenzo would be in very good hands.”

All told, eleven different creatures including the two stages of Fred and Ginger were created for the film. The lion’s share of the work was devoted to Dren. With every stage, form followed function. “It’s an evolution or ‘Drenolution’ of creatures, and that makes everything feel very real. It’s very clever and it’s good story-telling.

Berger’s prime directive was realism and that came from extensive effort in details, such as the skin, the eyes and the tail. Extensive combinations of practical effects and digital effects by C.O.R.E is the formula which Berger has found to be most effective. “It’s the magic trick. Dren is truly the ugly duckling that begins as a blob and develops in something beautiful.” For Dren’s eyes, Berger designed ten different versions of which Natali chose one and then they were modified further to have a cross-shaped pupils. For this purpose, Berger made oversized Scleral contacts for Chanéac. Ultimately, Berger assessed the final product of Dren and declared, “I think she is a combination of human and Vincenzo DNA.”

“Animals in general are very dangerous and unpredictable,” said Berger. “And I think that’s what makes Dren very cool. Delphine has brought everything to the table. This character wouldn’t exist without her. Everything from her look, to her movements, which Delphine created, are very specific She is bird-like and then predator-like. Even the sounds she makes are Delphine’s invention. Her agility and her endurance are impressive. Vincenzo dreamed up this character, but Delphine brought it to life.”

Bob Munroe, Visual Effect Supervisor from C.O.R.E., who has previously worked with Guillermo del Toro on *Blade II* and *Mimic* and has worked with Natali on *Cube*, *Cypher* and *Nothing* (winning Fantasporto International Fantasy Film Awards for both *Cube* and *Cypher*) started working on the digital effects for *Splice* almost a decade ago and restarted again in early 2007. “This is probably the most planned out film I’ve ever been on and it’s paid off,” he said during post-production as all the pieces fell perfectly into place. “In the beginning, *Splice* would have been somewhat possible from a CG standpoint, though not at the same budget level. However, we could not have made this film at the time because we would not have had Delphine Chanéac. She was absolutely amazing. The motion that you see and the emotion that you see on screen is all Delphine.”

In its completed form, 70% of the adult Dren will be real (30% CG), child Dren with Abigail Chu will be a 50/50 split, while baby and toddler Dren will be 100% CG. The innovation will be the eyes. “We are widening Delphine’s eyes ever so slightly beyond the realm of human norms and then replacing the eyes of child Dren with those of Delphine using a technique, devised by CG Supervisor Terry Bradley, that is something I have never seen before,” explained Munroe.

C.O.R.E. is also responsible for effects that range from subtle to grand. “We are adding an extra section to Dren’s legs to create a triple-jointed leg, plus a tail (which is 100% digital for adult Dren and 80% digital for child Dren), we are removing Dren’s navel because she was not born of a womb [Munroe’s innovation], removing the fourth finger on both hands, and adding wings,” Munroe continued. For those who follow CG innovations closely, the best reference for how body parts are digitally replaced in *Splice* can be seen in Guillermo del Toro’s *Blade II* (on which Munroe was also the VFX Supervisor), but for this film, the techniques were taken further than any film C.O.R.E. has ever done before.

\* \* \*

After a decade of struggling to bring *Splice* to the screen, Natali is at a loss to logically explain why, suddenly, it all came together so perfectly. The best he could muster was to say, “There is something in the air. *Splice* exists now for a reason. It did not and could not have existed 10 years ago. Its time is now and I really believe that it’s more than happenstance that the movie’s been made at this point.”

A possible answer is that while *Splice* synthesizes science and myth, Natali does wonder if the idea of the chimera in Greek mythology that dates back thousands of years now has the possibility of becoming, through modern bio-technology, a reality. “Did that mythological notion inspire geneticists to build it for real? Is that part of our natural evolution? Is that why it existed and it is our destiny?”

## **Interview with VINCENZO NATALI, Director and co-writer**

**SPLICE was actually conceived in the late 1990s...**

Yes. I've been seriously plugging away at this film for more than 10 years. I almost made it in 2000, right after CUBE. I worked like a dog for a full year on the design, the storyboard, and I was ready to shoot it. But at the last minute, the producer thought the project would be too expensive. I thought the film would never see the light of day because it was too ambitious, and very few people are able to take the kind of risk necessary to make a film like this.

It seems to me that most films are made for the wrong reasons. That's just the way this business is. No one makes a film just because the screenplay is brilliant. That might be one reason it is made, but not THE reason! (He laughs.) No, it's always made for a silly reason. If cows are fashionable one year, then we'll make films about cows. That's how it works. I think SPLICE's saving grace was the screenwriters' looming strike. Our financial backers had two options: make the film immediately or never make it at all. If circumstances hadn't forced them to act, the film would have never happened.

**So what triggered it?**

In a certain sense, SPLICE was predestined to be shot today. If it had been made ten years ago, the film technology wouldn't have been ready and I surely wouldn't have been able to adequately handle the subject as a director. And most importantly, the real science just wasn't there ten years ago. The concepts in the screenplay were more science fiction than fact. But genetic research has advanced by leaps and bounds, catching up with my story. Now the topic of genetic engineering is more current than ever. Because of these three factors and a little luck, SPLICE fell into the right hands and became possible.

**"Elevated", your short film, CUBE and SPLICE all share a similar theme: a person's capacity to become a monster...**

I think I'm fascinated by the monster that lurks within each of us. In a way, that monster is more terrifying than anything you can imagine in a horror film. And in SPLICE, the people who made this creature are ultimately more frightening than the creature itself. Even more so because they seem to be nice, decent people. That's why I picked Adrien Brody and Sarah Polley. You can't help liking them, no matter what they do.

**It's a monster film, like Frankenstein... How did you hope to change the genre?**

I grew up with James Whale's FRANKENSTEIN. But I would never do a remake. Films like that belong to their time. However, I was interested in taking some notions from these classics and modernizing them. Actually, what really inspired me wasn't a film, but a *mouse*. A mouse that appeared to have a human ear grafted onto its back. Of course it wasn't a real ear, it was a polymer object. The mouse then developed cartilage, which could be used for a human tissue graft. It was a striking image. Like a Salvador Dali painting. I knew instantly there was a story in this. So I wasn't thinking of Frankenstein, Mary Shelley and the myth of Prometheus, even though the film explores those themes.

It's also proof that I take forever to write a screenplay; scientists took less time to map the human genome than I did to finish my script! (He laughs.) It also shows how science makes exponential progress.

### **What makes a good monster movie?**

There are many kinds of monster movies. One of my favorites is Ridley Scott's *ALIEN*, which is nearly perfect. But *SPLICE* has nothing to do with that. In *ALIEN*, the monster is a hidden threat, lurking in the shadows. In my film, the monster is on screen all the time, she is just another one of the characters. *SPLICE* is a chamber piece. There are only five speaking parts. It's also a love triangle. The more the story develops, the more the emotional component grows... One of the reasons I wanted to make this film immediately after *CUBE* was because *CUBE* told the story of a group of innocent people faced with a horrible dilemma that forced them to lose their sense of innocence. *SPLICE*'s story comes from its characters' needs. They are directly responsible for their fates. The monster is born from Elsa's desire to have a child, something she is psychologically incapable of doing. In the end, *SPLICE* is more interested in how someone creates a monster than showing a monster on a rampage.

### **Could you speak more about the relationship between Dren, Clive and Elsa? Because there seem to be a lot of shameful emotions involved...**

The love triangle is what drives the film, its *raison d'être*. The complex relationship between the creatures and their creator makes *SPLICE* wander into disturbing, but exciting, waters.

On the surface, the relationship between Clive and Elsa, and their relationship with Dren, is purely scientific. They want to push technology to the next level and they see Dren as a means of inventing new medical treatments. But the deeper motivation behind scientific curiosity is complex and highly personal. In Elsa's case, it comes from an unhappy childhood and a difficult relationship with an abusive mother. And this prevents her from having children with Clive. By creating Dren, Elsa discovers another means of satisfying her maternal instinct. She proves herself able to handle a situation that she normally would be incapable of. As Clive tells her at one point, "You never wanted to have a child, but an experiment isn't the same thing." Clive, on the other hand, doesn't see Dren as his daughter. But as she grows, she develops an exotic beauty, and most of all, a latent, perverse, sexuality. It is a love triangle as much as it is a family drama. It is incestuous, Oedipal, and absolutely horrible... And what we discover is that humans can behave more monstrously than the monsters themselves. This is what distinguishes *SPLICE* from other monster films.

### **Guillermo del Toro, the Executive Producer of *SPLICE*, says that real horror is morally dangerous and that you have clearly understood this...**

I think it is one of the reasons the film took ten years to make. No studio wanted to finance a film in which the idea of a sexual relationship between a human and a creature was so clearly evoked. But I think it is a significant, eternal part of the human psyche. The idea of a centaur or a siren has existed for centuries. And now we are perhaps capable of giving life to these creatures. In Great Britain, they have already created half-human, half-animal hybrids,

though they haven't developed beyond the embryonic stage. What happens when technology opens doors in our psyches that have been locked for centuries? I think that what is hiding behind one of these doors is the idea of mating with something that isn't human. Maybe it's linked to evolution, to our desire to evolve? It was really exciting for me to work on a subject as ancient and as deeply rooted in the subconscious as this, and to give it some scientific foundation.

### **How was it meeting Guillermo del Toro?**

Guillermo is a great impresario of horror and fantasy. I met him during a film festival and he told me, "You know, I'd like to produce one of your films." I thought of SPLICE. I didn't dare mention it to him at the time, but sometime later, Don Murphy, another producer, got the script to him. And Guillermo decided to produce it. At the same time, the film was suggested to people I knew at Gaumont, and to Steve Hoban, my Canadian producer. Even though no one knew each other, they found a way to work together. The result is SPLICE, a French-Canadian co-production. It has many mothers and fathers. Guillermo wasn't directly involved in the film, but the fact that his name was associated with it gave it credibility and really helped to make it a reality.

### **How did you cast the film?**

Adrien Brody is a blessing because he has all the right qualities. He is well known, of course, and he's an excellent actor, but most importantly, he is naturally likeable and sensitive. Under normal circumstances, his character would seem despicable. But he transforms Clive into someone you can relate to. And he is the perfect age. Not too old, not too young. Extremely critical choices, frightening choices, were made in casting Clive, Elsa and Dren. Since it's a French-Canadian film, we needed to have a Canadian or a European in one of the main roles. But when you need to find a woman to play a geneticist in the 27-35 age range, there are only a few actors in the world who can pull it off. Fortunately Sarah Polley, who is Canadian, and who had always been on my short list was available. In the end, I think you completely believe Sarah and Adrien, not only as scientists but also as a couple. They have amazing chemistry.

### **You decided to go with a physical creature, not a digital one. Why?**

Actually, it was never a question. For one, it would have cost too much to make Dren a fully digital character. But more importantly, I believe an audience will never develop as strong an emotional bond to a digital character as a real live performer. I did everything in my power to use real people or mechanical special effects. I'm a big fan of digital special effects. But I feel that they are always better when they augment something physical. I didn't want Dren to be a magical creature, she needed to be totally real, totally biologically plausible.

The reason Gollum works in THE LORD OF THE RINGS is because it's a heroic-fantasy film and we willingly suspend our disbelief. A little like in Ray Harryhausen's films. But in SPLICE, we start with the idea that Dren could really exist. I kept telling the crew that we weren't making a science fiction film. The story takes place in today's world and when you see the labs in the film, they aren't impressive. I was careful NOT to build a Hollywood-style genetics lab. I spent time in real labs when I was doing research for the film and they more or less look like a high school science lab. A little dirty with test tubes, gas stoves and refrigerators. There's really not that much high-tech equipment. So I wanted to be faithful to that, so that the audience would really

feel that we are in today's world and that the creature we see is real in that environment. When we cast Dren, we knew it would be a crucial step.

### **What criteria did you use for the actress?**

We had to walk a fine line because I would like both men and women in the audience to be attracted to Dren. And to feel somewhat guilty about it. It was a difficult balance. If we went too far on Dren's monstrous side, she could become repugnant, but if we played up her human side too much, she wouldn't be monstrous enough. Dren had to embody these two elements to perfection. And Delphine has both of these qualities. She is a very beautiful woman, but she has something androgynous about her, which gives her something that isn't exactly human. I'm certain that, one day, humans will mutate toward a more polymorphous race... In my mind, Dren is the next step in evolution. And yet, I didn't know exactly what I was looking for. I only found it when I saw it. The irony is that when I went to Paris for the casting, the first person that walked into the room was Delphine. But that was too perfect, so I made myself see other actors. (He laughs.) And then chose her anyway. She's incredible. And she gave an amazing performance.

### **How did you prepare her for the role?**

We didn't actually cast her immediately. She came to Toronto. The special effects team was there to run some tests and take pictures of her, because we had to develop the Dren's design based on Delphine's actual physiology. I only decided she would be Dren after that process. I also tested her physical endurance because it is a very, very physical role and I needed someone fit for the job.

### **How much do you use special effects on Dren?**

Other than baby Dren (first two stages), she is a mix of human, digital effects and prosthetics. And I always knew that would be the case, even ten years ago. In fact, I did some tests with another actress back then... It's a very subtle thing. For example, how should the actor walk? On her feet or on stilts? How far should we go? Ultimately I think we made the right decision. We decided to do as little as possible. To be subtractive rather than additive. In most films about creatures they start with a human and add things to it. We felt it was more interesting to remove certain aspects and slightly alter other things. I think if you subtly alter the human face, like we did with Delphine, the result is more shocking than if you make wide, sweeping changes. That pretty much became our motto and it set the tone for the film.

### **How can you create a creature that first touches us, and then terrifies us?**

Dren needs to do both. It's all a matter of balance. I didn't want to do E.T. even if I can't deny there is some E.T. in Dren. I wanted the creature to be morally complex. She can be very sweet, but she can also be dangerous and vindictive. That was key. I also thought it was important that Clive and Elsa give birth to a creature, who is continually evolving, so that we would never really know what she was going to become.

### **You usually create very graphic, even geometric, films...**



SPLICE has some of that. But I tried not to be too affected in my direction. In contrast, CYPHER was almost an exercise in expressionist style. But with SPLICE, I felt that a more naturalistic approach would ultimately be more dramatically powerful. I decided to be like Rene Magritte: I wanted to paint the fantastic like an academic. I made this decision for better or for worse. It's difficult to know. It's harder for me to make a more conventional movie. But I tried to reign in my geek sensibilities.

**What was your guiding line for designing the film?**

The film is divided into two worlds: the laboratory and the barn, which is Dren's home. Two opposing environments. The lab is cold and sterile like you imagine a lab to be, while the barn is warm and organic. I felt that that reflected the essence of the film: they have created something they thought they could control, like all scientists do, but, naturally, life is more complicated than that. And Dren's existence has an impact not only on the world, but also on their lives. So the film follows Dren's evolution, from the insular world of the lab to the open, porous world of the barn. And then eventually out in the natural world.

**You can feel this in the atmosphere too, especially in the lighting...**

Absolutely. Even if the film takes place in a sealed-off environment, you really get the impression that it progresses from one world to another. I truly felt that with CUBE. By changing the color of the room, you get the feeling the place has changed. I am very aware that stories with few characters and locations need to evolve visually. And I applied that to SPLICE.

**Is that why you chose Tetsuo Nagata (the DOP in LA MÔME) as your Director of Photography?**

I had already worked with him on my segment in PARIS, JE T'AIME. I wanted the lighting to have richness and poetry. And Tetsuo is known as the "Prince of Shadows". He has no equal when it comes to giving texture to shadows. So he was an obvious choice.

**From your first film, CUBE, and this one, your budget was multiplied by nearly 100 (\$300,000 for CUBE versus 27 million dollars for SPLICE). Did this change your way of working?**

It didn't make the slightest difference. Because SPLICE was 100 times bigger and 100 times harder. 200 times even. Honestly, the hardest thing I've ever done in my life was CUBE. I wouldn't say that making SPLICE with the budget we had was as hard, but it was close. Really. Because Dren doesn't live in the shadows. We couldn't lie with her. Ridley Scott, with all his brilliance, only shows the Alien for a few seconds every now and then, a bit like Steven Spielberg did with the shark in JAWS. It's a classic technique. But Dren can't be hidden in a dark corner. She's a special effect from the 20<sup>th</sup> minute to the 110<sup>th</sup> minute in the film. That ate up a lot of the 27 million dollars. And it had to be that way because Dren had to be perfect. And I hope she is, knock on wood! The truth is that when we started the film, we didn't know how we would finish it with the money we had. Every frame of Dren has a price tag, and each one counted. Some directors say they know every frame in their film, well I know every single pixel! (He laughs.)

It kills me to say this, but I believe that restrictions force me to be creative. It only improves the story. So, ultimately, I'm convinced that all the technical frustrations that tortured me as a director are insignificant compared to what ends up on screen. It's the story and the characters that matter. That's what will determine if the film finds an audience.

## **SPLICE ABOUT THE CAST/FILMMAKERS**

**ADRIEN BRODY (Clive Nicoli)** Award for Best Actor for his performance in Roman Polanski's *The Pianist*. He is to date the youngest person to have won the Oscar in that category. His portrayal of real-life Holocaust survivor Wladyslaw Szpilman also earned him Best Actor honors from the National Society of Film Critics, the Boston Society of Film Critics, and the César Awards (France's equivalent of the Oscars); and nominations for Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild and BAFTA Awards.

He most recently starred in Rian Johnson's *The Brothers Bloom*. He will next be seen in the comedy *High School* for writer/director John Stalberg, Jr., as Psycho Ed; Thriller/horror film *Giallo* for Italian director, Dario Argento, as Inspector Enzo Lavia, and is attached as one of the film's producers, starring opposite Emmanuelle Seigner and Elsa Pataky; Romantic/drama *Manolette* for writer/director Menno Meyjes, as Manuel Rodriguez Sánchez, Spain's most famous bullfighter, starring opposite Pénélope Cruz; and the sci-fi film *Splice* for writer/director Vincenzo Natali, as the young genetic scientist Clive, starring opposite Sarah Polley.

Brody was born and raised in New York City, where he attended the High School for the Performing Arts and the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. He first came to prominence when he played the lead role in Steven Soderbergh's *King of the Hill*. He later starred in two features for director Eric Bross, *Ten Benny* and *Restaurant*, the latter earning Brody an Independent Spirit Award nomination.

Some of his films include Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line*; Ken Loach's *Bread and Roses*; Barry Levinson's *Liberty Heights*; Spike Lee's *Summer of Sam*; John Maybury's *The Jacket*; M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*; Peter Jackson's Academy Award-winning remake of *King Kong*; Allen Coulter's *Hollywoodland*; Wes Anderson's *Darjeeling Limited* and Darnell Martin's *Cadillac Records*.

**SARAH POLLEY (Elsa Kast)** Sarah Polley began acting at age four, but her performance in Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter* marked her breakthrough into adult roles; the film brought Polley her first Best Actress Genie nomination from the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television, and the Best Supporting Actress award from the Boston and Chicago Societies of Film Critics. Her other films include Zack Snyder's remake of George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, Doug Liman's *Go*, Kathryn Bigelow's *The Weight of Water*, David Cronenberg's *eXistenZ*, Hal Hartley's *No Such Thing*, Thom Fitzgerald's *The Event*, and Isabel Coixet's *My Life Without Me* (Genie Award, Best Actress) and *The Secret Life of Words*, Audrey Wells' *Guinevere*, Wim Wenders' *Don't Come Knocking*, Michael Winterbottom's *The Claim*, Atom Egoyan's *Exotica* and Terry Gilliam's *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*. Her recent projects include Jaco van Dormeal's *Mr. Nobody* and the award-winning miniseries, *John Adams*. Polley made her feature film directorial debut with *Away From Her*, for which she also wrote the Oscar-nominated screenplay based on Alice Munro's short story THE BEAR CAME OVER THE MOUNTAIN. *Away From Her* has been critically acclaimed around the globe and was an official gala selection at both the Sundance and Toronto Film Festivals. The Director's Guild of Canada honored Sarah and *Away From Her* with awards for Best Direction and Best Feature Film. The film was also nominated for

Golden Satellite Awards for Best Dramatic Motion Picture, Best Director, Best Dramatic Actress, and Best Adapted Screenplay. Her most recent film is Jaco van Dormael's *Mr. Nobody*.

**DELPHINE CHANEAC (Adult Dren)** *Splice* marks the North American debut for Paris-born actress Delphine Chaneac who recently completed production on Xavier Ruiz' drama, *Verso*, filmed in Switzerland as well as the television mini-series *Die Patin*. Prior to this, Chaneac has appeared in only one English-speaking feature, *The Pink Panther*, starring Steve Martin. On film in Europe, Chaneac has starred in the comedies *Incontrôlable* and *Brice de Nice*. On television, she has starred in *Trenhotel*, *Madame Hollywood*, *La vie devant nous*, *Retour aux sources* and *Pas vu, pas pris*.

**DAVID HEWLETT (Barlow)** Recent Spacey Award winner for favorite TV character, David Hewlett portrays the likeably unlikeable Dr. Rodney McKay on *Stargate Atlantis*. Hewlett's career began in his early teens, when he hooked up with a few of his fellow sci-fi geek schoolmates and started acting in their early film efforts. Hewlett still runs with the same crowd of filmmakers, collaborating with them on the feature films *Cube*, *Get Down*, *Cypher*, *Foolproof* and *Nothing*.

In addition to his role on *Atlantis*, highlights from Hewlett's television credits include guest starring roles on *ER*, *Without a Trace* and *The District*, and recurring roles on *Kung Fu: The Legend Continues*, *Beyond Reality* and the Canadian hit series *Traders*, for which he garnered two Gemini nominations. Hewlett has also had leading roles in *The Triangle*, and *Never Let Her Go*, *The Penthouse* and the critically-acclaimed *The Boys of St. Vincent*, as well as two films for the SCI FI Channel: *Darklight* and *Boa vs. Python*.

On the big screen, Hewlett's credits include roles in *Nothing*, *Get Down*, *Cypher*, *Cube*, *Clutch*, and John Boorman's *Where the Heart Is*, as well as cult favorites like *Scanners II*, *Desire* and *Hell at the Sunset Motel* and *Pin*.

Hewlett's writing and directing debut, *A Dog's Breakfast*, was picked up for distribution by MGM & FOX. *A Dog's Breakfast* is a bone-jarring, head-smacking, fiancé bashing feature-length comedy about marriage, madness and murder. He stars along with fellow *Atlantis* cast members Paul McGillion (Dr. Carson Beckett) and Rachel Luttrell (Teyla Emmagan), as well as SG-1's Christopher Judge (Teal'c), his real-life sister actress Kate Hewlett, and his wonder-dog, Mars. It was released in 2007.

**BRANDON MCGIBBON (Gavin Nicoli)** became a member of the Soulpepper Training Company upon graduation from the Ryerson Theatre School. He then appeared in TV shows such as *Odyssey 5*, *Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye*, and *Tracker*, as Marlon on *Little Mosque on the Prairie* and in Ken Finkleman's *At The Hotel*. On stage, McGibbon appeared Carmen Ghia in the Toronto production of "The Producers" at the Canon Theatre, and in the title role of Glenn Gould in the latest production of David Young's "The Prodigy" at the du Maurier Theatre Centre at Harbourfront Centre, in George F. Walkers' "Escape from Happiness," at the Factory Lab Theatre, and "Home Is My Road," the new play by Florence Gibson at the Factory Theatre. He earned a Best Supporting Actor Award from the Sacramento Film Festival for his performance in *Production Office*. In what spare time he has, McGibbon is the guitar-playing Slickfinger Flash in the band, Elastocitizens.

## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

**STEVEN HOBAN (Producer)** founder of the Toronto-based film production company Copperheart Entertainment, has just completed the CG animated short film, *The Spine*, voiced by Gordon Pinsent and Alberta Watson and directed by Chris Landreth, who also directed Copperheart's 2005 Oscar®-winning short, *RYAN*.

Steve has built his career through a unique blend of creative intuition, business savvy and commitment to cutting-edge technology. From writing comic books in university to establishing an Imax3D animation studio, from running the business affairs at a completion bond company to producing a creatively and technologically stunning Oscar® winning CG short, from structuring complex international treaty co-productions to producing the most sophisticated visual effects feature film ever made in Canada, Steve exemplifies the future of international film producing.

Some of the films Steve has produced include the internationally successful *Ginger Snaps* trilogy, the 2006 remake of *Black Christmas*, and one of last year's top grossing Canadian films, the low-budget comedy *Young People Fucking*. In 2000 Steve produced and co-wrote the world's first fully animated Imax3D film, *Cyberworld*, which featured the characters from *The Simpsons* and the voices of Woody Allen, Sylvester Stallone, and Sharon Stone.

Through extensive creative, finance and distribution relationships in Canada, Europe, Asia, and the United States, including being represented by Creative Artists Agency in Los Angeles, Steve has positioned Copperheart to finance and produce a steady flow of studio-level, live-action and animated feature films for the international market.

Upcoming films include the supernatural thriller, *Permission*, to be directed by Vincenzo Natali; the biographical/psychological horror animated 3D feature, *Lovecraft*, to be directed by Chris Landreth; an animated 3D family film called *Rock the Boat* that will be the first big budget Canada-France co-production of its kind; and *Dragonflight*, an adaptation of Anne McCaffrey's worldwide bestselling science fiction *Dragonriders of Pern* series of novels.

**VINCENZO NATALI (Writer/director)** The Canadian-born fantasist director Vincenzo Natali is no stranger to dystopia. Natali burst onto the scene in 1997 with his surreal, low budget sci-fi thriller *Cube*. The film impressed viewers and critics alike with Natali's ability to stretch cinematic boundaries on a shoestring budget; it also received multiple Genie nominations for art direction, sound, and an original score, and in time became something of a cult favorite. With his follow up film, *Cypher*, starring Jeremy Northam, Lucy Liu and David Hewlett, Natali kept his feet planted firmly in the postmodern realm. *Cypher* is the tale of a man who assumes a new identity in preparation for an espionage career, but instead gets systematically brainwashed and finds himself engulfed in a shaky, paranoid reality. Natali's third feature, *Nothing*, is described by the writer/director as "a buddy comedy set in a void." The film again garnered worldwide critical kudos. Two years later, Natali directed *Getting Gilliam*, the documentary on Terry Gilliam's production of the 2005 feature *Tideland*, which premiered concurrently with the feature. Natali then contributed a segment to the 2006 film-à-sketch *Paris, Je t'aime*.

**TETSUO NAGATA (Director of Cinematography)** was born in Nagano, Japan. He moved to Tokyo, continued his studies and immediately became interested in cinema, especially French cinema, and organized a Cinema Club at the Franco-Japanese Institute in Tokyo. In 1972, he left for France to study cinema at the University of Paris VIII. In 1975 he returned to Japan and worked as an assistant operator with the Director of Photography, H. Segawa (DOP du film *La femme de sable* de H. Teshigahara) on several films. This experience allowed him to work with Toho and Toei Studios. In 1982 he decided to move to Paris. He met Ricardo Aronovich and became his assistant. He continued to work with different French productions for feature films and advertisements. In 1988 he decided to launch himself as Director of Photography. Until 1995, Nagata worked mainly on advertising, music videos and short films. He collaborated with many directors: Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Jean-Paul Rappeneau, Jan Kounen and many others. Nagata worked on his first feature film as Director of Photography with Rock Stephanik, *Stand By* (Best Film at the Montreal World Film Festival, Grand Prize in Kiev, Best Actress César). He then met François Dupeyron and with him made two films: *C'est quoi la vie* (Grand Prize at San Sebastian) and *La Chambre des officiers* (official Selection at Cannes). For the second film, Nagata received a César in 2002 for Best Photography).

From that point on, his career was spent in France and abroad. He shot *Riders* in Canada with the French director Gérard Pirés and *Blueberry* in Mexico with Jan Kounen. He returned to his native Japan for the film *Until The Night Comes Back* with director Takashi Minamoto and then he met Vincenzo Natali, the Canadian filmmaker with whom he shot Vincenzo's segment of *Paris, je t'aime*. His work with director Olivier Dahan on the film, *La vie en rose* which earned Nagata his second César in 2008.

**GUILLERMO DEL TORO (Executive Producer)** Since winning the Critic's Prize at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival and nine Mexican Academy Awards for his first feature, the Mexican-American co-production *Cronos*, Guillermo Del Toro has established himself among the most admired and sought-after international writer-directors. With the release of his Spanish-language film *Pan's Labyrinth*, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2006, Del Toro sealed his position as both a critical and commercial success.

*Pan's Labyrinth* was released domestically by Picturehouse in December 2006. The film received six Academy Award nominations (including Best Foreign Language Film and Best Original Screenplay for Del Toro) and won three Oscars. It is currently the highest-grossing Spanish language film of all time in the US, with \$37.6 million in box office receipts.

Del Toro followed *Cronos* with the environmental horror film *Mimic*, which he directed and co-wrote for Dimension Films. He then returned to Spanish language subject matter with the supernatural Spanish Civil War film *The Devil's Backbone*, released in 2001 by Sony Classics. In 2004, after completing the New Line vampire film *Blade II*, Del Toro began work on *Hellboy* for Revolution Studios.

His successful collaboration with Universal on *Hellboy 2: The Golden Army* in 2008 has led Del Toro to join forces with the studio by entering into a first look producing deal, through which he will write and develop material both for himself as a director and for other filmmakers. Among these projects are *Hater*, an adaptation of the novel by David Moody which he will produce with Mark Johnson; *Drood*, based on the novel by Dan Simmons (to be published in 2009); *Midnight Delivery*, from an original treatment by Del Toro; and *Crimson Peak*, a screenplay by Del Toro and Matthew Robbins. Del Toro further intends to remake several key Universal library films. He

will go back to the source material and reinvent Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN, Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE, and Kurt Vonnegut's SLAUGHTERHOUSE 5.

In 2007, Del Toro produced the Spanish supernatural film *The Orphanage*, which has become the highest grossing local language film in Spain's history. The film was released in the US by Picturehouse in December 2007. Del Toro will produce the American remake of the film later this year. He will also produce the gothic horror film *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* for Miramax. Del Toro's other development projects include *The Witches*, based on the classic Roald Dahl novel, for Warner Bros., which he is producing with Alfonso Cuarón, and *The Left Hand of Darkness* with Francis Coppola's American Zoetrope.

In addition, he and fellow Mexican filmmakers Alfonso Cuarón and Alejandro González-Inárritu, have created cha cha cha, a production entity which will produce five films for Universal Studios and Focus Features. The three filmmakers will each direct one film for the banner, and will oversee the production of two films by other filmmakers. The first film to come out of this partnership is *Rudo Y Cursi*, directed by Carlos Cuarón and starring Gael García Bernal and Diego Luna.

Del Toro has recently turned his attention to the publishing world. With novelist Chuck Hogan, he co-authored the horror novel THE STRAIN, which was published by William Morrow in June 2009. The book debuted at #9 on the New York Times bestseller list. Also, Palace Press will publish an illustrated edition of his personal notebooks, emphasizing the artwork behind his three Spanish-language films and their development from early drawings to the final results.

Del Toro's current plans include starting pre-production in 2009 on the long awaited two-film adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's THE HOBBIT, to be produced by *The Lord of the Rings* filmmaker Peter Jackson, who has called Del Toro "a cinematic magician who has never lost his childlike sense of wonder."

**MICHELE CONROY (Editor)** returns to work with Vincenzo Natali again, having previously been his editor on *Paris, je t'aime*, *Nothing* (which earned Conroy a 2004 DGC Craft Award for editing, and Natali's Terry Gilliam documentary, *Getting Gilliam*. Conroy was nominated for a Best Editing Leo for her work on *The New Addams Family*. Additional film credits include *Who Loves The Sun*, directed by Matt Bissonnette, *Ginger Snaps: Unleashed*. On television, Conroy was the editor on *Flashpoint*, *Sophie*, *Billable Hours*, *Getting Along Famously*, *This is Wonderland*, *Playmakers*, and *Relic Hunter*.

**TODD CHERNIAWSKY, IDSA (Production Designer)** A graduate of AFI's Production Design program, Todd has over 10 years of experience in film production. Working his way up through various art departments as a set designer, illustrator, and an assistant art director, Todd has had the opportunity to contribute to many studio features, including *Ocean's 13*, *Beowulf*, *War of the Worlds*, *Monster House*, *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events*, and *Polar Express*. Recent Art Director credits include *Nancy Drew*, and James Cameron's latest feature, *Avatar*. His contributions to independent film as Production Designer include the *Ginger Snaps* trilogy, and *100 Days In The Jungle* for director Sturla Gunnarsson. Todd is currently Art Director on Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland*.

**DON MURPHY (Executive Producer)** (born on Long Island, New York) grew up with the dream of making movies. It was only after receiving his MFA degree from University of Southern California's School of Cinema-Television did he realize what a producer actually does. Armed with his passion for film, Don took his first step into producing with *Natural Born Killers* (based on the screenplay by Quentin Tarantino and directed by Oliver Stone). Since then, he has focused on producing films he wants to see such as *Apt Pupil*, *From Hell* and *Permanent Midnight*. Don Murphy went back to school (so to speak) when he teamed up with USC classmate Michael Davis to produce *Shoot 'Em Up*, a film Davis wrote and directed. Next up was a film written and directed by Susan Montford and starring Kim Basinger: *While She Was Out*. With the realization that that the children of the 1980's were now the movie-going public and that "**Transformers**" was their fantasy mythology, Don pursued and obtained the rights to the property, adding *Transformers* to his already impressive list of producer's credits. Don felt that this film would be the first in a trilogy of fun, summer entertainment and he was right. *Transformers 2: Revenge of the Fallen* is due in theaters this summer.

**SUSAN MONTFORD (Executive Producer)** developed her predilection for the arts while growing in Glasgow, Scotland. After graduating from Art School, she worked as a Fine Artist for several years, exhibiting her work around her home-town and beyond. Her first venture into film was with her two short films *Hairpin* and *Strangers*, made with grants from the Scottish Film Council. These lead her to the Toronto Film Festival where she set up a feature project *The Family Jam* to write and direct with Chris and Roberta Hanley producing. Susan soon moved to Los Angeles where she teamed up with Don Murphy at Angry Films. Susan produced the cult action hit *Shoot 'Em Up* (2007) with Angry Films and Executive Produced *Splice* a Vincenzo Natali film due in theatres in 2009. On the fast track as a producer with Angry Films, Susan's project range from Guillermo Del Toro's *At The Mountains of Madness* and Alex Proyas's *The Tripods* to a Dreamworks project which is out to a secret director entitled *Real Steel*. Susan is the writer and director of *While She Was Out* with Kim Basinger, released in theatres December of 2008, out on DVD in April of 2009

**BOB MUNROE (Visual Effects)**, co-founder and CEO of C.O.R.E. Digital Pictures, brings over twenty years of experience to the film and television industry. Bob's ability to combine technical knowledge and creativity has resulted in a diverse history of directing, producing, visual effects supervision, digital animation, and software development. After graduating from the Fine Arts program at the University of Western Ontario with a BFA and the Computer Animation program at Sheridan College, Bob quickly worked his way up to become an Animator and Technical Director at various Toronto production companies.

In 1993, Bob's credits caught the attention of William Shatner, who hired Bob to head a group of animators to design and animate 3D visual effects for a series of four made for television movies based on Shatner's popular science fiction TEK Novels. The computer effects that his team produced won the 1995 International Monitor Award for Best Special Effects in a Film Originated Television Series, as well as the 1996 Gemini Award for Outstanding Visual Effects.

In 1994, with John Mariella, Kyle Menzies and William Shatner, Bob founded C.O.R.E. Digital Pictures. Bob's leadership helped make the Toronto based company a world class creator of

digital visual effects and animation in the feature film and television industry, successfully building four divisions with a staff of more than 300 people: C.O.R.E. Visual Effects, C.O.R.E. Toons, C.O.R.E. Feature Animation and C.O.R.E. Film Productions.

As a Visual Effects Supervisor, Bob directed C.O.R.E.'s team to create 3D effects for such projects as Paramount Pictures' *Snow Day*, Universal Pictures' *Caveman's Valentine*, and Fox Television's *The Rats*, creating a series of breathtaking and suspenseful visual effects shots.

Dedicated to helping talented filmmakers, Bob teamed up with then student director Vincenzo Natali in 1996 on the Canadian Film Centre's *Cube*. In 2001 Bob again joined with Natali as the Visual Effects Supervisor for Pandora's spy thriller *Cypher* and yet again in 2002 as Visual Effects Producer for Natali's *Nothing*, managing over 250 visual effects on a low budget. Natali, aware of Bob's passion for storytelling, recruited him to direct the second unit on *Nothing* where he shot dozens of essential shots for the film. *Cypher* and *Nothing* screened at the 2003 Toronto International Film Festival and also at many film festivals throughout Europe and Japan.

Early in 2006, as the Supervising Producer, Bob and his crew delivered the animation for Walt Disney Pictures feature, *The Wild*. The production, released in spring of 2006, was fully animated in C.O.R.E.'s downtown Toronto studio and required a staff of over 290 artists, animators, systems engineers, software developers and other support staff almost three years to complete.

For the past two years Bob VFX Produced and Directed second unit in Ireland for Showtime's new dramatic series *The Tudors*. The series stars Jonathan Rhys-Meyers as Henry VIII. With a desire to share his knowledge, Bob is quite active on the lecture and public speaking circuit and is on the Canadian Film Centre's Board of Directors, as well as adjunct professor at Sheridan College.

**HOWARD BERGER (Creature Effects Supervisor)** met, at age 13, one of his idols Stan Winston, who took him under his wing and encouraged Howard as an up and coming artisan. Always stressing the importance of education, Stan promised to hire Howard after he completed high school with the understanding he had to maintain high grades, prove his attention to detail and devotion to his responsibilities to his schools work. Stan lived up to his promise and hired Howard after he graduated to work on *Predator* and *Aliens*, the first of many dreams to come true. Howard was beginning to make a name for himself, and went on to work with another idol, Rick Baker, on *Harry and the Hendersons*, in which Rick won the Oscar for Best Makeup. Through the years Howard worked at numerous studios moving up the ranks rapidly. In 1988 he and Gregory Nicotero decided to take the huge risk and form their own studio, K.N.B. EFX GROUP, INC.

In the past 20 years Howard and his company have worked with almost every director in Hollywood and on some of the most distinguished films made ranging from Oscar winner *Dances with Wolves*, *Casino* with Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* films, Sam Raimi's *Army of Darkness*, Robert Rodriguez's *Sin City* and most recently finished filming the latest *Narnia* installment, *Prince Caspian*, due out in theaters May 16, 2008. KNB is currently gearing up for the 3<sup>rd</sup> film, *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* to be filmed the fall of 2008. Howard's greatest challenge came in the adaptation of CS Lewis's classic novel, THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA, THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE. Howard lead his team of over 120 artists at KNB in LA and 42 artists on location in New Zealand in creating all the inhabitants of Narnia for director



Andrew Adamson. For the excellence and highest caliber of work, Howard won the British Academy Award, a BAFTA, for Best Makeup and his first Academy Award for the film.

**ALEX KAVANAGH (Costume Designer)** Among Alex's many impressive credits are the Universal feature *Land of the Dead* directed by George A. Romero, *Harold and Kumar Go To White Castle* (New Line), the features *Gingersnaps: The Beginning* and *Gingersnaps: Unleashed* for Lions Gate, *Nothing* directed by Vincenzo Natali, and *Saw II, III, IV* and *V*. Three of the films Kavanagh designed had their World Premiere at TIFF 2007; Allan Moyle's indie-feature *Weirdsville* starring Scott Speedman and Wes Bentley, George A. Romero's *Diary of the Dead*, and the indie comedy *Young People Fucking* directed by Martin Gero. Alex recently designed the indie feature *Real Time* (Serendipity Point Films) that opened the 2008 Slamdance festival, and the ambitious musical *Repo! The Genetic Opera* starring Anthony Head, Alexa Vega and Sarah Brightman.

**YVES CHEVALIER (Executive Producer)** Yves Chevalier has started his career as head of sales with MK2 in 1989 and has bought for this company « Kill me again » of John Dahl. He has distributed for TF1 "The lost seduction" of John Dahl again, and he has collaborated with TF1 International and TF1 video during 4 years. He has created Sagittaire Films in 1997 and released more than 40 films including 25 in collaboration with Bac Films. Among them *Requiem For A Dream*, *The Blair Witch Project*, *Buena Vista Social Club*, *Slam*, *Chopper*, *Bully*, *Ride With The Devil*, *Stir of Echoes*, *Austin Powers* etc...

Since 2005 he is collaborating with Gaumont and has discovered "Earth" or "Planet earth", "Cashback" and coproduced for them *Splice* directed by Vincenzo Natali.

His privileged relationships with talented directors such as David Koepp, Christopher Nolan, Darren Aronofsky, Larry Clark, Joe Carnahan, Rodrigo Garcia or Nicholas Refn are to be developed with Gaumont international.

**SIDONIE DUMAS (Executive Producer)** In 1988 while studying law, Sidonie Dumas started her career in the film industry as an assistant at Luc Besson's production company, *Films du Loup*, where she worked on the shoot of *Atlantis*.

After working in acquisitions and in feature film production at Warner Brothers in Los Angeles, she returned to Europe where she worked on the post-synchronization of Ettore Scola's *The Voyage of Captain Fracassa*. She then discovered the world of film-directing on Philippe de Broca's film, *The Keys to Paradise*.

In 1991, she started working at Gaumont as Project Supervisor, (screenplay development).

In 1998, she set out to promote new talent by producing first feature films and chose to produce *Milestones*, by Alain Beigel.

Since July 2004, she's Chairman of the Board at Gaumont. and encourages the production of films, of all genres, including: *Virgil* by Mabrouk El Mechri(2005), *You Are So Beautiful* by Isabelle Mergault (2006), *OSS 117: Cairo, Nest of Spies* by Michel Hazanavicius (2006), as well as others by renowned filmmakers such as *The Science of Sleep* by Michel Gondry .

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## **MATERIALS**

All materials including key art and production stills can be found on our press site:  
[www.madman.com.au/pressarea](http://www.madman.com.au/pressarea)

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