

# Everyone's Hero

***“I think a hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles. They are the real heroes, and so are the families and friends who have stood by them.”***

***-- Christopher Reeve***

What if you had a chance to be a hero? Would you take it? Or play it safe?

Shepherded by the film’s originating director and Executive Producer Christopher Reeve, the animated feature, *Everyone’s Hero* is a funny and poignant tale of a young boy who believes he can make a difference if he just hangs in there despite overwhelming odds.

It is Depression-era America and though times are hard, there is a giant bright spot in pinstripes: Yankee slugger Babe Ruth (voiced by Brian Dennehy). He thrills fans with his monster home runs and sensational exploits on and off the baseball field. “The Great Bambino” has no bigger admirer than 10-year-old Yankee Irving (voiced by Jake T. Austin, “Go, Diego!, Go!”).

The kid knows all of Babe’s stats and he lives for the Babe’s storied Yankees. In fact, Yankee’s namesake team is a constant source of inspiration on the sandlot when he steps up to the plate. All swagger and style, Yankee Irving swings! He swings! And, again, he swings! Despite his enthusiasm, inevitably, Yankee Irving strikes out. A frustrated Yankee gives up on

his beloved game. Despite his best efforts, Yankee Irving just can't hit a ball.

However, he does befriend one, a wiseacre of a baseball named Screwie (Rob Reiner) who has his own disheartened relationship with the national pastime. And that's when Yankee's adventures really begin. These two misfits form a special bond as they travel across the country on a mission to return Babe Ruth's stolen bat Darlin' (voiced by Whoopi Goldberg) before the deciding game of the 1932 World Series. Along the way Yankee meets a quirky array of characters that aid him on his comic journey. In the process, he learns about the value of hope, family, friendship and, of course, baseball.

IDT Entertainment presents, *Everyone's Hero*, directed by Christopher Reeve, Daniel St. Pierre and Colin Brady. Based on a story by Howard Jonas. Screenplay by Robert Kurtz and Jeff Hand. The voice cast includes William H. Macy, Rob Reiner, Brian Dennehy, Raven-Symoné, Robert Wagner, Richard Kind, Dana Reeve, Jake T. Austin, Joe Torre, Mandy Patinkin, Forest Whitaker, and Whoopi Goldberg. Casting by Mary Hidalgo. Music Supervisor Dawn Soler. Music by John Debney. Produced by Ron Tippe and Igor Khait. Executive Produced by Christopher Reeve, Dana Reeve, Stephen R. Brown, Morris Berger, Janet Healy, and Jerry Davis.

20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox will release *Everyone's Hero* nationwide on Friday, September 15. The film is Rated G by the MPAA.

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## **FROM BEDTIME STORY TO THE SCREEN**

*Everyone's Hero* began as a bedtime story that IDT Entertainment founder and chairman Howard Jonas wrote for his children. The story of a young boy who overcomes the odds and several harrowing and amusing situations to travel across the country

and achieve something he never thought possible, doing it as any good batter would: He just keeps swinging.

“I had been telling the story of Yankee Irving to my kids for years. It was one of their favorites. They just loved how the family stuck together and how a young boy could overcome all sorts of obstacles to become a hero to his family,” Jonas recalls. “One day, I told the story to our creative executives and everyone thought it would be a great film.”

Jonas says there was never any question of who should direct the project. “I always knew I wanted to bring in the biggest hero I could think of to direct. To me, there is no bigger hero than Christopher Reeve,” Jonas says.

Through mutual connections, Jonas reached Reeve, who invited Jonas and Robert Kurtz, an IDT Entertainment creative development executive, to his home to discuss the project. Reeve was immediately drawn to the story of Yankee Irving. “He related to the vision of a boy’s perseverance and overall theme of love between parents and their kids,” says Jonas. “We left him a copy of the story and as we drove back, both Rob and I really felt that we had just experienced something very transforming. To be honest, even if Christopher hadn’t ended up making the movie, I would still think of that day as incredibly special.”

Appropriately enough, the decision to do the movie was a family affair, as Jonas recalls. “Apparently that night, Christopher’s son Will had picked up the story and started reading it. When (his mother) Dana called everyone for dinner, Will said he couldn’t come down because he was in the middle of reading a great story. After he was done, Dana read it to Christopher. The next morning, we had a phone call and he agreed to do the movie,” Jonas says.

Producer Ron Tippe says: “There's no question in my mind the reason that Christopher Reeve was in love with this story was because

of its meaning. The story is about a young boy who has to keep on swinging. If you look at Chris' life, and I don't mean post-accident, I mean from day one; that was his philosophy. That vision that he had -- of never giving up, of believing in oneself, is a beautiful thing and certainly informed the film. And Dana Reeve (executive producer and voice of Emily, Yankee's mother) was marvelous and equally committed to those ideals, in the film and in life," Tippe says.

Producer Igor Khait says: "I've never been involved with a project that meant so much to the filmmakers on a personal level. What's really amazing about the making of this movie is how everyone who came in contact with it fell under its spell. It was impossible to work on the film and not have it grow into a labor of love. This kind of passion for filmmaking helps you overcome the most incredible obstacles. I guess that's what the movie is about anyway: prevailing against all odds because you believe in what you're doing."

Reeve worked closely with writer Robert Kurtz to transform Howard Jonas' bedtime story into a movie. He completed much of the storyboarding and prep work before his death. Soon after, Janet Healy joined IDT Entertainment as president of animation and brought in two animation veterans to direct and to continue Reeve's vision. Daniel St. Pierre, an alumnus of Disney and DreamWorks animation, and Colin Brady, an ILM and Pixar veteran, stepped in, with Reeve's spirit and intention in mind. St. Pierre joined the team first.

"I knew Dan when we both worked at Disney," Healy explains. "I was heading up the use of computer graphics in the traditional movies and he was the fellow who was pushing for the use of painterly artwork in 2-D animation. So, *Tarzan* was the first time we started to work together. He oversaw what was one of the biggest selling points of *Tarzan*, which was deep canvas - the moving shots through the brush strokes. After we both left

Disney, we went to DreamWorks. I was the producer on *Shark Tale* and I hired him as the production designer. I knew he was a visionary in our industry for movies that had great camerawork and a great look. I came to IDT after *Shark Tale* and the movie was underway in Toronto but, after Chris' death, not really finding its way. That's when I brought Dan in."

Healy adds that often at least two directors helm animated films. "It's because there are so many places to be at one time, so many departments to oversee and so many tasks, it's really hard for one person to do it alone. We started looking for a partner for Dan, knowing that Dan comes from production design and from layout; we knew that we had the look of the movie in really great hands, and knowing that Dan is a really great storyteller, we felt really good there too. So, we were looking for someone to complement him, someone who had an animation background. One of our favorite movies is *Toy Story II* and one of the people who really shaped that film in a big way was Colin Brady. Dan met with Colin and they just seemed like they were a good team. They're both funny and smart about the choices they make as directors. Between them, they have very strong specialties and they are both the full package," Healy says.

"The thing that attracted me to the movie in the first place was the idea -- and it was Christopher Reeve's idea -- of this whole keep-on-swinging kind of perseverance in the face of adversity that Yankee Irving has," says Daniel St. Pierre. "That theme was very important to me. It had such honesty and sincerity and heart. I took it upon myself to make sure that we retained the spirit of the film that Christopher was originally making and I was steadfast and absolutely adamant that we had to do that. In fact, after one of the first cuts of the movie, Dana (Reeve), said, 'This is a movie that Christopher would have

wanted to make.’ That validated it for me, I felt really good about that afterwards.”

*Everyone’s Hero* was a labor of love for all concerned and it was crucial to everyone to produce a movie that reflected Christopher Reeve’s vision and spirit. “We were determined to complete the movie Christopher Reeve began,” says Janet Healy. “We put together the best team of experienced creative people, alongside our producers and Dan. Our mandate was to honor Christopher Reeve’s vision and, in many respects, the way he lived his life. The theme of never giving up resonated with Chris and became the backbone of the film.”

Brady says he was deeply honored to help realize Christopher Reeve’s vision and adds that he had been a big fan since childhood. “In fact, the first movie I ever made when I was eight years old was based on his movie *Superman*. I was so excited after seeing it that I went home from the theater and made little characters out of clay and made a stop-motion film based on *Superman*. So, to know that he was part of this project and to be able to help bring his integrity to it, that’s what appealed to me,” Brady says.

## **THE STORY**

“The movie fires on so many levels,” says St. Pierre. “It’s a comedy. It’s an adventure. It’s about friendship. It’s about following your dreams and sticking to it, even when it seems hopeless. It’s a heartwarming story about families. It has something for everyone, really. It is also Christopher Reeve and Dana Reeve’s movie and all those themes reflect them.”

*Everyone’s Hero* is the story of a young boy who, with the help of a talking baseball and a talking bat helps the New York Yankees win the 1932 World Series. But it’s not just about that, it’s the story of a father and a son, because Yankee’s mission begins because he believes it will help his father get his job back. But, to do this, Yankee

gets to jump on trains, leap off fire escapes, run through the woods, meet a bunch of interesting characters, and travel 1,000 miles to new places. I mean, don't you wish you could have done that? So, it's a romp and a road trip and a buddy picture, but the buddies happen to be a talking baseball and a talking bat and a little boy," says producer Ron Tippe.

Co-Director Colin Brady notes that the story also intrigued him because it was about the triumph of the underdog. "Yankee loves baseball but, at first, he thinks he doesn't have the talent for it. So, this certainly discourages him and he gives up on the game. He learns not to give up on his dreams because he has to overcome all these obstacles to bring Babe Ruth's bat back to him, thereby saving his dad's job. In doing this unselfish act, he learns all the tools and skills he needs to actually be a good baseball player and plenty of life lessons as well. So, this boy, who at first, doesn't seem to have the stuff required to do all the amazing things he does in the course of the film, really rises to the occasion. He seems to be that underdog in each of us."

His companion, a discarded and decidedly cantankerous baseball named Screwie, initially doesn't seem the sort of character anyone would want around for a long - or even short - journey. His blunt manner results from a lingering disenchantment directly related to his failure at baseball, like Yankee.

"Screwie kind of represents Yankee's inner thoughts because only he can hear the baseball speak. And instead of saying, 'Hang in there, kid, just keep trying,' the baseball actually says the opposite. He says, 'Baseball is a field of broken dreams.' And then we learn that Screwie has a very sad story - during his one appearance in a major league game, he fouled out of the stadium and nobody came to look for him. It was his moment to shine and instead he was forgotten. But, at a pivotal moment in their cross-country journey, Screwie

encourages Yankee and gives him hope and Yankee does likewise for Screwie. And they both end up regaining their confidence and self-respect and rekindling their love of the game,” says Brady.

Through various misadventures, Yankee and Screwie rescue a mellifluous Southern belle named Darlin’ who also happens to be Babe Ruth’s lucky bat. The trio’s friendship offered the directors several creative, character-driven comedic opportunities that always had to be tethered to a certain level of reality.

“Yankee goes on the road with these two fantasy characters, Screwie and Darlin,’ whom he manifests out of his needs – for attention, guidance and his love of baseball. All of that comes into play and they become alive for him and the dynamics, comedy and situations between them are born out of the fact that the ball and the bat hate each other and Yankee’s in the middle,” St. Pierre explains. “So, we had to create certain rules for the characters and hopefully, if we followed them, audiences will believe that they are actual personalities, actual characters and will go along for the ride. For instance, Darlin’ has to be carried; she doesn’t have her own locomotion. So, there was a limit to the fantastical element that kept it grounded in a kind of reality and as long as we respected that, we had the fun of a talking bat and a talking ball and the absurd situation of a boy talking to them while nobody else can hear them.”

## **THE VOICES**

It was, of course, the human voices that initially gave the characters life. While Yankee, Screwie, Darlin’ and company began on the page, in script and storyboard form, many of their characteristics were informed by the actors who voiced them.

The impressive roster of actors includes Rob Reiner, Whoopi Goldberg, William H. Macy, Mandy Patinkin, Raven-Symoné, Brian Dennehy and newcomer Jake T. Austin. All the actors wanted to help



complete Christopher Reeve's vision and fell for the story of Yankee Irving.

"Generally, we tried to have storyboards that would begin the process so we'd know where to go," says St. Pierre. "We usually start out with what we call a 'scratch recording' which is so we're able to build a reel that gives us an idea of what the movie is going to be like. In fact, Ron Tippe did the scratch dialogue for Screwie - he *was* Screwie for the longest time. Then we'd go record the voice of the actors. It's an amazing experience to watch actors do this, as they try new things and suddenly land in a very comfortable place that feels original but completely right. That's where the characters begin to develop. Sometimes it was verbatim to the page and sometimes it wasn't, but that's always where the treasure was, when the character begins to speak on its own."

Of course when you have the kind of talent we had behind the microphone, that was a great gift," adds Brady. "The actors gave us a lot of ideas through their performance, in a visual respect, but specifically, vocally. We loved little nuances, imperfections, any stutter or stammer. That's like gold to an animator."

"Rob Reiner as Screwie is the quintessential foul ball," says St. Pierre. "He did a terrific job with Screwie's sort of disgruntled leave-me-alone-I'd-rather-sit-here-and-rot-in-peace attitude. Of course, he begins as this embittered thing and becomes a real pal to Yankee, in spite of himself, and actually ends up bringing him out of his despair. And Rob has been a comedian, actor, writer, producer and director, so he knew how to serve that whole emotional arc as well as mine the humor in it. It was a little intimidating to meet him and work with him at first. What was great was he was an artist that I got to not only collaborate with but also I got to learn from him on this project."

“Rob has such a wonderful sense of comic timing – he knew exactly when a line was landing and when it wasn’t and how to say it better than anything we could think up,” Brady adds.

As a lifelong baseball aficionado, Reiner brought a keen and personal insight to his character who is a baseball. *Everyone’s Hero* also marks Reiner’s debut as an animated character.

“I love baseball. I’m a ridiculously huge fan, so it was the perfect opportunity for me,” says Reiner. “As a kid, I used to go to 50 to 60 games a year. Now, as an adult, I have sons and a daughter who love baseball. I take them to games all the time, I probably get to 20, 30 games a year. Plus, I’ve never been involved in a feature-length animated film, so it was a real thrill to be a part of it.”

He points out that the story of Screwie and Yankee also appealed to him because the lessons they learn through their adventures change their outlook and are inextricably linked not just to baseball but also to life itself.

“Even though Screwie is curmudgeonly at first, he softens up, even as he constantly gives Yankee a dose of reality. And the two of them come together and find each other and find baseball again because they learn not to give up. And that’s a lot like baseball itself and it’s a great metaphor for life. I mean, you can be down by ten, 12 runs at the bottom of the ninth inning and you can still win – if you keep trying,” Reiner adds.

The biggest trial for Reiner was creating Screwie in the void of a recording studio. “It was a challenge – I mean, you’re sitting by yourself and interacting with characters you don’t see. So, I relied heavily on the directors and the other people making the film because they had the vision of how it was going to lay out and what the tone needed to be,” he says.

The fact that Screwie wasn’t human per se didn’t affect Reiner’s portrayal. “For me, Screwie was a character with real emotions –

anger, sadness, humor – all the things that come with playing a part,” Reiner continues. “So, it was easy to forget that he was an inanimate object. He could be a person except that he is a baseball. The whole idea is to try to bring him to life, to give him a soul. And that’s just like any other kind of acting.

As fan and a student of baseball history, one of Reiner’s favorite parts of *Everyone’s Hero* is when Yankee, Screwie and Darlin’ hook up with a busload of players heading for a game in the Negro League. On this bus, Yankee literally finds his footing and Screwie begins to recall what he loved about baseball.

“You know, my father was a big New York Giants fan until Jackie Robinson came into the major leagues. And then he became a Dodger fan because the Dodgers were the first team to break the color line. And that was very significant, not only for baseball but for America. I think it’s an important section of the film, about the history of the game and this country, of course told through the journey of Yankee Irving,” Reiner says.

Whoopi Goldberg voices Darlin,’ Babe Ruth’s lucky – and purloined – bat. Her honeyed southern accent and slightly diva-esque attitude constantly infuriates Screwie but like the irascible Screwie, she too proves to have a huge heart.

Goldberg found a kindred spirit in her character. “Well, Darlin’ is Babe Ruth’s bat, so she is the Queen of the Louisville Sluggers,” says the Oscar®-winning actress. “And when the filmmakers approached me to play her, they showed me some very raw animation of the story and I saw Darlin’ and thought, there I am! I knew it was me the minute I saw her. She didn’t have dreads or anything; she did have these very long, luxurious lashes. She was quite the woman!”

Christopher Reeve had directed Goldberg previously, in the telefilm "In the Gloaming." "Christopher's spirit was involved throughout production," Goldberg says. "He was a friend and I would do anything for him, so I knew I had to do this. All the filmmakers carried on his commitment - this was as much a labor of love for Chris as it was for the kids who will actually get to see it. So it made me feel quite good to be a little piece of the pie."

Goldberg adds that adults could learn a thing or two from *Everyone's Hero* and enjoy themselves as much as the children. "The idea of persistence towards a goal you set for yourself, the notion that there is nothing we can't do if we put our minds to it; it's always the best to see that in young people, in kids. But, there are also great lessons in that for adults. We often think we've failed, we're done. And that's not how we are as children. We would keep going and going, it's only as adults that we decide we're out of the running," she says.

She adds that, like Darlin,' children and adults can learn a thing or two about themselves in striving to attain their goals and dreams. "Along the way, Darlin' learns about team work, about doing things with other people and not making it all about herself. So, it's really a slice of life lesson told in a beautifully realized fashion," she says.

Goldberg finds voicing animated characters to be "more freeing than being in front of the camera. "It's just fun. To me, it's the greatest expression you can have and you have more options when you're in animation because you can play a bat or a hyena or whatever. That's really why I became an actor; I thought you could do anything as an actor but, in the real world, people have limitations in their minds. But, in animation, there are no limits. Nobody says, oh, well, you've put on some weight or gosh, you know, it turns out you're black and we don't think this part would ever be something you could relate to. You don't hear any of that in animation. For me that's

heaven because you can literally do anything or be anything,” Goldberg says.

Goldberg’s passion for and innate understanding of Darlin,’ as well as her process for communicating that, thrilled and mesmerized the two directors. “Whoopi is very, very smart and she would not read a line unless she understood what it was about and she brought so many of her own ideas to Darlin’ that were so much better than what we had,” says Brady. “Very often, she would say, ‘Well, I don’t think Darlin’ would say it that way, let’s try it this way,” Brady recalls.

“Whoopi was an absolute delight to work with because she imbued the part with so much that wasn’t on the page. And once she found the character, she knew exactly how Darlin’ should speak and it was extraordinary to watch this unfold,” says St. Pierre.

William H. Macy plays Lefty, the would-be pitcher of the Chicago Cubs and a hapless thief, hired to steal Darlin’ from Babe Ruth. Without his lucky bat, Babe Ruth will be unable to deliver his trademark home runs and the World Series will go to Chicago. However, Yankee Irving, Screwie and Darlin’ foil Lefty’s plans, which results in some embarrassing and painful situations for the wannabe thief. Taking Macy through these sequences sometimes proved slightly embarrassing and painful for the directors.

“William H. Macy is a fantastic actor, one of my favorites, and has been in so many classics and brought so much professionalism to the project. So, of course, we had him play our often ludicrous villain, and sometimes we would say, ‘Well, could you just read the line a little goofier?’ I’m certain he was used to getting much more sophisticated direction, but he was a great sport about the whole thing,” recalls Brady.

Macy, who has played his share of oddball characters, had no problems incarnating Lefty, adds St. Pierre. “He was an absolute dream. Right off the bat, he was Lefty – he gave him all these quirky

mannerisms and a little bit of Chicago. And we wanted to make him a guy who was really inept, a bad liar, a clumsy person who managed to become a pitcher for a major league baseball team. He likes to cheat to get ahead, to take short cuts so he doesn't have to really do what it takes. He's the complete opposite of Yankee, actually. And Bill understood that right away and really ran with it."

As it turns out, Chicago baseball came naturally to Macy and the tale of *Everyone's Hero* spoke to him for several reasons. "I'm an old Chicago boy and this had the old Chicago written all over it. For me, Wrigley Field is as close to heaven as you can get. I used to live on Waveland when Dave Kingman played for the Cubs. Every once in a while, you'd hear a SMACK and a baseball would be rolling down the street. Besides that, I thought it was a great story, really well written and heartfelt, and I thought the sketches I saw were original and stylish," Macy says.

He adds that the actual voice work did not come as naturally as the Chicago setting. Lefty, who finds himself in all sorts of uncomfortable physical situations, plays to Macy's strengths and allowed him to explore some new ones. "I've done a bit of voice work over the years, yet I still find it challenging," says Macy. "I have a tendency to be a physical actor and, of course, it doesn't show up on a microphone. But Lefty gets the stuffing whooped out of him throughout the film so I got to do a lot of oofing and ahfing. Sometimes we'd get lucky and I'd make a funny sound and they'd animate it," Macy says. "I also have a tendency to read the lines as written, so it was interesting to be encouraged to make stuff up, to go for the joke. It was fun to sort of rock out and come up with all kinds of variations."

Newcomer Jake T. Austin portrays young Yankee Irving. Like Yankee, Austin is a baseball nut. Unlike Yankee, he is quite good at it. "We couldn't have asked for a better Yankee than Jake," says Brady.

“He knows all the stats and it was very natural for him to talk about not just baseball but to get inside the emotional aspects of Yankee. He was just a goldmine, a wonder to work with and very talented and smart. He helped us a lot, in terms of our writing and storyboarding and certainly helped shape the character.”

“We had an initial outing where I met him and a bunch of his friends on a baseball field,” adds St. Pierre. “It was freezing cold. And they played a game of pick-up, very much like we have in the movie and we filmed the whole thing. We asked him to do some typical things, like to show us his stance and how he threw. And we grabbed some of that, showed it to our animators and started to incorporate some of Jake’s mannerisms into that of Yankee. Jake is pretty good at baseball but it was also fun to see him make mistakes. He’d miss a pop fly and get really angry at himself, there was a little bit of Yankee in that and some of it seeped into the character.”

In fact, Austin is not just a baseball fanatic, he is a Yankee devotee. One of the highlights of *Everyone’s Hero* for him was meeting Joe Torre who plays – what else? – The Yankees’ manager. “I’m the biggest baseball fan you ever want to meet, the biggest Yankee fan,” Austin says. “I have a baseball collection of many things, from autographed balls to pictures with players. I painted my room blue for the Yankees. Meeting Joe Torre was just crazy; it was a dream come true. When I got this project, I was stunned.”

While Austin, who was 10 when he recorded the part of Yankee, certainly enjoyed the project, he liked certain scenes better than others. “Some scenes are more melodramatic than others and those were more difficult for me. The scenes between Yankee and Screwie, when he yells at Screwie, those were more like me and were easier. Fortunately, we have a very talented producer. Ron Tippe helped me with my lines, taught me how to breathe correctly. Ron and Colin and

Dan helped me become a better actor, they deserve a lot of the credit.”

One of the people Yankee Irving meets along the way is a young woman named Marti, voiced by Raven-Symoné. Marti teaches Yankee Irving the physics of the perfect pitch as she helps fend off some bullies with some strategically thrown apples.

“I thought that *Everyone’s Hero* was a great story of someone coming into themselves and sometimes you have to take some risks to follow your dreams,” Raven-Symoné points out. “And I like that Marti, who’s a bit tomboyish, helps him along the way, not just in terms of learning about baseball but by becoming his friend. And why not? You always need a girl to push you along a little bit.”

Raven-Symoné, an animation veteran, enjoys voice-over work but can’t help bringing some physicality to her performance, even if it never ends up on film. “I like animation because I can come to work in my pajamas,” she says. “I had a great relationship with everyone in the recording booth; we laughed a bunch and had fun. But, as an actress, I’ve done a lot of comedy and most of my emotion comes through my face and I tend to favor big gestures. I like to move around a lot and, hopefully, that comes through in my voice. I don’t go as crazy as I would on television but I do try to embody the character.”

While the Georgia native is, of course, a fan of the Atlanta Braves, she doesn’t see *Everyone’s Hero* as “a baseball movie.” “I think the story is about following your dreams, whether that be baseball or basketball or swimming or singing, whatever your dream is. Sometimes that means taking chances and sometimes it’s a lonely road. But, like Yankee, along the way you make great friends who help you overcome obstacles. You see some of that in Yankee and Marti. She’s one of the people he meets along his journey, and she



teaches him a few things that help him on the path towards realizing his dreams,” Raven-Symoné says.

Mandy Patinkin, who voices Yankee’s father, had known Christopher Reeve since they were students together at Juilliard. “He was an old dear friend,” says Patinkin. “When the accident happened, it changed the world for everyone, in terms of having an inspirational figure who was just off the charts. When Chris asked me to do anything, whether it was a benefit for the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation or a movie or a recording for a children’s book, I was there. I think Chris and Dana’s life was about hope and belief and promise. And *Everyone’s Hero* is a story of a child who believes that a supposedly unattainable dream can come true. He is the little boy in Chris and in all of us. This boy is a believer and that is what Chris and Dana Reeve were.”

*Everyone’s Hero* is also the veteran actor’s first animated feature and Patinkin relished every minute of it. Playing Yankee’s father allowed him to revisit his own childhood as well as his sons’ childhoods. Like William H. Macy, Patinkin was a Chicago baseball fan, though he rooted for the cross town team.

“I loved being able to talk to Yankee, as his father, through the memory of my own boys, who are now grown,” says Patinkin. “And my father loved baseball; he would take me to Comiskey Park every Saturday to watch the White Sox. So he was with me in the booth for a line or two. I always wanted to do one of these and now I want to do more. I particularly loved seeing those tiny sketches initially and then early, jerky computer images that then become more fluid. Then with some of the voices added, it takes on a feeling that’s unbelievably real.”

Patinkin approached the process slightly differently than the other actors in that he often did not perform just his part but others as well. “Mandy had the most fascinating method - he read the other

guy's lines to himself and repeated lines and out of that came this outpouring of performance," says St. Pierre. "It was incredible to watch. What you get is this incredibly deep-rooted, soulful, heartfelt thing. You believe that he really is Stanley Irving, Yankee's father, because all this warmth and sweetness comes out in this extraordinary, golden voice."

Several other actors contributed in large and small ways to *Everyone's Hero*, from Richard Kind, who plays a helpful hobo and a maitre d', to Robert Wagner, who voiced the Yankees' general manager. Brian Dennehy brought the legendary Babe Ruth to life but unlike the other actors, his schedule did not allow him to record his lines in the usual fashion.

"Brian was working in London, and he was not available for us in the studio," says St. Pierre. "We had to record his dialogue via telephone lines. So we never got to meet him but directing over the phone is an interesting experience. We described what Babe Ruth would be doing during the scene and everything we knew about it and then Brian imagined and interpreted it. Darn if Babe Ruth didn't come out of his mouth when he delivered the lines. We forgot he was Brian Dennehy the actor, he just was Babe Ruth. It was a great fit."

## **FROM VOICES TO ANIMATED CHARACTERS**

Once the directors culled all the voice performances, it was time to transform them into animated characters and to create the world in which they lived. This is when their duties divided and also coalesced. They shared the responsibilities, working together on the storyboards, tag-teaming the recording sessions, deciding what bits should stay, collaborating on selection of the actors' voice performances. However, each brought their particular specialties to bear on the look and feel of the film and characters.

“My forte is in visual design and layout and camera stuff, while Colin came in as a CG animation specialist,” explains St. Pierre. “So, I spent the bulk of my time with the art department, the layout team, with an eye towards design and the color aspects and the final output of the film.”

Brady says that their different specialties and backgrounds were complementary and made for a richer collaboration. Which is not to suggest they always agreed on everything. “We were like Lennon and McCartney; our differences were really the strengths of the film,” says Brady. “Dan’s background in art direction and production design on such beautiful films as *Tarzan* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was tremendous. And I think he brought a certain kind of live action sensibility to the film as well. My background is much more cartoon-y, from my school experience at CalArts to Pixar. I think I contributed more of a comic style and attitude. I think these opposites ended up being the best of both worlds. For instance, there were times I might take it into a goofy direction and Dan would say, ‘That just doesn’t feel like this film.’ In a similar vein, this is an animated film and there is a reason for that, otherwise we would have shot it live action. So, all in all, it ended up being a very good balance of skills and talents.”

St. Pierre found inspiration for the look of the film in the paintings of Norman Rockwell, whose work depicted simple American vignettes realistically but with candor, warmth and humor.

“Although *Everyone’s Hero* is set during the Depression, we didn’t want it to be monochromatic or sepia-toned or in any way somber. We were trying to make it look as though Norman Rockwell had a hand in the design. If you look at a Rockwell drawing, he tended to find characters with interesting faces and his color choices are similar to ours. Ours were a little more saturated because, I think

especially for youngsters, its fun to see a more colorful, lively palette. But, tonally, it's very similar to Rockwell's style," says St. Pierre.

Like Rockwell's studies of ordinary American life, St. Pierre says the camerawork was similarly straightforward. Much of this had to do with the atmosphere he and director of photography Jan Carlee were trying to create. Some of this stylistic economy was more practical.

"We had a very short schedule in which to complete the movie," St. Pierre explains. "But, all that worked to our advantage. It kept us moving at a faster rate so we had to always consider if that extra 'dazzle' was really important to the story. It forced us to focus on what was essential to the story and the staging of the scenes. Jan Carlee really understood that. He was very economical in the way he used the camera but he had a real style and sense of play in terms of how he moved the camera.'

Carlee's "camera" is programmed into the computer but other than that, the process is akin to a live action movie. "We set up the CG models with break-away walls so the camera can get around and the ceiling can come off. And we arranged it just like you'd shoot a live action film; even though we have a mathematical camera, the camera still does need to operate that space," Carlee explains.

One of Carlee's biggest challenges was to be true to the era without seeming overly nostalgic. He had to create an artful balance that was true to the story and period, but would also underscore the film's universal themes and appeal to modern audiences.

"As head of layout, I'm responsible for the visual storytelling," says Carlee. "And the camera ends up becoming one of the characters in the show, whether it's an observer or an active participant. Because it is a period piece, a lot of the shots have a more classical feel, in the style of old movie making, not a lot of really crazy camerawork. At the same time, we have to balance that kind of cinematography with

elements that acknowledge a nostalgic feel but find a contemporary audience.”

Some of that, Carlee adds, came not from the eye-popping sequences that typify animation, but from the film’s smaller but no less intense emotional core. “*Everyone’s Hero* had to work on an emotional level and have a lot of heart. So, while a lot of animated films are lensed so that everything is set up for a big spectacle, often that distances the audience. I thought this needed to have a more intimate feel to embrace the emotional content and that’s how we staged it,” Carlee says.

That said, Yankee, Screwie and Darlin’ absolutely enjoy some phenomenal adventures and they provided Carlee a few “spectacles.” One of the most complicated – and for Carlee, very satisfying – begins in Penn Station and veers between moving trains before ending in another excruciating predicament for Lefty.

“There were three train sequences,” Carlee explains. “They began with Yankee going to Penn station and, being a New Yorker, I have a great appreciation for that piece of architecture. It was very rewarding to recreate it for the film. It also offered a lot of cinematic possibilities, in terms of staging, and allowed the audience to see it as it was back then, to feel like they were there. Later on, Yankee sneaks into a train and then we had some fun business, where he does all kinds of kid stuff, like slithering under seats. It ends with a huge chase, which was very exciting for the layout department. We took the initial storyboards and did a lot of visual embellishing. We really tried to dial it up. It was more than just finding shots; we tried to create a lot of sight gags and business for the characters. It was very challenging and incredibly rewarding and lots of fun.”

Key components of the camerawork were the color and lighting design. These began with beautiful renderings that now hang in the

hallways of IDT. “The movie has a really rich palette,” says Janet Healy. “The colors and the camerawork in conjunction draw the eye to certain parts of the frame in a sophisticated, viewer-friendly way. The other thing is that the characters and their world are so much of the same cloth that you can be transported. A lot of times in animated movies, characters don’t fit into the background. *Everyone’s Hero* has a level of design that is one of its real strengths. Sam Michlap is the head of our visual development in Los Angeles. He is one of the best colorists in the business; he is just a fantastic designer and painter. He did a whole series of lighting keys; they are just beautiful paintings, they are framed and hung here in the hallway. Those are what the lighters used as their references. So, it really does come from a well thought out, painterly world that is translated into computer graphics.”

Michlap adds that his color scheme reflected not only the story but also the emotions conveyed from scene to scene. “We had to decide which sequence should be what color and how to tie it to the story. But, for instance, there was some concern about the color sequences at first because it is set in the 1930s and all the photography from that period is in black and white. Obviously, there was tons of color in the world but that’s not our association with this era. Color works basically on emotion, so color scheme for a given scene was determined by its emotion. There are high and low notes to color and ranges to them, but overall, the tones we went for tried to reflect the optimistic spirit of Yankee Irving. So we tried to be as robust with the colors as we could,” Michlap explains.

Colin Brady says that Yankee Irving’s adventures and struggles and the film’s 1930s setting, give the film a unique and engaging emotional quality. The combination of animated people and fantastical manifestations like Screwie and Darlin’ offered endless

comedic opportunities but also, ultimately, affected the film's character designs.

"So many animated films have talking animals or cars, some kind of fantasy creature, and of course, ours does too, with Screwie and Darlin' and you couldn't ask for a better contrast," says Brady. "The comic tension between them is hilarious and we never ran out of gags we could do with them. But the humor had to come out of the situation and the emotional arc. However, the humans are much less forgiving, in terms of animation, because we see them every day and if they were a little off, it looked odd. If a baseball is talking and his mouth is open a bit too wide, there's nothing in the real world to compare it to. If we stylize the humans' design, the animation is more forgiving. I worked on films in the past, especially at ILM, where we actually tried to recreate humans photo-realistically and we've done a pretty good job. But, oddly, as you get closer to reality, the further away you are. It looks real but something is not quite right. Now if you put that character next to a talking baseball, it really seems off. So, we stylized Yankee Irving's design. We made his head and ears a little bigger, for instance. That helps the character from being scrutinized with the standard of absolute reality."

Supervising Animator Mile Chaffe says the animation team's biggest challenge was to convey the characters' emotional lives. Occasionally, this meant heightening Yankee's reactions and anthropomorphizing Screwie only to a certain point.

"It's a fine line, in terms of copying what we do in real life versus what you actually see in animation," Chaffe points out. "If we were to animate precisely what we do in reality, we'd get a very dead kind of look that isn't fun to watch. So the trick is to make sure that the rigs are good so we can get a lot of good facial animation. Dealing with human characters is always the toughest because we recognize what they are doing and if we get it wrong, the audience

knows it," he says. "Screwie was a challenge in that we had to make it look like a hardball but still has some life, to give him all the character he needed to have some fun."

The animation team relied on filmed reference shots of baseballs, including Austin's pick-up game, to begin to create Screwie. After that, it was imagination coupled with trial and error.

"We had to create a set of standards, like, how does his mouth move? How do we maintain the look of a hardball but still allow the squash and stretch we need to get the life we need out of him?" says Chaffe. "The good thing about shooting the reference, even the simplest things, like touching the ball and watching it move is that I don't really have to guess at something like that then. I'd rather put my efforts into the characters' performance. If I have that reference, the movement just becomes more accurate and believable. And if it's believable, people will invest themselves in the picture or the shot."

As Screwie is a *talking* ball, design and placement of his mouth was, of course, important. Supervising Animator Morgan Ginsberg concentrated on one of Screwie's first soliloquies and worked closely with Dan St. Pierre and Colin Brady on this anatomical conundrum.

"Screwie and Yankee have just become acquainted and Screwie is telling Yankee the story of how he came to be. I was trying to come up with simple mouth shapes, very graphic and very readable. Dan and Colin and I worked on getting the stitching line to come down so that it would hook up with the corners of his mouth and line up almost like his bottom lip. It was organically integrated as part of him as opposed to something that was pasted on."

Another animation challenge was the amount of characters populating the story, coupled with a very short production schedule. Supervising Animator Peter Lepeniotis explains: "Certain animation studios will assign supervisors to a character. We had to move a little



faster on this one which was good, mostly, because we had less time to pontificate and more time to actually work and get our characters out as quickly as possible. So we all worked on the characters but, for instance, Yankee, who is the lead and has to carry the entire film, has to carry more of the weight. So, when he had shots with Yankee, we tended to put more emphasis on those sequences. It's his story and we basically helped him along through it, digitally manipulating him as we went. Having said that, this is probably the largest cast I've ever seen on an animated feature, from little kids to mothers to grandparents. We littered cityscapes with them, and we had to create facially expressive emotions for each of them."

Much of this was accomplished during pre-production, for practical reasons, and was honed throughout the production. "These facial shapes take a long time because we have to design each one, including the eyebrows, eyes, mouths, all the limitations of head movements," adds Lepeniotis. "This has to be done to set parameter. That was a huge amount of work when you consider there are at least ten talking characters. Of course, Yankee was number one," he says.

Like the filmed baseball references, the animators required physical real-life examples of facial articulation and body movement. In a time-honored fashion, the animators photographed themselves. "It's a traditional method, used for at least 80 years. This kind of reference is always extremely important, whether it be done with mirrors or cameras. The nice thing about having it videotaped is that we didn't spend any time trying things out over and over. Reality is the best reference and also you can isolate certain actions, like how the face stretches or wrinkles with certain expressions," Lepeniotis explains.

While the photographic references were handy tools, Brady adds they were just templates to be use in concert with the animators' imaginations and, of course, the talented actors. "All kinds of great ideas come from real life; all the things you don't think about when you're animating a shot come from getting out of your chair and acting the shot out," says Brady. "So whether it was Yankee swinging a bat and missing and falling on his butt, or a very emotional close-up, we required that every single shot had a reference we could study, to use all that information. However, if the reference couldn't entirely do what we needed, we were certainly free to deviate from it and come up with something more playful. With Screwie, for example, we referenced the footage of Rob Reiner reading his lines. But, because Screwie is a ball that bounces all over the place, we had to pick and choose where and when to draw from reality and when to have pure animation fun."

The fun was always grounded in the emotional truth of Yankee, Screwie and Darlin's quest to reunite Darlin' and Babe Ruth, to vindicate Yankee's father and, in many ways, to prove to Yankee as much as anyone, that he could persevere, especially when circumstances didn't completely go his way. It was also uniquely anchored to Christopher and Dana Reeve.

\* \* \* \*

### **ABOUT THE CAST**

**ROB REINER** voices Screwie, the wise cracking ball that enjoys solitude versus being around people. On their journey, with the help of Irving and Darlin', he rediscovers his dreams and they become reality.

In addition to his position as principal and co-founder of Castle Rock Entertainment, Rob Reiner is a well-known actor and one of Hollywood's top directors.

Prior to his directorial career, Reiner acted in many television and feature films and wrote for the Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour. It was, however, his Emmy® Award winning portrayal of Michael Stivic, the son-in-law of Archie Bunker in the hit series *All in the Family*, that made him a household name.

Prior to the creation of Castle Rock, Reiner's credits as a feature film director included the now-legendary *This is Spinal Tap*, *The Sure Thing*, *Stand By Me*, and the much loved fantasy *The Princess Bride*, adapted for the screen by Academy Award winner William Goldman from his original novel.

Castle Rock Entertainment's first feature film release in 1989 was Reiner's now-classic *When Harry Met Sally...*, a chronicle of romance in the '80s which was both a critical and box office success, earning him Best Director nominations from both the Hollywood Foreign Press and the Directors Guild of America. He next directed *Misery*, a psychological thriller based on Stephen King's bestseller of the same title, which earned Kathy Bates an Oscar in 1990. The mega box office hit *A Few Good Men*, starring Tom Cruise, Jack Nicholson and Demi Moore, followed in 1992, garnering another DGA Best Director nomination as well as four Academy Award nominations, including that for Best Picture. In 1994, *North* was released, starring Elijah Wood, Bruce Willis, Jon Lovitz, Jason Alexander and Julia Louis-Dreyfus. Reiner directed the hit comedy *The American President* in 1995, which starred Michael Douglas and Annette Bening. In 1996, *Ghosts of Mississippi* chronicled the re-prosecution of the murderer of civil rights leader Medgar Evers and starred Alec Baldwin, Whoopi Goldberg and James Woods. *The Story of Us*, starring Bruce Willis and Michelle Pfeiffer, followed in 1999.

Reiner's most recent films are the 2003 romantic comedies *Alex & Emma*, starring Kate Hudson and Luke Wilson, and 2005's *Rumor Has It...*, with Jennifer Aniston, Kevin Costner, Shirley MacLaine, and Mark Ruffalo.

In addition to his work behind the camera, Reiner has continued to act, appearing in such films as *Bullets Over Broadway*, *Bye Bye, Love*, *Sleepless In Seattle*, *The First Wives Club*, *Primary Colors*, *EDtv*, *The Muse*, and *Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star*.

Reiner has long been one of America's leaders on public policy issues ranging from early childhood development to environmental protection. In 1997, Rob and his wife Michele founded the I Am Your Child Foundation (now Parents' Action for Children) and began a national public awareness and engagement campaign to communicate the importance of early childhood development. The Foundation's efforts, including two White House conferences, a primetime network television special, numerous statewide initiatives and the distribution of over 8 million videos, have helped give American parents the tools to raise happy and healthy children. In 1998, Mr. Reiner led the fight to pass California Proposition 10, which, through First 5 California, now provides over \$600 million each year to early childhood development services.

**WHOOPI GOLDBERG** voices Darlin', a conceited, self absorbed, bat who expects nothing but the best and getting her way. She learns through the journey that sometimes you have to put causes and friends before yourself.

In 2002, Whoopi Goldberg became one of a very elite group of artists who have won the Grammy (Whoopi Goldberg, 1985), the Academy Award (*Ghost*, 1991), the Golden Globe (*The Color Purple*, 1985 and

*Ghost*, 1991), the Emmy (as host of AMC's *Beyond Tara: The Extraordinary Life of Hattie McDaniel*, 2002) and a Tony (as a producer of "Thoroughly Modern Millie," 2002). She is equally well-known for her humanitarian efforts on behalf of children, the homeless, human rights, education, substance abuse and the battle against AIDS, as well as many other causes and charities. Among her many charitable activities, Goldberg is a Goodwill Ambassador to the United Nations.

Born and raised in New York City, Goldberg worked in theatre and improvisation in San Diego and the Bay Area, where she performed with the Blake Street Hawkeyes theatre troupe. There, she created the characters that became *The Spook Show* and evolved into her hit Broadway show, Grammy Award-winning album and the HBO special that helped launch her career.

Goldberg made her motion picture debut in Steven Spielberg's film version of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, for which she earned an Academy Award nomination and a Golden Globe Award. Her performance in *Ghost* earned her the Academy Award and a Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actress. Goldberg has also appeared in such films as *Jumpin' Jack Flash*, *Clara's Heart*, *The Long Walk Home*, *Soapdish*, *The Player*, *Sarafina!*, *Sister Act*, *Made in America*, *Corrina, Corrina*, *The Lion King*, *Boys on the Side*, *Eddie*, *The Associate*, *Ghosts of Mississippi*, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, *Girl, Interrupted*, *Kingdom Come* and *Rat Race*, which reunited her with her *Ghost* director, Jerry Zucker. She voiced characters in the animated features *Racing Stripes* and *Doogal*.

On television, Goldberg appeared for five seasons on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, she co-starred with Jean Stapleton in *Bagdad Café* and hosted her own syndicated late-night talk show. She appeared in the Emmy-nominated HBO drama, *In the Gloaming*, directed by Christopher Reeve, as well as *The Wonderful*

*World of Disney's Rogers & Hammerstein's Cinderella* and *A Knight in Camelot* and appeared in the mini-series *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Magical Legend of the Leprechauns*. She starred in the NBC sitcom, *Goldberg*, which she executive produced with Carsey-Werner-Mandabach and Bonnie and Terry Turner. She appeared on Nick Jr.'s *Goldberg's Littleburg*, a series of three, half-hour TV specials set in The Preschool Capital of the World, which she also produces.

As she has in every other facet of her career, Goldberg has made her mark as a producer. She executive produced the Lifetime original drama series *Strong Medicine*, the longest-running original drama created for basic cable and the first cable show to go into syndication. Goldberg was also an executive producer of the musical, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, which won six Tony Awards, including Best Musical.

Goldberg has appeared on many television series and specials, including her own HBO specials, three-time host of ABC's *A Gala for the President at Ford's Theatre* and eight Comic Relief telecasts with Billy Crystal and Robin Williams. Goldberg received Emmy Award nominations for hosting the 66<sup>th</sup>, 68<sup>th</sup> and 71<sup>st</sup> Academy Awards telecasts and returned to host the 2002 telecast at the new Kodak Theatre.

Goldberg's TV movies include *It's a Very Merry Muppet Christmas Movie* for NBC and Showtime's *Good Fences*, co-producing and co-starring with Danny Glover. In early 2003, Goldberg returned to Broadway, co-starring with Charles "Roc" Dutton in August Wilson's acclaimed *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, which she also produced. She had last appeared on Broadway in 1997, in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

**JAKE T. AUSTIN** voices Yankee Irving, an ordinary 10-year-old boy with an extraordinary heart. Yankee embarks on a grand adventure restoring his family's honor, while making true friends along the journey. He believes dreams come true if you don't give up.

Eleven-year-old newcomer Jake T. Austin stars as the voice of Diego in the new animated Nick Jr. series *Go, Diego, Go!*. He has appeared on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, *Blue's Clues* and the film *Martin and Orlove*, as well as several commercials and voiceovers.

Austin will also be featured in the upcoming animated film *The Ant Bully*.

An avid sports fan, Jake loves baseball, soccer, basketball, skateboarding and snowboarding. He also enjoys traveling, especially to visit his Abuelo and other relatives in Puerto Rico. Jake lives in New York's Rockland County with his parents, Giny and Joey, and his younger sister, Ava.

**WILLIAM H. MACY** voices Lefty, the gross, disgusting henchman who will do anything to succeed and get what he wants, including the destruction of Irving, his family and their hero.

William H. Macy appears in the independent feature *Thank You for Smoking*, the animated feature *Doogal*, for which he voiced Brian the Snail and *Sahara*, opposite Matthew McConaughey and Penelope Cruz.

Macy co-stars in the independent feature *Bobby*. The film is based around fictionalized events leading up to the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy in 1968. Directed by Emilio Estevez, the film also stars Anthony Hopkins, Demi Moore, Lindsay Lohan, Sharon Stone, Christian Slater, Mandy Moore, Helen Hunt, Elijah Wood, Heather Graham, Laurence Fishburne, Martin Sheen, Shia

LeBeouf, Freddy Rodriguez and Ashton Kutcher. Macy also recently wrapped production on *Umney's Last Case* based on an anthology of Steven King short stories. The mini-series aired on TNT in 2006. Macy also recently completed production on *Edmond*, an adaptation of the David Mamet play, also starring Dylan Walsh, Julia Stiles, Joe Mantegna and Mena Suvari. Macy will soon begin work on *Bee Movie*, another animated feature.

Macy is best known for his portrayal of Jerry Lundergaard in *Fargo*, for which he received an Oscar nomination and won an Independent Spirit Award as Best Supporting Actor. He also garnered nominations for Funniest Supporting Actor in a Motion Picture (American Comedy Awards), Best Actor (Chicago Film Critics), Best Supporting Actor (Dallas/ Fort Worth Film Critics), and Best Actor in a Drama (International Press Academy).

Other films include the thriller *Cellular* starring opposite Kim Basinger, *The Cooler*, *Seabiscuit*, for which he earned a Golden Globe nomination, *Spartan*, *In Enemy Hands*, *Magnolia*, *Pleasantville*, *Happy Texas*, *State and Main*, *Jurassic Park 3*, *Focus*, *Welcome to Collinwood*, *Psycho*, *A Civil Action*, *Boogie Nights*, *Wag The Dog*, *Air Force One*, *Ghosts of Mississippi*, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *The Client*, *Shadows and Fog*, *Murder in the First*, *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, *Radio Days* and *Panic*.

In 2005, Macy was seen in TNT's *The Wool Cap*. Macy joined writing partner Steven Schachter for this new take on the 1962 comedy *Gigot*, which originally starred Jackie Gleason and was directed by Gene Kelly. Macy was nominated for an Emmy, a Golden Globe, and a SAG Award for his performance. He and Schachter, who also directed the piece, were also nominated for a Writers Guild Award. In addition, the movie was nominated for an Emmy and a Critics' Choice Award.



In 2002, Macy received outstanding critical acclaim for his role as Bill Porter in TNT's *Door to Door* opposite Kyra Sedgwick, Helen Mirren, Kathy Baker and Felicity Huffman. The movie, which Macy also co-wrote, tells the true story of Porter, an award-winning door-to-door salesman with cerebral palsy. The movie aired to unprecedented ratings for a TNT original movie premiere and received a SAG Award, Peabody Award, an AFI Award, a Critic's Choice Award, a Golden Satellite Award, a Writer's Guild nomination, an American Cinema Editors nomination and a Golden Globe nomination. The movie was nominated for 12 Emmys and won 6 including Outstanding Made for Television Movie as well as winning Macy the Outstanding Lead Actor in a Television Movie statue and Outstanding Writing for a Television Movie with Steven Schachter.

In 2003, Macy was seen in the Showtime Original Picture *Stealing Sinatra*, which depicts the 1963 botched kidnapping of Frank Sinatra, Jr. Macy received an Emmy nomination in the category of Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Miniseries or a Movie for his performance.

He received an Emmy nomination as Best Guest Actor in a Drama Series for his recurring role as Dr. David Morgenstern on *ER*. Macy also had a recurring role on Aaron Sorkin's *Sports Night* and was nominated for an Emmy for his performance. His movie of the week credits include *Reversible Errors*, *A Murderous Affair*, *Heart of Justice*, *Standoff at Marion*, and the miniseries *Andersonville*, *The Murder of Mary Phagan* and *The Awakening Land*. In addition to the politically charged BBC telefilm *The Writing on the Wall*, Macy also appeared in two Mamet vehicles, *The Water Engine* and Showtime's *Texan*. In 1999, he starred opposite his wife Felicity Huffman, on the TNT television film *A Slight Case of Murder* and received another Emmy nomination. Macy and his writing partner Steven Schachter

wrote the film and Schachter directed. Also with Schachter, Macy has written several television scripts.

In 1998, Macy was honored by Showest when he was named Best Supporting Actor of the Year for his body of work.

**MANDY PATINKIN** voices Yankee's Dad, who works at the famed Yankee Stadium where Babe Ruth's bat Darlin' is stolen.

Mandy Patinkin who is not only an accomplished actor; he is also a renowned tenor. He attended [Kenwood High School](#), [University of Kansas](#) and [Juilliard School of Drama](#). His first real break was when he played Che in [Evita](#) on [Broadway](#) in [1979](#). He went on to win a [Tony Award](#) for that role.

After this initial [musical theater](#) success he moved to [film](#), playing a number of parts in movies such as [Yentl](#) and [Ragtime](#), before returning to Broadway in 1984 to star in [Sunday in the Park with George](#), which saw him earn another Tony Award nomination.

He is beloved by fans for his inimitable portrayal of [Inigo Montoya](#) in [Rob Reiner's The Princess Bride](#).

Over the next decade he continued to appear in various movies such as [Dick Tracy](#) and [Alien Nation](#), on Broadway in [The Secret Garden](#) and released two solo albums called *Mandy Patinkin* and *Dress Casual*.

In [1994](#), he burst onto the [small screen](#) playing the role of Dr. Jeffrey Geiger on [CBS's Chicago Hope](#) and promptly won an [Emmy Award](#).

He returned to Broadway in [2000](#) in the New York Shakespeare Festival's [The Wild Party](#), earning another Tony Award nomination. He has also been seen in the [Showtime comedy-drama Dead Like Me](#).

He currently stars in the [CBS](#) crime drama [Criminal Minds](#).

**RAVEN-SYMONÉ** voices Marti, a fun-loving, energetic, tomboy who exemplifies “girl power.” She becomes a good friend of Yankee Irving’s who helps him through tough situations and in achieving his goal.

Raven-Symoné currently stars as Raven Baxter, a confident teen whose ability to see flashes of the future compel her to embark on a series of comical misadventures on the hit show, *That’s So Raven*. She also voices the character of Monique on the animated action/comedy series *Kim Possible*. She starred in the Disney Channel movie *The Cheetah Girls*.

Born in Atlanta, GA, she began her career in entertainment at age 3. Best known as the adorable Olivia on *The Cosby Show* and as Nicole on *Hangin’ with Mr. Cooper*, she also appeared as Eddie Murphy’s rebellious daughter in the feature films *Dr. Doolittle 1* and *2*.

The multi-talented teen has been nominated for 2 NAACP Image Awards and is also a recording artist. She released her hit single, “That’s What Little Girls Are Made Of” when she was five and that same year she debuted on Broadway with The Boys Choir of Harlem for their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. More recently, she toured with N’Sync in support of her latest CD, *Undeniable*.

\* \* \* \*

### **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

#### **CHRISTOPHER REEVE (Director / Executive Producer)**

Actor, director and activist are just some of the words used to describe Christopher Reeve. From his first appearance at the Williamstown Theatre Festival at the age of 15, Reeve established a reputation as one of the country’s leading actors. However, ever since he was paralyzed in an equestrian competition in 1995, Reeve not

only put a human face on spinal cord injury but he motivated neuroscientists around the world to conquer the most complex diseases of the brain and central nervous system.

After graduating from Cornell University in 1974, Reeve pursued his dream of acting, studying at Juilliard under the legendary John Houseman. He made his Broadway debut opposite Katharine Hepburn in *A Matter of Gravity* in 1976 and then went on to distinguish himself in a variety of stage, screen and television roles with passion. Film credits include: *Superman* in 1978 and its subsequent sequels, *Deathtrap*, *Somewhere in Time*, *The Bostonians*, *Street Smart*, *Speechless*, *Noises Off*, *Above Suspicion* and the Oscar-nominated *The Remains of the Day*. Stage credits include: *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Fifth of July*, *My Life*, *Summer and Smoke*, *Love Letters* and *The Aspern Papers*.

Reeve made his directorial debut with *In the Gloaming* on HBO in April 1997. The film was met with rave reviews, was nominated for five Emmys and won six Cable Ace Awards, including Best Dramatic Special and Best Director. Reeve's autobiography, *Still Me*, was published by Random House in April 1998 and spent 11 weeks on the New York Times Bestseller List. His audio recording of *Still Me* earned Reeve a Grammy for Best Spoken Word Album in February 1999. In his first major role since becoming paralyzed, Reeve starred in an updated version of the classic Hitchcock thriller "Rear Window," for which he was nominated for a Golden Globe Award and won the Screen Actors Guild Award for Best Actor in a Television Movie or Miniseries. He also served as Executive Producer of the film.

Reeve continued his directing work in television and film as well as his arts-advisory service as a board member of the Williamstown Theatre Festival. In early 2001, Reeve began combining his directing efforts with his activism when he directed four commercials featuring Ray Romano, Randy Newman, Toni Morrison and himself for Johnson

& Johnson that focused on helping parents talk to their kids. The same year he filmed a spot for the American Red Cross that celebrated volunteerism.

In 1999, Reeve became the Chairman of the Board of the Christopher Reeve Foundation (CRF). CRF, a national, nonprofit organization, supports research to develop effective treatments and a cure for paralysis caused by spinal cord injury and other central nervous system disorders. CRF also allocates a portion of its resources to grants that improve the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As Vice Chairman of the National Organization on Disability (N.O.D.), he worked on quality of life issues for the disabled. In partnership with Senator Jim Jeffords of Vermont, he helped pass the 1999 Work Incentives Improvement Act, which allows people with disabilities to return to work and still receive disability benefits. Reeve served on the Board of Directors of World T.E.A.M. Sports, a group that organizes and sponsors challenging sporting events for athletes with disabilities; TechHealth, a private company that assists in the relationship between patients and their insurance companies; and LIFE (Leaders in Furthering Education) a charitable organization that supports education and opportunities for the underserved population.

In addition to his work on behalf of CRF, Reeve's advocacy efforts included:

- Lobbying on behalf of the National Institutes of Health to double the NIH budget in five years. In part because of his leadership, the NIH budget grew from 12 billion dollars in 1998 to nearly 27.2 billion dollars in fiscal 2003;
- Testifying before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies in favor of federally funded stem cell research;

- Providing instrumental and crucial support for the passage of the New York State Spinal Cord Injury Research Bill (7287C), landmark legislation that makes available up to \$8.5 million annually in funds collected from violations of the state's motor vehicle laws to be appropriated among the leading research facilities in New York. Reeve was also involved in lobbying efforts for similar bills in New Jersey, Kentucky, Virginia and California;
- Working tirelessly to obtain increased funding from both the public and private sectors to cure Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, MS, ALS, stroke, as well as to repair the damaged spinal cord; and
- Helping to establish the Reeve-Irvine Research Center at the UCI College of Medicine. The center supports the study of trauma to the spinal cord and diseases affecting it, with an emphasis on the development of therapies to promote the recovery and repair of neurological function.

While Reeve raised public awareness about the significance of medical research and the challenges facing those with disabilities, he also educated families about the importance of having adequate health and disability coverage. In 1997, Reeve joined with HealthExtras, the first company to offer subscribers a tax-free non-accountable payment of 1 million dollars in the event of a permanent accidental disability. The cost of this policy is a mere \$10 a month and is available through Visa, American Express or via the Internet. Reeve served as company spokesman.

Reeve's community and political involvement pre-dates his spinal cord injury. Over the course of many years, he served as a national spokesman on behalf of the arts, campaign finance reform and the environment. A founder and Co-President of The Creative Coalition, he helped to create recycling in New York City and to persuade state legislature to set aside one billion dollars to protect the city's water supply. Since 1976, he was actively involved with Save the Children,

Amnesty International, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Environmental Air Force and America's Watch. In 1987, he demonstrated in Santiago, Chile on behalf of 77 actors threatened with execution by the Pinochet regime. For this action, Reeve was given a special Obie Award in 1988 and the annual award from the Walter Briehl Human Rights Foundation.

His second book, *Nothing is Impossible: Reflections on a New Life*, was published by Random House in September 2002. The audio rendition of *Nothing is Impossible* garnered Reeve his second Grammy nomination for Best Spoken Word Album. At the same time, a documentary film about his advocacy and road to recovery entitled "Christopher Reeve: Courageous Steps" aired on ABC television in the United States. The documentary was directed by Reeve's son Matthew and has been distributed around the world.

In September 2003, Reeve was awarded the Mary Woodard Lasker Award for Public Service in Support of Medical Research and the Health Sciences from the Lasker Foundation. Recognized for perceptive, sustained and heroic advocacy for medical research in general, and people living with disabilities in particular, Reeve was selected for this distinction by a jury of scholars and scientists.

In August 2004, Reeve completed directing *The Brooke Ellison Story*. This fact-based A&E cable television movie was based on the book Miracles Happen: One Mother, One Daughter, One Journey. Brooke Ellison became a quadriplegic at age 11 but with determination and the support of her family, Ellison rose above her disability and went on to graduate from Harvard University. The film starred Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Lacey Chabert and John Slattery.

Christopher Reeve died October 10, 2004 of heart failure. He was 52 years old.

**DANA REEVE (Executive Producer, voice of Yankee's Mother)**

Dana Reeve was a founding board member of the Christopher Reeve Foundation and Dana Reeve succeeded her late husband, Christopher Reeve, as chair in 2004. The Foundation is wholly committed to finding cures and treatments for spinal cord injuries as well as improving the quality of life for people living with disabilities.

Ms. Reeve established the Foundation's Quality of Life initiatives: the Quality of Life grants program and the Christopher & Dana Reeve Paralysis Resource Center. Since its inception in 1999, the Quality of Life grants program has awarded more than \$8 million to support programs and projects that improve the daily lives of people living with paralysis.

In addition to her work with the CRF, Ms. Reeve also served on the boards of The Williamstown Theatre Festival, The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, TechHealth, and The Reeve-Irvine Center for Spinal Cord Research and as an advisory board member to the National Family Caregivers Association.

She received numerous awards for her work, most notably the Shining Example Award from Proctor & Gamble in 1998 and an American Image Award from the AAFA in 2003. In addition, the American Cancer Society named her Mother of the Year in 2005. Ms. Reeve authored the book *Care Packages*, which was published by Random House in 1999.

First and foremost an actress, Ms. Reeve's many singing and acting credits included appearances on television, where she had starring roles on *Law & Order*, *Oz*, and *All My Children*, among others. She performed in plays on Broadway, off-Broadway, and at numerous regional theatres, and performed as a singer on national television and at various New York venues. In 2000 she co-hosted a live daily talk show for women on the Lifetime Network.



Ms. Reeve graduated *cum laude* from Middlebury College where she also later received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, and she pursued graduate studies in Acting at the California Institute of the Arts.

Dana Reeve passed away of lung cancer at the age of 44 on March 6, 2006. Reeve is survived by her father, Dr. Charles Morosini, sisters Deborah Morosini and Adrienne Morosini Heilman, her son Will and two stepchildren, Matthew and Alexandra.

### **DANIEL ST. PIERRE (Director)**

Daniel St. Pierre previously served as the production designer on the hit film *Shark Tale*. He earned an Annie Award nomination for Outstanding Individual Achievement for Production Design in an Animated Feature for his work as an art director on *Tarzan*. He also served as a story artist and visual consultant on *102 Dalmatians*.

St. Pierre's additional credits include work as a layout supervisor on the animated features *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *The Lion King* and *Mickey's The Prince and the Pauper*. He was also a key layout artist on such films as *The Little Mermaid*, *Aladdin* and *Beauty and the Beast*. *Everyone's Hero* marks his debut as a director.

### **COLIN BRADY (Director)**

Colin Brady during his six years at Pixar, was co-director on *Toy Story 2* when the film transitioned from direct-to-video to a theatrical release. During those 18 months, Brady oversaw the design and development of new characters, and contributed significantly to story and dialogue. Brady was a lead animator on *Toy Story*, animation director in Pixar's shorts division, and a supervising animator on *A Bug's Life*.

On *Hulk* and *Lemony Snicket*, Brady and his team pioneered the motion capture of attack dogs and even eight-month-old infants. On

*Lemony Snicket*, Brady helped develop an inexpensive system to reliably track facial motion.

In addition, Brady was supervising animator on *Men in Black 2* and *E.T. The Extraterrestrial Special Edition*.

### **RON TIPPE (Producer)**

Ron Tippe has been integrally involved in the development and production of live action films, traditional 2-D and computer animated films and visual effects. He produced the 2D and CGI animation on the hit film *Space Jam* and served as producer of *Shrek* during the pre-production phase.

He also produced the Academy Award-nominated short animated feature starring Mickey Mouse, *Runaway Brain*. He served as associate producer on the American Playhouse/PBS telefilm *In A Shallow Grave*. He also was the executive vice president of creative affairs and co-founder of the Digital Character Group, an animation studio.

He went on to become vice-president of creative development at Route 66 Productions before becoming president and co-founder of Woof! Entertainment.

### **IGOR KHAIT (Producer)**

Igor Khait has been making animated films for more than 17 years. Beginning his career in 1989 at Amblin Entertainment, he has since worked at many of the most prestigious animation studios in the field. In that time Khait has built a strong reputation for creativity and versatility as well as for nurturing talent.

Khait was the producer on Disney's just released *Leroy and Stitch*. The film is the final chapter in the highly popular *Lilo & Stitch: The Series*.

In 2003, Khait was the associate producer on Walt Disney Studios' *Brother Bear*, an Academy Award nominee for Best Animated Feature. Prior to that, he served as production manager on Disney's *Atlantis, the Lost Empire*, Warner Bros.' *Quest for Camelot*, and Paramount's *Bebe's Kids*. Additionally, he has worked in production on the CBS animated series *Family Dog*, executive produced by Steven Spielberg and Tim Burton, an animated Christmas special *A Wish for Wings That Work*, based on the popular *Bloom County* comic strip, and on a number of industrial and corporate films.

Khait worked with John Kricfalusi, creator of the Emmy-nominated *Ren and Stimpy*. During his years at Kricfalusi's company, Spumco, Khait managed the production of the Spumco comics and toys, and was the associate producer of a collector's edition of *The Flintstones, The Early Episodes* laser disc set.

Art, animation, and film have always been Khait's passions. He received his first B.A. in Fine Art from University of California, Santa Cruz and his second B.A. in Film Graphics and Animation from CalArts in Valencia, CA. Originally from Odessa, Ukraine, Igor Khait lives in Studio City, CA with his wife and two children.

### **ROBERT KURTZ (Writer)**

Robert Kurtz is a two-time People's Choice Award winner, for writing and producing the acclaimed TV shows *Cosby* and *Grace Under Fire*.

He served as supervising producer for the WB animated series *Baby Blues* when he joined the creative development department at IDT Entertainment.

### **JEFF HAND (Writer)**

Jeff Hand has worked in theater, television and animation. He was an associate producer for the Disney Channel's *Mickey Mouse*

*Club*, and worked in production management for Walt Disney Feature Animation for ten years before writing development treatments for feature animation development.

His writing credits include *Ruckus*, a game show produced by Merv Griffin Enterprises, the children's video *Newton: Fun with Colors*, *Farm Force* as well as the animated features *Brother Bear* and *Brother Bear II*.

### **JAN CARLEE (Director of Photography)**

Jan Carlee has been active in the animation and special effects industry for over twenty years. Prior to his involvement in *Everyone's Hero*, Carlee supervised the digital 2D and 3D digital elements at Don Bluth Entertainment for such films as *Thumbelina* and *Rock -A-Doodle*. Later working at Blue Sky Studios in New York he directed many award winning commercials before directing animation for such feature films as *Alien Resurrection*, *Joe's Apartment* and *Titan A.E.* Carlee was also the sequence director for the film *Ice Age* and more recently worked at Dreamworks on the film *Shrek 2*.

\* \* \* \*

### **ABOUT THE SOUNDTRACK**

Just like the incredible talents voicing the film, the soundtrack is also full of a diverse group of talented artists who wanted to come together for this project. Music Supervisor Dawn Solér was as eager as all the talent to come on board for the film.

“Christopher Reeve was such a hero to me,” said Solér. “With his involvement, I knew the project would be filled with so much heart. This gave me a passion to find the best songs, songwriters and musicians for the soundtrack.”

Solér has worked as a music supervisor for 16 years, but "Everyone's Hero" is only her second animated film. She has worked on such acclaimed soundtracks as "Don Juan De Marco," "Notting Hill," "French Kiss" and "Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants."

One of the first musicians Solér sought out was John Ondrasik from the platinum certified and Grammy-nominated band Five for Fighting. "Ondrasik is one of the most gifted and current songwriters who can write emotional songs on a very a sophisticated level," said Solér. Ondrasik was told the story and was shown a few stills, and from that had agreed to work on the project. His Song, "The Best," was incorporated into the film twice and became a theme for Yankee.

"The music and emotion in the song were perfect to show Yankee's excitement in the beginning of the film, but also the song has very tender lyrics, which we were able to use later in a more tender moment with Yankee," said Solér. Ondrasik also wrote the song "Swing It" for the film, for which Solér and he brought on board country duo Brooks & Dunn to perform.

Raven-Simoné agreed to do a song for the soundtrack, as she was a natural fit for "Keep Your Eye On The Ball." "This is a fun song that kids will really enjoy," said Solér. "To give the song a more classic feel, we decided to use an acoustic guitar, rather than an electric guitar."

Other songs on the soundtrack include the baseball classic "Take Me Out To The Ballgame" performed by country super group Lonestar. "This version will be played at many ballgames to come," said Solér.

For a more urban flavor, Wyclef Jean was brought on board to remake Ella Fitzgerald's jazz standard, "It's Not What You Do, But The Way You Do It" and created a timeless remake with "What You Do." Another surprising musical turn is Lyle Lovett's rendition of Sinatra's "Chicago (That Toddlng Town)." In this version Lovett is

almost unrecognizable as his gritty voice has been soothed by the amazing musical rendition.

Another surprising appearance is from Paris Bennett of “American Idol” whose vocal performance on John Debney’s “The Tigers” will “take you out of the park,” said Solér.

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