

WHITE OLEANDER

- Production Notes -

Oleander can be poisonous... So can a mother's love.

White Oleander tells the unforgettable story of Astrid, a girl whose odyssey through a series of Los Angeles foster homes - each its own universe with its own laws, its own dangers, its own hard lessons to be learned - becomes a redeeming journey of self-discovery. Based on the acclaimed best-selling novel by Janet Fitch, *White Oleander* follows a young woman's journey through hardship and loss to maturity, joy and true independence.

After her uncompromising but seductive mother Ingrid (MICHELLE PFEIFFER) kills her boyfriend for abandoning her, fifteen-year-old Astrid (ALISON LOHMAN) witnesses her mother's arrest. It's an event that will change the course of both their lives.

Suddenly, young Astrid is on her own.

Shuttled through a series of foster homes (and foster mothers including ROBIN WRIGHT PENN and RENÉE ZELLWEGER), Astrid struggles to master the techniques she needs if she's to survive the unyielding and often harsh world she is thrust into. Astrid tries desperately to forge her own identity within her ever-changing environment. From behind bars, Ingrid's powerful influence is the only constant in Astrid's life. For good, and for bad...

In the three years that mark her passage from child to adult, Astrid must learn the value of independence and courage, rage and forgiveness, love and survival, to earn her freedom from the past.

Warner Bros. Pictures presents, in association with Pandora, a John Wells Production; *White Oleander*, starring Alison Lohman, Robin Wright Penn, Michelle Pfeiffer and Renée Zellweger. Directed by Peter Kosminsky from a screenplay by Mary Agnes Donoghue and based on the best-selling novel by Janet Fitch, *White Oleander* also stars Billy Connolly, Svetlana Efremova, Patrick Fugit, Cole Hauser and Noah Wyle. John Wells and Hunt Lowry are the producers; Kristin Harms, Stacy Cohen, E.K. Gaylord II and Patrick Markey are the executive producers. Donald Graham Burt is the production designer; Elliot Davis, the director of photography; Chris Ridsdale is the editor. Music is by Thomas Newman.

White Oleander will be distributed domestically by Warner Bros. Pictures, an AOL Time Warner Company, and internationally by Pandora, a division of Gaylord Films. Rated PG-13 by the MPAA for “mature thematic elements concerning dysfunctional relationships, drug content, language, sexuality and violence.”

www.whiteoleander.com / AOL Keyword: white oleander

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

From Book to Film

When producer John Wells received an early copy of Janet Fitch’s novel, *White Oleander*, he read it in one night and immediately optioned the film rights. “The characters were beautifully drawn,” comments Wells, a renowned writer and director as well as a producer and one of the creative forces behind *ER*, *The West Wing* and *Third Watch*. “It’s an extraordinarily well-written book with indelible characters and a very uplifting message. I found myself fully involved in Astrid’s journey.”

Wells was impressed by how the story illustrates a universal theme about growing up, weathering the myriad experiences that help define us as individuals and establish an identity apart from our parents. “Whether or not we experience the kind of adversity that Astrid encounters, one way or another this is a passage we must all navigate as adolescents,” says Wells. “Part of becoming an adult is the realization that our parents

have a great many of their own failings and frustrations, that they are human and not omnipotent. Their love, though genuine, may be as imperfect as they are, and we have to accept that for what it is if we're to move forward.”

Producer Hunt Lowry felt a similar strong reaction to *White Oleander*. Having read the script one evening, he was on the phone the next morning to arrange a meeting with Wells to discuss moving forward with the project. A man who receives countless scripts and proposals, Lowry trusts his instincts in selecting projects to produce and often bases his decision on how much he is “genuinely and emotionally moved, in a positive way” by the material. “What sets a story like *White Oleander* apart,” Lowry explains, “is that while I’m reading it I can forget that I’m reading a script or watching a movie because I become so immersed in the story itself.”

Within two weeks of its publication, *White Oleander* was chosen by Oprah Winfrey as the May 1999 selection for her book club and it rose to top-five positions on the bestseller lists of newspapers around the country including The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post and USA Today. The book touched readers who identified with its life-affirming message. As of August 2002, there are more than 1.5 million copies in print. *White Oleander* has also become an international success, appearing on best-seller lists in the U.K. and Holland, with rights sold in 25 countries.

To translate the much-admired novel into a compelling screenplay without compromising the narrative or the characters, Wells enlisted Mary Agnes Donoghue, whose screenwriting credits include *Deceived*, *Paradise* and the soulful adaptation of Iris Rainer Dart’s novel for *Beaches*.

The intention was to present the story as fully as possible, allowing for the time constraints of film. “We didn’t acquire the book with the intention of using just a piece of it and extrapolating from that into something else,” Wells explains. “We liked the story in whole and wanted to make as faithful an adaptation as possible, knowing that we’d have to reduce the scope of it. Readers will notice that we had to condense some of the episodes. Mary Agnes did an excellent job of making selections from the book and then Janet read her draft and provided some very helpful notes.”

Lowry, whose recent producing credits include the successful screen versions of two very popular novels, *A Walk to Remember* and *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya*

Sisterhood, emphasizes the sensitivity with which the filmmakers approached their task: “When you’re working with a book that a great many people already know and love, there’s a tremendous obligation to do it justice. It puts more pressure on us, certainly, but it’s a valuable kind of pressure because it produces the best results.”

Ultimately, a screenplay was developed that had the author’s complete approval – a rare occurrence, since novelists are often excluded from the development and production process. “I was fully prepared to put the book into their hands and just hope for the best,” says Fitch, “because other writers had told me that’s what I should expect. So I was surprised and thrilled when they invited me to read the script and later to attend the first read-through once the cast had been assembled.

“What a pleasure it was,” she says of the experience, “to hear those words being said by people who would bring these characters to life, characters that I had lived with for four years and who had previously only existed in my own mind. It was like stepping into a dream.”

While the screenplay was being prepared and Wells was still considering how to adapt the story visually, a friend sent him a tape of *Warriors*, an award-winning 1999 BBC miniseries about peacekeepers in Bosnia, directed by Peter Kosminsky. Impressed by the director’s deft and sensitive handling of the difficult subject and his ability to weave together narrative threads from multiple points of view, Wells felt that Kosminsky had precisely the right sensibility for *White Oleander*. “This is exactly what we need,” Wells recalls thinking, “someone who can work with characters in a real and restrained manner while sacrificing none of the honest emotion and never slipping into melodrama.”

Kosminsky, who lives and works in England, was originally reluctant to accept the project when Wells approached him, as his schedule was already full and a Los Angeles shoot would mean time away from his family. He was, he recalls, “in the middle of a run of films I was making in Britain, with one project in particular pretty much set to go when I read the script.” Having read the script, he then read the novel and found that he “simply could not resist it. I was incredibly moved by the story of this young woman and her voyage.”

Although Astrid’s experiences in various foster homes propel her development as an individual, it was never the intention of Janet Fitch nor the filmmakers for *White*

Oleander to be an exposé of the foster care system. Kosminsky understood this implicitly and that was another reason why Wells was convinced that he was the right director for the project. “Some people automatically assume it’s an indictment of the foster care system but that’s not what the book is about,” says Wells. “It’s about how a young person, no matter the circumstances, can find his or her own identity and emerge from the shadow of a very powerful parent. The foster homes are just the setting for this metamorphosis. As it happens, it’s Astrid’s bad luck to fall into a series of placements that are far from ideal.

“What emerged in my initial conversation with Peter was that he grasped the meaning immediately,” Wells continues. “He knew it was essentially about the relationship between a mother and daughter and about growing up.”

Lowry concurs, adding that his first meeting with Kosminsky left no doubt that the director “understood the arc of this young woman’s journey and all that it entailed; every nuance, ordeal, conflict.”

As Kosminsky describes it, “Here is a girl who spent her entire childhood walking on eggshells, living with a wonderful, charismatic but completely capricious, selfish and destructive mother. Ingrid is difficult and unpredictable. At her best she is a gifted artist as well as a perceptive, loving and utterly charming presence. But she’s not always at her best. As a child, I imagine Astrid would always be holding her breath, never sure what her mother’s mood would be on any given day or how she might react to things.

“With no real friends her own age,” Kosminsky continues, “Astrid sits on the edge of adult society, observing and sketching what she sees on a drawing pad. She idolizes her mother, who has raised her single-handedly. Ingrid is fond of saying that they are descendant of Vikings and Astrid imagines the two of them as Viking warriors, a united force against the world. Then, reality intrudes in a most dramatic way. Her mother is snatched away from her in an instant and she’s left to fend for herself in a very hostile world.”

As Astrid is placed in each new foster home in the years following Ingrid’s incarceration, Kosminsky observes that initially she continues to behave as she did with her mother, trying to figure out what is required of her and then doing it. “Chameleon-like,” he says, “she tries to assume the colors of each new world.”

Her efforts, however, are largely undermined by Ingrid, who communicates with her daughter from prison and criticizes any new influences in Astrid's life that don't meet with her own idealistic standards, causing Astrid to question whatever little progress she has made. "I'm only protecting you from *those people*," Ingrid claims, but, as John Wells points out, "she is primarily interested in protecting herself – in this case, from losing control of her daughter. This is the meaning behind Janet's choice of oleander as a symbol and the book's title. It's a beautiful flower that protects itself by making its own poison."

With the passage of time and a series of experiences, some of them traumatic, Astrid's true strength and character begin to emerge. Increasingly distanced from the powerful influence of her charismatic and demanding mother and strengthened by the hard lessons learned in one troubled placement after another, she begins to trust her own judgment and make her own decisions. Ultimately, she will see not only her mother but everyone and everything in her life with increasing clarity – as they are, not as she would like them to be. Only then will she be truly on her way to becoming an independent woman.

Casting

In the novel, Astrid's age at the time of her mother's incarceration is not quite 14 and her age at the story's end is 19, which was, as Wells describes, "a distance we knew we could not plausibly travel with a single actress." The filmmakers dismissed the option of using two actresses because that would require a time jump that would disrupt the narrative flow, so they abbreviated the age span to take Astrid from 15 to 18 and committed themselves to finding an actress who could believably make that progression.

After an exhaustive cross-country search in which the filmmakers and casting director Ellen Lewis considered nearly 400 young women, the prospects were narrowed to a series of screen tests and finally Alison Lohman, 21, was cast as Astrid. Lohman, who made her acting debut on stage in local musical theater at age 10, launched her film career in the 1999 drama *The Thirteenth Floor* and has gone on to appear in a number of film and television projects, including a series regular role on the Fox drama *Pasadena*.

“She has the range and maturity as an actress to span the age range from 15 to 18 and show the emotional changes that Astrid goes through,” Kosminsky says.

As Lowry points out, it was Lohman’s ability to balance Astrid’s vulnerability with her emerging strength that made the character so credible. “If she appeared too strong, the audience would feel that her survival was unquestionable,” he says, “and if she appeared too weak they might think ‘she’ll never make it,’ which can be depressing to watch. What Alison managed to do was convey inner strength while struggling with the natural doubts and insecurity of a girl her age going through such adversity.”

“It’s a tough job,” the director notes, commenting on the demands of the role. “She is in virtually every scene, and she is captivating. She has the kind of face that draws you in to closer and closer shots as you try to explore what’s going on behind her eyes. It was important that the actress who played this part knew how to be very still because Astrid is a watcher and a listener, a girl who sits on the edge of life observing and sketching. Alison has that wonderful quality. She seemed to understand the part inherently.”

Adds Wells, “She has a natural luminance.”

Before there was even a script or talk of a film, Lohman had read the novel and already imagined herself in the role of Astrid. “She was someone I could admire,” Lohman says. “The great thing about Astrid is that she is not a victim, regardless of what she endures. She has an inner strength and resilience that keeps her going. She refuses to wallow in her misery.

“Astrid is an artist and sees things with that perspective,” continues Lohman. “She’s vulnerable and open to things, and tends to acclimate herself to each new environment. She transforms herself into what she thinks each of these foster mothers expects her to be, as she did with her real mother, adapting to their standards while trying not to lose herself completely. It takes time before she gains the confidence to be who she wants to be.”

The filmmakers agreed that the key to portraying Astrid’s mother, Ingrid Magnusson, would be to acknowledge the various strong elements of her personality and avoid presenting her as a one-dimensional villain. “If not handled correctly,” Wells grants, “Ingrid’s extremes can come across as pure arrogance. The character is easy to

dislike. The truth is, Ingrid is extremely narcissistic but that does not mean she doesn't love her child. Maintaining a balance between the two is very difficult.”

Coincidentally, the filmmakers' first choice for Ingrid was the same actress Janet Fitch had in mind while developing the character – Michelle Pfeiffer.

“Michelle certainly has a lock on Ingrid,” Kosminsky attests. “There's a directness and authority to the way she plays the part that is quite compelling and very moving to watch. Ingrid is an extraordinarily difficult character.”

“I'm not sure it's possible to completely understand Ingrid,” Pfeiffer offers. “I think she's somewhat of an enigma even to herself. She's the ultimate purist, in a way, unyielding and unforgiving in her views and standards and the expectations she has of her daughter even at that young age. To some extent I admire that quality, the unwillingness to compromise, knowing that there will ultimately be a price to pay for it.

“What she says about people is harsh but it's usually the truth,” Pfeiffer acknowledges. “She says things that no one else will say because it isn't nice, but Ingrid is not concerned with being nice. She zeroes in on the weakness. It was challenging playing someone who could be so utterly cruel; I had to fight my natural impulse to soften her and take some of the edge off.”

For the role of Starr Thomas, Astrid's first foster mother, a flamboyant and volatile former stripper turned born-again Christian, Kosminsky's cast Robin Wright Penn, whose screen presence he describes as “natural and realistic. She's so authentic that often when she began to speak I'd catch myself, thinking for a moment, ‘is she talking to me?’ before realizing that she was doing her lines. There's no theatricality about her performance.

“Robin took a role that could easily slip into cliché and turned her into a completely genuine and even sympathetic person,” Kosminsky elaborates. “Starr is a very tough, hard-edged, a woman who is absolutely dangerous and vindictive, but is also tragic.”

The performance required Wright Penn to inhabit a character completely unlike herself, a welcome opportunity for which she credits the director “for having the faith to cast against type and not go for the obvious choice.” She jokes that in playing Starr she

found herself wearing high-heeled white pumps for the first time “and spandex pants, during the day, outside of aerobics class. It was a very campy wardrobe.”

Regarding Starr’s motivation for fostering Astrid, Wright Penn acknowledges the financial element (“it’s her only income”) but goes deeper to find a reason more central to Starr’s personality. “More importantly, it’s her redemption,” the actress says. “In a selfish way, it’s her salvation for having sinned, for having been an alcoholic and a stripper. Astrid is the third foster child she has taken in. With her new religious perspective, she believes that this philanthropic lifestyle is going to make up for her past and keep her clean.”

Renée Zellweger, already a fan of the book, was cast in the role of the tender and fragile Claire Richards, who becomes another of Astrid’s foster mothers. “Renée has a capable and down-to-earth quality about her that we needed for the character of Claire,” explains Kosminsky. “It would make the ultimate revelation of her frailty much less predictable. Renée embodied Claire – a profoundly vulnerable woman -- in a way that avoided the obvious displays of vulnerability.”

“Claire is an interesting dichotomy of weakness and strength,” Zellweger says, offering an insight into her character’s psychology. “She’s very generous and draws her strength and self-esteem from giving to others.

“Claire’s husband does not appreciate her desire to give, he perceives it as neediness and weakness,” Zellweger explains. “Astrid turns that around for her because she is in such need of that kind of attention, nurturing and kindness. Each of them enjoys being the most important thing in the world to someone else for the first time. It gives Claire a purpose but it also creates friction between her husband and herself.”

For the brief but significant part of Ingrid’s faithless lover, Barry, Kosminsky selected Scottish-born actor and comedian Billy Connolly, whose work he knew well from a wealth of film and television productions in the UK. As Connolly puts it with his customary wit, “They were looking for someone to play the part of a confident bum, a slob and a sexist, and of course Peter phoned me.”

Cast mate Michelle Pfeiffer confirms Connolly’s reputation as one of the most popular comedians in the UK, saying, “He was hysterically funny off camera, which was

a relief after our very angry dramatic scenes together. I had a wonderful time working with him.”

The filmmakers cast versatile actress and acting instructor Svetlana Efremova (*K-19, The Prince of Central Park*) as Russian émigré Rena Grushenka, who provides Astrid with the last of her foster homes. A woman with a Bohemian lifestyle but a very conservative financial outlook, Rena is already fostering two teenage girls whom she treats like employees. Together, they raid trash bins from upscale neighborhoods and then sell their salvaged merchandise at flea markets. Nearly an adult at this point and already transformed from her former dreamy self into a more realistic and self-possessed young woman, Astrid fits in comfortably with Rena’s unconventional routine, where she finds exactly what she most needs – the freedom to be herself.

“Rena is a free bird,” says Efremova of her role. “She’s independent, confident and hungry for life. I fell in love with this simple, courageous woman who smoked and drank and had a good time, who didn’t ask for the meaning of life but preferred to just enjoy it as it was. She’s honest and has a good sense of humor. It was good for Astrid to be around her.”

Rena, like Astrid, is a survivor.

A Russian immigrant herself, Efremova based her characterization “partly on imagination and partly on my knowledge and observation of Russian people in America,” she says, specifically their commitment to hard work and their desire to make a new life for themselves. “I did not want to portray Rena as greedy, regardless of her emphasis on materialism,” she says, delving deeper. “I saw her as a woman who came to this country with nothing and made her own way, who dove fully into the American life, learned its slang and rock music and also learned how to make money to live.”

This point is made in a scene in which Rena, Astrid and the other girls are setting up shop at the flea market. At one point, Astrid recognizes some fancy dresses that Claire had once given her, now pulled out of a garbage bag by Rena’s hand and feels a flush of emotion. But Rena’s practical response brings her quickly back to earth. “Sentimental is stupid,” the born-again capitalist admonishes her, “Is good to make money.” It is then Astrid herself who spots a buyer and makes the sale.

Delicately woven in between her several foster homes is Astrid's tentative relationship with another displaced teen, Paul, played by Patrick Fugit, who recently earned praise for his breakthrough role in Cameron Crowe's *Almost Famous*. Unlike Astrid, who was torn away from a mother who loved her, Paul never knew the affection of either parent and has been coping with life in foster care long enough to have become philosophic about it.

"Paul is the only non-judgmental person in Astrid's life," Kosminsky says. "Unlike all the other people she knows, he does not try to influence her or censor her in any way. He talks candidly and unemotionally about his experiences. I believe he provides clarity for her at a time when things look very dark."

While staying with the brash Starr Thomas, Astrid gets to know Starr's live-in boyfriend, "Uncle Ray," played by Cole Hauser (*Tigerland*, *Hart's War*, *Good Will Hunting*) whose quiet, thoughtful nature better suits her. Ray seems simple enough on the surface as a decent, content, hardworking and kind-hearted guy, but his increasing closeness with Astrid reveals a deeper nature of restlessness and regret, as well as increasing guilt about his physical attraction to this newest addition to the family.

As Ray, Hauser is called upon to convey these nuances with limited dialogue in fitting with the character, and in a limited amount of time as Ray's relationship with Astrid quickly ignites Starr's jealousy and puts an abrupt end to that particular foster home experience.

For the part of Claire Richards' husband Mark, Wells thought of his friend and colleague Noah Wyle, longtime star of *ER*, a series Wells helped launch and for which he serves as executive producer. But, mindful of the relationship, he didn't want the director to feel pressured into casting Wyle so he put the actor's name on the list and waited a beat. It turned out that Kosminsky had Wyle in mind for the role as well and was, as Wells recalls, "only waiting for Claire to be cast so that he could be absolutely sure the two stars would be a plausible match – which, of course, they were."

Wyle, who jokes that he jumped at the chance to play Mark because, "it's been a lifelong dream of mine to be a philandering husband," was interested in handling a role so unlike his popular television persona. "I play such a morally responsible honest guy on *ER*" he says, "It's good to do something different."

Not only did Wyle completely understand Mark Richards' personality, which he describes as "controlling and superficial," he saw the real reason behind the couples' decision to foster a child. "Mark and Claire have a troubled marriage and think that maybe having a child will help," he says. "But they're not ready to commit to an adoption so they take in an older child to see how they like it; like buying a dog. The truth is, they're more interested in the trappings of parenthood – someone to shop for, to dress up, to play with – than with actually being parents. Unfortunately, like the other placements Astrid goes through, the reason why these people have taken her into their home is to help themselves more than to help her."

As to how he guided this remarkable ensemble cast, Kosminsky says, "I've always been an actor's director. My twin roles are getting the script and the casting right and I take ages over both processes, often to the despair of my producer colleagues. Then I like to rehearse quietly, away from the chaos of the production office, for just a week. If more than a week, you can over-work the material, risking that feeling on set that you have never quite recaptured the way a scene worked in the rehearsal room. In a week you can flirt with the material, romancing it in earnest on location."

Once on set, the director prefers not to rehearse at all. "Wherever possible I shoot straight away so the actors come up to full performance pitch in front of the camera," he explains. "Some actors do their best work in the first couple of takes when they are really listening to what the other actor is saying to them and I like to capture that on film rather than watch it go by on my monitor during rehearsal. The actors on *White Oleander* gave extraordinary performances but what really struck me was how open they were to working in this slightly unusual way. Whether behind the closed door of the rehearsal room or later on set, their focus was entirely on exploring and bringing these characters to life. They give mesmerizing performances, real and unflinching, that complement each other beautifully. All I had to do at that point was stand back and watch."

Kosminsky's technique gets high praise from the cast, who credit his thorough preparation with allowing them to avoid endless retakes. "He has such a clear idea of what he wants," says Renée Zellweger, "that he doesn't rely on a monitor. There's no playback. He watches a scene and if it's right he says 'Yes, that's it' and it's done. He doesn't need to watch it again or get 20 additional takes."

The Director's Approach

Once Kosminsky came on board he worked with Wells and Donoghue to incorporate even more of Fitch's original ideas and language into the script. Together they maintained what he refers to as "a writer's approach" to the adaptation, protecting the core of the project because, he says, "I loved the source material and wanted to use as much of it as I could."

One slight alteration he made was to exclude from the film those few scenes depicting incidents that Astrid herself could not have witnessed. "It struck me straightaway," he explains, "that this is Astrid's story and the film must maintain her perspective throughout. She leads us through this world and we meet her foster families and absorb the various incidents along with her. We never see anything that Astrid herself could not have seen."

In keeping with Astrid's point of view, the camera follows her closely and never gets ahead of her. It keeps pace with her as she explores each new environment and then seeks her response by coming around for reaction shots, a method which supports Kosminsky's desire to "make people feel that they are really entering this world, that it's real and authentic rather than theatrical."

Director of photography Elliott Davis used mostly hand-held cameras, which helped capture the intimacy of the subject matter. Says Wells, "Once the advent of steadicam revolutionized the industry, most people stopped using hand-held cameras. But filmmakers are realizing that the steadicam forces you into a very fluid style. Peter was after something more immediate and raw."

Due to the episodic nature of the story, Kosminsky found himself directing a series of vignettes and fitting them together. Each foster home had its own cast, setting and set of circumstances with the traditional storytelling arc of a beginning, a middle and an end -- a structure that Kosminsky likens to life. Wells compares the overall effect to a pointillist painting: "When you stand up very close, you see only the little dots of paint. You have to stand back a bit to see the cumulative effect of those countless dots of paint and the beauty of the picture as a whole is revealed."

Springtime in Southern California

The city of Los Angeles is part of the fabric of *White Oleander*. As Astrid is repeatedly relocated from one placement to another, each opens as another self-contained mini-world with its own identity and way of life that she must learn, which is similar to how the various districts within the borders of that sprawling city actually function.

Understanding this, Kosminsky did not consider filming anywhere else. “It would have been appalling,” he says, “particularly for those who loved the novel, to see it set elsewhere. Besides, as a foreigner, I was intrigued by the idea of filming in this city, which is entirely unfamiliar to me. I wanted to see firsthand the places that Janet Fitch referenced in her book.”

In the course of the 40-day shoot, beginning in April 2001, the company filmed on 58 locations throughout the Los Angeles area, including Hollywood, Tujunga, Sunland, Echo Park, Silverlake, Monterey Park, Santa Monica, Malibu, Castaic, Manhattan Beach and Pasadena.

Astrid’s journey begins in her mother’s Hollywood apartment, which is predominantly stark and white. It’s clearly an artist’s space, reflective of Ingrid’s personality, an aesthete’s idea of beauty. Touches of Ingrid’s well-traveled Bohemian lifestyle are evident, but the most commanding details are her own dramatic artworks. One large mixed-media photo installation dominates an entire wall of the 1920’s Hollywood locale.

In jarring contrast is Starr’s doublewide trailer in the rural and undeveloped Tujunga Wash, with its cluttered, over-the-top, gaudy décor that matches Starr’s own wardrobe of hot ‘70s colors and eclectic thrift store finds. On moonlit nights Astrid can sit by herself on the tiny porch step and look out into the vast desert landscape, an image of profound loneliness and beauty.

Astrid next finds herself in Claire Richards’ Malibu hilltop home with its spectacular view of the shimmering Pacific Ocean. The classic contemporary set, with its white-on-white and beige hues is both opulent and restrictive. It reflects the outward serenity and inner sadness of the deeply troubled Claire.

By the time she arrives at her final foster home, the crowded Silverlake apartment of Russian émigré Rena, Astrid has given up trying to blend into her ever-changing surroundings and instead carves out a personal corner for herself amid Rena's eclectic flea market junk.

Even the weather plays a subtle part in the story, and in this way the authentic Los Angeles locations cooperated with the filmmakers. Throughout production the air often snapped with static electricity from warm Santa Ana winds that blow into town every spring – the winds that so inspired free-spirited Ingrid when her mood was upbeat and that Kosminsky was careful to capture on film. Southern California native Michelle Pfeiffer knows those winds well. “I grew up with them,” she says fondly. “We lived in an area that wasn't fully developed at that time. I have vivid memories of giant tumbleweeds rolling down my street when I was a child.”

ABOUT THE CAST

ALISON LOHMAN (Astrid Magnusson) was cast in the starring role in *White Oleander* after an exhaustive nationwide search in which some 400 young actresses auditioned for the coveted role. Lohman is currently in production on director Ridley Scott's *Matchstick Men*, starring opposite Academy Award winner Nicolas Cage and Sam Rockwell, and recently starred in the FOX TV series, *Pasadena*.

The California native began performing in musical theater when she was 10 years old, and as a child she sang and danced in local productions such as *The Sound of Music*. At age 11, Lohman won the Desert Theater League Award for Most Outstanding Actress in a Musical for the title role in *Annie*.

Lohman was accepted at New York University School of the Arts in the Cap 21 Program, but opted instead to move to Los Angeles and pursue a career in film. She also spent a summer session in workshops at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London. On television Lohman starred in the TV movie *Sharing the Secret*, with Diane Ladd and Tim Matheson.

ROBIN WRIGHT PENN (Starr) made her motion picture debut in the cult classic *The Princess Bride*, and has since garnered worldwide acclaim as one of the most interesting and versatile actresses in film. She earned a Golden Globe nomination for her co-starring role in the international box office hit *Forrest Gump*, with Tom Hanks and Sally Field.

In 1997, Wright Penn received prestigious award recognition for her leading roles in two films: for *She's So Lovely* (co-starring Sean Penn and John Travolta) she earned a Screen Actors Guild Award nomination for Best Actress in a Motion Picture; for *Loved* (starring opposite William Hurt), which was a special presentation at the Toronto Film Festival, she won the Best Actress Award at the Seattle Film Festival and received an Independent Spirit Award nomination.

Wright Penn most recently starred opposite Jack Nicholson in Sean Penn's highly acclaimed *The Pledge* and opposite Bruce Willis and Samuel L. Jackson in M. Night Shyamalan's *Unbreakable*. She co-starred with Kevin Costner and Paul Newman in *Message In A Bottle*, directed by Luis Mandoki; the independent film *Hurlyburly*, directed by Anthony Drazen, with Sean Penn, Kevin Spacey and Meg Ryan; starred opposite Kenneth Branagh and Lynn Redgrave in *How to Kill Your Neighbor's Dog*, directed by Michael Kalesniko and produced by Robert Redford and starred in the title role in *Moll Flanders*.

Her other film credits include *Toys*, directed by Barry Levinson, starring Robin Williams; *The Playboys*, directed by Gillies MacKinnon, starring Albert Finney and Aidan Quinn; *State of Grace*, directed by Phil Joanou, starring Sean Penn, Ed Harris and Gary Oldman; *The Crossing Guard*, directed by Sean Penn, and *Denial*, starring Jason Patric.

MICHELLE PFEIFFER (Ingrid Magnusson) has earned three Academy Award nominations – two as Best Actress for her performances as Dallas housewife Lurene Hallett, in *Love Field*, and as the sexy chanteuse Suzie Diamond, in *The Fabulous Baker Boys*, and a third nomination for Best Supporting Actress for her role as the long-suffering Madame de Tourvel in *Dangerous Liaisons*.

Additionally, Pfeiffer won a Golden Globe for her performance in *The Fabulous Baker Boys* and received Golden Globe nominations for her performances in *The Age of Innocence*, *Love Field*, *Frankie and Johnny*, *The Russia House* and *Married to the Mob*.

Most recently Pfeiffer starred in the critically acclaimed *I Am Sam*, opposite Sean Penn, and in the summer blockbuster hit *What Lies Beneath*, opposite Harrison Ford.

A former Miss Orange County, Pfeiffer worked at a local supermarket before she ventured to Hollywood to study acting. She landed early roles in television shows such as *Delta House* and *Fantasy Island*, and smaller films like *The Hollywood Knights*. She came to public attention in the musical sequel *Grease 2*, a role for which she was nominated for the Best Young Motion Picture Actress Award.

As the wife of *Scarface*'s Tony Montana (Al Pacino), Pfeiffer made a strong impression with her stunning looks and haunting style. She has since become one of the motion picture industry's most respected actresses and ranks as a top-grossing box office star in roles opposite leading men such as Bruce Willis, George Clooney, Robert Redford, Jack Nicholson and Sean Connery.

Pfeiffer's films also include *The Story of Us*, *Being John Malkovich*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *One Fine Day*, *To Gillian on her 37th Birthday*, *Up Close and Personal*, *Dangerous Minds*, *Wolf*, *Batman Returns*, *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Tequila Sunrise*, *Sweet Liberty* and *Ladyhawke*.

RENÉE ZELLWEGER (Claire Richards) most recently starred in the international hit romantic comedy, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, opposite Hugh Grant and Colin Firth. In 2000, Zellweger was honored with a Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Motion Picture Comedy for her comedic turn in Neil Labute's *Nurse Betty*, starring with Morgan Freeman and Chris Rock.

Zellweger's vulnerable performance opposite Tom Cruise in the multi-award-winning *Jerry Maguire*, directed by Cameron Crowe, left critics raving. For her performance she was named Best Breakthrough Performer of 1996 by The National Board of Review, received a Blockbuster Award for Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy and was nominated for a SAG Award.

Additionally, Zellweger has starred in the comedy *Me, Myself, and Irene*, directed by the Farrelly brothers, opposite Jim Carrey; *One True Thing*, opposite Meryl Streep and William Hurt; *A Price Above Rubies*; *Liar*; *Reality Bites*, directed by Ben Stiller and *Love and a .45* (for which she received her first Independent Spirit Award nomination).

For her role opposite Vincent D'Onofrio in the truth-based Depression-era independent film *The Whole Wide World*, she received a Best Actress Award at the Mar del Plata Film Festival and a second Independent Spirit Award nomination.

Considering she took her first acting class to ensure graduating from The University of Texas with a literature degree, Zellweger's rise to leading lady status has been as rapid as it has been unexpected. After appearing in such television projects as the USA Network telefilm *A Taste for Killing* and the Showtime Drive-In Classics series *Shake, Rattle and Rock*, she made her film debut while still in Austin in Richard Linklater's coming-of-age film *Dazed and Confused*.

Upcoming projects for Zellweger include *Chicago, The Musical*, in which she stars opposite Catherine Zeta-Jones and Richard Gere, *Cold Mountain*, opposite Jude Law and Nicole Kidman and *Down With Love*, opposite Ewan McGregor and David Hyde Pierce.

BILLY CONNOLLY (Barry), best known to U.S. audiences for his comedic work, gave a moving performance as the loyal servant John Brown in the highly acclaimed *Mrs. Brown*, starring with Dame Judi Dench. He will next be seen in *Timeline* and *Who is Cletis Tout?*

A stand-up comedian who has toured the world, Connolly's previous feature film credits include Troy Duffy's *The Boondock Saints*; Stephen Metcalfe's *Beautiful Joe*; Barry Levinson's *An Everlasting Piece*; Stanley Tucci's *The Impostors*; *Absolution*, with Richard Burton; *Bullshot And Water*, with Michael Caine; *Crossing The Line*, with Liam Neeson; the Muppet movie version of *Treasure Island* and the acclaimed BBC production *Down Among The Big Bad Boys*. His voice is also featured on the Disney animated film *Pocahontas*. Most recently, Connolly starred in the BBC drama *The Life and Crimes of Deacon Brodie*.

Connolly is also widely recognized from his hit television series *Head of the Class*, which was later spun off into his own series *Billy*. His other television work includes appearances on the sitcom *Pearl*, with Rhea Pearlman and Malcolm MacDowell; comedy specials for HBO and BBC; *Billy Connolly's World Tour of Scotland*, a six-part series documenting a tour of his beloved homeland, and *The Bigger Picture*, a series on Scottish art. Connolly has also released numerous home videos, including *25 BC*, *Billy And Albert*, *An Audience With Billy Connolly*, *Billy Connolly Live* and *Live '94*.

Connolly's career also includes performances in the BBC's *Androcles and the Lion*, the Scottish Opera production of *Die Fleidermaus*, and his own play *The Red Runner*, which performed to packed houses at the Edinburgh Festival.

He began his career as a musician, touring with Gerry Rafferty and the folk band *The Humblebums*. Connolly's humorous introduction soon became an audience favorite and in 1971 he played his first solo concert. This led to *The Great Northern Welly Boot Show*, a mixture of music and talk that established his talent as a popular entertainer. He went on to release a double album and a number one hit single, *D.I.V.O.R.C.E.* Since then, he has released numerous hit comedy records and published several comedic books.

SVETLANA EFREMOVA (Rena Grushenka) is a professor of Acting at California State University, Fullerton. The Russian-born actress holds a MFA degree from the Yale School of Drama and a BFA from the St. Petersburg Academy of Theatre in Russia and has taught at Harvard, the University of Rio Grande and the Academy of Humanities in St. Petersburg, Russia. Additionally, Efremova has conducted acting workshops on the Stanislavsky Method at colleges across the United States, including Bennington College and Miami University.

She appeared on Broadway in a touring production of *Uncle Vanya*, and starred in numerous shows at the Yale Repertory Theater and South Coast Repertory Theater. Among her film and television credits are *The Prince of Central Park*, *Evident Kiss*, *Hotel Lobby*, *Spiral* and *Gideon's Crossing*, as well as recurring roles on the popular series *The Guardian* and *The West Wing*. She can be seen in the current drama *K-19*, starring Harrison Ford.

Efremova was honored with Yale University's Herschel Williams Award for Outstanding Actress of 1997, as well as a Best Actress Award at the 1984 Prague Film Festival of European Acting Schools. She also received an Outstanding Actress nomination from the Connecticut Critics Circle in 1997.

Efremova's next screen appearance will be in Joel Schumacher's dramatic thriller, *Phone Booth*, starring Colin Farrell and Forest Whitaker.

PATRICK FUGIT (Paul Trout) made his motion picture debut in the central role of the young rock and roll reporter in Cameron Crowe's Academy Award-winning film *Almost Famous*, starring with Kate Hudson, Frances McDormand and Billy Crudup. He was initially seen by Crowe in an audition tape and flown to Los Angeles to meet with the writer/director, where he won the coveted part over hundreds of other young actors.

A native of Salt Lake City, Utah, Fugit began to take an interest in acting at age 11 and attended a theater program for young people at the University of Utah. He performed in several local stage productions, but it was his work in a school play that ultimately caught the attention of a local casting director who got him signed with a talent agency.

Prior to landing the role in *Almost Famous*, Fugit co-starred in the television movie *Legion of Fire: Killer Ants*. He also appeared on three episodes of the hit CBS series *Touched by an Angel*, as well as on two episodes of *Promised Land*. Most recently Fugit completed the independent film *Spun*, a dark comedy.

COLE HAUSER (Ray) will be seen next year starring opposite Bruce Willis and Monica Bellucci in Antoine Fuqua's *Hostile Rescue* and was most recently seen in Greg Hoblit's *Hart's War*, opposite Bruce Willis and Colin Farrell. He was also featured in Joel Schumacher's critically acclaimed *Tigerland*, a film about a group of recruits going through Advanced Infantry Training at Fort Polk, Louisiana's infamous Tigerland, the last stop before Vietnam for tens of thousands of young men in 1971, and was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for Best Supporting Actor for his performance. Hauser also starred in the soccer drama, *A Shot at Glory*, opposite Robert Duvall. Both *A Shot at Glory* and *Tigerland* were screened at the 2000 Toronto Film Festival.

Hauser's additional film credits include *Pitch Black*; Stephen Frears' *The Hi-Lo Country*; Gus Van Sant's *Good Will Hunting*; John Singleton's *Higher Learning*; Adam Goldberg's *Scotch and Milk*; Robert Mandel's *School Ties* and Richard Linklater's cult hit *Dazed and Confused*.

On television Hauser appeared as a series regular on ABC's and Steven Spielberg's *High Incident*.

For his role as Dr. John Carter on *ER*, **NOAH WYLE** (Mark Richards) has received five Emmy Award nominations, as well as three Golden Globe nominations as Best Supporting Actor in a Series, Miniseries or Motion Picture Made for Television. He also won the 2001 TV Guide Award for Supporting Actor in a Drama Series.

"Noah is a consummate professional and an extremely talented actor," says *ER* executive producer John Wells, who first cast Wyle as the young, impressionable Dr. Carter eight years ago. "He has been the soul of *ER* since day one. The show's success would not have been possible without Noah's performance as Carter."

Wyle, one of six brothers and sisters, was born and raised in Hollywood, California. He developed a genuine interest in acting after his junior year in high school when he participated in a theater arts program at Northwestern University. After graduation from high school, he found an apartment on Hollywood Boulevard and began studying with acting teacher Larry Moss.

Wyle scored his first professional role in the NBC miniseries *Blind Faith* and followed that with his first feature film, *Crooked Hearts*, in which he played a son in a dysfunctional family. A role in the Tom Cruise/Jack Nicholson starring vehicle *A Few Good Men* followed. His big break came when he was given the pilot script to *ER* and liked it so much he decided to audition for it – despite his reluctance to accept a regular series role because of the five year commitment involved. Since then, although his *ER* schedule is hectic and demanding, Wyle's film career has flourished.

He was most recently seen in *Enough*, opposite Jennifer Lopez; he also starred as Steve Jobs in the cable movie *The Pirates of Silicon Valley*; in the independent film *The Myth of Fingerprints* with Roy Scheider and Blythe Danner; and as the president's interpreter in the 2000 live television production of *Fail Safe*.

Wyle devotes much of his free time to the international non-profit organization Doctors of the World and to his work as a member of the Human Rights Watch Council. He enjoys basketball, traveling, photography and going to the movies. He lives with his wife, makeup artist Tracy Wyle. His birthday is June 4.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

PETER KOSMINSKY (Director), the British producer/director best known in the United States for his award-winning British television films *Warriors* and the controversial *No Child of Mine* makes his American feature film debut at the helm of *White Oleander*.

Warriors, a two-part series for the BBC, follows the experiences of a group of fictional British soldiers deployed to central Bosnia on peacekeeping duties in 1992. It won a 1999 BAFTA TV Award for Best Drama Serial, as well as several additional awards, and received an International Emmy nomination for Best Drama in 1999.

No Child of Mine is based on the true story of a little girl, sexually abused at home and in-care, who became a prostitute at the age of 11. The film earned Kosminsky notoriety in Britain and worldwide acclaim. It won the 1998 BAFTA TV Award for Best Single Drama and received additional recognition from the AFI Festival, Los Angeles (Grand Jury Special Commendation, 1997); the Toronto Film Festival (Official Selection, 1997); the Chicago International Film Festival (Certificate of Merit, 1997) and the 50th International Human Rights Festival in Belgium (Selection, 1998).

Kosminsky's other dramatic credits include *Shoot to Kill*, two two-hour films about the political situation in Northern Ireland which earned a BAFTA TV nomination for Best Single Drama in 1990; *Wuthering Heights*, starring Ralph Fiennes and Juliette Binoche, which aired on TNT in the United States; *15 - The Life and Death of Philip Knight*, winner of the New York Film & Television Festival Silver Medal in 1994; *The Dying of the Light*, the story of a UNICEF aid worker and BAFTA TV nominee for Best Single Drama in 1994; *Walking on the Moon* and *Innocents*.

Working at Yorkshire Television on the *First Tuesday* series, he made the award-winning documentaries *The Falklands War: The Untold Story*, *Cambodia: Children of*

the Killing Fields and *Afghantsi*. Other documentaries include *New York: The Quiet Catastrophe*, *Twilight in Belize*, *Death Row: A One-Woman Band*, *A Home for Laura*, *Murder in Ostankino Precinct* and *One Day in the Life of Television*.

Born in London, Kosminsky attended Oxford University as a chemistry major. He spent much of his time at the university in theater, where he was a lighting designer for the Dramatic Society and where he ultimately produced a successful touring production of *Twelfth Night*, co-starring fellow student Hugh Grant. The production's composer and accompanist was another young student named Rachel Portman (now an Oscar-winning composer and three time Oscar nominee). Following school, he worked at the BBC as a graduate trainee before becoming a documentary director.

Kosminsky, his wife Helen and two daughters, reside in Wiltshire, England.

JOHN WELLS (Producer) is one of the most prolific producers, directors and writers for the stage, television and film. In addition to *The West Wing*, the multiple award winner is at the helm of three other fast-paced one-hour dramas, *ER*, *Third Watch* and *Presidio Med*, as well as a number of high-profile film projects currently in various stages of production and development.

In addition to the 17 Emmys and other accolades awarded to *The West Wing*, Wells and his team have won 19 Emmy Awards, 2 Peabody Awards, 8 People's Choice Awards, 2 Producers Guild Awards, a Humanitas Prize and numerous awards from Health Care Organizations across the country for *ER*. He created *Third Watch* with writer/producer Edward Allen Bernero. Now in its third season, *Third Watch* continues to earn critical acclaim and honors, winning an Emmy Award and a Prism Award in 2000. *Third Watch* recently received the 2001 Peabody Award. *Presidio Med* is a medical drama about a team of hard-working physicians who run a tight-knit medical group adjacent to a hospital in San Francisco and premieres on CBS in the Fall.

Wells is in post-production on the theatrical feature *The Good Thief*, written and directed by Neil Jordan and starring Nick Nolte. He has several other films in development.

Prior to *ER*, *The West Wing* and *Third Watch*, Wells served as a writer and producer on the critically acclaimed *China Beach*. During Wells' tenure on the series,

the show received a Peabody Award, a Humanitas Prize, three Writers Guild of America nominations and six Emmy nominations. He was co-executive producer of the action blockbuster *The Peacemaker* for DreamWorks. Some of his award-winning stage productions are *Judgment*, *Balm in Gilead*, *Battery* and *She Also Dances*. He is the immediate past president of the Writers Guild of America.

Born in Alexandria, Virginia and raised in Denver, Colorado, Wells graduated from Carnegie-Melon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with a bachelor of fine arts and later earned a Masters degree in film and television at the University of Southern California.

HUNT LOWRY (Producer), with his partner E.K. Gaylord II, recently structured a long-term co-financing and production deal with Warner Bros. Pictures for Gaylord Films and its specialty film division, Pandora. Gaylord Films and Pandora currently have a number of motion pictures in production, post-production and development. Among the projects Lowry is producing in an as-yet untitled espionage thriller (Miramax), starring Jeremy Northam and Lucy Liu. He is also executive producing the upcoming comedy, *Welcome to Collinwood* (Warner Bros. Pictures). All three films are scheduled for a 2002 release.

Most recently, Lowry was a producer on the June release, *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, the classic Southern tale of life, love and family that follows a group of lifelong friends, and the inspirational coming-of-age love story, *A Walk to Remember*, starring Shane West and Mandy Moore, released in January of this year.

Previously, he was an executive producer on the critically acclaimed feature *Donnie Darko*, which premiered at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize there. Among his additional producing credits are Disney's *The Kid*, starring Bruce Willis, the thriller *Instinct*, starring Anthony Hopkins and Cuba Gooding Jr., Joel Schumacher's *A Time to Kill*, starring Sandra Bullock, the epic period romance *First Knight*, starring Sean Connery and Richard Gere, *My Life*, starring Michael Keaton and Nicole Kidman, *Striking Distance*, starring Bruce Willis, the award-winning *The Last of the Mohicans*, starring Daniel Day-Lewis, the Chris Columbus comedy *Only the Lonely*, *Career Opportunities*, *Get Crazy* and *Top Secret!*

For television, Lowry produced the miniseries *Dream West, Surviving: A Family in Crisis*, and was executive producer on *Rascals and Robbers: The Secret Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn*.

KRISTIN HARMS (Executive Producer) currently has a first look independent producer deal with John Wells Productions and is executive producing the upcoming heist film *The Good Thief*, written and directed by Neil Jordan and starring Nick Nolte, which is based on the French New Wave film *Bob The Gambler*.

Harms is the producer on the multi-E Emmy Award winning series *The West Wing*, for which she has won two Emmy Awards, a Golden Globe, two George Peabody and two Humanitas awards as a producer. Harms is also a producer for the police/fire drama *Third Watch* and is involved in the daily operations of *ER* and the television projects *Citizen Baines* and *The Big Time*.

For five years, Harms served as the President of John Wells Productions (November 1996 - October 2001) where she oversaw all television and film projects and spearheaded the opening of the New York office of John Wells Productions in order to heighten their presence in the book market. Feature film projects currently being developed by Harms for John Wells Productions include *The Englishman's Daughter*, *Kept Boy*, *Dooms*, *Raveling*, *Invisible Enemies*, *The Emperor of Ocean Park*, based on the best-selling novel by Stephen L. Carter, and *Bandits*, with director Nancy Bardawil attached.

Harms was also responsible for bringing Christine Vachon and Pam Koffler's Killer Films (*Boys Don't Cry*) into a deal wherein John Wells Productions finances their operation. Upcoming projects include: *One Hour Photo* starring Robin Williams, and *The Grey Zone*, a film written and directed by Tim Blake Nelson. In addition, Harms oversaw director Mimi Leder's (*Pay It Forward*, *Deep Impact*) first-look deal with John Wells Productions and created the hailed Minority Director Training Program.

Previously, Harms worked with director Richard Donner and producer Lauren Shuler-Donner on several film collaborations including the *Lethal Weapon* series, *Maverick*, *Conspiracy Theory* and *Free Willy*. Harms began her career in the

entertainment industry working for esteemed producer Kathleen Kennedy at Amblin Entertainment.

STACY COHEN (Executive Producer) is the Senior Vice President of Production at Gaylord Films/Pandora. She previously worked with Hunt Lowry for four years at his Disney-based production company as Vice President of Development.

Before joining Lowry, Cohen worked in the independent feature world in various production capacities on such films as Robert Altman's *The Player*, Bryan Singer's Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury prize-winning *Public Access*, and as associate producer on Dimension's *No Turning Back*.

E.K. GAYLORD II (Executive Producer) is president of the Oklahoma Publishing Company and is on the Board of Directors of the Gaylord Entertainment Company. He is Chairman of Gaylord Films, Gaylord Event Television and Gaylord Sports Management. He serves on the Board of Ricks Exploration. Additionally, he is a Director of the National Cowboy Hall of fame and Western Heritage Center and the State Fair of Oklahoma. Gaylord is President of Gaillardia Golf and Country Club in Oklahoma City and is Chairman of the Broadmoor Hotel and Golf Club in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Gaylord most recently served as executive producer on the June release, *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, the classic Southern tale of life, love and family that follows a group of lifelong friends, and the popular coming-of-age love story, *A Walk to Remember*, based on the best-selling novel by Nicholas Sparks. Released in January, it starred Shane West and Mandy Moore.

A man of diverse and far-ranging interests, Gaylord owns and operates the Lazy E Ranch, Arena and Training Center near Guthrie, Oklahoma, as well as Gaillardia Farms in Lexington, Kentucky, and the Gaillardia Ranch in Kendall County, Texas. He is on the Breeder's Cup Board and is very active in the thoroughbred industry. He is also involved with Children's Hospital, Children's Medical Research, the Leukemia Society, the Arthritis Foundation and the United Way.

Edward King Gaylord II is a graduate of Casady School and Texas Christian University. The son of Edward L. and Thelma Gaylord, he currently lives with his wife and three sons in Edmond, Oklahoma.

PATRICK MARKEY (Executive Producer) has produced *The Joy Luck Club*, Robert Redford's *The Horse Whisperer* and *A River Runs Through It*, Sam Raimi's *The Quick and the Dead*, *Deep Star Six*, *The Dark Wind*, *The Tie That Binds* and *The Associate*.

He also served as production executive on *The Natural*. In collaboration with director Norman Jewison, Markey produced the film *Bogus* for New Regency and the HBO adaptation of the Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Dinner With Friends*. His other television credits include Michael Mann's series *Crime Story* and the Warner Bros. Television mini-series *Dream West*, which he proudly produced with Hunt Lowry.

The eldest son in a family of fourteen children, Markey was born in West Virginia and raised in Ohio. He began acting in high school and received a degree in theater arts from Ohio State University. While in the Masters Program at OSU, he was hired as a consultant to the Ohio Film Commission, which led to his introduction into the film industry as a production assistant on *Brubaker*, starring Robert Redford. He then became the location manager on Redford's directorial debut, *Ordinary People*, and Michael Mann's *Thief*.

Markey currently serves as an adjunct professor in the Department of Film and the Theater Arts at Montana State University in Bozeman, owns the Empire Café, one of the hippest restaurants in Houston, Texas, and serves on the Board of the Dactyl Foundation for the Arts and Humanities, a private non-profit gallery in Lower Manhattan.

MARY AGNES DONOGHUE (Screenwriter) previously adapted the novel *Beaches* for the screen. The film starred Bette Midler and Barbara Hershey. She also wrote the original screenplays for the thriller *Deceived*, starring Goldie Hawn and John Heard, and *The Buddy System*, starring Richard Dreyfuss and Susan Sarandon.

Donoghue wrote and directed *Paradise*, starring Melanie Griffith and Don Johnson.

Projects in development for Donoghue include the original screenplays *Chasing the Dragon*, which will star Cate Blanchett, *Forests of the Night* and *The Time of our Lives*, an adaptation of the novel *Hot Flashes*.

Her play, *Me and Mamie O'Rourke*, was staged at the Strand Theatre in London and the Palace Theatre in Watford, England.

JANET FITCH (Author) published her debut novel, *White Oleander*, in 1999. Within a month, talk show host Oprah Winfrey raved about the novel, calling the language “liquid poetry,” and added it to her high-profile “Oprah’s Book Club” as the May 1999 selection. It then vaulted to the top of five newspaper bestseller lists, including the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post, and USA Today. The short story upon which the novel is based was noted as a distinguished story in Best American Short Stories 1994.

A third-generation resident of Los Angeles, Fitch graduated from Reed College in Portland, Oregon, majoring in history. She briefly attended film school in the Director’s Program at the University of Southern California. She went on to edit a weekly newspaper in southwestern Colorado and served as the managing editor of American Film magazine. She has worked as a typesetter, a freelance journalist and editor.

Her fiction has appeared in such literary publications as A Room of One’s Own, Black Warrior Review and Rain City Review. She is the author of a young adult novel, *Kicks*, and teaches writing through the UCLA Writing Program, Cal State Fullerton, and privately in the Los Angeles area. In the fall of 2001, Fitch served as the first Mosely Fellow in Creative Writing at Pomona College, Claremont.

DONALD GRAHAM BURT (Production Designer) has collaborated with legendary director Wayne Wang on three films: *The Center of the World*, starring Peter Sarsgaard and Molly Parker; *Anywhere But Here*, starring Susan Sarandon and Natalie Portman, and *The Joy Luck Club*, based on Amy Tan’s novel, starring Kieu Chinh and Tsai Chin.

He was the production designer of Mike Newell’s *Donnie Brasco*, starring Al Pacino and Johnny Depp; John Smith’s *A Cool Dry Place*; *Dangerous Minds*, starring

Michelle Pfeiffer; and *Kazaam*, starring Shaquille O'Neal and directed by Paul Michael Glaser.

ELLIOT DAVIS (Director of Photography) most recently completed *I Am Sam*, starring Michelle Pfeiffer and Sean Penn, directed by Jessie Nelson. He has photographed four films for acclaimed director Steven Soderbergh: *Out of Sight*, *Gray's Anatomy*, *The Underneath* and *King of the Hill*. He received an IFP Spirit Award nomination for his work on *The Underneath*.

Davis shot the Alan Rudolph films *Breakfast of Champions*, *Equinox* (another IFP Spirit Award nomination), *Mortal Thoughts* and *Love at Large*. His feature credits also include *40 Days and 40 Nights*, *Happy Campers*, *The Next Best Thing*, *Light it Up*, *Forces of Nature*, *Lawn Dogs*, *Get on the Bus*, *Larger Than Life*, *Things to do in Denver When You're Dead*, *The Glass Shield*, *Bright Angel* and *Harvest: 3000 Years*, which won the Critics Prize at the Cannes Film Festival and a Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival.

For television Davis shot Charles Burnett's *Night John*, the mini-series *Cruel Doubt* and six episodes of *Oasis in Space*, a PBS Jacques Cousteau series.

CHRIS RIDSDALE (Editor) has previously collaborated with director Peter Kosminsky on five British television projects, editing *The Innocents*, *Warriors*, *Walking on the Moon*, *No Child of Mine* and *The Dying of the Light*.

His additional credits include the British feature films and television dramas *The Swap*, *Messiah*, *The Last Train*, *Out of Hours*, *Playing the Field*, *Our Boy*, *Thief Takers* and *Crucial Tales*.

Ridsdale was an assembly editor on Sir Richard Attenborough's Academy Award-winning film *Gandhi*, and was the first assistant editor on *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Dog Soldiers* and *Tommy*.

THOMAS NEWMAN (Music) moves effortlessly from dramas such as *The Shawshank Redemption*, *The Green Mile*, *The Horse Whisperer* and *Erin Brockovich* to sharp satire (*The Player*) to period classics (*Little Women*), building on an amazing family tradition of music in Hollywood. Newman has received four Oscar nominations

for his film work. He was the only double nominee in 1994's Oscar race, receiving nominations for both *Little Women* and *The Shawshank Redemption*, and the following year for his score for Diane Keaton's off-beat comedy *Unstrung Heroes*.

In 1999, Newman scored two outstanding films: *The Green Mile*, his second collaboration with director Frank Darabont, and the critically-acclaimed *American Beauty*, starring Kevin Spacey and Annette Bening, for which he received his fourth Oscar nomination.

Since the beginning of film scoring, the Newman name has been an integral part of its evolution. Thomas Newman is the youngest son of the legendary Alfred Newman, a nine-time Oscar winner and 45-time nominee, who as musical director of 20th Century Fox from the mid-30s to the early '60s was responsible for overseeing or writing all the music created for over 200 Fox films. Alfred's brother Lionel succeeded him as Fox music director, winning an Oscar for *Hello, Dolly!* and overseeing the studio's scoring into the 1980's. Thomas Newman's cousin, Randy Newman, has also achieved fame in both pop and film scoring (*The Natural*), and brother David is also a busy film composer (*The War Of the Roses*).

Newman studied composition and orchestration at USC with professors Frederick Lesemann and noted film composer David Raksin, and privately with composer George Tremblay. Newman completed his academic work at Yale, studying with Jacob Druckman, Bruce MacCombie and Robert Moore.

Newman's reputation for originality and for intensifying mood and character grew rapidly with such films as Ron Howard's comedy *Gung Ho*; *Desperately Seeking Susan*; *The Lost Boys*; the Academy Award nominated *Scent Of A Woman*; *The Rapture*; the acclaimed cable movie *Citizen Cohn* and over 20 other major titles.

Newman's recent film scores include *The Road to Perdition*, *The Salton Sea*, *Erin Brockovich*, *Pay It Forward*, *Meet Joe Black*, *Up Close And Personal*, *Phenomenon*, *American Buffalo* (the film version of David Mamet's award-winning play), *The People Vs. Larry Flynt* and *Oscar & Lucinda*.

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