

9

PRODUCTION NOTES

Release Date: September 9, 2009

Studio: Focus Features

Director: Shane Acker

Screenwriter: Pamela Pettler

Starring: Elijah Wood, Jennifer Connelly, Martin Landau, Christopher Plummer, John C. Reilly, Crispin Glover

Genre: Animation, Adventure, Fantasy, Sci-Fi

MPAA Rating: PG-13 (for violence and scary images)

SYNOPSIS

An action-packed adventure, director Shane Acker's animated fantasy epic *9* is the feature-length expansion of his Academy Award-nominated 2004 short film of the same name. The screenplay for the feature is by Pamela Pettler (*Monster House*); directors Tim Burton (*Beetlejuice*) and Timur Bekmambetov (*Wanted*) are among the feature version's producers.

The time is the too-near future. Powered and enabled by the invention known as the Great Machine, the world's machines have turned on mankind and sparked social unrest, decimating the human population before being largely shut down.

But as our world fell to pieces, a mission began to salvage the legacy of civilization; a group of small creations was given the spark of life by a scientist in the final days of humanity, and they continue to exist post-apocalypse. Another of their own, #9 (voiced by Elijah Wood), emerges and displays leadership qualities that may help them survive and possibly even thrive. The conflicted but resilient tribe already includes #1 (Christopher Plummer), a domineering war veteran and the group's longtime leader; #2 (Martin Landau), a kindly but now-frail inventor; #3 and #4, scholarly twins who communicate nonverbally and mostly with each other; #5 (John C. Reilly), a stalwart and nurturing engineer; #6 (Crispin Glover), an erratic artist beset by visions; #7 (Jennifer Connelly), a brave and self-sufficient warrior; and #8 (Fred Tatasciore), the none-too-bright muscle and enforcer for #1.

With their group so few, these "stitchpunk" creations must summon individual strengths well beyond their own proportions in order to outwit and fight against still-functioning machines, one of which is a marauding mechanized beast. In the darkness just before the dawn, #9 rallies everyone of his number to band together.

While showcasing a stunning "steampunk"-styled visual brilliance, *9* dynamically explores the will to live, the power of community, and how one soul can change the world.

A Focus Features presentation in association with Relativity Media of a Jim Lemley/Tim Burton/Timur Bekmambetov production. 9. Elijah Wood, John C. Reilly, Jennifer Connelly, Christopher Plummer, Crispin Glover, Martin Landau, Fred Tatasciore. Casting by Mindy Marin, C.S.A. Themes by Danny Elfman. Score by Deborah Lurie. Edited by Nick Kenway. Associate Producers, Graham Moloy, Lilian Eche, Pierre Urbain. Animation Produced at Starz Animation, Toronto. Co-Producer, Jinko Gotoh. Co-Producer, Marci Levine. Produced by Jim Lemley, Tim Burton, Timur Bekmambetov, Dana Ginsburg. Story by Shane Acker. Screenplay by Pamela Pettler. Directed by Shane Acker. A Focus Features Release.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

“It’s a dream come true,” says director Shane Acker of the rare opportunity to expand his Student Academy Award-winning short film into a feature. “I had fallen in love with the world and the characters, and my head was full of ideas of what I would want to do to show more of it, and more of them, as they discovered the world and themselves.”

For Acker, the theatrical release of the feature film *9* – on, appropriately enough, September 9th, 2009 (9/9/09) – caps a decade of exploring a world he created. Through the years, from short to feature, his core concepts have remained consistent while also inviting and encouraging creative collaboration and audience interaction.

At the end of the last century, “I had the idea for the character of #9, an innocent who would risk his life for his brethren and use intellect rather than might to slay a beast,” he remembers. “I wanted to depict him empathetically, without dialogue. This way, the short film could be universal and accessible, while also challenging the audience to piece the details together in order to understand the whole. I thought that would make for a rewarding filmgoing experience, especially in animated form.

“The design of the short film was inspired by the work of several stop-motion animated masters; Jan Švankmajer, the Brothers Quay, and the Lauenstein brothers. In fact, I originally conceived the short as being stop-motion.”

At the time, though, Acker was still a student at UCLA, finishing his Masters Degree for Architecture and working towards a second one in Animation – with the short as his thesis film. “I was learning by doing – and, doing while learning. So a stop-motion production on a student budget would have been prohibitive,” he explains. “But that had started me thinking, ‘What can I use to *make* these characters out of?’ Well, things all around me; bits, pieces, scraps. I imagined a tribe of nomadic beings who carry their possessions – scavenged objects – within themselves.

“They’re ‘stitchpunk’ creations, if you will. That’s a term which I first heard coined from a fan of the short film, and I’d say it fittingly describes the characters’ aesthetic, in what they physically are and in that they have been designed not as toys but to survive in a barren landscape. I realized that the world they exist in should have real grit and texture, with debris of a past and new life forms rising out of it. For that scenic design, I was inspired by photographs of

European cities destroyed in World War II, as well as the fantasy artwork of Zdzislaw Bekskinski.”

Making the short took four-and-one-half years. Acker remembers, “I would take jobs on-and-off to pay for the cost of living. I went to New Zealand for six months to work on [Peter Jackson’s multi-Academy Award-winning *The Lord of the Rings*:] *The Return of the King*. That was an amazing learning experience, like animation boot camp.”

Being a part of a classic film furthered Acker’s own attachments to his characters and storyline. He offers, “#9’s tribe is a metaphor for a developing humanity; they possess the power of adaptation and invention. In contrast, the beast that is hunting them is a hunter, made from bones and bits of broken machinery. Yet it desires to assimilate, which is why it is stealing these beings’ souls.

“These two species are connected by a talisman, which I imagined as a piece of ancient technology left over from when humans walked the earth. A vessel for capturing and containing the soul of an individual, the talisman was split into two halves, one of which fell into the beast’s clutches and the other of which is in the tribe’s possession

The 11-minute short, *9*, completed in mid-2004, impressed audiences worldwide with its striking characters, thought-provoking science-fiction concepts, and exciting chase sequences. From one festival to the next, Acker found himself collecting awards for his achievement with *9*. But, as the director remembers, “There was a real emotional core, too. What was surprising was how often I would be approached, following screenings, by women or girls who had gotten invested in the character of #9.”

As director of the short, Acker received an Academy Award nomination in the Best Animated Short Film category – after having won the Gold Medal (the top prize) at the Student Academy Awards.

Acker reflects that “getting an Academy Award nomination changes your life! I had no idea that the short would go as far as it did, and I felt very blessed and honored. It opened doors, and has allowed me new opportunities to express myself as an artist.”

Among the short’s early champions – even before the Oscar nomination – were producers Jim Lemley and Dana Ginsburg. “I was mesmerized. It had a timeless concept and rich characters, which all the best fantasy stories share,” says Ginsburg.

In the winter of 2005, Lemley, as executive producer of the hit thriller *Red Eye*, was in the middle of a nighttime shooting schedule on the movie. At 3:00 AM one “day,” he was able to catch up on some submissions materials. He remembers, “My assistant at the time, Lee Clay, had been telling me for at least a week, ‘You need to look at this thing called *9*. So I picked up the DVD copy, put it on, and sat at my desk to sign some papers. I turned to look at the screen, and by the end my jaw was on the floor. I watched it again and again. Shane was conveying humanity through things that aren’t even human.

“Three days later, I was meeting with Shane. I asked him where the world he had created came from, and he started to outline the mythology. Within the week, I was funding development of the feature out of my own pocket.”

Two directors whose work has pushed moviemaking boundaries soon joined forces with Lemley to get *9* made.

Tim Burton notes, “The short was among the most extraordinary 11 minutes of film I’ve ever seen. Shane’s conception was and is a stunningly detailed and hauntingly beautiful universe that resonates not only visually but emotionally.”

Timur Bekmambetov adds, “As a viewer, Shane’s short hooked me, so I wanted to hear the end of the story – and what happened before. I sought to help Shane and support his vision of an epic, meaningful, and entertaining movie.”

Screenwriter Pamela Pettler, who has collaborated several times with Burton, was enlisted to work with Acker to expand his story and canvas. She states, “I absolutely felt that this short could become a full-length feature and a great adventure movie, since animation is a marvelous art form. Fundamentally, this is a universal story about a world not defined by country or race; there is struggle, but it is about hope and optimism.”

Acker notes, “We now had the opportunity to explore the world from the perspective of these beings but also to get at the back story; to get to ‘post-apocalyptic,’ there had to be a ‘pre-apocalyptic.’ The crux of that is, everyone was told ‘The Glorious Future Is Ours,’ but it all went awry.

“So we were able to delve deeper into why the world ended up the way it did, what happened to the humans, and the extent of hope. These creations ultimately have to look into the past to ascertain just who they are – *why* they are -- and how they can again move forward. So while we’re bringing people into a fantasy world with a different sensibility, they’re on an emotional journey with characters who are very human in their emotions and interactions.”

Pettler began work on the screenplay in mid-2005. Lemley comments, “She and Shane worked closely together for six months. They would visit each other’s homes constantly.”

The screenwriter remembers, “We had large boards up, showing the characters – Shane came up with wonderful renderings of the beast! – and listing the major story points. We did up an artistic outline in addition to a written one.

“I love collaborating with people who think as visually as Shane does. The way we created this universe was, he would free-associate and I would shape it so that the characters had emotional depth and the story was consistent.”

Acker reflects, “One of the design philosophies – dating back to the short – was to look to Aristotle’s definition of the different facets of man. These creations represent humanity, flaws and all. That’s key to the mystery of just how they came to be and where they came from — and

I'd also say that they're all facets of *me*; I try to be like #9 in terms of following my head and heart towards an ideal, even though the journey is going to be a challenging one.

“Pamela helped flesh out the characters and the structure. I'm the type who will throw everything in, including the kitchen sink, and she would sift through and knit all my crazy ideas together while making sure that the journey of the characters was a strong one.”

Similarly, Lemley saw his collaboration with Acker as “knowing what Shane wants to achieve and enabling him to do so. It's like building a house so that he can go into any room he wants to and get creative.

“With Tim and Timur, Shane could talk to people who have been there, who know what it's like to direct an epic fantasy movie. Even while directing *Sweeney Todd*, Tim was incredibly present for when we needed him. Timur was directing *Wanted*, which I was simultaneously producing, but he would always be saying, ‘How can I help Shane?’”

Acker remarks, “Timur also contributed greatly to our discussions of numerology, which figures significantly into the characters' names – or numbers, if you will. Tim made sure I had the creative space I needed. I was able to get feedback from not one but two amazing filmmakers to help me find what the core of the movie was.”

The look of the feature expanded from that of the short – exponentially, as production designer Robert St. Pierre explains; “One of the design themes was ‘the power of three,’ which entailed using elements of that number. For example, a vehicle will have three or six wheels on it. We researched historical applications of props and machines, and then figured out how we could uniquely utilize them in our context.

“We looked to go even more acidic and post-apocalyptic than the short did. The lighting in 9 has a more theatrical than cinematic bent, and Shane is not afraid to use darkness to accentuate staging. It's rendered all the more dynamic in terms of what these characters have to handle – given their forced perspective.”

Acker adds, “It's because of their size – they're about 8 inches tall – that the ruins of what was our world are that much more formidable for them to navigate.”

Editor Nick Kenway comments, “By way of the movement and the framing, we wanted the audience to get involved in the film. The editing style is not all in-your-face fast cutting, and the camera moves are motivated.”

The latter decision was made early on. As Acker explains, “The editorial department is where the film begins and then ultimately ends. Everything was filtered through this department so that we could see how things played in context, and to make sure that all the different departments' elements were coming together to tell our story.

“Nick was already shaping the movie with me after the storyboards phase. Next came layout, which was the first pass at roughing the environments with the characters in them. After that

came the animation phase – which was two parts; blocking, where you rough out the timing and refine the animation, and lighting, where the textures and the characters really come to life. All the while we were layering in music and sound, too – and editing pulls it all together.”

Layout supervisor Brian Foster adds, “We had our own camera rig, which very much mimicked what a camera boom and dolly rig would do on a live-action movie. That makes the world of *9* more real.

“In computer-generated animation, the camera can be moved wherever you envision it. But we showed restraint there, because Shane wanted the camera work on *9* to be handled the way a traditional shoot would be.”

Even so, director of photography Kevin Adams advises, “It’s certainly the most action-packed film that I’ve worked on! If you saw the short, well, this has quite a bit more of the characters battling the beast – audiences can expect quite a ride...

“I had to make sure that what we would plan at the beginning came out consistently through the end; in terms of the lighting and the color keys, it had to relate back to the story’s original intent. I oversaw the crew’s modeling, surfacing and matte painting, through lighting. Wherever we could add detail, we would; we had folders of reference for the junk, the rocks, and so on. Everyone worked so hard, but we were excited because we knew we were creating something that takes animation to new places. The look of *9* came to have more of a painterly feel than we thought it would.”

Supervising animator Charlie Bonifacio says, “The palette is very narrow, and yet there’s a lot of color in it; rose-colored skies and dense red rust in a gray landscape, for example.”

Visual effects supervisor Jeff Bell adds, “We were able to accomplish the shadows-and-contrast look that Shane wanted. In terms of the CG [computer-generated] animation, *9* looks like no other film you’ve seen. It takes place in rich, majestic ‘steampunk’ environments, yet those are backdrops; the characters drive the story.”

Animation director Joe Ksander offers, “When these characters come out of the darkness into the light, it is that much more powerful visually and from a storytelling point of view.”

While *9* was made using CG animation tools and technology, as Acker notes, “It’s not the technology that adds richness to the images, but the artists using the technology.

“The brilliant people who have created these software tools did so with the end user in mind, making it easy to grab something and create.”

To that end, the *9* artisans went to work at and with Canada’s largest feature animation studio, Starz Animation Toronto. Fortuitously, Starz had recently expanded its operations with a state-of-the-art 45,000-square-foot facility in downtown Toronto. So it was that in early 2007, production on the feature version was underway and Acker was back – full-time, this time – in the world that he had created.

CG notwithstanding, making 9 still necessitated trial-and-error by way of hand-crafting. Ksander reports, “The character designs were done on paper, out of clay, *and* in the computer system. We created a range of expressions for them which were saved within the computer system so that they could be further sculpted as needed.”

Acker remarks, “It’s ‘virtual puppetry’ in that the puppets are in the computer system. The poses are locked, the computer stores the data, and it all links together as animation.”

Ksander adds, “It’s like having a toolbox in a computer. An animator could control any part of the characters’ faces to pose, access a particular expression, or do dialogue – such as shaping their lips for how an ‘l’ or ‘r’ looks and sounds.

“If the character is saying something in anger, we’d pull together all the components of the face which convey that emotion.”

Indeed, a crucial component to the narrative was that the characters *would* speak even if, as Pettler states, “We wanted to have as little dialogue as possible.”

Acker elaborates, “We found it would be very difficult to try to tell some of the story points and communicate some of the larger emotions without dialogue. It brought a new richness to the characters and made their personalities more distinct.”

Although the feature would be voiced by well-known actors, Acker felt that “a lot of times, animated movies and their characters are broadly pitched. I wanted to make sure that we had subtlety, with our voiceover actors speaking with dramatic truth and more realistically. So the idea was to cast actors who themselves had key characteristics of the characters, and would speak with their own voice rather than ‘doing a voice.’”

To voice the lead role of the newly born – and aborning hero -- #9, Acker couldn’t help but have in mind an actor who was so central to the film set he had worked on years earlier in New Zealand – *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* star Elijah Wood. The director remarks, “For an actor who could play someone naïve yet unafraid to follow his instincts, and in so doing emerge as a leader, I knew I wanted Elijah. He was a natural fit.”

Wood says, “I was blown away by the short film, with its extraordinarily beautiful animation – of the kind you don’t come across often. I met with Shane and found him to have a very clear vision of what he wants.

“Playing a ‘stitchpunk’ creation was fun because he’s someone who is trying to navigate a journey of discovery through a world, and he looks at everything through an innocent’s eyes.”

For the supportive #5, Academy Award nominee John C. Reilly was everyone’s first choice. Acker says, “In so many of the characters he’s portrayed, audiences identify with John because he has this everyman quality. People feel that they can walk in his shoes, and sense that he leads with his heart. John’s voice conveys all that and more.”

Wood adds, “When you get a chance to play opposite the other actor in voice sessions, it makes a difference – and John is amazing; I’ve always been a fan of his.”

The female role of the rebellious #7, conceived by Pettler and whom Acker admiringly refers to as “a real character to be reckoned with,” was taken by Oscar winner Jennifer Connelly. “I have two kids,” she explains. “I watched the short film with them and they thought it was the coolest thing that they had seen. They watched it over and over again, so I couldn’t *not* be part of 9!

The visuals and the design fascinated me. Shane kindly indulged all my questions like, ‘How the heck do you do this? How does that work?’ and -- since I had never done voiceover before – ‘Let’s talk about that. Did you like it or not?’ He made me feel comfortable.”

Acker knew that the tribe’s commanding and occasionally manipulative leader, #1, had to be voiced by an actor who “could be powerful and imposing without shouting all the time. I sought out Christopher Plummer, who, happily, committed to play the role and then of course nailed it right from the first session. He had a deep understanding of the character, who has a large arc in the story.”

Lemley marvels, “Christopher brings such wisdom of experience to the part. He conveys #1’s majesty and also his vulnerability.”

The role of #6 was more difficult to cast, as the character is a highly physical manifestation of the beings’ adaptation processes in that, as Acker notes, “#6’s fingers are composed of pen nibs, so he’s constantly drawing and then trying to figure out what it all means, by pulling at – and *out* – threads in his head.”

All of which posed a challenge for Crispin Glover’s voice performance. The actor reflects, “#6 goes through so much physical action that I would exert myself, too. I would ask Shane specific questions about what #6 wanted or why he was saying a particular thing, and he could tell me the subtext so I could play to that rather than just the exact lines. I knew how important it was to give variations so that things could fit together in the editing room.”

Kenway confirms, “I’d listen to all the dialogue takes and choose what I thought was the best one – and sometimes it was one word from one, another phrase from another...Shane would come in and listen to decide which assemblage to use.”

Martin Landau was initially drawn in because of the participation of his friend Burton, who had directed the actor to an Academy Award win in *Ed Wood*. “I do not do a lot of voiceover work, only what interests me,” comments Landau. “I saw 9 as a very special piece. I came in with some ideas that I suggested to Shane, and we were basically on the same page.”

Landau elaborates that he felt #2 “needed to be old – which I am – and spirited – which I often am. #2 hasn’t lost his marbles, but he sees things in his own head that he thinks other people understand.

“I feel that 9 is so creative and exciting, and it’s going to make people think a little bit while it entertains them.”

Fred Tatasciore, who had studied animation at UCLA with Acker and became known there for his voiceover talents on other students’ films, was enlisted to voice #8, the “brawn to #1’s brain, if you will,” offers Acker. “Through Fred, the complexities of #8 are fully conveyed; #8 is not the quickest of intellect, but once a confrontation happens he’s the quickest to rise to the challenge.”

The landscape that the characters exist in, and are trying to figure out their past and find their future in, is “filled with things that are hauntingly familiar to us all,” says the director. “But it’s also as if the Industrial Revolution had been allowed to progress for hundreds of years, and we never got past that steam-powered design sensibility.”

That very sensibility has picked up momentum in recent years through the “steampunk” aesthetic that marries functional and custom-made invention to Victorian-era design. According to Ruth La Ferla in *The New York Times* [May 8th, 2008], it “is the aesthetic expression of a time-traveling fantasy world...inspired by the extravagantly inventive age of dirigibles and steam locomotives, brass diving bells and jar-shaped protosubmarines.”

As Pettler reports, “Shane had in mind industrial icons of mid-century Europe. There’s a very strong derivation from those in 9.”

St. Pierre adds, “The science of alchemy plays a pivotal role in the story and in the production design. Jules Verne was also an inspiration.”

Acker notes, “Verne’s world has definitely influenced ‘steampunk,’ which is a celebration of mechanisms and an idolization or faith in machines as a future, and which emphasizes analog over digital. But in 9, since the world has fallen to pieces it’s become *all* analog.”

Art director Christophe Vacher notes that, given the movie’s “post-apocalyptic environment, not only did we have to create things, we also had to age them, weather them, and sometimes destroy them!”

Acker elaborates, “The world of 9 is composed of what was discarded and what was left behind, so some things have become anachronistic and outdated.

“Each member of the group has clear visual ties to the humans’ past. For example, #1 has asserted his leadership status with a coin atop his head, and he swaddles himself in a piece of red velvet. This tribe exists – and its members and their adapted culture are maturing – in a post-human environment.”

Wood notes, “The whole group now tries to find out who they are and where they came from, and to overcome what they are afraid of.”

As director, Acker found he had to modify his working methods for the feature, since he was now overseeing dozens of people as opposed to previously occasionally working with two or three. He admits, “I was constantly saying, ‘Oh, I can do that myself’ or ‘Let me just take that.’ It naturally took a while for people to get acclimated to this world I’d set up and created. I would explain the rules for these characters, this world, and the philosophy of this world – and then our crew could run with it all.

“When you’re doing animation, you’re so close to it that it can be hard to take a critical distance from the work. Working with a team, there’s always people around to see the work in new ways and to bounce ideas off of. All of the amazing artists who have come onto the project have brought so much to it that I couldn’t have by myself. It’s been a tremendous collaborative effort.”

One collaborator, supervising animator Kristin Solid, had – like Tatasciore and Ksander -- been at UCLA “at the same time Shane was there. He and I would comment on each other’s films, and I even spent a little time working on the original short, doing some lighting. For the most part, he did that whole thing himself!

“Shane is very loyal and made sure to have people working on 9 that he has confidence in. They must be talented and be able to get him what he needs, because Shane and Joe Ksander expect the best from everybody, including themselves.”

Acker adds, “The good thing about directing the feature was that I didn’t have to worry about technological hurdles; we had a whole team that I could rely on to work out those challenges. This way, I could concentrate on the challenges of the story and characters.”

Co-producer Jinko Gotoh remarks, “Everyone was proud to be working on a film that is set apart from any other animated feature out there. Our crew size was smaller, so each individual was responsible for more of an output; seven feet of film was animated weekly, as opposed to the more typical five.”

Lemley comments, “What I learned on this movie is just how much animators put into the characters. It’s their personality, their skill, and their artistry that goes into the characters. *They* are acting, too; they are actors overseen and directed by Shane. Combine their performances with the actors’ voiceovers, and you’ve got universal human truths and emotions coming through these characters.”

Story artist Regina Conroy admits, “It was an emotional experience every day when we worked, going through the gamut of what these characters are feeling.”

Acker elaborates, “The actors deliver the subtleties of the dialogue, while the animators deliver the performance. We shot video footage of the actors, even when they were sitting around a table, and the animators used that for reference. This way, they could take those qualities that the actors had conveyed and apply them consistently throughout. Every character was distilled down to its vitals.”

Bonifacio says, “The footage was so interesting to watch. Shane pointed out to us some takes where Christopher Plummer would be readying to speak, so we put in that detail of #1’s mouth to start moving even before Christopher’s voiceover comes on; #1 is preparing to say what he’s going to say.”

Ksander reveals, “In addition to Elijah Wood, there’s some Shane Acker in #9; a great big grin that can break out on Shane’s face found its way onto #9’s face too.”

Bonifacio comments, “From Jennifer Connelly, the animators recreated for #7 the head tilts that Jennifer has, and the way that she would stand between takes.”

Ksander adds, “I would work with Shane closely after he and the art team had done character design. We would discuss which specifics I would be conveying to the animators. We had animators who worked their butts off to get onscreen the most subtle facial twitch *and* the shadow falling across that face.

“But it’s not just sitting down and moving keys around on a computer. We would also shoot video reference footage of *ourselves* acting, because there were lots of little things you would need to keep in mind before sketching or animating; studying the weight of a staff in someone’s hands, for instance. Mirrors were stationed at animators’ desks for them to glance into while they were working on their computers, for quick references to facial expressions or saying words. Since #3 and #4 have no dialogue at all, it was up to the animators to come up with those performances entirely; for those two characters, we were inspired by meerkats and silent film actors.”

Solid notes, “We had to make sure to get everything into the time frame we had for the shot, and that meant us doing everything from acting out lines to clambering around – for which we piled up a bunch of office furniture to simulate a junk pile.”

Supervising animator Adam Beck elaborates, “In looking at the sequence we were working on, we would listen to the dialogue and really try to put ourselves in that situation or scenario; how and what would this character do? All the time, we were keeping in mind our talks with Shane about who the characters were. A reference point for #1 was a Shakespearean-actor quality. For #2, it’s almost as if he was the others’ grandfather.

“Aside from the complex action sequences involving monster machines, the biggest challenge for the crew was to make these little beings full of emotion and life. I think we did so.”

Ksander concurs, “That’s what I’m personally most proud of, how we were able to pull the characters together; while animating them, we discovered a lot of who they were and where they were going. Through all the characters, we are telling a story.”

Wood says, “I’m so excited to have been a part of 9, because there’s much more to animation feature filmmaking that goes beyond the mold people too often put it into.”

Ultimately, Lemley feels that “9 will resonate with audiences; you will be entertained and, as in the best fantasy adventures, you will feel that you are part of a whole new world.”