

## NANNY McPHEE RETURNS

### Production Notes



**Release date** August 20, 2010

**Genre:** Family Comedy

**Cast:** Emma Thompson, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Rhys Ifans and Maggie Smith

**Directed by:** Susanna White

**Written by:** Emma Thompson

**Based upon the "Nurse Matilda" books by:** Christianna Brand

**Producers:** Lindsay Doran, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner

**Execuive Producers:** Debra Osborne, Liza Chasin, Emma Thompson

## PRODUCTION INFORMATION

***“I am going to explain to you the way I work.***

***When you need me, but do not want me...then I must stay.***

***When you want me, but no longer need me...then I have to go.”***

**—Nanny McPhee**

In *Nanny McPhee Returns*, Academy Award®-winning actress EMMA THOMPSON (*An Education, Stranger Than Fiction, Nanny McPhee, Love Actually, Sense and Sensibility*) returns to the role of the magical nanny who appears when she’s needed the most and wanted the least in the next chapter of the hilarious and heartwarming fable that has enchanted children around the world.

In the latest installment, Nanny McPhee appears at the door of a harried young mother, Mrs. Isabel Green (Academy Award® nominee MAGGIE GYLLENHAAL of *Crazy Heart, The Dark Knight, Stranger Than Fiction, SherryBaby*), who is trying to run the family farm while her husband is away at war. But once she’s arrived, Nanny McPhee discovers that Mrs. Green’s children are fighting a war of their own against two spoiled city cousins who have just moved in and refuse to leave.

Relying on everything from a flying motorcycle and a statue that comes to life to a tree-climbing piglet and a baby elephant who turns up in the oddest places, Nanny McPhee uses her magic to teach her mischievous charges five new lessons.

Starring alongside Thompson and Gyllenhaal in *Nanny McPhee Returns* are RHYS IFANS (*Notting Hill, Pirate Radio, Greenberg*) as Mrs. Green’s villainous brother-in-law, Phil, and legendary two-time Academy Award®-winning actress DAME MAGGIE SMITH (*Becoming Jane, Harry Potter* series) as the delightfully enigmatic Mrs. Docherty.

*Nanny McPhee Returns* is directed by BAFTA winner and two-time Emmy nominee SUSANNA WHITE (television’s *Generation Kill, Bleak House, Jane Eyre*) from a screenplay by Academy Award®-winning screenwriter Emma Thompson, based on the character from the “Nurse Matilda” children’s book series by CHRISTIANNA BRAND. It is produced by LINDSAY DORAN (in her fifth collaboration with Thompson, including *Nanny McPhee, Stranger Than Fiction* and *Sense and Sensibility*) and by Working Title Films’ TIM BEVAN and ERIC FELLNER (*Green Zone, Atonement, Bridget Jones’s Diary*).

The accomplished behind-the-scenes team includes director of photography MIKE ELEY (*Touching the Void, television’s Grey Gardens*), production designer SIMON ELLIOTT (*Brick Lane, television’s Bleak House*), editor SIM EVAN-JONES (*Shrek, The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*), eight-time Oscar®-nominated composer JAMES NEWTON HOWARD (*The Dark Knight, King Kong, Salt*) and two-time Oscar®-nominated costume designer JACQUELINE DURRAN (*Atonement, Pride & Prejudice*).

The family comedy’s executive producers are DEBRA OSBORNE (*Nanny McPhee, Atonement*), LIZA CHASIN (*Nanny McPhee, Pride & Prejudice*) and Emma Thompson.

## SYNOPSIS

Mrs. Green is at the end of her rope. Her three children—Norman (ASA BUTTERFIELD), Megsie (LIL WOODS) and Vincent (OSCAR STEER)—are constantly fighting with each other. Her husband, Rory (EWAN M C GREGOR), is away at war and hasn't been heard from in months. Her brother-in-law Phil is pressuring her to sell him Rory's half of the family farm and her employer, Mrs. Docherty, is beginning to behave very oddly indeed. On top of all that, her posh niece and nephew, Celia (ROSIE TAYLOR-RITSON) and Cyril Gray (EROS VLAHOS), are being sent to the farm from London for an unlimited stay, and the village warden, Mr. Docherty (SAM KELLY), keeps warning her that bombs could accidentally fall out of the sky at any moment. It's all too much for Mrs. Green. She doesn't know it yet, but the person she needs is Nanny McPhee.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Green's situation is even worse than it appears. Phil has been telling her that he has a buyer lined up who will give them a good price for the farm, but in truth he owes a gambling debt to the shadowy Mrs. Biggles. Mrs. Biggles has sent two female thugs, Miss Topsey (SINEAD MATTHEWS) and Miss Turvey (KATY BRAND), to threaten Phil and force him to get the farm away from Mrs. Green to pay off his IOU; if he succeeds, the Green family will lose everything.

Cyril and Celia show up a day early while Mrs. Green is away at work. The rich city children and their country cousins hate each other on sight, and their fighting quickly escalates to epic proportions. Mrs. Green comes home to find absolute mayhem in her house. She is trying in vain to stop the fighting when she hears a knock at the door. She opens it to reveal the unsettling figure of Nanny McPhee.

Nanny McPhee takes one look at the warring cousins and knows immediately that these children need her. She repeats her well-known phrase: "When you need me but do not want me, then I must stay. When you want me but no longer need me, then I have to go." She bangs her stick, and the children are suddenly hitting themselves instead of each other. Eventually they agree to Nanny McPhee's demand to stop what they are doing and apologize. Lesson One, to stop fighting, is complete.

Later that evening, Nanny McPhee continues to give the children a taste of their own medicine. When they refuse to share beds and say they'd rather share with a goat or a cow or an elephant, Nanny McPhee bangs her stick and the children are forced to make room for each other as well as for the animals they'd named. Lesson Two, to share nicely, is complete.

When Phil lets the family's valuable piglets escape in an attempt to make Mrs. Green desperate enough to sell the farm, Nanny McPhee uses her magic to force the children to cooperate in the search, and even to enjoy each other's company. Working together, the children manage to capture the piglets and return them in time to be sold to the Greens' neighbor, Farmer Macreadie (BILL BAILEY). Lesson Three, to help each other, is complete.

The children are just starting to get along, and Mrs. Green is finally becoming more relaxed,

when a telegram arrives bearing the terrible news that Mr. Green has been killed in the war. Everyone is overcome with grief except for Norman, who “feels it in his bones” that his father is alive. Cyril offers help—his father, Lord Gray (two-time Academy Award® nominee RALPH FIENNES), is “very high up in the War Office” and can find out what’s happened to Mr. Green if only they can find a way to get to London. Before long, they’re being whisked across the countryside in the sidecar of a motorcycle driven by none other than Nanny McPhee.

Back at home, Megsie and Celia find a note from Norman telling them where he and Cyril have gone and why. The girls realize they have to prevent Mrs. Green from selling the farm while Norman is gone. But later that morning, Phil shows up with a sale contract and a pen. The girls try to stall him, but time is running out.

Cyril and Norman have an adventurous ride to London, and then arrive at the office of Cyril’s imperious father. At first Lord Gray dismisses the boys’ request, but Cyril stands up to his father for the first time and demands his help. Lord Gray looks into the matter and reveals that Rory Green is missing in action, not killed, and that no telegram was sent from the War Office. Norman realizes that his wicked Uncle Phil has forged the telegram for his own purposes and that he and Cyril must get home right away.

Back at the farm, Megsie and Celia do their best to prevent Mrs. Green from signing Phil’s contract, but eventually Megsie loses hope. She whispers urgently, “Nanny McPhee, we need you!” Suddenly, a baby elephant—the same one that Nanny McPhee had deployed earlier for the lesson in sharing—appears in the kitchen. When Phil and Mrs. Green aren’t looking, the baby elephant sucks every pen in sight into its trunk. The children are delighted and Phil is temporarily confounded, but he eventually finds another pen and forces it into Mrs. Green’s hand. All seems lost, but suddenly a passing enemy plane accidentally drops a bomb into the Greens’ barley field, exactly as Mr. Docherty had predicted. The thud causes the ink to spill and ruin the contract, but the bomb doesn’t explode.

The boys return and Norman tells his mother that Mr. Green is missing but not dead. Mr. Docherty faints at the prospect of actually defusing a bomb, and the children realize they have to do it themselves. In the end, the children defuse the bomb and Lesson Four, to be brave, is complete. Phil is arrested, the harvest is brought in by Nanny McPhee’s magic, the children have become friends, and Mrs. Green’s life has at last become manageable. Lesson Five, to have faith, is complete, and it’s time for Nanny McPhee to go.

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

### The Nanny Returns

Five years after the success of *Nanny McPhee*, Emma Thompson and producer Lindsay Doran have once again combined forces with Working Title Films to bring forth the next chapter in the magical and enchanting fable that has delighted children through the generations.

“We always described the premise of the first *Nanny McPhee* film as ‘the magical nanny versus the seven most horrible children in the history of the world,’” explains Lindsay Doran, “and I think that’s what these films will always be about: badly behaved children and the magical nanny who comes to help them. The chief difference between the first film and the new one is that the first film was about a war between a parent and his children, while the new film is about a war between children and children. Nanny McPhee must teach these children five new lessons, and instruct them not only about how to get along, but about how to solve their problems in a more constructive way than fighting.”

Writer/executive producer and actress Emma Thompson adds: “In both films, there’s a prevailing sense of absence. In the first film, the absence is caused by the death of Mrs. Brown who’s had too many children, which was very true for that era. In the second film, it is the father’s absence in a war which was true of that era and, unfortunately, of the era we live in now.”

Thompson began creating the story for the new film while the original film was still in production, and wrote the script over the next three years. Throughout the process, Thompson tried to keep to the spirit of the original material. The Nanny McPhee character began as Nurse Matilda, the central figure of bedtime stories in the family of Christianna Brand and her cousin, Edward Ardizzone (who illustrated the “Nurse Matilda” books). The stories were passed down over 100 years, with each generation adding to the legend of the family’s ill-behaved children and the supernatural nanny who arrives to tame them.

Christianna Brand first wrote down the stories in the 1960s, and by that time they had achieved a timeless quality that Thompson has endeavored to preserve in her scripts. The story and characters may be new, but the basic attributes of a Nurse Matilda/Nanny McPhee story—her lessons, her looks that change from hideous to beautiful as the children come to love her, her magic stick, her heartbreaking need to go as soon as she’s wanted instead of needed—remain the same.

Director Susanna White, making her feature film debut, came on board to bring Thompson’s script to life on the screen. Producer Eric Fellner says: “Susanna’s TV films and dramas are stunning, and that’s what drew us to her. She brought a unique sensibility to the project and was passionate about doing it. The finished film speaks volumes for her skills and expertise.”

White recalls the moment that she received the script: “I was in Africa, where I’d been directing huge explosions all day for the American invasion of Iraq in *Generation Kill*. I came back in the evening, read the script and immediately felt a connection with it. I’d loved the first film, but the

thing that really appealed to me in the new script was that it is the story of a working mother who isn't coping, who is desperately trying to hold her life together. I'd loved what Emma and Kirk Jones had created in the first film, which was this creature of myth—that Nanny McPhee is a magical nanny—she's scary but she's safely scary, and I felt that they created something iconic. What I wanted to do with the new film was to protect that icon and to use a contemporary shooting style and a very contemporary cast to give it a modern feel.”

White felt that her television and documentary background helped to inform the way that she worked on the script. She explains: “The big thing that a documentary background gave me was an ability to understand people in a huge variety of emotional situations, and I always use that as my touchstone. I've been there when people have been dying, when babies are born, at postmortems, at all kinds of celebrations, and I really know when something in front of the camera feels ‘real.’ I wanted to create that in a fictional drama. I also wanted to use my experience with CGI on *Generation Kill* and take it several steps further so I had a wonderful and inventive time with the synchronized-swimming piglets and the magical harvest, which I added to the film and which were far from real!”

### **Pick Yourself Up, Dust Yourself Off, Start All Over Again**

The decision to make a second *Nanny McPhee* film necessitated the creation of an entirely new story. Doran explains: “People who haven't read the three ‘Nurse Matilda’ books by Christianna Brand might assume that we based the first film on the first book and the second film on the second book. But Emma mined every bit of story and character from all three of those books to create the script for the first film, so there really wasn't anything left. She had to start from scratch.”

But what should the new story be? A decision was made early on not to show Nanny McPhee returning to the Brown family from the first film to solve a new set of problems. Says Doran: “A director friend once said to me, ‘We should only make films about the most important day in a character's life. Who cares about the second most important day in a character's life?’ He was referring to sequels in which all the characters are the same, and the problems they're facing just aren't as big or as organic as they were in the original. It seemed like good advice.”

The solution was to have Nanny McPhee travel through time and space to visit a new family. Fellner comments: “She's a bit like Batman in that she has her magic powers and can operate in whatever way she deems necessary for the situation.

Says Thompson: “Nanny McPhee is ageless and timeless. Who knows how long she's been visiting families or how many families she's visited? Once we made the decision to move her through time, I knew immediately where I wanted to put her: wartime. I wanted her to visit a family in which the father was away at war, and the mother was home trying to hold everything together. New problems for the children, new problems for the parent and five new lessons for Nanny McPhee to teach.”

A decision was also made to make the war non-specific. The period resembles the 1940s and

World War II in many ways, but it is a resemblance rather than a strict adherence. Doran explains: “We wanted the war in this film to be a metaphor for all wars. And we didn’t want the look of the film restricted by a slavish adherence to what was real in a certain year. So we set it in what we called the ‘sort-of ’40s,’ a period that has much in common with the World War II era but has a unique look all its own.”

Another interesting aspect of a story set in wartime was that it affected the kinds of characters who would populate the world of the film. In this time and place, most of the men are away fighting. The only ones left are the older men (Mr. Docherty, Farmer Macreadie), and the ones who got around enlisting either through military employment (Lord Gray’s chauffeur, Blenkinsop, played by DANIEL MAYS) or cowardice and guile (Uncle Phil). That leaves a world of women and children, many of whom have had to take on roles previously held by the men who are away.

Mrs. Green and her children are entirely responsible for the upkeep of the farm, while the casino Phil frequents has been taken over by a woman known as Mrs. Big (presumably married to the absent Mr. Big). Phil is being threatened by Mrs. Big’s two “hit women” because all the hit men are away at the front. The hit women, Miss Topsey and Miss Turvey, seem to relish their new careers and it’s easy to speculate that, like many women left behind in wartime, they may find it hard to give up those new careers when the men come marching home.

### Children at War

Although the film is set against the background of an unspecified war between nations, the real war of the story is that between the Green and the Gray children. When the Gray cousins, Celia and Cyril, turn up at the Greens’ farm, a battle breaks out almost immediately between the boisterous farm children and their snobbish city cousins. Explains Lil Woods, who plays Megsie Green: “When the cousins arrive it all goes a bit haywire because we’re ready to be welcoming, but they’re posh and wearing fancy clothes, and they’re really rude to us. So we decide that they’re in for it, and it just goes off from there really.”

Woods describes her character: “Magsie is nine years old. She’s a big tomboy and not at all a girly girl, and she doesn’t like making a fuss over things. She’s very direct, and she gets on with things. She’s the mender of the family; if there’s something, like a gatepost that goes wonky or a window that smashes, she’s there to fix it every time.”

The Greens have other problems besides the arrival of the cousins. Explains Asa Butterfield, who plays Megsie’s older brother, Norman: “Norman is 11 years old and is the man of the house because his dad’s gone away to war. His mother is trying to run the family but she’s struggling, and they need to get money for their tractor.”

The last sibling in the Green family is six-year-old Vincent, played by Oscar Steer: “At the very beginning of the film he is really, really naughty, but by the end of the film he’s become good. At the beginning, Vincent smashes all the china with his cricket bat. But it wasn’t real china and they had to pick it all up and clean it away, and luckily I didn’t have to clean it up at all.”

The audience's first encounter with the Gray children is not a sympathetic one, but as the narrative progresses, we learn about the painful events in their family that have brought them to the Green farm.

Eros Vlahos explains how his character behaves on arrival at the farm: "Cyril is a posh young chap who gets up to lots of mischief and fighting and makes lots of remarks that are quite funny. He comes to the farm against his will with his sister, Celia, because they've been sent away from London. When he arrives, there's lots of mud, and he obviously doesn't like it because it ruins his clothes. There are no sweets around the house and there are chores!"

Rosie Taylor-Ritson plays Cyril's sister. The young actress explains: "Celia Gray is obnoxious at the start of the film, she can't do anything for herself, has to have 1,000 maids and then one day her parents decide to send her and her brother off to the country."

To help with the numerous fighting scenes in the film, Olivier Award-winning movement director TOBY SEDGWICK was enlisted to assist with the fiendishly complex fight in the parlor sequence in which the children fight each other, then themselves. With a background that includes training at the International Theatre School Jacques Lecoq in Paris, Sedgwick had experience that proved invaluable.

Says Sedgwick: "I'm not aware of any film that's used a movement director before, but physical comedy on film requires a lot of thought and precise timing, and Susanna and Emma wanted that kind of precision in the characters' movements. We worked with certain mime aspects of movement in order to make it look, for example, like Cyril's hand isn't his own when it grabs his collar and throws him to the ground, or Norman's hand isn't his own when it grabs his ear and yanks him across the room. And the children were brilliant. Even Oscar, who was only six years old, quickly learned the techniques required to make it look like he wasn't in control of his body or his cricket bat."

### **The Harassed Mother and the Army Nanny**

Maggie Gyllenhaal explains her character's state of mind at the start of the film: "Mrs. Green is at the very, very end of her rope, and then it just gets worse and worse and worse! If anyone needs Nanny McPhee, it's Mrs. Green. She's got the kids fighting and breaking things and hanging each other upside down, and then there's Mrs. Docherty who really needs Mrs. Green's help. So in every way, she is barely functioning."

She continues: "I took on this film because I felt that Mrs. Green is a real person, and she's a depiction of a mom that I relate to. Obviously there are things overwhelming her, but I think every mom understands that feeling of not having a second to get her head above water. That's very common, and the way that Emma Thompson has depicted it has a lot of compassion."

For Susanna White, the role of Mrs. Green was absolutely central to the story: "It's tricky directing a sequel, but what I felt was that this script was much more than a sequel. That it took the whole idea of the film to new places. What I loved was that it had this story of the absent father, and really for me the big thing was the plight of Mrs. Green. That she's a woman trying to

juggle a lot of things. Her husband is away at war. She can barely cope with her own children, let alone the impact of their cousins being sent from London to join them. She is trying to hold down a job in the village shop, run a farm—an impossible number of things. She’s juggling all these things at once, and I thought it was a very contemporary story, and that Mrs. Green was a very modern character.”

White continues: “There’s a warmth about Maggie, and an idiosyncrasy which I felt connected very well with Emma’s writing. Emma wrote Mrs. Green as quite a quirky character, and I thought Maggie could absolutely play that. Of course she’s a mother herself, and she understood motherhood so she connected very well with children. I felt there was something very natural and open about Maggie as an actress that really worked for this role.”

For Emma Thompson, it was interesting to put Gyllenhaal into a role so far removed from her usual work: “In this film, Maggie plays a slightly flappy English woman and we usually associate her with those very cool, funky, edgy movies she’s done, so it’s great to see her doing something quite this different...she gives us a glorious Mrs. Green.”

### **The “Covered-in-Poo People” and the “Perfumed Townies”**

Unlike the child characters in the first film who worked together as a team against their father and their nannies, the children in *Nanny McPhee Returns* are adversaries from the moment they meet. “There were only five children this time around rather than seven,” says Lindsay Doran, “and that made it easier to give each of them a distinctive personality as well as a distinctive role in the story. But because each one is so different, even within their respective families, it made casting more of a challenge.”

White saw Asa Butterfield for the first time in *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* and was astonished by his screen presence. “It is not only that the camera loves Asa’s face, but there is an incredible sensitivity behind those amazing eyes. He is capable of great emotional truthfulness and also had the great advantage of really looking like Maggie Gyllenhaal.”

Shares Thompson: “Asa is perfect for Norman who is, in this story, the quintessential hero. He and his mother are the two heads of the household and are struggling together to make sure the rest of the family doesn’t go down. Asa is straightforward and emotionally very powerful, which is crucial since Norman (which was my Dad’s middle name) has to carry the emotional center of the film.”

Lil Woods plays Megsie, the tomboy of the Green family. Says White: “Lil is the genuine article—a girl who lives in the countryside and actually has pet pigs [named Itchy and Scratchy]. She has a lovely openness about her and a natural sense of justice, a sense of right and wrong.”

Adds Thompson: “As soon as Lil walked in, I said ‘Now there’s a girl who looks like she lives on a farm.’ This was because Lil actually does live on a farm. Outdoor face, freckles, open features, she looked like fresh air. In fact, no one else came close because the urban dweller really does have an entirely different atmosphere.”

Oscar Steer plays the youngest Green child, Vincent. “We had to cast Oscar as he was totally yummy,” remembers White. “I wanted a boy who was still young enough to live in a world of his imagination—playing pirates or living out a fantasy world. The external expression of that imaginative inner life is his explorer’s helmet. I had borrowed one from the costume department for a filming project my daughter had at school and it was sitting on the side, waiting to be returned, when costume designer Jacqueline Durran suggested putting it on Vincent. That helmet tells you everything you need to know about Vincent’s adventurous spirit.”

Notes Thompson: “The lines I had written for Vincent were for a child who is still very young, but just on the cusp of understanding sentences with sub clauses. It was the combination of that understanding and Oscar’s extraordinarily mobile face, immensely impressive in one so young, that made us all shriek ‘He’s the one!’ as soon as he’d left the audition room. Also, I have never known a child so able to make realistic noises—like sad noises and whiny noises and happy noises—without sounding actory.”

Thompson feared that in creating the part of Cyril, she had written a character who was impossible for a child to play: “For a long time I thought, ‘We’re never going to find someone funny enough to play Cyril.’ I’d written a sort of lounge lizard part for a child—it was never going to happen. So it was miraculous that we found Eros Vlahos.”

Doran remembers watching Eros’ audition tape: “[Child casting director] PIPPA HALL asked Eros to perform an improvisation about a haughty child who’d been sent away from home and was now begging his parents to bring him back. His improv was hilarious, and we later learned that he had been doing stand-up comedy from the age of eight. We could all see immediately that he knew how to play a dreadfully spoiled child. Our one concern was could he be likeable? When Eros auditioned in person and performed some of the script’s more serious scenes, he was terribly moving, so casting him became an easy decision.”

Adds White: “What was also impressive about Eros was seeing him develop as an actor over the course of the shoot. His background was more in comedy than in acting, but he was very quick to learn from the great actors around. He paid attention and learned something from them all.”

White remembers that the role of Celia took the longest to cast: “We looked and looked and couldn’t find the right Celia. We needed a girl who had an aura of class about her and who was capable of going on a big emotional journey. Then one day I was doing open auditions with Pippa Hall in a church hall near the British Museum. As soon as I put the video camera on Rosie, I knew we had found someone very special. She looked absolutely beautiful on screen, combined with great ability as an actress. And there was something period about her face; her looks were classic rather than modern.”

Adds Thompson: “Rosie walked in and was so peach-like and delicate, everyone immediately leapt to their feet in order to prevent her from getting bruised. In actual fact, she is incredibly unbruisable and brave but just looks as though she has been carefully brought on in a hothouse with the other soft fruits. She had ballet training, of course, and held herself like Margot Fonteyn at all performances.”

Comments Rhys Ifans, who plays Uncle Phil: “I have to disagree with that old adage of don’t work with children and animals, as the children in this film were just a joy to be with. I’ve worked with kids several times, and it’s always a very fulfilling and joyous experience. They don’t have the hang-ups of grown-up actors.”

### The Menagerie

“The animals in the first film made a big impression on the children who saw it, and we realized that was one of the things we had to bring back in the new film,” says

Doran. “So Emma wrote in some piglets, which turn out to be very important to the plot. They’re not just there to be cute, though they are certainly very entertaining; they’re there to serve a purpose. But it’s been so much fun having them around; they’re very smart, and they’ve done virtually every single thing we’ve needed them to do.”

Says animal trainer GARY MOI: “Pigs are wonderful to train. They’re brilliant animals—very clever. We get them when they’re about three weeks old, and they’re trained up and shooting by the time they’re six weeks old. Pigs grow so fast that we’ve had to have two groups of eight for this film, and we shot on each group for about a month.”

The pigs used were Yorkshire hogs, which are generally just pink. To make them resemble the Gloucestershire Old Spot breed that director White had requested, Oscar ®- winning makeup and hair designer PETER KING designed stencils to paint distinctive markings on each pig, which also meant that two sets of piglets could play the same piglet roles.

Of course there were a few things in the script that the piglets couldn’t do—such as synchronized swimming and climbing trees—ideas that White felt would “increase the visual magic.” Those images were added later by the visual effects wizards at Framstore, but it meant that the children sometimes had to react to piglets who weren’t there...doing outrageous things that weren’t there either.

“In the synchronized swimming scene, the children were required to react with spontaneous and unbounded delight to an empty pond,” says Thompson, “and that’s a very difficult thing for children, or even adults, to act.” To help them with their reactions, Thompson unexpectedly splashed into the pond while the cameras were rolling. She then acted out everything the piglets would be doing while the children reacted with astonishment. “What you’re watching in that scene is children laughing with unbounded and spontaneous delight at me, drowning,” says Thompson with feigned resentment. “That just shows you the kind of respect there was on that set.”

The farm is also populated by a number of other animals. A cow and a goat play central roles, three geese turn their heads at the perfect moment, and chickens roam the yard and, occasionally, the kitchen. A baby elephant even shows up a few times, just to keep things interesting. But Nanny McPhee reveals a new side to herself in this film through the character of Mr. Edelweiss, her jackdaw familiar. Mr. Edelweiss has a predilection for window putty, even though it gives him the collywobbles and wind, but what seems like a very bad habit comes into very good use

at the climactic moment of the film.

Explains Doran: “When Emma and I were first working on the story, we thought it would be fun to give Nanny McPhee a familiar. Witches often have familiars (i.e., animals that help them carry out their magic), and though Nanny McPhee isn’t a witch, we thought it would be fun to give her an animal companion. Out of that grew the character of Mr. Edelweiss and his somewhat co-dependent relationship with Nanny McPhee. He’s been following her for who knows how long, trying to win back her friendship, because he did something that upset her a long time ago and she’s never forgiven him. There’s a slight mystery set up at the beginning of the film: what did he do to make her so angry with him? He just won’t let her go. He won’t give up. He’s going to persist and persist until she lets him sit on her shoulder again, and his faith is a little story within the big story of the film.”

Says Thompson: “Nanny McPhee has a relationship with Mr. Edelweiss that’s miles more normal than her relationship with the children she looks after. She gets very irritable with this bird in a way that she doesn’t ever get irritable with her charges.” Thompson enjoyed her work with the jackdaws that shared the role of Mr. Edelweiss: “We trained with the birds for months. I loved that. I really grew very fond of my jackdaws Al and Devil and Dorian—they were just great. I worked with six to start with, and then it was narrowed down to three—one was better at flying, another was a little more cheeky, one could dart out from under my skirt, and so on.”

For White, the inclusion of Mr. Edelweiss added something to the role of Nanny McPhee: “The great thing about Mr. Edelweiss is that you get more insight into Nanny McPhee as a character, you get more of her backstory through her relationship to him. Through her relationship with the bird you get just a chink more insight into another life she’s had.”

### **The Villains of the Piece**

In all good fables, there must be some baddies. Rhys Ifans on playing Phil Green: “Phil is Isabel’s brother-in-law, and whilst his brother Rory is bravely fighting for his country abroad, Phil pretends to have flat feet to avoid having to go to war. So he’s just hanging around. He owns half the farm, but also owes a lot of money from gambling debts, and the only way he can come good on one of his debts is to give away the farm.” He adds: “For me, the key with Phil is that he is a guy who has dodged conscription, and he’s just a good old-fashioned coward.”

Continues Susanna White: “Phil is someone very weak. He thinks he’s a good person, but he just gets into terrible trouble. He’s an eternal optimist who’s always thinking the next scheme he has is going to make money for him, and Rhys connected with that idea of the villain instantly. He is brilliant at the physical comedy, but behind this there is something very truthful emotionally that people connect with. Nobody could have played Phil better than Rhys Ifans...this wonderful villain who is strangely sexy.”

Into Phil’s shady world arrive Misses Topsey and Turvey, the henchwomen of the shady Mrs. Biggles (aka Mrs. Big). These “lady heavies” carry Phil’s marker (“IOU one farm”), and have come to lean on Phil to pay up. Explains Ifans: “All the men are at war, so we’re left with these strong, scary women and Phil’s very frightened a lot of the time as they’ve threatened to remove

his kidneys if he doesn't come good on his debt.”

Adds Katy Brand (Miss Turvey): “They work as enforcers for Mrs. Big who runs a casino. It's the war, and Misses Topsey and Turvey are the people for the job. They're sick of dried egg, they're sick of porridge, and if they can get the farm that Phil Green owes their boss, they're going to be rewarded and gorge on Turkish Delight.”

Continues Sinead Matthews (Miss Topsey): “I'm threatening him through flirtation and insane giggling.”

Katy Brand concludes: “And I'm pure muscle with the mind of a psychopath.”

### **Mr. Green's Fantastical Contraption**

Mr. Green is the absent father who has left to fight in the war and who has not been heard from in months. His character, however, is revealed through his playful invention—the Scratch-O-Matic—that he has created for his home, his family and his pigs.

Six-year-old Oscar Steer explains: “The Scratch-O-Matic is used to scratch the pigs. When his dad is away at war, Vincent can scratch the pigs with the machine. If it was my real life, I'd probably get my brother and sister to sit down in the barn and I would scratch them.”

Director White notes: “When I first read the script, I felt that it was vital to create more sense of the father in the world of the farm. I felt that it was only by feeling his presence that an audience would get a full sense of the ache of his absence. I suggested to Emma that there be some sort of contraption he had created that the children could use. She came up with the great idea of the Scratch-O-Matic.”

Adds Thompson: “Pigs love to be scratched. It makes them go to sleep and puts them into a deep state of bliss, and Mr. Green is represented in his absence by this pig- scratching machine. It indicates a man of imagination, compassion, depth and ingenuity.”

Art director NICK DENT cites Heath Robinson as one of the inspirations for the Scratch-O-Matic. He explains: “We looked at various ways of creating incredible machines and devices with household objects, and there is an element of crazy professors who have done that before us—so we knew where we were starting from. What we had to make sure of was that it didn't appear to be a purely mad and crazy invention. It was something that had been put together with a lot of care and thought, and we had to convey that this was something that the dad had built; this was how he felt about his children and his piglets.”

He continues: “It was built from scratch, and we knew that we had to have a certain cutoff point where our technology had to stop...as it couldn't be anything post- 1940s. Secondly, we knew that it had to be visually very exciting, with the feeling that dad would have wanted it to be interesting and fun for the children.”

### **The Sort-of '40s**

“This is a fantasy film, and we didn’t want to be restricted to any particular time period or even any particular place,” says Doran. “We chose not to adhere to what was accurate for the World War II period in order to make the film more delightful to look at and to make the war a metaphor for all wars. This is a classic story of a family with one parent away at war. The Green family’s problems should be recognizable to the people of any country whose armed forces are engaged in a conflict away from home. The family members left behind are worried, they are saddled with responsibilities they wouldn’t ordinarily have, there are financial consequences, and parenting is much harder.”

In keeping with the idea that the film is set in the “sort-of ’40s,” the design team was encouraged to venture into flights of fantasy. Emma Thompson explains: “When I’m writing, I work with words and character and story. And whilst I did see things in my head, production designer Simon Elliott came along and created something so perfect and beautiful and original that it blasted away everything I had envisaged. That’s the glory of writing a screenplay: that other people come along and add something that you could never have thought of.”

Susanna White decided on Elliott to be the designer when she first read the script. “Simon and I are very much in tune,” she explains. “He takes design influences from around the world—the drawers in the shop are based on a village shop in France, and the haystacks are from a shape we had both liked in Romania—but he can take all those disparate things and make them very English. We both love the tradition of the English surreal. [British painter] Stanley Spencer was on our mood boards, hence things like the strange topiary in the village.”

The exterior of the farmhouse and several of the fields used for the piglet chase were shot at Tilsey Farm, near Guildford. The Tilsey location was perfect, a valley between England’s green and rolling hills, with little evidence of 21<sup>st</sup> century progress. “I wanted rolling countryside and a very particular look for the farm,” says White. “We built our own farm because I wanted it to be set in 360 degrees of uninterrupted landscape, giving the film an epic look but also presenting an idyllic, safe, English countryside, which heals the two city kids who have been emotionally brutalized.”

Explains Elliott: “Apart from the barn, we constructed everything, the house, the outbuildings, the garden and the ponds. We had to move an enormous amount of earth to set the house into the side of the hill, make terraces, excavate a couple of ponds. Plus, for crew access we had to build a road into the site as well. It was all done in 11 weeks, and everybody worked phenomenally hard.”

One element that was already in the screenplay was an abundance of mud, and White instructed the art department to create a special mud-like substance that looked particularly gooey and chocolaty on film. As a result, Eros Vlahos discovered a new form of muscle training: “The mud slows everything down, so it feels like it’s all in slow motion. The crew has to lug the equipment through the mud in their wellies, so everything takes a lot longer. Wearing wellies has been a new kind of exercise for everybody because they’re not that easy to walk in through mud. But it’s kind of fun at the same time.”

While the exterior of the farmhouse was shot at Tilsey, several interiors were also required. Says Simon Elliott: “The script dictated that we needed to show five rooms in the farmhouse—a kitchen, a best parlor, the children’s bedroom, Mrs. Green’s bedroom and the bathroom.” These were built at Shepperton Studios. He continues: “For the period feel, we went for a kind of nostalgic English countryside from the ’20s, ’30s and ’40s. We’ve sourced the furniture and all the bits and pieces that you see around the house from all around the country and had great fun going to car boot sales, flea markets and even eBay. The house is supposed to feel very creative. Mrs. Green makes her own clothes and makes things for the children, so it’s supposed to have a feel of handicraft to it.”

The child actors in the film helped to decorate the set. During the rehearsal period, they were given crayons and asked to draw what they thought their characters would draw. The artworks around the kitchen set are theirs.

Another set built at Shepperton was Mrs. Docherty’s shop. Although the story is set in a time of wartime deprivation, we encounter the shop on the day when a month’s stock of deliveries has just arrived, so it’s chock-full of wonderful colorful things. Says

White: “I knew Simon could create a really imaginative and magical space that had the spirit of old English villages about it.” A wall of drawers was built to accommodate the scene in which Mrs. Green hears voices telling her that the person she needs is Nanny McPhee, and other parts of the set were specially prepared to accommodate assorted “talking” objects, as well as the volcano of flour that Mrs. Docherty creates behind the counter.

Perhaps one of the most idyllic locations in the film was the barley field, which was sown with an old-fashioned long stem crop that would allow a 1930s harvester to harvest it. Set in the Oxfordshire countryside, the field was planted on the crest of a hill, with a beautiful view over the valley below.

It was essential that this 30-acre field of barley was perfect, for as Thompson explains: “The harvest is a sort of central character in the film. The production team sowed the barley the year before, then it was grown and looked after for eight months. I’ve never worked in a more beautiful environment, ever. Because barley moves, it moves all the time, and it moves with the wind and you would never get the effects that we got if we had been using CGI. CGI is brilliant and it can be extraordinary, but a barley field is something else because every blade moves differently and it speaks to you and it makes noises in the wind. It was a living, breathing thing and you could understand why farming is this passion, that you have this relationship with your fields because we really did.”

In stark contrast with this countryside idyll, Norman and Cyril race to London with Nanny McPhee in an attempt to trace Mr. Green with the help of Cyril’s father, Lord Gray. Explains White: “We saved the color red for London. We had a restricted color palette for the countryside, and then in London the reds ping out at you, from the buses, pillar boxes and phone boxes to the guardsmen’s outfits and the red nails and red lipstick on the extras. We wanted London to feel very alien compared to the soft lines of the countryside. We limited the aesthetic to buildings with strong expressionist lines such as Battersea Power Station and the War Office, and, other

than the bright reds, we limited the city's color palette to blacks and grays. It was important to me that it should feel like 'a war' rather than specifically the Second World War, and that the red should stand out like poppies."

After a whistle-stop tour of famous London landmarks such as Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square, some of the filming took place over several weekends in Park Crescent, adjacent to Regents Park, and at Senate House, off Russell Square.

Another crucial design aspect of the film was the costumes. Jacqueline Durran, the costume designer of films as varied as *Atonement* and *Happy-Go-Lucky*, was chosen to design them. Says White: "I wanted the costumes to feel timeless and classic, and Jacqueline embraced that idea in a brilliant way. For the colors, I wanted to hang onto the first film's fantastic sense of color but to use it differently. Jacqueline used very British designs throughout—such as Liberty prints and Fair Isle sweaters—drawing on Norman Parkinson and old *Vogue* photographs for reference.

"It was vital to me that an audience should feel they could run into Mrs. Green on the streets of Notting Hill now, in her tea dress and plimsolls, and that she would fit right in," the director continues. "When she patches Megsie's dungarees, she does so in a fun and colorful way. The Greens' clothes reflect the same design aesthetic that we see in the way that Mrs. Green has decorated the walls of their house. It is all part of one world, a world very different from the world represented by Celia's frilly, expensive frock and Cyril's Savile Row suit."

### **"That Which is Loved is Always Beautiful"**

A central feature of the "Nurse Matilda" books on which the *Nanny McPhee* series is based is the fact that the title character's looks change as the children's behavior improves. These changes are never explained, but the filmmakers cite a Norwegian proverb—"That which is loved is always beautiful"—as the closest thing to an explanation they've been able to find.

Everyone reacts to Nanny McPhee's hideous looks when they first see her. Mrs. Green stops dead in her tracks, little Vincent makes an undisguised noise of disgust, Uncle Phil screams out loud, and Cyril describes her features as "a face that could win the war hands down."

But as the children grow to love their unusual nanny, and as they themselves become more caring and generous, her hideous features melt away. Whether this transformation actually happens, or happens only in the imagination of the family, is never addressed. In the original *Nanny McPhee*, Mr. Brown and his children notice that her face is changing, but in the new film only the animals notice—Mr. Edelweiss squawks, a piglet winks. The changes happen so imperceptibly that even the audience has a hard time knowing exactly what's different from scene to scene.

Hair and makeup designer Peter King remembers his first thoughts when creating the look for the Nanny McPhee character in the first film. "It had to be scary, but not too scary," says King, who won an Oscar® for creating wizards, trolls and hobbits for *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. "It had to be funny, but not too funny or it would detract from the more profound themes in the story."

In the “Nurse Matilda” books, Christianna Brand never shied away from describing the initial hideousness of her central character when she first arrives at the family’s door—two hairy warts, a single eyebrow, a protruding “tombstone tooth” and “a nose like two potatoes.” Coordinating his efforts with those of the costume department, King and his team recreated that initial look as well as the various stages the character goes through over the course of the story.

“It’s a very complicated process,” explains Doran. “Nanny McPhee’s looks sometimes change in the middle of a scene, and everyone has to know exactly where it happens. There were five stages for the costume and seven stages for the makeup and hair, and there had to be absolute clarity as to what the character looked like at each moment in her scenes. To achieve that clarity, we created a chart that contained entries such as the following:

**Scene 24B – The children hit each other, then themselves.**

**Costume: Stage 1 continues throughout.**

Hair/Makeup: Stage 1 continues until Vincent exits the parlour towards the end of the scene. As she watches him go, mid-scene, Nanny McPhee enters Stage 2—one wart is lost, but everything else remains the same. (Stage 2: Largest nose, largest earlobes, 1 wart, largest plumpers for cheeks, lowest hairline, mono-brow, horrible tooth.)

“The chart was distributed to the hair, makeup and costume crew, as well as to the assistant directors so everyone knew when we had to stop and make a change,” the producer explains.

In spite of the complications of the costume, hair and makeup transformations, Thompson was happy to tackle the role of the magical nanny once again: “Nanny McPhee isn’t normal. In some ways she is not human, and I always think of her as a collection of projections. Whilst she is certainly a moralist, her system is more like that of the Zen mistress than any other. It’s a tremendously interesting part to play.”

Producer Eric Fellner concludes: “I love Nanny McPhee because she creates a world that children love to inhabit. Her authority actually makes children slightly nervous but also really excited. They’re excited because they love seeing what she can do, and they’re slightly nervous because they think that she might tell them off as well. It’s wonderful to be able to make a film that extols some kind of classic family values.”

\*\*\*\*

Universal Pictures presents—in association with StudioCanal and Relativity Media—a Working Title production in association with Three Strange Angels Productions: Emma Thompson, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Rhys Ifans and Maggie Smith in *Nanny McPhee Returns*. The music is by James Newton Howard, the costume designer is Jacqueline Durran and the editor is Sim Evan-Jones, ACE. The production designer is Simon Elliott, and the co-producer is David Brown. The family comedy’s executive producers are Debra Osborne, Liza Chasin and Emma Thompson. The film is based on the “Nurse Matilda” character by Christianna Brand and is written by Emma Thompson. *Nanny McPhee Returns* is produced by Lindsay Doran, Tim Bevan and Eric

Fellner, and is directed by Susanna White. ©2010 Universal Studios [www.nannymcpee.com](http://www.nannymcpee.com)

## ABOUT THE CAST

**EMMA THOMPSON (Nanny McPhee/Written by/Executive Producer)** is one of the world's most respected talents for her versatility in acting as well as screenwriting. In 1992, Thompson caused a sensation with her portrayal of Margaret J. "Meg" Schlegel in the Merchant Ivory Productions adaptation of E.M. Forster's "Howards End." Sweeping the Best Actress category wherever it was considered, the performance netted her a BAFTA, a Los Angeles Film Critics Association Award, a New York Film Critics Circle Award, a Golden Globe and an Academy Award®. She earned two Oscar® nominations the following year for her work in *The Remains of the Day* and *In the Name of the*

*Father*. In 1995, Thompson's adaptation of Jane Austen's "Sense and Sensibility," directed by Ang Lee, won the Academy Award® for Best Adapted Screenplay, as well as the Golden Globe for Best Screenplay, and Best Screenplay awards from the Writers Guild of America and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, amongst numerous others. For her performance in the film, she was honored with the BAFTA for Best Actress and was nominated for a Golden Globe and an Academy Award®.

In 2008, Thompson starred with Dustin Hoffman in director Joel Hopkins' charming romance *Last Chance Harvey* and was nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture—Comedy or Musical. In 2006, Thompson co-starred, to critical acclaim, with Dustin Hoffman, Will Ferrell and Maggie Gyllenhaal in *Stranger Than Fiction*, directed by Marc Forster and produced by *Nanny McPhee Returns* producer Lindsay Doran. In 2004, she brought to the screen J.K. Rowling's character of Sybil Trelawney in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, for director Alfonso Cuarón, and in 2007, she reprised the role in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, for director David Yates. Also in 2004, Thompson appeared in her own adaptation of *Nanny McPhee*, directed by Kirk Jones.

Thompson is currently writing a new film version of *My Fair Lady* for Sony Pictures and starring, with Alan Rickman, in a flagship production of the Christopher Reid poem "The Song of Lunch" for the BBC.

Thompson was born in London to Eric Thompson, a theater director and writer, and Phyllida Law, an actress. She read English at Cambridge and was invited to join the university's long-standing Footlights comedy troupe, which elected her vice president. Hugh Laurie was president. While still a student, she co-directed Cambridge's first all-women revue (*Women's Hour*) and made her television debut on BBC Television's *Friday Night, Saturday Morning* as well as her radio debut on BBC Radio's *Injury Time*.

Throughout the 1980s, Thompson frequently appeared on British television, including widely acclaimed recurring roles on the Granada TV series *Alfresco* and the BBC's *Election Night Special* and *The Crystal Cube* (the latter written by fellow Cambridge alums Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie), and a hilarious one-off role as upper-class twit Miss Money Sterling on *The Young Ones*. In 1985, Channel 4 offered Thompson her own TV special, *Up for Grabs*, and in 1988, she wrote and starred in her own BBC series called *Thompson*. She worked as a stand-up comic when the opportunity arose, and earned £60 in cash on her 25th birthday in a stand-up

double bill with Ben Elton at the Croydon Warehouse. She says it's the best money she's ever earned.

Thompson continued to pursue an active stage career concurrently with her television and radio work, appearing in *A Sense of Nonsense* and touring England in 1982; in the self-penned *Short Vehicle* at the Edinburgh International Festival in 1983; in *Me and My Girl* at Leicester and then London's West End in 1985; and in *Look Back in Anger* at the Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue in 1989.

Thompson's feature film debut came in 1988, starring opposite Jeff Goldblum, in the comedy *The Tall Guy*. She then played Katherine in Kenneth Branagh's film-directing debut, *Henry V*, and went on to star opposite Branagh in three of his subsequent directorial efforts—*Dead Again* (1991), *Peter's Friends* (1992) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993).

Thompson's other film credits include *Junior* (1994), *Carrington* (1995) and *The Winter Guest* (1997). She has also starred in three projects directed by Mike Nichols—*Primary Colors* (1998) and the HBO telefilms *Wit* (2001, in a Golden Globe-nominated performance) and *Angels in America* (2002, for which she received Screen Actors Guild and Emmy Award nominations). Also in 2002, she starred in *Imagining Argentina*, for director Christopher Hampton, and *Love Actually*, for director Richard Curtis. The latter film netted Thompson a number of accolades, including Best Actress in a Supporting Role at the 2004 *Evening Standard* Film Awards, a nomination for Best Supporting Actress at the 2004 BAFTAs, Best Supporting Actress at the 2004 London Critics' Circle Film Awards and Best British Actress at the 2004 *Empire* Film Awards.

Oscar®-nominated actress MAGGIE GYLLENHAAL (Mrs. Green) is one of the great young talents of today. After receiving rave reviews at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival for her starring role, opposite James Spader, in Lions Gate's *Secretary*, she went on to receive a Golden Globe nomination for Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture—Musical or Comedy, an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Actress, a Chicago Film Critics Association Award for Most Promising Performer, a Boston Society of Film Critics Award for Best Actress, a National Board of Review Award for Breakthrough Performance and an IFP/Gotham Breakthrough Performance Award for her role in the film.

Years later, Gyllenhaal starred in *SherryBaby*, in which she played a mother struggling to overcome her drug addiction and regain custody of her daughter. The film was well received by critics and garnered her a second Golden Globe nomination, this time for Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture—Drama. Gyllenhaal was also nominated for a 2006 Film Independent Spirit Award for her role in Don Roos' *Happy Endings*, opposite Lisa Kudrow and Tom Arnold.

Gyllenhaal was recently seen as Rachel Dawes in the Warner Bros. box-office hit *The Dark Knight*, directed by Christopher Nolan, and the dramatic film *Crazy Heart*, starring alongside Jeff Bridges and directed by Scott Cooper, for which she was nominated for an Academy Award®.

In August 2006, Gyllenhaal was seen in *Trust the Man*, with Julianne Moore, Billy Crudup and David Duchovny, and in Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center*, with Maria Bello and Nicolas Cage. She also starred in Marc Forster's *Stranger Than Fiction*, with Will Ferrell, Dustin Hoffman, Queen Latifah and Emma Thompson. In the past few years, she appeared in John Sayles' *Casa de los Babys*, with Daryl Hannah and Lili Taylor, and Mike Newell's *Mona Lisa Smile*, in which she co-starred with Julia Roberts,

Julia Stiles and Kirsten Dunst. Gyllenhaal was also seen in *Criminal*, with Diego Luna and John C. Reilly, and Spike Jonze's *Adaptation*.

On stage, Gyllenhaal starred as Alice in Patrick Marber's award-winning *Closer*, at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles for director Robert Egan, and previously appeared at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre. She has also appeared in *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Vanbrugh Theatre in London. In 2004, she starred in Tony Kushner's play *Homebody/Kabul*, which ran both in Los Angeles and at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), and she was recently seen alongside Peter Sarsgaard and Mamie Gummer in Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*.

Gyllenhaal made her feature film debut in 1992, alongside Jeremy Irons and Ethan Hawke, in *Waterland*. This was followed by a memorable performance as Raven, the Satan-worshipping makeup artist in John Waters' quirky Hollywood satire *Cecil B. Demented*, which led her to a co-starring role in *Donnie Darko*, a fantasy-thriller about disturbed adolescence.

Gyllenhaal is a 1999 graduate of Columbia University, where she studied literature.

**RHYS IFANS (Phil)** is one of Britain's finest contemporary actors. He was born and raised in Wales, attended youth acting schools at Theatre Clwyd, Mold, and appeared in many Welsh-language television programs before embarking on his film career.

His breakout performance came in 1999 in Roger Michell's *Notting Hill*, opposite Julia Roberts and Hugh Grant, for which he received a BAFTA nomination for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role. Prior to that, Ifans starred in Charles McDougall's *Heart*, Kevin Allen's *Twin Town* (alongside his brother Llyr Ifans), Anthony Hopkins' *August* and Karl Francis' *Streetlife*.

Since 1999, Ifans has appeared in more than 20 films, including Andy Hurst's *You're Dead...*; Clare Kilner's *Janice Beard 45 WPM*; Edward Thomas' *Rancid Aluminium*; Dominic Anciano's *Love, Honor and Obey*; Ed Bye's *Kevin & Perry Go Large*; Howard Deutch's *The Replacements*; Steven Brill's *Little Nicky*; Michel Gondry's *Human Nature*; Ronny Yu's *Formula 51*; Mike Figgis' *Hotel*; Lasse Hallström's *The Shipping News*; and Shane Meadows' *Once Upon a Time in the Midlands*.

More recently, Ifans starred in Noah Baumbach's *Greenberg*, with Ben Stiller; as disc jockey Gavin Canavagh in *Pirate Radio*, a comedy about a pirate radio station in the North Sea, in which he starred alongside Philip Seymour Hoffman and was directed by Richard Curtis; Gregor Jordan's *The Informers*; Jaco Van Dormael's *Mr. Nobody*; Jeff Balsmeyer's *Danny Deckchair*; Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*; Peter Webber's *Hannibal Rising*; Francesca

Joseph's *Four Last Songs*; Martha Fiennes' *Chromophobia*; Roger Michell's *Enduring Love*, which earned him a Best British Actor Award nomination by *Empire* magazine; and Mira Nair's *Vanity Fair*.

On television, he played the role of Peter Cook in Terry Johnson's *Not Only but Always*, for which he won the BAFTA for Best Actor. He also appeared in *Shakespeare Shorts*; *Trial & Retribution*; *The Two Franks*; *Judas and the Gimp*; *Nightshift*; *Spatz*; *Burning Love*; and *Review*. In 2005, Ifans made a guest appearance for the rock band Oasis in the music video for their single "The Importance of Being Idle," for which he accepted their award for Video of the Year at the 2005 NME Awards. He also starred in James MacDonald's *A Number*.

In the theater, he has appeared at the Donmar Warehouse in Robert Delamere's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, Patrick Marber's *Don Juan in Soho* and Simon Harris' *Badfinger*; at the National Theatre in Matthew Warchus' *Volpone* and Roger Michell's *Under Milk Wood*; at the Duke of York's Theatre in Hettie Macdonald's *Beautiful Thing*; at the Royal Court Theatre in James MacDonald's *Thyestes*; and at the Royal Exchange in Braham Murray's *Smoke* and Ronald Harwood's *Poison Pan*.

Ifans has just completed filming *Mr. Nice*, in which he plays Howard Marks, the notorious British drug dealer.

Ifans' upcoming films include *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1*, directed by David Yates. Ifans' latest project is *Anonymous*, directed by Roland Emmerich, in which he portrays Edward de Vere, the man behind William Shakespeare's plays.

**MAGGIE SMITH (Mrs. Docherty)** graduated from comedy and revue to major tragic roles, to become one of our greatest actresses.

She made her first appearance on stage with the Oxford University Drama Society (OUDS) in 1952, but her professional debut was as a comedienne in New York in *New Faces of 1956* revue. She joined the Old Vic Company in 1959, appearing in *As You Like It*, *Richard III*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *What Every Woman Knows*. She played Daisy in *Rhinoceros* at The Strand in 1960 and received the *Evening Standard* Best Actress Award of 1962 for her roles as Doreen in *The Private Ear* and Belinda in *The Public Eye*, at the Globe Theatre.

In 1963, she joined the National Theatre and was seen at Chichester playing Desdemona, opposite Laurence Olivier in *Othello*. In 1965, she played Clea in *Black Comedy* and the title part in *Miss Julie*, for the National—the double bill transferred to Chichester where, in 1969, she was also seen as Margery Pinchwife in *The Country Wife*. In 1970, she played Mrs. Sullen in *The Beaux' Stratagem* at the National (having already appeared in the part with the National Theatre Company in Los Angeles) and the title role in *Hedda Gabler*. In 1976, she received her second Variety Club's Best Actress Award for her portrayal of Mrs. Millamant in *The Way of the World* at Stratford in Ontario.

Smith is undoubtedly best known for her fine portrayal of Jean Brodie in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, which gained her an Oscar® in 1969 and the Society of Film and TV Arts Best Actress

Award in 1970. A second Oscar ® followed in 1978 for her part in Neil Simon's *California Suite* (1978). In the theater, she was seen in *Night and Day* in London and on Broadway (1979/1980), followed by *Much Ado About Nothing* (directed by Robin Phillips), in which she played Beatrice at the Stratford in Ontario, and Madam Arkadina in *The Seagull* in 1980. She also played the title role in the world premiere of Edna O'Brien's *Virginia*, repeating her success in London at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, again directed by Robin Phillips, for which she received another *Evening Standard* Award Best Actress Award.

In 1983, she was nominated for a BAFTA for Best Actress for her performance in the title role of Granada TV's play *Mrs. Silly*. She appeared in Alan Bennett's *A Private Function*, in which she co-starred with Michael Palin.

In 1985, Smith played a leading role in Merchant Ivory's production of *A Room With a View*. She also appeared with Edward Fox in *Interpreters* at The Queen's Theatre. The following year, she played Jocasta in Cocteau's *The Infernal Machine* at the Lyric Hammersmith.

In 1987, she appeared in *Coming in to Land* at the National Theatre and filmed *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* for Handmade Films. Smith also appeared in *Lettice and Lovage* at the Globe Theatre, which transferred to Broadway.

In January 1991, Smith appeared in *Hook*, for Tri-Star, and *Sister Act*, for Disney. In November 1991, she starred in *Memento Mori* for the BBC. Early in 1992, she starred in the BBC's *Suddenly, Last Summer* and, later that year, performed in Warner Bros.' *The Secret Garden*.

In 1993, after completing a West End run playing Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Smith went straight into filming *Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit* for Disney, and then starred in Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women* at the Wyndham's Theatre in the West End, followed by the role of the Duchess of York in *Richard III*, directed by Richard Loncraine and starring Ian McKellen. In 1996, she appeared in the film *The First Wives Club*, for Paramount Pictures, and *Washington Square*, for Disney. She also performed in Alan Bennett's *Talking Heads* at the Comedy Theatre in London and on tour in Australia.

Smith's most recent films include the *Harry Potter* films in the role of Minerva McGonagall; Robert Altman's Oscar ®-winning *Gosford Park*; the telefilm *My House in Umbria*, for which she won an Emmy; Julian Fellowes' *From Time to Time*; and Niall Johnson's *Keeping Mum*.

The Queen's 1970 New Year's Honours List named Smith a Companion of the Order of the British Empire (CBE), followed by a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (DBE) in 1990. Smith was awarded the Hamburg Shakespeare Prize in 1991, is a fellow of the British Film Institute, was awarded a BAFTA Special Lifetime Achievement Award in 1993 and an Olivier Special Achievement Award in 2010, is an Hon. D.Litt. of Cambridge University and The University of St Andrews and is a patron of the Jane Austen Society.

**ASA BUTTERFIELD (Norman)** has been a professional actor since he was eight years old. He is now 13 and lives in London with his brother, Morgan, and his baby sister, Loxie.

After playing small roles in the British movie *Son of Rambow* and the British television drama *After Thomas*, he was offered the lead in Mark Herman's *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, alongside Vera Farmiga, David Thewlis and Rupert Friend. It was this role that earned him a nomination for Most Promising Newcomer (pipped by Dev Patel) at the British Independent Film Awards.

Since then, he has been in demand for both film and television work including the recent production of *The Wolfman*, with Benicio Del Toro, Emily Blunt and Anthony Hopkins, and a guest lead in the BBC television production *Ashes to Ashes*. He is also regularly asked to reprise his mysterious interpretation of the character Mordred in the popular BBC series *Merlin*.

Although busy with acting and his regular training at Young Actors Theatre in London, Butterfield makes a point of not letting work dominate his life. He keeps his feet on the ground, enjoying school, friends, piano, squash and his cats (that's "squash and," not "squashing"). He is just as happy reading a book as playing computer games too, a good book by Darren Shan or Anthony Horowitz rarely lasting more than a week.

He is currently filming the lead role in Martin Scorsese's *Hugo Cabret*.

**LIL WOODS (Megsie)** is 12 years old and lives on a smallholding in Mid Wales with her mom, dad, brother, sister and their dogs, pigs, goats, chickens and ducks. Woods is educated in Welsh at school and speaks the language fluently. She plays the flute and the piano and enjoys swimming, acting, dancing and reading. She also fosters rescue dogs and is a keen campaigner against puppy farms. Woods hopes to run a dog rescue one day.

Woods started acting when she was four years old, attending drama classes every week after school. When she was eight, she went to an open audition for the independent film *Blessed* and surprised her mother by getting the part! Her mother (Sarah Woods, playwright) then found her an agent, who suggested she audition for *Nanny McPhee Returns*.

My name is OSCAR STEER (Vincent). Some people call me Oscar Thomas George Bunny Rabbit Steer. If you want to know about my life, you're in the right place. I live in Kent with my mummy and daddy and little sister, Lottie, and brother, Ollie. I have a dog called Maggie and two older sisters, who live in Wales. My next-door neighbors are called Mel and Callum. I am six years old and soon, when the film is over, I will be seven.

**ROSIE TAYLOR-RITSON (Celia)** is 13 years old. She loves activities such as swimming, singing, fashion and playing her guitar. She is a member of a local international choir and a student on the gifted and talented dance program at her secondary school. Taylor-Ritson lives in Brighton, on the South Coast of England, with her two fluffy grey cats and two rabbits.

She has always been a natural performer, always entertaining those around her. Her first stage performance was when she entered a talent competition at infant school as a magician.

At the age of four she joined a local weekend acting, singing and dance class. During this time, she secured her first professional role in the film *Trace* (2008), when the director visited the class

looking for local talent.

Taylor-Ritson remained in the same class until she was 11 years old. She then explored other classes in the area, which she hoped would provide her with new acting challenges, and joined one which had an agency attached. She had just joined secondary school when she found out that she had secured the part of Celia in *Nanny McPhee Returns* !

Since *Nanny McPhee Returns*, Taylor-Ritson has appeared as Mary in a unique promenade production of *The Secret Garden*, which ran for six weeks as part of the colorful Brighton Festival 2010, and won the award for Best Show at a Small Venue!

**EROS VLAHOS (Cyril)** is 14, or perhaps 15 by the time you're reading this, or if you have found this piece of paper in an archaeological dig billions of years in the future, he is most likely dead or holding some sort of world record concerning his age.

Vlahos lives in a house in London; it's a small, cozy house. His hobbies include accidentally standing on his brother's Lego bricks, then screaming wildly in pain before tripping over his chihuahua and landing in his fish bowl. After recovering from his frequent swims with the fishes, Vlahos likes to write and perform stand-up comedy. He has performed comedy routines since he was eight or nine (he can't remember) and has performed at prestigious venues and events such as The Comedy Store, the Edinburgh International Festival and Greg-from-down-the-road's birthday party. Vlahos started out doing five-minute slots when he was young. His writing eventually mounted up to his own 50-minute show that he performed for 11 dates at 2008's Edinburgh International Festival, which received four stars from *The Independent* and from *ThreeWeeks*.

Vlahos was snapped up by CBBC (Children's BBC channel) extra to do a series of magazine shows. This was his introduction to a film camera. Vlahos and the camera became good friends. They played PlayStation and rode their bikes to the park where they kicked a football around. Soon, a time came when Vlahos found an agent. Then, at his first audition, he won a part in the BBC TV series *Casualty*, playing Liam Hendricks. This was the first time that Vlahos worked in a film studio. He couldn't get to grips with how a warehouse in Bristol turned magically, TARDIS-like, into a hospital. After staring blankly at the outside of the studio, he went inside and filmed. After three weeks, the episode *Snowball* appeared on national television and Vlahos did a small Morecambe and Wise heel-click-jump before sitting back down to watch the episode.

After a busy year learning and performing his own show in the Edinburgh International Festival, Vlahos was cast in the telefilm *Skellig*, playing Ginger Ninja Coot. This taught him a lot more about filming such as what call sheets are and where they keep the sandwiches.

\*\*\*\*\*

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

BAFTA winner and two-time Emmy nominee **SUSANNA WHITE (Directed by)** was the lead director of HBO's *Generation Kill*, the seven-part miniseries about the 1st Reconnaissance Marines whose unit was part of the first wave of the American military assault on Baghdad. The series was nominated for 11 Emmy Awards including Best Director.

In 2005, she won widespread praise for her six episodes of the BBC drama series *Bleak House*, which was based on Charles Dickens' novel. The series won a host of international broadcast awards including BAFTA and Royal Television Society (RTS) awards for Best Drama Serial. From this success, White went on to direct another highly regarded drama series for the BBC, *Jane Eyre*, which earned her an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Directing for a Miniseries, Movie or a Dramatic Special.

White began her career in documentaries and made several for the BBC, as well as *Rocket Men* and *Volvo City* for Channel 4. In 1996, she made *The Museum*, depicting a tempestuous year in the life of London's Victoria and Albert Museum. In 1997, she turned to drama with *Bicycle Thieves* for Channel 4, based on Whitbread Prize-winning writer Blake Morrison's short story, the first of several collaborations with him. She returned to the documentary form in 2000 to pay tribute to English poet W.H. Auden in *Tell Me the Truth About Love*, which received an Emmy nomination.

White then directed dramatic content including episodes in several series of Channel 4's *Teachers*, which gained BAFTA and RTS nominations, and *Love Again*, starring Hugh Bonneville, Dame Eileen Atkins and Tara Fitzgerald, a telefilm about another much beloved modern-day English poet, Philip Larkin (which received RTS and Banff nominations).

White has had a long interest in the relationship between mothers and nannies. She has had the help of nannies while raising her twin daughters and has also made a documentary about P. L. Travers, the creator of "Mary Poppins," and in doing so, was one of the last people to interview her.

**LINDSAY DORAN (Produced by)** has enjoyed a creative partnership with Emma Thompson that has lasted 20 years and encompassed five films (*Dead Again*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Nanny McPhee*, *Stranger Than Fiction* and *Nanny McPhee Returns*).

Doran began her career at Embassy Pictures, where she received her first credit as executive in charge of production on Rob Reiner's *This Is Spinal Tap*. Later, she joined Paramount Pictures where the films she supervised included *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *Pretty in Pink*, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, *The Naked Gun* and *Ghost*.

Doran then became the president of Sydney Pollack's Mirage Enterprises, where she produced *Dead Again*, *Leaving Normal* and *Sense and Sensibility*, which won the Golden Globe Award for Best Motion Picture—Drama and the Academy Award® for Best Adapted Screenplay.

In 1996, Doran became president and chief operating officer of United Artists Pictures, where

she presided over a number of films including the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> installments of the James Bond franchise, *Tomorrow Never Dies* and *The World is Not Enough*, as well as *Ronin* and *The Thomas Crown Affair*.

She later resumed her career as a producer and started her own production company, Three Strange Angels. Through Three Strange Angels, she has produced *Nanny McPhee* and *Stranger Than Fiction*.

Working Title Films, co-chaired by **TIM BEVAN and ERIC FELLNER (Produced by)** since 1992, is one of the world's leading film production companies. DEBRA OSBORNE (Executive Producer) serves as head of film and is creatively responsible for the company's slate of motion pictures, in conjunction with her U.S. counterpart, LIZA CHASIN (Executive Producer).

Founded in 1983, Working Title has made more than 90 films that have grossed more than \$4.5 billion worldwide. Its films have won six Academy Awards® and 26 BAFTAs. Bevan and Fellner have received the Michael Balcon Award for Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema at the Orange British Academy Film Awards, and both have been honored with the title of Commanders of the Order of the British Empire. Last year, they received a career tribute award at the Gotham Independent Film Awards.

Working Title's extensive and diverse list of credits include:

- Seven films with Joel and Ethan Coen: *Burn After Reading*, *Fargo*, *The Hudsucker Proxy*, *The Big Lebowski*, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, *The Man Who Wasn't There* and *A Serious Man*
- Six collaborations with writer Richard Curtis: *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* and *Notting Hill*, as well as *Love Actually* and *The Boat That Rocked*, both of which Curtis also directed
- *Bean*, directed by Mel Smith; *Mr. Bean's Holiday*, directed by Steve Bendelack; and *Johnny English*, directed by Peter Howitt, all starring Rowan Atkinson
- *Pride & Prejudice* and *Atonement*, directed by Joe Wright
- *United 93* and *Green Zone*, directed by Paul Greengrass
- *Hot Fuzz* and *Shaun of the Dead*, directed by Edgar Wright
- *About a Boy*, directed by Paul Weitz and Chris Weitz
- *Definitely, Maybe*, directed by Adam Brooks
- *The Interpreter*, directed by Sydney Pollack
- *Dead Man Walking*, directed by Tim Robbins
- *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, directed by Shekhar Kapur
- *Frost/Nixon*, directed by Ron Howard
- *Nanny McPhee*, directed by Kirk Jones
- *Billy Elliot*, directed by Stephen Daldry. The success of the film has continued on the London, Sydney and Broadway stages with a stage-musical version directed by Daldry—with songs composed by Sir Elton John.

**MIKE ELEY (Director of Photography)** started his career in documentaries, working on some hard-hitting and controversial programs such as the *Cutting Edge* series, with Stephen Lambert.

He also worked on the *Into the Wild* series, which famously took Julia Roberts to see orangutans.

He then moved into features and television drama, shooting the documentary feature *Touching the Void*, with Kevin MacDonald (for which he won a British Independent Film Award for Best Technical Achievement); *He Knew He Was Right*, with director Tom Vaughan for the BBC; as well as 2nd unit/additional photography on *Notting Hill*, with Roger Michell, *Dust*, with Milcho Manchevski, and *United 93*, with Paul Greengrass.

He has collaborated many times with director Susanna White, most notably on *Jane Eyre* for the BBC (for which he received an Emmy nomination and won a Royal Television Society Award for Best Cinematography), and as 2nd unit director and DP on *Generation Kill*, for HBO and Company Pictures.

Recently, Eley worked with director Michael Sucasny on HBO's *Grey Gardens*, for which he was recently nominated for an Emmy; with director Giles Borg on *1234*; and on Tiger Aspect Productions' *Blood and Oil*, which was shot on location in Africa.

**SIMON ELLIOTT's (Production Designer)** film credits include Sarah Gavron's *Brick Lane*, J.K. Amalou's *Hard Men* and Paul Hills' *Boston Kickout*.

For his television work, he won a BAFTA and was nominated for an Emmy for Best Production Design for the BBC series *Bleak House*, which was directed by Susanna White and Justin Chadwick, and was nominated for a Golden Globe for Outstanding Art Direction for a Miniseries or Movie. He also received a BAFTA nomination for his work on Brian Percival's BBC four-part drama *North & South*. His other television credits include Michael Offer's *Moses Jones* and *The Passion*; Jeremy Lovering's *Sex & Lies* and *Cancun*; season four of Maurice Phillips and David Innes Edwards' *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*; the six-part comedy-drama *Rescue Me*; Tom Vaughan's *I Saw You, Safe as Houses* and *Still Buzzin'*; Frances Lea's *Fugee Girl*; and Matt Winn's *Coming Down*.

Elliott has also worked on numerous promos and commercials, mainly with directors Tom Vaughan and Matt Winn.

**SIM EVAN-JONES, ACE (Editor)** was the editor of the animation favorite *Shrek*, for which he earned an American Cinema Editors Eddie Award nomination, and its blockbuster sequel, *Shrek 2*. He followed these successes with *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*.

A native of Great Britain, Evan-Jones has recently returned there after living and working in America for 12 years, moving between Los Angeles and San Francisco. He joined DreamWorks

Studios in 1995, after working at Steven Spielberg's Amblimation studio in London. While there, he teamed up with director Andrew Adamson on the original *Shrek*, a collaboration that continued through *Shrek 2* and both *The Chronicles of Narnia* films for Walt Disney Studios.

**JACQUELINE DURRAN (Costume Designer)** started her career as an assistant costume designer, working on projects including *Star Wars: Episode II—Attack of the Clones*, *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* and *Topsy-Turvy*.

Her first feature as costume designer was Mike Leigh's *All or Nothing*. They went on to collaborate a second time on *Vera Drake*, for which she won a BAFTA, and *Happy-Go-Lucky*.

Durrán received BAFTA and Oscar® nominations for her work on *Pride & Prejudice* and *Atonement*, directed by Joe Wright. She has also recently worked with Wright on DreamWorks' *The Soloist*, starring Jamie Foxx and Robert Downey Jr.

Her other feature film credits include David Mackenzie's *Young Adam* and Sally Potter's *Yes*.

**JAMES NEWTON HOWARD (Music by)** is one of the most versatile and respected composers currently working in films.

To date, Howard has received eight Oscar® nominations, including six for Best Original Score for his work on *Defiance*, *Michael Clayton*, *The Village*, *The Fugitive*, *The Prince of Tides* and *My Best Friend's Wedding*. He was also nominated for Best Original Song for the films *Junior* and *One Fine Day*.

Howard, along with Hans Zimmer, won the 2009 Grammy Award for the score for *The Dark Knight*. He has also received Grammy Award nominations for music from *Blood Diamond*, *Dinosaur*, *Signs* and the song from *One Fine Day*. In addition, he won an Emmy Award for the theme to the Andre Braugher series *Gideon's Crossing*, and received two additional Emmy nominations for the themes to the long-running Warner Bros. series *ER* and the Ving Rhames series *Men*. Howard has also been nominated four times for Golden Globe Awards for his massive orchestral score for Peter Jackson's blockbuster remake of *King Kong*; for the songs from *Junior* and *One Fine Day*; and most recently, for his provocative symphonic score for *Defiance*.

He received the 2008 World Soundtrack Award for Film Composer of the Year for his work on the films *Charlie Wilson's War*, *Michael Clayton* and *I Am Legend*. He received the Soundtrack of the Year Award from the Classical BRIT Awards for *The Dark Knight* (2009) and *Blood Diamond* (2008). In 2009, he received the Special 5th Anniversary GoldSpirit Award for Best Composer of the Last 5 Years (2004–2008) from the International Film Music Conference in

Úbeda, Spain.

Howard, who has been honored with ASCAP's prestigious Henry Mancini Award for Lifetime Achievement, now has more than 100 films to his credit. Among them are all of M. Night Shyamalan's films (*The Sixth Sense*, *Unbreakable*, *Signs*, *The Village*, *Lady in the Water* and *The Happening*), five films for director Lawrence Kasdan (*Grand Canyon*, *Wyatt Earp*, *French Kiss*, *Mumford* and *Dreamcatcher*), four Julia Roberts comedies (*Pretty Woman*, *Runaway Bride*, *My Best Friend's Wedding* and *America's Sweethearts*) and three animated films for Walt Disney Studios (*Dinosaur*, *Treasure Planet* and *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*). His other wide-ranging credits include *Duplicity*, *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, *The Great Debaters* (with Peter Golub), *Batman Begins*, *Collateral*, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, *Outbreak*, *Hidalgo*, *Peter Pan*, *Falling Down*, *Primal Fear*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Waterworld*, *The Devil's Advocate* and *Dave*, among others.

Howard's success reflects the experiences of a rich musical past. Inspired by his grandmother, a classical violinist who played in the Pittsburgh Symphony in the '30s and '40s, he began his studies on the piano at age four. After studying as a piano major at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara and at the USC Thornton School of Music, he completed his formal education with orchestration study under legendary arranger Marty Paich.

Though his training was classical, he maintained an interest in rock and pop music, and it was his early work in the pop arena that allowed him to hone his talents as a musician, arranger, songwriter and producer. He racked up a string of collaborations in the studio with some of pop's biggest names, including Barbra Streisand; Earth, Wind and Fire; Bob Seger; Rod Stewart; Toto; Glenn Frey; Diana Ross; Carly Simon; Olivia Newton-John; Randy Newman; Rickie Lee Jones; Cher; and Chaka Khan. In 1975, he joined pop superstar Elton John's band on the road and in the studio.

Howard left the band in 1976 to do more record production. He rejoined the band in 1980 for another tour and again in 1986 to conduct the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra for John's "Live in Australia" tour, which later became a platinum-selling album.

When he was offered his first film in 1985, he never looked back. As a change of pace, Howard reunited with Elton John for a multicity tour in the summer of 2004, which included sold-out concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London and Radio City Music Hall in New York.

His recent releases include M. Night Shyamalan's *The Last Airbender*, Phillip Noyce's *Salt*. His upcoming films include Edward Zwick's *Love and Other Drugs* and Kelly Asbury's *Gnomeo and Juliet*. In February 2009, Howard had his first concert piece, titled "I Would Plant a Tree," performed by the Pacific Symphony as part of their American Composers Festival.

Despite his varied experiences in *Casualty* and *Skellig*, Vlahos was a newcomer to a big feature film set on *Nanny McPhee Returns*. He was in awe at the vast effort and amount of people involved in such a project—and the size of the sandwiches!

Becoming friends with his co-stars, Vlahos went on to see his debut on the big screen at his first premiere.

