

THE HELP

Production Notes



Release Date: August 10, 2011

Studio: DreamWorks Pictures and Participant Media

Director: Tate Taylor

Screenwriter: Tate Taylor

Starring: Jessica Chastain, Viola Davis, Bryce Dallas Howard, Allison Janney, Chris Lowell, Sissy Spacek, Octavia Spencer, Emma Stone, Cicely Tyson, Mike Vogel

Genre: Drama

MPAA Rating: PG-13 (for thematic material)

Official Website: TheHelpmovie.com.

Deeply moving, filled with poignancy, humor and hope, "The Help" is a timeless and universal story about the ability to create change.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

This summer DreamWorks Pictures invites you to meet three extraordinary women and discover what it takes to find your voice.

From DreamWorks Pictures comes the inspiring and poignant drama “The Help.” Based on the critically acclaimed No. 1 New York Times best-selling debut novel by Kathryn Stockett, “The Help” boasts an illustrious cast, including, in alphabetical order, Jessica Chastain, Academy Award® nominee Viola Davis, Bryce Dallas Howard, Emmy® Award winner Allison Janney, Chris Lowell, Oscar® winner Sissy Spacek, Octavia Spencer, Emma Stone, Academy Award® nominee Cicely Tyson and Mike Vogel.

The film is written for the screen and directed by Tate Taylor, with Brunson Green, Chris Columbus and Michael Barnathan producing. Executive producers are Mark Radcliffe, Tate Taylor, L. Dean Jones Jr., Nate Berkus, Jennifer Blum, John Norris, Jeff Skoll and Mohamed Mubarak Al Mazrouei.

Set in Jackson, Mississippi during the 1960s, “The Help” chronicles the relationship between three different and extraordinary women who build an unlikely friendship around a secret writing project that breaks societal rules and puts them all at risk.

Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan just graduated from Ole Miss and is intent on getting a job as a writer. Unlike the girls she grew up with in Jackson, Mississippi, Skeeter wants a career and is quite content to put marriage and children on hold—much to her married friends’, and her mother’s, constant consternation. When she lands a job writing the Miss Myrna cleaning-hints column for the local newspaper, she seeks help from Aibileen, her best friend’s maid and finds herself embarking on a clandestine project, spurred on by a book editor in New York and inspired by the moving stories she uncovers.

Aibileen Clark has been a housekeeper all her life, working in the white homes of Jackson, Miss. She has raised 17 children for her employers and one son of her own, who was tragically, and unnecessarily, killed in an accident. Saddened by the loss of her only child, Aibileen draws strength from both her faith and her best friend Minny.

With quiet courage and dignity, Aibileen fulfills her duties as the Leefolt family’s maid, caring for their little girl, Mae Mobley. When Skeeter enters her life, Aibileen finds herself opening up and telling her stories for the first time in her life—even though the seemingly simple act brings with it the great risk of retaliation.

Out-spoken Minny Jackson is a 33-year-old housekeeper who has a reputation as the best cook in

Mississippi. She works for Hilly Holbrook (Bryce Dallas Howard), but an act of defiance finds her fired and traveling to the outskirts of Jackson to work for lonely, fish-out-of-water Celia Foote (Jessica Chastain). Minny is Aibileen's best friend and helped her get through her grief over losing her only son. Though strong and independent, Minny nonetheless is the voice of reason, as well as a healthy skeptic, when it comes to Skeeter's project.

A remarkable sisterhood emerges from their improbable alliance, instilling all of them with the courage to transcend the lines that define them, and the realization that sometimes those lines are made to be crossed—even if it means bringing everyone in town face to face with the changing times.

Deeply moving, filled with humor, hope and heart, “The Help” is a timeless and universal story about the ability to create change. The film is both inspirational and empowering, featuring relatable, funny, courageous characters, who by finding their unique voices triumph and become the heroes of their own lives.

Celebrate the courage to inspire change.

FROM THE PAGE TO THE SCREEN

As friendship is so vital to the story of “The Help,” so was friendship vital to how the film became a reality. Director/Screenwriter Tate Taylor and Kathryn Stockett, author of the book “The Help,” were childhood friends who grew up together in Jackson, Miss., in the 1970s.

Taylor and Stockett's longtime, trusting friendship formed the basis of the film's journey and along the way they added another friend, Jackson native Brunson Green, to their mix, who Taylor had met at a blues festival in Jackson some 18 years prior. Then another friend, Octavia Spencer, joined their pack. Taylor met Octavia Spencer in 1996 when they were both production assistants on “A Time to Kill.”

After the movie wrapped, Taylor and Spencer packed up and moved to Los Angeles together. Taylor, Green and Spencer all hung out in Los Angeles, with frequent visits from Stockett, who was off getting married, having a baby and living in New York City. After taking five years to write the novel, which Stockett started right after 9/11 when she was in New York, and facing over 60 rejections from literary agents, Stockett was close to giving up when she gave it to Taylor for a read. As Taylor recalls, “I started reading the manuscript and was blown away. I was moved by the truth of the story, about these unlikely women coming together to create change in Mississippi in 1963. I called Kathryn and just said, ‘This is fantastic. You cannot give up...this will be published. If it doesn't, I'll make it into a movie.’”

The authenticity of the story of “The Help” resonated with Taylor from the moment he opened the manuscript. “This was our childhood. Kathryn and I weren’t quite raised like the characters in the book because we were raised in the ’70s. But our mothers were single moms who had to work. And they, like the women in the story, needed to get help with the children. Kathryn and I like to refer to the women who raised us as our co-mothers. Mine was Carol Lee and hers was Demitri.”

Excited by the prospect of making “The Help” into a film, Taylor started the ball rolling by sending the manuscript to their mutual friend, producer Brunson Green.

Green recalls, “I was in New York and Tate said ‘I am going to send you this book. Read it immediately. We need to make it into a movie.’ I read it on the flight home and I was crying on the plane. It reminded me of my Grandmother’s housekeeper Mary and their rich, lifelong yet complex relationship.”

With Stockett’s blessing, Taylor, with the help of Green, acquired the film rights to “The Help” and Taylor began to adapt the novel into a screenplay.

Taylor definitely had a feel for the material as he committed himself to bringing the complex, inspiring and surprisingly humorous novel to the big screen. “These women would not be allies at that time for reasons of race and class,” says Taylor. “It’s easy to be quiet. You think that there is no benefit from speaking up, or maybe you are just lazy and want to go with the status quo. But, I think what this book shows people, and I hope the movie will show people, is that the smallest thing can affect change.”

The challenge for Taylor in writing the screenplay was to be honest to the voice of the novel and condense it into a two hour movie. As Taylor comments, “The technical issue for me was getting the first 200 pages of the novel into 20-25 minutes of the script. But, I know this material. I read the book about 13 times and I would circle the things I really liked in the novel.

“Once I starting writing, it just began to flow. Kitty [Kathryn Stockett] and I have the same sense of humor and we tell stories the same way. She was generous enough to let me run things by her.”

About a year later, in 2009, “The Help” was published by Penguin Books. Spurred by passionate word-of-mouth from readers, “The Help” stayed on the New York Times bestseller list for 103 weeks, six of which were in the No. 1 spot.

Tate Taylor happened to be traveling through Alabama with Kathryn Stockett and Brunson Green following a book signing in Jackson, Miss., and en route to Atlanta, the last stop on the

book tour, when Stockett received a call from her publisher. They quickly pulled over at a truck stop to hear the news from the publisher—“The Help” was debuting on the New York Times bestseller list.

Green recalls, “I snapped a photo of them celebrating in front of the truck stop with their Smirnoff Ices. Kathryn was literally on the phone with her publisher and very excited.”

At that point, Taylor and Green worked actively to find a veteran producer to partner with them on “The Help.” They realized that their primary filmmaking experience had been in the world of independent film, so they looked at bringing in another producing partner with studio credibility.

“We started with baby steps, in the development of the script, in getting the right partners. We really needed someone who had the legs, someone who had done huge movies like ‘Harry Potter’ and that was Chris Columbus and 1492,” explains Taylor.

And it was only natural that Taylor would take the project to Producer Chris Columbus as he had known him for some time. When Taylor asked him to read the book, Columbus agreed. “I read the book and it was phenomenal,” Columbus says. “It was so complex and socially relevant for our time.”

Columbus was also impressed with Taylor’s screenplay and felt strongly that Taylor was the best choice to direct the project. As he explains, “Tate’s the only guy who could have directed this movie because he lived in this world; he grew up with these people. He understands every detail, every nuance. And that’s what you look for in a director.”

The next step was to find a studio that would support the filmmakers’ vision of turning “The Help” into a feature film. This was not an easy process as Taylor and the producers found themselves also meeting rejection, just as Kathryn Stockett had with the book. Then what they all worked and hoped for happened. “DreamWorks came in and really supported Tate directing the film and that really was the kick off,” says Columbus.

“DreamWorks’ Stacey Snider [Partner, Co-Chairman, CEO] said, ‘I can’t let this go,’” Columbus recalls. “And it was because of Stacey and Steven Spielberg, who stepped in and agreed to make the movie, that we were able to fulfill Tate’s vision.”

Green adds, “DreamWorks came on board, which was phenomenal. They care about the filmmakers and they don’t want them to feel compromised in any way. They give the director the freedom to tell his story.”

Just as the novel attracted millions of readers around the world, the filmmakers are hopeful that

the novel's universal themes will resonate with moviegoers. "I think the key to the book's success is that the subject matter is finally being told from the point of view of the most obvious people, which are these women. I think it takes us back to a time and place that has been forgotten and that is still really important to us," says Taylor.

A seemingly simple act can make a difference to so many.

CASTING "THE HELP"

One of the biggest responsibilities in casting "The Help" was living up to the book readers' expectations. Everyone who loves the book loves the characters, and the filmmakers felt a great obligation to the readers to bring them to life in an authentic way, while at the same time casting with an eye for reaching the audience who had never read the book and bringing them into the world of "The Help."

They searched for actors who could transcend who they are as a personality and become the real, honest characters that were in the novel. Director Taylor says, "When we were looking for actors, I was looking at how they talked, the way they moved...and these actresses just have such great body language that I swear they could be in Jackson, Mississippi. That really guided me a lot of the way. It's just a regional authenticity."

Producer Michael Barnathan confirms, "Tate didn't want a 'Hollywoodized' version of the South. He wanted to have it feel authentic. So that was his gauge for assessing the actresses."

In many ways the character Aibileen is the heart and soul of "The Help." She is also perhaps the most complex and conflicted of the women. For this all-important role, the filmmakers were thrilled when two-time Tony Award® winner and Academy Award® nominee Viola Davis ("Doubt," "Eat Pray Love") read Tate Taylor's screenplay and accepted the role. However, it wasn't an easy process to lock her down.

As producer Brunson Green recalls, "We loved Viola and rightfully so. She subtly conveys the strength of the character, which made her the perfect Aibileen. We weren't certain that we could get her for the role, since she was committed to her Tony Award®-winning role on Broadway's 'Fences,' but timing was on our side and everything fell into place."

"Viola is just power. She brings such truthfulness to the role. The role of Aibileen with the wrong actress could turn into a cliché, but Viola brings a bravery to this role that will break your heart."

— Tate Taylor, director

“For me it felt like a movie where it wasn’t just a chance for me to create a character that was interesting and complicated but it was also a chance for me to be in a movie that illuminated a part of our history that we have a tendency to be silent about,” says Viola Davis of her heart-rending portrayal of Aibileen, the maid who agrees to tell novice writer Skeeter Phelan (Emma Stone) the painful and potentially incendiary stories about her life.

“I see Aibileen as being a reluctant hero,” continues Davis. “She is just getting by after her son dies, just being invisible, until Skeeter enters the picture. And what Skeeter stimulates in her is the excitement of having a purpose; something else to drive her life, which is telling her story. I want to honor Aibileen.”

Emma Stone (“Easy A,” “Zombieland”) was a hands-down favorite to portray Skeeter Phelan primarily due to her scene stealing vulnerability in a series of comedic movies. As Skeeter, Stone portrays an Ole Miss graduate who has come back home, is living with her parents, unmarried and desperately in search of a career in journalism.

“No one else could be playing Skeeter except for Emma Stone. Kathryn, the author, feels the same way. I met Emma and saw some of her work and it was just so obvious. She is so smart and she brings to the character of Skeeter this intelligence, a healthy naiveté and you just root for her. You want her to win. She is the perfect underdog in so many ways. She is the swan waiting to mature,” says Taylor.

Columbus adds, “The character of Skeeter represents someone who, although she comes from a narrow-minded small town, has the ability to leave and go on and have a career. She is fighting two things in her life. She is fighting her family and her town for acceptance. Emma brings the character of Skeeter to life. Emma has a real, strong sense of naturalism and for what feels right for this character.”

Emma Stone describes Skeeter as “a bit of a misfit. Someone who has never been rebellious, she has always conformed to the laws of her society, her family, her friends. But, when it comes to writing, as time goes on, and as the story unfolds she begins to understand that her way of thinking is more progressive than the people in her town. In a way, it’s a coming-of-age story for Skeeter.”

One of the most difficult roles to cast was that of the antagonist Hilly Holbrook. “Hilly is that type of villain who has no idea that she is doing anything wrong,” says Brunson Green.

Chris Columbus agrees, “I always thought of Hilly as probably one of the most important characters to cast in the film. When I read the book and the script, she reminded me very much of Louise Fletcher’s portrayal of Nurse Ratched in ‘One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest,’ someone

who wholeheartedly believes that what they are doing is absolutely right, absolutely moral. She believes in her own self righteousness.”

Bryce Dallas Howard (“Hereafter,” “Terminator Salvation”) isn’t necessarily the first person you think of to portray an iconic villain, but the filmmakers all agreed that she was the right actress to portray Hilly Holbrook.

“Bryce Dallas Howard did a fantastic job. Bryce has the charisma that Hilly needs to lead. She has the positivity. But, she can also turn on the ice cold B-word like you can’t believe. It’s like she is a cult leader. The audience gets to see both sides,” says Taylor.

Howard was first introduced to “The Help” through her mother who had read the novel. However, it was Tate Taylor’s screenplay that captured her attention. “I read the script first and just thought, oh my gosh, this is wonderful. I auditioned for it immediately. Only then did I go back and read the book,” she says.

“What I find so remarkable about this story is that it really holistically depicts the time period,” Howard continues. “It’s not necessarily vilifying anyone, but rather vilifying certain mentalities and belief systems that were evil at their core. Playing Hilly has been a journey for me to understand her ignorance. She’s extraordinarily self-righteous and really believes that she knows what’s best for her family and community and preserving certain old values. Hilly believes that her cruel actions are justified even though she’s deeply and devastatingly misguided.

“My hope is that the audience will see a fully expressed character. I don’t think they need to relate to her and they should never agree with her but I hope we can also see these women in this period of time in an honest way,” concludes Howard.

Viola Davis adds, “We really root for Aibileen and Minny. We all want to defeat the Darth Vaders, whoever that person is in our lives who is cruel to us. But at the end of the day, I don’t know how much you can blame Hilly. I don’t think that she knows what a terrible person she is. Aibileen doesn’t like her, but Hilly actually helps her because she is the cause for Aibileen going to Skeeter and telling her stories.”

Versatile, talented actress Octavia Spencer (“Dinner for Schmucks,” “Seven Pounds”) was Tate Taylor’s first choice for the dauntless Minny. “Octavia and I were roommates for four years, and Brunson, Octavia and I all ran around,” says Tate Taylor. “And since Kathryn modeled some of Minny’s traits after Octavia, we felt no one else could play her but Octavia.”

Spencer comments laughingly, “I think that Kathryn created Minny on the part of me that doesn’t have a problem speaking up. It’s not always a good thing.”

But Spencer points out that playing the character of Minny is much more complex than just displaying her own personality. “A lot of playing Minny was stripping away what is inherently me and leaving what is inherently Minny—a strong woman who lives in an oppressive environment, an abused wife and mother of five...and a good cook,” says Spencer.

Celia Foote is played by relative newcomer Jessica Chastain (“Tree of Life,” “The Debt”) . “One of the most satisfying discoveries in the casting process for us has been finding Jessica Chastain. She has been in 4 or 5 movies this year, but none had been released when she auditioned. She keeps booking roles because she is such an amazing actress. She brings this heart and sympathy to a bombshell, which is difficult to pull off because when you are that gorgeous, with a handsome husband living in a mansion, it could be a little hard to relate to,” says Green.

Allison Janney (“Juno,” “Hairspray”) portrays Charlotte Phelan, a proper southern woman who has to learn to contend with her progressive daughter. Charlotte spends most of the movie getting her daughter groomed and coiffed in an effort to marry her off. “Allison is fantastic. She is a master at bridging comedy with drama and taking you back and forth. It is a constant visual joyride,” says Taylor.

Rounding out the cast are Academy Award®–winner Sissy Spacek (“In the Bedroom,” “Coal Miner’s Daughter”) as Hilly Holbrook’s outspoken mother; Annette Bening (“The Hours”) as Elizabeth Leefolt, Aibileen’s employer; Anna Camp (“True Blood,” “Mad Men”) as Jolene French, one of the young mothers in Hilly Holbrook’s circle; Cicely Tyson (“Sounder,” “Fried Green Tomatoes”) as Constantine, the Phelan family’s longtime maid; Chris Lowell (“Private Practice,” “Up in the Air”) as Stuart Whitworth, Skeeter’s suitor; Mike Vogel (“Blue Valentine,” “She’s Out of My League”) as Johnny Foote, Celia’s handsome husband; and Aunjanue Ellis (“Ray,” “The Mentalist”) as Yule Mae, the Holbrook’s family new maid.

The power of one person with one idea can create change.

MISSISSIPPI AS A CHARACTER

“The Help” is set in Mississippi, and although a fictional story, it takes place during one of the most important eras in our country’s cultural history—the changing times of the 1960s.

Director and screenwriter Tate Taylor knew from the beginning that “The Help” had to be filmed on location in Mississippi. He wanted to capture the period of time in a very honest and entertaining way and that could not be accomplished on a movie studio back lot.

Taylor explains, “Mississippi is a character itself. Everyone here has some eccentric, eclectic

characteristic to them. It's a fun place. Just look at the storytellers who have come from the South. A lot of their fame and accolades are just because they were writing about what life is like here. They didn't invent anything. They are commenting on the South. There is no other place quite like it."

The producers agreed with Taylor's premise that Mississippi itself is a character in the film, and though filming in the heat of a southern summer would be challenging, they set out to find the perfect representation of what the South looked like in 1963. When they discovered the small town of Greenwood, Miss., they knew that they had the ideal setting.

Producer Brunson Green recalls, "Tate and I are Mississippi natives, so we knew we could accomplish a complete and genuine look there. Along with our production designer, Mark Ricker, we set out on a road trip across Mississippi and searched for five days for the perfect spot. When we finally arrived in Greenwood, we saw that the 1960s Jackson has remained intact. Everything fit—we saw Skeeter's and Hilly's houses, and the abandoned ballroom where we could hold the benefit. It was at that point we knew Greenwood was the right place, and the town opened their homes and their hearts to the entire production."

Producer Michael Barnathan comments, "Greenwood is an interesting place. It is like stepping back in time. It affected the movie in a big way and I don't think we could have made the same movie if we were shooting it somewhere else. It was inspiring to be there."

Equal distance between Jackson, Miss. and Memphis, Tenn., Greenwood provided the filmmakers exactly the authenticity of time and place they were looking for. Production designer Mark Ricker ("Conviction," "Julie and Julia") searched the local area for the perfect exterior locations for the characters' homes and then created interiors that represented the feel and look of the '60s and were true to the characters' personalities and lifestyles.

Commenting on the benefits of shooting in Greenwood from a production-design point of view, Ricker says, "It's my job and my department's job to become the expert on 1963 Mississippi and when you are trying to create a period film about such a specific place and can be in that place with the people who live there, you get to eat their food, you can go into their houses that are historically accurate and amazing and it does enrich the production design."

Mississippi is nothing like the neighboring state of Louisiana either. The architecture changes when one crosses the Mississippi River. "You can drive around and see the cotton fields here, but they are just cotton fields. The real difference I noticed was in the houses. You can't find Mississippi houses in Louisiana. They are just different," says Ricker.

The filmmakers found practical locations for the Phelan Farm, Hilly's House, Elizabeth's House,

the Foote Mansion, the Robert E. Lee Hotel and Aibileen and Minny's houses all in Greenwood or neighboring towns.

For the actors, shooting in Mississippi gave them a different perspective, which helped in building their characters. "Mississippi's another character," says Viola Davis. "You feel the ghosts of the past. You feel the ghosts of all the people who died with unrealized hopes and dreams. You feel it in every fiber, in the heat, in the homes and in the faces of people who live here. It informs your character in a way that wouldn't have been informed if you were shooting in L.A. And, I hope that people see that when they see the film."

"The South is an oppressive, complicated, beautiful, tragic, loving place all in one bundle. And being there as a group, like we were in summer camp, really bled into these performances and into the film."

—Tate Taylor, director

"It's about taking the audience to a time and place," sums up Chris Columbus. "All the films that have done it well have made it feel real. And that's what I think Tate did so beautifully."

Finding your voice is empowering.

CREATING THE LOOK OF "THE HELP"

It was important that Tate Taylor be surrounded not only by a cast that would support his vision, but also that he have a really talented crew to create the authenticity he wanted. Chris Columbus, Michael Barnathan and Mark Radcliffe had worked with Director of Photography Stephen Goldblatt ("Batman Forever," "Closer") on "Percy Jackson" who in turn had worked with Tate Taylor's choice for a Production Designer Mark Ricker on "Julie and Julia." For costume design they chose Sharen Davis, who had been nominated for an Academy Award® for her work on "Dreamgirls."

Taylor was thrilled to be working with both Ricker and Goldblatt. "Since Mark Ricker is from the South, I knew he was the perfect choice," says Taylor. "Then luckily I got Stephen Goldblatt as my DP, who is just phenomenal and whose body of work speaks for itself. But what I loved most about those two as a team is what they did together on 'Julie and Julia,' turning Brooklyn into Paris in the '50s."

Production Designer Mark Ricker also appreciated having the chance to work with Tate Taylor, whom he has known for years. "Tate was an immediate ally. He was open to my ideas and that comes from friendship and familiarity...and trusting each other. It was great," says Ricker.

Ricker found that shooting in Mississippi was a little like shooting on a back lot. “Everything is so close together, that I can be physically and emotionally in one space. If someone needs me I will be on set in one environment, and in 45 seconds I can be two blocks away, and then run off to another location that is another three blocks away,” says Ricker.

Creating interior sets that honestly reflected the characters and paid homage to the book was an important element in the production design for Ricker.

“Because Skeeter is so different from Hilly and Hilly is so different from Aibileen and they are all so different from Elizabeth that you see it in the sets. That is the way we are supporting the characters ...in the details. The details, aside from the classic elements of furniture and draperies are injected with contemporary elements from 1963 and back into the '50s,” says Ricker.

“I think there is a responsibility to the readers to get it right,” continues Ricker. “I do take that seriously. I want to put visuals in the film that are going to be as rich as what anyone can imagine. That’s one of the things that was so unbelievably perfect about the locations in Mississippi. Skeeter’s house, for example. We rolled up to the location for the first time and I thought, that’s exactly what I imagined when I read the book.”

Things being what they are, Ricker had to completely redecorate the interior of another home to become the Skeeter’s family home as only the exterior worked for the film. The same was true for Aibileen’s house where the exterior worked, but the interior had to be designed from scratch and built on a stage.

Director of Photography Stephen Goldblatt felt strongly about the look of the film. “I don’t like a period film to be cloaked in the cliché of romanticism or desaturation,” Goldblatt says. “It’s nonsense to think that people didn’t live as fully thirty or forty years ago.

These were the Kennedy years and everything is bright and colorful and I didn’t want to take that away. If anything, we’ve gone to saturated colors. It was a time in America where color was vibrant and saying something about America.”

Costume Designer Sharen Davis had deep feeling for the project as well. Davis says, “There is something in this story that is deeper than the help or the domestic; it’s something about the relationships of these women, in the South at this time for some people that lived it and for some it’s a secret that has been let out.”

For Davis honoring these women and the book was of utmost importance. “I don’t want the wardrobe to ever pop out, or for someone to say ‘oh, that’s a cute dress,’” Davis explains. “I want you to believe that is Hilly; that is Skeeter. It’s really important to me that the wardrobe

plays the character and not the clothing playing the character. And, I want all these girls' clothes to read different personalities."

"Sharen brought the characters to life. It's so true. This is how people dressed and carried on in Mississippi back then," says Taylor. Another attention to southern detail was the responsibility of the Prop Master Chris Ubick. Southern cooking plays a big part in the film and it had to be authentic. As Ubick elaborates: "To a certain extent, with the food, it was more about creating an era than a location, but it's the way people cooked. We had three chefs that we worked with: Martha Foose, who is a cookbook author and a wonderful lady; Lee Ann Fleming who is a local chef, cookbook author and writes a column in the local newspaper; and another local chef Mary Hoover."

Along with creating the congealed salads, deviled eggs and caramel cakes of the day, the chefs had to also deal with two of the actresses food requirements. Jessica Chastain, a vegan, had to eat fried chicken in a scene and Bryce Dallas Howard, who doesn't eat wheat or sugar, had to eat Minny's infamous chocolate pie.

Ubick explains, "For Jessica, Martha Foose took soy hot dogs, put them on a stick, wrapped vegan turkey slices around it, rolled it in vegan flour and almond milk and fried it up in vegetable oil. You could not tell the fried chicken from the vegan fried chicken!"

"For Minny's pie, it was a little bit more difficult because when you use sugar, wheat and butter it browns up beautifully. And, when you take all those things away it is not quite as pretty. So we cut a slice of Bryce's pie and put it into the other pie, so that when she cut it out she could eat it. The way the camera was angled you can't see that her piece is hidden in the pie."

"I would suggest people come to the movie having had dinner or lunch because they are going to be starving about ten minutes into the film. Fried chicken, okra, black eyed peas, cakes and pies. Great pies."

—Tate Taylor, director

Taylor was also excited about all the period details, including the automobiles. Taylor comments, "I have been the most excited about the period buses. One of the buses we have for the maids to travel to and from work in was actually a bus from Selma, Alabama from that time. Everything is authentic. We have 70 period cars pulling up in front of the Robert E Lee."

Director of Photography Stephen Goldblatt sums it up, "This film has been blessed with great luck and great actors and great weather. When we got rained out, we just stayed in the same place and sure enough the clouds parted, the rain stopped and we had beautiful last light just when we needed it."

“Some films are dogged by misfortune. It doesn’t seem to matter what you do—the dog dies, the actor gets sick, the camera gets stolen. It doesn’t happen on this film. Quite the reverse. Everything good that you wish for seems to happen every time,” Goldblatt concludes.

One can triumph in very quiet ways and become a hero in their own life.

MAKING MUSIC

The filmmakers chose iconic film composer Thomas Newman to score “The Help.” With 10 Academy Award® nominations and two Grammys®, Newman is one of the most respected composers in modern film and has scored over 50 feature films in his prolific career.

Producer Brunson Green says, “Thomas Newman is just a phenomenal composer. The range of emotions he can evoke from sounds is amazing.”

Adds Chris Columbus, “Thomas is one of those composers who never hits you over the head with sentimentality...his emotions are very subtle, but they sneak up on you. You’re never being told to cry based on his score; you’re never told to feel a certain way. His score exists to support the characters. And he’s done a remarkable job at creating a score that is evocative of the South.”

Newman’s touch for the South may have something to do with the fact that his mother is originally from Clarksdale, Mississippi, which is one of the neighboring towns that the filmmakers shot in. As Brunson Green reflects, “He’s a southern boy at heart too.”

Multiple Grammy® Award–winning recording artist Mary J. Blige also contributed to the score by writing and recording an original end-credit song.

The song, “The Living Proof,” was written and recorded by Blige after she saw a screening of the film. She was inspired by the women in the film, whom she says, “chose to walk in love and forgiveness.”

Also moved by the film’s celebration of courage to inspire change, Blige says, “To speak to so many women with this song means a lot to me. I wanted to be involved with this film because I think we need to encourage each other more; we are here to tell a story.” “The Help” soundtrack will be released on July 26, 2011, by Interscope Records.

Friendship is the basis for discovering a common humanity.

“THE HELP” IN THEATERS

“Yet all of this exists with a historical undercurrent in the background. It’s like a teardrop of history in the film. You get a sense of what is going on, but at the same time you’re investing in the lives of these very real characters.”

“The Help” is already having a personal effect on viewers as advance screenings to various groups attest. There has been strong support, especially from leaders in the African- American community, who feel a personal connection to the film’s time and place. Says Derrick Thomas, National Vice President Eastern Region, AFLCIO: “I simply loved the film. It was such a great movie and definitely is a ‘must see.’ I was a teenager during this period in history so I have very personal recollections.”

Comments Kuae Mattox, National President, Mocha Moms Inc.: “I wept during the movie, not only because it was poignant, but because there are striking parallels to our own status as stay at home mothers. Many of our ancestors were ‘The Help.’ They were the cooks and the maids and the seamstresses who broke their backs to give their families, especially their children a better future.”

Tate Taylor sums up his hopes for the film’s impact on the viewing audience. “I hope it will make people stop and consider their past and start sharing their own personal stories about what someone meant to them.”

Taylor continues, “It’s honoring these people, past and present, because these characters are heard and seen in this movie and that serves as a touchstone for remembrance and tribute for the people watching.”

Change begins with a whisper!

ABOUT THE CAST

JESSICA CHASTAIN (Celia) was born and raised in Northern California. She attended the Juilliard School where she starred in “Romeo and Juliet.” She went on to receive glowing reviews for her performances in “The Cherry Orchard” at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, opposite Michelle Williams, and in Richard Nelson’s drama “Rodney’s Wife,” opposite David Strathairn, at Playwrights Horizons. Chastain also starred as Desdemona in “Othello,” opposite Philip Seymour Hoffman, which was directed by Peter Sellars and staged at The Public Theater in New York City.

In feature films, Chastain starred in “Tree of Life,” this year’s the Palm d’Or winner at Cannes, written and directed by Terrence Malick, and starring Brad Pitt and Sean Penn. She will soon be seen in “The Debt,” with Helen Mirren and Sam Worthington, “Coriolanus,” directed by and starring with Ralph Fiennes, and “Take Shelter.” She recently wrapped production on “The Wettest Country” with Tom Hardy and Shia LaBeouf.

At the senior class Juilliard showcase, Chastain landed a coveted talent deal with Emmy® Award-winning executive producer and writer John Wells, the show runner of “E.R.,” “The West Wing,” and producer of “White Oleander.” After completing a pilot for Wells and director P.J. Hogan, Chastain returned to the stage in the Los Angeles Wadsworth Theatre production of “Salome,” where Academy Award® winners Estelle Parsons (director) and Al Pacino cast Chastain to play the title role of Salome opposite Pacino. Continuing the collaboration, she starred in the film version titled “Salomaybe,” directed by Al Pacino.

Chastain’s work in “Salome” received enormous critical attention and led to her being cast in the dynamic title role in “Jolene” directed by Dan Ireland, and also starring Rupert Friend, Frances Fisher, Dermot Mulroney and Michael Vartan. Chastain won the Best Actress Award at the 2008 Seattle Film Festival for this role.

Jessica Chastain currently lives in California.

VIOLA DAVIS (Aibileen) received Best Supporting Actress Academy Award® a nomination, a Screen Actors Award nomination and a Golden Globe® Guild Award nomination, as well as voted Best Breakthrough Performance-Female by the National Board of Review for her role as Mrs. Miller in “Doubt.” Davis’ other feature film credits are, “It’s Kind of a Funny Story,” “Trust,” “Eat Pray Love,” “Knight & Day,” “Law Abiding Citizen,” “State of Play,” “Madea Goes to Jail,” “Nights in Rodanthe,” “Disturbia,” “Syriana,” “Get Rich or Die Tryin’,” “Solaris,” “Antwone Fisher” (for which Davis was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award), “Far From Heaven,” “Kate & Leopold,” “Traffic,” and “The Substance of Fire,” among others.

On Broadway, Davis won Tony® Awards for Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Play for her role in “King Hedley II” (for which she also won the Drama Desk Award) and Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Play for “Fences.” Off-Broadway, in The Roundabout Theatre Company’s production of “Intimate Apparel,” she won Best Actress awards from the Drama Desk, the Drama League, and received the Obie Award and the Audelco Award. She was nominated for the Lucille Lortel Award as well. Davis reprised her role at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles where she won the Ovation Award, The Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award, and the Garland Award.

On television, Davis was seen last year in a six-episode arc in Showtime’s hit series “United States of Tara.” She also starred in the A&E miniseries “The Andromeda Strain,” and enjoyed recurring roles on “Law & Order: SVU” and in the CBS miniseries franchise “Jesse Stone.” Additional television credits include “Traveler,” “Century City,” “Lefty,” and “City of Angels.” She also had roles in Oprah Winfrey’s “Amy and Isabelle,” and Hallmark Hall of Fame’s “Grace and Glorie.”

Davis is a graduate of The Juilliard School and holds an Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts Degree from her alma mater, Rhode Island College. She resides in Los Angeles with her husband, actor Julius Tennon.

BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD (Hilly) is one of Hollywood’s most versatile and dynamic talents both on screen and behind the camera. Her feature-film acting credits include “The Twilight Saga: Eclipse,” “Hereafter,” “The Loss of a Teardrop Diamond,” “Terminator Salvation,” “Spider Man 3,” “Lady in the Water,” “The Village,” and “Manderlay.” She recently completed a starring role in Jonathan Levine’s comedy “50/50,” opposite Seth Rogen and Joseph Gordon-Levitt. Howard also received a 2008 Golden Globe® Award nomination for her performance as Rosalind in HBO’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s “As You Like It,” written and directed by Kenneth Branagh.

Expanding her creative reach beyond acting, Howard produced Gus Van Sant’s soon to be released “Restless.” She made her directorial debut with the short film “Orchids” and currently has a feature in development as a screenwriter.

After leaving the Tisch School of the Arts program at New York University, Howard immediately began working on the New York stage, including playing the role of Marianne in the Roundabout’s Broadway production of “Tartuffe”; Rosalind in the Public Theatre’s “As You Like It”; Sally Platt in the Manhattan Theater Club’s production of Alan Ayckbourn’s “House/Garden”; and Emily in the Bay Street Theater Festival’s production of “Our Town.”

Howard currently resides in Los Angeles with her husband, Seth Gabel, and their son, Theo.

ALLISON JANNEY (Charlotte) has starred in numerous feature films, including “Life During Wartime,” “A Thousand Words,” “Away We Go,” “Juno,” and “Hairspray.” She also appeared in the comedy “Strangers with Candy,” was heard as the voice of Gladys in DreamWorks’ animated comedy “Over the Hedge” and received an Independent Spirit Award nomination for her work in “Our Very Own.”

Janney starred Meryl Streep in *Hours*, which received a SAG® also opposite “The Award nomination for Outstanding Ensemble Cast in a Motion Picture. Other feature credits include “American Beauty” (for which she won a SAG Award for Outstanding Ensemble Cast in a Motion Picture) and the Disney/Pixar animated feature “Finding Nemo” (as the voice of Peach), as well as “Nurse Betty,” “How to Deal,” “Drop Dead Gorgeous,” “10 Things I Hate About You,” “Primary Colors,” “The Ice Storm,” “Six Days Seven Nights,” “The Object of My Affection” and “Big Night.” She will soon be seen starring in “The Oranges,” “Margaret” and “Lucky Them.”

On television, Janney starred as C.J. Gregg on “The West Wing,” for which she won four Emmy® Awards, as well as four SAG® Awards. She currently stars on the ABC comedy “Mr. Sunshine,” with Matthew Perry.

While a freshman studying acting at Kenyon College in Ohio, Janney was cast in a show directed by Paul Newman. Soon after, Newman and his wife Joanne Woodward suggested she study at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. She followed their advice and went on to make her Broadway debut in Noel Coward’s “Present Laughter,” for which she earned the Outer Critics Circle Award and Clarence Derwent Award. For her Broadway performance in Arthur Miller’s “A View From the Bridge,” she was nominated for a Tony® Award and won the Outer Critics Circle Award and the Drama Desk Award for Best Supporting Actress.

In addition, she has starred in the New York City Public Theater’s production of “The Taming of the Shrew,” which was part of the Shakespeare in the Park series, and in the Williamstown Theatre Festival’s production of Lillian Hellman’s “The Autumn Garden.”

Janney was recently seen on Broadway as Violet Newstead in the musical “9 to 5,” for which she received a Tony® Award nomination and Drama Desk Award.

CHRIS LOWELL (Stuart) starred as Dell, in ABC’s “Grey’s Anatomy,” and its spin-off “Private Practice.” His additional television credits include the series regular roles of Piz, on the critically acclaimed “Veronica Mars,” and Jonathan Fields in ABC’s “Life as We Know It.”

In feature films, Lowell appeared in Oscar the -nominated “Up in the Air,” directed by Jason

Reitman and starring George Clooney. His other films include “Spin,” directed by Henry Pincus, and “Graduation,” directed by Michael Mayer. He will soon be seen in writer/director Maggie Kiley’s “Light Years.”

Born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, Lowell attended the prestigious Atlanta International School (AIS). While studying drama and theatre there, he also spearheaded and founded the Film Program and Video Yearbook, which allow students to get a taste of the filmmaking process from the script to the screen.

At the 14Street Playhouse, Lowell starred as Sir Toby Belch in “Twelfth Night,” Ezekiel Cheever in “The Crucible” and Ananse in “Ananse and the Spider.” At the Georgia Shakespeare Festival he starred as Romeo in “Romeo and Juliet” and Snug in “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

Lowell has a passion for photography and has compiled a book of work from his world travels.

SISSY SPACEK (Missus Walters) has been one of the industry’s most respected actresses for almost four Academy Award®/Oscar® decades. Her many honors include an, five additional nominations, three Golden Globe® Awards, and numerous critics awards. She first gained the attention of critics and audiences with her performance in Terrence Malick’s widely praised 1973 drama “Badlands,” in which she starred opposite Martin Sheen. In 1976, Spacek earned her first Academy Award nomination and won a National Society of Film Critics Award for her chilling performance in the title role of Brian De Palma’s “Carrie,” based on the Stephen King novel. The following year, she won the New York Film Critics Circle Award for her work in Robert Altman’s “Three Women.”

In 1980, Spacek starred as Loretta Lynn in the acclaimed biopic “Coal Miner’s Daughter,” winning the Oscar® and Golden Globe Award® for her performance. Spacek also swept the New York Film Critics Circle, Los Angeles Film Critics, National Board of Review, and National Society of Film Critics Awards for her portrayal of the country music legend.

Spacek received another Golden Globenomination the next year for her work in “Raggedy Man,” directed by her Jack Fisk. She earned a Golden Globe® and her third Oscar® and two additional nominations for her role in Costa-Gavras’ 1982 drama “Missing,” opposite Jack Lemmon, and her fourth Oscar and Golden Globenominations for her work in 1984’s “The River,” in which she starred with Mel Gibson.

In 1987, Spacek gained her fifth Academy Award nomination and won another Golden Globe® and the New York film Critics Circle Award for her performance in the dark comedy “Crimes of the Heart.” Her most recent Oscarnomination came for her portrayal of a mother grieving for her

murdered son in the drama “In the Bedroom,” for which she also won a Golden Globe Award®, an Independent Spirit Award, and an AFI Film Award for Best Actress. In addition, she garnered Best Actress Awards from a number of critics’ organizations, including the Los Angeles, New York and Broadcast Film Critics. Her work in “In the Bedroom” also brought Spacek two Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Award nominations, one for Outstanding Lead Actress and another for Outstanding Cast, shared with the rest of the film’s ensemble.

Spacek’s other film credits include “A Home at the End of the World,” “The Straight Story,” “Blast From the Past,” “Affliction,” “The Grass Harp,” “JFK,” “The Long Walk Home,” “night, Mother,” “Marie,” “North Country,” “Nine Lives,” “Hot Rod,” “Lake City” and “Four Christmases.” Spacek most recently starred in “Get Low” alongside Robert Duvall and Bill Murray. Her next films will be the thriller “Blackbird,” and her directorial debut “Sweet Tea” (based on the novel “Goodbye to the Buttermilk Sky” by Julia Oliver). She is also writing her memoir “Barefoot Stories.”

Spacek has also been honored for her work on the small screen, where she has starred in several highly praised -form projects. She received Emmy Award ® long nominations for her portrayal of Zelda Fitzgerald in “Last Call” and for her work in Tommy Lee Jones’ western “The Good Old Boys.” She also earned SAG Award nominations for her performances in “Midwives” and “A Place for Annie.” Her additional television credits include “If These Walls Could Talk,” “Beyond the Call,” “Streets of Laredo,” “A Matter,” a Golden Globe ® Private nominated performance for “Pictures of Hollis Emmy ® Woods,” and most recently an-nominated performance for her guest role on HBO’s “Big Love.”

OCTAVIA SPENCER (Minnie) is a veteran character actress and one of Hollywood’s most sought-after talents for both television and the silver screen.

Spencer’s acting career began with her big screen debut in 1995 in Joel Schumacher’s “A Time to Kill,” opposite Sandra Bullock. Since that time she has built a diverse and impressive resume and in 2009 was lauded by Entertainment Weekly online for her comedic timing when she was named to their esteemed list of the “25 Funniest Actresses in Hollywood.”

Spencer’s extensive feature film credits include “Peep World,” “Dinner for Schmucks,” “Small Town Saturday Night,” “Herpes Boy,” “Halloween II,” “The Soloist,” “Drag Me to Hell,” “Seven Pounds,” “Pretty Ugly People,” “Coach Carter,” “Charm School,” “Win a Date with Tad Hamilton,” “Bad Santa,” “Spiderman,” “Big Momma’s House,” “Being John Malkovich” and “Never Been Kissed.” In 2009, Spencer directed and produced a short film entitled “The Captain” which was a finalist for the coveted Poetry Foundation Prize at the Chicago International Children’s Film Festival.

On television, Spencer starred in the Comedy Central series “Halfway Home” and completed a five-episode arc as the character Constance Grady on the hit series “Ugly Betty.” Additionally, Spencer has been seen in guest-starring roles on shows including “The Big Bang Theory,” “E.R.,” “CSI,” “CSI: NY,” “Raising the Bar,” “Medium” and “NYPD Blue.”

Among her many other professional achievements, Spencer made her stage debut in Los Angeles in 2003 in Del Shore’s award winning play, “The Trials and Tribulations of a Trailer Trash Housewife.” She also recently wrapped production on the film version of that play. Additionally, Spencer has co-authored an interactive mystery book for children called “The Ninja Detectives,” which is currently in development, and also voiced the character Minny in the audio version of “The Help.”

Spencer is a native of Montgomery, Alabama, and holds a BS in Liberal Arts from Auburn University. She currently resides in Los Angeles.

EMMA STONE (Skeeter) recently wrapped production for Columbia Picture’s on “The Amazing Spider-Man.” She will soon be seen in the Warner Bros comedy, “Crazy, Stupid, Love,” in which she stars opposite Steve Carell and Ryan Gosling, and “Friends with Benefits,” starring with Justin Timberlake and Mila Kunis.

Last year, Stone earned rave reviews and a Golden Globe Award nomination for her performance in the Broadcast Film Critics Association Award winning comedy “Easy A,” for which she also won the 2011 MTV Movie Award for Best Comedic Performance . Stone also recently lent her voice to the DreamWorks Animation comedy “The Croods” along with Ryan Reynolds and Nicholas Cage, which is slated for release in 2013.

Stone’s film credits include the independent drama “Paperman,” the Twentieth Century Fox animated comedy, “Marmaduke,” Columbia Picture’s hit comedy “Zombieland,” the Warner Brothers romantic comedy “Ghosts of Girlfriends Past,” the Columbia Pictures/Happy Madison hit comedy, “The House Bunny,” Twentieth Century Fox’s “The Rocker” and the Judd Apatow comedy “Superbad,” where she portrayed the love interest of Jonah Hill.

Native of Arizona, Stone currently splits her time between New York and Los Angeles.

CICELY TYSON (Constantine Jefferson) is an actress, activist and humanitarian, renowned for her portrayals of strong female characters on stage, screen and television. Her career as both pioneer and award winning actress have made her a respected national treasure and creative force.

Tyson was the first women of color to co-star in a television drama series, “East Side/West Side”

and the first woman of color as a series regular on a daytime television soap opera series, “Guiding Light.” This remarkable actress is hailed as a gifted performer for her roles in such landmark films as her title role in “The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman,” in which she played a slave woman ranging in age from 19 to 110 for which she received an unprecedented two Emmy Awards® for Best Actress and Actress of the Year. In addition, she won an Emmy Award® for Best Supporting Actress for her role in the television film “The Oldest Confederate Widow Tells All.”

Other prominent performances include Harriet Tubman in the televised special “A Woman Called Moses,” Binta, the mother of Kunta Kinte, in Alex Haley’s landmark series “Roots,” Marva Collins, the innovative Chicago schoolteacher, in “Welcome to Success: The Marva Collins Story,” Coretta Scott King, the wife of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in “King,” and her roles in both the Hallmark television movie “Relative Strangers” and the NBC series “Sweet Justice,” all of which earned her Emmy® nominations.

Critical acclaim continues for Tyson’s performance as “Rebecca” in the feature film “Sounder” for which she received an Academy Award nomination as well as the British equivalent, the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Award nomination. Other beloved and memorable film credits include “Hoodlum,” “The Women of Brewster Place,” “Fried Green Tomatoes,” “Mama Flora’s Family,” “Diary of a Mad Black Woman” and “Why Did I Get Married, Too?”

Early praise is beginning to pour in for Tyson’s performance in the upcoming feature film “A Haunting in Georgia.”

This activist and advocate has performed at the White House, served as Chairperson of UNICEFF, traveled extensively throughout Africa on behalf of children in need and has spoken at over 500 colleges and universities, covering a wide range of topics including human rights, education and race relations. President George W. Bush credits Tyson’s tireless efforts as the driving force in the development of the forthcoming national Black Museum that will celebrate history and accomplishments of people of color.

Since 1996, Tyson has served as the guiding force and matriarch of The Cicely L. Tyson Community School of Performing and Fine Arts. This institution of academic learning and creative expression, based in East Orange, New Jersey, serves a dynamic population of pre K thru 12th grade students.

Tyson was honored with a star on the world famous Hollywood Boulevard Walk of Fame. Other recognition of her talent and dedication include a record number of honorary doctorates. Tyson also is the recipient of fifteen Image Awards for Best Actress from the NAACP. Civil Rights honors include, The National Council of Negro Women Award, as well as additional awards

from Operation PUSH, CORE, the SCLC, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center. Harvard University celebrated this remarkable actress with a Cicely Tyson Day and Sony Films named her a Master Film Innovator. Tyson has written numerous articles for “The New York Times” and “Ebony Magazine” and the Smithsonian hosted a tribute featuring a retrospective of her film career. Most recently, Tyson has been honored by Essence Magazine, BET and is the 95th recipient of the NAACP’s highest honor, the prestigious Spingarn Award.

Tyson continues to develop her art as she takes on new roles and opportunities in her efforts to enlighten future generations.

MIKE VOGEL (Johnny Foote) recently co-starred in the critically acclaimed “Blue Valentine.” He also appeared in “Cloverfield,” “She’s Out of My League,” the cult thriller “Across the Hall,” “The Deaths of Ian Stone,” “Open Graves,” “Poseidon” and “Rumor Has It.”

Vogel received praise for his starring roles in “Supercross” and “The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants,” as well as for his breakthrough performance in MTV’s musical adaptation of “Wuthering Heights” and the box office hit “The Texas Chainsaw Massacre.”

ANNA CAMP (Jolene) is perhaps best known to audiences for her work as Sarah Newlin on the hit HBO series “True Blood.” Raised in Columbia, South Carolina, Camp began acting in elementary and high school stage productions. She studied at North Carolina School of the Arts, from which she earned her BFA in 2004. Upon graduation, Camp moved to New York City and got her first audition the day after she arrived.

Camp subsequently appeared in commercials and Off-Broadway and regional stage productions, including “columbinus” at the New York Theatre Workshop, “God Hates the Irish” at Rattlestick Theatre, “Flesh and the Desert” at Playwrights Horizons, “Hay Fever” at Baltimore Center Stage, and “The Importance of Being Earnest” at the Dallas Theatre Center.

She made her feature film debut in “And Then Came Love” in 2007, followed by her television series debut in an episode of “Cashmere Mafia.” Quickly becoming one of the most sought after actresses in Hollywood, **AUNJANUE ELLIS (Yule Mae)** has already left her mark on television, film, and the stage.

Ellis is currently filming the television series, “Missing,” alongside Ashley Judd, set to premiere during the summer of 2012. Prior to this, she was seen on “The Mentalist” as tough as nails chief of CBI, Madeline Hightower.

Ellis began her television career on the award-winning ABC television series “The Practice.” Since then, she has appeared on many notable series including: “The Good Wife,” “True Blood,”

“Third Watch,” “100 Centre Street,” “Law & Order: Criminal Intent” and “Numb3rs.” Known for playing composite characters, Ellis was cast by Jerry Bruckheimer in two separate series, NBC’s “E-Ring,” opposite Benjamin Bratt and Dennis Hopper, and more recently FOX’s “Justice,” with Victor Garber.

Her film projects have showcased Ellis’ chameleon-like ability to transform from one character to the next. Her portrayals of a pregnant drug addict in the Biggie biopic “Notorious,” the cat-fighting Sistah Girl in “Undercover Brother” (for which she was nominated for a Black Reel Award for Best Actress in 2003) and the quintessential novelist Zora Neal Hurston in “Brother to Brother,” have proven Ellis’ talent time and again.

In 2001, Ellis received her first NAACP Image Award Nomination for her portrayal of Jo Brashear in “Men of Honor,” opposite Academy Award®-winning actors Cuba Gooding Jr., Robert DeNiro and Charlize Theron. Ellis’s other film credits include “I Love You Phillip Morris,” alongside Jim Carrey and Ewan McGregor, “The Resident,” with Hilary Swank, the cultural psychological thriller “Cover,” “The Taking of Pelham 123,” with Denzel Washington and John Travolta, “Freedomland,” opposite Julianne Moore and Samuel L. Jackson; “Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story” (NAACP Image Award Nomination, 2010), opposite Cuba Gooding Jr. and “The Hungry Ghosts,” a role written for her by Michael Imperioli.

She is perhaps best known for her performance as Mary Ann Fisher in the Oscar®-winning film “Ray,” opposite Academy Award®-winner Jamie Foxx.

Ellis has appeared on Broadway in “Joe Turner’s Come and Gone” and “The Tempest.” Her Off-Broadway credits include “Drowning Crow,” “The Winter’s Tale,” “The Cider House Rules” and “Seeking the Genesis.”

A trendsetter with a style all her own, Ellis has graced the pages of both VIBE and Essence magazines.

She is a graduate of Brown University and studied at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. As an active member of Delta Sigma Theta Inc., a service sorority, Ellis believes in the power of giving back.

MARY STEENBURGEN (Elaine Stein) won the Academy Award for her role in “Melvin and Howard.” Most recently she starred in “Did You Hear About the Morgans?,” with Hugh Grant and Sarah Jessica Parker, and “The Proposal,” with Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds.

Among Steenburgen’s many other feature film credits are “Four Christmases,” “Stepbrothers,” “The Brave One,” “Nobel Son,” “Hotchkiss’ Ballroom Dancing and Charm School,” “Elf,”

“Sunshine State,” “Casa De Los Baby,” “Life as a House,” “Philadelphia,” “Parenthood,” “What’s Eating Gilbert Grape,” “The Grass Harp,” “Back to the Future Part III,” “Time After Time,” “A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy,” “Cross Creek,” “One Magic Christmas,” “Dead of Winter” and “End of the Line,” for which she also served as the film’s executive producer.

For seasons on television, Steenburgen in the Emmy® two starred Award nominated CBS series, “Joan of Arcadia.” She also starred in the television film “Southern Discomfort,” and in numerous episodes of “Curb Your Enthusiasm.” Steenburgen also starred with her husband, Ted Danson, in the television film “It Must Be Love” and in the television miniseries’ “Talking to Heaven” and “Gulliver’s Travels.”

Steenburgen starred with Jon Voight and F. Murray Abraham in Robert Halmi’s “Noah’s Ark” for NBC, and was also nominated for a Screen Actors Guild Award®, for her role in “About Sarah.”

Currently, Steenburgen is starring in a pilot called “Outlaw Country,” opposite John Hawkes, for FX. She also appears in the upcoming season of HBO’s acclaimed series, “Bored to Death,” and in FX’s new series, “Wilfred,” starring Elijah Wood, which debuts this month.

On stage, Steenburgen starred in the David Mamet-directed play “Boston Marriage” at The Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles. Her other theater credits include “The Beginning of August,” “Holiday” and “Candida” at New York’s Roundabout Theater, and “Marvin’s Room” at the Tiffany Theater in Los Angeles.

In addition to her professional work, Steenburgen has devoted a great deal of time to causes close to her heart. In 1989 she and fellow actress, Alfre Woodard, founded Artists for a Free South Africa. In 1996 she and Ted Danson were presented with Liberty Hill Foundation’s prestigious Upton Sinclair Award for their work in human rights and environmental causes.

Steenburgen is a native of Little Rock, Arkansas, the daughter of a railroad conductor and a public high school secretary. She began her career at the age of nineteen in New York. She currently lives in Los Angeles, California with her husband. They are the parents of four children, Kate, Lilly, Charlie and Kat.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

TATE TAYLOR (Director/Executive Producer/Screenplay by) was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi and graduated from the University of Mississippi. After spending time in New York he moved to Los Angeles to pursue his film career.

In 2004 Taylor made his directorial debut with the critically acclaimed short film “Chicken Party”, which he wrote, directed and starred. “Chicken Party” went on to win eight festivals and placed at 12 more.

“Pretty Ugly People” was Taylor’s first feature length film, which was released theatrically in the fall of 2009. Written and directed by Taylor, this dark comedy was shot on location in Montana’s Glacier National Park, Chicago and Los Angeles and presented a complicated shooting schedule and ensemble cast which gained Taylor further notoriety as a director and writer to watch.

Taylor has established a mentoring program based in Mississippi with Kathryn Stockett, author of “The Help,” that provides creative and structural mentoring for writers and filmmakers.

As an actor, Taylor has a long history of creating outstanding performances and was most recently seen in the 2010 Sundance “Grand Jury” Prize-winning feature, “Winter’s Bone.”

KATHRYN STOCKETT (Author of “The Help”) was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi. After graduating from the University of Alabama with a degree in English and creative writing, she moved to New York City, where she lived and worked for 16 years. She currently lives in Atlanta.

“The Help,” Stockett’s first novel, was on the New York Times bestseller list for 103 weeks, six of those weeks were at number one.

Mississippi-native **BRUNSON GREEN (Producer)** received his BA in Economics before exploring the world of filmmaking. After relocating to Austin, Texas, Green got the opportunity to work in the props department, cleaning guns on the Bill Wittliff-produced western TV series, “Ned Blessing.” Seeing Wittliff at work, Brunson was immensely intrigued and continued freelancing across the country, honing his skills to becoming a producer in his own right.

In 1996, Green formed Harbinger Pictures, focusing on developing a unique slate with the goal of finding stories that resonate. He produced the comedic feature “Fool’s Gold,” which played at the Sundance Film Festival. He also produced “The Journeyman,” a spaghetti-style western, starring Barry Corbin and Willie Nelson, which was distributed domestically by THINK Film

and internationally by Dream Entertainment. Among numerous short projects, Green produced Lorraine Bracco's ("The Sopranos") directorial debut "Auto Motives," a short film, starring James Cameron and Robert Downey, Jr.

Green has also extensively collaborated with hometown friend and actor/writer/director Tate Taylor. These projects included the multi-award-winning short film, "Chicken Party," followed by the feature "Pretty Ugly People," which screened in over 36 festivals, garnered numerous awards and was theatrically released and distributed by Osiris Entertainment. "The Help" marks Green and Taylor's third project with their longtime friend, writer/actress Octavia Spencer (Minnie Jackson), who had starred in their previous two films. In between project development, producing and eating Mississippi caramel cake from his family's secret recipe, Green splits time between Los Angeles, Austin, and New York.

For over twenty-five years, **CHRIS COLUMBUS (Producer)** has written, directed and produced some of the most successful box-office hits, which have established him as a major force in contemporary Hollywood filmmaking.

Columbus is the masterful filmmaker behind one of the most revered and successful literary adaptations, Harry Potter, as the director and producer of the first three in the blockbuster series of films. He began by directing "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," the first film based on J.K. Rowling's monumentally successful book series. With millions of avid and often fanatical readers, Columbus was under a great pressure to deliver a film that was equally satiating to the fans, and captured the essence of the beloved characters.

He cast newcomers Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint in the leading roles, demonstrating his facility for nurturing and cultivating young talent. The film triumphed at the box office and Columbus followed the film as director and producer of "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" in 2002, and as producer of the third film of the series, "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban" in 2005. All three films went on to collectively gross over \$2.6 billion worldwide.

As a director, Columbus has been at the helm of such films as "Home Alone," and "Home Alone 2: Lost In New York," which launched the career of Macaulay Culkin. He followed up such comedies with the smash hit "Mrs. Doubtfire," starring Robin Williams and Sally Field, and "Nine Months" with Hugh Grant and Julianne Moore. Columbus has also directed his share of dramas, including "Only the Lonely," based on his original screenplay—which featured one of the late John Candy's best performances, and the return of legendary actress, Maureen O'Hara to the big screen. He also directed the drama "Stepmom," starring Julia Roberts and Susan Sarandon.

More recently, Columbus has directed features such as the hit film “Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief,” based on the bestselling children’s book series, and will begin producing the sequel “Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Sea of Monsters” later this year; as well as “Rent,” based on the Pulitzer Prize winning Broadway musical. As a producer, Columbus was also behind the highly successful family/adventure/comedy film, “Night at the Museum” and its sequel “Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian.”

Currently, Columbus is working on an adaptation of 2010’s Norwegian thriller, “Troll Hunter,” and recently signed a multi-project television deal with CBS. Other upcoming projects for Columbus’ 1492 include the screen adaptation of Michael Koryta’s “The Cypress House,” which Columbus will write, as well as a remake of the Korean film “Hello Ghost” and “Temple Stay” with director JK Yoon.

In Hollywood, Columbus first gained prominence by writing several original scripts produced by Steven Spielberg including the back-to-back hits “Gremlins” and “The Goonies,” which became decade-defining films that intertwined high notes of offbeat, edgy, often outrageous humor against more classic adventure-thriller backdrops. These screenwriting achievements led Columbus to directing his first feature, “Adventures in Babysitting,” starring Elisabeth Shue.

Born in Spangler, Pennsylvania, Columbus grew up outside Youngstown, Ohio where he originally aspired to be a commercial artist—spending years studying art and interested in drawing for comics. He eventually made the connection between comic books and movie storyboards and graduated from NYU’s prestigious Tisch School of the Arts where he sold his first script, “Jocks.”

MICHAEL BARNATHAN (Producer) is President of 1492 Pictures, in which he is a producing partner with Chris Columbus and Mark Radcliffe. The company was formed in May 1994.

Barnathan has served as producer on such Columbus-directed projects as “Nine Months,” “Rent,” “Stepmom,” “I Love You, Beth Cooper” and most recently “Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Lightning Thief.”

For 1492, he also produced “Jingle All the Way,” “Cheaper by the Dozen,” “Christmas with the Kranks,” “Night at the Museum” and the sequel, “Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian.”

He served as executive producer on the first three installments of the “Harry Potter” franchise: “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone,” “Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets” (both directed by Columbus) and “Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban” (which earned a BAFTA

Award as Best Children's Film and a second nomination as Best British Film), as well as "Fantastic Four" and the sequel, "Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer."

Next up, Barnathan will produce an adaptation of 2010's Norwegian thriller, "Troll Hunter," as well as a screen adaptation of Michael Koryta's "The Cypress House," which Columbus will write, and a remake of the Korean film "Hello Ghost" and "Temple Stay" with director JK Youn.

Prior to joining 1492 Pictures, Barnathan was Senior Vice President of Production at Largo Entertainment for four years. His responsibilities included supervision of both development and production of Largo's feature slate. The N.Y.U. grad (where he first met aspiring filmmaker Columbus his freshman year) served as executive producer on "Used People" and supervised such productions as "Point Break," "Dr. Giggles," "Judgment Night" and "The Getaway."

Before joining Largo, Barnathan spent seven years working for Edgar J. Scherick Associates. During his last two years with Scherick, he served as Executive Vice President of Production, producing and executive-producing numerous cable movies, telefilms and miniseries, including "The Kennedys of Massachusetts," which received eight Emmy® nominations and three Golden Globe® nods, including Best Miniseries for each.

MARK RADCLIFFE (Executive Producer) continues his long association with director Chris Columbus, which dates back to 1988 when he served as assistant director on Columbus' second directorial effort, "Heartbreak Hotel."

Since the birth of their partnership, Radcliffe has served as producer or executive producer of the Columbus-helmed pictures "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" (executive producer on both), and "Mrs. Doubtfire," "Stepmom," "Rent," "Bicentennial Man," "Nine Months" and "I Love You, Beth Cooper" (all as producer). He also produced the third installment in the "Potter" franchise, "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban," directed by Alfonso Cuarón (for which he shared a BAFTA Award as Best Children's Film and a second nomination as Best British Film).

Working together in their 1492 Pictures production entity, Radcliffe also produced "Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief," "Fantastic Four," "Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer," "Christmas with the Kranks," "Jingle All the Way," "Night at the Museum" and the hit sequel, "Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian." His producing duties began on three early Columbus triumphs—"Home Alone" (on which he also was assistant director and associate producer), "Only the Lonely" (as co-producer and assistant director), and "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (executive producer).

A native of Tulsa, Oklahoma, Radcliffe began his film career as assistant director on the Francis

Ford Coppola production “The Escape Artist,” re-teaming with Coppola on “Rumble Fish” and “Peggy Sue Got Married.” Other assistant director credits include John Hughes’ “She’s Having a Baby” and “Planes, Trains and Automobiles,” Jerry Zucker’s Oscar®-nominated 1990 hit, “Ghost,” Donald Petrie’s “Mystic Pizza” and Paul Schrader’s “Light of Day.” He also served as production manager on the 1979 film “Rock ‘n’ Roll High School.”

L. DEAN JONES JR. (Executive Producer) has enjoyed a long and auspicious career in the motion picture and television industries serving in various creative capacities. Among his most prominent feature film credits as production manager are “Body of Lies,” “Rent,” “The Matrix Revolutions,” “The Matrix Reloaded,” “The Green Mile,” “L.A. Confidential,” “Flubber” (visual effects unit), “James and the Giant Peach,” and “The Stars Fell on Henrietta.”

As an assistant director, Jones contributed his talents to such features as “Bicentennial Man,” “The Thin Red Line,” “The Hi-Lo Country,” “Sphere,” “Angels in the Outfield,” “A Perfect World,” “Wind,” “Made in America,” “Chains of Gold,” “Bird,” “The Dead Pool,” “Tucker: The Man and His Dream,” “Heartbreak Ridge,” “Pale Rider,” “City Heat,” “Tightrope” and “The Right Stuff,” among many others.

For television, Jones served as co-producer or production manager on such pilots and series as “Trauma,” “Privileged,” “Journeyman,” “The Evidence” and “Partners.”

NATE BERKUS’ (Executive Producer) professional creative career began when he joined Leslie Hindman Auctioneers. There, he developed his keen eye for decorative arts and furniture. He subsequently established his own design firm, Nate Berkus Associates and went on to achieve international recognition through appearances on “The Oprah Winfrey Show.”

Berkus has gone on to host his own popular design program on television, aptly titled, “The Nate Berkus Show.” He is the author of the New York Times best-selling book “Home Rules: Transform the Place You Live into a Place You’ll Love.” His second book will be published in 2012.

JENNIFER BLUM (Executive Producer) is a New York City native whose family hails from Tennessee. After graduating from Wellesley College, she worked as an account executive at Ogilvy & Mather for several years. She then left for the Sundance Institute in Utah where she worked on everything from fundraising for the Institute and Film Festival to helping launch the Sundance Catalog.

Her movie career started after moving to Los Angeles and briefly covering books for CAA. She was then hired as a development executive for manager/producer Larry Brezner where she worked on “Angie” and “The Vanishing.” Blum began working for 1492 Pictures in 1994, the

year the production company opened its doors. In addition to being a co-producer on “Jingle All the Way” and executive producer on “I Love You, Beth Cooper,” she has been involved in the development and production of all 1492 projects from the “Harry Potter” and “Night at the Museum” franchises to “Percy Jackson.”

JOHN NORRIS (Executive Producer) is vice president of Wyolah Films, where he is a producing partner with Tate Taylor and oversees development and production of Wyolah Film’s upcoming projects.

Prior to joining Wyolah Films, Norris was CEO and partner at Artists & Directors Cooperative for five years. His responsibilities included supervision of both development and production of all A&DC Projects. Norris served as executive producer on Sony’s “Angel of Death” and facilitated such productions as IFC’s “I Sell the Dead,” Magnolia’s “The House of the Devil,” and the upcoming “The Innkeepers.”

Before creating Artists & Directors Cooperative, Norris spent six years as the COO and Head of Business Affairs at The Aaron Sims Company, where he oversaw visual-effects production on numerous blockbusters including “Insidious,” “Clash of the Titans,” “The Day the Earth Stood Still,” “I Am Legend” and the upcoming “Rise of the Planet of the Apes.” Norris also briefly served as head of business development for Stan Winston Studios.

JEFF SKOLL (Executive Producer) is a philanthropist and social entrepreneur. As founder and chairman of the Skoll Foundation, Participant Media and the Skoll Global Threats Fund, he is bringing life to his vision of a sustainable world of peace and prosperity.

As the first full-time employee and first President of eBay, Skoll developed the company’s inaugural business plan and led its successful initial public offering. eBay has since become the world’s largest on-line marketplace, connecting hundreds of millions of buyers and sellers.

After pioneering the creation of the eBay Foundation through the allocation of pre-IPO shares, Skoll then founded the Skoll Foundation in 1999. It quickly became the world’s largest foundation for social entrepreneurship, driving large-scale change by investing in, connecting, and celebrating social entrepreneurs and other innovators dedicated to solving the world’s most pressing problems. Its flagship program, the Skoll Awards for Social Entrepreneurship, currently supports 85 leading social entrepreneurs whose extraordinary work serves the neediest populations in over 100 countries.

The Skoll Foundation also co-produces the annual Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship with the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at the Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford. The Skoll World Forum unites acclaimed social entrepreneurs with

essential partners from the social, finance, private and public sectors. Each year, the Skoll World Forum attracts 800 distinguished delegates, including such renowned world figures as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, U.S. President Jimmy Carter, the Honorable Mary Robinson, Dr. Paul Farmer, and Nobel Laureates Al Gore, Muhammad Yunus, Jody Williams and Dr. R.K. Pachauri.

In 2009, Skoll founded the Skoll Global Threats Fund. Its initial focus is on five global issues that, if unchecked, could bring the world to its knees: climate change, water scarcity, pandemics, nuclear proliferation and Middle East conflict.

Skoll founded Participant Media in 2004 with the belief that a story well told has the power to inspire and compel social change.

Participant's films are accompanied by social action and advocacy campaigns to engage people on the issues addressed in the films. Skoll has served as executive producer on over 25 films to date, which have collectively received a total of 4 Academy Awards® and 18 nominations. Participant's films include, among others, "Good Night, and Good Luck," "North Country," "Syriana," "An Inconvenient Truth," "The Kite Runner," "The Visitor," "The Informant!," "The Soloist," "The Cove," "Countdown to Zero," "Waiting for 'Superman'" and "Food, Inc." In 2008, Participant launched TakePart.com, an on-line Social Action Network™ that enables people to learn, inspire, connect and get involved in major issues that shape our lives.

Skoll received a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Toronto and an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business. He has been awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Toronto and an honorary Doctor of Public Service from Santa Clara University. Skoll's other recent honors include Barron's 25 Best Givers (2010, 2009), Huffington Post's Ultimate Game Changer in Entertainment, among the world's top 100 game changers (2010),

Environmental Media Awards Corporate Responsibility Award (2010), the Producers Guild of America's Visionary Award (2009), Global Green USA's Entertainment Industry Environmental Leadership Award (2009), Business Week's 50 Most Generous Philanthropists (2003-2007), Time magazine's 100 Most Influential People (2006), and Wired magazine's Rave Award (2006).

SONYA LUNSFORD (Co-producer) has been on the business side of film for the last twenty years. She has managed the budgets of such films as Steven Soderbergh's "Traffic," "Che: Part One," "Che: Part Two," "The Good German" and "Bubble." Her experience in accounting lent itself to producing, which she has been doing for the last five years.

Lunsford subsequently joined Brunson Green and Tate Taylor as a producing partner. Their first film together, “Pretty Ugly People,” garnered acclaim from over 35 film festivals.

STEPHEN GOLDBLATT, A.S.C., B.S.C. (Director of Photography) is a two-time Oscar® nominee. He has worked frequently with such directors as Mike Nichols (“Charlie Wilson’s War,” “Angels in America,” “Closer”), Joel Schumacher (“Batman and Robin,” “Batman Forever”), and the late Alan J. Pakula (“The Pelican Brief,” “Consenting Adults”).

Born and raised in South Africa, Goldblatt was educated at London’s Royal College of Art and began his career as a cameraman for documentaries and commercials. He made the transition to feature films under such directors as Tony Scott (“The Hunger”), Francis Ford Coppola (“The Cotton Club”) and Richard Donner (“Lethal Weapon I & II”).

Among his other film credits are “Julie and Julia,” “Return of the Soldier,” “Young Sherlock Holmes,” “For the Boys,” “The Prince of Tides,” “The Deep End of the Ocean,” and “Rent.” His work will next Oscar® be seen in “Percy Jackson.” He received his nominations for “Batman Forever” and “The Prince of Tides.”

MARK RICKER (Production Designer) most recently designed the soon to be released “Conviction,” for director Tony Goldwyn. His other production design credits include “Julie and Julia,” “You Don’t Know Jack,” “The Accidental Husband” “The Nanny Diaries,” and “The Hoax.” In addition, he also served as production designer on “Prime,” “Fierce People,” “The Ballad of Jack Rose,” “Sunshine State,” “Thirteen Conversations About One Thing,” “Famous,” “Fever,” “Julie Johnson,” “Better Living,” “Walking to the Waterline,” and “Harvest.”

As an art director, Ricker contributed to the designs of Sweetland Films’ “Just Looking” (Jason Alexander’s directorial debut), “Montana,” “A Brooklyn State of Mind,” Hallmark’s “Prince Charming” and Dan Sullivan’s film adaptation of “The Substance of Fire.” Additional art department film credits include “Catch Me If You Can,” “The Shipping News,” “Far From Heaven,” “Kate & Leopold,” “The Thomas Crown Affair,” “Big Daddy,” “The Out-of--Townners,” “The Last of the Mohicans,” “Once Around” and “Passion Fish.”

Ricker studied English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has an MFA in scenic and production design from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts.

SHAREN DAVIS (Costume Designer) has twice been nominated for the Academy Award — first for “Ray” in 2004 and then for “Dreamgirls” in 2006. She is a frequent collaborator with actor Denzel Washington, having worked with him on five films, most recently on the post-apocalyptic “The Book of Eli.”

Davis' other credits include "Middle Men," "Seven Pounds," "The Great Debaters," "The Pursuit of Happyness," "Akeelah and the Bee," "Beauty Shop," "Out of Time," "Antwone Fisher," "High Crimes," "Double Take," "Nutty Professor II: The Klumps," "Rush Hour," "Doctor Dolittle," "Money Talks," "Devil in a Blue Dress," "Earth 2" (TV series), "Younger and Younger" and "Equinox."