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A Lee Kirk film

THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN

Written and Directed by Lee Kirk

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Select Theatrical Release

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375 Greenwich Street

New York, NY 10011

TRIBECA FILM:

Jennifer Holiner

212-941-2038

jholiner@tribecafilm.com

ID PR:

Lafilm@id-pr.com

Nyfilm@id-pr.com

FEATURING

JENNA FISCHER *as Janice*

CHRIS MESSINA *as Tim*

MALIN AKERMAN *as Jill*

LUCY PUNCH *as Pauline*

RICH SOMMER *as Brian*

BOB ODENKIRK *as Mark*

And

TOPHER GRACE *as Doug*

MUSIC BY..... RICH RAGSDALE
MUSIC SUPERVISOR..... PATRICK BELTON
..... SANAZ LAVAEDIAN
PRODUCTION DESIGNER PAULETTE GEORGES
EDITOR..... ROBERT KOMATSU
COSTUME DESIGNER..... MONA MAY
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DOUG EMMETT
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BRENT STIEFEL
..... MICHAEL COWAN
..... MICHAEL GALLANT
..... TIM NARDELLI
..... MIKE ILITCH, JR.
..... GLENN P. MURRAY
PRODUCED BY..... MOLLY HASSELL
..... JENNA FISCHER
..... MICHAEL NARDELLI
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY..... LEE KIRK

SYNOPSIS

THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN is a charming comedic love story between Janice (Jenna Fischer), a woman in her 30's who has yet to learn how to navigate adulthood, and Tim (Chris Messina), a devoted artist who finds that his unique talents as a silver-painted street performer don't exactly pay the bills. Evicted from her apartment and forced to move in with her overbearing sister (Malin Akerman), Janice is on the receiving end of well-intentioned but misguided pressure to date an egotistical self-help guru (Topher Grace). Everyone seems to know what's best for Janice, but Tim helps her find her own voice and realize that it only takes one person to make you feel important. As a symbol of the urge to break free from a life defined for us, THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN brings forward an optimism and feeling of belonging that can only come from falling in love.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT FROM LEE KIRK

The initial seeds for THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN were planted years ago when I was living in Chicago. The city was dotted with tiny storefront theaters and galleries, each filled with artists peddling their own particular brand of theater, from absurdist to minimalist to post-modern. Occasionally these avant-garde performances spilled out onto the street, and one could stumble upon a sad tramp wandering down the sidewalk, performing in a production of *Waiting for Godot*, followed by a small audience.

When I started to get to know these artists, I realized that they took their performances very seriously. And yet, as much as they tried to communicate their particular vision to the world, few people seemed to notice. I remember thinking about an artist's resolve, and what drives them to keep at the struggle, day in and day out, year after year.

"What if only one person understands your art?"

This was the question I posed when I began writing the script. And in doing so, the most important character for me to create was this "one person." I wanted someone who on the surface seemed ordinary and forgettable, the kind of person you pass on the street and wouldn't notice, but upon closer inspection is every bit as vibrant and complicated as the rest of us. She is the other half of the story, someone who needs to receive the artist's message as much as the artist needs to send it, and her journey is where the true emotion of the story lies. From here, the film evolved into a love story.

The movie was originally conceived to be set in Chicago. I had always imagined seeing the characters walking down State Street and working at the Lincoln Park Zoo. But when reality set in, our modest budget meant we couldn't afford to shoot in Chicago. So we decided to shoot in the only city we could afford: Detroit. This meant retooling the script and making the city unspecific, simply an American city. With an incredible cast and crew, we made the film in nineteen days in the middle of a cold and dreary December. And although the story is not set in Detroit, I was surprised to find how well the city leant itself to the film. It's a grayish city with spirit, much like the mechanical man.

ABOUT THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN

When writer/director Lee Kirk lived in Chicago, he kept noticing street performers—eventually he became curious about their lives and the metaphor behind a man bronzed in silver who doesn't move, except for when money is dropped in hat for him. After moving to Los Angeles and struggling to find work as an actor, Kirk began a career as a screenwriter. Looking to produce and star in a project that she could develop from the ground up, Jenna Fischer began meeting with several writers to take story ideas, passing on all of them until Kirk pitched her THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN. "He said he'd always been curious about the people who stand out on the street and perform as a mechanical man," said Fischer. "He was interested in people who were clearly born with a skill that was maybe not commercial, but that they still felt compelled to do."

"When Jenna got interested in the idea, I started exploring who the other character was—who was this woman that was responding to the street performer," said Kirk. "And then I became interested in exploring how we define ourselves. It seems like so much self identity is defined by what we do—what our jobs are—and so I wanted to ask if there are other ways for this woman to realize herself."

Intrigued by the story, Fischer hired Kirk to write the screenplay. Over the next year, a real life story developed which, in a way, mirrored the romance on the page. "Jenna and I began working together and seeing a lot of each other to talk about the film," said Kirk. "But pretty soon we were just planning meetings as an excuse to see each other. We were meeting to talk about our film over things like dinner or the movies."

"This film is how our real-life relationship got started," said Fischer. "It's been a part of our lives for a long time and it's really special to us. It has been four years since our first meeting. We joke that it was easier to fall in love, get married and have a baby, than it was to get an independent film made in Hollywood."

True to Fischer's words, the making of the film did not happen overnight, or without its share of turns and challenges. The film seemed close to fruition a couple of times, but they soon found that the economy combined with changes in the business of the industry had films set at being made for either \$20 million or for nothing. "It was right at the heart of 2008, the worst time to try and get funding for a movie," said Kirk. "The movie kept getting built up, then falling apart."

Around this time, Chris Messina read the script. "Chris was an integral part of this film coming together. He came to us and expressed a real passion for the project, and we started talking about how to get this film made for less money," said Kirk. At the same time, Topher Grace read the script and responded to the role of the motivational speaker. "He said he'd always wanted to play a motivational speaker, which we instantly thought was a funny choice," Fischer says. "We went out to dinner and he did some imitations of motivational speakers he'd seen on TV and was so funny, that we knew it was a brilliant decision to give him the role of Doug Duncan." Casting was rounded out with Malin Akerman playing 'Jill' and Rich Sommer playing her husband 'Brian'.

"At this point of casting and getting financing, I'm thinking I should try to direct it, and we should try to get it made for less money. Being a first time director, I knew nobody would let me

make it for seven or eight million, but I was pretty sure I had a shot if we made it for under a million,” said Kirk. “And so very quickly after we made that decision, we rallied people together and got the movie off the ground, and eventually made the film for around \$900K.”

Even though they had reduced the budget significantly, the challenge to secure timely financing almost derailed the film. They had a small window in December where the cast was all available and, as of November 1, still hadn’t closed the financing. So they took a leap of faith and financed pre-production out of their own money. “That was a little scary, but Lee knew he had to get started in Detroit if we were going to start shooting December first,” says Fischer. “So we crossed our fingers and paid for the first two weeks of pre-production with our credit cards, with the hope that when financing was secured, we would be paid back. I went online and booked plane tickets for Lee, our DP, First A.D. and Line Producer. I put them up at a hotel in Detroit, rented a car and held my breath. Luckily, it worked out.”

The film stayed on track, and was shot in the middle of winter. “That couldn’t have been a bigger gift to the film because it added to the story,” said Fischer. “You realize how desperate these two people are for work when they wind up working outdoors at a zoo in the dead of winter. So it lent itself to being a very realistic job option for people who couldn’t find work otherwise.”

THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN was filmed in Detroit over 19 days. “I had written the film to be set in Chicago because I knew Chicago from having gone to school there, but we just couldn’t afford to shoot in Chicago,” said Kirk. “My goal was to shoot a city to look like Chicago or New York. There’s such beautiful architecture in Detroit—I wanted it to look like an older city and Detroit lent itself to that.”

But rather than identify the city, Kirk kept the location vague. “I liked keeping it as just an American city, because it added a fairy tale aspect to it—once upon a time, we were in this city—and because it’s not defined, it adds a little bit of question as to where this could have taken place.”

Both Kirk and Fischer were grateful by how wonderful the people of Detroit were while they were shooting. “Everyone was so supportive. The folks at the Zoo gave us access to the most beautiful locations and helped us work the animals into the different shots. Everywhere we went people were friendly.” Fischer recalls a day when she, Malin, Topher and Rich went into a tiny record store and the person behind the counter was shocked to see them all. “This gal was so confused as the four of us walked in the door one by one,” said Fischer. “I was the last to walk in and I watched her glance up after each one of us came in and every time her eyes got so big. She couldn’t figure out why we were all there in the same place at the same time. It must have been very surreal. And then she helped me pick out some kick ass records!”

With several films recently shot in Detroit, Kirk felt he had a great local crew supporting production of the film. “The crews really run deep,” said Kirk. “They were really talented and tireless.” Fischer continues, “The people there were great, had a lot of heart.” Because it was a small production, people got really close and it became like kind of a summer camp experience.”

The cast also bonded while living at the same hotel, waking up every morning for breakfast and then going up to a room to get their hair and makeup done. “Our hotel room was basically our trailer and then we had a hotel room for hair and makeup and wardrobe,” said Fischer. “The hotel was a little isolated, so the hotel bar was really the only place to hang out.”

Producer Molly Hassell was brought on to serve as lead producer on the project. “To make a film with our budget we needed Molly’s expertise, and it was her idea to shoot in Detroit,” said Kirk. “She had filmed in the city and knew so many contacts there—she just knew how to navigate through it all the way to post production. She was instrumental in the making of the film and we were very fortunate to have her on board.”

“This was my first time producing,” said Fischer. “Molly was very patient with me, let me ask lots of questions, and basically guided me through the whole process. I learned that there is so much that goes into making a film before the actor steps on set that I didn’t know before. The truth is, I probably slowed her down! But she was awesome. I owe her a lot.”

Fischer continues, “We also had another producer, Michael Nardelli who was instrumental in bringing together our financing. He had some great Detroit contacts as well. We were a great team. I have this awesome photo of us from the set where we posed in our most common form of producing: I’m pretending to be stressed about budget, Michael is watching the monitor, and Molly is laughing at both of us while typing on her Blackberry.”

This also being Kirk’s first film, there were a lot of things he was learning along the way with the help of cinematographer Doug Emmett. “Doug was recommended by Chris Messina, they had done a couple of films together, and we met six weeks before shooting,” said Kirk. “We worked really well together. I was lucky to have him. He’s a huge talent.” The budget was small so the two had to share a hotel room for the start of pre-production. “Doug slept on the pull out couch in my room for the first week. When Jenna got there, we got him his own room.” Fischer adds, “We got so lucky with Doug. He and Lee were so prepared when shooting began. And they had to be. We only had 19 days to shoot the movie. I still can’t believe everything those two were able to do in only 19 days!”

For the film, Kirk wanted the score to elicit a melancholy but also at times be uplifting and expansive. “I had a vision of a guitar based indie rock type of score, and I was hoping to get great bands like Mogwai, Explosions in the Sky and Pinback in the film. Luckily they were kind enough to allow us to use their songs for next to nothing, which went with the spirit of the film,” said Kirk. “It’s really exciting to have all of these great bands contributing their songs, and adding a nice textured layer to the film.” Kirk adds, “And then Rich Ragsdale rounded out the music with a truly great score.” The music was an especially exciting element for Fischer. “It was my job to contact all of the bands and, well, basically beg them for their songs. But now I email with like Great Northern and Dios Malos and Pompeii. It’s pretty freaking cool.”

Though the film is thought provoking and affecting with the struggles people face as they come to terms with how their lives have turned out, Fischer describes the film as a love story. “It’s not the typical love story though because you kind of know from the beginning that these two characters are perfect for one another. It’s not a movie about will they fall in love. It’s a movie about how they fall in love,” says Fischer. “They’re trying hard to overcome their own fears,

anxieties and insecurities about falling in love. And I think that's so much more realistic because, sadly, that's usually what keeps us from love in life."

In a film that Kirk describes as, "two lost people finding themselves in a city"—THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN gives the hope that life can, when you least expect it, bring you to the one person that can help you feel like you belong.

Q&A WITH WRITER/DIRECTOR LEE KIRK AND PRODUCER JENNA FISCHER

Jenna, talk about working with Lee as a director.

Jenna: He was so amazing to work with. Lee's gift is recognizing and drawing out other people's talents and that's what a good director does. He makes you feel so proud of the work that you've done and I watched him work that way with the entire cast and crew. He had their trust, and loyalty. He also was able to handle the stress and demands of all of the different elements of moviemaking so well, and kept such a great atmosphere on set.

How do you both see the character of Janice? Describe her.

Lee: To me, Janice is like a tourist. It's like she just landed in the city and doesn't really have a job that she clings to, doesn't really have a lot of friends, she's just sort of drifting through and trying to find something to hold on to. Those around her are worried, because they feel she should be on a certain track by now. It's the "go to college, get a job, get married, buy a house, have kids" path that, if you're somehow not on, people think there's something wrong with you. So her family is worried, and I think she's a little worried too, and trying to seek her place in the world. She feels lost, like she doesn't speak the language, which is perhaps why she spends her time watching silent movies. She needs to learn to speak up for herself, to ask for what she wants.

Jenna: There's nothing wrong with Janice, except for what everybody thinks is wrong with Janice. But she starts thinking there is something wrong with her because society is telling her that she has to be something, or do something—but the truth is she's a good person, she's a good friend and sister. She's simple, and I'd say she's ordinary—but that's a compliment. I think there's a saying I heard that goes something like, "We strive to be extraordinary because we fear we are less than average. To embrace the ordinary is to find true peace."

Tell us a bit about the character of Tim Tucker, who is also the Mechanical Man, and what Chris Messina brought to it.

Jenna: Tim Tucker is a starving artist. A street performer who paints himself silver and even though he's only making a few bucks, stands outside waiting to do his art for anyone who takes notice. Chris is amazing. He brought something special to the role, because he was brooding and manly and made Tim feel like a real person. He's also one of those relentless actors who never stops working, never wants to stop exploring. He goes above and beyond and is incredibly giving. On set one day I was having a hard time with this monologue, and it was freezing cold. We offered to have someone stand in, in a jacket for him, but he stayed standing off camera, without a coat on in silver paint because he felt it would help me deliver my monologue better. And it did. I also remember he had this idea for a scene, of walking through these Christmas lights all sort of strung about the trees, because he thought it would look great. We had about

two more hours of shooting something else, and told him it was a great idea, but that we understood he'd probably not want to wait around. But he did. He sat in a van for two hours so that he could walk through this park because he felt it would be a great scene and was so inspired to make it happen. I loved working with him. Working with Chris reminded me of my early days doing theater. He's very artistic and hardworking. Oh, and then there is the day that he had off when he joined the crew and worked as a camera assistant all day. It was amazing. It was a show of support with the crew that was so inspiring. I probably would have taken a hot bath and several naps and told people to leave me alone if I had a day off. But not Chris, he joined the crew for the entire day!

Lee: Chris is always seeking the truth, whatever role he's playing. He loves to create and be a part of the process. He puts his entire self into his work. While shooting, he was always curious about how the day went, he'd always come to me wanting to watch the dailies, and would have endless ideas. Chris was just really excited about the film, and it would not have been made without his passion.

As for his character Tim, he's a starving artist, and a bit of a dreamer, perhaps he walks to the beat of a slightly different drum. But this doesn't stop him from being a good man with integrity and heart. He's a guy who has a peculiar and specific talent, which I think he feels he must somehow share with the world. He's a struggling guy who is trying to figure where he fits in, while not sacrificing his personal creative identity. Unfortunately, society is not in a desperate need of a mechanical man. But I believe the world needs people like him, individuals who have a particular vision and imagination. And he's searching for that person who understands and appreciates him and his art, which ultimately turns out to be Janice.

Janice's sister, Jill—she seems to have her life all figured out and is trying to help Janice's life to mirror her own. Talk about her character and her husband, Brian.

Lee: Malin Akerman plays Jill, and her character is pretty much the antagonist in the film, in that Janice has to learn to stand up to her and speak her mind. We were so lucky to have Malin join the film; she's a terrific talent and had a great attitude, and she's really funny. She usually gave me exactly what I needed on the first take, but on the times when I needed to give her a bit of direction, she would immediately deliver, seamlessly. Not to mention she's beautiful, which was one of the important traits of Jill. Because while she relentlessly gives life advice to Janice, the truth is, Jill doesn't have much life experience. The fact is, because of her beauty, life has been simple for her. But her heart is in the right place. Rich Sommer, I've been a friend of his for a while, and he gives a superb performance. I had just finished the script when I met him, and I knew he had to play the role. He perfectly captures the really honest guy who means well, and who's just trying to help out his sister-in-law. He just fit that role so well. Both of those characters, Jill and Brian—they are good people who mean well. They want to help Janice out, but they don't know how to.

Jenna: Everyone assumes Jill is older than Janice, because of how she has her life together, and is always in control. Jill lives like an adult, while Janice still kind of lives like a college student. Malin could deliver some pretty biting stuff but still with a smile and she really made it feel like they were real sisters. That's how sisters talk to each other. I love it that the first time they speak to each other they're just both annoyed with one another. With just the tone of their voice you know this is a sister on the other end of the phone, not a friend. There's

history. Malin and Rich Sommer, who plays her husband, had a great comedic chemistry that was really important for the film.

Part of Jill and Brian's efforts to help Janice, is setting her up with motivational speaker, Doug Duncan, played by Topher Grace. Talk about his character.

Jenna: I love Topher. We bonded many years ago after I did a guest spot on "That 70s Show." I've literally been dying to work with him again ever since. He doesn't know it but I've tried to weasel my way in to a number of his other movies. I finally had to produce one of my own to get to work with him! Topher really brought a tragedy and humanity to what is basically the broader comic relief of the film. He's so funny, but it's not over the top, and I feel like a lot of actors would have had a hard time showing that kind of restraint. Doug isn't a bad guy, he's treating Janice nicely, but he's just super self-absorbed and annoying and it just makes it more depressing because she doesn't have a lot of options. He kind of breaks your heart at the same time he's making you laugh. Janice is sort of a project to him, like he's the expert and she's the novice. That's the type of woman he goes for because he likes that dynamic and I think he's also a bit scared of having a real intimate loving relationship with an equal. So he picks this person that he thinks is a little bit needy of him.

Lee: Topher really knew this character, and only brought more highlights to this guy. The sweaters he wears, those are all Topher's sweaters that he thought would look great for the character. His mom would give him a sweater every year for Christmas and he kept them all, and brought them all up to Detroit for the movie. It was hilarious. Topher was just so great, so funny, and he looked forward to that big scene at the convention, where he does his speech. He had a blast with that. Topher is a very detailed actor, he crafts his performance meticulously, and his timing is perfect. He's very funny in the film.

Lee, you mentioned that there were metaphors in the film, especially with the zoo. Could you explain that?

Lee: As I got into the script and developed the Janice character, I started to realize the metaphor that the mechanical man provides. That of the lifeless man, the statue, who only moves when he is given money. And yet even when he moves, it's very methodical and without much freedom. I think that's how Janice sees her life, and that's why the mechanical man resonates in her. Her existence feels empty and lifeless, and when she sees this strange sight, an eight foot tall silver man dressed in a sort of business suit, it's striking. She's moved by the sight. And then with the zoo, the image of these animals caged up and sitting there—these beautiful animals sitting in cages, staring out at life. I think Tim and Janice might feel the same way about their lives, and even their jobs in the zoo, they're sort of in the same type of cage. Without being too heavy-handed, I was hoping these metaphors might resonate with the viewer on some level.

What do you feel helped you make this film a possibility?

Lee: The talent that we were able to attract, from the actors to the producers, cinematographer and the amazing crew in Detroit. I have to say it's everyone's great attitude in making the film. There were a lot of constraints on us, but it forced us to come together and be creative. Everyone rose to the occasion. To have everyone be so enthusiastic and supportive everyday meant so much to me. I'm very grateful for the experience.

BIOS

JENNA FISCHER (Janice and Producer)

For eight seasons, Jenna Fischer has won rave reviews from fans and critics for her role as Pam Beesley, on NBC's hit comedy, "The Office." In 2007, Fischer earned her first Emmy nomination for Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series for her critically acclaimed work on "The Office."

On the big screen, Fischer starred in Michael Weithorn's A LITTLE HELP opposite Chris O'Donnell and Rob Benedict as well as the Farrelly Brother's HALL PASS with Christina Applegate, Owen Wilson and Jason Sudeikis. Other film credits include SOLITARY MAN with Michael Douglas, Susan Sarandon and Danny DeVito, WALK HARD: THE DEWEY COX STORY with John C. Reilly and the Dreamworks hit figure skating comedy, BLADES OF GLORY, with Jon Heder, Will Ferrell, and Amy Poehler.

In 2004 she was awarded the Screen Actors Guild Emerging Actor Award at the St. Louis Film Festival.

CHRIS MESSINA (Tim)

Chris Messina is a busy film, television and stage actor. His upcoming films to be released in 2012 include HE LOVES ME with Paul Dano and Zoe Kazan in director's Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris's follow up film to LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE, which will be released by Fox Searchlight. He also co-stars in director Ben Affleck's ARGO alongside Ben Affleck, John Goodman and Bryan Cranston for Warner Bros. In the independent film CELESTE AND JESSE FOREVER which will premiere at Sundance 2012, he co-stars with Andy Samberg and Rashida Jones (who also starred in last years' MONOGAMY with Chris). Also at Sundance, Chris will be seen in TWENTY EIGHT HOTEL ROOMS, co-starring with Marin Ireland and directed by Matt Ross.

Chris co-starred on the fourth season of Glenn Close's television show "Damages" this past year, garnering critical praise for his role as a former U.S. soldier with post traumatic stress disorder. That season featured co-stars John Goodman and Dylan Baker. Chris is currently shooting the fifth season which will premiere in June of 2012. He is also currently co-starring on Aaron Sorkin's show "Newsroom" for HBO that will debut this year with Jeff Daniels and Emily Mortimer.

His recent credits include MONOGAMY with Rashida Jones that won the Best New York narrative award at the Tribeca Film Festival directed by Dana Adam Shapiro and Universal's DEVIL produced by M. Night Shyamalan and directed by John and Drew Dowdle. He also starred in Nora Ephron's JULIE & JULIA alongside Meryl Streep and Amy Adams, and in Woody Allen's Golden Globe winning VICKY CHRISTINA BARCELONA with Javier Bardem and Penelope Cruz. Other credits include Noah Baumbach's GREENBERG, the Sam Mendes directed AWAY WE GO and Alan Ball's TOWELHEAD.

Messina came to national attention in 2005 during the final season of HBO's acclaimed series "Six Feet Under," in which he was cast opposite Lauren Ambrose. He drew further notice as Ira in the popular indie romance IRA AND ABBY, co-starring Jennifer Westfeldt, and in 2007 was listed as one of *Variety's* "Ten Actors to Watch."

Messina started his career on the New York stage. He appeared on Broadway with Al Pacino and Marisa Tomei in Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, and starred opposite Frances McDormand under the direction of Stephen Daldry in New York Theatre Workshop's production of Caryl Churchill's *Far Away*. Other notable stage appearances include *Blur* (Manhattan Theater Club), *Good Thing* (The New Group), Adam Rapp's *Faster, This Thing of Darkness* (Atlantic Theatre Company), and Frank Pugliese's *Late Night, Early Morning*, which premiered at the Tribeca Theatre Festival and went on to win the Jury Award for Best Theatre at the 2005 Aspen Comedy Festival.

MALIN AKERMAN (Jill)

Named one of Variety's "10 Actors to Watch" in 2007, Malin has since been tearing up Hollywood with her beauty, charisma, and moxie. The Swedish-Canadian actress, best known for her sharp comedic timing and cover-girl good looks, has also wowed audiences with her touching dramatic performances.

At the 2011 Tribeca Film Festival, Akerman shared the screen with Ryan Philippe and Taylor Kitsch in Steven Silver's film *THE BANG BANG CLUB*. The drama premiered at the 2010 Toronto International Film Festival and is based on the true-life experiences of four combat photographers capturing the final days of South African apartheid.

In February 2012, Malin will join Paul Rudd and Jennifer Aniston for the Judd Apatow-produced comedy *WANDERLUST*.

She recently wrapped production on Simon West's *MEDALLION*, starring alongside Nicolas Cage and Danny Huston. She is also slated to star in *INFERNO*, the Linda Lovelace biopic, and will be seen singing alongside Tom Cruise in the musical adaptation of the Broadway hit *Rock of Ages* set to hit theatres summer 2012.

In March 2011, Akerman was seen in theaters nationwide in the 2010 Sundance Film Festival Audience-Award-Winner *HAPPYTHANKYOUMOREPLEASE*. She joined Kate Mara, Zoe Kazan, and Josh Radnor in Radnor's directorial debut. As Annie—a woman struggling with alopecia—Akerman gives "one of the most genuine and heartfelt performances from this year" (Erik Davis, *Fandango*). Also in March, Malin appeared in Sebastian Gutierrez's fun and sexy *ELEKTRA LUX*, which premiered at the 2010 SXSW Festival.

In September 2010, Malin starred in the charming indie rom-com *THE ROMANTICS*, directed by Galt Niederhoffer. *THE ROMANTICS* also premiered at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival and co-stars Katie Holmes, Anna Paquin, Josh Duhamel, Adam Brody, and Elijah Wood.

In October 2009, Malin was seen in the Peter Billingsley-directed hit comedy *COUPLES RETREAT* opposite Vince Vaughn, Kristen Bell, Jason Bateman and Jon Favreau. In March of the same year, she co-starred as Laurie/Silk Spectre in Zack Snyder's blockbuster *WATCHMEN* which opened at number one with more than \$50 million in box office sales. She was nominated for a Teen Choice Award for this role.

In 2008, Akerman starred in the hit romantic comedy *27 DRESSES*, with Katherine Heigl, James Marsden and Edward Burns, under the direction of Anne Fletcher. Akerman recently reunited with Fletcher to join Sandra Bullock and Ryan Reynolds in the romantic comedy *THE PROPOSAL*,

which also topped the box office after its debut and has grossed more than \$100 million to date.

In 2007, Akerman could be seen alongside Ben Stiller in the comedy *THE HEARTBREAK KID*, directed by the Farrelly brothers. She is often remembered her delightful portrayal of wacky nut job Lila in this cult-classic. Akerman's other credits include *HAROLD AND KUMAR GO TO WHITE CASTLE* and *THE BROTHERS SOLOMON*.

Despite her wide-ranging experience with feature films, Akerman is also no stranger to the small screen. Her breakthrough came in 2005 on the HBO series "The Comeback," starring Lisa Kudrow as a washed up sitcom actress. Akerman gained the attention of both critics and audiences for her role Juna Millken, a popular model/musician who befriends Kudrow's character as she tries to resuscitate her career. Akerman also had a memorable recurring role on the third season of HBO's hit series "Entourage." She was recently seen in a special episode of "How I Met Your Mother" and graces TV screens while co-starring in the second season of Adult Swim's "Children's Hospital"—a hilarious medical-drama parody.

Born in Stockholm, Sweden, Akerman moved to Toronto, Canada at the age of two. By age five, she had already begun to model and act in television commercials, and at 17, she won the "Ford Supermodel of Canada" search. After attending college as a psychology major, Akerman relocated to California to focus on acting. It was here where Akerman met her drummer husband Roberto while performing as the lead singer of the alternative rock band The Petalstones. The two currently reside in Los Angeles.

LUCY PUNCH (Pauline)

Lucy Punch most recently starred alongside Cameron Diaz, Jason Segel and Justin Timberlake in Columbia Pictures' *BAD TEACHER*, in Paramount Pictures' *DINNER FOR SCHMUCKS* with Steve Carell and Paul Rudd, in Woody Allen's *YOU WILL MEET A TALL DARK STRANGER* with Naomi Watts, Anthony Hopkins, and Josh Brolin, and *A LITTLE BIT OF HEAVEN*, alongside Kate Hudson, Kathy Bates, and Gael Garcia Bernal. Lucy will next be seen in *YELLOW*, written and directed by Nick Cassavetes.

Punch began her feature film career working opposite Geoffrey Rush in 2004's *THE LIFE AND DEATH OF PETER SELLERS*. This was followed by the family fantasy, *ELLA ENCHANTED*, with Anne Hathaway. In 2006, Punch was chosen as the British Shooting Star by the Berlin Film Festival for her work in *BEING JULIA* opposite Annette Bening and Jeremy Irons. She has also appeared in *ST. TRINIAN'S* and Edgar Wright's British action comedy *HOT FUZZ*. Punch also worked with Topher Grace and Anna Faris in Universal Pictures' *YOUNG AMERICANS* and starred in the musical dramedy *UNTITLED* alongside Adam Goldberg and Marley Shelton.

Punch has also appeared in numerous television series in the UK such as "Days Like These," "Doc Martin," and "Let Them Eat Cake." She made her West End debut as Elaine Robinson in *The Graduate*, directed by Terry Johnson. In 2007, Punch returned to TV in the CBS comedy "The Class" alongside Lizzy Caplan, Jason Ritter and Jesse Tyler Ferguson. In October of 2010 she starred in the three-part mini-series "Vexed" for BBC opposite Toby Stevens.

Punch was born and raised in London, England. She divides her time between London and Los Angeles.

RICH SOMMER (Brian)

Rich Sommer stars as 'Harry Crane' on AMC's critically acclaimed show "Man Men." Set in 1960s New York, the provocative AMC drama follows the lives of the ruthlessly competitive men and women of Madison Avenue advertising.

Along with his cast, Sommer won two SAG Awards for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series. The show has won multiple Emmy and Golden Globe Awards for Best Drama.

Sommer made his feature film debut as Anne Hathaway's drinking buddy 'Doug' in THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA. He recently completed work on the feature film FAIRHAVEN opposite Sarah Paulson and Chris Messina. He has appeared in some of television's most popular series, including a recurring role on "The Office," "Curb Your Enthusiasm," "Law & Order," "CSI," "Nikita," "Ugly Betty" and "Burn Notice." Sommer can next be seen in the Broadway revival of *Harvey* opposite "The Big Bang Theory" star Jim Parsons and Broadway vets Carol Kane, Charles Kimbrough, and Jessica Hecht.

A student, performer and teacher of improvisation, he received his training and experience with The Brave New Workshop in Minneapolis and the Upright Citizens Brigade in New York. He received his Bachelor's Degree in Theatre Arts from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN and went on to study at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH, where he received his Master of Fine Arts Degree in Acting.

Sommer has two children with his wife, Virginia.

BOB ODENKIRK (Mark)

Bob has won Emmy's for comedy writing for the TV shows "Saturday Night Live," "The Ben Stiller Show," and co-created and starred in "Mr. Show" with Bob and David, which has been called "the American Monty Python," and which ran on HBO for 4 years.

Since "Mr. Show" finished production he has written and directed quite a few short films and TV pilots, including "The Near Future," "Derek & Simon", and "David's Situation" all at HBO; "Highway To Oblivion" at Comedy Central, and "NEXT!" the innovative sketch pilot for FOX.

In 2003 Bob directed the independent feature MELVIN GOES TO DINNER. The low-budget feature went on to win numerous awards at festivals, had successful independent theatrical distribution, ran on Sundance Channel and Showtime, and has been released on *Sundance Home Entertainment* on DVD. He also directed the feature films; LET'S GO TO PRISON and THE BROTHERS SOLOMON.

Bob has had memorable roles as the agent Stevie Grant on "The Larry Sanders Show," and in many films and TV shows, but he is particularly thrilled to be a part of AMC's "Breaking Bad" in the role of Saul Goodman, a lawyer who never places his clients' interest above his own.

TOPHER GRACE (Doug)

Topher Grace, who was a weekly fixture in homes across America on the hit comedy series “That ‘70s Show,” seamlessly transitioned from the small screen to the big screen. In 2004 he was honored with Breakthrough Acting Awards by both the National Board of Review and the New York Online Film Critics for his roles in Paul Wietz’s *IN GOOD COMPANY*, starring opposite Dennis Quaid and Scarlett Johansson, and Dylan Kidd’s *P.S.*, opposite Laura Linney.

Grace was most recently seen in Michael Brandt’s thriller *THE DOUBLE* starring opposite Richard Gere. His additional recent credits include HBO’s Emmy-nominated film *TOO BIG TO FAIL* starring alongside William Hurt and Cynthia Nixon and the coming of age comedy *TAKE ME HOME TONIGHT* which he also executive produced for Relativity Media. He will next be seen in the drama/comedy *THE WEDDING* with Robert DeNiro, Diane Keaton and Katherine Heigl.

Grace’s major breakthrough in film came with his debut role in Steven Soderbergh’s Oscar nominated *TRAFFIC* which he followed-up with memorable cameos in Soderbergh’s *OCEAN’S 11* and *OCEAN’S 12*. Grace’s additional film credits include Robert Rodriguez’s thriller *PREDATORS*, Garry Marshall’s *VALENTINE’S DAY* starring opposite Anne Hathaway, Robert Luketic’s *WIN A DATE WITH TAD HAMILTON*, *MONA LISA’S SMILE* starring opposite Julia Roberts and the third installment of the *SPIDER-MAN* franchise starring opposite Tobey Maguire and Kirsten Dunst as the evil Venom.

Due to a tennis injury, Topher fell into acting in a high school performance of *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum*. Upon graduating, he moved to Los Angeles to attend USC and was asked to read for the starring role of Eric Forman on “That ‘70s Show” by a high school classmate’s parents who had seen him perform. It was his first audition.

Grace now splits his time between New York and Los Angeles.

FILMMAKERS

LEE KIRK (Writer/Director)

Lee Kirk is from Dallas, TX. A graduate of The Theater School of DePaul University, he has written numerous short films, as well as the featurette *THE MAN WHO INVENTED THE MOON*. His playwriting credits include the absurdist comedy *Sad Happy Sucker*, which was produced by Saint Ed Theater in Los Angeles. *THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN* is his directing debut. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Jenna, and their son, Weston.

MOLLY HASSELL (Producer)

Producer Molly Hassell has produced and financed over 11 critically acclaimed films to date. Hassell began her career in China where she produced Mandarin language films including *SPRING SUBWAY* starring Xu Jinglei and Gengle (distributed by MediaAsia) and the documentary with MIT entitled *FROM HUTONG TO HIGHRISE*.

From Asia, Hassell moved back to the USA and worked in commercial production prior to continuing in film production. Her credits include: The acclaimed *HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS* directed by Asia Argento starring Asia, Peter Fonda, Michael Pitt and Winona Ryder (chosen by Cannes Directors Fortnight and the Toronto FF).

Hassell also worked on the critically lauded David Mamet piece EDMOND directed by Stuart Gordon starring William H Macy, Julia Stiles and Denise Richards (shown by Telluride FF and Venice FF) and LYING directed by M Blash starring Chloe Sevigny, Jena Malone and Leelee Sobiesky (in Cannes Directors Fortnight). Hassell also worked for two years with Catfish Productions, the company which produced the Academy Award winning WALK THE LINE. More recently Hassell Produced the Sundance Award Winning BIG RIVER MAN, her first foray into the documentary feature world. Her other documentary Producer credits include National Geographic's THE SLAVE NEXT DOOR.

Hassell Executive Produced SEPARTATION CITY, a New Zealand comedy directed by Paul Middleditch starring Joel Edgerton, Rhona Mitra and Thomas Kretschmann. SEPARATION CITY released in 2009. In 2010 Hassell produced two films, the Amy Heckerling (FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH, CLUELESS) VAMPS to be theatrically distributed by Anchor Bay and THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN slated for the 2012 Tribeca Film Festival.

Hassell's upcoming slate includes the Johnny To remake EXILED which is being produced by the Hadida's at Davis Films; BECOMING MADAME MAO based on the book of the same name, a film she also penned; PARTS PER BILLION starring Rosario Dawson, Josh Hartnett and Olivia Thirlby; SANTA directed by Dan Ireland; and LOST FOR WORDS starring Allison Brie and Tom Payne. In addition to Producing Hassell has also sat on the Istanbul, IF Film Jury and has lectured on film at prestigious Universities and Festivals.

Hassell is a graduate of Stanford University and speaks multiple languages including Chinese.

MICHAEL NARDELLI (Producer)

A movie buff from birth, Michael Nardelli knew at an early age he would want to carve out a career in the entertainment industry. He began acting in school plays by age five and would submit short films that he would write, act in, produce and direct to teachers in lieu of a typical essay. His love for entertainment eventually took him to Los Angeles, where he quickly enrolled in the University of Southern California's prestigious film and theatre schools.

Nardelli created Taggart Productions in January of 2010 with the intent of producing quality, character driven films and to give many of his up and coming artist friends a platform to harvest their creative sensibilities.

In the fall of 2010, Nardelli completed post-production on ANOTHER HAPPY DAY, Taggart Productions' first co-production, which he produced alongside Celine Rattray (THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT). ANOTHER HAPPY DAY stars Demi Moore, Thomas Haden Church, Kate Bosworth, Ellen Burstyn, Ellen Barkin and George Kennedy. Several months later it was accepted as an official entry of the Sundance Film Festival's Dramatic Competition. It went on to win the Waldo Salt Award for best screenwriting for first time writer/director Sam Levinson. The film was quickly acquired by Phase 4 films and was released in November of 2011.

Immediately after wrapping ANOTHER HAPPY DAY, Nardelli began pre-production on Taggart's second project: THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN. The film stars Topher Grace, Malin Akerman, Jenna Fischer, Lucy Punch, Chris Messina and Bob Odenkirk and was directed by first time writer/director Lee Kirk. Nardelli produced THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN with *The Office's*

Jenna Fischer and Molly Hassell. The film will be an official entry in the 2012 Tribeca Film Festival, and be released by Tribeca Films in spring 2012.

In 2012, Nardelli teamed with director McG (CHARLIE'S ANGELS, TERMINATOR) to develop THE GIRL WHO CONNED THE IVY LEAGUE for actress Amanda Seyfried (MAMA MIA, DEAR JOHN, MEAN GIRLS). Based on a popular Rolling Stone article, Nardelli optioned the material and recently hired up and coming scribes Paul Schafer and Chris Vicknair to adapt (Nichol's Fellowship finalists in 2010 and creators of "Girlfriend Season", recently sold to CBS). Nardelli will produce alongside McG and Mary Viola.

Nardelli continues to pursue his dual passions: acting and producing, in Los Angeles. He can be seen in upcoming films THE COLLECTION and GRASSROOTS. As a student of the famed comedy troupe *The Groundlings* (breeding ground for SNL vets such as Will Ferrell and Kristen Wiig), Nardelli is also tapped into budding comedic writers and performers. He hopes his production company Taggart Productions can continue to create rewarding creative experiences that result in powerful, moving stories like THE GIANT MECHANICAL MAN.