



Tribeca Film in Partnership with American Express presents

# JANIE JONES

*“Inspired by the true story of director/writer David M. Rosenthal”*

International Premiere Toronto Film Festival 2010  
US Premiere Tribeca Film Festival 2011

**Theatrical Release:**

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## **JANIE JONES**

### **Synopsis**

Rocker Ethan Brand (Alessandro Nivola) and his band are on the comeback trail when a former flame (Academy Award® nominee Elisabeth Shue) drops a bomb in his lap: their 13-year-old daughter, Janie Jones (Academy Award® nominee Abigail Breslin).

Ethan refuses to believe Janie is his kid, but when her mom suddenly leaves for rehab, the child has no place to go but into the tour bus and on the road with the band. With no feel for fatherhood, Ethan continues his hard-living ways, giving Janie a crash course of the not-so-glamorous life on the road.

As Ethan's self-destructive spiral threatens the group's future, his band members desert him one by one, until he and Janie are left alone. Desperate to finish the tour and revive his career, Ethan stays on the road as a solo act with Janie in tow, where her surprising musical talents help guide him down the rocky road to redemption.

Nivola and Breslin naturally embrace their musical characters—both actually sing and perform in the film—while developing Ethan and Janie's relationship in a refined way to delicately express the emotional needs of the characters. Writer/director David M. Rosenthal, who was inspired by his own experiences, blends the musical setting with road trip movie elements that add subtle layers to the dynamic of his two main characters.

## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

*He's in love with rock 'n' roll...*

*He's in love with Janie Jones.*

From "Janie Jones"

The Clash

The inspiration for JANIE JONES, the story of a man who discovers he has a teenage daughter he's never met, came from a source very close to writer and director David M. Rosenthal—his own life. At the age of 18, Rosenthal fathered a child but didn't meet her until 11 years later.

"Her mother was 26," he says. "Our families were friends and we ended up having a fling. Then I got a call from her during my freshman year in college telling me that she was pregnant and that she intended to have the baby, but she wanted to keep what had happened a secret. She was telling everyone in her family that she had been artificially inseminated and it was really important to her that I keep up that story. I was stunned and unprepared and immature. I said fine because I didn't know what else to do."

Rosenthal kept their secret for nine years, trying to keep track of his daughter from a distance. "It ate away at me the entire time," he admits. "I finally contacted her mom and told her I'd love a picture, I'd love to know her name. It was complicated because she had married and had another child, but it actually was a timely call. Our daughter was asking a lot of questions about her biological father."

Rosenthal used his experience as a jumping-off point for a different story as the film is not entirely autobiographical. "Janie's mother is not anything like my daughter's mother," he says. "And I had years to come to terms with the fact I had a daughter. When her mother sent me a package with pictures of the first 10 years of her life, I felt such profound sadness at having missed all of that, and some shame for being so reticent to be part of her life. Those feelings of regret and self-loathing worked their way into the character of Ethan."

Alessandro Nivola, who plays rock 'n' roll burn-out Ethan Brand, says that, in many ways, Rosenthal's own story gave the film additional resonance. "He brought a great deal of passion to the project, which made it really special for everyone involved."

Elizabeth Shue agrees. "It was very moving to have David telling a story drawn from his own life," she adds. "The idea of someone finding a daughter he didn't know he had is profound. How do you develop a relationship with someone you don't know, and yet is part of you? I think David's connection to the story is the reason there is so much feeling in JANIE JONES. It seems like it would be a small story, but there is so much emotion contained in it that it has become something much, much larger."

## Casting “Janie Jones”

“Everyone” includes Nivola, Shue and Abigail Breslin, who make up Janie Jones’ dysfunctional nuclear family. Nivola had just finished shooting the period film *COCO BEFORE CHANEL* and says Ethan “is more in my comfort zone. Ethan is very familiar to me. I’ve played in bands all of my life, so I know music—rock ‘n’ roll especially.”

From the beginning, Rosenthal felt it was critical that the actors playing Ethan and Janie be able to play guitar and sing. “One of the things I hate about music movies is when it’s obvious the actors are playing badly to recorded music,” he says. “It kills the whole experience for me. I’d heard Alessandro sing in *LAUREL CANYON* and I knew he played the guitar well. It was obvious that he would bring another dimension to the movie.”

Nivola felt like he was on familiar ground with his character, Ethan Brand. “Ethan is a narcissistic, drunk, indie rocker,” says Nivola. “The character is not wildly different from me. I certainly hope I’m a better person than Ethan is at the start of the movie, but it was not a demanding transformation. It was a role I could enjoy living in.”

When Ethan is confronted with a 13-year-old girl who may be his daughter, his first instinct is to bolt. But when the kid’s mother disappears, Janie, played by Abigail Breslin, hops on the tour bus. Breslin brings a potent combination of vulnerability, stoicism and optimism to the role.

“Abby is one of the best actors I’ve ever worked with, period,” says Rosenthal. “She has a preternatural gift for it. She gets right to heart of the scene instantly. If there are notes, she adjusts in a natural way. And amazingly, she can go right back to being a teenager when the scene is done.”

Breslin’s co-star jokingly says that she is the living embodiment W. C. Fields’ famous advice never to work with children or animals. “Janie is a remarkable kid and so is Abigail,” says Nivola. “She’s an extraordinary actress, both talented and smart. She can say, ‘Just give me 20 seconds,’ and she’ll be awash in tears. She’s so genuine; it makes it very easy to act with her.”

The uncanny chemistry between the two actors took some time to emerge, recalls Rosenthal. “It grew organically, just as it did with the characters. At first, there was some apprehension—we had a very short shoot and some challenging production elements. As we went along, their relationship grew on set and off. I nurtured what I could and then got out of the way. We were all blown away by the way they found their way to that relationship.”

Janie’s mother is struggling with drug addiction and needs a safe place to leave Janie while she enters rehab. “Janie has never met her dad, who is a messed up rocker guy,” says Breslin. “Her mother takes her to a club to meet her father, who doesn’t know she exists, and ditches her there. She has no place else to go, so her dad has to take her on the road with him.”

Breslin found a lot to admire in her character. “I like Janie and I love the story,” she says. “Janie’s a really brave girl and very strong throughout the movie. She finds that strength in her music. It’s where she can put all her emotion and say whatever she wants.”

It wasn’t until after Breslin agreed to do the film that she learned there is a real Janie Jones, as well as a seminal punk rock song that celebrates her. Jones was a British pop star who got caught up in a prostitution scandal in 1970s London. “I had never heard of her, but my brother Spencer is really into music,” she says. “When I told him my character was named Janie Jones, he said, ‘Oh, like the Clash song.’ I first heard the song after I had already read the script.”

Janie’s resolve comes from years of looking after her substance-abusing mother, Mary Ann, played by Academy Award® nominee Elisabeth Shue. “I had a short list of actors I wanted to play that character,” says Rosenthal. “Elisabeth was right on the top of that list. She read it and wanted to do it—I feel like we really lucked out.”

Shue takes a character that could easily have been a villain and renders her enormously sympathetic. “There are certain actors who can take an unsympathetic character and make you root for them,” says the director. “Elisabeth plays broken souls to perfection. She completely inhabits the character in way that makes you have empathy for them.”

Leaving Janie with Ethan is a last resort for Mary Anne. “I focused on her deep need to have her daughter be okay,” says Shue. “What she is does is extreme, but Mary Anne knows there is no way she can take care of Janie in the shape she’s in. Staying with her child would be even more detrimental than abandoning her.”

Committing fully to the idea that Mary Ann was acting in Janie’s best interests is what makes the character relatable, Shue believes. “A rational person can look at the situation and know it’s crazy, but Mary Ann is pretty irrational at this point and she’s afraid of what will become of Janie if she stays.”

Shue says she fell in love with the character immediately. “I love playing people who are damaged. I find people who are trying hard to overcome their circumstances and find love the best way they can extremely touching.”

It was easy for the actress to imagine what attracted Mary Ann to the rock ‘n’ roll lifestyle. “Music touches us in such a raw, sensual way,” she says. “It is incredibly seductive. I can see how it would be easy to fall in love with someone singing to you every night and writing songs about you. Even though Marianne was really more of groupie, always on the sidelines, that’s the dream.”

Although Shue’s role required only about four days shooting time, her scenes are among the film’s most intense. “To be able to play such an interesting character for a short time was great,” says Shue. “Staying in Mary Ann’s skin for a long period of time would be extremely challenging.”

Hers was the hardest role in many ways, says Nivola, particularly because the character is in crisis from the moment she appears. “Elisabeth had to come in and start at a very high emotional pitch. In the first scene she shot, she had to tell Ethan, who she is not sure even remembers her, that they have a daughter together. I was pretty blown away.”

Shue credits her co-stars with giving her the support she needed to approach the work wholeheartedly, even though she arrived on set after shooting had already begun. “I was transfixed by how available Abigail’s emotions are to her. For somebody so young to be able to access so much, seemingly so easily, is extraordinary. I can’t imagine finding that with anybody less talented than she is.

“And Alessandro is so honest,” she adds. “Tackling a scene that emotional right in front of him, I had to feel such a sense of trust. He was so present in those moments. I could look in his eyes and know he was right there. He gives so much and is so generous as an actor.”

### **The Music of “Janie Jones”**

The 14 original songs in JANIE JONES range from Ethan’s raw, rock ‘n’ roll club performances to the sweet and soulful ballads with which Janie consoles herself. Award-winning Irish singer and songwriter Gemma Hayes created Janie’s evocative music. “I didn’t want the same songwriter for Janie and Ethan,” says Rosenthal. “They needed to have their own voices. Gemma was my first choice to write all the songs for Janie. She has the ability to write beautiful, effortless songs that seem simple but are really complex. I knew she would be able to find the voice of a young musician easily.”

Eef Barzelay of Clem Snide scored the film and wrote all of Ethan’s songs. “The movie lives and dies on the music,” says Rosenthal. “Eef has enormous range. There’s an evolution to Ethan’s music in the film. Being on the road with his daughter brings him back to something so much more simple and soulful. Once he lets go of ego-based striving to ‘make it,’ it becomes about the music.”

The music was a big part of what made Nivola want to be in the film, according to the actor. “It had to be good for this to work. David Rosenthal sent music demos with the script. Eef brought a distinctive sound that was perfect for the world of the movie and the character.”

Although Nivola professes never to have had any professional ambition in music, he has sung in several previous films, including LAUREL CANYON, JUNEBUG and Kenneth Branagh’s Cole Porter-esque update of LOVE’S LABOUR’S LOST. “We were so blessed that he’s not just a great actor, he’s also a great musician,” says Shue. “I don’t how many actors who could have performed all those songs.”

Breslin, on the other hand, had no professional musical experience other than her unforgettable dance number in LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE. By chance, she had started voice lessons a few weeks before agreeing to play Janie. “The only place I ever sang before was at my church Christmas party,” she

says. “I started guitar lessons after I got the film. I had never really considered playing the guitar before that. I was lucky Alessandro is such an amazing guitar player and I could pick up tips from him.”

Even with all her onscreen experience, singing in public was an intimidating experience for the young actress. “Singing is much more nerve-wracking than acting,” says Breslin. “I’ve grown up acting, so it’s never been scary for me, but singing in front of people was. We rehearsed a little bit before we went into the studio in Des Moines to record, which was really cool. But that was pretty much all the time we had.”

Once Breslin started taking lessons, she committed completely, says Nivola. “It was impressive. She had no prior experience, but she has a huge amount of talent. Even so, she had to work hard. It was like me learning French for *Chanel*—a completely new skill set.”

The members of Ethan’s band, the Ethan Brand Experience, are played by Joel Moore, Brittany Snow, Rodney Eastman and Frank Whaley. “Coincidentally, I used to go to a club in New York to hear a band called The Niagaras play,” says Nivola. “Frank Whaley and his brother Robert were in the band. Frank played drums and his brother was the lead singer.

“The Niagaras were almost identical to our band,” Nivola continues. “I based a lot of my character on Robert. Initially, it was just his performance; he was pretty unhinged on stage. He had this intense energy and presence. He would spend long periods of time talking to the audience and no one knew what he was going to do next. He and Frank had a great, and sometimes contentious, relationship, just as our characters do in the movie. The more Frank told me about him, the more I incorporated him into the character.”

The film’s music was almost entirely prerecorded by composer Barzelay and then Breslin and Nivola had only a small window of time to rehearse together and record their instrumentals and vocals. “We recorded in a little studio in Des Moines in two days. It all needed to be finished before filming started, so the tracks would be ready for the performance scenes. It was real indie filmmaking. We went for it and stayed up all night doing it, so it has an authentically raw sound that is great for the film.”

### **Shooting “Janie Jones”**

Working closely with director of photography Anastas N. Michos, Rosenthal developed a visual strategy for the contrasting moods of the movie. “Anastas is incredibly talented,” he says. “He implicitly understood what I was going for. For the first time as a director, I was able to focus completely on the actors.

“For the club scenes and on the road with the band, we used a handheld camera,” he explains. “I wanted the movie to have a verité quality, but not exactly in the sense of the French New Wave. I wanted a more modern version of New Wave, like what the Dardenne brothers did with *La Promesse*. I also

didn't want the whole movie to have a handheld quality. The scenes between Ethan and Janie are more traditionally shot. The cameras are still, so they don't get in the way of what's going on emotionally."

All three stars agree that having David M. Rosenthal at the helm of JANIE JONES made their jobs easier. "He is so funny and sweet," says Breslin. "He's very calm on the set. It's good for a director to be like that.

For his part, Alessandro Nivola found working with a contemporary invigorating. "As I get older, the directors get younger," says Nivola. "That's great for me, because the relationship becomes more equal. When I started out, directors often seemed paternal in their approach. This experience had a very different dynamic. It's a hard balance for a director to trust himself, as well as the actors; to maintain that authority but give us the freedom to be creative. David is very good at finding that balance."

The best directors, says Shue, are the ones who instantly welcome everyone involved into the on-set family. "David made me feel like he was grateful to have me there. That attitude of support gives the actors the ability to take risks.

Finally, in a further parallel to the film's storyline, the production afforded father and daughter an opportunity to work together for the first time. "My daughter is 22 now," says the director. "She was my assistant on the movie and she played a small role in one of the club scenes. She wanted to be a part of it and I wanted her to be a part of it. Having her there was an inspiration to everyone because it gave a solid foundation to the story we were telling.

"I was so afraid of what might happen when I finally reached out to my daughter," Rosenthal remembers. "Trying to mend a broken relationship can be scary, but now she's probably the person I'm closest to. When it turned out the way it did, it was a tremendous relief. This may sound a little corny, but I want to show people that anything is possible. There's always the possibility of a positive ending. That is my truth and I hope people are inspired by it."



## ABOUT THE CAST

**ABIGAIL BRESLIN (Janie Jones)** is one of the most versatile, charismatic and sought-after actors of her young generation. A talented and engaging performer from the tender age of five, she had the amazing opportunity to play the leading lady in M. Night Shyamalan's 2002 film SIGNS. Breslin has been able to apply her unique talents to comedy and drama, breathing life into quirky and unusual roles.

She may be best known for her role in the critically acclaimed LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE, the irreverent, antic comedy that created a sensation at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. Breslin played Olive, an ambitious child obsessed with winning a beauty pageant who possesses guileless wisdom and klutziness edged with grace. For her performance, Breslin received a Best Actress Award from the Tokyo International Film Festival and was nominated for Academy Award, SAG and BAFTA Best Supporting Actress honors. She was also honored as ShoWest's Female Star of Tomorrow in 2008.

Breslin also received notice for her performance in Garry Marshall's RAISING HELEN, in which she starred opposite Kate Hudson. She was also seen in THE ULTIMATE GIFT, co-starring James Garner, and had a surprise role as a perky elf in the family hit THE SANTA CLAUSE 3.

In 2008, Breslin starred in NO RESERVATIONS, directed by Scott Hicks and co-starring Catherine Zeta-Jones and Aaron Eckhart. That same year, she was seen in DEFINITELY, MAYBE, alongside Ryan Reynolds; NIM'S ISLAND, opposite Jodie Foster; and KIT KITTREDGE: AN AMERICAN GIRL, with Chris O'Donnell. In 2009, she starred opposite Cameron Diaz in the drama MY SISTER'S KEEPER and worked with Woody Harrelson, Jesse Eisenberg and Emma Stone on the horror comedy ZOMBIELAND.

Breslin recently lent her voice to a character in the animated feature RANGO, co-starring Johnny Depp.

On television, Breslin has had guest roles on "Law and Order: Special Victims Unit," "Navy NCIS," "What I Like About You" and "Grey's Anatomy."

This spring, Breslin took to the stage as Helen Keller in the first Broadway revival of *The Miracle Worker*, co-starring Allison Pill.

**ELISABETH SHUE (Mary Ann Jones)** has enjoyed an extensive film career that garners the admiration of fans and critics alike. Her performance in LEAVING LAS VEGAS, opposite Nicolas Cage, earned her an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress. She also received a Best Actress award from the Los Angeles Film Critics, the Chicago Film Critics and the National Society of Film Critics as well as nominations for an Independent Spirit Award, Golden Globe Award® and Screen Actors Guild Award.

Shue recently starred as Sheriff Julie Forester in Alexandre Aja's PIRANHA 3-D, opposite Adam Scott. She is currently in production on the independent film HOUSE AT THE END OF THE STREET, for director Mark Tonderai.

Other film credits include HAMLET 2, opposite Catherine Keener and Steve Coogan; Davis Guggenheim's GRACIE, which Shue co-produced; Katherine Brooks' WAKING MADISON, opposite Sarah Roemer; HIDE & SEEK, opposite Dakota Fanning and Robert De Niro; Gregg Araki's MYSTERIOUS SKIN; DREAMER, opposite Kurt Russell; AMY AND ISABELLE, produced by Oprah Winfrey; HOLLOW MAN, with Josh Brolin and Kevin Bacon; John Duigan's MOLLY; Woody Allen's DECONSTRUCTING HARRY; and Phillip Noyce's THE SAINT. Earlier projects include THE KARATE KID, ADVENTURES IN BABYSITTING, COCKTAIL, the first two BACK TO THE FUTURE films, SOAPDISH and RADIO INSIDE. Shue also starred on Broadway in Richard Nelson's *Some Americans Abroad*.

Shue currently resides in Los Angeles with her husband, director Davis Guggenheim, and their children.

**ALESSANDRO NIVOLA (Ethan Brand)** earned an Independent Spirit Award nomination for his performance as the rock singer Ian McNight in Lisa Cholodenko's LAUREL CANYON, recording the character's songs himself. In 2006, he starred in JUNEBUG, opposite Amy Adams, and in the Sundance Film Festival Audience Award winner GRACE IS GONE, opposite John Cusack. Most recently, Nivola played Leonard Chess in WHO DO YOU LOVE, a biopic about the life of the Chess Records founder, and starred opposite Audrey Tautou in COCO BEFORE CHANEL. He was also seen in HOWL, a film about the obscenity trial concerning the famous Alan Ginsberg poem of the same name.

A graduate of Yale University with a B.A. in English, Nivola earned a Drama Desk Award nomination for his first professional leading role, starring opposite Helen Mirren on Broadway in Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*. The following year, he drew critical acclaim and a Blockbuster Award nomination for playing Nicolas Cage's paranoid genius younger brother in John Woo's FACE/OFF.

A series of roles in English films followed, establishing Nivola as one of the few Americans capable of playing British characters from all regions and classes. He starred as a Hastings fisherman opposite Rachel Weisz in Michael Winterbottom's I WANT YOU, played Henry Crawford in the Patricia Rozema adaptation of Jane Austen's MANSFIELD PARK, and was a singing and dancing King Ferdinand of Navarre in Kenneth Branagh's musical adaptation of Shakespeare, LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

Back in the U.S., Nivola starred opposite Reese Witherspoon in BEST LAID PLANS and played leading roles in JURASSIC PARK 3 and Mike Figgis' TIMECODE before being reunited with Helen Mirren in the film THE CLEARING, this time playing her son.

The actor recently returned to the New York stage after a 10-year absence to star in Ethan Hawke's revival of the Sam Shepard play *A Lie of the Mind*. He also played Orlando to Gwyneth Paltrow's Rosalind in *As You Like It* at Williamstown.

Other credits include Ridley Scott's miniseries "The Company," the horror film THE EYE (opposite Jessica Alba) and David Auburn's drama THE GIRL IN THE PARK, opposite Sigourney Weaver and Kate Bosworth.

Last summer, Nivola was awarded the prize for achievement in acting from the Provincetown International Film Festival.

### **BRITTANY SNOW (Iris)**

Brittany Snow is one of the brightest and most engaging acting talents to emerge in recent years. She recently wrapped production on a few indie films back to back. The first being SYRUP opposite Kellen Lutz and Amber Heard as well as the thriller titled WOULD YOU RATHER, where she also took on the role of Executive Producer. Next, she joined Thora Birch in the independent film PETUNIA.

She most recently appeared as lead role in the Independent Spirit Award-nominated feature THE VICIOUS KIND which also premiered to rave reviews in Sundance 2009. Prior to that, Brittany starred in the box office hit PROM NIGHT as well as the well-received indie film FINDING AMANDA opposite Matthew Broderick. Snow's other notable film credits include New Line Cinema's HAIRSPRAY playing Amber Von Tussle, the daughter of Michelle Pfeiffer's character, Velma Von Tussle, the FOX movie JOHN TUCKER MUST DIE which was her first leading film role and had made her big-screen debut in the box-office hit, THE PACIFIER for Disney opposite Vin Diesel. Brittany also starred on NBC's dramedy, "Harry's Law," opposite Kathy Bates and had a recurring role as Matt's neo-nazi girlfriend on FX's hit original series, "Nip/Tuck."

A native of Tampa, Florida, Brittany began her acting career appearing in and lending her voice to numerous national commercials. She also starred in theater performances including the national tour of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

Snow made the transition to television when she landed a starring role on the long-running daytime drama "Guiding Light." Brittany would commute on the weekends from Florida to New York City where the show was taped. Additional television credits include: "Safe Harbor," "Sea Quest DSV" and the pilot "Murphy's Dozen." Her next project was the NBC series "American Dreams." Snow played

Meg Pryor a teen in the 60's struggling to find balance between her family's strict upbringing and her own desires as a young woman.

In September 2010, Brittany founded the movement *Love is Louder* in association with MTV and The Jed Foundation to build on the outpouring of support online after the lives of multiple teenagers were lost to suicide that month. This movement has already impacted the lives of millions and invites anyone who has ever felt mistreated, misunderstood or isolated into the conversation.

### **PETER STORMARE (Sloan)**

Swedish born actor/director Peter Stormare works non-stop and is currently in production on Paramount's HANSEL & GRETEL: WITCH HUNTERS opposite Jeremy Renner and Gemma Arterton.

In 2010, he starred opposite Guy Pearce and Maggie Grace in Luc Besson's LOCKOUT, JANIE JONES opposite Abigail Breslin, Mel Gibson's HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION, HENRY'S CRIME opposite Keanu Reeves and Vera Farmiga, critically acclaimed SMALL TOWN MURDER SONGS and finished the year by starring in a commercial for Budweiser that premiered during the 2010 Super Bowl. Prior to that he worked on various films such as: THE KILLING ROOM with Chloe Sevigny, Screen Gem's INSANITARIUM, INSEPARABLE opposite Kevin Spacey, Mandate Picture's HORSEMEN, ANAMORPH opposite William DaFoe, Terry Gilliam's THE IMAGINARIUM OF DR PARNASSUS, WITLESS PROTECTION with Larry the Cable Guy, BIRTH with Nicole Kidman, PREMONITION with Sandra Bullock, THE BROTHERS GRIMM opposite Matt Damon, and CONSTANTINE with Keanu Reeves.

Stormare starred as John Abruzzi on the first season of the hit Fox TV drama series "Prison Break" executive produced by Brett Ratner. He can last be seen on the small screen portraying memorable guest appearances in "Entourage," "Weeds," "Hawaii Five-O," "CSI," and "Monk." Other past television credits include: "Hitler: The Rise of Evil," "Watching Ellie," "Joey," and "Seinfeld."

Stormare has consistently worked with exceptional directors throughout his career. He appeared in Penny Marshall's AWAKENINGS, Steven Spielberg's MINORITY REPORT and THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK, the Coen Brothers' FARGO and THE BIG LEBOWSKI, Joel Schumacher's 8MM, and Michael Bay's BAD BOYS II and ARMAGEDDON. Other work includes Lars Van Trier's DANCER IN THE DARK, Lasse Hallstrom's CHOCOLAT, Wim Wenders' MILLION DOLLAR HOTEL, Jonas Akerlund's SPUN, John Woo's WINDTALKERS, and Kevin Donovan's THE TUXEDO. He began his acting career in his native land at the Royal National Theatre of Sweden under the direction of the legendary Ingmar Bergman where he performed leading roles in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *Miss Julie*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet*. It was while performing *Hamlet* in New York that Stormare was embraced by American audiences and was sought out for his first American feature role.

He sustained his work in theater, appearing in productions at the Actors Studio and the Public Theater; and he became the associate director of the Globe Theater in Tokyo, all while continuing his film work.

Inspired by his passion for music – specifically The Beatles, The Clash, and Nirvana – Stormare formed a band called “Blonde From Fargo,” in homage to his breakout role. The five-member rock and roll band includes the guitarist from Roxette, the drummer from Alanis Morissette, and the bass player from Slash’s Snakepit, with Stormare writing all of the music and playing guitar. The band has performed at Lebowsky-Fest, as well as toured North America and Europe.

Stormare currently resides in Los Angeles, California

### **FRANK WHALEY (Chuck)**

Since his breakout performance as the young Francis Phelan opposite Jack Nicholson and Meryl Streep in the Academy Award nominated *IRONWEED*, Frank Whaley has appeared in over 60 films including, *FIELD OF DREAMS*, *BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY*, *THE DOORS*, *JFK*, *THE FRESHMAN*, *CAREER OPPORTUNITIES*, *SWING KIDS*, *HOFFA*, *IQ*, John Woo’s *BROKEN ARROW* opposite John Travolta, *RED DRAGON* and *SCHOOL OF ROCK*. He is probably best known for his portrayal of Guy, the put-upon assistant opposite Kevin Spacey in the now cult classic *SWIMMING WITH SHARKS* and as the ill-fated drug dealer Brett in *PULP FICTION*. His recent film roles include a fourth collaboration with Oliver Stone in *WORLD TRADE CENTER*, and his intense and terrifying performance as Mason opposite Luke Wilson and Kate Beckinsale in *VACANCY* and *AS GOOD AS DEAD*, opposite Andie MacDowell.

On television Frank appeared in the mini-series “Marina and Lee” opposite Helena Bonham Carter, with Jessica Tandy in “To Dance With The White Dog,” HBO’s “When Trumpets Fade,” and opposite Ben Kingsley and Annette Benning in the Emmy award winning “Mrs. Harris.” He starred opposite Sam Shepard in the ABC television mini-series “Ruffian” and opposite Tom Selleck in Arthur Haley’s “Detective”. He also starred in “Where There’s A Will” for Lifetime, opposite Blythe Danner in *Homage*, and with Lara Flynn Boyle in “Café Society” for Showtime. Additionally, Whaley has made guest appearances on numerous series including, “Law and Order,” “Ugly Betty,” “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” “Psyche,” “N.C.I.S.,” “House” and “C.S.I.,” “Burn Notice,” and “Medium.” Whaley starred in the CBS television series “Buddy Faro” opposite Dennis Farina (1999-2001) and in “The Dead Zone (2003-2004).”

Frank has written and directed three feature films. His first, *JOE THE KING* starring Val Kilmer, premiered at the 1999 Sundance Film Festival where he received the Waldo Salt Award for screenwriting and a Grand Jury Prize nomination. His second feature, *THE JIMMY SHOW* which he wrote, directed and starred in opposite Carla Gugino and Ethan Hawke, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2002.

His latest film, NEW YORK CITY SERENADE starring Freddie Prinze, Jr., Chris Klein and Wallace Shawn premiered at the 2007 Toronto International Film Festival, His next feature LIKE SUNDAY, LIKE RAIN will begin production early next year.

Aside from his work in television and film, the stage-trained Whaley has appeared Off-Broadway in numerous productions, including his drama desk award winning performance in *The Years* and Charles Evered's *The Size of the World* with Rita Moreno which earned him his second Drama Desk nomination. He appeared in the critically acclaimed revival of Sam Shepard's *A Lie of the Mind* at the New Group in 2010 and recently starred opposite Marisa Tomei in the revival of Wallace Shawn's *Marie & Bruce*. In 1992, Frank co-founded the Malaparte Theater Company along with longtime friends and colleagues Ethan Hawke and Robert Sean Leonard which became one of New York's most vibrant, celebrated and popular off Broadway companies.

Frank Whaley currently resides in New York City with his wife and children.

## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

**DAVID M. ROSENTHAL (Writer, Director)** recently directed and co-wrote the independent romantic comedy *Falling Up*, starring Rachael Leigh Cook and Joseph Cross. In 2004, Rosenthal co-wrote and directed his first feature film, *See This Movie*, which premiered at the Aspen Comedy Film Festival. It was the first feature produced by the Weitz brothers' (*About a Boy*, *American Pie*) prodco, Depth of Field. *See This Movie*, which starred Seth Meyers and John Cho, won the Grand Jury Award for Best Narrative Feature at the Malibu Film Festival and was released in theaters in 2006. It has since been widely seen via DVD and cable.

As a director, Rosenthal has many commercial credits. His notable spots include "Master Cabbie," which won an AICP Award, a Merit Award and was a finalist at both the London International Advertising Awards and the Clio Awards.

As a young man, Rosenthal's love of writing and film led him to the American Film Institute, where he received his master's degree. A year after graduating, he sold his first short film, *Absence* (which he also shot), to Atom Films. The short was purchased by networks around the world including Canal+, HBO Latin America, PBS, Encore and Starz. The film made the festival rounds and was a finalist at the USA Film Festival and the Slamdance festival in Park City, Utah.

Rosenthal's second short film, *Waiting for Anna*, was chosen as a quarterfinalist out of 1000 films in Chrysler's Million Dollar Film Festival and received distribution through Hypnotic.com.

Rosenthal's love of documentary filmmaking began when he traveled to China for National Geographic's "Explorer" to film a documentary about Three Gorges Dam, the largest and most disparaged man-made project ever built.

His second documentary, entitled *Dylan's Run*, which he produced and directed, followed the campaign trail of Dylan Glenn. Glenn made history by becoming the first black Republican to run for a congressional seat in the Deep South since Reconstruction. The documentary made its debut at the Film Arts Festival in San Francisco before being screened at many other festivals, including Amsterdam, Sonoma and Toronto. It's now available on DVD.

## **KEITH KJARVAL (Producer)**

As an entrepreneur, producer and co-founder of Unified Pictures, Keith Kjarval has rapidly forged a stellar reputation in the rough-and-tumble world of independent filmmaking.

Early in his career, Kjarval worked with large equity and hedge funds and developed internal revenue models for Capital One, thereby acquiring top-notch financial knowledge and instincts. After moving to Los Angeles, he set about applying those hard-won skills to film production, developing and

financing an \$11 million slate of sci-fi projects. Demonstrating his versatility, Kjarval raised another \$14 million for a slate of animated family films, which he subsequently developed.

In 2005, Kjarval founded Unified Pictures with Kurt Rauer and several key artists. “I started a film company and became a producer,” he explains, “because I’m interested in offering the world an alternative to their film choices – an option that is neither a lavishly budgeted special-effects extravaganza nor an obscure art house film aimed at two people.” With this credo in mind, Kjarval kicked off Unified’s inaugural year with the acquisition and distribution of the multiple David di Donatello (Italian Oscar) award-winning film DON’T MOVE (starring Penélope Cruz).

Kjarval then launched production on his debut film, THE PERFECT SLEEP. Combining the moody visual splendor of film noir with the psychological depth and intensity of a Dostoyevsky novel, SLEEP was hailed by Time Out New York as “a marvel of budget-stretching innovation” and a “cross between Zentropa and Memento without the pretentiousness.”

2008 was another busy year for Kjarval and Unified as they launched a foreign sales arm headed by indie veteran Ann Dubinet. Most notably, Unified struck a strategic alliance with David Lynch’s company, Absurda, to handle foreign sales of its impressive library, including the acclaimed Lynch/Herzog collaboration MY SON, MY SON, WHAT HAVE YE DONE, featuring rising star Michael Shannon (Take Shelter).

Following THE PERFECT SLEEP, Kjarval went on to produce several more films, including 2009’s award-winning horror film XII and the offbeat comedy BOB FUNK, starring Rachael Leigh Cook and Amy Ryan. The latter opened theatrically in New York, Los Angeles and other major cities.

“Our vision for Unified Pictures,” says Kjarval, “is to become a hybrid studio, in that we are committed to producing both thought-provoking live-action features and – through our in-house animation facility – hugely entertaining animated family films that offer the world a refreshing break from itself.”

With that goal in mind, Kjarval and Unified began production in 2009 on the \$35 million animated musical NOAH’S ARK, written by Philip LaZebnik (THE PRINCE OF EGYPT, MULAN). Also in 2009, Kjarval produced David Rosenthal’s touching film JANIE JONES, about a washed-up rock star forced to take responsibility for the daughter he never knew he had. The film, which stars Abigail Breslin, Elisabeth Shue, and Alessandro Nivola, received the honor of being selected as a Gala Presentation at the 2010 Toronto Film Festival, where it received its world premiere.

Currently, Kjarval is in pre-production on the thriller A SINGLE SHOT, starring Forest Whitaker, William H. Macy and Alessandro Nivola. Additionally, Kjarval recently acquired the film rights to Amos Oz’s world-renowned novel “A Tale of Love and Darkness.” Academy Award-winning actress Natalie Portman wrote the screenplay and will also direct.



**ERIC BASSETT (Producer)** owned his own design and marketing firm for 10 years before partnering in 2002 with David Lynch to run the legendary director's production, sales and distribution company, Absurda. As managing partner, Bassett handled Lynch's entire library, personally distributed Lynch's most recent feature *Inland Empire*, and produced three feature films including Alex Cox's *Repo Chick* and Werner Herzog's *My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done*.

Originally from Denver, Bassett earned his B.F.A. at the University of Arizona.

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