

TRUE GRIT

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Synopsis

True Grit is a mythic Western adventure story of vengeance and valor from Academy Award® winning filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen, whose stirring adaptation hones in on the plain-spoken humor, bold storytelling and rough beauty of Charles Portis' classic American novel. The time is the 1870s, the setting frontier America just after the Civil War, and the tale-teller is Mattie Ross, who at 14 years-old journeys to Fort Smith, Arkansas determined to extract justice for the death of her father, shot in cold blood. Highlighted by a cast that includes Academy Award® winner Jeff Bridges (*Crazy Heart*), Academy Award® nominee Matt Damon (*Invictus*), Academy Award® nominee Josh Brolin (*Milk*), Barry Pepper (*Saving Private Ryan*) and newcomer Hailee Steinfeld as one of literature's most stouthearted young heroines, *True Grit* is written for the screen and directed by Joel and Ethan Coen and produced by Scott Rudin, Ethan Coen and Joel Coen. The executive producers are Steven Spielberg, Robert Graf, David Ellison, Paul Schwake and Megan Ellison. Mattie Ross (STEINFELD) arrives in Fort Smith as her family's sole representative, in search of the coward Tom Chaney (BROLIN), who is said to have killed her father for two gold pieces before setting out into Indian Territory as a fugitive. Beholden to follow Chaney and see him hanged, Mattie enlists the help of a man rumored to be the most ruthless U.S. Marshal in town -- trigger-happy, drunken Rooster Cogburn (BRIDGES), who, after many objections, agrees to hunt Chaney. But Chaney is already the target of the talkative Texas Ranger LaBoeuf (DAMON), who also aims to catch the killer and bring him back to Texas for an ample reward – which brings the trio to collide on the trail. Each willful and stubborn, each driven by their own rough moral codes, this unlikely posse rides towards an unpredictable reckoning, as they find themselves enveloped in the stuff of legend: mischief and brutality, courage and disillusion, doggedness and unalloyed love. The film's distinguished production team is made up of collaborators from many of the Coen Brothers past projects including Oscar®-nominated director of photography Roger Deakins, ASC, BSC (*The Man Who Wasn't There*, *O Brother Where Art Thou?*) production designer Jess Gonchor (*Capote*, *No Country for Old Men*) and costume designer Mary Zophres (*Catch Me If You Can*, *O Brother Where Art Thou?*). The editor is Roderick Jaynes and the composer is Carter Burwell.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

“People do not give it credence that a young girl could leave home and go off in the wintertime to avenge her father’s blood, but it did happen.”

-- TRUE GRIT, by Charles Portis

In 1968, *The Saturday Evening Post* published a serial novel that riveted readers with a story that immediately felt like a grand and timeless American legend, and kept them hungering for more. This was Charles Portis’ True Grit, the tale of an unusually stalwart young girl seeking to avenge her father’s death with the aid of a washed-up, frontier lawman and a forthright Texas Ranger who all set out into Indian Territory to find the killer. Laced with deadpan humor, rife with ruggedly individualistic characters, and cut through with richly American themes, the novel would take on a life of its own. Like Mattie Ross, it would cross the river into that realm where real life events turn into tall tales and legends, becoming both a bestseller and an enduring literary classic, passed from reader to reader and writer to writer, over the decades. The book was soon being taught in schools, became a 1969 movie starring John Wayne, and the title was woven into the very fabric of the language. The words “true grit” came to represent the kind of single-minded, cocksure gutsiness that can see a person through incomprehensible circumstances – a concept at the core of the American spirit. But Portis’ story was about more than courage. Narrated by the starkly unsentimental spinster that Mattie Ross becomes in the wake of her escapade, it also probed the restlessness of the American character, with its conflicts between the yearning for adventure and the need for home, between the desire to right injustices and the cost of such retribution to body and soul. The characters of Mattie, Rooster Cogburn and LaBoeuf clash in big ways not just with each other and the outlaws they’re after, but with their own hearts as they veer between the untamed and the righteous. What lends the novel its timelessness and transcendent quality most of all is Mattie’s voice, which stands apart in literature. Best-selling author George Pelecanos in a 1996 NPR interview, explained: “Mattie’s voice, wry and sure, is one of the great creations of modern fiction. I put it up there with Huck Finn’s and that is not hyperbole . . . Most importantly, it can be appreciated by readers of various ages, education levels and economic backgrounds. It’s an egalitarian work of art.”

Portis ultimately wrote five novels (True Grit was his second, after Norwood), and over the years, readers have fallen in love with his alchemical blend of comic folksiness and bold archetypal themes. Among those who came to admire Portis’ works were Joel and Ethan Coen, who themselves have spun some of the most compelling motion picture tales of our times, starting with the noir classic

Blood Simple and including *Raising Arizona*, *Miller's Crossing*, *Barton Fink*, the Oscar®-winning *Fargo*, *The Man Who Wasn't There*, *O Brother Where Art Thou?*, the Oscar®-winning *No Country For Old Men* and *A Serious Man*. "We'd read Charles Portis' books but this one seemed especially amenable to have a movie made from it," says Ethan of their decision to adapt *True Grit*. The brothers were drawn to Portis' daring decision to place an irrepressible young girl at the center of a novel rife with brutality, irony and harsh realities, which appealed to their sense of the unusual. Mattie's story is certainly full of the raw humanity and ink black wit that have often characterized the Coens' cinematic vision, but at the same time, *True Grit* is a departure for them, featuring their most unabashedly literary, emotional and direct storytelling. "The story is definitely in that weird genre of young persons' adventures," says Joel. "It's told by this very self assured 14 year-old girl," adds Ethan, "which is probably what makes the book so strange and funny. But it's also like *Alice in Wonderland* because this 14 year-old girl finds herself in an environment that's really, now-a-days, exotic." Ethan continues: "That's another thing about the book -- the setting is really exotic but obviously Portis knew the period and the place. He made the details of the setting so vividly real that they became surreal." The novel is also decidedly a Western, a genre that the Coen brothers wanted to tackle outright for the first time. Although some might want to put *No Country for Old Men* in that category, for Joel and Ethan that film was a modern thriller. The tones of the two films diverge. "*No Country For Old Men* was set in Texas," explains Joel, "but it was a contemporary movie. Nobody rides a horse in it except in the respect that people still ride to get into the backcountry. We never really considered that a Western. That was in our minds something different." The screenplay stayed faithful to Portis' construction of the novel, which keeps Mattie at its core and brings her full circle as a tough, old woman searching for Rooster Cogburn in a faded Memphis Wild West Show. Echoing Portis, they aimed to give Mattie's voice – as plain, unflinching and sonorous as an old ballad – its full due on the screen, and to paint the equally mesmerizing Rooster Cogburn and the Texas Ranger LaBoeuf through the light of her recognition –or hope -- that they all might be connected by something gritty and honorable in their spirits. Jeff Bridges, who was cast in the role of Cogburn, says it was the idea of mixing the book's authentic cadence and rollicking yet moving tone with the Coens' cinematic approach that got him so excited to tackle an iconic character in a fresh way. "When the Coens first mentioned the idea of making *True Grit*, I said 'Gee, didn't they make that movie? Why do you want to do it again?' and they said, 'We're not remaking the film, we're making a version of the original book by Charles Portis'. So I read the book and I immediately saw what they were talking about. It seemed like the perfect story for the Coens

to make into a movie. And since they have never made an actual Western adventure before, it was going to be a surprise.”

Adds Matt Damon, who plays LaBoeuf, “I’d never read the book until the Coens gave it to me, but it’s a fantastic American novel that deserves to be recognized as that. Their adaptation was just great. They used so much of the original dialogue and captured Charles Portis’ ear for the way people really spoke. I was just floored by it. Yet you always feel the Coens’ voice because they’re such powerful artists.” Concludes Barry Pepper, who plays the outlaw Lucky Ned, and works with the Coens for the first time on *True Grit*: “The dialogue in the novel is like cowboy poetry done by Shakespeare. The Coen brothers got that rhythm, that precise musicality. What’s remarkable about their adaptation is how specific and true the language is. The way they have re-interpreted and then visually expanded on what Portis did in his novel is something quite beautiful and special.”

CAST AND CHARACTERS

Driven as much by the dynamics of character as action, *True Grit*’s casting would be crucial - and, as with many of the Coen brothers’ films, the screenplay drew a decorated roster of actors. However, carrying the film would be an absolute beginner: Hailee Steinfeld, who turned the larger than life tenacity, forbearance and spunk of the book’s heroine-narrator Mattie Ross into the flesh and blood of an unusual child who doesn’t varnish her opinions, or relent on her intentions, for anyone. The task of casting Mattie was complex. The character is on a very short list of epically courageous female characters in classic American literature, and even on that short list, is quite unique. She has been compared to Huck Finn (by Walker Percy, Donna Tartt and George Pelecanos, among others) for her stark individualism and encapsulation of American qualities – and yet she is most assuredly not a boy. Smart, feisty, sharp-tongued and dead true, Mattie is a force to be reckoned with – and yet, she is undeniably a child. Like Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz*, Mattie is a long, long way from home – and yet the way back must be extracted in blood. The challenge at hand was to find an actress who could imbue Mattie with equal parts innocence and insolence, who could get at both the girlish tenderness and the unassailable grit in her being. Casting directors Ellen Chenoweth and Rachel Tenner spent months crossing the nation, holding open casting calls and watching thousands of girls. Then, at the very last moment, they found it. The needle in the haystack was 13 year-old Hailee Steinfeld who struck the filmmakers not only with her vivid personality, but her apparent fearlessness. “After seeing people from all over, ironically we ended up choosing a young girl from the Los Angeles area so it just goes to show,” comments Joel. “We cast Hailee pretty much just

before we started shooting, and we were very lucky to find her.” “Kind of like the character, she’s totally imperturbable and unintimidated,” Ethan says. Steinfeld is forthright about her love of the character. “Who wouldn’t be attracted to Mattie?” she asks. “She’s tough, she’s witty and she’s just fourteen, which is incredible. She has one goal, to find the killer of her father, and she tells herself she will not go on with her life until it is done – and then she goes for it. That’s the main similarity between us: that we would both stop at nothing to get what we want.” Hailee so wanted the part that she turned up at her final audition in a burlap skirt and outfit her mother had handcrafted from Salvation Army clothes. “I read with Jeff Bridges and Barry Pepper and I felt really prepared and ready. That was a good feeling,” she recalls. There was no trepidation involved. “I was more fascinated by the Coens than intimidated by them,” she explains. “They, and all of the actors, were so humble that they didn’t come off as intimidating at all. They all treated me like one of their own.” Still, there was a lot for Steinfeld to learn, especially in the way of riding and shooting, Mattie being unusually skilled at both for a young girl. Hailee already knew how to ride, but in the English style. “I took lessons to get me in the zone of Western riding,” Steinfeld recalls. “And shooting a gun was completely new to me, so my Dad took me to a shooting range so I could get more familiar with it. It really helped because I learned about the kickback. There’s no kickback with a blank gun, but Mattie gets knocked back and had to know what that felt like.” For Steinfeld, one of the biggest surprises turned out to be her fellow actors’ performances. “You know, you read the book and you have a vision in your mind of what it’s going to be and then these guys do it and it’s completely different and not at all what you might expect. It was really amazing to experience that because it’s how I want to be as an actor,” she muses. In one scene, Steinfeld had to endure an epic spanking from Matt Damon’s LaBoeuf, but even then, she was unflappable. “After every take, Matt would say, ‘oh my gosh, are you OK? I didn’t hurt you, right? You promise you’ll tell me if I do.’ But I thought it was fun,” she admits, “and also funny.” She concludes: “For me it was a lot to comprehend that I was making a movie with this amazing group of actors. I just felt blessed and thankful to be exactly where I want to be.” The casting of the key men in the story fell into place more directly. From early days, the Coens knew they wanted Jeff Bridges for the role of Rooster Cogburn. Bridges, who had just won an Academy Award® for his role as a down-and-out country singer in *Crazy Heart*, had previously worked with Joel and Ethan in 1998 creating the iconic character The Dude in *The Big Lebowski*. A self-described “one-eyed fat man,” Cogburn might carry a fearsome reputation that attracts Mattie, but he does not present an initial portrait of competence. Whiskey-doused, disobliging and leading a sketchy, degenerate’s life living in the back

of the General Store, he hardly seems like Mattie's savior when she comes to seek his much-rumored tracking expertise. And yet he manages, in the midst of alternately enchanting and disappointing Mattie, to become her respectful, unwavering, and poignantly devoted, partner on the trail. Bridges came fresh at the role, leaving entirely aside John Wayne's performance in a very different kind of film from a very different era of moviemaking. Instead, he brought to the part his long-lived love of the Western genre (his father Lloyd starred in many) and his extensive riding experience (he rode as a child and has mounted steeds in numerous films), then focused all of his energies on etching out the grainy layers of perhaps his most hard-scrabble character yet. "Rooster Cogburn kind of straddles the law, he's got one foot on the side of the law and one foot entirely against it," Bridges wryly observes. "But Mattie is looking for a man who has true grit, and that, he certainly has in spades. He's got that thing where no matter how tough the situation is, he's going to see it through to the end." For Bridges, a big part of the pleasure of playing Cogburn was getting to quibble, quarrel and ride side-by-side with Hailee Steinfeld as the girl who pushes Rooster in ways he might not have known he could be pushed. "Mattie is the most challenging role in the film," Bridges states. "The whole screenplay is centered around her. I was worried at first about Hailee because this is her first movie, but by the end of the first day of filming, I just said, 'Oh, God, did we luck out with her.' She has a wonderful sweetness but then she overlays that with the hard edge of this character. She pulled it off so well, she didn't require much advice." With Bridges set as Rooster, Academy Award® nominee Matt Damon, most recently seen as a South African soccer star in Clint Eastwood's *Invictus*, was chosen in a departure as the self-possessed Texas Ranger LaBoeuf. Then, the Coens chose to reunite with Academy Award® nominee Josh Brolin, who had a breakout role in *No Country for Old Men*, as Tom Chaney, the craven killer who sparks the film's epic chase. "Josh and Matt we thought would be very interesting," says Joel. "With a lot of these things, casting movie stars like Matt and Josh, you think about them and then it's the process of sorting out whether or not it's actually going to work in terms of their availability." Schedules aligned and Damon and Brolin came on board. Both brought a bonus beyond their propensity for character: serious riding skills. "I guess we were aware that they had both ridden but it wasn't a factor in casting," says Ethan. "Yet it turned out it ought to have been. Oh, my God, it would have been impossible if they weren't good riders." Damon had wanted to work with the Coens for a long time, but never had the chance until he was approached to play LaBoeuf. The character intrigued Damon immediately. "He's a Texas Ranger who's little full of himself and he's a bit of a windbag, a guy who can really hold court," he observes. "He reminded me a bit of Tommy Lee Jones, and we also

thought of Bill Clinton, people who are classically fun to listen to expound on any subject. His talkativeness becomes a running joke as it slowly drives Rooster Cogburn crazy, and it is taken to an extreme consequence when he nearly bites off his tongue, yet even that does not cause him to cease talking.” (For the latter part of the film, Damon would double over his tongue and hold it in place with a hair rubber band to evince his speech impediment.) As they each seek Tom Chaney for their own purposes, Cogburn and LaBoeuf become disputing, bickering, rivalrous partners bent on one-upmanship, their young charge notwithstanding. “They’re like oil and water,” says Damon. “Rooster doesn’t see much value in LaBoeuf and LaBoeuf is very proud. He’s trying to impress Rooster yet he is also irked that Rooster clearly doesn’t appreciate what it means to be a Texas Ranger, which to him is a very big deal. It’s one of those fun relationships, with this macho thing going on whenever they’re in front of each other, yet then you also see the reality of who they are when they’re not trying to strut their feathers.” Working with Bridges brought out the rivalry in original ways, says Damon. “Jeff makes for a classic American protagonist because he is so perfectly imperfect,” he muses. “He’s funny, he’s dynamic and he brings a joy to his work that is infectious.” Damon was particularly impressed with how Hailee Steinfeld held her own amid the repartee. “She gives an incredible performance, which is also a testimony to Joel and Ethan, and how well they directed her. They talked to her like they talked to Jeff or to me, because they knew she could handle it,” he says. He goes on: “It’s a really interesting dynamic between Mattie, Rooster and LaBoeuf. She’s coming of age in this hard world and they are kind of like big brothers or fathers to her, both trying to impress her, to show that they’re in charge, and yet both turn out to be truly honorable to her.”

Bridges took particular pleasure in watching Damon tackle his role. “He makes for a terrific Texas Ranger,” he comments. “He brings a lot of comedy and character to it, and he rides beautifully. His acting was just superb and whenever you work with an actor who brings so much to it like that, it improves your own game and everybody else’s.” Likewise, Barry Pepper, who plays Lucky Ned, leader of the Tom Chaney’s outlaw gang, says working with Brolin was something rare. “Watching Josh create his character was intriguing because Tom’s this real simian-like thug and when Josh steps into him there’s just absolutely no remnant of his former self left. He was willing to present the character as he is in all his wrinkles and flaws. I was really, really impressed with that.” Pepper, the Canadian actor who came to the fore in *Saving Private Ryan* and was most recently seen in *Casino Jack*, was a later addition to the cast. “Barry was someone we didn’t have in mind when we first set out to cast the rest of the movie but he was wonderful and his whole look came together in

a great way,” says Joel. “He is really interesting in the part.” Pepper explains his character as “the chief of a gang of scallywags and no-good train robbers and bandits. He’s crossed paths with Rooster in the past, and was shot in the face, so he’s, uh, very intriguing looking. But he’s always managed to escape, so that’s how he got his moniker.” Yet, Lucky Ned also possesses layers beyond villainy. “He’s not a cold-blooded killer,” notes Pepper. “He’s more of a wolf in, uh, wool chaps. I think he really comes to admire Mattie and is secretly impressed with her because she’s so bold and she just stands up to him. He is cut from a different cloth than Tom Chaney, and that’s ultimately why they go separate ways, and why he gives Mattie back to Rooster Cogburn. In his own way, maybe Ned shows a modicum of true grit.” To evince Lucky Ned’s broken teeth and busted jaw, Pepper wore a facial prosthetic created by makeup designer Christien Tinsley. “He molded a prosthetic piece that was just amazing blended in with a Custer-like goatee and mustache. When I’d step out of the trailer in the morning, people didn’t recognize me. It also informed the sound and delivery of Ned’s dialogue,” he explains. Rounding out the cast are also Mike Watson, Bruce Green as Harold Parmalee; Elizabeth Marvel as the adult Mattie Ross; Domnhall Gleeson and Paul Rae as the renegades Moon and Emmit Quincy; Ed Lee Corbin as the mysterious traveler Bear Grit and Dakin Matthews as Colonel Stonehill, who Mattie goes to see about her father’s ponies.

SETTING & DESIGN

The dueling themes encompassed by *True Grit* – justice and revenge, wilderness and sanctuary, individualism and loyalty, real life and legends -- may be outside of time, but the action takes place in a very specific era and place that has long enraptured the American imagination: the last days of the true frontier West. The tale begins in 1878, when Mattie sets out across the river on her first, and greatest, adventure. At that time, the U.S. consisted of only 38 states and the town where Mattie’s father died -- Fort Smith, Arkansas -- was the very westernmost border of the nation, the last “civilized” town before the formal United States faded into an untamed and feared wilderness. Just across the state line lay the Indian Territory, then not part of any state (but which would in 1907 become Oklahoma), where land had been set aside for the use of Native Americans under the Indian Intercourse Act of 1834. This “no-man’s land” drew fugitives, escaped slaves and others hoping to disappear off the map, who often holed up in the woods or the rough-hewn Winding Stair Mountains about 70 miles from Fort Smith. Thus, Fort Smith also became a hotspot for U.S. Marshals, a colorful assortment of whom were posted to bring back escaping criminals, dead or alive. Considered a kind of gateway between two worlds, a popular saying about Ft. Smith at the

time was “There is no law west of St. Louis and no God west of Ft. Smith.” To recreate life on both sides of this fraught, powder keg of a borderland, the Coens worked with a trusted artistic team, including cinematographer Roger Deakins and production designer Jess Gonchor, who early on dove into exhaustive research and scouting, searching for remote areas where they could authentically recreate the late 19th Century West as Mattie and Rooster Cogburn would have experienced it. Hunting for a place to shoot a wintry landscape in the late spring, they wound up heading northwest from Arkansas into New Mexico and West Texas. “The story was written as taking place in Arkansas and Oklahoma Territory but we had a couple of constraints which were, this is a winter movie and we wanted snow in part of it -- on the ground,” explains Joel Coen. “That made us look a little bit further north than either of those locations. We shot most of the exteriors in New Mexico and most of the town of Fort Smith and interiors in Granger, Texas, just outside Austin.” For Roger Deakins, who recently shot another take on the 1870s West, Andrew Dominik’s *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*, as well as the Coens’ *No Country For Old Men* – both of which drew Oscar® nominations for his cinematography in 2008 – *True Grit* was a chance to entwine all that he learned on those two very different films. “To me, this film is a kind of amalgamation of that stark natural realism in *Jesse James* with the poetic realism of a Cormac McCarthy story,” he explains. “I was very glad I had done both of those films before *True Grit*.” Deakins says the folkloric feel of the film evolved organically as he and the Coens began collaborating. “I began by reading the book, which is so poignant and has such a deep sense of the period,” he says. “The idea of this young girl coming of age during a journey of revenge is both harsh and melancholy. But because the whole story is really the memory of young girl, that lends to it a slightly larger than life quality. Then I read the script, and of course Joel and Ethan write in an extraordinarily visual way. They created a path of storyboards but the look of this film really developed as we found it, scene by scene. For example, the scene with the hanging tree is one we looked at again and again. Originally, it was going to be in a completely open, empty wilderness, but then we found this stand of denuded Cottonwoods, literally moments before they were about to bud, and that influenced the whole creation of the sequence.” Although he and the Coens have developed a rhythm of working together over the years, Deakins says *True Grit* was something new again. “This film has a very different feel to it,” he acknowledges. “It has a lovely kind of flow as a singular piece. There is nothing tricky or clever or ornate about it and that was the aim. The way the film was lit, the way it was framed, the way the camera relates to the story and the characters, was all very much based on intuition and personal interpretation.” He goes on: “The biggest challenges were related to the

physical scale of the locations and the logistics of lighting so many night shoots. It was important to the boys to show the landscape at night, but it is difficult to shoot that kind of terrain in low light conditions. I also wanted to play a bit with color in the night scenes, keep them more blue than I might normally do, play with the firelight in the campfire scenes, which contrasts the harshness of the day with the mysteries of the night.” One of Deakins’ favorite scenes, however, involves sunlight – the early scene in a Ft. Smith Courthouse as Rooster Cogburn defends his trigger-happy ways, engulfed in the shadows thrown by a massive window streaming light over him. “I love the way Rooster is introduced, where he begins in silhouette and then this shaft of light slowly reveals him to Mattie for the first time,” he says. “Of course, it is one thing to imagine such a thing and quite a bit more difficult to pull it off.” Production designer Jess Gonchor, too, had his work cut out for him, in turning what he and the Coens imagined into palpably real locations. From the moment he read Charles Portis’ book, he knew his biggest task would be trying to place audiences inside the visceral life of Fort Smith, Arkansas, the thriving frontier city where the story kicks off as young Mattie arrives by train, steadfastly determined, whatever it might take, to avenge her father’s killing. Gonchor began what became an intensive journey with a personal research trip to Fort Smith, which today is the second largest city in Arkansas. Once there, he dove into the local historical society’s vast treasure trove of photographs and started “getting a feel for the place as it might have once been.” Then, he set off on a five state tour in search of a stand-in for Fort Smith that would be amenable to a major overhaul and set construction. He found what he was looking for in Granger, Texas, a quiet agricultural community outside Austin. The town seemed to have everything necessary: turn-of-the-century brick buildings, sprawling streets and, most importantly, it sat right on a historic train line, with tracks dating back to the days of the Union Pacific. “Granger was the town that time forgot,” muses Gonchor. “It had post Civil War buildings a lot like the ones I had seen in my research, and it had the train crossing, which is so important because you have to sense that Fort Smith is the last stop on the line as Mattie arrives on the train.”

The town lent Gonchor many options. “You have to keep in mind that Fort Smith was a big city. It wasn’t a coal mining town or an encampment, it was a place full of the flavor of a new age coming to America, with these big stream trains rolling through bringing strangers. The tops of the buildings in Granger have fantastic shapes to them, which isn’t 100% historically accurate, but it created great lines and shadows. There were also pockets in Granger where we could create whatever we needed to, where I was able to say, ‘Here is where I could put Stonehill’s Barn’ for example. Tons of work went into remaking the town but it gave us a lot of possibilities.”

Gonchor was ultimately able to turn a town with a population under 1500 into a bustling city on the rebound after the Civil War. “We did a little bit with visual effects to extend the town, but not much,” he remarks. “We were constantly looking for ways to make it feel bigger. When we put the dirt down in the roads -- that was the turning point. It put just the right touch on things and gave everything more scale. That’s when I said, ‘We’re going to be able to do this.’” Ultimately, Stonehill’s Barn, one of several evocative interiors in Fort Smith, where Mattie haggles over returning her father’s ponies, was created in an empty lot that had been an auto body repair shop. “They cleared out their junker cars and we created Stonehill’s Barn,” says Gonchor. Likewise, the undertaker’s shop was a gutted out old building, which Gonchor filled with pine boxes to become Mattie’s first accommodations; and the boarding house where Mattie upgrades to sleeping with a snoring grandmother, was recreated in one of Granger’s Victorian houses. Another favorite set from Fort Smith is Rooster Cogburn’s bedroom in the back of the General Store, built on a soundstage near Santa Fe. “Even though it was a stage set, we wanted it to feel very organic,” Gonchor explains. “You have this guy living on a sagging bed, amongst the carnage of all these things people bring back there to store. The idea is that it was all about layers, so we just kept putting more things in there and when people moved them, we left them where they were, to give it a real hodge-podge feeling like it would have in real life.” Then, there is the courthouse, where Mattie first sees Rooster, which was unearthed in Blanco, Texas in the Texas hill country 45 miles north of San Antonio. “The building we found was a functional hall for town meetings and it was a diamond in the rough,” recalls Gonchor. “It was perfect for creating what was a very informal kind of court from that time.” Though much of the rest of the film is shot in exterior, Gonchor notes that the locations became no less essential to the story’s fabric – and no less challenging. For example, a key, atmosphere-setting locale is the river crossing where Mattie dodges a ferryman and fords the river on the heels of Cogburn and LaBoeuf. Finding just the right spot was anything but elementary. “That’s the first place we arrive coming out of the city into the wilderness,” Gonchor observes. “We needed just the right crossing, the right length that a horse could swim, and where we could contrast two looks – manicured on one side and a much rougher on the other. A lot of work went into that.” One of Gonchor’s favorite sets is Bagby’s Outpost, the trader’s cabin where goods and, more importantly, information are exchanged as the woods give way to the Winding Stair Mountains. Gonchor calls it “the most rustic thing in the movie.” “I love it because it really shows you’re no longer in the city,” he comments. “We found the perfect spot to build it new, Las Vegas, New Mexico, and I was inspired by a house I’d found in my research with a pole through the middle

of it. I've never seen anything like it, and it was just what we needed to get the right shots. You never see the inside, just as you never see where Mattie comes from, and I like the mystery of that." A more makeshift cabin was crafted for Greaser Bob's place, where Mattie and Cogburn are almost ambushed. After a lot of searching, Gonchor came upon a box canyon on the San Cristobal Ranch in Lamy, New Mexico that had all the right stuff. "It was this oblong ravine surrounded by a rocky cliff and we decided we would kind of bury our cabin among the falling rocks," he recalls. "The place had to look like a real hideout, and I researched quite a few of them. The priorities were always a place that could be kept warm and protect the people inside." While shooting the sequence at Greaser Bob's, the production lucked into snowfall, which allowed for the stirring shot of several snow-dusted bodies leaned against the outer wall of the cabin. The Rock Ledge where Lucky Ned and his gang make camp and the Meadow where Rooster has a shootout with the gang was found on the Charles R Ranch outside Las Vegas, NM. The Santa Fe Trail runs through the ranch and the ruts made by the wagons many, many years ago can still be seen, adding to the atmosphere. This is also where Mattie falls into the infamous pit of snakes, which Charles Portis based on real-life Rattlesnake Cave – the historic site where in the late 1800s, Deputy Marshal John Spencer became a legend after an epic battle with a pack of rattlers while gathering evidence for a murder trial. While the exterior of the pit was an old turquoise mine, the interior was built on a stage in Austin. "We needed somewhere stable and safe to shoot, because there are so many close-ups," the production designer notes. "We created a massive set that was about 60 feet high, the biggest single set in the movie, and carved the whole cave out of foam. It had to be narrow and frightening, and allow the camera to capture Mattie's perspective as the snakes slither out of the skeletal remains." The final scenes of the film brought the production forward in time as a grown Mattie looks for Rooster Cogburn in a Memphis Wild West Show. Gonchor was cognizant of how much the world would have changed in quarter of a century since Mattie came of age in the wilderness. "Even when we were creating Fort Smith, I was thinking about Memphis, and the contrast in time, going ahead 25 years," says Gonchor. "In that one shot where Mattie arrives on the train, you see the buildings now have curved arches, are more expansive, and the city feels more technologically advanced. Then, she finds the Wild West Show, which takes her back into her memories of the past." Gonchor explored the rich history of Wild West Shows, which glamorized and exaggerated the Western lifestyle for Eastern audiences, existing somewhere between authentic reproductions and playful fabrications. "They were like a Western version of the traveling circus," he says. "The beautiful part for me was creating all these wonderful, old side-show banners and the great wagons. We really wanted to

create the kind of dusty, sun-worn, tired Wild West Show that Rooster Cogburn would wind up in, nothing fancy, shiny or glamorous. Everything looks like it sat through ten years of sun and rain. It's just enough to take Mattie back to the feelings she's held so long about Rooster." In the end, it was all these carefully considered, smaller details in the visual design that allowed the story to take on the vast, rambling feel of an American legend. Summarizes Roger Deakins: "The fantastic part of this film was that no matter how hard the days and the nights were, we all knew at the end of it, we were working on something very special, and we also know that no one was working harder to create this world than the Coens."

COSTUMES

The 1870s time period of *True Grit* also challenged and exhilarated costume designer Mary Zophres in her 10th collaboration with the Coen Brothers. Zophres' intensive research and deep consideration of character was greatly appreciated by the cast. "I worked with Mary on *The Big Lebowski* and I sure admired the expertise she brought to this," says Jeff Bridges. "She gave me wonderful books to look at with all the styles a guy like Rooster might have worn. Then, together, we picked just the right hat, just the right eye patch, just the right boots – the boots are very important – and the it really brings you back into those times."

"Just putting on the clothes made a real difference that affected the performances," adds Hailee Steinfeld.

Barry Pepper was awed by the big, white, wooly chaps Zophres custom-created for him. "I was worried about wearing these monstrous chaps but she explained to me that they would get all dressed down and washed out very much in the Coen Brothers way of making things as realistic as possible," he recalls. "Then we started picking out hats, belt buckles and spurs, all of which make a statement about the character." Although Zophres summarizes that there are two keys to a Western – "hats and aging," she offers – she started the process of *True Grit* by jumping into the most meticulously detailed research she's yet done for a film. "The book was awesome – we'd read it in my book club," Zophres explains. "After a brief conversation with the brothers, I started to do massive amounts of research. I went to the Western Research Library every afternoon, and the great librarian there also got in touch with the Ft. Smith Historical Society. I looked at every piece of material from the period that I could get my hands on."

Photographs from the period were helpful, but Zophres notes that she had to keep in mind the artifice of 19th century photos. "There were very few candid shots in those days, almost everything

was posed portraits,” she says. “I found a lot of pictures of bad guys and criminals, but again, they had to be taken with a grain of salt. So, in addition to looking at photographs, I did a lot of written research, reading diaries and historic accounts. I also used The Calico Chronicle, which is a great reference for women’s Western fashion in the late 19th Century. I really took the time to do a lot of reading, then I made boards for each character and bounced around ideas with Joel and Ethan.” *True Grit* takes place in an era when clothing was largely utilitarian in nature, designed for maximum warmth and durability, certainly not comfort or cultural statements. And yet, in Zophres’ work, the resonant personalities of the story’s characters are writ into their outfits. “I had in mind a very specific silhouette for each person,” she comments. “I can give you a reason and a history for every single scrap of clothing in the film.” For Mattie, Zophres expected that she would be traveling to Fort Smith in a dress her mother made for her. “Her dress is plaid wool and typical of what children would wear,” she says. “We also made silk stockings for Hailee, which are beautiful but my poor costumers were constantly darning them. When Mattie heads out on the trail, she wears her dad’s pants and coat and that big Stetson. I loved her hat, because no matter how far away she is, you can always tell it’s Mattie.” Zophres notes: “Mattie wears what was known as Stetson’s Boss of the Plains hat, which was a wider brimmed hat popular in Texas. Really, there were no true ‘cowboy hats’ in that period. They were all city hats that looked different because they got completely messed up in the elements.” Rooster Cogburn is the very antithesis of a man of appearances, but he also cuts his own distinctive figure. “Rooster is slovenly and drunk, doesn’t care what he looks like and doesn’t have a lot of clothes,” Zophres explains. “He has one outfit he wears when he has to go to court and he keeps it on a hook and pulls it out whenever he has to testify. When he hits the trail, he wears a basic pullover that they made 11 million of and were common military issue, and then he wears what was called an Ulster Coat or a Great Coat, which was split up the back for riding horseback, and a hat that looks like it’s been soaked too many times by the rain. His boots are Civil War cavalry boots, but the pulls are too long. There’s nothing about him that’s refined. He’s a mess and Jeff really owned that.” One of his most distinguishing features is his eye patch, for which Zophres presented Bridges with several choices based on her research. “Jeff instantly gravitated towards the most raw one – it looked like a piece of leather he had tanned himself and stuck on his head,” she laughs. “Joel and Ethan then let him decide which eye Rooster had lost.” Zophres adds: “Jeff is someone who like to get into costume very early on and really work with it. The way that Jeff paid attention to the clothing really meant a lot to me.” Matt Damon’s LaBoeuf is the stylistic opposite of Rooster Cogburn in every way. “He’s the film’s only dandy, the one guy who cares about

what he looks like,” Zophres observes. “That’s why we used the fringed buckskin for Matt. There was no uniform for Texas Rangers then, that came later, so they could wear whatever they wanted. With LaBoeuf, we made a real concerted effort to make sure no one else in the picture looks remotely like him. Even his hat has a real swagger to it.”

For the coward Tom Chaney, on the other hand, Zophres imagined that he would “wear a jacket he stole off someone.” She goes on: “That jacket is so ill-fitting, it actually changes his posture. It wasn’t comfortable, but Josh Brolin was really into it.” One of the biggest challenges came in dressing the enigmatic stranger known as Bear Grit, who first appears to Mattie and Rooster as the implausible, spitting image of a bear on a horse. “He’s described in Charles Portis’ book, and Joel and Ethan had this idea that they wanted him to look like a 19th Century homeless person, like a real vagabond. Ed Corbin, who plays him, is a very tall man, so we had to use about 4 bearskins to cover him – which resulted in an emergency trip to a taxidermist in Albuquerque! In many ways it was the hardest costume in the movie because it had to be carved just the right way. We even hired a special craftsman to weave claws and teeth into his moccasins, and these are the kinds of craftsmen who you can’t rush or ask for Fed Ex. You have to do things on a different time scale.” “But,” she adds, “the impact of the costume is one that is jarring and funny. I think it’s everything Joel and Ethan wanted.” Authentic details are also imbued into the clothing of secondary characters. “Every single person who appears in the film wears something that tells a bit of their story,” says Zophres. “Even the ferry man who tries to stop Mattie has a very specific outfit – a rubber coat that Goodyear started making in the 19th Century and that seaman’s hat that was immortalized on the Morton Salt label.” The realistic details went right down to the guns. Propmaster Keith Walters, a veteran of many Westerns and a historical firearms expert, hunted down reproductions of the Colts, Winchesters and Sharps that the men carry. Cogburn, as an ex-confederate guerilla, carries on his saddle two hefty, four-pound pistols that are remnants of the Civil War -- Dagoon models from 1847. He also carries a .45-caliber revolver, the famous Colt Single Action Army, known as the Peace Maker, which was adopted as the standard military revolver in the late 1800s. As a sharpshooter, LaBoeuf carries a Sharp Carbine. For Lucky Ned’s fancy pistols, Walters custom-designed guns just for the character. Another essential element in the film was facial hair – lots of it. “That period in the West was all about facial hair,” notes Zophres. “If you could grow it, you had it. It was a sign of virility. So, long before we started shooting, we told all the male actors to start growing their beards.” Sums up Zophres: “In many ways this was the most difficult film I’ve done with the Coens, but it was also the most awesome design experience I think I’ve had.”

STUNTS AND HORSES

Mattie's rollicking journey into the Indian Territory with Rooster Cogburn and LaBoeuf is punctuated by moments of sudden ambush and violence. Coordinating the film's gunfights and horse chases was stunt coordinator Jery Hewitt, who used the cast as much as possible in the sequences. His biggest challenge was the shootout between Rooster and Lucky Ned's men in the meadow – as Rooster rides at Ned's gang, reigns in his teeth, a six-gun in each hand -- which required special rigs, mechanical horses on crane arms and stunt doubles for wide shots. But at the heart of it, was Bridges himself, who did his own riding and the double-fisted shooting.

Each of the actors surprised and impressed the crew with their abilities to handle stunts, from Hailee Steinfeld, who'd never done anything like this before to Matt Damon, veteran of the high-action *Bourne* films. As for Josh Brolin, Hewitt says: "Here's a guy that definitely could have been a stuntman. He's probably one of my top five favorite actors because he completely understands a stunt. Something new to him, doesn't matter. He's just a natural athlete." Hewitt goes on: "Barry Pepper was a surprise on the horse and the other thing that he did really well was the scene where he manhandles Hailee when they come from their first gun fight with Rooster. He has to grab her and throw her to the ground and put his foot on her neck. He did a great job, and Hailee did as well because it was her controlling that foot." As for Hailee, she was completely game to try anything, from firing a pistol and jumping in the river to falling into a snake pit and being hoisted into the high treetops on a harness. "I was amazed at her acting," says Hewitt, "but then when it comes to her abilities doing some of her own stunts, she was equally brilliant." One of the most difficult stunts, which took preparation and training for the stunt rider and the horses, was the river crossing that demarcates Mattie's journey into the territory of legends, as Mattie and her horse Little Blackie take an unlikely swim to the other side. Horses, of course, are known to loathe water. "I think there are circumstances where horses grow up in an environment that requires them to swim, and they get good with it – but not often," laughs veteran wrangler Rusty Hendrickson, who oversaw the film's horses. "It's a dangerous situation for people to be on a horse in deep water." With safety the biggest concern, a special effects diving team scouted the river first, to assure the bottom was free of debris, and a consistent depth. Then they created a special ramp on the far bank where it was too muddy and steep for the horse to climb out. Teaching the horses to swim started at a facility near Austin where they swim racehorses to condition them. "We started there," explains Hendrickson, "and then we increased the distance they swam each day. When we got to where they could swim

double the distance of the river with the saddle, and pulling the rider, then we thought, okay, we're ready." Once they cross the river, Mattie finds herself in a world she has never experienced – raw, brutal and spiritually tough, but also breathtaking and, at times, spirit-lifting. It is this essence of what Portis wrote – the moments of unexpected beauty, humanity and even tenderness that suddenly burst into a comic-tinged, hard-edged Western adventure -- that the lead actors says the Coens have captured with their adaptation.

"The movie has an incredible look," says Matt Damon. "The locations and the composition give you this sense of a passage into another world." "The light and the geography, everything was just beautiful," Jeff Bridges concludes. "Everyday, the Coens showed up in cowboy hats, which was comic, but there was also something about the image that set a wonderful environment, that set that certain mood for *True Grit*."

ABOUT CHARLES PORTIS

Charles Portis' five novels are each classics of the literature of the Deep South, celebrated for their inventive and comical observations on American culture and character. While four of the novels are set in contemporary times, his second novel, True Grit (1968), stood apart. It hearkened back to the "Wild West" Arkansas of the 1870s, as a spinster recalls an extraordinary quest of vengeance, and the unlikely friendships with a US Marshal and a Texas Ranger, she made as a determined and inexperienced young girl who set out into the wilderness with an absolute sense of right and wrong. At once a grand, genre-busting, coming-of-age adventure and a study of steadfastness of spirit in all its forms, the book is widely considered Portis' great masterpiece, often compared to Mark Twain for its quintessentially sharp, raucous humor, its free-spirited heroine, and its sprawling American themes.

Originally serialized in *The Saturday Evening Post*, the book has gone on to sell millions of copies around the world and to be taught in schools. It was also adapted into a 1969 hit movie, for which John Wayne won an Academy Award®. Numerous writers, from Walker Percy, Larry McMurtry and Roy Blount, Jr. to Nora Ephron and Donna Tartt have praised the influence of Portis on American fiction. Writing in *Esquire* in 1998, journalist and author Ron Rosenbaum concluded: "Reading Portis is one of the great pleasures – both visceral and cerebral – available in modern literature." Portis' first novel was Norwood (1966), the story of a naïve Texas Marine taken in by a New York City con man, which was filmed in 1970 starring Glenn Campbell in the title role. His additional novels are The Dog of the South (1979), about a hapless Arkansas man on the trail of his runaway wife in Central America; Masters of Atlantis (1985), an account of the rise and fall of a fictional American cult; and Gringos (1991) about the loners, eccentrics and mad romantics living as American expatriates in Mexico. Today, Portis still lives in Arkansas, where he was born (in El Dorado) and educated. He served in the Marine Corps during the Korean War and afterwards, became a reporter. He wrote for the *New York Herald-Tribune*, at a time when Tom Wolfe, Lewis Lapham and Jimmy Breslin were all cutting their teeth there, and was later the paper's London Bureau Chief. He left journalism in 1964, returned to Arkansas, and dedicated himself to fiction.

ABOUT THE CAST

JEFF BRIDGES (Rooster Cogburn) is one of Hollywood's most successful actors and a five-time Academy Award® nominee. His most recent performance in *Crazy Heart* garnered the iconic performer his first Oscar® for Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role. He earned his first Oscar® nod in 1971 for Best Supporting Actor in Peter Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show*, co-starring Cybill Shepherd. Three years later, he received his second Best Supporting Actor nomination for his role in Michael Cimino's *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot*. By 1984, he landed top kudos with a Best Actor nomination for *Starman*; that performance also earned him a Golden Globe nomination. In 2001, he was honored with another Golden Globe nomination and his fourth Oscar® nomination for his role in *The Contender*, Rod Lurie's political thriller, co-starring Gary Oldman and Joan Allen, in which Bridges played the President of the United States. Bridges will next be seen in *TRON Legacy*. Prior to *Crazy Heart*, he was seen in the war comedy *The Men Who Stare at Goats*, playing Bill Django, a free-spirited military intelligence officer, who is the leader of a secret group of warriors in the army. The Peter Straughan screenplay (based on the Jon Ronson book and directed by Grant Heslov) is based on a true story about a reporter in Iraq, who meets a former member of the US Army's First Earth Battalion, a unit that employs paranormal powers in their missions. He stars opposite George Clooney (also a producer), Ewan McGregor and Kevin Spacey. He could also be seen starring opposite Justin Timberlake in *The Open Road* as Kyle Garrett, a legendary ballplayer trying to reconnect with his son while coming to terms with who they are and what kind of men they should be. The film is written and directed by Michael Meredith. Additionally, he starred in *A Dog Year* for HBO Films/Picturehouse, based on the memoir by Jon Katz and directed by George LaVoo (who also wrote the screenplay); as well as opposite Robert Downey, Jr. in the Paramount Pictures/Marvel Studios blockbuster *Iron Man*, playing the character of Obadiah Stane. Last summer, he starred opposite Shia LaBeouf as Geek, a cantankerous and washed-up surfer penguin, in the Academy Award®-nominated *Surf's Up*, from Sony Pictures Animation. The same year he appeared in *The Amateurs*, a comedy written and directed by Michael Traeger, in which citizens of a small town, under the influence of a man in the midst of a mid-life crisis (Bridges), come together to make an adult film. Prior to that, he was in his second film for director Terry Gilliam, entitled *Tideland*, where he played Noah, a drug addicted, has-been, rock guitarist; as well as in *Stick It* for Touchstone Pictures, playing the coach of a team of rule-abiding gymnasts. The actor's multi-faceted career has cut a wide swathe across all genres. He has starred in numerous box office hits, including Gary Ross' *Seabiscuit*, Terry Gilliam's offbeat comedic drama *The Fisher King* (co-starring Robin Williams), the multi-award-nominated *The Fabulous Baker Boys* (co-starring his brother Beau Bridges and Michelle Pfeiffer), *The Jagged Edge* (opposite Glenn Close), Francis Ford Coppola's *Tucker: The Man and His Dream, Blown Away* (co-starring his late father Lloyd Bridges and Tommy Lee Jones), Peter Weir's *Fearless* (with Isabella Rossellini and Rosie Perez), and Martin Bell's *American Heart* (with Edward Furlong, produced by Bridges' company, AsIs Productions). That film earned Bridges an IFP/Spirit Award in 1993 for Best Actor. In the summer of

2004, he appeared opposite Kim Basinger in the critically acclaimed *The Door in the Floor* for director Todd Williams and Focus Features, which earned him an IFP/Spirit Award nomination for Best Actor. He played a major featured role in *The Muse* (an Albert Brooks comedy starring Brooks, Sharon Stone and Andie MacDowell); appeared in the suspense thriller *Arlington Road* (co-starring Tim Robbins and Joan Cusack, directed by Mark Pellington); and starred in *Simpatico*, the screen version of Sam Shepard's play (with Nick Nolte, Sharon Stone and Albert Finney). In 1998, he starred in the Coen brothers' cult comedy *The Big Lebowski*. Before that, he starred in Ridley Scott's *White Squall*, Walter Hill's *Wild Bill*, John Huston's *Fat City* and Barbara Streisand's romantic comedy *The Mirror Has Two Faces*. Some of Bridges' other acting credits include *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People*, *K-PAX*, *Masked and Anonymous*, *Stay Hungry*, *Fat City*, *Bad Company*, *Against All Odds*, *Cutter's Way*, *The Vanishing*, *Texasville*, *The Morning After*, *Nadine*, *Rancho Deluxe*, *See You in the Morning*, *Eight Million Ways to Die*, *TRON*, *The Last American Hero* and *Heart of the West*. In 1983, Jeff founded the End Hunger Network, a nonprofit organization dedicated to feeding children around the world. Jeff produced the End Hunger televent, a three-hour live television broadcast focusing on world hunger. The televent featured Gregory Peck, Jack Lemmon, Burt Lancaster, Bob Newhart, Kenny Loggins and other leading film, television and music stars in an innovative production to educate and inspire action. Through his company, As Is Productions, he produced "Hidden in America," which starred his brother Beau. That television movie, produced for Showtime, received a Golden Globe nomination in 1996 for Best TV/Cable Film and garnered a Screen Actors Guild nod for Best Actor for Beau Bridges. The film was also nominated for two Emmy Awards. One of Jeff's true passions is photography. While on the set of his movies, Jeff takes behind-the-scenes pictures of the actors, crew and locations. After completion of each motion picture, he edits the images into a book and gives copies to everyone involved. Jeff's photos have been featured in several magazines, including *Premiere* and *Aperture*, as well as in other publications worldwide. He has also had gallery exhibits of his work in New York (at the George Eastman House), Los Angeles, London and San Diego. The books, which have become valued by collectors, were never intended for public sale, but in the fall of 2003, powerHouse Books released *Pictures: Photographs by Jeff Bridges*, a hardcover book containing a compilation of photos taken on numerous film locations over the years, to much critical acclaim. Proceeds from the book are donated to the Motion Picture & Television Fund, a nonprofit organization that offers charitable care and support to film-industry workers.

Several years ago, Jeff fulfilled a life-long dream by releasing his first album, "Be Here Soon," on Ramp Records, the Santa Barbara, CA label he co-founded with Michael McDonald and producer/singer/songwriter Chris Pelonis. The CD features guest appearances by vocalist/keyboardist Michael McDonald, Grammy-nominated Amy Holland and country-rock legend David Crosby. Ramp Records also released Michael McDonald's album, "Blue Obsession."

Jeff, his wife Susan and their three children divide their time between their home in Santa Barbara, California, and their ranch in Montana.

MATT DAMON (LaBoeuf) has been honored for his work on both sides of the camera, most recently earning Academy Award®, Screen Actors Guild Award® and Critics' Choice Award nominations for Best Supporting Actor for his portrayal of South African rugby hero Francois Pienaar in Clint Eastwood's true-life drama *Invictus*. In addition, he also garnered dual Golden Globe Award nominations this year: one for Best Supporting Actor for his performance in *Invictus* and one for Best Actor for his starring role in Steven Soderbergh's *The Informant!* Earlier in his career, Damon won an Academy Award® for Best Screenplay and received an Oscar® nomination for Best Actor, both for his breakthrough feature *Good Will Hunting*. Damon is currently starring in the Coen brothers' remake of the classic Western *True Grit*. He also has a number of projects upcoming, including George Nolfi's thriller *The Adjustment Bureau*, opposite Emily Blunt and the independent feature "Margaret," directed by Kenneth Lonergan. He recently completed filming *Contagion* for director Stephen Soderberg and will begin work on the comedy *We Bought a Zoo*, directed by Cameron Crowe in January. In 2002, Damon originated the role of Jason Bourne in the blockbuster actioner *The Bourne Identity*. He went on to reprise his role in the two hit sequels, *The Bourne Supremacy* and *The Bourne Ultimatum*, both directed by Paul Greengrass. He has also repeatedly teamed with Steven Soderbergh: as part of the all-star cast in the *Ocean's* trilogy, and in a cameo role in the second part of the director's two-part biopic *Che*. Damon's other recent film credits include the drama *Hereafter*, which reunited him with director Clint Eastwood, the action thriller *Green Zone*, directed by Paul Greengrass, Martin Scorsese's Oscar®-winning Best Picture *The Departed*, with Leonardo DiCaprio, Jack Nicholson and Mark Wahlberg; Robert De Niro's dramatic thriller *The Good Shepherd*, with De Niro and Angelina Jolie; and Stephen Gaghan's geopolitical thriller *Syriana*, with George Clooney. In addition, for the small screen, Damon both executive produced and appeared in the History Channel project *The People Speak*, based on a book co-written by famed historian Howard Zinn and featuring dramatic readings and performances from some of the most famous names in the entertainment industry.

Hailing from Boston, Damon attended Harvard University and gained his first acting experience with the American Repertory Theatre. He made his feature film debut in *Mystic Pizza*, followed by roles in *School Ties*, Walter Hill's *Geronimo: An American Legend*, and the cable projects *Rising Son* and Tommy Lee Jones' *The Good Old Boys*. He first gained attention with his portrayal of a guilt-ridden Gulf War veteran tormented by memories of a battlefield incident in 1996's *Courage Under Fire*. Together with his lifelong friend Ben Affleck, Damon co-wrote the acclaimed 1997 drama *Good Will Hunting*, for which they won an Academy Award® and a Golden Globe Award, as well as several critics groups awards for Best Original Screenplay. Damon also garnered Oscar®, Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Award® nominations for Best Actor. Additionally in 1997, Damon starred as an idealistic young attorney in Francis Ford

Coppola's *The Rainmaker* and made a cameo appearance in Kevin Smith's *Chasing Amy*. The following year, Damon played the title role in Steven Spielberg's award-winning World War II drama *Saving Private Ryan* and also starred in John Dahl's drama *Rounders*, with Edward Norton. Damon earned his third Golden Globe nomination for his performance in 1999's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, under the direction of Anthony Minghella. He also reunited with Ben Affleck and director Kevin Smith to star in the controversial comedy *Dogma*. Damon's subsequent film credits include starring roles in Robert Redford's *The Legend of Bagger Vance*; Billy Bob Thornton's *All the Pretty Horses*; the Farrelly brothers' comedy *Stuck on You*, opposite Greg Kinnear; Terry Gilliam's *The Brothers Grimm*, with Heath Ledger; and a cameo in George Clooney's *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*. Damon and Affleck formed the production company LivePlanet to produce film, television and new media projects. LivePlanet produced three Emmy-nominated seasons of *Project Greenlight*, chronicling the making of independent films by first-time writers and directors. The Project Greenlight films produced to date are *Stolen Summer*, *The Battle of Shaker Heights* and *Feast*. LivePlanet also produced the documentary *Running the Sahara*, directed by Oscar® winner James Moll. In addition, Damon co-founded H2O Africa, now known as Water.org, and is an ambassador for the children's foundation ONEXONE.

JOSH BROLIN (Chaney) continues to emerge as a powerful, sought after film actor willing to take on challenging roles in both major studio productions as well as independents. Brolin was nominated for an Academy Award®, a Screen Actors Guild Award and received awards from the New York Film Critics Circle and the National Board of Review for his portrayal of 'Dan White' in Gus Van Sant's acclaimed film *Milk*. This fall, Brolin re-teamed with director Oliver Stone in *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* opposite Shia LaBeouf and Michael Douglas. He was also seen in Woody Allen's *You Will Meet A Tall Dark Stranger*, starring alongside Anthony Hopkins, Naomi Watts, Freida Pinto, and Antonio Banderas. Brolin will soon begin production opposite Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones on the third installment of the *Men In Black* franchise directed by Barry Sonnenfeld, due for release May 2012. In 2009, Brolin produced, along with Matt Damon, Chris Moore, Anthony Arnove, and Howard Zinn, a documentary entitled *The People Speak*, based on Zinn's influential 1980 book [A People's History of the United States](#). The feature, which aired on the History Channel, looked at America's struggles with war, class, race, and women's rights and featured readings by Viggo Mortensen, Sean Penn, and David Strathairn, among others. Brolin received rave reviews for his portrayal of George W. Bush in Oliver Stone's biopic *W*. In 2007, he earned a Screen Actors Guild Award as part of an ensemble for his work in Joel and Ethan Coen's *No Country For Old Men*, which also won four Academy Awards® including Best Picture and Best Director. Additionally, he starred in Ridley Scott's blockbuster *American Gangster* and was nominated for a Screen Actors Guild Award as part of this ensemble. In early 2008, Brolin made his film directing

debut with a short entitled *X*, which he also wrote and produced. It premiered at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival before screening at such festivals as South by Southwest and the AFI Dallas Film Festival. He also directed the behind-the-scenes documentary for the *No Country for Old Men* DVD. Brolin made his feature film debut starring in the action-comedy *Goonies*, directed by Richard Donner for producer Steven Spielberg, and has since appeared in several successful films including Paul Verhoeven's blockbuster hit *Hollow Man*, with Kevin Bacon, and Jim Stern's controversial film, *All The Rage*, which made its debut at the 1999 Toronto Film Festival, featuring an all-star cast including Gary Sinise, Joan Allen, Giovanni Ribisi, and Anna Paquin. Brolin received recognition from critics and audiences in David O. Russell's *Flirting With Disaster*, portraying a bisexual federal agent, torn between a love from the past and the reality of a current relationship. The film featured an outstanding ensemble cast including Ben Stiller, Patricia Arquette, Tea Leoni, Mary Tyler Moore, George Segal, Alan Alda, Lily Tomlin and Richard Jenkins. Additional film credits include *Planet Terror*, part of the critically acclaimed Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez double feature *Grindhouse* alongside co-stars Rose McGowan and Freddy Rodriguez; *In The Valley Of Elah* for director Paul Haggis; Victor Nunez's *Coastlines*, which premiered at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival, opposite Timothy Olyphant; Scott Silver's *Mod Squad*, opposite Claire Danes; Ole Bornedal's psychological thriller *Nightwatch*, with Nick Nolte, Patricia Arquette, and Ewan McGregor; *Best Laid Plans* opposite Reese Witherspoon and Alessandro Nivola, produced by Mike Newell; Guillermo Del Toro's science-fiction thriller *Mimic*, opposite Mira Sorvino, Jeremy Northam, and Charles Dutton; as well as John Stockwell's *Into The Blue* where Brolin starred opposite Jessica Alba. Brolin made his mark in television as a series regular in the popular ABC series "The Young Riders" as well as "Private Eye" for NBC and "Winnetka Road" for CBS. Brolin also received critical praise in TNT's epic miniseries "Into the West," opposite Beau Bridges, Gary Busey and Jessica Capshaw. In addition, Brolin starred in the title role of NBC's acclaimed political drama, "Mr. Sterling." The show followed the efforts of an idealistic young politician as he attempted to both learn and work within an often corrupt system. He also appeared in the CBS movie-of-the-week "Prison of Children" and in the Showtime original film "Gang in Blue" with Mario Van Peebles, J.T. Walsh and Stephen Lang. Brolin co-starred opposite Mary Steenburgen, Gretchen Mol and Bonnie Bedelia in CBS's television adaptation of William Inge's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "Picnic." Brolin spent five years with Anthony Zerbe at the Reflections Festival at the GeVa Theatre in Rochester, New York. While there, he performed in and directed several of the festival's plays, including "Pitz and Joe," "Life in the Trees," "Forgiving Typhoid Mary," "Oh, The Innocents," "Peep Hole," "Ellen Universe Joins the Band," "Lincoln Park Zoo" and "Hard Hearts." Brolin also starred opposite Elias Koteas in the acclaimed Broadway production of Sam Shepard's "True West." In 2004, Brolin starred in the award-winning Off-Broadway play "The Exonerated," based on the true stories of a half-dozen former death row inmates. Additional stage credits include "Skin of the Teeth," "The Crucible" and "A Streetcar Named Desire" at the Kennedy Memorial Theatre; "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Lebrero Theatre; and "Dark of the Moon" at the Ann Capa Ensemble Theatre.

BARRY PEPPER (Lucky Ned Pepper), one of Hollywood's most talented actors, has a body of work that speaks for itself. Ever since he gained critical attention for his portrayal of "Private Jackson" in the Academy Award winning feature *Saving Private Ryan*, Pepper has been sought out for compelling roles with award-winning filmmakers. Both a television and film star, Pepper recently started production on the History Channel's eight-hour mini-series "The Kennedys," starring with Greg Kinnear, Katie Holmes, and Tom Wilkinson. Pepper was seen in several films this year, including *Casino Jack*, where he stars opposite Kevin Spacey in the story of disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff. Pepper plays Abramoff's protégé, Michael Scanlon. He will also be seen in *Like Dandelion Dust*, which made the festival circuits, winning awards at the Sedona Film Festival, San Luis Obispo Festival, Vail Film Festival, Sonoma Film Festival, Las Vegas Film Festival, and the Palm Springs Film Festival, just to name a few. Pepper has starred alongside some of today's most respected fellow actors and directors. He was seen opposite Will Smith in Columbia Pictures' *Seven Pounds*, worked with Clint Eastwood in the World War II epic *Flags For Our Fathers* for Dreamworks/Warner Bros, and starred alongside Tom Hanks in the Academy Award® winning feature *The Green Mile*. He also starred in *25th Hour*, Spike Lee's compelling view of post-9/11 New York City, starring Ed Norton and Philip Seymour Hoffman; and in *The Three Burials Of Melquiades Estrada* for Sony Pictures Classics, which marked Tommy Lee Jones' directorial debut and was shown in competition at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival, and garnered Pepper a nomination for Best Supporting Male at the 2006 Independent Spirit Awards. His other feature credits include the Bruckheimer/Scott thriller *Enemy of the State* with Will Smith and Gene Hackman, the critically acclaimed Paramount Pictures' *We Were Soldiers* with Mel Gibson, and the New Line feature *Knockaround Guys* opposite John Malkovich and Dennis Hopper. Pepper has also made his mark as a producer. He executive produced and starred in the title role of the ESPN feature "3: The Dale Earnhardt Story," a biopic of the NASCAR star who died in a crash during the final lap of the 2001 Daytona 500. His performance garnered a nomination for the 11th Annual SAG Awards for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Television Movie or Miniseries. He also executive produced and starred in *THE SNOW WALKER*, which he received a Best Actor nomination for the 24th Annual Genie Awards in Canada as well as eight other nominations for the film.

Pepper's starring role in the HBO feature "61*" earned him nominations for a Golden Globe, an Emmy, and a Critic's Choice Award. The film tells the story behind the competition between the New York Yankees' Roger Maris (Pepper) and Mickey Mantle (Thomas Jane) to break Babe Ruth's single season homerun record in 1961. The critically acclaimed film was directed and executive produced by Billy Crystal. Born and raised in Canada, Pepper resides there with his wife and daughter.

HAILEE STEINFELD (Mattie Ross) makes her feature film debut in *True Grit*, having landed the key role of Mattie Ross at the age of 13, following a nationwide search. At eight years of age, Hailee revealed to her family that she had a strong desire to pursue acting. After a year of study, she then signed with an agent. She began with print work, quickly transitioning to commercials and several short films as well as regularly participating in acting workshops. On the small screen, Hailee was cast in Kelsey Grammar's short-lived television series "Back to You" and in a pilot for Nickelodeon. A native of California, Hailee lives in the Los Angeles area with her parents and her older brother.

BRUCE GREEN (Harold Parmalee), an Iowa native, began his career in Chicago. He became a member of ImprovOlympic and The Second City's National Touring Company, performing in small theaters, nightclubs, and college campuses. His comedy team Die Hanswurst scored a hit portraying humorless German clowns in *Klown: Prick Us and We'll Burst*. Later, Bruce starred as Friar Laurence in *The People Vs. Friar Laurence, The Man Who Killed Romeo and Juliet*, a wildly successful co-production of The Second City and Chicago Shakespeare Theater. The modestly budgeted comedy went on to become the most profitable show in Chicago Shakespeare's 25-year history. Relocating to Hollywood, Bruce made a handful of appearances on Fox's "MADtv" and came to films in *The Brothers Solomon* with Will Arnett and Will Forte.

MIKE WATSON (Stunts) is as known for his work behind the camera as a stunt coordinator and stunt player as he is for his acting. Among Watson's acting roles are *Appaloosa, The Garden, The Adventures of Huck Finn*, and *Back to the Future Part III*. As a stunt coordinator, his work includes *The Road, Appaloosa, We Fight to Be Free*, and the HBO series "Deadwood." He has appeared as a stunt player in numerous films including *3:10 to Yuma, Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End, Hidalgo, Gods and Generals, Planet of the Apes, Texas Rangers, All the Pretty Horses, The Mask of Zorro* and *The Patriot*.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

JOEL COEN (Director/Writer/Producer) was honored by the Cannes International Film Festival in 2001, as Best Director for *The Man Who Wasn't There*, and in 1991, as Best Director for *Barton Fink*. He was honored as Best Director by the New York Film Critics Circle, the National Board of Review, and the BAFTA Awards for 1996's *Fargo*; and also won the Academy Award® for Best Original Screenplay for *Fargo*, which he co-wrote with his brother Ethan. The screenplay for *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, also co-written with Ethan, was nominated for a BAFTA Award and the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. Other films that he has directed and co-written are *Intolerable Cruelty*; *The Big Lebowski*; *The Hudsucker Proxy*; *Miller's Crossing*; *Raising Arizona*; and *Blood Simple*. He co-directed and co-wrote the 2004 comedy *The Ladykillers* with Ethan. Joel & Ethan Coen's 2007 adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* brought them the Directors Guild of America, BAFTA, and Academy Awards; the Golden Globe Award for Best Screenplay; Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay from the New York Film Critics Circle; and Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay from the Oscars and the National Board of Review. The film's cast was voted the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture, and Javier Bardem won the Screen Actors Guild and Academy Awards for Best Supporting Actor, among other accolades. Joel & Ethan Coen's film, *Burn After Reading*, was nominated for the BAFTA Award and the WGA Award for Best Original Screenplay and their most recent film, *A Serious Man*, received Academy Award® nominations for Best Picture and for Best Original Screenplay and was also nominated for the BAFTA Award and the WGA Award for Best Original Screenplay.

ETHAN COEN (Director/Writer/Producer) Ethan Coen has produced and co-written such critically acclaimed films as *Miller's Crossing*, *Barton Fink*, which won the Palme d'Or [Best Picture], Best Director, and Best Actor (John Turturro) Awards at the 1991 Cannes International Film Festival; and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, which was nominated for two Academy Awards, five BAFTA Awards, and two Golden Globe Awards (winning one). One of 1996's most honored films, *Fargo*, which he produced and co-wrote, received seven Academy Award nominations and won two, including Best Original Screenplay for Ethan and his brother Joel. Among the other films that he has co-written and produced are *Blood Simple*; *Raising Arizona*; *The Hudsucker Proxy*; *The Big Lebowski*; *The Man Who Wasn't There*; and *Intolerable Cruelty*. He co-directed and co-wrote the 2004 comedy *The Ladykillers* with Joel. Joel and Ethan Coen's 2007 adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* brought them the Directors Guild of America, BAFTA, and Academy and Awards; the Golden Globe Award for Best Screenplay; Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay from the New York Film Critics Circle; Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay from the Oscars and the National Board of Review. The film's cast was voted the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture, and Javier Bardem won the Screen Actors Guild and Academy Awards for Best Supporting Actor, among

other accolades. Joel and Ethan Coen's film, *Burn After Reading*, was nominated for the BAFTA Award and the WGA Award for Best Original Screenplay. Their most recent film, *A Serious Man*, received Academy Award® nominations for Best Picture and for Best Original Screenplay and was also nominated for the BAFTA Award and the WGA Award for Best Original Screenplay. "Almost an Evening," comprising three short plays by Ethan Coen, was staged in 2008 off-Broadway by Neil Pepe at the Atlantic Theater Company's Stage 2 and then at the Bleecker Street Theater; in 2009, the same director and company staged his three new short plays under the title "Offices."

SCOTT RUDIN (Producer) Films include: *The Social Network*; *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*; *True Grit*; *Moneyball*; *Greenberg*; *It's Complicated*; *Fantastic Mr. Fox*; *Julie & Julia*; *Doubt*; *No Country for Old Men*; *There Will Be Blood*; *Reprise*; *The Queen*; *Margot at the Wedding*; *Notes on a Scandal*; *Venus*; *Closer*; *Team America: World Police*; *I Heart Huckabees*; *School of Rock*; *The Hours*; *Iris*; *The Royal Tenenbaums*; *Zoolander*; *Sleepy Hollow*; *Wonder Boys*; *Bringing Out the Dead*; *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*; *The Truman Show*; *In & Out*; *Ransom*; *The First Wives Club*; *Clueless*; *Nobody's Fool*; *The Firm*; *Searching for Bobby Fischer*; *Sister Act*; *The Addams Family*. Theatre includes: *Passion*; *Hamlet*; *Seven Guitars*; *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way to The Forum*; *Skylight*; *The Chairs*; *The Blue Room*; *Closer*; *Amy's View*; *Copenhagen*; *The Designated Mourner*; *The Goat*; *Caroline, or Change*; *The Normal Heart*; *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*; *Doubt*; *Faith Healer*; *The History Boys*; *Shining City*; *Stuff Happens*; *The Vertical Hour*; *The Year of Magical Thinking*; *Gypsy*; *God of Carnage*; *Fences*.

ROGER DEAKINS, ASC, BSC (Director of Photography) was born in Torquay, Devon, England. He attended art college and the National Film School. He began in still photography and many of his stills can be seen on his website (www.rogerdeakins.com). He then turned to documentaries, shooting many in Africa as well as covering the Whitbread Round the World Yacht race that required him to work for more than 9 months as a crew member while filming a documentary. Roger then went on to feature cinematography, starting in England and then later shooting in the United States. Deakins has been nominated eight times for the Academy Award® for Best Cinematography. Cited was his work on Joel and Ethan Coen's *No Country for Old Men*; Frank Darabont's *The Shawshank Redemption*; Martin Scorsese's *Kundun*; Andrew Dominik's *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*; Stephen Daldry's *The Reader* (shared credit with Chris Menges); and Joel Coen's *Fargo*, *The Man Who Wasn't There*, and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* He has been nominated nine times for the American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) Award and won the award twice for *Shawshank Redemption* and *The Man who Wasn't There*. Cited was his work on the eight features listed above, as well as on Sam Mendes' *Revolutionary Road*. He will be receiving the ASC's Lifetime Achievement award in 2011. He has been nominated 5 times and twice won the BAFTA award for cinematography for *The Man Who Wasn't There* and *No Country for Old Men*. He has been nominated 5 times and four times won the BSC award.

He was honored in 2008 with the NBR's Career achievement in Cinematography award. He has been nominated twice and won once for the Independent Spirit awards. Recently, Roger has been the visual consultant for several animated features - Pixar's release *WALL•E* and Dreamworks' *How to Train Your Dragon*, as well as several other projects currently in production.

JESS GONCHOR (Production Designer) came to industry attention as a production designer with his work on Bennett Miller's *Capote*, starring Academy Award® winner Philip Seymour Hoffman. He went on to design the blockbuster *The Devil Wears Prada*, which starred Golden Globe Award winner Meryl Streep for director David Frankel; and the Coen Brothers' Academy Award-winning *No Country for Old Men*, for which he was an Art Directors Guild Award winner and *Burn After Reading* and *A Serious Man*, which each earned him a nomination from the Art Directors Guild for Excellence in Production Design. The native New Yorker first honed his craft in off-off-Broadway theater productions. Segueing into films, he worked in the art departments of such features as Nicholas Hytner's *The Crucible*; Clint Eastwood's *A Perfect World*; and Rob Reiner's *The American President*. Mr. Gonchor worked as an assistant art director on Edward Zwick's *The Siege*, and was later an art director on the filmmaker's *The Last Samurai*, sharing in the design team's Art Directors Guild Award nomination. He was production designer on Sam Mendes' *Away We Go* starring John Krasinski and Maya Rudolph; and, most recently, on Doug Liman's *Fair Game*, starring Sean Penn and Naomi Watts.

True Grit is **MARY ZOPHRES** (Costume Designer) tenth consecutive collaboration with the Coen Brothers as costume designer, following *Fargo*; *The Big Lebowski*; *O Brother Where Art Thou?*; *The Man Who Wasn't There*; *Intolerable Cruelty*; *The Ladykillers*; *No Country for Old Men*; *Burn After Reading* and *A Serious Man*. Earlier, she was assistant costume designer for the Coens on *The Hudsucker Proxy*. She has been the costume designer on several movies for Steven Spielberg including *The Terminal*; *Catch Me If You Can*, which brought her a BAFTA Award nomination for Best Costume Design; and *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. Zophres' other films as costume designer include the Farrelly Brothers' first three movies (*Dumb and Dumber*, *Kingpin*, and *There's Something About Mary*); Timothy Hutton's *Digging to China*; Oliver Stone's *Any Given Sunday*; Terry Zwigoff's *Ghost World*; Brad Silberling's *Moonlight Mile*; Bruno Barreto's *View from the Top*; Nora Ephron's *Bewitched*; Joe Carnahan's *Smokin' Aces*; and Robert Redford's *Lions for Lambs*.

She earned a degree in art history and studio art from Vassar College before beginning her professional career working in the fashion industry for Norma Kamali and Esprit. She began working in the film industry as the extras wardrobe supervisor on Oliver Stone's *Born on the Fourth of July*. Zophres recently worked as costume designer on Jon Favreau's *Iron Man* sequel, starring Robert Downey, Jr. and is currently at work on Favreau's *Cowboys and Aliens*.

CARTER BURWELL (Composer) has composed scores for several Coen Brothers' films, including the recent *A Serious Man*, as well as *Blood Simple*, *Raising Arizona*, *Miller's Crossing*, *Barton Fink*, *The Hudsucker Proxy* and *Fargo*. He most recently scored *Howl* for Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman and for Lisa Cholodenko's *The Kids Are All Right*. He also scored *The Spanish Prisoner* (David Mamet), *Three Kings* (David O. Russell), *Being John Malkovich* and *Adaptation* (Spike Jonze), *Before Night Falls* (Julian Schnabel), *Velvet Goldmine* (Todd Haynes), *Gods and Monsters* and *Kinsey* (Bill Condon). Carter previously composed the original orchestral score for the Telling Pictures production of *The Celluloid Closet*. Carter has taught film scoring at the Sundance Composer's Lab, the School for Sound (UK), Columbia University, Buddy Baker Film Music Seminar, Havana Film Festival, Edinburgh Film Festival, Cinesonic (Australia), NYU and ASCAP.