

GRADUATION Production Notes

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SYNOPSIS

When a friend is in need of financial assistance, the logical next step is to plan a bank robbery. At least that was the conclusion of four high school friends about to embark on the next stage of their lives. The question is will they pull off this heist in time to toss their caps at graduation or have they gotten themselves way in over their heads?

POLLY (Shannon Lucio), JACKSON (Chris Lowell), CHAUNCEY (Riley Smith), and CARL (Chris Marquette) are four best friends and graduating seniors. On the eve of graduation they are unsure about the different directions their lives are taking them. Polly is off to Harvard, which pleases her banker-father, DEAN (Adam Arkin). But her longtime boyfriend, Chauncey, finds himself heading to state college without her. Jackson, who has long had a crush on Polly, doesn't know what he wants to do with his life despite advice from his step-dad, MIKE (Huey Lewis). And rebellious Carl is resigned to care for his mom.

But when Carl can no longer afford his mom's care, and Polly catches her father in a lie, the four hatch a plan to rob her father's bank on graduation day. To prepare they copy Dean's keys and scope out his bank. But their perfect plan is quickly complicated by love; Polly falls for Jackson, and Carl pursues SUZY (Aimee Garcia,) one of the bank tellers. At Prom, as all conflicts come to a head, the gang learns Polly has become the class valedictorian. Because she'll have to give a speech at the graduation ceremony, their plan is now more complicated than ever.

On the day of their ceremony, as classmates prepare to graduate, the foursome slips into the bank to pull off the heist. But when their plan hits an obstacle, events quickly spin out of control. As cops surround the bank, the four have to figure a way out of their predicament or risk seeing their futures slip out of their hands.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Development

While attending USC's Graduate Screenwriting Program, writer D. Cory Turner began a screenplay that would eventually influence GRADUATION. "The script was my attempt to understand why I had chosen to go to film school while so many of my friends were landing respectable jobs. I, like the character Jackson, felt adrift. No job – no career – sounded right to me," says Turner.

"I met the movie's director, Mike Mayer, soon after I wrote that first draft, and his notes were smart. Very smart. So I hitched my wagon to his, and we developed what would eventually become GRADUATION."

Mayer was attracted to the story of students facing the end of their high school days. "I remember back in school being absolutely certain of one thing: my best friends and I would always be together. And yet now we're living our own lives, some in different cities, some in different countries. I wanted to tell a story about lifelong friends who have done everything together and who are forced by circumstance to go their separate ways." Adds Turner, "high school graduation is about the end of so much more than high school."

Mayer and Turner developed the script together, interweaving the bank heist with the characters. "The bank heist in GRADUATION is spectacular, but the theme of the film is very real. It's about figuring out what you want to be in life – what your life is all about," says Mayer.

Writer Cory Turner needed a day job to support his writing. So he became a gas meter reader for the Southern California Gas Company. "I averaged about 700 meters and eight to ten miles a day. By the end of my tenure at the Gas Company, I had been chased, bitten, nearly assaulted, and even caught up in an LAPD raid. I met thousands of perfect strangers, adopted a stray cat, married my wife and wrote GRADUATION all while employed as a gas meter reader."

Cast & Crew

Mike Mayer brought the GRADUATION screenplay to producer Jane Sindell. Mayer had worked for Sindell when she was an agent and head of the Motion Picture Literary department at Creative Artists Agency, and they had become fast friends. Mayer directed his first short film, THE ROBBER, while working for Jane. According to her, "on weekends and evenings Mike would shoot and edit his film, and during weekdays he would work with me. Occasionally he would

fall asleep in my office.” Jane, who had earlier left CAA to become one of the producers of SEABISCUIT, brought executive producers Jeffrey Korchek and Jason Blum in to the project. Producers Scott Hanson and Robin Bradford were looking for a project like GRADUATION and quickly signed up as well. “When Scott and Robin came on board, preparation on the film really took off,” says Mayer.

Producer Bob Degus (PLEASANTVILLE, A MAN APART) originally planned to work only a few weeks on GRADUATION, but he was a fan of the screenplay and of Mike Mayer’s short film THE ROBBER, and he eventually signed on to produce Mike’s debut feature. Mayer says “I was very lucky to have Bob on location with me because he had just directed a great film called 9/TENTHS so he understood the challenges and possibilities that lay before me.”

Cinematographer Matt Uhry (LOS BASTARDOS, numerous music videos) came on board. “For me, Matt was a true creative partner, and his team was so fast we were never waiting on camera or lighting,” says Mayer. Production designer Bruton Jones (UNDERWORLD) had little time to secure and dress locations, but he pulled it off with humor and grace. Editor Jane Kurson (MONSTER, BEETLE JUICE) set up shop in Los Angeles. “Jane Kurson was my stab at reaching-for-the-moon as far as editors go. I am such a fan of her body of work and her ability to craft character. Much to my surprise she loved the script and agreed to work with me. I was thrilled,” says Mayer.

The characters in GRADUATION “have bits and pieces of both Mike and me throughout,” says Turner. Some of them are even based loosely on Cory Turner’s friends from Decatur, Illinois. But for the filmmakers, the characters really came to life with the ensemble casting.

“With Shannon Lucio as Polly, the audience believes she is smart enough to become valedictorian, beautiful enough to be the center of a love triangle, and motivated enough to drive the heist. She really makes it authentic,” says Mayer.

Chris Marquette dove into his role as Carl with gusto. He got real piercings and had to dye his hair green. “It turns out there are no permanent green hair dyes, so Chris had to re-dye his hair every two days or so. Because the dye was temporary it would come off everywhere, and Chris would regularly wake up with his hotel sheets dyed dark green,” says Mayer.

Riley Smith gives a heartfelt performance as Chauncey, a character who is losing his long-term girlfriend. “Riley made his complicated character truly likeable. And it was amazing how he could turn it on and off with each take,” says Mayer.

Chris Lowell was the last of the lead actors to be cast. Mayer remembers “I knew the second I saw him he was the perfect Jackson. He has such a natural charm about him. He is charismatic and vulnerable in a way that makes men identify with him and women want to be with him. He is a star in the making.”

Adam Arkin brought likability to the role of Dean, Polly’s father. “It was important for me that Dean not come off as an evil character, but rather a good man who had made bad choices. Adam is an accomplished director as well as actor, and he was capable of communicating with me as both,” says Mayer.

Huey Lewis, who plays Jackson’s step-dad, Mike, was touring at the time of production. Mayer notes “I asked Huey to grow a beard for the part of ‘Mike,’ and Huey agreed. He wanted to be as authentic as possible. For the few weeks before his performance, Huey had to appear in concert with his scruffy beard. I’m not sure what his fans thought of that.”

“GRADUATION is my feature film debut, and I found it fascinating to direct an ensemble cast where each actor had his or her own unique approach to the craft of acting. It was a challenging introduction to feature directing for me, and I’m so proud of the great performances in the film,” says Mayer. Indeed, the performances in GRADUATION have received rave reviews.

Tone & Location

According to Mayer, “the tone of GRADUATION is real and heartfelt, with a subversive edge. Cory and I are both fans of genre movies. Heists in particular. Because no good heist film is ever about the money.” Adds Turner, “good heists are about stealing something else, something the money represents. In DOG DAY AFTERNOON it’s Al Pacino trying to pay for his lover’s sex-change operation. In RIFIFI it’s about respect. In GRADUATION, Carl’s robbing the bank to save his mother. Polly’s doing it to help Mrs. J, certainly, but she’s also trying to punish her adulterer-father. Chauncey wants to please, and hold onto, Polly, and Jackson commits because he’s desperate for a challenge. The money’s an afterthought. It has to be because money, by itself, ain’t interesting.”

The heist is extraordinary but the characters and the environment are very real. Mayer says “I shot GRADUATION in a realistic blue-collar style that lends a relatable sense of tension to the imaginary heist plot.

The filmmakers chose Pittsburgh because of its authentic blue-collar, industrial look. “The Steel City has all the trappings of a working class, American town that’s seen better days,” says Turner.

Rehearsal & Production

The characters Jackson, Polly, Chauncey and Carl have been friends their whole lives, so it was imperative in rehearsals to establish a true bond among the four actors. “What is at stake for the four characters is their friendship in the face of their approaching graduation.” says Mayer.

“The actors and I had a very short time in Pittsburgh to rehearse. I got the four of them together in my hotel room and we rehearsed as a group. During breaks I had the actors go around town in character, with me tagging along to observe and make suggestions. We went to a Burger King, I think, and Chris Marquette, in character as Carl, went behind the counter and nearly got us all kicked out. It was at that moment that the four actors clicked as a group. I left them at the restaurant and walked back to the hotel, floating on air. I don’t even think the four of them noticed me go,”

“To rehearse the emotional rollercoaster of the heist, I would kick the actors out of my hotel room, hide an object like a glass or a remote control, dim the lights, and then have the actors ‘break into’ my room to steal it. I would often change things up a little so they would have to deal with surprises. It was a very effective rehearsal and it was a lot of fun. I always worried, though, that another hotel guest was going to call the front desk on us. I’m sure we must have looked mighty suspicious,” notes Mayer.

On another occasion, the actors “borrowed” prom costumes from the wardrobe truck and crashed a wedding that was taking place in their hotel ballroom. Mayer remembers, “the bride and groom and a lot of their guests were big fans of the actors and the whole thing turned into an amazingly fun night.”

Music

The real and subversive tone in GRADUATION is furthered by the music. “All of the source music in the film is music the main characters would listen to. It’s fresh and timeless and has a certain raw edge to it. We compiled an amazing soundtrack, mixing up-and-coming bands like The Royal Heist, The Ringers, ballboy and James Henderson with more established bands like Iggy Pop, Gang of Four, Stellastar and Bloc Party. I am very proud of the soundtrack and I really can’t believe how great it came out,” says Mayer.

Composer Brian Ralston created a score that melds a heist melody with the raw rock influence of the source songs. According to Mayer, “Brian is not only a musical genius, he also has a technological proficiency and curiosity that saved us many times over in post production.”

Reflections

The filmmakers look back with fondness on the experience of making GRADUATION. Notes Mayer, “my goal with GRADUATION, my first feature film, was to create a commercially appealing film that treats its audience with respect. Mostly, I love when people see a little bit of themselves in the characters I helped create. The filmmaking process was longer and more involved than I could have possibly predicted. But the thrill of sitting with an audience and feeling them connect to the film, and to the characters, has made it all worth while. Because making that audience connection was why I became a filmmaker.”

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

MIKE MAYER – Director / Story By

Writer/director Mike Mayer will debut his first feature length film, GRADUATION, theatrically in May 2008 through Magnolia Pictures. The Houston Chronicle calls Mayer “**a rising star**,” adding that, for audiences “**Graduation is a fine, focused initiation into his burgeoning talent.**”

Mike's award-winning short film THE ROBBER, which he wrote, produced and directed, traveled to over 25 film festivals worldwide. THE ROBBER was distributed through HBO/Cinemax and on a vast array of media platforms throughout the world. The success of "The Robber" garnered Mike several feature writing assignments. Mike continued to direct festival and internet favorite shorts including “The Date,” the TV series “One Minute Soap” for ABC/Disney, and commercials.

Prior to his directing debut, Mike was an Associate Producer on numerous TV shows and music videos, and worked with future GRADUATION producer, Jane Sindell, at Creative Artists Agency. While based in London, Mike consulted for film commissions throughout Europe. In 1997, Mike launched Los Angeles-based Particle Productions, which has become a leading entertainment marketing firm handling product placement, promotion, licensing and sponsorships for brand and studio clients.

Mike attended Brandeis University in Boston, Massachusetts, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude; was an All-American sabre fencer, and received Brandeis Athletics’ top award, the Charles Napoli Scholar Athlete Award. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Film and Economics, as well as a Master of Arts in International Economics and Finance.

D. CORY TURNER - Writer

Screenwriter D. Cory Turner earned an MFA from USC's Graduate Screenwriting Program, where he co-wrote *Blue Haven*, a fifteen-minute homage to transgendered skateboarders. The short film played more than eighty festivals, including Sundance, and won the Ellen Award for most original short at the Aspen Shortsfest (April '01) as well as the Gold Award for most original dramatic short at Worldfest Houston (also April '01). *Blue Haven* later sold to HBO/Cinemax for a two-year run.

To subsidize his writing career, Turner has loaded furniture, dartboards, and porcelain buffalo into semi-trailers for a major department store chain, re-shelved library books, and catalogued bullet holes for a prominent military museum. Yes, bullet holes. He has also read gas meters in Compton (where he was assaulted with a knife and bitten, though not by the same man). Most recently, he became a producer with NPR (National Public Radio) and personally reported on the AIDS pandemic in western Kenya.

Turner grew up in Decatur, Illinois – a blue-collar town with more than one noteworthy distinction. It's both the world's largest processor of soybeans and home of the Chicago Bears (before, of course, they left for Chicago). He received his B.A. from Grinnell College, where he majored in English, published more than a dozen short stories in the campus rag, and studied writing in a faculty swap with the renowned Iowa Writer's workshop. He graduated valedictorian of his class and fully intended to earn a Ph.D in British Literature with an emphasis on the rhyming couplets of Alexander Pope. But that's only because he didn't think he could get into film school. The rest, as they say...

Today he divides his time between hard news assignments from NPR and writing movies that make him feel the way he once did, as a kid, watching *The Goonies*.

MATTHEW UHRY - Cinematographer

Matt Uhry is a Los Angeles-based cinematographer who has lensed feature films, commercials, and music videos.

Recent work includes the music videos for the Strokes, the Foo Fighters, the award-winning "Respect Yourself" Kellogg's Nutri-Grain campaign for Leo Burnett; AICP award winning Nike Skateboys for Wieden Kennedy, and the launch spots for the 2007 Nissan Sentra. His commercial work has also been featured at Cannes in the Saatchi & Saatchi showcase including spots for the Mississippi Board of Health, the GAP and, Baccardi.

In addition to major broadcast outlets, Uhry's feature work has been screened at festivals including Sundance, SXSW, Taos Talking Pictures and the Hamptons Film Festival.

Uhry sidelines as a virtual cinematographer having advised lighting and layout at digital animation facilities including Pixar Animation Studios (*Toy Story 2*) and in addition has consulted on several digital features and videogames.

Uhry received a BFA with a specialization in cinematography from the University of Colorado, Boulder in 1990.

JANE KURSON, A.C.E – Film Editor

Jane Kurson is an award winning film editor who has edited over 20 feature films. She began her career in documentaries as an assistant editor on Pumping Iron, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger.

After winning an Emmy for the CBS special, The Body Human, The Body Beautiful, Jane went on to edit features such as John Avildsen's Neighbors and Karate Kid II, Jonathan Kaplan's Immediate Family and Love Field, and Tim Burton's Beetle Juice. She also edited such films as Hotshots!, Bed of Roses, and Patty Jenkin's Monster, for which Charlize Theron won an Academy Award.

A Boston native, Jane now lives in Los Angeles where aside from film editing she has begun to establish herself as an artist. Her paintings can currently be seen at Pace Restaurant in Laurel Canyon.

BRUTON JONES – Production Designer

Bruton Jones began his feature film career as an Art Director on such films as Armageddon, The Rock, and Con Air, collaborating with acclaimed directors like Michael Bay, Simon West and John Carpenter. Bruton's first Production Design credit was on the critically acclaimed thriller, Underworld, starring Kate Beckinsale. Most recently, Bruton worked on Solstice, with director Daniel Myrick; Stay Alive, for Brent Bell; and Mike Mayer's Graduation. He is currently working on the remake of the cult classic, Revenge of the Nerds.

JANE SINDELL - Producer

Jane Sindell produced Seabiscuit, the critically acclaimed box office success, along with Gary Ross, Kathleen Kennedy, and Frank Marshall. A former literary agent, Sindell came across the story of the famous racehorse in an article written by Laura Hillenbrand in American Heritage magazine. Together with her then filmmaking partner, Gary Ross, Sindell leapt upon the opportunity to acquire the rights, along with Universal Pictures, to what she sensed had the potential to not only be a best selling book but also a commercially profitable motion picture.

Prior to her involvement with Seabiscuit, Sindell ran the motion picture literary department at Creative Artists Agency, where she spent 11 of her 22 years in the agency business. During her tenure at CAA, she managed all aspects of the careers of her clients, which included Paul Newman, Billy Crystal, Kevin Costner, Lowell Ganz & Babaloo Mandel, Eric Roth, Barry Levinson, Sydney Pollack, and Gary Ross. Sindell has been intrinsically involved with numerous feature films including Forrest Gump, Nobody's Fool, Big, Dave, Dirty Dancing, Stand By Me, City Slickers, The Insider and Pleasantville.

Prior to her tenure at Creative Artists Agency, she headed the motion picture literary department at International Creative Management. Sindell represented artists such as Nora Ephron, and was instrumental in turning her client, Eleanor Bergstein's, autobiographical idea into one of the most successful independent films of all time, Dirty Dancing.

After graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Stanford University, Sindell got her start in the business at the William Morris Agency. Although the agency was not at that time accepting women into their agent training program, she became one of the only two women to have been promoted to agent from within the company. Sindell was subsequently recruited by both International Creative Management, and later Creative Artists Agency, where she managed all day-to-day operations of the respective agency's screenwriting business.

In addition to developing and producing Graduation, Sindell also produced, along with Jason Blum, the forthcoming independent movie, The Darwin Awards (MGM).

BOB DEGUS - Producer

Producer of two Academy Award nominated short films, two-time Cable-Ace Award nominee and a Golden Satellite nominee, Bob Degus started from the ground up and has, at one point or another, done almost every job in filmmaking; including writer, director, cinematographer, editor, post-production supervisor, Oxberry-animation cameraman, and most importantly, caterer.

Growing up in Rochester, New York, his family has a long history of working for Eastman Kodak. Following somewhat in their footsteps, Bob wanted to make film as well – just not film stock. He wanted to take it a step further and actually make movies. Prior to producing Graduation, he directed the independent feature, 9/Tenths, starring Gabrielle Anwar. He also directed and edited a 35mm short film, Another Round, that was invited to screen at the Los Angeles International Film Festival, received an award at the Houston Film Festival, and was subsequently purchased by Showtime for airing on their network.

He has produced films starring Brad Pitt, Tobey Maguire, Reese Witherspoon, Gary Sinise, Vin Diesel, Elijah Wood, to name a few.

He likes to say he has produced or worked with more first time feature directors than just about any other producer in Hollywood, most notably producing Gary Ross' feature debut film, the triple ACADEMY AWARD nominated Pleasantville which he produced alongside Steven Soderbergh and John Kilik. Bob continued to work with Gary Ross for the next five years.

He was the Production Executive on F. Gary Gray's highly successful feature-directorial debut film, Friday, and also worked with Gray again on Set It Off (which was New Line's highest grossing film the year it was produced) and he later produced F. Gary Gray's, A Man Apart.

SCOTT HANSON - Producer

Scott Hanson is the founder of Hanson Film Group, Inc., an independent film production company. Scott has produced independent films including the soon to be released film,

Graduation. He is currently in post production on the film *Tenderness* starring Russell Crowe, Laura Dern and Jon Foster, directed by John Polson, which he produced with Greenstreet Films.

A seasoned executive, Scott has enjoyed a life-long interest in the entertainment industry. Growing up in Los Angeles provided Scott with an opportunity to do a number of television roles, most notably as a regular on *The Danny Thomas Show*. Exposure to creative talent at an early age had a lasting impact on him. Today Scott is well-known in the art world, both as an artist and as the founder and owner of the prestigious Hanson Galleries, which grew to twenty six locations throughout the United States and Europe.

Scott sold off his first gallery group. His travels through Europe had inspired a new passion. He negotiated contracts to represent the limited edition artwork of Picasso, Chagall, Calder and Miro, among others, in the United States. He opened a second group of galleries to showcase these recognized modern masters. Thirteen galleries were opened nationally from New York to Los Angeles. The success of Hanson Galleries motivated Scott to develop a publishing company that specialized in the representation and distribution of American Artists in Asia and Europe. Two years later, Hanson was recognized by *INC. Magazine* as one of the top ten entrepreneurs of the year. By this time, Hanson Galleries was considered the largest privately held art company in the United States. Throughout the years Scott has continued his own artwork, which has exhibited in seven museums and many public venues.

ROBIN BRADFORD - Producer

Robin has been writing for film for six years and has ten completed scripts, two of which are in pre-production, and four of which have been sold. A number of her original screenplays have won prestigious awards, including: *Email From Heaven* (Best Comedy Screenplay at the Telluride Film Festival 2004 and Austin Film Festival 2004); *Prey For Me* (Best Mystery Thriller at both the Telluride and Key West Film Festivals in 2004); *Darling Diva* (a finalist at the Sundance Writers Lab in 2004 and Platinum Remi Award at the Houston Worldfest, 2004); and *Catbird Strut* (Platinum Remi Award at Houston Worldfest, 2006), among others. Robin has also written for the stage, and was a founding member of the Bay Area's Brookside Repertory Theatre. She continues to study writing with acclaimed Eugene O'Neill Theatre distinguished playwright Will Dunne.

Her short film, *The Good Daughter*, has been recognized at numerous film festivals. *Graduation* marks Robin's debut in feature film production. Currently, she is producing *Frank*, a family film based on her own script, being shot in Spokane, Washington.

Robin has a strong business and leadership background as the founder and CEO of Bradford Staff, a highly successful recruiting and temporary placement firm headquartered in San Francisco. Robin grew the Company from a one-person startup to a leading California company with six Bay Area offices and over 5,000 temporary employees annually. Robin was consistently named as one of San Francisco's Top Twenty-Five Women in Business and featured in *INC. Magazine* and many other publications. She has served on the Boards of San Francisco Opera, San Francisco

Conservatory of Music, San Francisco State University's Graduate School of Business, the YMCA, and as Chairperson of San Francisco Zen Center's Everyday Board.

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

ADAM ARKIN (DEAN DEELEY)

Adam Arkin's work spans motion pictures, television and theatre. He received a Tony Award Nomination for his work in the play, *I Hate Hamlet*, and played the role of Nathan Detroit in the Broadway production of *Guys and Dolls*. Other stage credits include roles in *Brooklyn Boy* (Drama Desk Nomination), *An American Daughter* with Meryl Streep, and *Four Dogs and Bone*.

He has appeared in recurring roles in many notable television series, including: *Monk*, *Boston Legal*, *8 Simple Rules*, *The Practice*, *Frasier* (Emmy Nomination), *The West Wing*, *Chicago Hope*, *Picket Fences*, *Ally McBeal*, and *Northern Exposure* (Emmy Nomination).

Mr. Arkin's theatrical motion picture credits include *Hitch*, *Halloween VII*, *Wrestling Ernest Hemingway*, *Marilyn Hotchkiss Ballroom Dancing*, and *Hanging Up*.

AIMEE GARCIA (SUZIE)

A Chicago native, Aimee Garcia has been working in entertainment since the age of seven and has been a fixture of television and film ever since. Aimee is a new series regular on *The George Lopez Show* playing "Veronica" and will next be seen in the indie features *D-War* and *Universal Signs*, as well as the feature *Graduation* about a group of friends who plot to rob a bank during their high school graduation. Fresh off *James L. Brooks' Spanglish*, Aimee shot two indies: *Mercy Street*, a coming-of-age story about a tragic bus accident and *7eventy 5ive*, a college thriller in the vein of *Scream* about a prank call gone wrong.

She was recently seen in *Lies & Alibis* opposite John Leguizamo and in *Dirty* opposite Cuba Gooding Jr. In *Dirty*, an urban tragedy inspired by the Rampart scandal that rocked the LAPD in the late 90's, Aimee plays "Rita", a skateboarder's girlfriend who is assaulted and humiliated by Officer Day (Gooding). Aimee was recently seen as "Nicole", a nerdy teen with a big crush in *A Lot Like Love* opposite Ashton Kutcher.

On the small screen, Aimee shot the pilots *Ultra* for CBS about an aspiring writer who realizes she has super powers, and *Global Frequency* for WB, a drama pilot about a covert intelligence agency. Before that, Garcia was a series regular on the WB's *All About the Andersons*, a half-hour comedy starring John Amos and Anthony Anderson.

Aimee also starred in the family comedy Greetings From Tucson as “Maria”, a sarcastic high school cheerleader who lived to make her brother’s life a living hell and recurred as young “Nina Gonzalez” on American Family, an Emmy-nominated series directed by award-winning Gregory Nava.

On the theater front, Aimee won Chicago Tribune’s “Best Actress” award for her portrayal of “Maria” in the immigrant saga Journey of the Sparrows. She also starred in Island of the Blue Dolphins, which was nominated for seven Joseph Jefferson Awards. She later combined her singing and dancing talents to play the hot-blooded Puerto Rican “Diana Morales” in Northwestern University’s A Chorus Line, directed by Broadway choreographer Mitzi Hamilton.

Aimee’s professional stage debut came at age seven in Paul Mejia’s Cinderella at The Auditorium Theatre. By age twelve, Aimee was performing 20 shows per month, starring as “Clara” in The Nutcracker at The Arie Crown Theatre in Chicago. During her Junior High years, Aimee performed with the acclaimed Young People’s Company, which boasts famous alums John and Joan Cusack, Jeremy Piven, Lili Taylor, and Aidan Quinn.

CHRIS LOWELL (JACKSON)

Chris can currently be seen playing the role of ‘Dell’ opposite Kate Walsh in the upcoming ABC ‘Grey’s Anatomy’ spin-off series ‘Private Practice.’

Prior to ‘Private Practice,’ Chris played the (series regular) character of ‘Piz’, Kristen Bell’s love interest on the CW’s critically acclaimed series ‘Veronica Mars.’

On the film front, Chris can be seen starring in the role of ‘Delaney’ in the soon to be released ThinkFilm feature ‘You are Here’, directed by Henry Pincus and the film ‘Graduation’, starring in the role of ‘Jackson’, directed by Michael Mayer.

Past television credits include the series regular role of Jonathan Fields on ABC ‘s critically acclaimed series “Life as We Know It”

Chris Lowell was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia where he attended the prestigious Atlanta International School (AIS).

While taking drama and theatre classes at AIS, Chris found a love for acting and filmmaking. Having had no film curriculum at AIS, Chris spearheaded and founded the “Film Program” and “Video Yearbook,” which allow students to get a taste of the film making process from the script to the screen.

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

On the side, Chris has a tremendous passion for photography and has compiled a solid book of work from his world travels. These great photographs can be viewed at chrislowellphotography.com.

When not working, Chris enjoys the arts, including movies, music, theatre and traveling with friends. Chris also continues his passion for the filmmaking process, shooting his own short films and mockumentaries.

HOMETOWN ... Atlanta, GA
BIRTHDAY October 17

SHANNON LUCIO (POLLY)

A skilled young performer with unquestionable talent and versatility, Shannon Lucio is quickly catching the attention of Hollywood. From the theatrical stage to the television screen, she showcases her gift for acting and her infectious charm.

Lucio starred on FOX's hit series, *The O.C.* where she portrayed 'Lindsay Gardner,' the smart, working-class new girl at Harbor High. After realizing they were from similar backgrounds, 'Lindsay' and 'Ryan Atwood' (Benjamin McKenzie) became romantically involved.

Hot off her role on *The O.C.*, Lucio landed the female lead in the CBS original movie, *Spring Break Shark Attack*, opposite Emmy Award and Golden Globe Award winner Kathy Baker, and Emmy Award and Golden Globe Award nominee Bryan Brown. She played 'Danielle,' a sheltered high school senior who secretly joins her friends on a Spring Break trip to Florida, defying the orders of her overly-protective father. The film premiered March 2005 as one of the highest rated CBS films of the year.

Lucio's additional television credits include diverse guest-starring roles on the Emmy-award winning NBC series, *ER*, where she played an Amish girl conflicted by the culture in which she lives; Steven Bochco's Emmy-award winning ABC series, *NYPD Blue*, in the role of a selfish, conniving villain; CBS' *CSI: Miami*, where she played the girlfriend to a porn-obsessed college student who murders a porn star; and Lifetime's *The Division*, in the role of a homicidal young girl who kills her stepmother out of love for her grandmother.

For the big screen, Lucio stars as the female lead in the upcoming feature, *Graduation*. She plays the smart, affluent 'Polly,' one of four disaffected high school seniors who decide to rob her father's bank on the day of their graduation in order to help a family member in trouble.

Lucio recently played the female lead in the indie thriller, *Starkweather*. The film tells the true story of one of crime history's most notorious murder sprees, in which 19-year-old garbage man 'Charles Starkweather' and his 14-year-old girlfriend 'Caril-Ann Fugate' (Lucio) embark on a reign of terror across Nebraska in the late 1950s.

Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, Lucio spent her childhood concentrating on her studies, playing basketball and running track. In fact, Lucio had aspirations of competing cross-country in the Olympics before a knee injury prohibited her from running long distances.

Although she did some modeling as a child, Lucio developed a passion for performing during an acting class her senior year in high school. "I loved going to class so much, and I just felt like acting made sense," says Lucio. "I knew that performing was what I was supposed to do." She took the advice of her acting coach, and sent out applications to major collegiate theatre programs.

Upon acceptance to the acclaimed University of Southern California School of Theatre, Lucio packed her belongings and moved to the west coast to further her studies and training. While at USC, Lucio starred in numerous productions including "Fefu and Her Friends" and The Love of the Nightingale.

Lucio currently resides in Santa Monica with her two dogs, a Pomeranian named Brutus and a Sheltie named Lady Bird Johnson. When she's not busy working, Lucio enjoys staying physically fit by running, hiking, playing basketball and going to the gym. Her other passions include drawing, painting, reading, watching her favorite basketball team, the San Antonio Spurs, and going to the beach, which she claims to be her "saving grace" of the city.

CHRISTOPHER MARQUETTE (CARL)

Christopher Marquette was born in Stuart, Florida and began modeling at the age of four in Dallas, Texas. Christopher landed his first screen acting debut at the age of eight as the son of Mira Sorvino in Sweet Nothings (WB). He played a lead in The Tic Code (WB) with the legendary Gregory Hines, and on Broadway as "Tiny Tim". He starred in Another World (1996-97) as "Gregory Hudson". Christopher's big screen credits include Just Friends (New Line Cinema); The Girl Next Door (New Regency/ 20th Century) and Freddy vs. Jason (New Line Cinema).

Christopher starred in American Gun (IFC) released at 2005 Toronto Film Festival. He stars across Justin Timberlake, Sharon Stone, and Bruce Willis and rejoins Emile Hirsch in the Nick Cassavetes-directed film, Alpha Dog, (New Line Cinema), which premiered at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. The story is inspired by the real-life story of Jesse James Hollywood. Christopher recently completed filming two independent films, Graduation (Bradford-Hanson Productions), and Choose Connor (Blue Cactus Pictures). Christopher stars in The Invisible (Spyglass Entertainment); Fanboys by Kevin Spacey's Trigger Street/ Weinstein Co. and The Education of Charlie Banks (Iridium Entertainment).

On the Emmy nominated and People's Choice Award-winning, Joan of Arcadia (CBS), Christopher brought romance. Christopher starred as "Adam Rove", the love interest for Joan (Amber Tamblyn). The romantic connection between Adam (Marquette) and Joan (Tamblyn) was enchanting. Christopher breathed life into Adam Rove's character. Adam (Marquette) was an artist, down to earth, vulnerable, loyal and honest. The touching and thunderous silences between Adam (Marquette) and Joan (Tamblyn) created and stirred the kind of romance every girl and many grown women long for, tossing Marquette's hat into the teen heartthrob arena. His small screen credits include recurring roles on Showtime's Huff, and Strong Medicine (Lifetime). He guest starred on ER (NBC); Seventh Heaven (WB); Judging Amy (CBS) and Touched By an Angel (CBS).

Christopher is the oldest of the three Marquette brothers. All actors, the Marquette brothers began their careers with a boost from their parents. Sean Marquette, the youngest, says his brother Christopher is his inspiration. . Sean starred in 13 Going on 30 (Sony Pictures). The Marquette's enjoy helping each other for upcoming roles. The middle Marquette, Eric, starred on Desperate Housewives (ABC).

Acting is self exploration for Christopher. He works at bringing his audience an original piece of work every time he performs. What makes Christopher different from other actors is his keen observation of people. Ed Norton, Peter Sarsgaard, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Daniel Day-Lewis have all influenced him.

Christopher believes he is blessed with all of the opportunities within the entertainment industry. He donates his time to the Sunshine Foundation, the Cancer Society, Special Olympics and Pediatrics AIDS. Christopher lives with his family in Los Angeles.

RILEY SMITH (CHAUNCEY)

Discovered in a mall in his hometown of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Riley Smith was urged by a local talent scout to compete at the International Modeling and Talent Association convention in New York. While there, Riley picked up a Tommy Hilfiger modeling campaign. Turning down a college basketball scholarship, Riley stayed in New York where he quickly began gracing the pages of magazines and billboards through modeling.

Not content to stay in one medium, Riley began taking acting classes. A mere three months after he started, he was flown to Los Angeles to screen test for the 1998 WB pilot "Minor Threat". He landed his first role and relocated to the west coast.

The pilot never made it to air, but Riley did. He's gone on to do several network pilots, series, and more than a dozen guest-stars including recurring roles on "Freaks and Geeks", "24", and "Joan of Arcadia". In 2007 he was one of the leads in FOX's series "Drive". On the feature side, he's starred in "Eight Legged Freaks" with David Arquette and Scarlett Johansson, in "Radio" opposite Ed Harris and Cuba Gooding Jr., and as Ashley Olsen's hot love interest in Warner Bros's "New York Minute". More recently, he stars in the independent features "Weapons" alongside Nick Cannon and Mark Webber and "White Air" with Dominique Swain, which are both awaiting release. Most recently Riley wrapped the feature "Gallowalker" with Wesley Snipes in South Africa and the dance movie "Make it Happen" opposite Mary Elizabeth Winstead.

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Contact: Melissa Raddatz / 212-924-6701 EXT. 222
MelissaR@Landmarktheatres.com

TRULY INDIE, MAGNOLIA PICTURES PARTNER TO ACQUIRE “GRADUATION”

New York, NY, April xx, 2008 -- Magnolia Pictures and Truly Indie announced today a partnership that will bring Mike Mayer’s teen-heist film **GRADUATION** to theatres and DVD. Truly Indie will handle the theatrical distribution for the film, which premieres May 2nd in Austin, Seattle, San Francisco, Berkeley, and Minneapolis. Magnolia Home Entertainment will release the film on DVD. Directed by Mayer and starring Riley Smith, Shannon Lucio (“The OC”), Chris Marquette (ALPHA DOG, THE GIRL NEXT DOOR), Chris Lowell (“Private Practice”), Adam Arkin, and Huey Lewis, **GRADUATION** is a unique take on the heist genre.

When a friend is in need of financial assistance, the logical next step is to plan a bank robbery. At least that was the conclusion of four high school friends about to embark on the next stage of their lives. The question is will they pull off this heist in time to toss their caps at graduation or have they gotten themselves way in over their heads?

“GRADUATION deftly balances drama, thrills, and laughs,” said Kelly Sanders, Executive Director of Truly Indie, “And, like the best heist movies, it places just as much emphasis on the characters as the money they are trying to steal.”

The deal was negotiated by Scott Hanson with Truly Indie Executive Director Kelly Sanders and Head of Business and Legal Affairs Jason Janego.

GRADUATION was directed by Mike Mayer and written by D. Cory Turner. It was produced by Scott Hanson, Robin Bradford, Jane Sindell (SEABISCUT), and Bob Degus and executive produced by Jason Blum, Jeffrey Korchek, and Fred Fuchs (THE VIRGIN SUICIDES) in association with Hanson Film Group, Blumhouse Productions, BlueLine Films and Tavistock Films. It stars Riley Smith, Shannon Lucio, Chris Marquette, Chris Lowell, Adam Arkin, Aimee Garcia, and Huey Lewis. The film is not rated and has a running time of 89 minutes. It will be released by Truly Indie on May 2nd.

www.trulyindie.com

About Truly Indie

Truly Indie is a self-distribution initiative under Wagner Cuban Companies, a vertically-integrated group of media properties co-owned by Todd Wagner and Mark Cuban that also includes the Landmark Theatres chain, Magnolia Pictures distribution company, production companies HDNet Films and 2929 Productions, and high-definition cable networks HDNet and HDNet Movies. Truly Indie has distributed Neill Dela Llana and Ian Gamazon’s CAVITE, Doug Block’s 51 BIRCH STREET, and James Scurlock’s MAXED OUT. Recently, they released Geoffrey Wright’s modern spin on Shakespeare, MACBETH, John Jeffcoat’s critically acclaimed comedy OUTSOURCED, Alan White’s drama BROKEN, starring Heather Graham and Jeremy Sisto, and Award Winning

Director Terry Sanders' documentary FIGHTING FOR LIFE, and Bruce Van Dusen's "coming of age late" film, BACKSEAT. In April, Truly Indie will release Brad and John Hennegan's gripping documentary about the 2006 Kentucky Derby trail, THE FIRST SATURDAY IN MAY.

For more information visit: www.trulyindie.com

About Magnolia Home Entertainment

Magnolia Home Entertainment is the home video division of Magnolia Pictures. Launched in November 2005, the company releases a diversified slate of films both under Magnolia Home Entertainment and the Magnet label, including the 2008 Academy Award® nominated documentary No End in Sight, the 2007 Academy Award® nominated documentary, Jesus Camp, Alex Gibney's Academy Award® nominated documentary Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room, Steven Soderbergh's Bubble, Roger Donaldson's The World's Fastest Indian and Bong Joon-Ho's The Host. Magnolia Home Entertainment is part of a vertically-integrated group of media properties co-owned by Todd Wagner and Mark Cuban that includes distributor Magnolia Pictures, the Landmark Theatres chain, production company 2929 Productions, and high-definition cable networks HDNet and HDNet Movies.

For more information visit <http://www.magpictures.com>.