

The Nines

**PRODUCTION NOTES
SUMMER 2007**

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Writer/Director Statement

I've been a screenwriter for a decade, and have had the opportunity to work with some terrific and deservedly acclaimed directors.

Writing for directors is much like acting for directors; you come into the process with your own ideas, but ultimately your vision is subordinate to their vision. That's not whining—I love my job. I work a lot because I'm good at hiding my own voice. You want it funnier, scarier, more romantic? I can do that. Pushing words around is a craft. It's like acting, but with more typing.

The relationship between actors and writers is a fundamental question of *The Nines*, and the primary reason why I decided to direct the movie. As you'll see, the film blurs the traditional boundaries between real and unreal, scripted and unscripted. The whole story couldn't be told on the page. It needed to be written as it happened, cameras rolling.

Screenwriting is often compared with architecture: the writer provides the blueprints, but he's not that involved with constructing the final product. By that analogy, *The Nines* is the house I built for myself. I had terrific collaborators, but the structure itself is deliberately and peculiarly designed to fit me. Consider this the housewarming party. It's a pleasure to invite you in.

John August
January 2007

The Story, in brief

The Nines consists of three short films, each featuring the same actors in different—and sometimes overlapping—roles.

“The Prisoner” tells the story of a troubled television star (Ryan Reynolds) who finds himself under house arrest, with his chipper publicist (Melissa McCarthy) and disillusioned next-door neighbor (Hope Davis) providing his only links to the outside world. Mysterious events lead him to question whether one or both women are deceiving him about the nature of his incarceration.

“Reality Television” is a half-hour episode of “Behind the Screen,” a Project Greenlight-style documentary series tracking the process of creating a network television drama. Having shot the pilot, creator/showrunner Gavin Taylor (also Ryan Reynolds) faces post-production with the help of his best friend (and lead actress) Melissa McCarthy and development VP Susan Howard (Hope Davis).

“Knowing” finds an acclaimed videogame designer (also Ryan Reynolds) and his wife (Melissa McCarthy) facing car trouble deep in the woods. Their daughter (Elle Fanning) uncovers information which leads to a difficult and irrevocable choice.

Together, the three stories form a single narrative that explores the relationships between author and character, actor and role, creator and creation. Alternately funny and unsettling, *The Nines* is like a riddle where the answer is the question: “How does it all add up?”

An Unconventional Structure

Like John August’s first film, 1999’s critically-acclaimed *Go*, *The Nines* is divided into three named sections. But whereas *Go*’s non-linear narrative found time looping back on itself, *The Nines* is even more ambitious, with its three stories seeming to exist in parallel realities.

“With *Big Fish*, I got to play around with levels of reality,” says August, referring to his adaptation of Daniel Wallace’s novel, which Tim Burton directed in 2004. “There was the real world of the father and son, but also the fantasy world of the father’s stories. As the story moved back and forth between them, you realized the boundaries weren’t quite as defined as you’d assumed.”

For *The Nines*, August wanted to push the split between reality/unreality further. “The three stories all take place in the ‘real world,’ yet they’re overlapping in impossible ways. Gary is living in Gavin’s house; Gavin’s television pilot seems to be about Gabriel. And all three characters are played by the same actor (Ryan Reynolds), for reasons that aren’t at all coincidence.”

August says the impetus for the overlapping structure came from watching—and misunderstanding—a dubbed Hong Kong drama. “The movie was really two separate stories, but as I watched it, I kept trying to make the pieces fit together. I think that’s human nature. You’re constantly trying to connect the dots, even if they’re completely random.”

For *The Nines*, August wanted to use the audience’s desire to draw connections as one of the “engines” of the film. “As you watch it, you notice aspects that are repeating between the three sections: a line of dialogue, an image, or a tiny action. It’s almost like rhyming. Or music. There are three different verses, but it’s all one song.”

Inspiration(s)

As suits a movie with three storylines, *The Nines* has three distinct origins.

► Part One: The Prisoner

It began with Melissa McCarthy, who had a small role in August’s first produced film, *Go*. Explains August, “I liked her so much in dailies I decided to write a short film starring her, even though I barely knew her.”

McCarthy was surprised by the attention. “I ran into John at Starbucks, and he said he’d written a short and wanted me to be in it. I thought he wanted me to play a small part, but it was basically all me.”

The short film, *God*, is a comedy about a young woman named Margaret’s tumultuous friendship with the Almighty. “It became my reel, basically. To this day, casting directors will pull me aside and quote lines from it.”

McCarthy went on to play roles in many of August’s projects—“D.C.”, *Charlie’s Angels* and its sequel. “I try to write her into everything,” explains August. “But since she became a regular on ‘Gilmore Girls,’ it’s been hard to get her free.”

August wrote *The Nines* expressly for McCarthy, including the Margaret character from the short film. “Before I wrote it, I sat down with Melissa and figured out some backstory about what’s happened to the character in the intervening years.

Margaret is lots of fun, but kind of lives to take care of other people, which to me screams publicist.”

Part One finds Margaret taking care of a television actor who’s found himself placed under house arrest. As their relationship develops, it becomes clear that Margaret knows more than she’s letting on.

“I read an article about house arrest a few years ago, and how Los Angeles was testing a new voice-recognition system,” says August. “I liked the idea of a computer confirming someone’s identity, when the character himself started to question who he was.”

The third main character in Part One is the next-door neighbor, a new mom who feels trapped by her infant daughter. August could relate: “My partner and I had just had our first child. A newborn is like a cuddly warden: you’re torn between your instincts to nurture and to flee.”

► **Part Two: Reality Television**

The second part of *The Nines* began with a nervous breakdown in 2000.

August had co-created the television drama “D.C.” for The WB network, and found himself living on airplanes, flying from the editorial offices in Los Angeles to Toronto and Washington D.C., where the show was shot. But the real drama was behind the scenes, where tensions were high between the studio, the network and the other executive producer. August was the “showrunner” in title, but crucial decisions were often being made without him: “I was in ostensible control of an out-of-control show. I remember the studio sent an executive up to Toronto to try to make peace between me and the other executive producer. As he was talking to me, I sort of floated out of my body. I heard myself saying things, but I wasn’t really there.”

More troubling, August started to have difficulty distinguishing between the real world and the show. “Because of the stress, because of the hours, you start to exist only for the show. You hear a song on the radio, and you’re thinking, ‘How can I use that on the show?’ Someone will say something to you, and you’re already rewriting it in your head as dialogue.”

The television showrunner is in a unique position, explains August. “Essentially, you’re responsible for maintaining this alternate universe 24/7 in your head. With features, you’re writing scripts months or years before they shoot. But with TV, it’s immediate. I would write a scene on the kitchen set, then we’d be shooting it an

hour later, and editing it the next day. You have a god-like amount of control, but also a god-like amount of responsibility.”

Before shooting the pilot, August had been approached by a filmmaking friend, who proposed shooting a behind-the-scenes series much like Project Greenlight. “I regret not saying yes,” says August. “The shouting matches were much better than the show I’d written.”

Ultimately, August got fired from the show he’d created. Back in Los Angeles, he felt responsible both to the characters he created and the cast he’d employed, unable to do right by either of them.

“The actors had all become friends. I’d even written Melissa McCarthy into the show. She’d signed on as a favor, and now she was locked into this doomed show that I wasn’t even writing.”

But it was leaving behind the imaginary universe he’d created that was hardest for August. “To me, those characters were stuck in a kind of limbo, their creator having abandoned them. They weren’t my only literary orphans—most of the characters a screenwriter creates exist only in 12-pt Courier. But in a very real sense, I felt a responsibility to them.”

August’s experience on “D.C.” and two other television projects became the inspiration for Part Two, which consists of a reality TV program documenting the process of creating a drama pilot. “Gavin is a fictionalized version of me—very slightly fictionalized, honestly. He lives in my house; he has my dogs. He’s basically me when I was single and childless.”

Melissa McCarthy plays Gavin’s friend and muse... Melissa McCarthy. “Before I gave her the script, I had to warn her that she’d be playing herself. That tends to freak an actor out. But I knew I wanted to smudge the edges of fiction and non-fiction. Her backstory with Gavin is her backstory with me. Her husband is her husband.”

The third character in the section is Susan Howard, a development executive who August stresses is not based on any one person. “She’s a composite of a lot of development people I’ve worked with,” says August. “She’s smart, ambitious, passionate and afraid of losing her job. Ultimately, that’s a rough combination.”

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► **Part Three: Knowing**

The third section of *The Nines* is the pilot Gavin would have been shooting in Part Two. The action follows a family facing car trouble in the woods.

“It’s a pretty straightforward thriller premise,” says August. “An ordinary day takes a dark turn.”

But it’s the details that make the day-trip-gone-wrong distinct. The father is a videogame designer—like Part Two’s Gavin, a creator. And his mute daughter, Noelle, discovers secrets that suggest a dead battery is the least of the family’s troubles.

The outdoor setting was one of the main draws for August. “The last pilot I shot was largely outdoors, shooting in Vancouver as a stand-in for Alaska. There’s something very unsettling about the forest. Something’s always lurking in the shadows.” Going outside was also an opportunity to expand the scale of the final section. “The movie gets claustrophobic in Part One, and Part Two is a lot of ‘people-talking-in-rooms.’ I wanted to take away the walls and give a sense of space and isolation.”

In Part Three, the overlapping aspects of the three sections finally come together. “But the answers lead to some bigger questions,” says August, “which extend beyond the boundaries of the movie.”

*“An ordinary
day takes a
dark turn.”*

August likens the feeling at the end of the film to waking from a dream. “Sometimes on a Sunday afternoon, you’ll fall asleep while it’s still light out, but then you wake up after it’s dark. It’s unsettling, but it’s kind of exciting. You’re not sure where the edges of reality are.”

August says he’s fine leaving certain questions unanswered. “You walk out of some movies and they’re just done. There’s nothing left to say. What’s exciting to me is when I can spend the next two hours debating and discussing the film with others, either over coffee or online.” Indeed, the film is deliberately set up to suggest alternate possibilities: “[The movie] exists in sort of an expanding universe. There are exactly 87 other stories I didn’t tell, and that’s an invitation for viewers to come up with their own.”

Finding the cast

With the nine main roles played by just three actors, the director and producers decided not to bring on a casting director. “Melissa was obviously playing the M’s,” explains producer Dan Jinks. “And we knew we’d be making direct offers for the G and S parts, so it didn’t seem that there would be much left for a casting director to do.”

The ‘M’ roles were written for McCarthy, but finding actors who could fill each of the ‘G’ and ‘S’ incarnations proved much more difficult.

“They were great parts—most actors dream of getting to play three distinct roles,” say producer Bruce Cohen. “But when you start figuring who could actually do it, the lists become pretty short.”

August and the producers decided to offer the ‘G’ roles to Ryan Reynolds. “I’d seen him in *The Amityville Horror*, and was impressed by how much he brought to what could have been a one-dimensional role,” says August. “In four weeks of production, the actor [playing the G’s] had to completely disappear into three different characters. I was pretty confident Ryan could do that.”

Reynolds’ reputation was also a selling point. “[Producer] Dan Etheridge had worked with him, as had [director of photography] Nancy Schreiber. Pretty much everyone you talked to raved about Ryan, both as an actor and as a person.” For August, this was a critical concern. The actor playing these roles, “is going to be in pretty much every scene, every day, every frame we shoot. You want someone that you respect and trust.” On top of that was the unique relationship between the actor and the writer/director: “He’s basically playing me in Part Two, so you want someone you feel confident letting into your head.”

Reynolds signed on immediately, drawn to the challenge of playing multiple roles, but also to the intertwining mystery that is revealed through their shared journey. “It’s a head trip, but every behavior in the piece is something that happens in life and that’s what I love about it. I feel incredibly fortunate to be doing a film in which I feel 100 percent aligned with.”

While none of the three roles are particularly comedic, Reynolds’s comedy background was also a selling point. “For Part Two, I knew we’d be doing a lot of improvisation. That’s a skill you generally find more of among comedians.” (Indeed, both Melissa McCarthy and Hope Davis got their starts in comedy.)

For the roles of Sarah, Susan and Sierra, the filmmakers approached Hope Davis. “We loved her work, and knew she could bring a lot to the three roles,”

says Cohen. She also felt like a good match with Reynolds. “They’re not actors you’d normally think of as being in the same movie,” says Jinks. “Which tells you that it’s not quite what you’d expect from either of them.”

For Davis, the role meant moving her family from New York to Los Angeles for production. “It was a lot to ask, so we did everything we could to keep it manageable,” says Jinks. The challenging production schedule made it impossible to block Davis’s shooting days together, so she’d often work one afternoon only to find herself off for days. “Whenever we’d have a ‘Hope Day,’ it was like an extra dessert,” says August. “It wasn’t until the end of the schedule [for Part Two] that I got to see her for multiple days in a row.”

Melissa McCarthy didn’t take any convincing to sign on. “When someone like John writes a movie for you to star in, you don’t question it. You just embrace it. And panic a little.” In particular, McCarthy wrestled with how she was going to play herself in Part Two. “You could drive yourself insane thinking about it. Fortunately, that was the last thing we shot, so we just did it.”

With the three leads cast, August and the producers looked to fill out the remaining ranks. For one key role, the filmmakers relied on outside eyes. “Our editor, Doug Crise, was cutting *Babel*, and said that Elle Fanning was fantastic in it,” says August. “So we offered her the part of Noelle based on his recommendation.”

“Elle is refreshingly normal and real,” says August. “We’d play Crazy 8’s while we were waiting for lights.” As Noelle, Fanning plays the mute child to Reynolds and McCarthy’s married couple in Part Three. She had to study sign language in order to deliver her lines, a new skill she picked up in no time. Says August: “I’d let the camera run and she could improv—in sign language—and never break the scene until we cut.”

For most of the remaining roles, August had very specific people in mind. “I’d already worked with Octavia Spencer and David Denman. So I just called them up and asked if they’d do it.” Other friends and colleagues found themselves playing...themselves.

“It’s a head trip, but every behavior in the piece is something that happens in life and that’s what I love about it.”

Screenwriter/director John Gatins plays a character named John Gatins, but with a slightly different backstory. Melissa McCarthy's real husband, Ben Falcone, plays himself in the film. Explains August, "It's blurring the lines between what's real and what's not, which is very much the question of the movie."

In Production

"We realized early on that we were really making three movies in 22 days," says producer Dan Etheridge. "It's not just that the stories were different. The whole approach to production would need to change as we moved from one part to another. Different cameras, different locations, and in some cases, different crew. It was a huge undertaking."

► An impossible schedule

Responsibility for figuring out how to put the pieces together fell on line producer Todd King, first assistant director Mark Mathis, and production manager Brigitte Mueller. The first challenge was trying to come up with a schedule. Explains King: "Because John wanted very different looks for the characters in each section, we knew we couldn't cross-board them—which would be the normal, sane thing to do. We'd have to shoot out each section completely before moving on to the next. Which made everything a lot more difficult."

Adding to the scheduling difficulties, the script ends up circling back on itself, repeating and expanding upon earlier moments. In order to cut through the confusion—and reduce mistakes during production—August and Mathis came up with a new scene numbering scheme. Says Mathis: "The whole movie was a bunch of chicken-or-the-egg questions. This scene needed to be shot before that scene, but it also relied on something else."

Ultimately, the production team decided to shoot Part Three first, followed by Part One, then Part Two. The decision to start with Part Three was partially dictated by facial hair. Explains Etheridge: "John asked Ryan to grow a beard for the Gabriel character, so we needed to shoot that first." But August says the decision to keep each section separate wasn't just about hairstyles and beards. "I was already asking a lot of the actors. I didn't want them to have to play two or three different characters in a day, just so we could shoot out a location."

In fact, the production would have to return to one location—a house in Hancock Park—three separate times over the schedule. Fortunately, the homeowner was accommodating. "It's my house," explains August. "A lot of people are precious about their homes, but I really looked at it as a set—a set that I happened to

sleep in every night. I'd written the movie very specifically for the location, so I wasn't worried about getting scratches on the floor."

Shooting at the August's house helped achieve another one of the director's goals: getting rid of the trucks. Explains production manager Mueller: "On a movie of this size, transportation ends up eating a huge chunk of the budget. We were able to load out of the trucks and store everything in John's garage. Which was its own challenge. But it made for happier neighbors, too."

"We were pretty low-impact," says August. "I don't think many of my neighbors would have realized we were shooting a movie if we hadn't told them."

► **Finding the look(s)**

August was thrilled when acclaimed cinematographer Nancy Schreiber signed on to shoot the movie. "Nancy has a wide range of experience, from big studio movies to scrappy video documentaries. So I knew she could change her style around, which was crucial for the three different sections of the movie."

After discussing various options, including HD video, Schreiber and August decided to shoot the bulk of the movie on film, reserving video for the faux-reality show in Part Two. Explains Schreiber: "John's house has these giant french doors all across the back of it. They're lovely, but video couldn't handle [the over-exposure]. By the time we controlled for all that light, we would have lost any advantage to shooting HD."

Schreiber used her relationships with Kodak, Laser Pacific, and camera rental house Otto Nemenz to help the production afford to shoot on film. But once the film went into the lab, everything else was entirely HD. Explains August: "I'm digital. I'm very comfortable with that workflow. Some directors really want that film negative, but I'm fine with the movie being a bunch of ones and zeros."

The color palette would become one of the primary ways of distinguishing between the sections. Part One would be warm, mostly reds and yellows. Says August. "I described it as, 'Two beers in on a great July night.'" Part Three would be cooler, mostly blues and greens, while Part Two would be largely uncontrolled. "It's meant to be a documentary," explains August. "So I didn't want to dictate what color jackets people were wearing."

Responsibility for wardrobe fell on costume designer Molly Grundman, who had worked with August on both *Go* and his short film *God*. She teamed with Paula Jane Hamilton (makeup) and Romy Fleming (hair) to find three distinct looks for

each of the leads. “It was a small cast,” says Grundman, “But there were a lot of changes, and a lot to keep track of.”

From the start, August decided not to bring on a production designer, or a traditional art department. “It’s not like we were making a Dogma film, or a documentary. But I wanted to keep it simple, and shoot things largely as we found them.”

August hired Colleen Saro on as art director, on the recommendation of Dan Etheridge, who’d worked with her on “Veronica Mars.” With her background in props, Saro knew how to work reactively, quickly finding solutions to situations as they arose. Sometimes the answer was a quick run to the store. Other times, it involved a sledgehammer.

Explains Saro: “We had to shoot in a bathroom that was too small to hold the camera. So we broke through the wall into the garage.” It was another example why August was glad to be shooting at his own house. “I don’t want to think how much that would have cost us if we were shooting somewhere else.”

► **New York, New York**

A final challenge of the production schedule was finding a way to shoot one section which takes place in New York City during television upfronts. “I knew we couldn’t fake it,” says August. “It was supposed to be reality TV. It wasn’t just about the look of New York, but the travel to get there.”

The New York section ended up being August’s favorite part of the production. “The crew was so small, it really was like a documentary. We could turn off the camera, talk a bit, then decide to shoot something new. It was much more spontaneous than a movie generally is.”

Post-production

The job of assembling all the pieces fell on editor Doug Crise. He’d worked with August before on his short film *God*, but it was Crise’s experience on complicated movies like *Babel* which made him ideally suited for the job.

The difficult production schedule ended up working in Crise’s favor: “Usually, you’re getting a scene here and a scene there, so it’s hard to get a whole sequence put together.” Since each part was shot separately, Crise was able to show August complete sections of the movie shortly after they were shot.

“The movie is built on a lot of little connections,” says August. “And sometimes, you see things in the edit that you realize you can pay off later. Having complete sequences so early helped me add some things as we were shooting.”

An important part of the editing process for August was showing the film to audiences. “It’s terrifying, but you don’t really know what you have until you have other people watch it.” The producers organized two test screenings, complete with questionnaires. From the feedback, the filmmakers learned not only what to cut, but what to add.

“We hadn’t spent our contingency, so we used that to get three new scenes that I really wanted,” says August. “That’s the luxury of independent film: we didn’t have to get permission from a studio. We just did it.”

With the picture editing complete, the focus turned to completing music and visual effects.

► **Music**

Composer Alex Wurman, known for his work on *March of the Penguins*, had scored several projects for August. In this case, he needed to get an early start: one scene in Part Two has the Gavin character playing a piano melody which repeats throughout the film. So Wurman had to come up with a main theme before the first frame was shot.

“It was cool to get in on the ground floor, so to speak,” says Wurman. “Usually, music happens a lot later. But you could feel what it was from the script. We came upon it pretty quickly.”

Another musical complication was, “Is That All There Is,” a Lieber/Stoller classic which Hope Davis performs in Part One. The scene was scheduled early in the production, leaving little time for a recording session. So August flew to New York to meet Davis and pre-record the song with the help of Andrew Lippa, a Broadway composer with whom August was collaborating on a different project.

“It was crazy,” says August. “I met Hope, shook her hand, then put her in the recording booth. We had one hour to get the song and get out of there. Thank God, she nailed it.”

A second musical sequence, “As Long as He Needs Me,” was performed live by Melissa McCarthy. “It’s meant to be rehearsal,” explains August. “So I wanted it to be a bit ragged.”

Wurman recorded the score largely at his home studio. “With Alex, it’s not like there’s one day with a hundred strings on a soundstage,” says August. “Everything is built in layers. It evolves. You come back a few days later and the melody is the same, but the sound has shifted. And if you try to pick out one instrument, it’s hard to even identify what it is.”

In addition to the score, the film relies on existing songs to drive several sequences. August turned to Julianne Jordan as music supervisor, whom he’d known from *Go*. When trying to get rights to music, “money is always a factor,” says Jordan. “But part of my job is getting people to understand what kind of movie it is, and why they want their song in it.”

► Visual Effects

For a film of its size, *The Nines* features several impressive visual effects sequences. This was new territory for August: “I’ve written a lot of movies with visual effects, but there’s a big difference between writing, ‘One hundred squirrels sort nuts,’ and figuring out how to show that.”

To translate the words into images, August worked with storyboard artist Vincent Lucido, mapping out exactly which shots they needed. By the time the storyboards were handed off to the team at Look FX, the scale and scope of the work seemed manageable. Still, it was complicated. Explains August:

“One shot moves from live-action to a rendered set, out a window and into a helicopter shot—which is a combination of real footage and a lot of invisible edits. It then goes into a completely CG world, which has to match back out to a live shot.”

While Look FX handled the complicated shots, many of the simpler visual effects were handled by editor Crise: “The Avid can do a lot of things we used to farm out.”

August says his experience with *The Nines* got him past many of his fears with visual effects. “It really is just directing. Rather than talking with an actor, you’re talking with an effects artist about the texture and detail you want. It’s painstaking, but it can also be exciting.”

Cast Biographies

RYAN REYNOLDS (Gary/Gavin/Gabriel) is quickly emerging as one of Hollywood's most sought after leading men. Reynolds recently finished production on the Working Title Film *Definitely, Maybe* for Universal Pictures. He plays a soon-to-be divorced political consultant and parent with a questionable sexual past in this romantic comedy that co-stars Rachel Weisz, Isla Fisher and Elizabeth Banks.

Reynolds can next be seen starring in director Joe Carnahan's *Smokin Aces* for Working Title and Universal Pictures, alongside an all-star cast including Ray Liotta, Jeremy Piven, Andy Garcia, Ben Affleck and Jason Bateman. Reynolds plays an FBI agent on the hunt for a Las Vegas stand up comedian who has decided to squeal on the mob. *Smokin Aces* will be released on January 26th, 2007.

Reynolds also recently completed the film *Chaos Theory* co-starring Emily Mortimer for Warner Independent Pictures. In the Marcos Siega directed drama, Reynolds stars as a man experiencing a crisis after he finds out he is sterile and his child is not his own.

Reynolds also starred in *The Amityville Horror*, a remake of the classic cult film. *The Amityville Horror* opened #1 at the box office during its opening weekend and made \$107 million worldwide. Reynolds was memorable in the title role of 'Van' in the cult classic *Van Wilder*, as well as last year's New Line romantic comedy *Just Friends*.

For his co-starring role with Jessica Biel and Wesley Snipes in *Blade Trinity*, Reynolds showcased his physical attributes undergoing and impressive physical transformation for his role as the acerbic vampire, 'Hannibal King.' Reynolds currently resides in Los Angeles.

HOPE DAVIS (Sarah/Susan/Sierra) was named 2003 Best Actress of the Year by the New York Film Critics Circle for her work in two of the year's most critically acclaimed independent features—*American Splendor*, directed by Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini, and Alan Rudolph's *The Secret Lives of Dentists*.

Davis won a Golden Globe™ Award nomination for her portrayal of Joyce Brabner, the fiercely intelligent, sardonic wife and collaborator to Paul Giamatti's Harvey Pekar, in *American Splendor* (LA Film Critics' Best Picture of 2003). A fixture on 2003 Top 10 lists, *American Splendor* captured the Grand Jury Prize - Dra-

matic Competition at Sundance; Best Film Un Certain Regard in Cannes and the Grand Jury Prize in Montreal's Just for Laughs Festival.

Davis also received an IFP Spirit Award nomination for her performance opposite Campbell Scott in *The Secret Lives of Dentists*, Alan Rudolph's intimate look at a contemporary marriage compromised by children and infidelity, based upon Jane Smiley's novella *The Age of Grief*. Davis first garnered critical attention for her work in a trio of independent hits—Greg Mottola's *The Daytrippers*, Bart Freundlich's *The Myth of Fingerprints* and Brad Anderson's *Next Stop Wonderland*.

Her filmography includes Douglas McGrath's Truman Capote piece *Infamous*; the black comedy *The Matador*, with Greg Kinnear and Pierce Brosnan, written and directed by Richard Shepard; Gore Verbinski's *The Weatherman*, opposite Nicolas Cage; John Madden's adaptation of David Auburn's Pulitzer and Tony award-winning play *Proof* opposite Gwyneth Paltrow, Anthony Hopkins and Jake Gyllenhaal; *Duma*, with Campbell Scott, for director Carroll Ballard (*Fly Away Home*, *The Black Stallion*); a delicious turn as Jack Nicholson's daughter in Alexander Payne's *About Schmidt* (Los Angeles Film Critics' Best Picture of 2002); *Hearts in Atlantis* opposite Anthony Hopkins; Campbell Scott's *Final* with Denis Leary; Stanley Tucci's *Joe Gould's Secret* and *The Imposters*; the political thriller *Arlington Road* with Jeff Bridges and Tim Robbins; and Lawrence Kasdan's *Mumford*.

Davis' upcoming films are *The Hoax*, directed by Lasse Hallström; and *Charlie Bartlett* alongside Robert Downey Jr. Davis recently performed "Hope Leaves the Theatre," part of the radio plays "Theatre of the New Ear" for Sirius Radio, which was written by Charlie Kaufman and was performed alongside Meryl Streep and Peter Dinklage. In addition to "Camino Real" at the famed Williamstown Theatre Festival, her other stage credits include Lincoln Center productions of Rebecca Gilman's "Spinning Into Butter," "Ivanov" opposite Kevin Kline and "Two Shakespearean Actors." Off-Broadway, Davis has appeared in "Pterodactyls," "The Food Chain," "The Iceman Cometh" and David Mamet's "Speed the Plow," directed by Joel Schumacher.

A natural born comedian with credits that include film, television, stand-up and theater experience, **MELISSA McCARTHY** (Margaret/Melissa/Mary) returns for a sixth season as clumsy culinary genius Sookie St. James in "Gilmore Girls." Born and raised in Plainfield, Illinois, just outside of Chicago, McCarthy first made her mark on the comedy stage, performing stand up in New York at The Improv and Stand Up New York. At the same time, she received dramatic training from The Actors Studio in New York and starred in a variety of stage productions throughout the city. Since moving to Los Angeles, McCarthy's quick wit gets a workout every weekend as a member of The Groundlings comedy improv cast. In addition

to sketch comedy, McCarthy's feature film work includes *The Life of David Gale* with Kevin Spacey and Kate Winslet and the novel adaptation *White Oleander* with Michelle Pfeiffer. Her previous credits include *Pumpkin* with Cristina Ricci and *Go* directed by Doug Liman. In addition, McCarthy starred in John August's independent short film *God* as a young woman having gossipy phone conversations and a short-lived spat with the Almighty.

Energetic, lively and bright are just a few words that describe eight-year old **ELLE FANNING** (Noelle). Elle starred as the young Sweetie Pie Thomas in *Because of Winn-Dixie* with Cicely Tyson and Dave Matthews, and the acclaimed feature film starring Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett, *Babel*. Elle is currently filming *Reservation Road* where she plays 'Emma Learner,' the eight-year old daughter of Joaquin Phoenix. She has also appeared in Focus Films' *Door in the Floor* from director Tod Williams. Elle stars as Ruth Cole, the daughter of Kim Basinger and Jeff Bridges, in the adaptations of the John Irving novel *A Widow for One Year*. In addition, Elle appeared in director Tony Scott's, *Déjà Vu*. Elle made her feature film debut co-starring as a young 'Lucy' in New Line Cinema's *I Am Sam*. She then went on to co-starred opposite Eddie Murphy in the family comedy *Daddy Day Care* for Revolution Studios. In addition to her film credits, Elle has also made numerous television appearances. Elle recently filmed the SciFi miniseries with Peter Krause, "The Lost Room." She has even been seen in both "CSI: Miami" and "CSI: NY," "House M. D.," "Judging Amy" and Dreamworks' "Taken." In addition to her television and film appearances, Elle has also shot commercial spots for Toyota, Smuckers and Target as well as being featured in Vogue Bambini's 30th Anniversary Issue. Elle continues to be a bundle of energy and enjoys acting and dancing.

DAHLIA SALEM (Herself) made a splash on the television scene starring as 'Sofia Carlino' on the long-running soap opera "Another World." She was first acquainted with John August when he cast her to star in his TV pilot "Alaska." Salem is well-known now, having made appearances on "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," "House M. D." and "Criminal Minds." She can currently be seen playing feisty surgeon 'Dr. Jessica Albright' on "ER," as well as the no nonsense D.A. 'Susan Hale' on the Fox series "Justice."

DAVID DENMAN (Parole Officer/Agitated Man) is continually cited for his stand-out performances on stage, screen, and television. He is currently a series regular on NBC's "The Office," where he plays the irascible 'Roy,' the fiancé of Pam the receptionist. He recently co-starred in the Screen Gems remake of *When A Stranger Calls*. During his hiatus from "The Office," he completed co-starring roles in three independent features: *Fan Boys* starring Dan Fogler, *Crossing Paths* starring Minnie Driver and *If I Had Known I Was a Genius* starring Whoopi Goldberg,

Sharon Stone and Pink. Many people remember Denman from his big screen debut with Keanu Reeves and Gene Hackman as the deaf tight end in the Warner Brothers football comedy *The Replacements*, as well as in the Spyglass/Disney snowboard comedy *Out Cold* playing the sexually confused bartender 'Lance.' Denman's other feature credits include *The Singing Detective* and playing opposite Ewan McGregor in Columbia Pictures' *Big Fish* directed by Tim Burton, adapted by John August, and produced by Richard D. Zanuck, Bruce Cohen and Dan Jinks.

On television, Denman starred in USA Network's movie of the week "The Perfect Husband: The Laci Peterson Story" with Dean Cain. He has been on numerous television shows such as "Without A Trace," "Bones," "Crossing Jordan," CSI: Miami," "The X-Files," "E. R.," "Arli\$\$," as well as in recurring roles on the former UPN series "Second Time Around," and most notably as 'Skip the Demon' on "Angel." Additionally, Denman has been seen in the NBC miniseries "The 60's" produced by Lynda Obst, as well as in the TV movie "A Vow To Cherish" with Ken Howard, Barbara Babcock and Ossie Davis. Denman literally grew up all over Southern California attending eight different schools and was fortunate enough to end up at Fountain Valley High School where fellow classmates included *Hustle and Flow* writer/director Craig Brewer and *Munich* actor Omar Metwally. After high school, David attended the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco before he received a BFA from the famed Juilliard School in NYC. After years of training and numerous summer stocks, David returned to Southern California to follow his dream of working in film and television. He currently resides in Los Angeles with his wife Nikki and Great Dane Gertrude.

OCTAVIA SPENCER (Streetwalker/Woman on Sidewalk) is a native of Montgomery, Alabama; which, she claims is the proverbial buckle of the Bible belt. She's the sixth of seven siblings and holds a B. S. in Liberal Arts from Auburn University. A "closet" lover of acting, this practical Alabamian knew that she'd someday work in the film industry, but never dreamed it would be in front of the camera. In 1995, acclaimed director Joel Schumacher changed all that by giving her a small role opposite Sandra Bullock in the hit film *A Time To Kill*, and Spencer was on her way. In 1996, she teamed up with Bullock again in Bullock's directorial debut of *Making Sandwiches*, a short film that premiered at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival and won rave reviews. Since then, Spencer has continued to see success as an actor in memorable supporting roles. In 2003, she made her stage debut in Los Angeles, in Del Shore's award winning play, "The Trials and Tribulations of a Trailer Trash Housewife," starring opposite veteran actress Beth Grant. Later that year, she starred opposite Emmy™ Award winner Allison Janney in Tate Taylor's critically lauded, and award winning short feature, *Chicken Party*. Her screen credits include: *Pulse*, *Coach Carter*, *Charm School*, *Win A Date With*

Tad Hamilton, Legally Blonde 2, Spiderman, Big Momma s House, Never Been Kissed and Being John Malkovich. She's had a myriad of guest starring roles on TV including: "ER," "CSI: NY," "Presidio Med," "LAX," "Titus," "City of Angels," "Dharma & Greg," "Huff," "Medium" and "NYPD: Blue." In 2002, the avid forensic buff co-authored a mystery novel for kids entitled, *The Rock Holler Gang: Jr. Detectives.* Still a True Crime enthusiast, it's no wonder that Spencer will now be playing a hardened criminal on Comedy Central's highly anticipated sitcom, "Halfway Home."

BEN FALCONE (Himself) recurred as Joey's neighbor 'Howard' on the NBC sitcom "Joey" for two seasons. He has appeared recently on "Andy Barker, PI," "The Class" and "My Name Is Earl." He was recently seen in the feature films *Smiley Face* and *Unaccompanied Minors.* He was delighted to work with John August and his wife, Melissa McCarthy, on *The Nines.*

About the Filmmakers

The Nines marks the feature directorial debut of screenwriter **JOHN AUGUST** (Director/Screenwriter), who has amassed a long list of successful credits beginning with 1999's critically-acclaimed *Go.* Other films include Tim Burton's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Corpse Bride,* as well as both *Charlie s Angels* movies and *Titan A.E.* In 2004 he received a BAFTA nomination for his script adaptation of the novel *Big Fish* (also directed by Tim Burton). He maintains a screenwriter-oriented website at johnaugust.com.

August graduated with a degree in journalism from Drake University and later earned an MFA in film from the Peter Stark Producing program at USC.

The Nines is the second collaboration between John August and **DAN JINKS and BRUCE COHEN** (Producers), who won the 2000 Academy Award™ for Best Picture for *American Beauty.* The film, which won a total of five Oscars™, was the first film produced through The Jinks/Cohen Company. Their second film was the sex comedy *Down with Love,* starring Renee Zellweger and Ewan McGregor, followed by Tim Burton's *Big Fish,* which was nominated as Best Picture for both the Golden Globes™ and the BAFTAs, and *The Forgotten,* starring Julianne Moore. The Jinks/Cohen Company's first TV series, the hour-long drama "Traveler," will debut on ABC this spring.

Before co-founding the company, Jinks produced *Nothing to Lose,* starring Martin Lawrence and Tim Robbins, and executive produced *The Bone Collector,* starring Denzel Washington and Angelina Jolie. A graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, Jinks began his career working in the theatre in New York.

Cohen produced *The Flintstones* and the prequel *The Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas*, as well as *Mousehunt*. He was executive producer of *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar* and co-producer of *Alive*. A graduate of Yale University, Cohen began his film career as the DGA trainee on Steven Spielberg's *The Color Purple*, and went on to serve as the associate producer/first assistant director on *Hook*.

DAN ETHERIDGE (Producer) is a film and television producer who first worked with John August on August's directorial debut, the short film *God*. Other film credits include the recently-released 2006 Sundance Festival selection *Come Early Morning*, directed by Joey Lauren Adams and starring Ashley Judd; *Overnight Delivery* with Reese Witherspoon and Paul Rudd; and *Buying The Cow* starring Ryan Reynolds. Currently, Etheridge is in his third season as Supervising Producer on the acclaimed television drama "Veronica Mars." Etheridge began his career at Orion Pictures/MPCA as a Producer/Creative Executive and later as Vice President of Production. Originally from Virginia, Etheridge received an MFA from USC's Peter Stark Program and a BA from Yale University.

Following film studies at UCLA and California State University Northridge, **TODD KING** (Co-Producer) began his career as a development assistant at ITC Productions where he worked on such MOWs as "Guts And Glory: The Bill Johnson Story" and "Secret Weapons" starring Geena Davis and Linda Hamilton. Looking to learn "hands-on" production, King began working as a production assistant and rapidly ascended the ranks to a Unit Production Manager position on Skouras Pictures' *Vampire At Midnight*. Among King's many credits as Unit Production Manager are *Night Eyes*, *Future Zone*, *Double Threat*, *Last Call* and *Legal Tender*. He also served as line producer on the popular New Line release *Embrace of the Vampire*. He began an association with Imperial Entertainment in 1993, serving as Associate Producer on the theatrical feature *Showdown* and co-producer on the MOW "Silk Degrees," the fantasy adventure *To The Ends of Time* and the critically acclaimed drama *Boogie Boy*. For Screenland Pictures, King executive produced the dark comedy *Late Last Night* starring Emilio Estevez, Steven Weber and Catherine O'Hara, which premiered at the 1998 American Film Institute/LA Film Festival. In 1999, King completed *It's The Rage*, a feature he exec-produced for Mutual Film Company starring Joan Allen, Jeff Daniels, Anna Pacquin, Gary Sinise and David Schwimmer. It's The Rage had its world premiere as a "Special Presentation" at the Toronto International Film Festival. Appointed Executive Vice President for Scanbox Pictures USA in January 2000, King oversaw a number of projects through the development process. Following the sale of Scanbox to VCL in 2001, King left in order to produce the thriller *Taboo* for Creative Entertainment, which premiered at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival. In 2002, King's projects included *Northfork*, a feature he co-Produced for acclaimed filmmakers Mark and

Michael Polish, which stars Nick Nolte, James Woods, Daryl Hannah and Anthony Edwards. *Northfork* was released by Paramount Classics in July 2003. King also executive produced *Nightstalker*, a horror thriller starring Roselyn Sanchez. Both *Northfork* and *Nightstalker* were official selections of the 2003 Sundance Film Festival. Recent projects include *Daltry Calhoun*, a Quentin Tarantino executive produced feature for Miramax starring Johnny Knoxville and Juliette Lewis, and *Waitress*, directed by Adrienne Shelly and featuring Keri Russell and Andy Griffith.

NANCY SCHREIBER grew up in Detroit and received her BA at the University of Michigan in Psychology as well as Art History. She worked her way up as a gaffer for directors such as Martha Coolidge, Richard Pearce, Claudia Weill and Shirley Maclaine. She has worked extensively in features, television, documentaries (such as *Visions of Light*), music videos (artists such as Aretha Franklin, Van Morrison, The Bangles and Concrete Blonde) and commercials including “John Kerry for President 2004.” In 2004, Schreiber was honored with the Best Dramatic Cinematography Award at Sundance for the film *November*. In 1997, Schreiber shared Sundance’s Best Cinematography Award for the documentary *My America... or Honk If You Love Buddha*. Schreiber also garnered an Emmy™ nomination for her cinematography on “The Celluloid Closet” and an Independent Spirit Award nomination for *Chain of Desire*. In 1995, Schreiber was voted into the prestigious American Society of Cinematographers, the fourth woman in the organization’s history. Schreiber was honored with the Kodak Vision Award at the 1997 Women in Film Crystal Awards. In 2000, she was recognized by *Variety* magazine on one of the “Ten DPs to Watch.” Last year, Schreiber was DP on Michael Patrick King’s HBO series “The Comeback” with Lisa Kudrow, as well as DP on the Showtime pilot “Filthy Gorgeous” with Isabella Rossellini. Besides *November*, Schreiber’s cinematography has been shown previously at Sundance, including *Loverboy* for director Kevin Bacon in 2005, *The Celluloid Closet*, *Robert Capa: In Love and War* (2003), *Stranger Inside* (2001) and *Shadow Magic* (2000). Other films Schreiber has photographed include *Flakes*, a comedy directed by Michael Lehmann with Zooey Deschanel and Chris Lloyd, *Piggy Banks* for director Morgan J. Freeman, *American Gun* directed by Aric Avelino with Marcia Gay Harden and Forest Whitaker, Neil LaBute’s *Your Friends & Neighbors*, and *The Hamptons* documentary for Barbara Kopple. Schreiber’s work in documentaries is extensive, including PBS’ “American Masters and American Experience,” *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster*, and her own documentary *Possum Living*, which was in the New Directors/New Films series at MOMA. Schreiber has guest lectured frequently in New York and Los Angeles at conferences, as well as at USC, AFI and Columbia University film schools. She serves on the Board of Governors of the American Society of Cinematographers. She is also a member of the Acad-

emy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Film Independent, the IDA and Women in Film.

The Nines is the second project **DOUGLAS CRISE** (Editor) has worked on with John August, having edited August's short film, *God*. Crise is currently editing Marcel Langenegger's *The Tourist*, which stars Hugh Jackman and Ewan McGregor. Crise has recently received much acclaim for his work on Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu's *Babel*. He also co-edited the Steven Soderbergh/George Clooney production *Criminal*. Crise collaborated with Stephen Mirrione on the films *Good Night, And Good Luck*, *Oceans Eleven* and *Traffic*.

ALEX WURMAN (Composer) has composed memorable scores for more than thirty projects, including the *March Of The Penguins*. He has recently collaborated with the comedy team of Adam McKay and Will Ferrell on both *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy* and *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby*. Wurman also created the original score for John August's short film *God*.