

SEARCHLIGHT
PICTURES

Presents

In Association with TSG Entertainment
A LEA PICTURES / ARCHERY PICTURES Production

A BRADLEY COOPER Film

IS THIS THING ON?

Starring

WILL ARNETT as Alex Novak
LAURA DERN as Tess Novak
ANDRA DAY as Christine
BRADLEY COOPER as Balls
CHRISTINE EBERSOLE as Marilyn
CIARÁN HINDS as Jan

Directed by **BRADLEY COOPER**

Screenplay by **BRADLEY COOPER** and **WILL ARNETT & MARK CHAPPELL**

Story by **WILL ARNETT & MARK CHAPPELL & JOHN BISHOP**

Inspired by a True Story

Produced by **BRADLEY COOPER, p.g.a., WESTON MIDDLETON, p.g.a. KRIS THYKIER, p.g.a., WILL ARNETT**

Director of Photography **MATTHEW LIBATIQUE, ASC**

Production Designer **KEVIN THOMPSON**

Editor **CHARLIE GREENE**

Music by **JAMES NEWBERRY**

Costume Designer **GALI NOY**

Casting by **SHAYNA MARKOWITZ**

Run Time: 120 minutes

Rating: R

<https://press.searchlightpictures.com/>

IS THIS THING ON?

As their marriage quietly unravels, Alex and Tess Novak find themselves at a crossroads, both collectively and individually. Facing middle age and the specter of impending divorce, Alex seeks renewed purpose in the New York stand-up comedy scene, while Tess confronts the sacrifices she made for their family. Together, they're forced to navigate co-parenting, shifting senses of identity and a burning question: Can love and commitment take a new form?

Directed by Academy Award®-nominated filmmaker Bradley Cooper (*A Star Is Born*, *Maestro*), *IS THIS THING ON?* stars Emmy Award®-nominee Will Arnett (“Arrested Development”, “30 Rock”), Academy Award® winner Laura Dern (*Wild*, *Marriage Story*), Academy Award® nominee Anora Day (*The United States vs. Billie Holiday*, *The Deliverance*), Academy Award® nominee Ciarán Hinds (*Belfast*) and 2-time Tony Award® winner Christine Ebersole (*42nd Street*, *Grey Gardens*), along with Cooper. Written by Cooper, Arnett and Mark Chappell (*See How They Run*), from a story by Arnett, Chappell and John Bishop (*The John Bishop Show*), the film is produced by Cooper, Arnett, Weston Middleton (*Maestro*) and Kris Thykier (*Operation Mincemeat*). Bishop, Caroline Jaczko and Robert S. Wilhelm Jr. are executive producers.

Emmy Award® winner Sean Hayes (“Will & Grace”), Emmy Award® nominee Amy Sedaris (“At Home with Amy Sedaris”), Jordan Jensen, Chloe Radcliffe, Reggie Conquest (*Scream*), Scott Icenogle, Blake Kane and Calvin Knechten round out the cast, along with two-time Super Bowl-winning quarterback Peyton Manning (*Ferdinand*, “The Santa Clauses”).

Joining Cooper behind the camera are Academy Award®-nominated cinematographer Matthew Libatique, (*Maestro*, *Black Swan*), production designer Kevin Thompson (*Maestro*, *Birdman*), costume designer Gali Noy (*Maestro*, *The Goldfinch*), Academy Award®-nominated hair department head and hair designer Lori McCoy-Bell (*Wolfs*, *Maestro*) and Academy Award®-nominated makeup department head and makeup designer Nicki Ledermann (*Joker*, *The Irishman*), with casting by Shayna Markowitz. (*Maestro*, *Joker*).

The post-production team is led by editor Charlie Greene (*Maestro*, “The Queen’s Gambit”) with an original score by composer James Newberry (“Tulsa King,” “Ozark”), while the sound team features Academy Award®-nominated production sound mixer Steve Morrow (*A Star Is Born*, *La La Land*), Academy Award®-nominated re-recording mixers Tom Ozanich (*The Creator*, *A Star Is Born*) and Dean A. Zupancic (*Maestro*, *Joker*) and Academy Award®-winning supervising sound editor Dane A. Davis (*Dolemite is my Name*, *The Matrix*).

ALEX (CONT'D)

That there's a fine line between
comedy... and a lonely, middle-aged
man talking about his problems to a
roomful of strangers. Okay, you're
probably as relieved as I am to
know that our time is up for today,
thank you, I've been Alex Novak...!

THE STORY *Stand-up as Therapy?*

Oscar®-nominated actor and filmmaker **Bradley Cooper** first met Emmy®-nominated actor **Will Arnett** 25 years ago. They had their entire careers in front of them still. But on this occasion, it was an audition of sorts: Arnett was dating actress Amy Poehler, who had become close with Cooper during the filming of the 2001 film *Wet Hot American Summer* and was eager to get her friend's take on her new boyfriend.

Around the same time, 3,000 miles away across the Atlantic, pharmaceutical rep John Bishop was nursing the wounds of a breakup with his wife on the streets of Manchester. To avoid the £4 entry fee at a local pub, he put his name down for the establishment's open mic night and boldly took the stage for a stand-up comedy set in front of seven people, during which he worked through what was going on with him and his wife. He found it strangely therapeutic, like a form of counseling – until one evening his wife coincidentally turned up in the audience. After the gig, they ended up chatting and found themselves on the road to reconciliation.

As story hooks go, it was an enticing one. The moment Arnett heard it, he began working on a script inspired by Bishop's story. During the filming of Cooper's sophomore feature *Maestro*, Arnett mentioned the broad points of Bishop's story and it crawled into Cooper's brain and took root.

"I love stand-up comedy, ever since I was in grad school in 1998," Cooper says. "I used to go to the Comedy Cellar all the time, and then when I became friends with Dave Chappelle, I would go there with him. When you went with a comic, you really got to experience it – the upstairs restaurant at The Olive Tree and just having your mind blown. You're eating a sandwich and they're talking about the monologue for SNL. It was insane! Then being friends with Zach Galifianakis and going to Largo in Los Angeles, all the people and the camaraderie, I just became enthralled by it."

It was an intimate atmosphere that he had experienced up close and yet never really seen captured on screen. But he wasn't interested in a "stand-up movie," per se. Arnett and his writing partner Mark Chappell, who had been in conversations with producer Kris Thykier, spoke with Cooper about taking a crack at a rewrite himself that would make the relationship between Alex Novak (the character inspired by Bishop) and his wife Tess the "A" story, with the stand-up aspect becoming a foil for that narrative.

"I was like, 'Give me the summer,'" Cooper says. "'I'm going to write it and then I'll hand it to you, and if you guys like it, let's make this movie. If you don't, no problem. Take what you like from it and make your movie.'"

Arnett and Chappell loved the new direction. In Cooper's rendition, *IS THIS THING ON?* was tapping a much deeper vein, investigating, in the immediate aftermath of a marriage's disintegration, why that relationship had slowly lost its tether. No big blow-up scene where Alex and Tess call it quits. No dramatic court proceedings. Just two people with kids shuffling through

the detritus of their failed 20-year life together, then realizing they weren't unhappy *with* their marriage, but rather, they were unhappy *in* their marriage. They work through it separately – Alex with his stand-up “therapy,” Tess re-courting an athletic passion she had abandoned long ago – until they find their way back to each other, stronger than ever.

“People do drift apart, and when things get left unsaid for long enough, that divide can become really great,” Arnett says. “If you look at it on paper, there’s so much that they have going for them, but that’s true in lots of relationships. It’s a lot harder when it’s a near miss, when you can’t put your finger on what happened. I think they just got to that point where they were kind of missing each other. We thought it was a really interesting way to look at what it is about a relationship that makes it work.”

The film ultimately is an unconventional journey of a man finding himself and rediscovering his voice and happiness. On his 50th birthday, Cooper table-read the script with some actor friends. That was in January of 2025. A breezy 33-day shoot and an accelerated post-production schedule later, the film was primed and ready for a debut at the New York Film Festival by October – the perfect landing spot for a movie so steeped in the city’s vibe and atmosphere.

“I wrote this script faster than I’ve written anything,” Cooper says. “And then the filming, I was much more at ease than I’ve ever been. Because you get into a hole on the day sometimes, and maybe things aren’t working. But I just breathed through it, like, ‘It’s going to come. It’s going to come. Stay relaxed.’ The moment you crink up, you’re fucked. It’s like that in anything – stand-up comedy, a fight, sports. You’ve got to stay loose, and I was very loose through this whole movie.”

Adds Dern, “Working with Bradley and Will was an exercise in staying loose — finding truth through feeling, not explanation. Bradley’s openness invited us to explore the mess and mystery of love, the way we lose and find ourselves in partnership. It took work and constant practice to stay vulnerable, to let the story reveal itself without forcing it into words.”

THE CAST

Camaraderie and Community

It was never a question that Arnett would play the part of Alex. For Cooper, audiences still haven’t really been able to see what his friend is capable of.

“I know him so well, and I know where he is in his life,” Cooper says. “When I pitched it to Searchlight, it was like, ‘I have nuclear power in Will Arnett and if you just let me do it, this guy is going to kill it.’ It’s almost, in some ways, like introducing Will Arnett, and I know that sounds crazy. But I just felt like the guy that I’ve known for years, if we could see that on screen, we would have the potential of making something really great.”

Not only that, but Arnett had the right amount of inherent fearlessness to tackle the role of a guy who, for the first time in years, is able to open up and be honest, albeit with a room full

of complete strangers. As a bit of reconnaissance, and to also shape the work Arnett would be doing on stage in the stand-up portions of the film, the two went to several clubs and sort of threw Arnett to the wolves. He would take the stage as “Alex Novak” and muscle through a set, sometimes crushing it, sometimes failing spectacularly. Comedian Shane Gillis, a friend of Cooper’s, even let Arnett open for him at the Comedy Mothership in Austin. Arnett also got a couple of spots at the Comedy Cellar in New York, a fictionalized version of which would become Alex’s comedy home base in the film.

“We started going to the Cellar almost every night for about six weeks,” Arnett says. “We’d write in the afternoon and go try new material that night. It was kind of surreal going up as Alex. There were moments where people were like, ‘What the hell’s going on?’”

Adds Cooper, “Will is so bold. We would go to the Village Underground, The Fat Black Pussycat, and he would kill in one, bomb in the next. I remember the first time he bombed. No one knew who he was. There were a lot of tourists, so you get up there, and it’s ‘Alex Novak.’ There wasn’t that initial 10 seconds of favorability and, ‘Holy shit. That’s Will Arnett.’ Even when they knew it was Will, you only get about 10 to 20 seconds, no matter who you are, and then if you’re not funny, you’re going to bomb. He bombed so hard it was unbelievable. We were laughing so hard. God bless him, man.”

Meanwhile, there was the role of Tess to fill. A former Olympic volleyball sensation who retired from that life in order to raise her family. Tess is an impressive individual. She’s very driven, very sure-footed, but domestic life has taken its toll. That dynamic was interesting to Cooper. Here’s someone who has been to the summit of Everest, so to speak, and she’s on her way down from that high. Then here’s Alex, finding his footing on his own ascent.

“Alex, I think, was in a support role for many years,” Arnett says. “Then there’s a sort of a shift. A lot of athletes retire young, so, she retires and Alex kind of goes into work mode and they start a family, and she goes into mom mode and wife mode. In that transition to those different roles, they kind of get off the rails a little bit.”

Cooper had been friends with Oscar®-winning actress **Laura Dern** for quite some time, but it wasn’t until he started thinking about the volleyball aspect and the athleticism of the character that he came around to something that was staring him in the face.

“I just kept thinking, ‘Who’s a tall actor?’” Cooper says. “There aren’t that many, especially against Will, who’s tall. Then I was like, ‘Laura. Laura can do this.’”

But he didn’t want a favor from a friend. He wanted – “selfishly,” as he puts it – to challenge Dern and offer something truly worthy of her. Dern loved the depth of the characters and the richness of the story. It was an easy yes.

“I was so thrilled to read something that holds as much irreverence and complication and mess as any true deep story, but also has hope in it about being who you are and learning to find your way,” Dern says. “Often, films are sort of going on a journey with the relationship, not with

the individuals. The idea that this is a couple who have so much at stake, but they kind of have to get back to their individual journey to find each other again, that deeply interested me.”

From there, the ensemble cast presented a number of exciting opportunities. To begin with, Alex and Tess are close friends with Balls (Cooper) and Christine (Oscar® nominee **Andra Day**), another couple that has been together for a long time, who find themselves on the verge of an empty nest as their son prepares to leave for college. Balls is fairly eccentric, an actor fiercely committed to his craft, even if it’s being an understudy warming the bench in the New York theater scene or landing a small role in this or that. Christine, meanwhile, holds a sense of festering resentment with the fact that they’re not getting any younger. She lives vicariously through Tess’s sense of freedom following the split with Alex as her own marriage seems to be on a collision course with rocky shores.

“I was just crossing my fingers with Andra,” Cooper says. “I just knew she would say no, but I had to offer it to her. When I saw *The United States vs. Billie Holliday*, I was floored. I was like, ‘Look, I apologize that the real estate is going to be small here, but here is the terrain. Would you please come do this with me?’ It was a huge coup to get her.”

Christine is Tess’s “bestie,” Dern says, “which is hilarious because we are polar opposites, although we kind of both are killers in our world. In the design world and even in her own life, Christine is no-nonsense, no-bullshit, very direct about how things are going to go. That’s obviously how Tess has led her life as an athlete, and in some ways, Tess is waking up to leading her personal life in that way, too, more than ever. That’s where we match in every other way that we don’t. It makes for a delicious, spiky friendship.”

As for the humorous – and humorously-monikered – Balls, Cooper kept throwing names out to Arnett, who finally insisted that it was a perfect spot for Cooper to enter the picture himself. Two friends of 20-plus years playing two friends of 20-plus years? It was obvious.

“I was like, ‘You’re right, you’re right,’ but we look similar, me and Will,” Cooper says. “I was like, ‘What if Balls is an actor, so he has long hair and a beard for a role?’ I started growing my hair, and I gave the character glasses. Also, I always wanted a fool in the movie, like Falstaff – the fool that doesn’t really know what’s going on, but manages to impart some wisdom. Balls says to Alex, ‘I’m confused most of the time. I just like being confused with [Christine].’ He says it in a simple way, but that’s a teaching moment from him.”

Elsewhere, two more friends of the troupe were brought on for the roles of Stephen and Geoffrey, ostensibly the only couple in the film enjoying a normal relationship. Emmy® winner **Sean Hayes** (who co-hosts the popular *SmartLess* podcast with Arnett and Jason Bateman) and his real-life husband, composer **Scott Icenogle**, fit the bill beautifully.

As for Arnett’s mother and father, Jan and Marilyn, Cooper had a dream cast in mind. This is the preeminent relationship in Will’s life, as it is for many: his mother and father. That’s instructive for the character, so it’s a delicate piece of casting. Jan, an immigrant, is unassuming,

quiet, but well aware of and sensitive to Will's personal crisis. Marilyn, meanwhile, is an outspoken firecracker who has developed, and continues, a close and adoring relationship with Tess.

"I met **Ciarán Hinds** years ago," Cooper says. "He's been one of those guys for me, from *Munich* to *Rome*, *Mary Reilly* – even *There Will Be Blood*, where he doesn't say much. He's amazing. Plus, he and Will, their profiles look alike. They have the same hair. Like, I believe it. And then **Christine Ebersole** just fell from heaven – she had recently been in *Licorice Pizza*. She's just a fucking beast of an actor, her delivery, her understanding of what we were doing. Just effortless."

One role in particular stood out as one that Cooper really needed to nail. Laird is a guy who comes into the story late. He's an old friend of Tess's who catches wind of her ambition to transition into volleyball coaching with the 2028 Olympics on the horizon and wants to offer his support. Laird knows a lot about that, having transitioned from being a player to a coach himself. This would also be part of Tess's journey in the single world, leading directly to that fateful evening reflected in Bishop's real-life moment of unwittingly taking the stage in front of his wife. Cooper wanted a meta quality in the casting of Laird. He didn't want an actor; he wanted an athlete.

As it turns out, several years ago he had developed a television sitcom he thought would have been perfect for **Peyton Manning**. Alas, the Super Bowl-winning quarterback had recently retired and wasn't looking to make that big a move just yet, but they maintained their relationship, sometimes talking football and Cooper's beloved Philadelphia Eagles by text. When Cooper and Dern began brainstorming ideas for the Laird character, Manning came straight to mind.

"This is the hardest scene for the movie to pull off, and for the actor," Cooper says. "In four minutes, you have to believe that the movie may go this way. So, I called him. I was like, 'Listen, dude, it's not a cameo. You're going to have to do some lifting.' We went back and forth and he talked to his family and then, thank God, he said yes. Then on the day, he fucking crushed it."

Adds Dern, "We both thought it would be a dream if he would do it, to hear him talk about what it means to give up the game as a player and what it means to come back into the game in other capacities. Whether you're a commentator or you're a coach, it is your life's passion, and to just walk away is brutal."

Finally, the outer bands of Alex and Tess's world dictated great care and detail. That's where Cooper shouts out casting director **Shayna Markowitz**, who worked on *Joker*, which Cooper produced, as well as *Maestro*.

"The field work that she did for the comedians, the boys who play their sons, all that stuff, you can't even imagine," Cooper says. "The job is just endless, and we talk all the time at night, texting. It's a 24/7 job as you're leading up to the film."

The Comedy Cellar is teeming with life, from the legendary **Amy Sedaris**, who plays Kemp, the open-mic hostess, to **Liz Furiati**, the real-life manager of the venue who makes a cameo. Comedians like **Jordan Jensen**, **Chloe Radcliffe** and **Reggie Conquest** bolster the sense of camaraderie in the club, which was also something Cooper wanted to accurately reflect. The stand-up comedy scene isn't the cutthroat world it used to be, he notes. There's healthy

competition, of course, but there's a real sense of support and community now that stands in contrast to how things used to be. Local legend **Dave Attell** also makes an appearance.

Even the film's Oscar®-nominated director of photography, **Matthew Libatique**, who has shot each of Cooper's three features, gets a few choice moments as one of the open-mic participants.

"I'm a big fan of putting the crew in the movie," Cooper says. "You're around these people and you're hearing their voice and you're seeing their faces and their soul every day. I love the way Matty dresses and he's got a great voice, and he's a funny motherfucker. So, I was like, 'Dude, come on, let's do it,' and he was game right away."

With his cast in place, Cooper would then use a rehearsal and development technique called Dream work with his ensemble that uses an actor's own nighttime dreams, often inspired by Jungian psychology, to uncover hidden truths, emotions, and subconscious motivations within their character. By incubating dreams and embodying them, the actors were able to tap into deeper, more layered performances, grounding the film in unexpected emotional honesty.

THE CRAFT

Harmony in Dissonance

Speaking of the crew, despite the accelerated schedule, Cooper was able to assemble many of his top collaborators for department head positions. Libatique is back behind the camera. Production designer **Kevin Thompson** was brought in to help realize a vision of New York that was in keeping with the energy Cooper recognized in the city as a young man. Hair-and-makeup heads **Lori McCoy-Bell** and **Nicki Ledermann** joined the cause as well.

Elsewhere, **Gali Noy** settled into her biggest costume designer role to date, following her work as an assistant to Mark Bridges on *Maestro*. Film editor **Charlie Greene** also moved from the assistant ranks of *Maestro* to head up post-production this time around.

"For me, these people are at the highest level of their field and their position, and that's why we were able to deliver the movie so quickly," Cooper says. "Without that, forget it. And we shot 10-hour days, mostly. There's just no way we would have done it otherwise."

Compared to the scope and scale of *A Star Is Born* and *Maestro*, *Is This Thing On?* is a more contained, intimate piece of work. But Cooper is still deeply invested in big cinematic ideas, as ever. From the very first images of the movie, he's telling story with framing and camera movement.

The opening sequence features a Chinese New Year celebration at the Novaks' elementary school, fit with an ornate lion dance and children ceremonially offering up lettuce to "feed the lion" for prosperity in the new year. The camera floats through the joyful chaos until it finally settles on Alex, despondent and numb in the wake of his off-screen break-up with Tess. Cooper got the idea from an event at his own daughter's school.

“I’m sitting there, and I was seeing all these parents on their phones in front of this incredible sonic extravaganza of color, and I was like, ‘How is anybody just sitting on their phone,’” he says. “Then I was like, ‘Oh, this is perfect for an opening.’ It’s as if life is going, ‘Hey, wake the fuck up, bro. Do you see what’s in front of you?’ To me, it’s like the camera is the lion’s POV, and it goes over to him and it’s like, ‘There’s a guy who’s not feeding the lion. There he is.’ That was the idea.”

It’s also the last time for several scenes that we will see Arnett’s face straight on. Cooper made the conscious decision to frame the actor exclusively in profile all the way up until his first appearance on stage at the Comedy Cellar. In that moment, the camera finally floats back in front of Arnett to capture his unencumbered visage, right at the moment he says to the crowd, “I think I’m getting a divorce.”

“Hopefully you don’t consciously think, ‘Oh, I’ve only seen him in profiles,’ but you just emotionally feel like, ‘Oh, I can see him now,’” Cooper says.

Very early on, Cooper was also interested in the unusual 1.66:1 aspect ratio, which is a touch boxier than a typical 1.85:1 ratio. To him, it’s a framing that really makes the actor on screen the star of the composition in ways that excited him for this particular project. He also tends to do a proof-of-concept for every film he makes, and in testing lenses with Libatique in the run-up to production, he fell in love with the 40mm lens so much that he used it for every single shot in the movie and never deviated.

Cooper opted for a handheld aesthetic as well, and for the first time ever, he hopped behind the camera himself to operate after joining the local ICG 600. With *A Star Is Born* and *Maestro*, he was able to be “on the field” with the cast as a lead character himself. Here, he would only be in a few scenes, so he wanted to maintain intimacy and communication in the moment with the other actors.

“To me, with that lens and that ratio, it’s like the audience isn’t safe, which is the way I felt living in New York,” Cooper says. “And that’s a wide lens for a close-up, so I’m right there. It can be invasive for the actor, but I felt like Will really trusted me. Also, the camera is an autonomous being in this movie. In an early scene, it decides to go to the left to show that the bed’s empty. He’s feeling a certain way and the camera moves, like, ‘Why are you so – oh, right. Tess isn’t there.’”

Outside of what Cooper calls the “womb” of the Comedy Cellar, this warm, safe space where Alex can spill his guts to strangers, he’s depicting a world of Manhattan apartments and fringe suburbia. In *Thompson*, Cooper had a partner in his vision who could really help design these spaces in a way that would speak up for the characters, from Balls and Christine’s artist loft to the sterile confines of Alex’s bachelor pad to the residential family home he’s vacated.

“We wanted to address the stagnant, faded passion in their relationship, the blandness of the color palette,” Thompson says. “Nothing was saturated and alive in that family house. Then we contrast that with Balls and Christine and this creative, full-of-character loft. It was saturated

in bold colors and it had unpredictability. But by the end of the film, their loft also suggests a sort of dynamic quality of things that don't fit together, things that were not in harmony with one another, which is what ultimately their relationship was. They were more in trouble than Tess and Alex."

Stretching that thought process into costuming, Noy notes that a journey of self-respect and self-care is evident in Arnett's wardrobe throughout.

"At the beginning, it's as if his clothes have gone through one too many washes with the kids. They're a little bit tired-looking," Noy says. "Then, towards the end of the movie, they're a little crisper. They're the same clothes, just a little bit tighter-fitting, a little sharper. He doesn't change as a human being; he just rediscovers himself."

For Tess, a solid and forthright personality, Noy wanted to show strength in Dern's wardrobe. A lot of her outfits have tight-fitting tops to show her shoulders and arms, made with lightweight cashmeres that reveal some kind of definition in this former athlete.

"We also tried to go with neutrals for her, with pops of red," Noy says. "Throughout the film, you see a pop of red either in her sweater or socks or something. The red and the yellow actually go back to the first scene, with the Chinese New Year. We always tried to call back to those colors, just to tie everything in."

Christine, meanwhile, is in a dark place, so there's a lot of black in her color palette. But for Balls, Noy and Cooper quickly seized on a coveralls concept that they affectionately called a "onesie." At first it was an option for just one scene, but that quickly evolved.

"As we continued prep, Bradley texted me one morning and said, 'I have a crazy idea. I think Balls should be exclusively in onesies,'" Noy says. "I just said, 'Let's do it.' We designed a whole bunch of coveralls for him, depending on the scene. Balls and Christine, they're showers. They're filling voids in their life because they're in this bad marriage that they're not admitting to, and their way to fill voids is stuff and fashion and details. I think in Balls's case, he likes comfort, but he's also an actor. So, I think he just wants to be extra fashionable and extra 'extra.'"

Sonically, Cooper continued his penchant for separately mic'ing actors with Oscar®-nominated production sound mixer **Steve Morrow**, which allowed for overlapping dialogue and an energy that recalls Robert Altman or John Cassavetes at times. His music supervisor **Jason Ruder**, meanwhile, turned him on to composer **James Newberry**, who fashioned a minimalist original score reflective of the interiority of the characters.

"I wasn't even going to do a score other than drums," Cooper says. "I was just sending James tracks of stuff I would find on YouTube and I'm like, 'This is the idea. Just explode your brain. Let me see what you come up with.' There's also this vocal group I heard when I was doing *Maestro*, and I was like, 'I want to hear that to a percussive beat,' so he came up with that. He's been wonderful to work with."

But going back to Thompson's notion of things not quite fitting well together, that actually becomes part of a significant thematic throughline in the film: harmony in dissonance. It's

something reflected even in the choice of Queen and David Bowie's classic song "Under Pressure" for the big recital that the Novaks' sons are building to along the way. Beyond, of course, the lyrics themselves, Cooper felt the track was an apt way to close a film that is about the inherent untidiness of spending your life with someone.

"You have these two sounds of these two guys, Bowie and Freddie Mercury, who have very different voices that you would never think would be the greatest fit, and yet they fit perfectly," Cooper says. "That, to me, is like a relationship."

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ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS & CAST

BRADLEY COOPER – Director, Writer, Producer, & “Balls”

Bradley Cooper, born in Philadelphia, is an acclaimed actor, filmmaker, writer, and producer. Cooper’s most recent film, *Maestro*, which he co-wrote, produced, starred, and directed garnered 7 Oscar® nominations. Cooper’s directorial debut, *A Star is Born*, which he also co-wrote, directed, produced, and starred in earned 8 Oscar® nominations. In 2020, Cooper began his production company, Lea Pictures, which focuses on developing and producing commercially entertaining and transformational feature films, television, documentaries, and digital content.

In 2013, Cooper started the One Family Foundation to help make a difference in the lives of patients with cancer and their families. One Family aims to ease the burden of cancer treatment for patients and their families by reducing financial barriers to care.

Cooper is a 12-time Oscar® nominee, Grammy winner, and Tony nominee.

WILL ARNETT – Writer, Producer, & “Alex Novak”

Will Arnett has built an impressive career that spans television, movies, podcasts, commercials, and more. He is also the co-host of the immensely popular podcast “SmartLess”, with close friends Jason Bateman and Sean Hayes, and guests have included Vice President Kamala Harris, George Clooney, Gwyneth Paltrow, Stacey Abrams, Jennifer Aniston, and many more. He previously hosted and produced the hit competition show “Lego Masters”.

Arnett can also be seen in the *SmartLess: On The Road Documentary* that follows Arnett, Sean Hayes, and Jason Bateman on the North American tour of their Podcast. Arnett also recently produced and starred in the hit series “Twisted Metal”. In addition, Arnett serves as an executive producer on the all-new game show “Snake Oil”. Additionally, Arnett is an executive producer and star on “Murderville”.

Arnett burst onto the scene portraying “Gob” on the Emmy Award-winning sitcom “Arrested Development”, which earned him his first Emmy® nomination in 2006. He also famously guest-starred on the beloved “30 Rock”, for which he received four Emmy® nominations for his portrayal of Jack Donaghy’s nemesis, Devon Banks.

Arnett has starred in dozens of hit live-action and animated movies, including *The Lego Movie*, *Lego Batman*, *Blades of Glory*, *Semi-Pro*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Ratatouille*, *Teen Titans GO! to the Movies*, *Monsters vs. Aliens*, and many more. Audiences heard him in the family film *Rumble*.

In television, he starred for six seasons in the critically acclaimed “BoJack Horseman”. He starred in and produced the comedy “Flaked” and had starring roles on CBS’ “The Millers”, “Up All Night”, “Running Wilde”, “Riviera”, and “The Increasingly Poor Decisions of Todd Margaret”.

Arnett’s voice is also a mainstay in the advertising world. He has most notably been the voice of GMC Trucks for over twenty years and has done spots for Reese’s Peanut Butter and Bank of America.

In August 2014, Arnett launched his production company, Electric Avenue, which develops and produces content across all platforms. Electric Avenue was behind “Flaked”, “The Gong Show”, and Pop TV’s “Hot Date”.

Arnett currently resides in Los Angeles with his three sons.

LAURA DERN – “Tess Novak”

Laura Dern is a three-time Academy Award® nominee who won a Best Supporting Actress Oscar, as well as a Screen Actor’s Guild award and BAFTA award for her performance in Noah Baumbach’s film *Marriage Story*. She is also an Emmy® and Golden Globe® winner who has touched audiences and critics alike with her moving and heartfelt performances.

Most recently Dern can be seen starring in *Lonely Planet* opposite Liam Hemsworth. She will next be seen in the Noah Baumbach project *Jay Kelly*, and the limited series “Forever, Interrupted” with Margaret Qualley.

In 2024, Dern executive produced the new series “Palm Royale”, in which she also stars. In 2023, she co-starred opposite Hugh Jackman in *The Son*, writer-director Florian Zeller’s follow-up to the BAFTA winning and Academy Award® nominated *The Father*. Additionally, in 2023, Dern executive produced with co-producer Reese Witherspoon on the Hulu television series “Tiny Beautiful Things”, starring Kathryn Hahn based on the book of the same title. She also reprised her iconic role as Ellie Sattler in Colin Trevorrow’s *Jurassic World: Dominion*, one of the highest grossing films globally in 2022.

Previously, Dern was seen in Greta Gerwig’s adaptation of *Little Women*, as well as reprised her role as Renata in the second season of “Big Little Lies,” which earned Dern an Emmy nomination.

In addition to her extensive film and television acting credits, Dern is prolific in her producing career. In 2017, she founded Jaywalker Pictures, a Los Angeles-based production company with producing partner Jayme Lemons. Jaywalker’s first successful entre into the world of documentaries was the Emmy® Award nominated “The Way I See It,” directed by Dawn Porter. Jaywalker Pictures also served as executive producers on the Academy Award® winning animated short film “If Anything Happens I Love You” in 2020.

Prior to forming Jaywalker Pictures, Dern and Lemons served as producers on the critically acclaimed series “Enlightened,” in which Dern starred and won an Emmy® and Golden Globe® for.

Some of Dern’s additional starring roles include *Star Wars: Episode VIII – The Last Jedi*, *Wilson*, *Certain Women*, *Wild*, *99 Homes*, *The Fault in Our Stars*, *The Master*, *Inland Empire*, *Lonely Hearts*, *Happy Endings*, *We Don’t Live Here Anymore*, *Novocaine*, *Focus*, *Citizen Ruth*, *Jurassic Park*, *A Perfect World*, *Rambling Rose* (Academy Award® nomination), *Smooth Talk*, *Mask*, *Blue Velvet*, *Wild at Heart*, *Dr. T & the Women*, *October Sky*, *Mask*, and *Fat Man and Little Boy*.

Dern’s starring roles in some of the most successful television shows including “Big Little Lies,” “The Tale,” “Enlightened,” “Recount,” “Damaged Care,” “Within These Walls,” “Daddy and Them,” “The Baby Dance” and “Afterburn.” In 1997, Dern was nominated for an Emmy® Award and won an American Comedy Award for her guest-starring role in the controversial “puppy episode” of the comedy “Ellen.”

In 2010, in celebration of their family legacy in film and television, Dern, her mother Diane Ladd and father Bruce Dern were awarded with the first ever “Family Star Ceremony” on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Out of appreciation and respect for the extraordinary gifts the Dern family has brought to the big and small screen, the Hollywood Entertainment Museum honored Bruce, Diane and Laura with the Hollywood Legacy Award.

From 2016 through 2020, Dern also served on the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences’ Board of Governors representing the actors branch. Additionally, Dern has served on the Board of Trustees for The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures since 2019.

ANDRA DAY – “Christine”

Andra Day is an Emmy® Award-winning, GRAMMY® Award-winning, Golden Globe® Award-winning, and Academy Award®-nominated singer, songwriter, actress, and activist whose influence transcends music, film, and culture. A generational talent, her voice and presence have proven to be powerful forces for impact and inspiration.

In her very first on-screen acting role, Day captivated audiences and critics alike with her portrayal of the legendary Billie Holiday in *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*. Her emotionally raw and transformative performance made her only the second Black actress in history to win the Golden Globe® for Best Actress in a Motion Picture – Drama. She also earned an Academy Award® nomination for Best Actress and took home a GRAMMY® for Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media.

Following her breakout acting success, Day won a Children and Family EMMY® Award for her work as a writer and performer in *We The People*, and continued to expand her screen presence with powerful performances.

Most recently, she starred in the Netflix hit *The Deliverance*, which debuted at number 1 on Netflix’s Top 10 and added to her growing acclaim as an actress. She also starred alongside Andre Holland and Aunjanue Ellis in the critically acclaimed *Exhibiting Forgiveness*. Next up, she will portray the iconic goddess Athena in the Disney+ series “Percy Jackson and the Olympians”.

On the music front, Day’s voice first reached a global audience with her 4x platinum anthem “Rise Up” from her debut album *Cheers to the Fall*. That debut earned two GRAMMY® nominations and introduced a powerful new voice in R&B and soul. In 2024, she returned with *CASSANDRA (Cherith)* to widespread acclaim from *The New York Times*, *People*, *W Magazine*, and more. She continues to make history with performances like her stirring rendition of “Lift Every Voice and Sing” during the Super Bowl LVIII pregame show and remains deeply committed to activism—supporting organizations like Global Citizen, The Kering Foundation, Faith Moves Only No Fear and GiveDirectly.

With more music, more films, and more impact on the horizon, Day’s voice—and her presence—will continue to shape culture for years to come.

CHRISTINE EBERSOLE – “Marilyn”

Christine Ebersole has captivated audiences throughout her performing career. Recognized with a string of honors that includes two Tony Awards, she has appeared in twenty Broadway and Off-Broadway productions, as well as gracing television series and specials, films, concerts, recordings and opera. Ebersole has also accrued a long list of film/television credits in addition to her illustrious stage career. She was recently in Chuck Lorre’s hit sitcom “Bob Hearts Abishola” and can also be seen in Paul Thomas Anderson’s Oscar-nominated *Licorice Pizza*, as well as Scorsese’s award-winning *Wolf of Wall Street*.

CIARÁN HINDS – “Jan”

Ciarán Hinds can most recently be seen starring opposite Jacob Elordi in director Justin Kurzel’s latest effort, a limited series adaptation of “The Narrow Road To The Deep North”. Hinds currently has a strong crop of projects in the can starting with limited series “East of Eden” opposite Florence Pugh, Christopher Abbott, and Mike Faist as well as *Midwinter Break*, a small

independent film out of the UK in which he stars alongside Lesley Manville. He is currently in production on the next season of “Lord of the Rings: Rings Of Power”.

Hinds was also recently featured opposite Mark Wahlberg in the feature *The Family Plan*, which at the time of release became Apple TV+’s most watched movie to date. Hinds received an Academy Award® nomination for Best Supporting Actor in Kenneth Branagh’s film *Belfast*, opposite Jamie Dornan, Judi Dench, and Jude Hill. Additionally, he can be seen in the series “Treason”.

Hinds began his career at The Glasgow Citizens Theatre and was a member of the company for many years. In Ireland he has worked at the Lyric Theatre Belfast, the Druid Theatre in Galway and at the Project. On the stage, Hinds has performed in Brian Friel’s *Translations* and in Conor McPherson’s *The Girl from the North Country* in the West End and The Old Vic. Extensive theatre credits include Lyndsey Turner’s *Hamlet* at the Barbican, Mark O’Rowe’s new play *Our Few and Evil Days* at The Abbey Theatre. Donmar Theatre and New York productions of Connor McPherson’s *The Night Alive*, on Broadway as Big Daddy in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, in a co-production with the Royal National Theatre of *Juno & The Paycock* by Sean O’Casey, directed by Howard Davies. For the Gate Theatre he appeared in Conor McPherson’s *The Birds*, The Field Day Company’s version of *Antigone*, *The School for Wives* and Brian Friel’s *The Yalta Game*.

He toured internationally with Peter Brook’s Company in *The Mahabharata* and has played leading roles at the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Court, the Donmar Warehouse and the National Theatre, where he last appeared in *Burnt by the Sun* and played Larry in Patrick Marber’s *Closer*, which transferred to Broadway. He also performed on Broadway in Conor McPherson’s *The Sea Farer*.

On television he can be seen as John Franklin in “The Terror”. Previous to this, he appeared in “Shetland”, as Mance Rayder in “Game of Thrones” and as Bud Hammond in “Political Animals”, DCI Langton in Linda La Plante’s “Above Suspicion” and as Julius Caesar in the co-production of “Rome”. This follows extensive television credits including leading roles in “The Mayor of Casterbridge”, “Jane Eyre”, “Seaforth”, “Ivanhoe”, “Sherlock Holmes”, “Prime Suspect 3” and the award-winning film of Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*, in which he played Captain Wentworth.

Extensive film credits include Peter Greenaway’s *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, *December Bride*, *Circle of Friends*, *Titanic Town*, *Some Mother’s Son*, *Oscar and Lucinda*, *The Lost Son*, *The Weight Of Water*, *Mary Reilly*, *The Road to Perdition*, *The Sum Of All Fears*, *Jonjo Mickybo*, *Calendar Girls*, *Lara Croft: The Cradle Of Life*, *The Statement*, *Veronica Guerin*, *The Phantom Of The Opera*, *Miami Vice*, *Munich*, *Amazing Grace* for Michael Apted, *Nativity*, *Hallam Foe*, *A Tiger’s Tail*, *Excalibur*, *Margot At The Wedding*, *There Will Be Blood*, *Stop Loss*, *In Bruges*, *The Tale Of Desperaux*, *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*, *Cash*, *Race to Witch Mountain*, *The Eclipse*, *Life During Wartime*, *The Debt*, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, *John Carter of Mars*, *Salvation Boulevard*, *The Rite*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *Ghost Rider: Spirit Of Vengeance*, *The Woman In Black*, *Closed Circuit*, *The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby*, *The Sea*, *Frozen*, *Last Days In The Desert*, *Agent 47*, *Driftless Area*, *Silence*, *Bleed For This*, *Woman Walks Ahead*, *Red Sparrow* and *Justice League*.

MARK CHAPPELL – Writer

Mark Chappell is a screenwriter. His BAFTA nominated murder mystery comedy with Searchlight, *See How They Run* starring Saoirse Ronan and Sam Rockwell, was a number one film at the UK box office in 2022. Chappell created *My Life In Film* starring Andrew Scott, wrote *A Young Doctor's Notebook* starring Daniel Radcliffe and Jon Hamm, and co-created and wrote the comedy *Flaked* with Will Arnett. He is currently developing new films with Left Bank, and his latest television film is shooting for Channel 4 starring Lenny Rush.

WESTON MIDDLETON – Producer

Weston Middleton is a writer and producer serving as Head of Film for Lea Pictures, a production company that holds a first-look deal with Warner Brothers. Middleton served as an Executive Producer on Lea Pictures' recent PBS documentary, *Caregiving*. Middleton also served as Executive Producer for the film *Maestro*, and was a part of the producing unit for *A Star is Born*. Other credits include *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *The Silver Linings Playbook*, and *The Place Beyond the Pines*. Middleton is also the co-founder of One Family Foundation, a non-profit organization that aims to ease the financial burden of cancer patients in low-income communities, and to support family caregivers who care for loved ones due to aging, illness or disability.

KRIS THYKIER – Producer

Kris Thykier founded Archery Pictures in 2014. Since its launch, he has developed and produced the hit series "Fate: The Winx Saga"; three series of "Riviera"; and the limited series "The State", for which he was nominated for a BAFTA.

Thykier has most recently Executive Produced "Mobland" starring Tom Hardy, Pierce Brosnan and Helen Mirren; and produced feature film *Fackham Hall* starring Damian Lewis, Katherine Waterston and Thomason Mackenzie.

Previously, Thykier has produced John Madden's latest film, *Operation Mincemeat*, starring Colin Firth, Matthew Macfadyen, Kelly Macdonald, Penelope Wilton and Jason Isaacs; Executive Produced "Hijack" and *Luther: The Fallen Sun*, both starring Idris Elba; and *Your Christmas or Mine?* and its sequel.

Before launching Archery Pictures, Thykier founded and ran PeaPie Films: one of the UK's leading independent film producers. Films produced by Thykier under the PeaPie banner include the political thriller *Miss Sloane* starring Jessica Chastain; the epic love story *Ali & Nino*, written by Christopher Hampton and directed by Asif Kapadia; John Wells' *Burnt*, starring Bradley Cooper; and *Woman in Gold*, directed by Simon Curtis and starring Helen Mirren and Ryan Reynolds. Thykier also developed and produced *Trash* with Working Title, directed by Stephen Daldry and based on a screenplay by Richard Curtis.

Other features produced by Thykier include *One Chance*, *I Give It a Year*, *W.E.*, *Ill Manors*, *The Debt*, *Summer of '92*, *Harry Brown*, *Kickass* and *Stardust*.

MATTHEW LIBATIQUE, ASC – Director of Photography

Academy Award®-nominated cinematographer Matthew Libatique, ASC, LPS's credits span a wide array of genres, showcasing his extensive creativity and ability to adapt to any style of film. He is widely regarded today as one of the best in the business.

Over the past three decades, Libatique has built an impressive career defined by creative risk-taking and enduring collaborations. In recognition of his contributions to the art of cinematography, he received the prestigious Franklin J. Schaffner Alumni Medal from the American Film Institute (AFI) in April 2024.

In 2023, Libatique lensed Bradley Cooper's *Maestro*, following their acclaimed collaboration on *A Star is Born*. Both films earned him Academy Award® nominations for Best Cinematography and American Society of Cinematographers (ASC) nominations, along with additional honors including a BAFTA nomination for *Black Swan* and the Hollywood Film Awards Cinematographer of the Year for *A Star Is Born*.

Libatique recently reteamed with legendary director Spike Lee on *Highest 2 Lowest*, a crime thriller reinterpreting Akira Kurosawa's *High and Low*. The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival and was released in August 2025. Their past collaborations include *Inside Man*, *Chi-Raq*, *Miracle at St. Anna*, *She Hate Me* and more.

He also reunited with longtime collaborator Darren Aronofsky for *Caught Stealing*, a gritty crime thriller based on Charlie Huston's novel of the same name. Starring Austin Butler, Matt Smith, Zoë Kravitz, Regina King, Vincent D'Onofrio, Liev Schreiber and Bad Bunny, released by Sony Pictures in August 2025.

He also served as DP on Aronofsky's *The Whale*, a critically lauded character study that continued their decades-long creative partnership. Their earlier collaborations include *Pi*; *Requiem for a Dream*, which earned Libatique the Film Independent Spirit Award for Best Cinematography; *The Fountain*; *Black Swan*, which won the Independent Spirit Award and earned Oscar® and BAFTA nominations for Best Cinematography; *Noah*; and *mother!*.

In 2021, Libatique captured the unsettling beauty of Olivia Wilde's *Don't Worry Darling*, set against the vibrant, mid-century desert palette of Palm Springs. It marked their second project together after the short film *Wake Up*, which premiered at Sundance in 2020.

Additional credits include Ryan Murphy's star-studded musical *The Prom*, Rashid Johnson's *Native Son* (Sundance premiere), the Oscar-nominated *Straight Outta Compton* and the anti-hero blockbuster *Venom*.

He also shares a longstanding collaboration with Jon Favreau, working together on projects such as *Cowboys & Aliens* and the original *Iron Man* films. Their creative partnership on *Iron Man* and *Iron Man 2* which helped in establishing the visual identity of the Marvel Cinematic Universe and marked the beginning of a new era in superhero filmmaking.

He is represented by UTA in the United States and is an active member of the American Society of Cinematographers.

KEVIN THOMPSON – Production Designer
Forthcoming.

CHARLIE GREENE – Editor
Forthcoming.

JAMES NEWBERRY – Composer

James Newberry is an award-winning film and television composer. His scores aim to subvert expectations, defy conventional norms, and elevate the art of filmmaking.

Recent projects include *Barron's Cove*, starring Garrett Hedlund and directed by Evan Kelman; Elegance Bratton's *Move Ya Body: The Birth of House*; *Enigma*; *Row of Life* and Suzannah Herbert's *Natchez*. *Natchez* won the Best Documentary Feature Award at the Tribeca Festival in June 2025 and is being positioned by Oscilloscope as a potential Oscar contender for the upcoming awards season.

Newberry has also written additional music for numerous top TV Shows over the last decade, such as "Presumed Innocent", "Tokyo Vice", "Ozark", "Fear the Walking Dead" and many more.

He is a classically trained percussionist and also performs clarinet, piano, hardware synthesizers, and experimental strings on his scores. He is currently based in California.

GALI NOY – Costume Designer

Forthcoming.

SHAYNA MARKOVITZ – Casting Director

Shayna Markowitz is an award-winning Casting Director best known for her work on Bradley Cooper's *Maestro* and Todd Phillips' *Joker*. She began her casting career over 18 years ago, working with Casting Director Debra Zane with whom she co-cast *Ocean's 8*, "Bloodline" and *The Best of Enemies*, as well as her work on films including *The Hunger Games* and *The Planet of the Apes* franchises.

In 2018, she created Shayna Markowitz Casting. Markowitz received the inaugural BAFTA for Best Casting for *Joker* in 2019. She also cast the television series' "Dash & Lily" and others. She just completed casting *The Devil Wears Prada 2* (with co-Casting Director Ellen Lewis), currently in production.

Markowitz is a member of the Casting Society of America and has been nominated for four Artios Awards (winning one for her work on "Bloodline"). She also received a Daytime Emmy nomination for her work on "Dash & Lily".

Markowitz is a graduate of The University of Michigan.