

Lilo & Stitch

Production Notes

“Lilo & Stitch” is the wildly funny and touching story of a lonely Hawaiian girl and the fugitive alien who helps to mend her broken family. A live-action reimagining of Disney’s animated classic, “Lilo & Stitch” is directed by Dean Fleischer Camp, the Oscar®-nominated filmmaker behind the animated feature film “Marcel the Shell with Shoes On,” and stars Sydney Elizebeth Agudong, Billy Magnussen, Tia Carrere, Hannah Waddingham, Chris Sanders, with Courtney B. Vance, and Zach Galifianakis, and introducing Maia Kealoha.

The screenplay is by Chris Kekaniokalani Bright and Mike Van Waes, and the film is produced by Jonathan Eirich, p.g.a. and Dan Lin, with Tom Peitzman, Ryan Halprin, Louie Provost, Thomas Schumacher serving as executive producers.

THE STORY

Lilo Pelekai is a 6-year-old girl living in Hawai’i who longs for a best friend. Following the tragic loss of her parents, she and her older sister Nani, who is 18 years old, are left to navigate life alone. Despite this, Lilo remains relentlessly optimistic. When their neighbour, Tūtū, allows Lilo to visit the local animal shelter (where she loves to spend time feeding candy to the stray dogs), Lilo brings home a wild and impulsive creature who seems intent on causing chaos. While Nani views him as trouble, Lilo is convinced her prayers have been answered and that she has finally found a best friend.

Unfortunately, her new pet, whom she names Stitch, is actually an alien, Experiment 626, who has fled Planet Turo, and two representatives from the United Galactic Federation, Pleakley and Jumba, have infiltrated the human race and are in close pursuit. As Lilo struggles to control the lovable but mischievous creature, Nani grapples with the pressures of trying to hold down a job and take care of her younger sister, and social services is concerned that she is failing miserably. Stitch embarks on a journey from alien outsider to a beloved family member, validating the importance of ‘ohana: that a family can be comprised of more than just blood relatives and that no one gets left behind.

A FRESH AND VIBRANT TAKE ON THE ANIMATED CLASSIC

The live-action “Lilo & Stitch” offers a fresh perspective on the animated tale that touched hearts worldwide upon its release in 2002. The original film is a cornerstone of Disney’s animated canon, notable for its unique blend of humour, heart, and the fact that it was set in Hawai’i and revolved around a Hawaiian family. Directed by Chris Sanders and Dean DeBlois, the heartwarming tale resonated deeply with audiences of all ages, becoming a critical and commercial success, and receiving praise for its originality, memorable characters, and beloved Hawai’i setting. The film

led to multiple direct-to-video sequels and a television series, further cementing its place in Disney's legacy of animated classics.

Beyond its box-office success and critical acclaim, "Lilo & Stitch" introduced global audiences to Hawaiian culture and language in a meaningful way, fostering a greater appreciation for the island's unique traditions and values. The character of Stitch, with his mischievous yet endearing personality, became a popular figure in Disney's archive of characters, spawning a successful line of merchandise and theme park visibility, ensuring that the film's legacy would thrive for years to come.

Screenwriters Chris Kekaniokalani Bright and Mike Van Waes have crafted a narrative that honours the original while exploring themes of 'ohana (family), belonging, and redemption against Hawai'i's breathtaking landscapes and rich cultural tapestry.

Guided by the vision of director Fleischer Camp, the film seamlessly blends the fantastical elements of "Lilo & Stitch" with the unique culture and stunning vistas of modern Hawai'i. This adaptation is not just a retelling but an expansion, reimagined for today's audiences while staying true to the essence of the beloved characters.

Producers Jonathan Eirich ("Aladdin") and Dan Lin ("Haunted Mansion"), alongside executive producers Tom Peitzman ("The Lion King"), Ryan Halprin ("The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part"), Louie Provost ("Togo"), and Thomas Schumacher ("Beauty and the Beast"), faced the unique challenge of transitioning a cherished animated film into a live-action spectacle while honouring the cultural nuances and values intrinsic to the story.

"The film has lasted and quite honestly grown in popularity because it is so singular and so ahead of its time," says Eirich. "The visual style, the themes of this imperfect 'found family,' the bond between Nani and Lilo trying to navigate such a difficult situation...and then you throw in one of the most memorable characters imaginable in Stitch, and it's a recipe for a classic. Stitch is so iconic because we all identify with him, that troublemaker side of us that's always trying to get out...we all wish we could be as unapologetically bold as Stitch is. None of us are perfect, and Stitch is simply the most fun personification of that."

Eirich continues, "But the movie also separates itself because it's not about a princess or set in a fairy tale kingdom – it's in our world, present day, and it's about feeling out of place and alone, the way we all feel so much of the time. What our characters are dealing with is so grounded and real that even with this wild alien thrown into the mix, the drama resonates because Lilo believes if she can 'fix' Stitch, then she can fix herself and her family. It's timeless and poignant, and that unique bond between Lilo and Stitch is the thing that really connects deeply with audiences."

According to Halprin, "'Lilo & Stitch' follows a different paradigm from many Disney movies. It acknowledges classic Disney tropes but does something different. It is about a real family with human beings and one heightened, fantasy sci-fi element that causes mayhem. The story's core

is simple—two sisters dealing with the loss of their parents and the arrival of a misunderstood alien.”

Peitzman, who is a veteran of some of Disney’s most recent live-action adaptations, says, “This is the third Disney film I’ve worked on that transitioned from animation to live-action, following ‘The Lion King’ and ‘Chip ‘n Dale: Rescue Rangers.’ It’s fun and exciting to take a well-known property and maintain its integrity while bringing it to today’s audiences. The vivid, colourful world of the original animated film is brought to life in Hawai’i, showcasing its beauty, diverse landscapes, and people. It all has a very tangible feel that sometimes you don’t get from an animated film.”

Eirich shares his team’s enthusiasm for this transformation. “This is one of the few Disney movies set in our world, which gave us the ammunition to say it belongs in a live-action environment. We wanted to see the humanity of these characters with human actors, feeling their struggles, drama, and heart. Stitch is a character everyone wants to revisit and bringing him into a live-action world while melding sci-fi and reality was a fascinating challenge.”

Halprin continues, “Finding the right director was crucial, and Dean Fleischer Camp was an inspired choice. He has live-action and animation experience and a real sense of comedy with heart. We wanted someone who could bring emotion to this movie, especially with the strong sister-to-sister and familial relationships. Dean brings that to the table with a comedic sensibility, and he brings out the best in our comedic actors.”

Adds Eirich, “We needed someone who could nail humour, understand actors and emotion, and have a background in animation, design, and visual effects. Dean’s prior film, ‘Marcel the Shell with Shoes On,’ ticked all those boxes. He had a simple pitch: ‘Jokes plus tears,’ capturing the heart and humour we wanted.”

“I was just coming off my second feature film, ‘Marcel the Shell with Shoes On,’ when they first approached me,” says Camp. “And even though they are very different projects on the surface, I felt like I knew in my gut that they shared the same DNA. Both Marcel and Stitch are unusual protagonists looking for family in a world that wasn’t made for them, and that gives them an unusual level of emotionality that elevates them beyond being just cute. I knew I could externalize that emotion to tell a powerful story. There’s enough that I felt familiar with from making hybrid live-action stuff and having an animation background, and then there was enough that seemed like a very new challenge.”

Camp continues, “The original has always been my favourite Disney film, and I was blown away when I first saw it. Since it is based on Chris Sanders’ artistic style, it didn’t look like any other Disney movies at the time. Also, it’s kind of a broken fairytale – unlike most Disney movies, there are no princesses. It takes place in a contemporary setting in Hawai’i, and most of the characters are just normal humans going about their lives and striving for happiness. I felt like that made it a perfect film to try to make a live-action adaptation that still honours the original because there’s

so much opportunity in terms of digging into the emotional realities of those human characters and grounding it in a lived experience.”

Halprin adds, “Dean’s approach was to identify the core elements of the story he related to on a human level and see how the sci-fi elements enhanced the human story, both exciting and challenging. Dean’s mom is a social worker, which added a personal touch to his approach. He was interested in creating a more modern extraterrestrial that speaks to families today.”

BRINGING THE ANIMATED CHARACTERS TO LIFE

The cast of “Lilo & Stitch” brings a fresh interpretation to the beloved story and one that aligns with the original’s focus on the central theme of ‘ohana. Through their performances, the film captures the spirit of family, community, and resilience, resonating with both original fans and new audiences. The dedication to authenticity and respect for the people and cultures of Hawai’i ensures that this live-action adaptation honours the legacy of the original while bringing new depth and nuance to the characters and story.

After an extensive casting search, new discovery Maia Kealoha, born and raised on the Big Island, makes her screen debut as Lilo Pelekai. Lilo is a spirited young 6-year-old Hawaiian girl with a love for hula and Elvis Presley. She has a vivid imagination and somewhat of a rebellious streak, which often gets her in trouble and isolates her from her peers.

“Finding Lilo was the biggest challenge,” says producer Jonathan Eirich. “We needed someone young who could realistically play a girl growing up in Hawai’i, and with the stamina to film every day. Maia Kealoha blew us away with her energy, humour, and dramatic ability.”

Eirich continues, “After looking at over 800 audition tapes, she was the perfect choice. She embodies Lilo’s personality, spunk, and sense of wonder.”

“Maia truly is Lilo,” says executive producer Tom Peitzman. “She has this fun, mischievous side that adds a different edge to the character. Dean has harnessed those attributes, and it was wonderful to see Maia’s performance evolve. She enjoyed showing up to work and really hit it out of the park. She is the shining star of the film, delivering a natural and realistic performance.”

Director Dean Fleischer Camp praises Kealoha’s casting. “It was clear to me from the moment she and her mom walked in the door that we’d found our Lilo. Maia’s a born performer, but it was her inherent curiosity and imagination that struck us,” he says. “We wanted someone who embodied Lilo’s precociousness and her poise, but we conscientiously *avoided* casting someone who just *was* Lilo, as a person, on and off-camera. When you’re casting somebody so young, you have to be careful about the ramifications of that, and we wanted to be thoughtful. Acting coach Sara Arrington and I both felt strongly that we wanted to find a talented kid with whom we could work to *craft* a real *performance* of ‘Lilo,’ and *not* somebody who was simply playing themselves on camera. Maia did just that, and what you see on screen is a powerful performance by a prodigious talent, and not somebody simply being themselves. ‘Lilo’ is a character that Maia crafted

through a lot of hard work and imagination. I'm actually not even sure they would be friends in real life—Maia hates a lot of gross stuff, for example, unlike Lilo.”

Camp continues, “On day one, she hadn’t even started learning to read yet, so she was memorizing all of her lines by audio recording. And unlike a lot of kids who auditioned, she didn’t have any work experience. She was asking me what ‘lines’ were, what a ‘take’ meant. Then, by the end, not only could she read, but she knew to ‘hold for sound’ and all kinds of other on-set lingo. Her ability to take direction and learn on the job and her relationship with the whole team were truly remarkable. By the end, I don’t think anybody on our crew wouldn’t give a kidney for Maia.”

In describing her character, Kealoha says, “Lilo has lots of energy, and she is very artsy, but she also enjoys having playtime as well. And she really likes doing crafts, too. Her best friend is Stitch, but he is always getting into trouble, so I have to teach him to try and be good.”

The film’s acting coach and Stitch suit performer, Sara Arrington, was instrumental in guiding the young actress each day on set. “Maia is one of the most tenacious people I’ve ever met,” she says. “She never stopped, not even on the rare bad days. She was always willing to try and always kept an open mind. Her creativity and willingness to play made her perfect for Lilo.”

Arrington continues, “From the beginning, the production emphasized ‘ohana, making everyone feel part of a community. It felt like a familial relationship we built on the film, which is very unusual but was very special.”

“Maia really threw herself into the process,” Camp says. “She really learned how to channel her imagination through the tools at an actor’s disposal. And she, over the course of our film, went from being a very charming kid and very precocious and smart to being, honestly, one of the better actors I’ve worked with. There were a number of times when I was blown away by her performance, which was not something that we had rehearsed or worked on. It was something she brought to the role totally separate from me, which you really don’t see with a lot of child actors.”

Multi-talented actress, singer, and songwriter Sydney Elizebeth Agudong, born and raised on Kaua’i, portrays Lilo’s older sister Nani. Agudong’s work includes indie features such as “At Her Feet” and “Infamously in Love,” as well as roles in television series like “NCIS” and Netflix’s “On My Block.” Nani is an intelligent and athletic 18-year-old who has taken on the role of Lilo’s guardian. Once a straight-A student with aspirations of a career in marine biology, Nani now juggles school, work, and the crushing responsibilities of raising Lilo.

The actress carries a lot of the movie as Nani, and from the moment she auditioned, the filmmakers knew they had found their Nani. Plus, her chemistry with Kealoha was magical.

“We connected from the start,” says Agudong. “I love that kid with all my heart. She is extremely talented and precocious, and beautifully embodies Lilo’s fascination with the world. She is this

little, spunky, adorable child, is very friendly, and loves to play on set. We played around with the ukulele and sang 'Aloha 'Oe' together. There was an instant sense of trust, sisterhood, and love."

Executive producer Ryan Halprin adds, "Sydney was phenomenal from the start. Nani is the protagonist in terms of emotional arc, and because she grew up on the islands, she related to the themes of Nani's story. She nailed the emotional moments and the humour, making her a perfect fit."

Eirich agrees, saying, "For Nani, we needed someone who felt like a big sister, balancing responsibility and youthful energy. Sydney had that innate quality and instantly bonded with Maia."

Agudong describes Nani as a character who has been through significant challenges. "She's been through it at this point in time. Right off the top, she is running late, she's getting off work, she's doing her hustle. At the age of 18, she's basically functioning as a single mom to her little sister. She's just starting to get into trying to get the groove with not only being a young adult but having lost her parents, trying to deal with the grief and raising Lilo, who is a 6-year-old, and keeping the spirit alive like it never happened. She's hotheaded, she is type-A, she's a go-getter, and nothing's going to stop her."

The story's beloved alien characters, Jumba and Pleakley, are brought to life by Zach Galifianakis ("A Wrinkle in Time") and Billy Magnussen ("Into the Woods"), respectively. Pleakley is a zany and overzealous extra-terrestrial agent from the United Galactic Federation, sent to Earth to infiltrate the human race and retrieve Experiment 626. An alien agent from the United Galactic Federation, Jumba takes on a human form and is the evil mastermind responsible for the creation of Experiment 626.

"Zach and Billy take on the roles of 'Jumba' and 'Pleakley' in the live-action movie," says Eirich, "but in our film, they play aliens who take on human forms to assimilate on Earth, which was a fun challenge to crack and provided so much room for comedy. Zach has this brilliant, dry, sarcastic wit, while Billy brings such zany high energy. Their different energy levels create this fun juxtaposition for their characters that audiences are going to love."

Halprin adds, "Zach brought a unique take to Jumba, making him an egotistical villain parallel to Nani's journey. Billy, full of wild energy, adapted Pleakley in a live-action context, making the character's fascination with human fashion work hilariously."

Magnussen says, "For me personally, this story had a huge impact on me as a young kid. I was landlocked on the East Coast, and I knew nothing about Hawai'i and its culture. And it was my first introduction to this beautiful place. So, I would say that was one of the biggest influences, but also the story of family is always inspiring, 'ohana, and the beautiful message the film has."

Magnussen's portrayal of Pleakley captures the character's enthusiasm and curiosity. "Pleakley is a very eager, excited professional from the Galactic Federation. He is fascinated with Earth and

wants to be ingrained in it but can't find his own footing in the real world or come to the reality of what Earth's culture really is."

Galifianakis delves into the complexities of Jumba. "What was fun for me, personally, was to play someone villainous, or a villainous creature. I don't think I really did any of that, and it was kind of fun just to act with your menacing face," he explains.

The duo's dynamic is likened to classic comedy pairs. "How would I describe the duo?" says Magnussen. "This might be too old for the young audience, but Laurel and Hardy is the best way I could describe it. I was a big fan of their work, and I think it's that kind of dynamic, like a nice duo is what makes that relationship, is what makes everything exciting to work with. Especially Zach, man. He's a great guy."

Magnussen continues, "Working with Zach has been a career highlight for me. It was an absolute delight. He is a true artist when he collaborates. He is here for the project and not for himself. And I think that's one of the most important things...to keep pushing this boulder up a hill."

Galifianakis, in turn, praises Magnussen's performance. "Billy is a Broadway actor, and as a stand-up comic, I get a little intimidated by legitimate actors. But it was a pleasure to work with him," he says. "He is a really, really enthusiastic guy."

Two-time Emmy® and Tony Award® winner Courtney B. Vance ("The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story," "Lucky Guy") is Cobra Bubbles, a CIA agent who goes undercover as a social worker assigned to the Pelekai family.

"Courtney brings sternness and seriousness to Cobra Bubbles but gives him a real soft side as well," says Eirich. "We explore his empathy for Nani and Lilo in the film, balancing his tough character with a sense of compassion."

Adds Halprin, "Courtney brought credibility to the character. He balanced suave gentleness with intensity, adding stakes to the story."

Reflecting on his first introduction to the original animated film, Vance shared a personal and frank anecdote. "We have to go back to when 'Lilo & Stitch' first came out," Vance says. "My wife and I have a set of twins. They're 17 now. I think they were 3 or 4 at the time, and they were afraid of Stitch. We've seen the 'Toy Story' movies about four times each, and all the 'Cars' movies about four or five times each, but 'Lilo & Stitch,' we never got into it because they were too afraid."

Despite not being deeply familiar with the original, Vance was drawn to the complexity and humour of Cobra Bubbles. "He is not actually a social worker at all, but is undercover portraying one, so it is a little tricky for him," Vance says. "Because he is a top-drawer operative security as well, and he always gets the job done."

Vance continues, “This is challenging for him, because it’s a situation that he doesn’t often encounter...situations where there is a human element, so he’s dealing with a human element while trying to achieve his goals.”

Newcomer Kaipo Dudoit, an O’ahu local, plays David Kawena. David is a handsome, young neighbour with a heart of gold. He works with Nani at a lū’au where he dances the fire knife. An avid surfer, David has always had a crush on Nani and is always trying to entice her with a trip to the beach.

The actor brings authenticity and a deep connection to his role as David, and being cast in the film was a dream come true. “I was in elementary school when I saw the animated ‘Lilo & Stitch,’” Dudoit says. “Seeing people that look like me and scenes of my home on screen was eye-opening.”

“Kaipo came on board and immediately brought dimension to David, making him awkward, yet charming, and emotionally intelligent,” says Eirich. “He really helped evolve the character.”

In terms of the relationship between Nani and David, Agudong reflects on working with Dudoit, saying “Kaipo is incredible, and we instantly connected. He was so wonderful to work with, and we learned so much from each other.”

The live-action “Lilo & Stitch” introduces several new characters, namely Tūtū, Mrs. Kekoa, and the lū’au manager, portrayed by Amy Hill (“50 First Dates,” “Magnum P.I.”), Tia Carrere (“Wayne’s World”), and Jason Scott Lee (“Mulan”), respectively. Hill, who voiced Mrs. Hasagawa in the animated “Lilo & Stitch,” returns to the beloved franchise as Tūtū, a warm and quick-witted neighbour who has known the Pelekai family for many years. She is an unwavering presence in Nani and Lilo’s lives, as she has witnessed their struggles firsthand.

Hill shares her excitement about bringing this newly-created character to life, saying, “My daughter was 3 when the original came out, and it was so much fun to do at the time. I loved seeing my daughter go, ‘Is that my mom?’ She recognized my voice but couldn’t quite figure it all out. I don’t think she knew what my actual job was.”

“It was exciting to come back now with a different role, because I was able to create a character that didn’t exist in the original,” Hill explains. “I did have to go back and rewatch the animated film because it had been such a long time. It is such a warm-hearted, lovely movie. All Disney movies are like that, but this was so special and sweet because it was set in Hawai’i, and ‘ohana means family.”

In describing her character, Hill says, “Initially, when I looked at the script, it felt like she was just a nosy neighbour...this kind of eccentric woman. She lives on her own and manages the farm by herself with her grandson, David, who is delightful but is not so on top of things. He adores Nani and Lilo, as does Tūtū, as she feels a connection not just as the nosy neighbour who wants to

know what's going on, but as someone who really cares about their future and how they are going to move forward in life."

Hill finds humour in Tūtū's directness. "She is funny," she says. "I'm not sure she's intentionally funny, but she is so direct that she's surprisingly funny. She is very similar to me in many ways, so playing her wasn't a huge stretch. As you get older, you also don't have so much of a filter, so you just say things that maybe are a little inappropriate or insensitive, but you still know that she cares, so it's okay."

Fans will remember Carrere, who voiced Nani in the 2002 animated film. Her new role is that of Mrs. Kekoa, who works for social services. She tries to steer Nani in the right direction by providing helpful hints and holding her accountable when she screws up. The actress, who is originally from Honolulu, reflects on her journey with the film, saying, "It's quite something to have been a part of the original film 23 years ago, so when I heard that they were going to be doing this new iteration, I knew I wanted to be a part of the legacy of the story. Plus, I was super curious to see how they planned to translate such a beloved animated film into the live-action world."

According to Halprin, "Tia embodies the spirit of Hawai'i and was an integral part of the 'Lilo & Stitch' 'ohana. She brings both a calming energy and bubbly presence to the film."

Carrere elaborates on her character's deeper motivations, saying, "The way I conjured Mrs. Kekoa in my mind is that perhaps she, too, was in the foster care system and was one of those kids that lost her way. She has a similar story to Lilo and Nani, but worked hard, went to school, and changed her life."

The actress reflects on her connection with Agudong, who plays the role she originated in the animated film. "Sydney called me before I even was cast in the film," Carrere says, "And asked me to mentor her and help her with the character as I saw it, but then also to step in as Mrs. Kekoa to be her protector and confidant in that way."

Lee, who appears in the film as the lū'au manager, also voiced David Kawena in the animated film. The actor, who is of mixed Hawaiian and Chinese descent, was born in California and raised on Oahu.

Chris Sanders is the creator and original voice of Stitch, an alien experiment also known as Experiment 626, designed to be abnormally strong, virtually indestructible, super-intelligent, and mischievous. Stitch is an alien experiment that lands on Earth disguised as a dog. A genetic experiment banned by the United Galactic Federation, he finds refuge in the arms of Lilo.

"The original 'Lilo and Stitch' is an extremely unusual film and a very, very personal film for me," says Sanders. "I came up with the idea, I pitched the concept to Tom Schumacher, the studio's head of feature animation at the time, and he said 'yes' to the idea on the condition that it looked like I drew it, because to pitch the project, I basically made a children's book. It was an illustrated

pitch. And my concern at the time was that there were a lot of alien movies that were coming out, and I wanted people to see the alien in my film the right way, because he was a very unusual creature. So, I thought, 'I'll illustrate the pitch. If they don't like it, I'll know they didn't like my pitch, and they weren't seeing something else in their heads.' Then, when Tom said, 'I will make this movie on one condition – that it looks like you drew it – he was saying that because of the pitch book that I'd created.'

Sanders continues, "At that point, we had an artist in the studio try to figure out how it is I drew because I didn't see my drawings as being different than anybody else's. So, Sue Nichols, a very, very talented artist in feature animation, did an analysis of my drawings and created a book called Surfing the Sanders Style, and that was a guidebook. Nobody was more fascinated to look at it than I was. So, I ended up voicing the character, designing the characters, writing the script with Dean DeBlois, my co-director, and pitching the project, so it is an unusually personal project."

Sanders was deep in production on "The Wild Robot" (an animated film from DreamWorks he wrote and directed), when casting for "Lilo & Stitch" began, but he was adamant that he remain the voice of the mischievous alien. "I'm going to do this voice for as long as I possibly can. This is a very personal character to me."

"Stitch is interesting because he exists in a zone," says Sanders. "I would say that his closest neighbour in a Disney neighbourhood would probably be Donald Duck. Donald has the ability to start trouble, which is, I think, one of the reasons I like him as a character. He can be really on point, and he can do a good job, but a lot of times he gets caught in his own mischief. So, he generates things, he gets ideas, and he does these things. And Stitch is very similar. Stitch was designed to be a villain that becomes a hero. That was unique at the time, and it still is."

"Having Chris Sanders back was a dream come true," says Camp. "He has been so generous with not just his voice, but his time and his mind in guiding us and telling us when we're off track and making himself open to advice and answering questions. And then getting into the ADR booth and just seeing that voice come out of his face was totally surreal. I know, intellectually, Chris Sanders does the voice of Stitch, and I know Chris Sanders, but then my brain exploded when I saw the two together."

Camp continues, "Also, he's so energetic as Stitch. He's an energetic guy, but when you let him go as Stitch, he's totally off-leash. It was amazing just how generous he was with his energy. I would be like, 'Can you do another take this way?' and he would just improvise for 15 minutes. I don't know how he does it. I imagine he conks out at like 4:00 pm every day."

Rounding out the cast is Hannah Waddingham ("Ted Lasso") as the Grand Councilwoman, the alien head of the United Galactic Federation. While sensible with good intentions, she has no tolerance for lawbreakers of any kind.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Disney's live-action "Lilo & Stitch" is a testament to innovative storytelling, inviting audiences to experience the magic of 'ohana and the joys of creating a family in the most unexpected circumstances. Principal photography on the film took place in Hawai'i on the island of O'ahu in 2023.

The filmmakers set out to create a film that resonates with audiences of all ages, and put together an impressive creative team focused on ensuring the film's visual and thematic elements both reflect and respect the authenticity of the original. The core creative team includes: director of photography Nigel Bluck ("The Peanut Butter Falcon"), production designer Todd Cherniawsky ("Obi-Wan Kenobi"), editors Phillip J. Bartell, ACE ("Haunted Mansion") and Adam Gerstel ("Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania"), costume designer Wendy Chuck ("The Holdovers"), visual effects supervisor Craig Hammack ("Black Panther: Wakanda Forever"), composer Dan Romer ("Death of a Unicorn"), Stitch suit performer Sara Arrington ("The Jungle Book"), and Stitch puppeteer Seth Hays ("The Mandalorian").

Movie magic and visual effects played a pivotal role in bringing Stitch to life. Producer Jonathan Eirich discusses the collaboration with executive producer Tom Peitzman, saying, "We love working with Tom. This is our second film together, and he brings a real knowledge of line producing along with visual effects. Stitch is a total CG character, so Tom's combination of deep physical production knowledge and visual effects expertise has made the process seamless."

Eirich continues, "Our director, Dean Fleischer Camp, had a great truism: Cuteness is something evolution has created for thousands of years...we just need to draft off that. So, we looked at everything in nature that we find charming and merged them into one character, making Stitch believable and naturally appealing to audiences."

Executive producer Ryan Halprin shares insight into the design process, saying, "Everyone's first question was about what Stitch would look like. Dean's approach was to lean into how humans react to certain animal traits. Stitch's design took inspiration from deer ears, a bulldog's nose, and a koala's texture. His eyes are like a seal's: black from far away, but more human-like up close to connect emotionally."

Adds Peitzman, "Stitch was always going to be computer-generated. The challenge was getting performances from the human cast while interacting with a character that was not there. We brought in Legacy Effects to build an on-set maquette and puppet, both for lighting and camera reference and for Maia to emotionally connect and interact with. The maquette, combined with the puppeteering skills of Seth Hays, helped bring Stitch to life in a way that felt real for the actors and, ultimately, the audience."

When filming scenes where Kealoha interacts with Stitch, it was important for the filmmakers that the young actress have something to act against whenever possible...and something more substantial than a tennis ball.

Arrington worked closely with Kealoha to overcome initial challenges, such as helping her understand filmmaking fundamentals and rehearsing scenes with an imaginary Stitch (Arrington would get in a grey suit and act opposite the actress). “Maia had to engage in scenes with an imaginary creature, maintaining a connection with something that was not physically there,” Arrington says. “We used various objects like puppets, stuffies, and dolls to simulate Stitch during rehearsals.”

Arrington continues, “One of the challenges of making this movie is that Stitch is not the same size as a person. He’s only about from my knee to the ground, and sometimes he’s moving quite a bit. So, the actor has to engage in a scene, having a full-on connection with a creature that is moving and basically carrying on their own dialogue. The director needs to have that eyeball-to-eyeball connection that only another person can provide.”

There were some scenes, however, when Camp needed something more substantial, which is when Seth Hays came in. Hays, who served as the Stitch puppeteer, works with Legacy Effects and previously served as one of Groggu’s puppeteers on the Disney+/Lucasfilm series “The Mandalorian.”

“There is a scene where Lilo is running and she has to be talking to Stitch the entire time, so Seth had a puppet and was running alongside her,” Arrington explains. “If Seth had not been there, it wouldn’t really translate well. There’s a level of trust that was built between Seth and Maia and me and Dean; all of us worked together to make all those moments look believable. And there were probably a hundred different applications of the Stitch versions. We had a grey cage one, and we had a heavy version that was used for the scenes underwater. But at the end of the day, none of it means anything if Maia was not connecting to it.”

Hays describes his specific role on set, saying, “I was basically there to give Maia a more realistic scene partner and to give Dean a more accurate idea of how he wants the scene to look, and what would exist in that space where a CG Stitch will eventually appear...something more than just a lifeless object. It helped to make Dean and Maia both feel more comfortable and helped give the visual effects team the space dimensions that they needed to complete their work in post-production.”

Hays continues, “This particular puppet that we used is different in the fact that we were not going to be using the performance that I actually created with the puppet. Most of the characters that I am a part of will use my movements, and that will be what is seen onscreen. But not in this film. The puppet is there to bring the character to life for everyone on set. And it was just me, and I only have two hands, so I could only bring so many of his extremities to life. Normally, there would be at least one more person, and then another person operating the head, because it would be an animatronic head or animatronic character.”

“We were using what you would call a rod puppet, and he has rods that come out of each one of his extremities,” explains Hays. “So, you can convey his emotions with his hands, and he definitely

has a lot of emotion that he can get with his eyes, just because of who the character is. He has such big eyes and a big mouth.”

Hays remembers the first day he worked with Maia on set. “It was a brutally hot day, and everyone was tired and a little irritable. But the moment that Maia engaged and saw Stitch, it was pretty magical. I was just happy to be the guy holding onto the sticks and bringing him to life for her and trust me; she is an incredible little actor. She really turned it on every scene we had together, no matter what.”

“Dean learned from ‘Marcel the Shell with Shoes On’ that when there’s no tactile interaction in a practical set, the audience disconnects,” says Eirich. “The Stitch puppet and maquette – though never seen on screen by the audience – were used to make the interactions real. When Stitch rustles papers, it needs to look real, which makes the VFX integration seamless, and the character feels like part of the environment.”

Industrial Light & Magic’s Craig Hammack, who serves as the film’s visual effects supervisor, discusses the collaboration with Legacy, saying, “The furred maquettes of Stitch that they created were meticulous, with hand-sewn fur that looked beautiful, and Seth was incredible. He brought a real personality to the puppets, which was a huge benefit to Maia. He established a real friendship with her, and he was talented in so many unexpected ways. Puppets don’t always fit into a shooting set, so you have to be creative to figure out the best way to help Maia, while not bumping into things that Stitch would bump into and not casting shadows over the set. Seth was a tremendous collaborator, in that he got the best actions out of Maia on set in the least obtrusive way.”

In discussing his overall approach to the film’s visual effects, Hammack says, “We wanted to keep it pretty faithful to the original film, especially in terms of Stitch. You see Stitch merchandise everywhere, so he’s very well known, but at the same time, he’s very unique and has characteristics that are quite subtle. We spent a lot of time determining what the actual combination of those things that make up such a beloved character are so that we can then be as faithful as possible in 3D.”

Hammack continues, “We did quite a bit of development getting there, in nuanced colour tones, the blending of the fur, how big the eyes are, what the shape of the eyes are, and how big the ears are. In the end, I think we really nailed the right attitude and feeling of the character.”

Creating the alien incarnations of Jumba and Pleakley presented a whole new set of challenges. “Jumba and Pleakley are caricatures,” Hammack explains, “and Jumba is certainly larger-than-life. There are aspects of his personality that manifest themselves into his character that make him large and jolly, and it’s a very fine line when you try to put those kinds of creatures in a real-world setting. Both characters have very large features, and their movements tend to be a little over the top and not something that you can see in the real world, so bringing that into the real world and not immediately taking you out of the story was challenging.”

Hammack continues, “Pleakley has these noodle arms and very grand gestures, and the more cartoony the forms and the motions, the harder that is. While we needed to maintain that animated aspect of them, we had to make sure they didn’t become too scary, which is easy to do with animated characters in a real-world setting. But I think we navigated everything really well. Pleakley is a little goofier, so it was easy to make him cute and unassuming, but Jumba, being so large, is immediately kind of scary, so we had to be very, very careful.”

Co-screenwriter Chris Kekaniokalani Bright talks about how modern filmmaking technology allowed the production to bring creative ideas to life, saying, “Writing can lead to ideas that take months to figure out in production. The infinite portal loop, for example, came from a conversation with Dean. Realizing it was incredibly complicated, but the team loves figuring out creative ways to make it happen. The technology frees you up to do fun and interesting things while capturing authentic, documentary-like performances from Stitch in the real world.”

Ensuring cultural authenticity and capturing the essence of Hawai’i was paramount for the production team of “Lilo & Stitch.” Eirich emphasized the importance of this, saying, “It was really important for us to capture the authenticity of Hawai’i, not only the beautiful landscape but also the cultures. We wanted the movie to feel as real as possible and be true to the experience of family and community as it is experienced here.”

Eirich continues, “Our screenwriter Chris Kekaniokalani Bright, who is Hawaiian, helped us reflect the real culture, not just a tourist version. We also had a team of consultants specializing in Hawaiian culture and language.”

“Our cultural advisor team, led by Lāiana Kanoa-Wong, was tremendous,” says Peitzman. “He ensured the dialogue, proper Hawaiian language, Pidgin usage, and all cultural elements were authentic. And having Chris write the script and work with our advisors infused the story with genuine Hawaiian and local Hawai’i culture.”

Adds Halprin, “Cultural context and authenticity were a priority. Dean especially wanted to ensure we did right by the Hawaiian aspects of the story. Chris Kekaniokalani Bright, our writer, has deep roots in the original story and the culture, which helped us expand on the idea of ‘ohana to include the surrounding community and neighbourhood.”

Shooting the entire movie in Hawai’i was crucial to honouring the story. “We determined early on that we needed to shoot the entire movie in Hawai’i to honour the story,” says Peitzman. “Hiring as many local people as possible was important, and this crew has stepped up and done an amazing job. Our set decorator, Katrin Chong, sourced items locally, adding authenticity to the film.”

Camp adds, “The Hawai’i crew was amazing, and it is such a close-knit filmmaking community. There are plenty of TV shows and movies that shoot in Hawai’i, so the crew is very seasoned. Usually, as a director, when you go shoot somewhere that’s not a normal location, you have a lot of people learning on the job because there are not enough film projects there for them to gain

experience, but Hawai'i is totally different. You have people who have worked together for 20 years and who have a shorthand. I felt very honoured to build a shoot there."

Camp continues, "One of the things that really impressed me is their connection to the land, and there truly is no way to recreate it anywhere else...it is a one-of-a-kind place. The land, the geography, it is incredible and spiritual, and the people and the cultures that have sprouted up around that land have such a reverence for it and are so good about protecting it and fighting to protect it from development. It is a wonderful spirit to be around and to learn from."

Adds Halprin, "Shooting in Hawai'i allowed us to capture local communities, not just postcard Hawai'i. Lāiana provided invaluable insights on dialogue, set decoration, and larger story elements."

Production designer Todd Cherniawsky underscored the importance of cultural authenticity. "One of the best things about this project has been the ability to immerse myself and the art department in the culture of Hawai'i," he says. "It's more than just Easter eggs; it's about making every single decision rooted in a cultural influence or story. Our cultural consultants were invaluable in providing historical context and ensuring the accuracy of our set designs."

Filming in Hawai'i was a dream for the cast as well. "Hawai'i is absolutely magical," says Billy Magnussen. "From the local community to the customs, to the nature of it all, to the food...it really is a little slice of heaven here on Earth. And you can't beat the weather and the surf. It's a healthy lifestyle. To be able to jump in the ocean in the morning and then go to work and then come home and jump in the ocean was a real treat."

Zach Galifianakis agrees, saying, "The culture of Hawai'i is embedded in the script. 'Ohana is a real thing. The people there are very friendly and very positive."

Adds Tia Carrere, "There really is no place like home. There are no mountains that look like the Ko'olau Mountains. To insert another tropical island would just be wrong."

Carrere continues, "'Ohana means family, and family means that we look out for each other. Family means that we pull together and try and make things work, and everybody pulled together on this film to try and make the best film we can and then share it with the world."

Shooting the film entirely in Hawai'i with a predominantly Hawai'i-based crew was crucial to the project's authenticity and was a priority with filmmakers from day one. A local sensibility gives the film depth.

"Even if they're not in front of the camera, being behind the camera also adds to the meat of the film," says Bright. "It makes you feel like you are part of the 'āina, part of the land, part of the mana and kuleana. Our responsibility is to tell this story as authentically as possible."

Cherniawsky's production team did a phenomenal job, ensuring that all the sets felt like authentic Hawai'i homes, filled with items you would find in any local household. "We wanted everything to pop out on screen and feel right," he says. "We worked closely with the art and set design teams to ensure that every detail, from the bumper stickers on cars to the design of the Pelekai house, was authentic. The goal was to create a world that felt true to the experience."

The production design meticulously balances the beloved elements of the original film with innovative updates and a deep desire for cultural authenticity, creating a visually stunning and emotionally resonant world that honours the spirit of the original while bringing it into a new era. The production designer approached the beloved story with a blend of reverence for the cultures and innovation.

The transition from the hand-painted, watercolour style of the original to live action brings its own set of challenges and excitement. Carrere agrees, saying, "The interesting thing about the first 'Lilo & Stitch' was that it was a hand-painted, watercolour style, and it created this lyrically beautiful world of Hawai'i that was idealized. Bringing it into the real world is always tricky because everybody has their own visions of how it should look, and Dean perfectly captured the blending of the animation with the real-world backdrops to make it utterly believable."

Cherniawsky's initial scouting trip in October 2022 was pivotal in shaping the film's visual language. He explains the scouting process and how it influenced the design. "I came to the Hawaiian Islands for about two and a half weeks, starting in Kaua'i. Hanapēepē, on the southwestern corner of Kaua'i, was the original inspiration for the town in the animated film. Scouting Kaua'i, I saw the north shore, south shore, east side, and west side to understand the island's diverse landscapes," he says. "Moving to O'ahu, we tried to replicate that tour, finding unique locations that have never been shot before, creating a composite of all the best elements from the islands."

One of the film's central locations is the Pelekai house. Cherniawsky describes the process of finding and building this crucial set. "The exterior and interior of the Pelekai home is the predominant location in this film," he says. "We found three strong candidates, but one parcel of land on O'ahu's windward side stood out. We built the exterior Pelekai house like a traditional house, making it weatherproof and functional. It took us about 12 weeks from the initial survey to opening the set. Most of the interior shooting took place on stage at Point Panic, a converted warehouse in greater Honolulu."

Bright, who was born and raised in Hawai'i, reflects on the experience of seeing his writing come to life on set. "The first time I stepped onto the Pelekai house set, I freaked out," says Bright. "It looked exactly like our old aunties' houses, down to the smallest details. The care everyone took to make sure every detail was right was incredible."

Cherniawsky also emphasizes the importance of the story's animal shelter: "The second most important location for this story is the animal shelter, where Lilo meets 626 and christens him as Stitch," he says. "We searched the entire island and found a unique place, known on the island

as Fong's Plantation, that had never been used in film or TV before. The open beam, open truss architecture was perfect for Stitch's character, allowing him to scuttle around and interact with the environment in a playful and dynamic way."

Creating the alien environments and technology was another significant challenge. "My duty was to create environments that reflect the Galactic Federation while also grounding them in our real world," says Cherniawsky. "This film's biggest challenge was bridging Hawaiian architecture with intergalactic elements. We used the idea of nanotechnology and water-based designs to create seamless transitions between these worlds."

Cherniawsky continues, "For alien technology, like Jumba's gadgets and the portals, we drew inspiration from marine life and the primordial soup concept. Our portals are based on the states of water, transitioning between steam, air, and water to create a visually cohesive and scientifically intriguing design."

Director of photography Nigel Bluck brings a fresh perspective to the beloved animated classic. With a career that spans various genres and styles, Bluck's approach to the film emphasizes authenticity and emotional depth, though he admits he wasn't initially familiar with the original animated film.

"I had very little knowledge of animation," Bluck says. "However, upon watching it and researching its significance, I realized its importance to Hawai'i and its people. That's really what attracted me to it. That, and the fact that Dean Fleischer Camp was directing it. I really loved 'Marcel the Shell with Shoes On' and thought a version of this with that much heart would be really interesting."

Following numerous conversations with the director, Bluck chose to focus on grounding the film in reality. "Our talks were always about trying to find a sense of reality," Bluck explains. "We wanted to see Stitch through Lilo's eyes, who has a much more innocent view of his existence, rather than an adult's point of view."

Shooting scenes with Stitch, who would later be added in post-production, presented unique challenges for Bluck and his team. They had to ensure that Stitch's presence didn't constrain the camera work. "We tried to shoot it like you would shoot a regular shot in all instances and tried to reverse engineer Stitch into that," says Bluck. "This method required careful planning and a solid understanding of Stitch's physical dimensions and movements to integrate him seamlessly into the scenes."

And authenticity was paramount in filming on location in Hawai'i. "We always wanted to make sure that the audience has a sense of Hawai'i as much as possible," Bluck says. "We tried to infuse as much island culture in all aspects...in a less obvious way."

The animated film, which featured an original score composed by Alan Silvestri, is especially memorable for its authentic Hawaiian music and use of Elvis Presley songs. For the music in the

live-action film, the filmmakers wanted to honour the music people remember from the original while also finding new ways to infuse Hawaiians into the music, which included Bright's mother, Lynell K. Bright.

Bright is the director of the Kamehameha Schools Children's Chorus, a choir composed of elementary school-aged children, which performed some the authentic Hawaiian music for the original film and contributed to several numbers for the live-action film, including *Henehene Kou 'Aka*, and *He Lei Pāpahi No Lilo a me Stitch*, on which the choir is joined by Hawaiian vocalist Mark Keali'i Ho'omalulu. For *Hawaiian Roller Coaster Ride*, they are joined by Hawaiian-born vocalist Iam Tongi, who won season 21 of "American Idol."

The Kamehameha School Children's Chorus is comprised of 40 children from grades four through six. "These kids are very special," says Lynell K. Bright. "What makes this project so special for these kids is that they are all native Hawaiian descent, and they all speak Ōlelo Hawai'i, so it was a tremendous honour to be involved with this beloved story once again."

Another song from the animated film, which can be heard over the film's end credits (and which appears on the "Lilo & Stitch" Soundtrack featuring an original score composed by Dan Romer available on Walt Disney Records), is *Burning Love*. The song, which was made popular in the '70s by Elvis Presley and was performed by Wynonna Judd in the animated film, is performed by Nyjah Music & Zyah Rhythm, two young musicians born and raised on the North Shore of Oahu, who also happen to be the nephews of GRAMMY®-winning artist Bruno Mars.

The faith in director Dean Fleischer Camp was evident from all aspects of the production. "I've known Dean for a long time, so when he asked me to be in the movie it was a definite no-brainer," says Galifianakis. "He knows what he's doing, and it shows some confidence that he was willing to go off track a little bit, which also allowed the actors to breathe a little bit and bring their own spin to where it didn't feel too controlled at all."

Courtney B. Vance appreciated the director's detailed and prepared approach to the project. "Dean was very, very hands-on with everything," Vance says. "A lot of his job was tweaking the story, and ultimately, that becomes part of the tapestry. Everything is a part of telling the story, which initially is gruelling, especially with the minutiae work that comes with filmmaking, but he handled everything exceptionally well."

Working with the director was an enriching experience for Sydney Elizebeth Agudong. "One of the first times we had a conversation about Nani specifically, it was all about the love surrounding family, the 'ohana, which is the biggest theme in the movie. We both agreed that the story is a very real and relatable family situation and that it doesn't necessarily mean that it's broken. Anybody can be family, and that was our main thing when developing Nani."

Carrere praised the director's approach to the film, drawing from her admiration of his previous work. "I had seen 'Marcel the Shell with Shoes On' before I even knew about 'Lilo & Stitch' or that Dean was going to be working on the film," she says. "I was incredibly touched by 'Marcel,'

which I was not expecting from an animated film. The blend, the soft focus, the gentle, deft touch that he had with the space that Marcel was living in...it was such a small, intimate feeling.”

Cherniawsky also spoke highly of the director, saying, “Dean’s approach to the material was empathetic and sensitive, and so crucial for a story so deeply rooted in culture.”

IN THEATERS

“This movie is for everyone,” says producer Jonathan Eirich. “It captures the nostalgia for older audiences who grew up with the original and introduces a new generation to the story. We’ve added depth and new scenes to make it a unique experience while delivering on iconic moments.”

Eirich continues, “It’s a movie that blends humour, drama, and the beauty of Hawai’i, and it appeals to both long-time fans and newcomers.”

Co-screenwriter Chris Kekaniokalani Bright says, “My hope is that audiences will enjoy the film’s humour and emotional depth. I want people to laugh and have a good time, but also to feel the emotional depth of the story. It’s about being there for your family, no matter what that looks like. By the end of the movie, we have a family that looks really weird, but that’s what family is. I hope everyone walks away feeling inspired.”

Kaipo Dudoit hopes audiences will appreciate the new take on the beloved story. “This is a timeless and transgenerational story; one that connects with every age group and person around the world. The film’s commitment to authenticity is evident from the moment the audience first sees our beloved islands on screen.”

“Audiences are going to cry and laugh their heads off,” says Sydney Elizebeth Agudong. “I know they will be able to tell how much heart, soul, and work was put into making this film such a beautiful piece of art.”

ABOUT THE CAST

Born and raised on the Big Island of Hawai’i, **MAIA KEALOHA (Lilo Pelekai)** made waves after landing her breakthrough role as Lilo Pelekai in the live-action adaptation of “Lilo & Stitch.” Born in 2016, Maia’s love for her Native Hawai’ian culture is evident in every aspect of her life, from her passion for hula to her skills in surfing.

In 2023, after an extensive casting search involving hundreds of potential actors, Maia was selected to breathe life into the character of Lilo, a role that seems tailor-made for her vibrant personality and deep connection to her roots. In late 2022, young Maia was crowned Little Miss Kona Coffee, demonstrating her charm and poise.

Not only does Maia embody the spirit of Lilo on screen, but off-screen, she shares Lilo’s love for music, dance, and, most notably, animals. Whether on land or sea, Maia shows love and respect for all forms of life. When she’s not in front of the camera or practicing her dance moves, Maia

can be found at the beach with her 'ohana. Through her portrayal of Lilo, Maia is poised to share the 'aloha spirit' with audiences worldwide.

SYDNEY ELIZABETH AGUDONG (Nani) is an actress, singer, and professional songwriter born and raised on the island of Kaua'i, Hawai'i. In 2018, after graduating high school, Sydney moved to Los Angeles to pursue her passion for acting and singing.

Currently, Sydney is in production for her leading woman debut on the silver screen, starring in Hallmark+'s "Riddle" opposite Frankie Faison, Ian Harding, and Julia Chan. The new drama series is expected to premiere in 2025.

In addition, Sydney can be seen as the lead in the upcoming films, "At Her Feet" and "Esther," which she also executive produced, and in supporting roles in the indie films "Trapped in a Farmhouse" and "Infamously in Love." She also recurred as Charlize in season 4 of Netflix's "On My Block" and appeared in an episode of "NCIS."

In addition to her acting, Sydney is working with FR8 Train Music Publishing, a publishing company founded under Westlake Studios, as a top liner/songwriter for Sync and other artists. She released her debut original song in 2022, "Welcome to Hollywood," under her artist's name, Jayne Doe, which has been recognized by magazines and publications, including Earmilk, Sweetiehigh, and more. Sydney is expected to release more original music soon.

COURTNEY B. VANCE (Cobra Bubbles) has carefully cultivated an extraordinary career that showcases his passion, talent, and intellect. Known for successfully finding the dignity and honour in each character he explores; this Harvard scholar and Yale School of Drama-trained actor is a powerful presence from the theatrical boards to the silver screen.

Vance's stunning portrayal of Johnnie Cochran in FX's "The People vs. OJ Simpson: American Crime Story" earned him Emmy®, Critics Choice, and NAACP Image Awards, as well as SAG® and Golden Globe® nominations. His role as the beloved and pivotal character Uncle George in HBO's critically acclaimed drama horror series "Lovecraft Country" earned him an Emmy Award for outstanding guest actor in a drama series, his second career Emmy win, as well as a Hollywood Critics Association nomination and a Black Reel TV Award. He also starred in NatGeo's "Genius: Aretha," in which he portrays Aretha Franklin's father, Rev. C.L. Franklin. Vance was recognized for his performance with the NAACP Image Award for outstanding supporting actor in a TV movie/miniseries/dramatic special, with nominations from the Hollywood Critics Association, Critics Choice Awards, and Black Reel TV Awards.

His project, "61st Street," a criminal justice drama executive produced by Michael B. Jordan and Alana Mayo of Outlier Society from BAFTA winner Peter Moffat, announced to air on the CW Network, earned Vance an AAFCA TV Honors Award. His most recent feature film, "Heist 88," in which he stars and is produced by Bassett Vance Productions, premiered on Showtime Networks as one of the most watched original films of 2023 on the network, and streamed on Paramount+. The film earned three NAACP Image Award nominations, including outstanding lead actor in a

television movie for Vance and outstanding television movie drama, and winning for outstanding writing for a television movie drama.

Vance's other film credits include the Universal/Will Packer romantic drama "The Photograph," with Issa Rae and LaKeith Stanfield, directed by Stella Meghie, and Netflix Originals' "Uncorked," with Niecy Nash and Mamoudou Athie.

His debut as Spc. Abraham 'Doc' Johnson in "Hamburger Hill" launched a prolific cinematic career that includes historically noteworthy films such as "The Hunt for Red October," "The Preacher's Wife," "The Adventures of Huck Finn," and "Terminator Genisys."

On the stage, Vance received Tony Award® nominations for his debut performance in August Wilson's "Fences" and his starring role in "Six Degrees of Separation." He won the Tony Award for best featured actor in a play for his stellar performance in Nora Ephron's "Lucky Guy." Additionally, he earned a GRAMMY® nomination for his narration of Neil DeGrasse Tyson's book, "Accessory to War."

Notably, Vance is chairman of the SAG-AFTRA Foundation. In this capacity, he continues to build on the Foundation's legacy of providing educational resources for people who are pursuing all forms of the performing arts; promoting the children's literacy program as an avenue to empower youth through storytelling and leading the Foundation's Entertainment Industry Council designed to provide support for artists throughout their careers. Throughout the hardship of the entertainment industry shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Vance and the Foundation's team implemented a robust fundraising initiative, which distributed more than \$6.1 million to over 6,500 SAG-AFTRA performers and their families.

Courtney and Angela Basset's Vance Productions is in partnership with MTV Studios to create diverse and inclusive content for Paramount Global. Their first project, "One Thousand Years of Slavery," aired in February 2022 on the Smithsonian Channel.

He is the recipient of the Bounce Trumpet Awards excellence in entertainment honour, an ABFF honours excellence in the arts award, and is a proud ambassador for the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. His new book, "The Invisible Ache: Black Men Identifying Their Pain and Reclaiming Their Power," with Dr. Robin L. Smith, was written by award-winning journalist Charisse Jones and published in November 2023 (GCP Balance). He currently resides in Southern California with Angela and their twins, Bronwyn Golden and Slater Josiah.

After failing his last college course by one point at North Carolina State University, **ZACH GALIFIANAKIS (Jumba)** moved to New York City. He got his start performing his brand of humour in the back of a hamburger joint in Times Square, eventually graduating to doing stand-up in nightclubs and coffeehouses across the city. While working as a busboy, he got his first acting job on the sitcom "Boston Common." An eclectic career has followed.

Most recently, Galifianakis guest-starred on season 4 of Hulu's "Only Murders in the Building." Galifianakis previously starred in the Apple TV+ feature "The Beanie Bubble," alongside Elizabeth Banks and Sarah Snook, the animated feature "Ron's Gone Wrong," as the titular character, as well as the critically acclaimed series "Baskets" for four seasons, which garnered him an Emmy® nomination. Prior to that, he starred in the big screen version of his successful web series, "Between Two Ferns: The Movie," and in the movie "A Wrinkle in Time." Additional feature credits include Greg Mottola's "Keeping Up with the Joneses," alongside Jon Hamm, Isla Fisher and Gal Gadot, as well as Jared Hess' "Masterminds," with Kristen Wiig, Owen Wilson, and Jason Sudeikis. He also starred in Justin Chadwick's "Tulip Fever," with Alicia Vikander and Dane DeHaan. Prior to that, Galifianakis starred opposite Michael Keaton, Naomi Watts, Emma Stone and Ed Norton in the 2015 Oscar® winner for best motion picture of the year, "Birdman (or The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)" directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu.

Galifianakis is most well-known for "The Hangover" trilogy, from director Todd Phillips. Galifianakis played Alan, the hapless member of the wolfpack in all three films, the first of which became domestically the highest-grossing R-rated comedy of all time. Before completing the trilogy, he starred alongside Will Ferrell in the Jay Roach-directed comedy "The Campaign." Galifianakis reteamed with director Todd Phillips for "Due Date," the buddy comedy with Robert Downey Jr. In a departure from comedy, Galifianakis starred in the Focus Features film "It's Kind of a Funny Story," in which he played a patient in a mental hospital, bringing his warmth and humour to the character of Bobby. Other film credits include "Dinner for Schmucks," opposite Steve Carell and Paul Rudd, the independent feature "Youth in Revolt," the Jerry Bruckheimer produced live-action feature "G-Force," which debuted at #1 and grossed over \$290 million worldwide, as well as a cameo role in Jason Reitman's Academy Award®-nominated film "Up in the Air." He also appeared in the critically acclaimed feature "Into the Wild" from director Sean Penn.

On the small screen, Galifianakis starred in the comedy "Bored to Death," with Jason Schwartzman and Ted Danson, which ran for three seasons. He also hosted the critically acclaimed VH1 talk show "Late World with Zach," as well as writing and starring in "Dog Bites Man" for Comedy Central. Galifianakis continues to host the Emmy®-winning internet talk show "Between Two Ferns," on which he has interviewed such guests as President Barack Obama, Brad Pitt, Steve Carell, Natalie Portman, Conan O'Brien, and Justin Bieber.

BILLY MAGNUSSEN (Pleakley) can currently be seen in HBO's comedic series "The Franchise," for Sam Mendes and Armando Iannucci. He will next be seen opposite Margot Robbie in Kogonada's upcoming Sony feature film "A Big Bold Beautiful Journey." Following this, he will star in the independent feature "Violent Ends," for writer/director John-Michael Powell, which he also produced. He currently stars in the action-comedy feature "Lift," opposite Kevin Hart for Netflix, and opposite Jake Gyllenhaal in the remake of "Road House," directed by Doug Liman, which landed Amazon's biggest feature streaming debut with a record-breaking 50 million global views. Magnussen was recently seen in the lead role in the indie feature film "Coup!" opposite Peter Sarsgaard, which premiered at last year's Venice Film Festival. Previous credits include a flashy role in "No Time to Die" for director Cary Fukunaga, the HBO Max/Paramount series "Made for

Love,” Cary Fukunaga’s Netflix miniseries “Maniac,” Warner Bros./New Line’s “Game Night,” Adam McKay’s “The Big Short,” Steven Spielberg’s “Bridge of Spies,” and Matt Spicer’s “Ingrid Goes West.”

On the theatre side, Magnussen originated the role of Spike in Lincoln Centre’s “Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike,” written by playwright Christopher Durang, opposite Sigourney Weaver, which garnered him a Tony Award® nomination in 2013.

CHRIS SANDERS (Stitch) is a four-time Academy Award® nominee and the writer/director of the critically acclaimed film “The Wild Robot” from DreamWorks Animation and Universal Pictures. Earning praise for its impressionist, hand-drawn painterly style, and emotionally powerful story about kindness, motherhood and perseverance, “The Wild Robot” has, to date, earned recognition from numerous industry organizations including three Academy Award nominations, three BAFTA nominations, four Golden Globe® nominations, three Critics’ Choice Awards nominations, ten Annie Award nominations from ASIFA-Hollywood, five nominations from the Visual Effects Society, and has won over 60 additional awards from critic groups and film festivals around the world.

Born into an artistic household in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Sanders was the middle of three children and grew up drawing and penning short stories. “Art was the dominant thing in our house as we grew up,” Sanders says. “My dad was always sketching and painting – mostly abstract stuff and Buck Rogers-style spaceships. On Friday nights, we all sat at the dining room table around big glasses of water and painted as a family. We were always welcome to draw at my dad’s desk, and we had a constant supply of Blackwing pencils and computer paper he had liberated from the office where he worked.”

Although Sanders sketched throughout school and served as the cartoonist for the Arvada High School newspaper, he hadn’t considered art as something he could do for a living. But when his grandmother found a random article about the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in the *Denver Post*, everything changed. Sanders applied for and was accepted to CalArts’ Animation Program and went on to work for Marvel Productions and later, Disney Studios. Sanders worked as a story artist on “Rescuers Down Under” and received writer/story by/screenplay credits on “Beauty and the Beast,” “Aladdin,” “The Lion King,” and “Mulan.”

Sanders would go on to write, storyboard, and direct one of Disney’s most beloved films, “Lilo & Stitch,” with Dean DeBlois, which earned Sanders his first Oscar® nomination. In addition, Sanders voiced (and continues to voice across all platforms) the titular character of Stitch. In 2006, Sanders left Disney Studios to join the filmmaking team at DreamWorks Animation. As a character designer, Sanders contributed to the “Shrek” and “Madagascar” franchises, as well as “Kung Fu Panda.”

When Sanders was given the opportunity to direct DWA’s “How to Train Your Dragon,” he jumped at the chance. His first call was to his fellow “Lilo & Stitch” director Dean DeBlois. “I felt

that the story of a teenaged Vikings battling dragons was the perfect style for us,” Sanders says. “Dean was just finishing a project and was excited to join me in writing and directing the project.”

“HTTYD” garnered two Academy Award® nominations, two BAFTA nominations, a Golden Globe® nomination, and won ten Annie Awards and three Visual Effects Society Awards and, in the process, established a successful franchise across two Oscar® nominated subsequent films, a multiple Emmy Award®-winning television series, multiple theme park attractions and countless consumer products.

Following the success of “How to Train Your Dragon,” Sanders and Kirk DeMicco wrote and directed the Academy Award® and Golden Globe-nominated blockbuster “The Croods,” establishing yet another franchise for DreamWorks Animation. Prior to writing and directing “The Wild Robot,” Sanders directed “The Call of the Wild” for 20th Century Studios, starring Harrison Ford.

Sanders is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, ASIFA-Hollywood, and the Visual Effects Society. In addition to his three Academy Award® nominations, Sanders has been recognized by ASIFA-Hollywood numerous times throughout his career, winning four Annie Awards and with this year’s nominations for “The Wild Robot,” an additional six nominations, as well as earning numerous accolades around the world for his work.

Born and raised in Honolulu, Hawai’i, **TIA CARRERE (Mrs. Kekoa)** is an accomplished actress in motion pictures and television, as well as a two-time GRAMMY Award®-winning musical artist. Since she was discovered in a grocery store for her first movie role in “Aloha Summer,” she has shown her range of acting talent and versatility, starring in numerous blockbusters such as “Wayne’s World 1” and “Wayne’s World 2” with Mike Myers and Dana Carvey, “True Lies,” opposite Arnold Schwarzenegger, and “Rising Sun” with Sean Connery and Wesley Snipes. Carrere also voiced the character of Nani in Disney’s classic animated film and TV series “Lilo & Stitch.”

In television, she launched her acting career in Los Angeles with a regular role on the daytime drama “General Hospital.” Since then, she has been seen in numerous TV programs, including “Nip/Tuck,” “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” “Warehouse 13,” and “Hawai’i 5-0.” Her own action/adventure television series, “Relic Hunter,” continues to play in syndication all over the world.

Carrere and her long-time friend, artist/producer Daniel Ho, share four nominations and two GRAMMY Awards® for their acclaimed CDs consisting of all-original Hawa’ian language compositions. Their record “Hawai’iana” reached #10 on Billboard’s World Music Chart. She also performed on the double-platinum movie soundtrack for “Wayne’s World,” had the end title song on “Batman: Mask of the Phantasm,” as well as releasing her Warner Bros. record “Dream.”

AMY HILL’s (Tūtū) television and film credits number over 200. Many know her from her memorable turns in “Fifty First Dates” or as Ice Cube’s neighbour in “Next Friday.” She was

recurring on “Crazy Ex-Girlfriend,” “UnReal,” “Preacher,” and “MOM.” She was a regular on NBC’s “Magnum P.I.” as Kumu for five seasons, played Mama P. on four seasons of Amazon Prime’s “Just Add Magic,” and has been a regular on multiple series on cable and network TV.

As a voice actor, Hill has been heard as recurring or regular voice characters on numerous animated series or films, including “Kung Fu Panda” (series), “American Dad,” and the next season of Freeform’s “Praise Petey.” She’s also worked with regional theatres such as The Mark Taper Forum, Berkeley Rep, Seattle Rep, Actors Theatre of Louisville, The Public Theatre in NYC, and appeared on Broadway in Lincoln Centre’s “Twelfth Night,” which also aired on PBS’ “Live from Lincoln Centre.” She is proud to consider East West Players as her LA Theatre “home,” where she has also performed, directed, and taught. Her latest theatrical adventure was as the title character of Shakespeare’s Cymbeline with NAATCO, which received glowing reviews in the New York Times. “Mack and Rita,” starring Diane Keaton, marked a joyful return to the big screen in 2022.

She just completed filming a new untitled series on Amazon Prime with Maggie Q.

KAIPO DUDOIT (David Kawena) is a Native Hawaiian actor, hula dancer, and model known for his roles in “My Partner” (2023) and “Magnum P.I.” (2018). Born and raised on O’ahu, he is a proud kanaka ‘ōiwi.

In addition to his work in film and television, Dudoit is a licensed massage therapist, driven by a passion for creating spaces for healing and connection. He finds purpose in connecting with his culture through his art forms, whether it is dance, acting, or modelling. Raised on a strong foundation built by his family and mentors, he embraces the values of his heritage and is dedicated to uplifting the lāhui and the people of Hawai’i through his creative pursuits.

JASON SCOTT LEE (Lū’au Manager) voiced David Kawena, Nani’s boyfriend, in the original animated film. Lee was born in California and raised in Oahu, Hawai’i, from the age of two. He is of mixed Hawai’ian and Chinese descent.

HANNAH WADDINGHAM (Grand Councilwoman) is an Emmy Award®-winning and BAFTA-nominated television, film, and theatre actress and singer.

Recently, Waddingham appeared in Universal Pictures' action film “The Fall Guy,” starring Ryan Gosling. The film was released in May 2024. Additionally, Waddingham recently starred in the Sony Pictures animated adaptation of “Garfield.” She can also be seen in the BBC animated Christmas film “Tiddler.”

Waddingham can also be seen starring in Dan Harmon’s FOX animated series “Krapopolis,” for which she received a 2024 Emmy Award® nomination. The show debuted as the highest-rated animated series in over a decade.

Upcoming, Waddingham will star in the Netflix thriller “The Woman in Cabin 10,” alongside Keira Knightley and Guy Pearce.

In late 2023, Waddingham premiered her own Christmas special on Apple TV+, entitled “Hannah Waddingham: Home for Christmas,” to rave reviews. Recorded live at The London Coliseum, this one-hour special features Waddingham ringing in the season with musical performances of beloved Christmas classics. It has earned her and her producing partners a BAFTA TV Award nomination.

Waddingham recently wrapped production on “Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part Two,” opposite Tom Cruise, which is slated for release in 2025. Waddingham is currently in production on an untitled comedy action-adventure series for Amazon worldwide, which she is executive producing and starring in alongside Octavia Spencer.

Widely recognized of late as Rebecca Welton in the multi award-winning Apple TV+ series “Ted Lasso,” currently streaming its third and final season. She has garnered Emmy®, Critics Choice, Hollywood Critics Association, and SAG Awards®, as well as two individual Golden Globe® and SAG nominations for this role.

Previously, Waddingham appeared in PBS Masterpiece and ITV’s “Tom Jones” (HCA Best Supporting Actress in a comedy series) and Disney’s “Hocus Pocus 2,” as the long-awaited Mother Witch.

Waddingham made her worldwide hosting debut in April 2023 at The Olivier Awards followed swiftly by the BBC Eurovision Song Contest 2023, for which she has been garnered with her second BAFTA TV nomination and has won The Royal Television Society award for best entertainment performance 2024. She made her return as host of the 2024 Olivier Awards which was met with rave reviews.

Her other notable credits include the Netflix series “Sex Education” and Warner Bros. series “Krypton” for E4/SyFy, but she was probably best known on screen until recent years as Septa Unella, the Shame Nun in HBO’s groundbreaking series “Game of Thrones.” Waddingham also appeared as Magdalena in “12 Monkeys” for SyFy, starred in BBC 2’s “The Entire Universe” working again with Eric Idle, which also aired on PBS in America, MGM’s feature “The Hustle,” and as Tonya Dyke in ITV’s “Benidorm,” season 6.

Before her extensive film and television work, Waddingham was best known for her contribution to West End and Broadway musical theatre over the last 25 years, with three Olivier nominations for her roles in “Kiss Me Kate” as Kate/Lilli Vanessi (Old Vic/Dir. Trevor Nunn), “A Little Night Music” as Desiree Armfeldt (Garrick & Menier Chocolate Factory/Dir. Trevor Nunn) and “Monty Python’s Spamalot” as The Lady of The Lake (Palace Theatre/Dir. Mike Nicholls). Originating the role in the West End, then moved to the Broadway production, where she won the [Broadway.com](https://www.broadway.com) award for best newcomer when she reprised the role at the Shubert Theatre.

Waddingham also won the WhatsOnStage Award for best supporting actress in a musical as the Wicked Witch of the West in Andrew Lloyd-Webber's "The Wizard of Oz" (London Palladium/Dir. Jeremy Samms).

Other theatre work includes the Witch in "Into the Woods" (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre), Madame Pinglet in "A Little Hotel on The Side" (Theatre Royal Bath), Fay Hubbard in "A Chorus of Disapproval" (Clwyd Theatr Cymru), Satan in "Tonight's the Night," Rizzo in "Grease" (Victoria Palace Theatre), Christine Warner in "The Beautiful Game" (Cambridge Theatre. Critics' Circle Award nomination), and Suzanne Valadon in "Lautrec" (Shaftesbury Theatre).

Waddingham resides in London.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

DEAN FLEISHER CAMP (Director) is the award-winning filmmaker and New York Times bestselling author who created the viral sensation "Marcel the Shell with Shoes On." Since appearing on Filmmaker Magazine's 25 New Faces of Independent Film in 2011, Camp's work has been profiled in virtually every major American media outlet. In 2018, his first feature, "Fraud," was released to widespread controversy and acclaim, described as a brilliantly provocative (Filmmaker) and "exhilarating (Sight+Sound) masterwork (Documentary Magazine) that pushes the boundaries of documentary (Variety). He has directed for Comedy Central, HBO, TBS, Adult Swim, and Disney Interactive. Commercial clients include Atlassian, Pop-Tarts, Clearasil, Maltesers, and many others.

His first scripted feature, an adaptation of "Marcel the Shell with Shoes On," starring Jenny Slate, Isabella Rossellini, and Rosa Salazar, was released in cinemas on June 24, 2022, by A24. The film received rave reviews and has been nominated for and won many animated film awards.

CHRIS KEKANIOKALANI BRIGHT (Co-Screenwriter) is a screenwriter born and raised in O'ahu, Hawai'i. After attending Kamehameha Schools for 13 years, he went on to study film and music at Chapman University. He worked in production at Walt Disney Animation Studios from 2014 to 2017 and has been writing several film projects since then, including "Conviction."

MIKE VAN WAES (Co-Screenwriter) recently wrote New Line's "Conjuring" spin-off "Crooked Man." He also adapted his four-quadrant novel "Peeves" for Temple Hill & Fox and has his original four-quadrant action-adventure spec "Hammerspace" set up at Warner Bros. with Dan Lin producing.

He recently finished a draft for the reboot of the genre classic "Leprechaun" for Lionsgate, Vertigo, and Blumhouse.

JONATHAN EIRICH, p.g.a. (Producer) is the Co-CEO of Rideback, the film and television company known for producing tentpole live-action and animated content for global audiences.

Since joining the Rideback team in 2015, Eirich has overseen production for live-action films such as Disney's billion-dollar box office hit "Aladdin," directed by Guy Ritchie; the Netflix awards contender "The Two Popes," directed by Oscar®-nominated Fernando Meirelles; Netflix's "Death Note," directed by Adam Wingard; and Universal/Amblin's comedy "Easter Sunday," which starred comedian Jo Koy. Eirich recently produced Disney's summer 2023 tentpole, "Haunted Mansion," the live-action remake of the popular Disney theme park attraction directed by Justin Simien and starring Owen Wilson, Tiffany Haddish, Jared Leto, LaKeith Stanfield, Jamie Lee Curtis, and Danny DeVito, among others. Rideback is currently filming season 2 of the hit live-action adaptation of "Avatar: The Last Airbender" for Netflix.

Before Rideback, Eirich spent nine years as a development and production executive at DreamWorks Studios, most recently as senior vice president where he oversaw the Steven Spielberg-directed and Oscar®-nominated "Bridge of Spies." Some of his previous films at the studio include "Need for Speed," "Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen," "I Am Number Four," and the 2011 Oscar-nominated "The Help."

Prior to becoming a senior executive at the studio, Eirich served as the creative assistant to Chairman Stacey Snider during her transition from Universal Studios to DreamWorks, following a year at Creative Artists Agency. His first jobs in the industry included an internship at Gold Circle Films during the production of "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," and working as a production assistant on the initial episodes of the hit TV series "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy."

Eirich attended Harvard University where he majored in history & literature and graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2003.

TOM PEITZMAN (Executive Producer) has an impressive list of film credits, most recently working as the executive producer on several Disney films including the upcoming release "Lilo & Stitch," as well as Justin Simien's "Haunted Mansion," Akiva Schaffer's "Chip 'N Dale: Rescue Rangers," and Jon Favreau's "The Lion King." Prior to this, Peitzman was co-producer and visual effects producer for Legendary and Warner Bros.' "Kong: Skull Island," starring Tom Hiddleston, Samuel L. Jackson, John Goodman, and Brie Larson; Brad Bird's "Tomorrowland," starring George Clooney for Disney; Bird's "Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol," starring Tom Cruise; Tim Burton's "Alice and Wonderland," "Watchmen," J.J. Abrams' "Mission: Impossible III," starring Cruise; "The Spiderwick Chronicles"; "Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events," starring Jim Carey and Meryl Streep; and "Planet of the Apes," starring Mark Wahlberg and directed by Burton.

Peitzman was also the visual effects producer on "Hulk," starring Eric Bana and Jennifer Connelly, in which he worked closely with Academy Award®-winning director Ang Lee and was a critical part of the creative process to ensure a seamless blend of live-action photography and computer-generated animation. Peitzman began his career in 1987, fresh out of film school. Starting as a production assistant, Peitzman quickly worked his way up through the ranks on such films as "Dead Poets Society," "The Great Outdoors," "Three Fugitives," "Taking Care of Business," and "Harlem Nights." His first introduction to the world of visual effects was as a staff production

coordinator on “Honey, I Blew Up the Kids” for the Walt Disney Studios. Following that, Peitzman worked as an assistant director on “Forever Young,” “Major League II,” and “Terminal Velocity,” gaining vast experience in the process. Peitzman went on to produce the visual effects on such films as “Bedazzled,” “Inspector Gadget,” “Spawn,” “The Relic,” and “Congo.”

RYAN HALPRIN (Executive Producer) is senior vice president of production at Rideback, where he works on both film and TV projects. He is currently executive producing the live-action series adaptation of “Avatar: The Last Airbender” for Netflix. Since joining the company in 2012, he has also overseen production on the “Lego Movie” franchise of animated films at Warner Bros. and co-produced the “Death Note” manga adaptation for Netflix.

He has been developing the live-action feature adaptation of “Lilo & Stitch” for Disney since 2018 and is thrilled to see it come to life. Halprin hails from Harvard, where he studied Neurobiology and Economics, and in his spare time, he choreographs couples’ first dances at weddings.

LOUIE PROVOST (Executive Producer) spent 18 years as a production executive at Walt Disney Studios, overseeing a diverse slate of films. His work includes “Aladdin,” the “Maleficent” franchise, and the Emmy Award®-winning “Chip ‘n Dale: Rescue Rangers.”

Since 1988, **THOMAS SCHUMACHER (Executive Producer)** has worked with The Walt Disney Company, setting new standards of excellence in film, television, and theatre. He currently develops new stage works for Disney Theatrical Group as chief creative officer. The division’s credits include “Beauty and the Beast” and “King David.” “The Lion King,” “Der Glöckner von Notre Dame,” Elton John and Tim Rice’s “Aida,” “Mary Poppins,” “On the Record,” “Tarzan,” “High School Musical,” “The Little Mermaid,” “Peter and the Starcatcher,” “Newsies,” “Aladdin,” “Freaky Friday,” “Shakespeare in Love,” “Frozen,” and “Hercules.”

As president of Walt Disney Feature Animation, he oversaw some 21 animated features, including “The Lion King,” “The Nightmare Before Christmas,” “Pocahontas,” “Mulan,” “Tarzan,” “Hercules,” and “Lilo & Stitch,” and worked closely with Pixar on their first five films.

Schumacher previously served on the board of directors for Lincoln Centre for the Performing Arts, as a mentor for the TDF Open Doors program, and as an adjunct professor at Columbia University. He was the chair of The Broadway League from 2017 to 2020, and currently serves as the president of their Foundation.

NIGEL BLUCK (Director of Photography) is an accomplished cinematographer from New Zealand. Initially, Bluck thought he wanted to be a director. He enrolled at the University of Canterbury for fine arts and began making his own films. However, after learning how to be a camera assistant and shooting his first film, he fell in love with the camera. He went on to study at the Australian Film, Television, and Radio School, concentrating on cinematography.

For the past 20 years, Bluck has worked on everything from commercials to television series and feature films. His early feature work includes shooting 2nd unit for Peter Jackson on the “Lord of

the Rings” trilogy. His work on “Son of a Gun,” starring Ewan McGregor, impressed “True Detective” EP Scott Stephens. After some conversations, he was hired as the DP on “True Detective” S2. He dealt with three interwoven storylines and six different directors.

In 2015, Bluck was listed as one of Variety’s 10 Cinematographers to Watch. He’s gone on to shoot multiple critically acclaimed films, such as “The Peanut Butter Falcon,” “Tigertail,” and “The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent,” starring Nicolas Cage, which received rave reviews when it premiered at the SXSW Film Festival. He has recently worked on “Americana,” starring Sydney Sweeney and Halsey, as well as Disney’s live-action remake of “Lilo & Stitch,” starring Hannah Waddingham and Zach Galifianakis, both slated for release later this spring and summer. He is currently shooting the highly anticipated “Anaconda,” starring Paul Rudd, Jack Black, and Thandiwe Newton, directed by Tom Gormican.

Born in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and raised in a rural setting near the town of Ardrossan, **TODD CHERNIAWSKY (Production Designer)** completed his undergraduate studies in architecture and engineering (NAIT, 1988) and industrial design and technical illustration (University of Alberta, 1993). During those formative years in a city that was very supportive of art and culture, his positive experiences and contributions to local architecture and industrial design led to a strong drive to explore his interest in filmmaking. Using the tools and techniques of traditional analogue workflow and the new, undefined digital world became an obsession as he merged the two into hybridized experiments in film and theatre design. The Edmonton Fringe Festival and Film & Video Arts Society of Alberta (FAVA) were the incubators for these early endeavours. After multiple stage plays, art installations (scenic, lighting, animation, and projection) and art direction credits on a half dozen short films and indy features, he began to look for options to study film art direction formally.

Moving to Los Angeles to attend the American Film Institute Conservatory (AFI) Production Design program, Cherniawsky studied and mentored under Robert Boyle, one of Hitchcock’s most trusted production designers. At that time, Henry Bumstead, Harold Michaelson, and Richard Sylbert were among the other mentors at the school who passed on their wisdom and knowledge of the craft. After graduating from the Conservatory in 1996, he worked his way up the art department as a set designer, assistant art director, and art director in the studio system.

Early opportunities put him in the first group of adaptors of digital tools in the art department of numerous features, including “Sphere” (Barry Levinson, 1998) “Armageddon” (Michael Bay, 1998) “Inspector Gadget” (David Kelloff, 1999), and “Planet of the Apes” (Tim Burton, 2001).

Implementing what he learned and developed as an architect and industrial designer, Cherniawsky created drawing techniques (2D and 3D) and CAD/CAM pipelines which are still used today in art departments. In the summer of 2007, he started a two-year commitment as supervising art director on “Avatar” (James Cameron, 2009) under the guidance of production designer Rick Carter. Furthering his relationship with his mentor, Cherniawsky worked for Carter on “Sucker Punch” (Zack Snyder, 2011) and “The BFG” (Stephen Spielberg, 2016). “Avatar’s” incredible impact on the technology of filmmaking put him on the front lines of digital tools and

processes, and informed his work on the next wave of features: “Alice in Wonderland” (Tim Burton, 2010), “Transformers: Dark of the Moon” (Michael Bay, 2011), “In Time” (Andrew Niccol, 2011), “Zero Dark Thirty” (Kathryn Bigelow, 2012), “Oz: The Great & Powerful” (Sam Raimi, 2013), “Oblivion” (Joseph Kosinski, 2013), “Tomorrowland” (Brad Bird, 2015), “Jurassic World” (Colin Trevorrow, 2015), “Terminator Genisys” (Alan Taylor, 2015), “Alice Through the Looking Glass” (James Bobin, 2016), “Transformers: The Last Knight” (Michael Bay, 2017), and “Star Wars VIII: The Last Jedi” (Rian Johnson, 2017).

Now focused on production design full time, his recent credits include the following: “Star Trek: Discovery” (Season 1 - Episodes 1-5, 2018), “Pet Sematary” (Kevin Kolsch & Dennis Widmyer, 2019), “Star Trek: Picard” (Season 1 - 10 Episodes, 2020), “Distant” (Will Speck & Josh Gordon, 2021), “Obi-Wan Kenobi” (Joby Harold & Deborah Chow, 2022), “Ahsoka” (Dave Filoni, 2023), and “Dora & The Search for Sol Dorado” (Alberto Belli, 2025).

Cherniawsky is currently in Melbourne, Australia, spearheading the production design for Jaime Collet-Serra’s next feature, a WWII story that takes place in Belgium in November 1944, during one of the last days of The Battle of the Scheldt.

PHILLIP J. BARTELL, ACE (Editor) has edited a number of films and television series, including Disney’s “Haunted Mansion,” “To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before,” “Bad Hair,” and “Dear White People.” He is an editing mentor for Women in Film and for the Motion Picture Editors Guild’s Rainbow Connect LGBTQ+ mentorship program. He lives in Los Angeles.

ADAM GERSTEL (Editor) graduated from NYU Tisch School of the Arts and quickly thereafter began his professional career through his role as visual effects editor on several Martin Scorsese films, including “The Aviator,” “The Departed,” “Shine a Light,” and “Shutter Island.” He transitioned into picture editing through his role as 2nd Editor on Disney’s “The Jungle Book.” He continued his collaboration with Jon Favreau on “The Lion King” and “The Mandalorian,” Season 2, for which Gerstel was nominated for an Emmy®.

He followed this with his work at Marvel Studios for the film “Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania,” directed by Peyton Reed. Gerstel’s other editing credits include “Transformers: The Last Knight.”

WENDY CHUCK (Costume Designer) has collaborated with some of the film industry’s most celebrated talents including Alexander Payne, George Clooney, Adam Sandler, Matt Damon, and Jane Campion. Her alchemy with fabric, texture, and colour have brought to life a diverse range of characters onscreen – “Twilight’s” teenage vampires, “Nebraska’s” rustic Midwesterners, “Election’s” conniving high schooler, and the inhabitants of “Downsizing’s” miniature world.

Trained in fashion in Australia, Chuck refined her skills as a cutter/fitter/tailor during her tenure in the costume department of ABC TV (Australia) and Opera Australia in Sydney, followed by a decade of freelance work in London that included styling an eclectic group of musicians, a 6-year tenure as costume designer at the BFI museum, London, and sharing her knowledge teaching at

the City Literary Institute. Since her first nomination for excellence in her career in 1994, she has won the Costume Designers Guild Award for her work on “About Schmidt” (2003) and received nominations for “The Descendants” (2011), “Nebraska” (2014), and “The Romanoffs” (2019).

Chuck has enjoyed a long-standing working relationship with acclaimed director Alexander Payne and has served as costume designer on all but one of his features. Her work can also notably be seen in the mega-hit “Twilight” (2008), “Varsity Blues” (1999), “Bad Santa” (2003), and “The Ring 2” (2005). Some of her other most outstanding projects include best picture Academy Award® winner “Spotlight” (2015) and best picture nominee “The Holdovers” (2023). Her more recent projects include “Lilo & Stitch” (2025), and she is currently shooting a thriller with Lily Gladstone and Bryan Cranston, “Lone Wolf.”

CRAIG HAMMACK (Visual Effects Supervisor) is a BAFTA Award-winning and Academy Award®-nominated visual effects supervisor with over 20 years of experience who has worked on a myriad of features, including “Deepwater Horizon,” “Captain Marvel,” and “Tomorrowland.” Prior, he oversaw ILM’s work on “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever” and “Black Widow,” where he earned an Oscar® nomination for best visual effects. In 2018, Hammack earned the BAFTA Film Award for best special visual effects for his work on “Black Panther.” Previously, he received critical acclaim and an Academy Award® nomination for his contributions to Peter Berg’s “Deepwater Horizon.” He was also honoured with a VES Award for outstanding supporting visual effects for Berg’s film.

Earlier in his career, Hammack oversaw the research and development of technologies employed for the digital effects on Steven Spielberg’s “Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull.” His contributions to the film earned him two nominations from the VES.

DAN ROMER (Composer) is an award-winning composer, songwriter, and music producer based in Los Angeles. Romer’s scores include “Woman of the Hour” (Netflix), “The Promised Land” (Magnolia), “Station Eleven” (HBO MAX), “Luca” (Pixar/Disney+), four-time Oscar®-nominated “Beasts of the Southern Wild” (Searchlight), “Maniac” (Netflix), and the Emmy®-winning series “Ramy” (Hulu).

In addition to his film scoring work, Romer composed the music for Ubisoft’s flagship video game “Far Cry 5,” and has produced several worldwide hit singles including “A Great Big World,” Christina Aguilera’s GRAMMY®-winning “Say Something,” and Shawn Mendes’ best-selling single “Treat You Better.”

SARA ARRINGTON (Stitch Suit Performer) is a professional actor and acting coach working in the business for over 20 years. The creative process involved in performance is what inspires her, whether it is creating characters herself or assisting in others’ creations through collaboration. Her notable coaching credits include Disney’s “The Jungle Book,” “Lilo & Stitch,” “KPop’s!,” “Are You There God? It’s me, Margaret,” “Avatar: The Last Airbender,” and “Underground Railroad.”

She has worked with such acclaimed directors as Barry Jenkins, Jon Favreau, Kelly Fremon Craig, Dean Fleischer Camp, and Anderson.Paak.

For over 16 years, **SETH HAYS (Stitch Puppeteer)** has brought creatures to life at Legacy Effects. In Disney's live-action "Lilo & Stitch," he served as the animatronics designer and puppeteer for the practical Stitch used to support the CGI performance, helping ground the beloved alien in realism and heart.

His work spans major productions, including "The Mandalorian," "Ahsoka," "Guardians of the Galaxy," "Spider-Man 1-3," "Alien: Romulus," "The Revenant," and even the iconic Aflac duck. Hays' signature: blending technical precision with emotional storytelling, one creature at a time.

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