

BLOOM



# THE SEA OF TREES



**OFFICIAL SELECTION**  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

## Production Notes

Running time: 110 min

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### **DISTRIBUTION**

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ARTHUR

It's always that moment that wakes us up, you know?  
Some big, life-changing event that reminds us what  
really matters. The problem is, the only time that  
moment comes is when that moment comes -- and  
sometimes it comes too late.

Thick, single tears crawl down his cheek, cling to his clenched jaw.

ARTHUR

I...  
(hesitates)

From Gus Van Sant's *The Sea of Trees*,  
Screenplay by Chris Sparling

Acclaimed director, Gus Van Sant's ***THE SEA OF TREES*** is a deeply moving story about the destructive, redemptive and healing nature of love. It's love and loss that lead Arthur Brennan (Matthew McConaughey), across the world to Japan's Aokigahara, a mysterious dense forest known as The Sea of Trees lapping the foothills of Japan's Mount Fuji – a place where people go to contemplate life and death.

Numbed by grief, Arthur enters the depths of the forest and loses himself beyond the guiding ribbons threaded through the trees by many before him. Having found the perfect place to die, Arthur encounters Takumi Nakamura (Ken Watanabe), a Japanese man who also appears to have lost his way. Unable to leave Takumi behind, Arthur invests all of his remaining energy into saving Takumi and returning him to safety. The two men embark on a journey of reflection and survival, which affirms Arthur's will to live and reconnects him to his love with his wife (Naomi Watts).

Gus Van Sant, nominated for two Academy® Awards (*Good Will Hunting* and *Milk*) directs Oscar® winner Mathew McConaughey (*Dallas Buyers Club*, *Interstellar*, *Mud*, *The Wolf of Wall Street*), Oscar nominee Ken Watanabe (*Inception*, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *The Last Samurai*) and two-time Oscar nominee Naomi Watts (*The Impossible*, *Birdman*,

*21 Grams, St. Vincent, Mulholland Drive*). The cast also includes actors Katie Aselton (star of FX's *The League*) and Jordan Gavaris (*Orphan Black*).

Producing ***THE SEA OF TREES*** are Gil Netter (Oscar nominated for *Life of Pi* and *The Blind Side*), Ken Kao (*The Nice Guys, Silence, Rampart, Knight of Cups*), Kevin Halloran (*Million Dollar Arm, Water For Elephants, The Deep Blue Good-By*). Also producing are F. Gary Gray, Brian Dobbins, Allen Fischer and Chris Sparling, based on the original screenplay written by Chris Sparling (*Buried*).

Gus Van Sant's creative team on ***THE SEA OF TREES*** includes editor Pietro Scalia who garnered Oscars for his work on *JFK* and *Black Hawk Down* and was Oscar nominated for *Good Will Hunting* and *Gladiator*, director of photography Kasper Tuxen (*Beginners*), Emmy winning production designer Alex DiGerlando (*Beasts of the Southern Wild, HBO's True Detective*), Oscar nominated costume designer Danny Glicker (*Milk, Up In The Air*) and makeup department head Felicity Bowring (*The Bourne Legacy, The Social Network*).

The music supervisor for ***THE SEA OF TREES*** is KCRW's twice Grammy-nominated Chris Douridas, renown in the film industry for his work on *Grosse Pointe Blank, American Beauty, As Good As It Gets, Heat, One Hour Photo, Down With Love, The Girl Next Door, The Chumscrubber, Northern Exposure, Shrek 2, Ride*, and the *Austin Powers* movies.

### **THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY**

It all began with a Google search. Sometime after he found earlier success writing the screenplay for *Buried*, which premiered at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival to critical acclaim, Chris Sparling was surfing the Internet and somehow stumbled upon Japan's obscure real-life geographic oddity – *Aokigahara* – not too unlike the way that *The Sea of Trees*' character Arthur Brennan (Matthew McConaughey) does - while doing 'research' online.

Every notable movie is born from a great screenplay. "*The Sea Of Trees* was the best

script I remember reading in the last five years,” Matthew McConaughey said of the screenplay. “It felt like a bunch of beautiful haikus, back to back. It was incredibly surprising. I got chills just in my reading of it.”

Producer Ken Kao describes *The Sea Of Trees* as a movie about how people deal with grief in different ways. “We have Arthur and Takumi and they’ve both suffered a loss in their life and they go through their own process and find their way. For me, that’s the most beautiful thing about this film, and about life in general, is how we all process our grief.”

Sparling reflects on the place itself, “What struck me immediately were the great distances that people traveled – not only from within Japan, but actually across the globe– to journey to this place with the sole specific intent on killing themselves there. Of course, it’s just as horribly tragic for someone to walk into another room and take a bunch of pills, but what was really fascinating to me was how people could make a grave decision such as this, travel so far, sometimes for days, interact with various people along the way and then still carry out their suicide as planned. They made their decision and was nothing or no one that was going to change that.”

“The place actually came to me before the creation of the characters,” says Sparling. When I read about Aokigahara, it came across to me, not just as an arcane piece of geographic trivia but also, as this mysterious, deeply spiritual yet very creepy place. I then set out to mine a story from what seemed like a fantastic setting – one that was untapped, as of yet, in a film.”

“At first I considered something in the horror genre but upon reflection that’s too expected,” Sparling shares. “I soon knew that I had to focus on drama and emotion. I dug in and did my research and found that people do go there and contemplate life and death and some of them do, in fact, change their mind but the forest is so disorienting that it’s just too late... the forest just keeps you. That notion of someone going on this long journey and then reconsidering their decision, having this reflection and then

restoration... this beautiful life-affirming turnaround but now being stuck in this place to die... well, that was really compelling to me.”

Sparling collaborated with Oscar nominated producer Gil Netter when developing the screenplay. “Before we even met, I was very impressed with Gil’s body of work,” says Sparling. “This is a producer who has made beautiful and profound movies – *Life of Pi*, *The Blindside*, he oversaw the production of *Ghost* many years ago. There’s a common thread in Gil’s work in that he makes transportive, life-affirming movies... films where the main characters embark on journeys of self-reflection, contemplation and survival. From the very beginning, Gil completely understood my ideas, my script and the deeper meanings and subtext of the story. He insisted that to make this film it would have to be done properly... developed carefully and that, obviously, was very important to me.”

Netter and Sparling nurtured the project and kept it close to their vest for kept some time after they started down the development road. However, once Netter felt confident enough to start sharing the screenplay with a select few, it quickly made the rounds among Hollywood’s intelligentsia and Sparling’s script soon found its way on to the prestigious *Black List* – a widely circulated yet still “insider” list of Hollywood’s most liked, as of yet unproduced screenplays, based on the candid opinions of studio and production company executives.

Kao read the script toward the end of 2013. The producer shares the genesis of the project, for him, while on location, deep within an eerily quiet forest while Van Sant’s crew is busily laying dolly track within a sea of trees to get that next shot, “Gil and I first met specifically about this project. There were no actors attached at that point. My first impression of reading the script was it was the best script I’ve read since I started working in this business. I found it extremely well written and inspirational. I remember sitting in Gil’s office saying to him, ‘I love it! I want us to make this film.’ I then called my agent at WME and said, ‘I think this is an important film that we need to bring to audiences.’”

Reflecting on the cast, Kao shares “We are blessed to have ourselves a dream cast with Matthew and Ken and Naomi. It was quite fortuitous for us to be able to get Matthew

aboard our project right before *Dallas Buyers Club* built its considerable momentum and started winning awards. I remember... we had a really great, long, multi-hour conversation about the film and the journey we were all about to undertake together. It just felt right.”

McConaughey shares his own perspective on the project’s genesis. “Lately, I’ve been choosing roles that scare me... and this one definitely scared me!”

The actor recalls, “*Interstellar* had just wrapped filming. It was early 2014, prior to the Golden Globes and months before the Academy Awards... before *Dallas Buyers Club* received awards and accolades. Producer Gil Netter approached me with the script. I had him at my house in Malibu... Gil’s a Malibu guy... a neighbor. I read it and I knew right away that it was a great script. In fact, I thought it was the best thing I had read since I don’t remember when. I just immediately knew then that I wanted to be a part of it. It was not one of those projects that I really had to deliberate. I loved the pedigree around the project. I loved the story itself. I loved the fact that Gus Van Sant was attached to direct and I loved the ‘Arthur’ character and the fact that this was something that was going to be highly challenging for me.”

The Oscar winner reflects, “*The Sea of Trees* was a very internal and intuitive choice for me. I’d just come off shooting of *Interstellar*, which was ‘let’s go on a voyage way out there,’ and this one was all about ‘let’s take an internal voyage deep inside.’ At that time, I had just completed a very public month campaigning for *Dallas Buyers Club* and I was looking for a long quiet walk with myself in the woods. I needed some meditation... some introspection. After reading Sparling’s script, I said, ‘Guess what? This is a beautiful story and also get to go have a job and get that introspection.’”

With McConaughey aboard, in the months leading up to the summer start of production, at the Cannes Film Festival in 2014, Ken Kao and Alex Walton’s international sales, production and financing company, BLOOM, formally presented *The Sea Of Trees* to film buyers and distributors. By the end of the festival they had virtually sold out the entire world.

“We were fortunate to be able to take Gus and Matthew to Cannes with us,” shares Kao, “to support what was already an outstanding project. What happened at Cannes was a perfect example of strong material being crucial to the beginning of a successful project.”

“Chris Sparling wrote an incredible script and you have an acclaimed director, Gus Van Sant, and actors of the highest caliber -- Matthew McConaughey, Ken Watanabe and Naomi Watts. The buyers responded to those elements. It’s an exciting thing to see because it shows me that, globally, people will get excited about what was, until very recently, viewed as ‘tough material.’ I think now people are ready to start seeing elevated intelligent drama... smart material. That’s not always been the case, so it was really refreshing to see the international market and the buyers respond to our project so strongly.”

“I think it’s serendipitous that there’s so many like minds behind this film. After Matthew went through the whole *Dallas Buyers Club* awards circuit, I started to have concerns,” shares Kao, “Of course, I was thrilled to have such a high caliber talent interested in our script and it’s an honor to have Matthew choose us as his first role after winning the Academy Award. At the same time, in the wake of all the acclaim and accolades, I became terrified how we were going to get his deal closed, as he very quickly became such a hot commodity... but we made it happen!”

### **WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?**

McConaughey remarks, “If you give somebody a one-liner pitch on this, and they go, ‘Oh, it’s the suicide movie.’ I say, no, it’s life affirming—and for me, it fit right into my own sort of personal philosophy of Just Keep Living. *The Sea Of Trees* is a life-affirming story that should leave a lot of people questioning their own lives, in good ways. When they leave the theater, they will ponder: what have they taken care of since they’ve been here on this earth? What do they still need to take care of while they’re here? What do they need to make amends for?”

Watts shares, “Life is wonderful. Life is short and so valuable. The ups and downs are part of it. Just live. We must just live. People can believe different things and this is a film, where it’s not all dictated to you. You can understand it and interpret it in the way you want to but there are questions. To me this is about Arthur’s journey of healing himself... that the relationship didn’t reach its full potential. If there was just more time, he could’ve had the fullest potential. So now it’s time to heal that and his relationship with this man in the forest, Takumi, is to me, perhaps a metaphor... or maybe he is real. It doesn’t really matter. We don’t have to have the answer to that. To me, it’s just part of his growth. This is a necessary part of his healing and perhaps now he gets a new chance, a new possibility to heal and recreate a better potential for himself.”

McConaughey shares, “*The Sea Of Trees* deals with something spiritual. Some may see it, as it has to do with God. Some may say it has to do with reincarnation... literal purgatories, what have you. Many films that deal with that subject matter become very heavy-handed in effort to impress a message. This thing is just poetic. It’s going to let everyone leave the theater and have his or her own talk through the parking lot to philosophize about what it was about and what it wasn’t about, who Takumi was -- was he my spirit, was he Joan’s spirit? Was the forest actually an existential place? The screenplay was poetic and it didn’t preach, but yet it was elegant and at the same time... gnarly. You’ve got to go through annihilation to get to salvation. And we get annihilated. I get annihilated. So it’s one hell of a survival story as well.”

There’s a quite a bit of action in *The Sea Of Trees*, McConaughey explains, “The story drives along. It’s Biblical... there’s fires and floods and cold and loss of blood and near death.” The actor jokes, “The behind-the-scenes title for this story could be: *The Sea of Trees: A Really Tough Place for Me to Die*.” It’s tough to die in this forest, man, and Arthur’s trying—Arthur thinks, you know, ‘Geez, man, why is it so hard? I came here to end my life and I just can’t seem to do it. Something is pulling me back.’ And in the midst of that, Arthur finds out that he actually doesn’t want to die.”

Kao considers the changes that Arthur undergoes as the story unfolds. “It’s interesting. He’s on this journey and he’s invested in this very extreme course of action, so to speak. I think he cycles through that natural, human cycle of grief. There’s the part where he’s in



denial about his situation and there's the part where he commits to his actual course of action. I think as things are revealed to him in his time in the forest and with Takumi, I think he learns a lot about himself obviously and who he is and what he had with Joan and things come into perspective. I think he learns a lot about himself and what's meaningful to him and what's not. There are things a lot of people take for granted in everyday life. It takes a real wakeup call before they're actually enlightened to that.”

McConaughey sums it up. “ I hope audiences walk away and just check in a little, clock their own life, clock their own relationships, clock their relationships with people they’ve loved that aren’t even here anymore. Looking at themselves in the mirror... that’s really what the picture does is it’s an honest reflection for each one of us, in our particular way, to say, “How am I doing with my relationships? How am I doing in my relationship with myself?” If you believe in reincarnation, there are versions of that that say, you know what, you’re reincarnated to come back and learn lessons you did not learn the first time around. It’s another—in this story, it happens in Arthur’s life live. He doesn’t die and resurrected to come back and learn lessons, he’s learning them through purgatory... going through death to get to life. So I think it’s a good picture to take a little inventory for people and everyone will be able to take a little inventory, not in a heavy way, but in a spiritual way.”

“My hope,” Kao says, “is that when people see this film, they feel inspired. I think that regardless of what culture you're part of or what language you speak, I think the message that is in this film about spirituality and valuing those moment in life and the people in life, valuing your own life, are things that translate universally. And even though the entry point for this film—and a lot of people may be attracted to the sensationalism of the suicide element of it -- the film itself is redemptive and it has an inspirational message. I think that’s something that will resonate with audiences worldwide.”

### **WHO IS ARTHUR?**

“I think Arthur Brennan is in a lot of ways, every man, says Kao. “ He’s highly educated but he kind of fits that mid-range. He’s neither wildly successful nor is he a failure. So he’s experienced a lot of the things that many of us all have at some point in our lives,

things that are mundane challenges and things that are very rare and unfortunate instances, like losing his wife. I think that it's something that a lot of people can relate to, even if you haven't actually suffered that specific circumstance. I hope the audiences find Arthur to be very relatable, as we do. We all process grief differently, I think he goes through a process that, while maybe extreme, is also not out of the realm of possibility for many people."

Watts reflects on her impression of working with the Oscar winner, while on set summer of 2014 in a suburban enclave nestled in pastoral central Massachusetts during the filming of one of the on-screen couple's flashback scenes. "Heavyweight, major talent... which is no surprise at all!"

Lending a bit of insight into their process, Watts shares, "We both knew we wouldn't have a lot of time together to rehearse. Matthew reached out to me via email after I was cast and I asked, 'Do you mind if I write back to you as your wife, Joan?' And so we've spent about the last six weeks writing notes to each other back and forth as Arthur and Joan... creating our little backstory, and starting our way of building a foundation for what is on screen."

McConaughey describes his character, "Arthur is someone who finds out that he's got to make amends for a whole lot of things that he thought he didn't have to. Arthur's wife is violently taken from him. He decides he wants to fulfill a promise that he'd given to her as to when it's time to go; he'll go and die in a beautiful place, a perfect place. He finds this forest and those good intentions are interrupted by a man walking through the woods."

Sparling shares, "I think with anything I write and maybe a lot of writers write, there is always a piece of you somewhere in that script, whether it's in a character or an event. More than anything, what he does is he represents kind of a very realistic man in a relationship with someone that loves so deeply that they would lay down in traffic for that person, to save their life. But at the same time, has been worn down by life, by marriage, by the things that we face day-to-day. He wants to be happy. He wants his wife

to be happy, but there's struggle. That's life, man. I didn't want him to be a perfect person. He shouldn't be. We're not perfect people, none of us are. So I wanted him to represent—not the every man, necessarily, but just someone we certainly can see ourselves in.”

“*The Sea Of Trees* takes a realistic look at what it's like to have a marriage.” Reflects Sparling, “All too often we see in film and TV that it's either one extreme or the other – there's either this highly abusive, awful relationship on one extreme, or the other extreme is that it's a completely perfect relationship where everything's great. But those extremes are rare. To me, this was taking a look at what most people's real relationships are like. Arthur and Joan have been married for quite a long time. They have such a deep love for each other, but at the same time, there's friction and there's conflict. In moments of crisis all of that stuff goes away and the love is what truly holds them together.”

### **WHO IS TAKUMI?**

“Ken Watanabe as Takumi,” reflects Kao. “I think in a lot of ways he's a similar character as Arthur but on the other side of the Pacific, the Takumi character is a lot of the every man as well as an examination of a different culture. Japan is a very specific culture, very different from people from the United States. We share a lot of similarities, but also a lot of differences. I think with Japanese culture specifically, if you look back in history, suicide is actually part of their culture, granted in many extreme cases but it goes back a long way. So there's the root of something there and that's interesting to me... examining a modern Japanese suicide and the modern Japanese culture. You see that interplay between Arthur and Takumi at different points in the film where there's some obvious cultural clashes, I think, and each man is there for their own reasons, very different reasons. I think that's something that other people will identify with and that will resonate for people on both sides the Pacific.”

McConaughey talks about his co-star Ken Watanabe. “We met months ago very briefly but we didn't actually meet as Arthur and Takumi until our very first day on-set, our first day of work, which was 100% intentional. We thought that would be interesting and maybe give a little extra surprise or magic to our relationship on screen. Ken comes to set

highly prepared and he's got certain majesty to him. He's a really good man who cares about himself and cares about others. He's also got a very witty sense of humor.”

Sparling muses, “It comes down to who is Takumi, ultimately?” I leave that open to interpretation as Gus does with the film version of the script. Takumi though, as far as his journey with Arthur in the forest, is someone that is relying on Arthur to take care of him. And, that's what Joan wanted. She wanted to feel like her husband is taking care of her instead of putting himself first.”

There are hints as to who Takumi may or may not be via the costume. The film's costume designer Danny Glicker, who collaborated with Van Sant on *Milk*, shares, “The basic look, the foundation of Takumi, is a representation of a very traditional uniform worn by the salarymen of Japan. Takumi, when we first meet him, is in a pretty serious state of distress, so we never see Takumi in his perfect state. We're meeting someone who, unlike Joan, is unable to hide his unhappiness, who is unable to hide the thing that troubles him so much. Takumi's professional look and Joan's professional look mirror each other. The idea is we have to ask ourselves, so how does that connect Joan and Takumi? And it's an interesting question and it's not one with a definite answer.”

“Arthur's arc is reflected in Takumi and Takumi's need to survive.” Adds McConaughey, “He is counting on Arthur to help him and Arthur takes on that task. It's through that process, in taking on that task, that that restoration in Arthur occurs.”

### **WHO IS JOAN?**

“It's definitely our good fortune that we were able to get Naomi Watts as Joan. She brings a lot to the project,” says Kao, “Naomi is an incredible actress that has an incredible depth to her. I can't wait to see the dynamic, on screen that she brings to the Joan and Arthur relationship. I think that there is a short list of actresses that can really display the type of depth and damage that comes with the Joan character.”

Sparling reveals, “It's a very real relationship as opposed to either all black or all white. Long relationships... things come and go, things dissipate and dissolve completely but it

doesn't mean to say you can't be together. It's acceptance and tolerance. This is what the movie centers on."

The screenwriter continues, "It could be said, perhaps, that Takumi is the spiritual manifestation of Joan. This is part of the mystique and the lore of Aokigahara, which is a mystical place where spirits exist -- a purgatory, where spirits want to move on to the other side. There's closure that needs to happen before that occurs. Joan needs for that to occur for her to transcend, to move on to the other side. That's why Takumi is so important to this story -- if he is in fact Joan, she/he needs that closure. It's not just Arthur that's in the forest that needs to finish a journey. It's her as well, through the form of Takumi."

"I love this character," says Naomi Watts. "I feel very close to her. Joan is a professional woman. She's definitely in love with her husband. She unfortunately has masked a lot her pain with alcohol. She's a high functioning alcoholic. She has resentment towards him about a past affair and that she's paying the lion's share of the bills. She needs more acknowledgement. She needs to forgive, but she's not evolved enough. She's protecting herself. And I think they both are doing that. There's an underlying, absolute love for them, for each other, but so many things have got in the way. So we have our wake-up calls here and there. Sometimes they're small or... sometimes it takes a bigger one."

McConaughey shares, "Arthur absolutely loves this woman. He harbors a tremendous amount of guilt... having not had the chance to fully reconcile or make amends. She was horrible to him and that pains him because she never had the chance to really say, 'I'm sorry,' and he knows that she would've wanted to and he feels guilt for her in that. So for him, it's the process and the arc is letting go of so much of that and it comes out in this opportunity to help Takumi... and that brings Arthur to a place where he no longer wants to die. He no longer wants to end his life. He wants to live. It restores his faith in life itself."

### **GUS ON THE SET**

McConaughey describes his director as "a wonderful voyeur." The actor reveals, "When I read this script and then being a fan of Gus Van Sant and his past work, I remarked to

our producer, Gil Netter, ‘this is the right guy, with the right sensibility for this material.’ Gus is confident enough to not say a word if everything’s going fine. And he also is confident enough to say after a seven and a half-hour day, ‘we got it.’ This story could’ve easily have been very dark and black... ‘The Suicide Story.’ Gus is not trying to make it dark. Quite the opposite -- one of the first things he said to me, ‘I’m looking for places of optimism and delight joy in the Joan-Arthur relationship. Let’s look for places with Takumi and Arthur where we can find humor, if it happens.” Gus never presses for it, but if it happens. So he’s also looking for the lighter sides that are just other expressions of humanity in this thing. And some of these scenes in here are quite horrific, as in like a good horror movie... things in the forest.”

“I’m thoroughly enjoying working with Gus,” continues the Oscar winning actor, “he’s wide open and I can throw any idea to him and he knows that I may be right but I know there’s a thousand ways to be right and so if we don’t want to do my version, I don’t care because I completely trust him. Gus has no other agenda than just telling the truth with the people he has and the story he has in this film.”

Observing Van Sant quietly on set, Kao remarks, “Gus is very confident, calm and efficient and he knows exactly what he wants. I think that’s really refreshing. I think the cast has responded to it, having a very decisive and intelligent director who is not prone to waste time or effort. It allows us to really be very nimble as a production. I think really you can’t underestimate how much confidence that inspires in the people around him, in the cast and crew. Every director has their own process and in the time that we’ve worked together I’ve really appreciated those traits. It’s a privilege to work with Gus.”

“I love working with Gus. He is the most knowledgeable, generous, and specific director that I have the pleasure of working with.” Says Danny Glicker who also collaborated with the director on *Milk*. “His calm demeanor is really about someone who cares and the impact of that is encouraging me and then encouraging everyone on this set to just bring him their very best work.”

“If somebody told me all the rest of the movies you're going to make in this business are with Gus Van Sant, I'd be the happiest guy on the planet,” shares producer Kevin Halloran. “Gus knows what he wants. He knows how to get it, and he knows when he’s got it. I mean, you can't ask for more than that.”

Glicker says, “Gus’ ideas and taste are so impeccable that the times that he really does sort of zero in on a specific direction, it’s a thrill because that’s the detail that makes this a Gus Van Sant movie, says Glicker. That’s the thing that makes it specifically his. So when he does respond or he does have a very specific idea, that to me is really exciting because a lot of his direction is in a very big scope and then he allows you to sort of fill that scope in, and then he comes in and he has these small, specific observations. And they're so elegant, and they're witty, and they're playful, and they're also very powerful and emotional. I love the responsibility of bringing him my best ideas and constantly trying to push myself further to bring him something that is special or that is richer than what might be the easier choice. I also love it when he has a specific idea. The ultimate collaboration is that he allows me to bring my best work and then he also allows me to realize his vision, which is of course my greatest pleasure.”

### **SETTING AND LOCATION**

*The Sea Of Trees* began filming on location in Central Massachusetts in July, 2014. In September 2014 Gus Van Sant and his team filmed in the Kanto region of Japan, which includes Tokyo, Kanagawa and Shizuoka prefectures. Additionally, Van Sant and his crew ventured into Aokigahara itself, to film, within the shadows of Mt. Fuji in Japan’s Yamanashi prefecture.

While Chris Sparling’s screenplay, *The Sea Of Trees* is an original work of fiction; the place where the action takes place is very real. Comprising 35-square-kilometers (14 square miles) at the foothills of Mount Fuji -- Aokigahara is very much a real place. Known throughout Japan as a popular spot for those taking their final journey, those that have visited Aokigahara describe it as “the perfect place to die” and in fact the place is

described as such by Wataru Tsurumui in his macabrely titled bestselling book: The Complete Manual of Suicide.

Japanese forestry workers are constantly stumbling upon corpses in various states of decomposition, often hanging by trees or partly eaten by wild animals. Nobody knows how many bodies lay undiscovered among the trees of the Aokigahara, eventually decomposing and becoming part of the forest itself, but the sheer volume of corpses uncovered have earned this place an eerie reputation as the top suicide spot in Japan and, by some estimates, the world. Many the victims are actually found carrying copies of Tsurumui's book with them, which makes this infamous forest even more tragic.

Mt. Fuji is an active volcano, most recently erupted in 1708. As such, there exists massive iron deposits underneath Aokigahara forest's topsoil that cause compasses and other navigation gadgets to go haywire, disorienting and trapping those that enter. Acknowledged as the most haunted place in all of Japan, there are myths and legends going back hundreds of years about the trees themselves being filled with evil energy accumulated from centuries of suicides. The place is peppered with perfunctory signs in Japanese and multiple languages that read "think of your family!" and "please reconsider!" or "please consult the police before you choose to die!" but these seem to have little influence on those determined to die there.

Arthur like the screenwriter Sparling stumbles across Aokigahara by doing an Internet search, typing the words that he promised to Joan: 'A perfect place to die.' Of course, after reading the script, the entire cast and crew started to do their own Internet research to learn more about Aokigahara.

"I had actually not heard of Aokigahara before I read the script but I think, as many did on this crew when they first got hold of the script, they quickly did their own research," says Kao, "I found, obviously, there's lots of fascinating material on the Internet about The Sea of Trees... Aokigahara Forest."



McConaughey relates, “There’s some quite disturbing, macabre pictures and stories about Aokigahara ... then you find out that a lot of people go there with the intentions of dying and then change their mind and then can’t find their way out and die anyway.”

The actor continues, “Many go there with intentions to take their life and succeed. It’s very interesting because in Japan, suicide used to be a valorous thing; it used to be a thing of honor. And now there’s a high suicide rate in Japan because of why Takumi’s there... people lose their job, men lose their job, and that’s a real socially shameful thing, to not be able to support your family. Arthur thinks Takumi’s reasons for being there are despicable. He has a wife, he has a family, but he there’s because he lost a job? Arthur feels like he has a real reason. What he comes to find out is he doesn’t have a real reason. He has a real reason to live and as you find out at the end of the story, spiritually Joan’s been with him the whole time and just because someone physically leaves this earth, they can still be with you spiritually. That’s what Arthur learns.”

Netter recalls scouting the locations, “We always knew that we would be shooting partially in Japan. In addition, we searched and we considered virtually every location in North America. We eventually came to scout Massachusetts and the first place the Film Commission took us to, here, was a place deep in the forest, formed by a glacier called Purgatory Chasm... we were with Gus, got off the plane, got in a van, drove straight to Purgatory Chasm and everybody was just blown away. It was perfect! At that moment we knew that we would be shooting in Massachusetts.”

Screenwriter Sparling, coincidentally, lives across the State line in Rhode Island about 45 minutes from where most of the Massachusetts location work took place. “This has been ideal for me. Seeing the locations is just so enjoyable. It’s incredible to be able to shoot a big movie like this in pretty much my backyard.”

The love affair was mutual. Joe Rotondo, Department of Conservation and Recreation in Massachusetts was the liaison that showed the producers, Van Sant and team Purgatory Chasm and other locations. “When we realized that the film was coming here and we told everybody that it was Gus Van Sant directing Matthew McConaughey and Ken

Watanabe, our people were just so excited.” He laughs, “They wanted to work overnights, double shifts. They just wanted to be part of the film. They realized this was going to be a major film and it was going to have a lot of impact.”

Beyond the aptly named quarter-mile long chasm with its 70-foot high granite walls formed 14,000 years ago from the glacial meltdown at the end of the last ice age, other Massachusetts locations included Ashland State Park, Blackstone State Park, Douglas State Park, F. Gilbert Hills State Park as well as various spots in and around the Worcester area, including Clark University, Municipal Airport and One Exchange Place, a historic building where the film’s production office was also based.

To film flashback sequences depicting Arthur’s days as a community college teacher, director Van Sant selected Worcester’s Clark University, after an earlier location scout found labs and an office that could play as Arthur’s on film. Van Sant was duly impressed with Clark’s Sackler Science Center, which featured a perfect blend of brainy intellectualism and scholarly clutter with its piles of books, stacks of papers and endless gadgets. To the delight of it’s students and faculty, trailers, trucks, and an army of the film’s crew members descended on Clark’s campus for filming, a process that to an outside observer likely seemed chaotic, but which in fact was carefully orchestrated and controlled down to the most minute detail.

### **ABOUT THE CAST**

Texas native **MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY (ARTHUR BRENNAN)** is one of Hollywood’s most sought-after leading men. A chance meeting in Austin with casting director and producer Don Phillips led him to director Richard Linklater, who launched the actor’s career in the cult classic *Dazed and Confused*. Since then, he has appeared in over 40 feature films that have grossed over \$1 billion; and has become a producer, director, and philanthropist – all the while sticking to his Texas roots and “jk livin” philosophy.

2014 was a game-changing year for McConaughey. For his riveting portrayal of Ron Woodruff in *Dallas Buyers Club*, McConaughey received an Academy Award, Golden Globe Award, Screen Actors Guild Award and Gotham Award for Best Actor, the Best Actor Award at the Rome Film Festival as well as the Desert Palm Achievement Actor Award at the Palm Springs Film Festival. He also made the move to TV starring alongside Woody Harrelson in the HBO dramatic series *True Detective*. The show was met by rave reviews from critics and fans alike and earned Matthew a Critics Choice and TCA Award for Best Actor in a Drama Series as well as an Emmy Nomination. Later that year he starred in *Interstellar*, directed by Christopher Nolan, and also starring Anne Hathaway and Jessica Chastain.

In 2015, McConaughey started production on the Gary Ross film *The Free State of Jones*, based on the true story of Newt Knight.

In 2012 McConaughey was spotlighted in four diverse career-changing performances. He won a Spirit Award for his portrayal of Dallas Rising in Steven Soderbergh's *Magic Mike*, and was named the year's Best Supporting Actor by both the New York Film Critics Circle and the National Society of Film Critics for his work in *Magic Mike* and Richard Linklater's *Bernie*. Mr. McConaughey also received acclaim for his performance in Lee Daniels' *The Paperboy*, and was a Spirit Award nominee for playing the title role in William Friedkin's *Killer Joe*.

He followed this up in 2013 with the release of Jeff Nichols' *Mud*, which received rave reviews and was a sleeper hit in the national box office top 10 for five weeks and Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which opened in December 2013.

His other films include Brad Furman's *The Lincoln Lawyer*, Ben Stiller's *Tropic Thunder*, McG's *We Are Marshall*, Jill and Karen Sprecher's *Thirteen Conversations About One Thing*, Bill Paxton's *Frailty*, Jonathan Mostow's *U-571*, Ron Howard's *EDtv*, Richard Linklater's *The Newton Boys*, Steven Spielberg's *Amistad*, Robert Zemeckis' *Contact*, Joel Schumacher's *A Time to Kill*, and John Sayles' *Lone Star*.

In 2008, Matthew McConaughey started The just keep livin Foundation ([www.jklivinfoundation.org](http://www.jklivinfoundation.org)), which is dedicated to helping boys and girls transform into men and women through programs that teach the importance of decision-making, health, education, and active living. The Foundation has partnered with Communities in Schools (CIS) – the nation’s largest, non-profit, dropout-prevention organization –in West Los Angeles to implement fitness and wellness programs in two large urban high schools. Through an afterschool program, they are able to give kids a healthy start in life and the promise of a healthy future.

Since **KEN WATANABE (TAKUMI NAKAMURA)** made his American film debut in Ed Zwick’s *The Last Samurai* (Oscar, Screen Actors Guild, Critics’ Choice and Golden Globe award nominations) opposite Tom Cruise, the actor has collaborated with some of most significant filmmakers of our time. In 2006, Watanabe portrayed the courageous Japanese General Tadamichi Kuribayashi in Clint Eastwood’s award-winning World War II drama *Letters from Iwo Jima*. Watanabe first worked with director Christopher Nolan on the 2005 blockbuster *Batman Begins* and subsequently on *Inception*. For Rob Marshall, Watanabe starred in *Memoirs of a Geisha*, the lush screen adaptation of Arthur Golden’s best-selling novel.

Last year, Watanabe starred in and received a Japanese Academy Award nomination for *Yurusarezaru mono*, Sang-il Lee’s Japanese language remake of Clint Eastwood’s *Unforgiven*. Last summer, Watanabe co-starred with Bryan Cranston, Sally Hawkins, David Strathairn, Aaron Taylor Johnson and Elizabeth Olsen in Warner Bros/Legendary’s *Godzilla*, directed by Gareth Edwards.

In 2006, Watanabe starred in and executive produced the Japanese film *Memories of Tomorrow*, for which he won a number of Best Actor awards, including the Japanese Academy Award and the Hochi Film Award. In 2009, he starred in *Shizumano Taiyô (The Unbroken)* for which he won his second Japanese Academy Award, as well as the Hochi Film Award for Best Actor. His Japanese film credits also include the international hit comedy *Tampopo*, directed by Juzo Itami, *Ikebukuro West Gate Park*, *Space Travelers*, *Oboreru Sakana (Drowning Fish)* and *Shin Jinginaki*

*Tatakai/Bosatsu (Fight Without Loyalty/Murder)*, an updated version of the popular Yakuza movie series.

Watanabe currently stars as the King of Siam opposite Kelli O'Hara in Lincoln Center Theater's acclaimed revival of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "The King and I," directed by Bartlett Sher. The production marks Watanabe's American stage and Broadway debuts.

Watanabe began his acting career with the Tokyo-based theater company En. His lead performance in the company's production of "Shitayamannen-cho monogatari," directed by Yukio Ninawara, caught the attention of both critics and Japanese audiences. Last year, Watanabe returned to the Tokyo and Osaka stages in critically acclaimed, sold out runs of the comedy "Dialogue with Horowitz" by Koki Mitani. His Japanese theatre credits also include "Hamlet," "The Lion in Winter" and "The Royal Hunt of the Sun."

In 1982, Watanabe made his television debut with "Michinaru Hanran." His formidable screen presence in the subsequent Samurai drama series "Dokuganryu Masamune" led to additional roles in the historical series "Oda Nobunaga" and "Chushingura," and the film *Bakumatsu Junjou Den*.

**NAOMI WATTS (JOAN BRENNAN)** was honored with an Academy Award® nomination for Best Actress for her performance in Juan Antonio Bayona's *The Impossible*, starring alongside Ewan McGregor. For her role as a courageous wife and mother struggling to survive the aftermath of a tsunami, she also earned Best Actress nominations from the HFPA for a Golden Globe Award, from the SAG Awards®, the Broadcast Film Critics and she received the Desert Palm Achievement Actress Award at the Palm Springs International Film Festival.

Watts also earned an Academy Award® nomination for Best Actress for her role in Alejandro Gonzales Inarritu's *21 Grams* where she starred alongside Sean Penn and Benicio Del Toro. Her performance also garnered Best Actress Awards nominations from the SAG Awards®, BAFTAs, Broadcast Film Critics and Golden Satellites as well as

Best Actress honors from multiple critics' associations. At the film's premiere at the 2003 Venice International Film Festival, she received the Audience Award (Lion of the Public) for Best Actress. The film itself won the Special Distinction Award at the Independent Spirit Awards. Her most recent honor was for her role in *St. Vincent*, which she starred alongside Bill Murray. Watts earned a SAG Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress for her performance.

She most recently starred in Noah Baumbach's *While We're Young* with Ben Stiller and Amanda Seyfried as well as *Insurgent*, the latest installment of the successful *Divergent* franchise based on the popular, best-selling novels written by Veronica Roth. She also recently starred in Alejandro González Iñárritu's Academy Award nominated film *Birdman* with Emma Stone and Michael Keaton.

Watts recently shot *Demolition* with Jake Gyllenhaal, *Three Generations* with Susan Sarandon and the psychological thriller *Shut In*. She will begin shooting the next installment of the *Divergent* franchise, *Allegiant: Part I* this year.

She has starred in many other films in recent years including Clint Eastwood's critically acclaimed *J. Edgar* starring opposite Leonardo DiCaprio; Doug Liman's *Fair Game*, starring opposite Sean Penn; Woody Allen's *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger*, as part of an all-star cast, including Josh Brolin, Anthony Hopkins, and Antonio Banderas; Rodrigo Garcia's "Mother and Child," for which she received an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress and Tom Twyker's *The International*, with Clive Owen.

Watts has had an impressive list of movies since her acclaimed turn in David Lynch's controversial drama *Mulholland Drive*, for which she earned Best Actress Awards from a number of critics' organizations, including the National Board of Review and National Society of Film Critics. In addition to starring in Peter Jackson's epic remake of *King Kong*, her credits include *We Don't Live Here Anymore*, which she starred in and produced; *The Assassination of Richard Nixon*, opposite Sean Penn and Don Cheadle; David O. Russell's *I (Heart) Huckabees*, with Jude Law and Dustin Hoffman;

Marc Forster's *Stay*, opposite Ewan McGregor and Ryan Gosling; Gore Verbinski's *The Ring* and its sequel, *The Ring 2*; Merchant-Ivory's *Le Divorce*, alongside Kate Hudson, Glenn Close and Stockard Channing; John Curran's *The Painted Veil*, opposite Edward Norton, which was based on W. Somerset Maugham's novel; David Cronenberg's drama/thriller *Eastern Promises*, opposite Viggo Mortensen; and Michael Haneke's thriller *Funny Games*.

Born in England, Watts moved to Australia at the age of 14 and began studying acting. Her first major film role came in John Duigan's *Flirting*. She produced and starred in the short film *Ellie Parker*, which screened in competition at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival. In 2005, a full-length feature of the short debuted at Sundance.

Among her many awards and recognitions, Watts received the Montecito Award from the Santa Barbara Film Festival in 2006 for her role in *King Kong*; was honored by the Palm Springs Film Festival in 2003 for *21 Grams*; and in 2002, was named the Female Star of Tomorrow at ShoWest and received the Breakthrough Acting Award at the Hollywood Film Festival, both for her work in *Mulholland Drive*. She was also honored for her entire body of work at the 2011 Deauville Film Festival. Watts resides in Los Angeles and New York with her partner and 2 sons.

**KATIE ASELTON (GABRIELLA LAFORTE)** is best known for her starring role in the FXX comedy *The League*. Katie first caught people's attention when she starred in *The Puffy Chair*, directed by Mark and Jay Duplass. The film was nominated for two Independent Spirit Awards and won the Audience Award at the South by Southwest Film Festival. Katie quickly demonstrated her versatility by delivering performances in a wide variety of genres such as the broad comedy *Our Idiot Brother* opposite Paul Rudd, the survivalist thriller *Black Rock* opposite Kate Bosworth and Lake Bell, and a recurring character in the action/adventure series *Revolution*.

A talented multi-hyphenate Katie wrote, directed, produced and starred opposite Dax Shepard in the independent film "The Freebie," an intimate portrayal of a married couple who decide to allow each other a one-night stand and the consequences which follow.

She next directed and starred in *Black Rock*, a post-feministic take on *Deliverance*. Katie is currently in Los Angeles shooting the sixth and final season of the *The League*.

**JORDAN GAVARIS (ERIC)** has quickly established himself as a highly sought after young actor in film and television. He can currently be seen on the third season of BBC America's critically acclaimed drama *Orphan Black*. Gavaris breakout portrayal of Sarah's foster brother, "Felix," has garnered high praise from critics and fans alike. He recently won his second consecutive Canadian Screen Awards for Best Performance by an Actor in a Featured Supporting Role in a Dramatic Program or Series and was the fan voted winner of Entertainment Weekly's 2014 EWwy Award for Best Supporting Actor, Drama.

Born and raised in Southern Ontario, Canada, Gavaris got his first taste of show business at 10 years old, performing as "Wilbur," in a community stage production of *Charlotte's Web*. Dabbling in behind the scenes work for a couple of his high school's junior plays, Gavaris redirected his focus to creative writing. It wasn't until his senior year that he truly discovered his passion for acting, while taking a class at a local acting studio, where a disciple of the late Lee Strasberg was teaching The Method.

Six months later, Gavaris landed the lead role in his first feature film, *45 R.P.M.* Written and directed by David Schultz, the film tells the story of 'Parry Tender,' a crestfallen boy who wants nothing more than to escape the whispers and stares of the small northern town of 'Goose Lake,' and retreat to New York City. The film and its performances were met with critical praise. Gavaris has also appeared in the cult series *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, and starred in Cartoon Network's first live-action series, *Unnatural History*, which earned him an award from Playback Magazine and The Canadian Film and Television Hall of Fame as one of the 2010 "Top Ten to Watch."



## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

**GUS VAN SANT (DIRECTOR)** has been winning over critics and audiences alike since bursting onto the scene in 1985 with his widely acclaimed feature film *Mala Noche*, which won the Los Angeles Film Critics Award for Best Independent/Experimental Film of 1987. His body of work includes many hallmarks of independent cinema, notably *Drugstore Cowboy*, *My Own Private Idaho*, and *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*.

Van Sant's direction of Nicole Kidman in the 1995 black comedy *To Die For*, won a Golden Globe® Award and debuting at the Cannes and Toronto Film Festivals. He received a Best Director Academy Award® nomination for *Good Will Hunting*, which received a total of nine Academy Awards® and then in 1998 followed with the controversial remake of a classic Alfred Hitchcock thriller, *Psycho*, which was the first shot-for-shot recreation of a film.

The new millennium brought the release of the literary drama *Finding Forrester*. Van Sant returned to his indie roots in 2002 with the beautiful and austere *Gerry* which he wrote with the film's stars Matt Damon and Casey Affleck. The experience of making *Gerry* inspired Van Sant to write and direct *Elephant*, a compelling reverie on a normal day of high school that is destroyed by a Columbine-like massacre. Shot in Van Sant's home town of Portland with a cast of non-actors, *Elephant* went on to win the Palme d'Or® and Best Director award at the 2003 Cannes Film Festival. *Last Days* followed in 2005 and won a sound design award at Cannes. Next Van Sant adapted the novel *Paranoid Park* by Blake Nelson to the screen. Once again he cast non-actors and the film won the 60th Anniversary Award in 2007 at Cannes.

In 2008 Van Sant nominated for his second a Best Director Academy Award® for *Milk*, which earned a total of 8 nominations, and won Oscars® in the categories of Best Actor for Sean Penn's performance as Harvey Milk, and Best Screenplay for Lance Black's writing. This success was followed by *Restless*, which was released in the fall of 2011 and *Promised Land*, which was released nationwide in January of 2013.

Throughout his career Mr. Van Sant has continued to make evocative short films, which have been winning awards at film festivals worldwide. These works include an adaptation of William S. Burroughs' short story "The Discipline of DE," a deadpan black-and-white gem shown at the New York Film Festival. In 1996 Van Sant directed Allen Ginsberg reading his own poem, "Ballad of the Skeletons," to the music of Paul McCartney and Philip Glass, which premiered at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival. Other acclaimed shorts include 1987's *Five Ways to Kill Yourself; Thanksgiving Prayer*, a 1991 re-teaming with Burroughs; *Le Marais* (2006), a segment of the compilation project *Paris, Je T'aime*, and *Mansion on the Hill* (2008), which is part of the UN funded project 8, created to raise awareness about essential issues the world is facing today.

Born in Louisville, Kentucky, Van Sant earned a BA at the Rhode Island School of Design before moving to Hollywood. Early in his career he spent two years in New York creating commercials for Madison Avenue. Eventually he settled in Portland, Oregon, where in addition to directing and producing, he pursued painting, photography, and writing. In 1995 he released a collection of photos entitled "108 Portraits" (Twelvetrees Press) and two years later published his first novel, "Pink" (Doubleday), a satire on filmmaking. A longtime musician himself, Van Sant has directed music videos for many top recording artists including David Bowie, Elton John, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Hanson.

**GIL NETTER's (PRODUCER)** previous projects as a producer include: *Life Of Pi* which grossed more than \$600 million worldwide, was nominated for 11 Academy Awards® including Best Picture and won four Oscars®, including Best Director for Ang Lee and the box office phenomenon *The Blind Side*, nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture and garnering an Oscar for Best Actress for Sandra Bullock.

Netter also produced *Water for Elephants* starring Robert Pattinson, Reese Witherspoon, and Christoph Waltz; the hit film, *Marley and Me*, starring Jennifer Anniston and Luke Wilson; *Phone Booth*, starring Colin Farrell and directed by Joel Schumacher, *Flicka*, *Fever Pitch* and *Dude Where's My Car?* He was also executive producer of *Eragon*.

Earlier, Netter served as president of Zucker Brothers Productions for seven years, where he oversaw the production of *Ghost*, written by Bruce Joel Rubin and directed by Jerry Zucker starring Patrick Swayze, Demi Moore, Tony Goldwyn, Whoopi Goldberg. Beloved by audiences and critics, *Ghost* was an outstanding commercial success, grossing over \$505.7 million at the box office on a production budget of \$22 million; nominated for five Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Score and Best Film Editing. It won the awards for Best Supporting Actress for Goldberg and Best Original Screenplay. Swayze and Moore both received Golden Globe Award nominations for their performances, while Goldberg won the BAFTA, Golden Globe, and Saturn Awards in addition to the Oscar. Netter also executive produced such films as *My Best Friend's Wedding*, *First Knight*, *My Life*, *Naked Gun 33 1/3: Final Insult*, *Naked Gun 2: The Smell of Fear* and *A Walk in the Clouds*.

Netter Productions' upcoming slate includes: *The Shack*, directed by Stuart Hazeldine, starring Octavia Spencer and *The Graveyard Book*, directed by Ron Howard.

**KEN KAO (PRODUCER)** is co-founder and CEO of Waypoint Entertainment, a production, development, and financing company. In 2014, Kao established Bloom, a film distribution, sales and financing company with veteran international film executive Alex Walton. In addition to representing films as a foreign sales agent, the pair are building a diverse slate of films – from commercial, talent driven titles to specialty films from proven filmmakers.

In 2014, Kao produced two Terrence Malick films. The first of these films is *Knight Of Cups*, which premiered at the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Berlin International Film Festival in February 2015. The feature stars Christian Bale, Natalie Portman, and Cate Blanchett. The second film is Malick's yet-to-be titled project starring Ryan Gosling, Michael Fassbender, and Rooney Mara. The untitled feature is also set for release in 2015.

Waypoint Entertainment is currently partnered with Joel Silver and Silver Pictures to produce *The Nice Guys*, a detective thriller starring Russell Crowe and Ryan Gosling.

Warner Bros. will release *The Nice Guys*, Summer 2016.

In 2015, Waypoint began production on film legend Martin Scorsese's *Silence*, starring Liam Neeson and Andrew Garfield. The project is scripted by two-time Oscar nominated screenwriter Jay Cocks. *Silence* is an adaptation of the 1966 Japanese novel by Shusaku Endo, which details a pair of Jesuit priests who face violence and persecution in 17th Century Japan as they attempt to locate their mentor and spread the gospel of Christianity.

A graduate of The University of Kansas and DePaul University School of Law, Kao practiced law in the high-tech, sports, and fashion industries for seven years prior to entering the film industry. He is currently developing, producing and financing an amalgam of projects set for wide release in 2015 and beyond. Kao is represented by WME.

**KEVIN HALLORAN (PRODUCER)** most recently executive produced Disney's film *Million Dollar Arm* starring Jon Hamm for Disney. His other production credits include *Water For Elephants* starring Reese Witherspoon and Robert Pattinson, *Parental Guidance* starring Billy Crystal, *Tooth Fairy* and *Eragon* for Twentieth Century Fox; *Red Dawn* for MGM and *Bridge to Terabithia* for Disney. He is currently executive producing *Deep Blue Good-By* starring Christian Bale, directed by James Mangold for Twentieth Century Fox, Appian Way and Chernin Entertainment.

With a filmography of more than 40 feature films, Halloran, a native of Indiana, began his career over 25 years ago as a Production Assistant on Shelly Duvall's *Faerie Tale Theater* television series. Shortly thereafter he became a Location Manager, in which capacity his credits included *Pow Wow Highway* and the critically acclaimed television series *The West Wing*, among many others. He soon transitioned into Production Management on films such as *Shallow Hal*, *House Of Sand And Fog*, and the indie classic *The Minus Man*.

**CHRIS SPARLING (SCREENWRITER/PRODUCER)** wrote the Sundance hit *Buried*, selected as one of the 10 Best Independent Films of 2010 and honored with Best Original Screenplay by the National Board of Review, receiving a Goya Award in the same category. His Black List script, *ATM*, soon followed and was produced by Gold Circle Films and released by IFC Films in 2012. In 2014, Sparling was named by Variety as one of "10 Screenwriters to Watch."

He is currently adapting Jo Nesbo's bestselling crime novel *Blood On Snow* for Warner Brothers and Leonardo DiCaprio, and is also adapting the Lois Duncan thriller *Down A Dark Hall* for Lionsgate. Sparling made his directorial debut with the supernatural thriller *The Atticus Institute*, which he also wrote.

**PIETRO SCALIA (EDITOR)** began his career as an editor on Andrei Konchalovski's *Shy People*. Later, he received an assistant editor position working with Oliver Stone. Scalia worked on such films as *Wall Street* and *Talk Radio*. He later continued as an associate editor on *Born on the Fourth of July* and as an additional editor on *The Doors*. After five years of working with Oliver Stone, Scalia was finally asked to fully edit a film. It was *JFK*, for which Scalia and his co-editor, Joe Hutshing, were honored with an Academy Award for Film Editing. Craig McKay was nominated the same year for editing *The Silence of the Lambs*. Interestingly enough, Scalia would edit a sequel to the movie, *Hannibal* ten years later. He also received a BAFTA Award and A.C.E. Award for his work.

Scalia worked with Bernardo Bertolucci on *Little Buddha* and *Stealing Beauty*, as well as with Sam Raimi on *The Quick and the Dead*. He earned two more Academy Award nominations: first in 1997 for *Good Will Hunting* and second in 2000 for *Gladiator*, and a second Academy Award for director Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down*. He also edited *G.I. Jane* and a pilot episode of a TV series *American Gothic* in late 1990s.

In more recent years, Scalia edited such movies as *Levity* directed by Ed Solomon, a documentary entitled *Ashes and Snow*, *The Great Raid* directed by John Dahl, and *Memoirs of a Geisha*, directed by Rob Marshall.

He has a long lasting relationship with Ridley Scott working on movies such as *The*

*Martian, The Counselor, Prometheus American Gangster, Body of Lies, and Robin Hood.*

Scalia also worked with director Daniel Espinosa on *Child 44* and with Mark Webb on *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*.

Born in Sicily, Scalia later moved to Switzerland with his parents and attended Swiss-German schools until high school. In 1985 he earned his Master of Fine Arts from UCLA Film School. He currently lives in Los Angeles with his wife and kids.

**KASPER TUXEN (DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY)** found himself drawn to the camera at the age of 13 while working as an actor on the set of Niels Gråbøl's *The Hideaway (Moevog Funder)*. Within a decade, he had changed his vocation and, at The National Film School of Denmark, began an extensive collaboration as cinematographer with director Martin de Thurah. The duo completed many projects together, most notably the short *Young Men Falling*, which world-premiered at the 2008 Cannes International Film Festival.

Mr. Tuxen's career as cinematographer has encompassed documentary features and shorts; the International Emmy Award-winning series *The Protectors*; Anders Morgenthaler's features *Echo* and *Princess*; and his first American feature, *3 Backyards*, which earned the Directing Award for Eric Mendelsohn at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival, and which starred Edie Falco, Elias Koteas, Embeth Davidtz, and Rachel Resheff.

He has subsequently been the director of photography on the upcoming feature *The Wait*, starring Jena Malone and Chloë Sevigny, and directed by M. Blash; and on commercials for directors Mark Romanek and Chris Milk.

**ALEX DiGERLANDO (PRODUCTION DESIGNER)** recently completed work on the second season of HBO's *True Detective*, the first season of which earned him an Art Directors Guild Award as well as a Primetime Emmy nomination for Outstanding Art Direction. He is also known for his work on Benh Zeitlin's *Caméra d'Or* winner *Beasts of the Southern Wild* which earned the Chlotrudis Award for Best Production Design; Todd

Solondz's *Dark Horse*, nominated by the Venice Film Festival for a Golden Lion Award; the MTV sitcom *I Just Want My Pants Back* for Executive Producer Doug Liman; and Zal Batmanglij & Brit Marling's eco-espionage thriller *The East*.

His first film as Production Designer was *Pretty Bird* for actor-turned-director Paul Schneider; followed by John Hindman's *The Answer Man*. Both films were selected for the dramatic competition at the Sundance Film Festival.

Alex earned his BFA in Cinema Studies at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Since graduating in 1999, he worked his way up in various capacities within the Art Departments of a long list of movies for lauded filmmakers such as Spike Lee's *Bamboozled*, Woody Allen's *Hollywood Ending* and *Anything Else*, Todd Haynes's *Far From Heaven*, Steven Spielberg's *Catch Me If You Can*, Jim Jarmusch's *Broken Flowers*, Julie Taymor's *Across The Universe* and *The Tempest*, Charlie Kaufman's *Synechdoche, New York*, Wes Anderson's *The Darjeeling Limited*, Roger Michell's *Morning Glory*, Jodie Foster's *The Beaver*, and Darren Aronofsky's biblical epic *Noah*.

He is currently on location in Chicago designing Spike Lee's *Chirag* and is looking forward to the September release of *99 Homes*, which he designed for Rahmin Bahrani.

**MASON BATES (COMPOSER)** Recently named the first composer-in-residence of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Mason Bates writes music that fuses innovative orchestral writing, imaginative narrative forms, the harmonies of jazz and the rhythms of techno. His symphonic music has been the first to receive widespread acceptance for its expanded palette of electronic sounds, and it is championed by leading conductors such as Riccardo Muti, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Leonard Slatkin. He has become a visible advocate for bringing new music to new spaces, whether through institutional partnerships such as his residency with the Chicago Symphony, or through his classical/DJ project Mercury Soul, which has transformed spaces ranging from commercial clubs to Frank Gehry-designed concert halls into exciting, hybrid musical events drawing over a thousand people. In awarding Bates the Heinz Medal, Teresa

Heinz remarked that “his music has moved the orchestra into the digital age and dissolved the boundaries of classical music.”

As part of the San Francisco Symphony’s recent Beethoven & Bates Festival, three of his electro-acoustic works — *Alternative Energy*, *Liquid Interface*, and *The B-Sides* — were recorded for an upcoming CD focusing on his largest works. Another major work, his *Violin Concerto*, was recorded by Leonard Slatkin, the London Symphony, and extraordinary violinist Anne Akiko Meyers. His symphonic music’s dramatic realization of narrative forms has recently attracted the attention of great artists outside classical music, such as famed director Gus Van Sant, whose upcoming film *Sea of Trees* starring Matthew McConaughey features a symphonic score by Bates.

Continuing performances of works such as *Mothership*, which premiered at the Sydney Opera House by the YouTube Symphony to an online audience of 1.8 million, have demonstrated that electronic sounds can be a welcome addition to the orchestral palette with minimal logistics. While Bates often performs the electronica onstage with orchestras, dozens of repeat performances of his symphonic music happen without him, and he recently was named the second-most performed living symphonic composer. For more info, go to [www.masonbates.com](http://www.masonbates.com) and [www.mercurysoul.org](http://www.mercurysoul.org).

**DANNY GLICKER (COSTUME DESIGNER)** was nominated for an Academy Award® and the Costume Designers Guild for his work on Gus Van Sant’s *Milk* starring Oscar winner Sean Penn.

Glicker was honored by the CDG with their Excellence in Costume Design for Contemporary Film Award for his work on Duncan Tucker’s *Transamerica*, which starred Golden Globe Award winner Felicity Huffman. He also received a CDG Award nomination for his designs on Jason Reitman’s *Up In The Air* starring George Clooney.



His credits as costume designer also include Michael Cuesta's award-winning *L.I.E.*; Craig Lucas' *The Dying Gaul*; Jason Reitman's *Thank You for Smoking*; McG's *We Are Marshall*; and the Polish Brothers' *Northfork* and *The Astronaut Farmer, This is The End* and HBO's *True Blood* among others. Glicker began his career as a production assistant for the film *Quiz Show*

**FELICITY BOWRING (MAKEUP DEPARTMENT HEAD)** After graduating from The London College of Fashion, Felicity returned to her native Australia where she began working as a Makeup and Hair designer in the Film Industry. She went on to work internationally in Europe, Canada and the United States where she continues to work with the top Directors worldwide including David Fincher and Martin Campbell.

In 2014 Felicity won an Emmy for her work on HBO's *True Detective* and her Department Head credits include *Social Network*, *State Of Play*, *Zodiac*, and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, amongst others. She is currently shooting *The Free State Of Jones* with Matthew McConaughey and director Gary Ross.

### **About Netter Productions**

Netter Productions develops and produces films for all audiences. Company founder and principal Gil Netter's previous projects as a producer include: *Life Of Pi* which grossed more than \$600 million worldwide, was nominated for 11 Academy Awards® including Best Picture and won four Oscars®, including Best Director for Ang Lee; *Water for Elephants* starring Robert Pattinson, Reese Witherspoon, and Christoph Waltz; box office phenomenon *The Blind Side*, nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture and garnering an Oscar for Best Actress for Sandra Bullock; the hit film, *Marley and Me*, starring Jennifer Anniston and Luke Wilson, *Phone Booth*, starring Colin Farrell and directed by Joel Schumacher, *Dude, Where's My Car?*, *Flicka* and *Fever Pitch*. Netter also served as executive producer of *Eragon* and served as president of Zucker Brothers Productions for seven years, where he oversaw the production of *Ghost* and executive produced such films as *My Best Friend's Wedding*, *First Knight*, *My Life*, *Naked Gun 33 1/3: Final Insult*, *Naked Gun 2: The Smell of Fear* and *A Walk in the Clouds*. Netter

Productions' upcoming slate includes: *The Graveyard Book*, directed by Ron Howard; *The Shack*, directed by Forest Whitaker and *The Glass Castle* starring Jennifer Lawrence for Lionsgate.

### **About Waypoint Entertainment**

Waypoint Entertainment is a film and television development, production, and finance company cofounded by Ken Kao in 2010. Waypoint's upcoming slate includes: Martin Scorsese's *Silence* to be distributed by Paramount Pictures, starring Liam Neeson, Andrew Garfield, Andrew Driver, and Ken Watanabe; and Terrence Malick's next two films -- *Knight Of Cups* with Christian Bale, Natalie Portman and Cate Blanchett, and an untitled film featuring Michael Fassbender, Ryan Gosling, Rooney Mara, Natalie Portman and Cate Blanchett.

### **About BLOOM**

BLOOM represents and curates a diversified slate of films ranging from commercial, talent-driven, wide release movies, to specialty films from proven and trusted filmmakers, all the while keeping an eye towards fresh and emerging talent. *The Sea of Trees* is the first project on the BLOOM slate. The company recently announced *Skiptrace* starring Jackie Chan and *The Hunters*, which will be directed by John Moore. The existing slate includes: Gillian Flynn's best-selling novel *Dark Places* starring Charlize Theron; *A Walk Among the Tombstones* starring Liam Neeson; *The Woman in Black: Angel of Death*; *Pele*, the biopic about the legendary Brazilian soccer player; Brian Kirk's *Passengers* starring Keanu Reeves; *Jane Got a Gun* starring Natalie Portman; and *Out of the Dark* starring Julia Stiles and Scott Speedman.

## CAST

<u>Matthew McConaughey</u>	<u>Arthur Brennan</u>
<u>Naomi Watts</u>	<u>Joan Brennan</u>
<u>Jordan Gavaris</u>	Eric
<u>Ken Watanabe</u>	<u>Takumi Nakamura</u>
<u>Katie Aselton</u>	Gabriella Laforte
<u>James Saito</u>	Dr. Takahashi
<u>Ami Haruna</u>	Game Show Host
<u>Owen Burke</u>	Actor
<u>Susan Garibotto</u>	Arthur's friend
<u>Jeffrey Corazzini</u>	Arthur's friend
<u>Joseph Oliveira</u>	Gas Station Clerk
<u>Simba Dibinga</u>	Ambulance Tech #2
<u>Anna Friedman</u>	Anna
<u>J.T. Turner</u>	Accident Witness
<u>Richard Levine</u>	Funeral Director
<u>Michael Steven Swanson</u>	Funeral mourner

<u>Jimi Stanton</u>	Mailman
<u>Phyllis Gordon II</u>	Hospital Administrator
<u>George J. Vezina</u>	Airport travelor
<u>Mark Burzenski</u>	Gas Station Customer
<u>Joseph Baken</u>	Male Student
<u>Ai Yoshihara</u>	Mental Health Specialist
<u>Lino Tanaka</u>	Emergency Medical Technician
<u>Steven Dougherty</u>	Mourner
<u>Joy Costanza</u>	Tourist
<u>Amanda Collins</u>	Young Mother
<u>Ikuma Ando</u>	Park ranger #1
<u>Mackenzie Hawe</u>	Arthurs Friend
<u>Juzo Yoshida</u>	Park Ranger 2
<u>Marely Mercedes</u>	Restaurant Patron
<u>Steven Howitt</u>	Doctor
<u>Roy Y. Chan</u>	Japanese Nurse
<u>Sienna Tow</u>	Little Girl
<u>Joe Girard</u>	Cashier

## CREW AND CREDITS

**Produced by**

Bloom  
Waypoint Entertainment  
Netter Productions

**Produced by**

Christopher Sparling  
Ken Kao  
Gil Netter  
Kevin Halloran

**Co produced by**

F. Gary, E. Brian Dobbins, Allen Fischer  
Tami Goldman  
Satch Watanabe  
Tracy McGrath

**Directed by**

Gus Van Sant

**Associate producer**

Thomas Patrick Smith

**Cinematography by**

Kasper Tuxen

**Sound by**

Chris Douridas

**Film Editing by**

Pietro Scalia

**Music by**

Mason Bates

**Costume Design by**

Danny Glicker

**Production Design by**

Alex DiGerlando