



**Present**

**A production from  
The Jim Henson Company**



**Directed by Dave McKean  
Screenplay by Neil Gaiman  
Executive Produced by Lisa Henson**

**Starring  
Stephanie Leonidas  
Jason Barry  
Rob Brydon  
Gina McKee**

## **MIRRORMASK**

MIRRORMASK is a groundbreaking effort from graphic novelist and director Dave McKean and storytelling master Neil Gaiman. Teaming up with the Jim Henson Company, they combine live action with digital animation in a spectacular concoction that will dazzle audiences across the board.

MIRRORMASK tells the story of Helena (Leonidas), a fifteen-year-old girl working for her family circus, who wishes-quite ironically-that she could run away from the circus and join real life. But such is not to be the case, as she finds herself on a strange journey into the Dark Lands, a fantastic landscape filled with giants, monkeybirds and dangerous sphinxes. On her quest to return home, Helena searches for the Mirrormask, an object of enormous power, which is her only hope of escaping the Dark Lands.

A dark fantasy with elements of THE DARK CRYSTAL and LABYRINTH, MIRRORMASK is a thrilling new chapter in the celebrated careers of Dave McKean and Neil Gaiman. Filled with imagination and unforgettable imagery, and fully realized with the help of CGI, MIRRORMASK is a visual and psychological menagerie of dreamscapes, nightmares and otherworldly creatures.

## **Director's statement**

“I don't know where to start, every day was a steep learning experience...

I would say I have learned most about my own strengths and weaknesses. I have a tendency to fall in love with the purity of a formal solution to a problem, and then I just become blind to its possible flaws, and any little changes made feel like they are watering down the idea. I think this caused several difficulties on the film, and I think I'll be conscious of that tunnel vision from now on.

Editing is always a wondrous experience, an alchemical experience. But on this film, working with an editor really for the first time, and noticing his approach, continually 'on the story', was a big lesson. Any block of dialogue in the script longer than three lines looked suspiciously like fat needing to be trimmed. We cut our penultimate edit, which didn't have any scenes or large chunks to shed, down by ten minutes just by trimming frames, and the odd shot. I have no idea where all that fat came from, but it really helped.

I have also learned that you don't start up a new computer-rendering studio during production. The little blighters need at least three months to get to know each other before an animator goes anywhere near them. And finally, I learned that computers are as human as the rest of us. Our technical director named all the machines after different bands. The four Macs in the edit suite were named after the Beatles; fair enough, I was John. But then we needed a fifth so he named it Yoko, and they all stopped talking to each other.”

—Dave McKean

## **About the Production**

Helena's journey is an incredible story. But how could it be otherwise when its creators are Neil Gaiman, the award-winning author of Sandman, American Gods and Neverwhere, and director/designer and multimedia artist, David McKean. In addition to this potent collaboration, the setting where MIRRORMASK's story was first conceived is just as inspiring. As Neil Gaiman tells it: "Dave and I created the story and script for MIRRORMASK in the Henson family home in London, surrounded by memorabilia and artifacts from Jim Henson's astonishing career in television and fantasy filmmaking. It was a true challenge and inspiration to try to make something today that would be as visually rich, creative, funny and as moving as Jim Henson's original works."

MIRRORMASK combines live action with digital animation, set in a spectacular computer generated landscape. A "visually rich" and "creative" environment, indeed— and an achievement that is all the more dazzling given the limits imposed by their independent film budget. Working with Producer Simon Moorhead and Executive Producers Martin G. Baker, Lisa Henson and Michael Polis, Gaiman and McKean had to create a production process that mixed new technology, off-the-shelf hardware and just plain unorthodox thinking.

After shooting on location in London and Brighton for two weeks, followed by four weeks in a blue screen studio, the film entered its arduous post-production phase. McKean researched different computer animation studios who could build the world of MIRRORMASK, but instead chose to form his own team of animators. And so, for just over a year, seventeen animators (many of them recent Computer Animation graduates from Bournemouth University in England) worked at PC stations in a single quiet room in Islington as McKean personally supervised every frame of the film, thus ensuring that his and Gaiman's original artistic tone would be completely realized.

MIRRORMASK is a groundbreaking effort to take the stunning authorship and artistry of Gaiman and McKean off the pages of the graphic novel for the first time and put that vision on the screen. The result is a visually and emotionally compelling story that is sweeping and powerful, yet with the intimate, handcrafted feel of an independent film.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

### **Dave McKean—Director, Designer, Story**

Born in Taplow, Berkshire in 1963, Dave McKean attended Berkshire College of Art and Design and upon graduation in 1986 had already begun his professional career as an illustrator. Today, McKean is an internationally known award-winning artist with a prolific career spanning all forms of media.

An accomplished director of short films, McKean's *THE WEEK BEFORE* (1998) toured international festivals as did his 2002 film *N[EON]*, First Prize winner at the Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival. *MIRRORMASK* marks his debut as a feature film director.

As a writer and illustrator, McKean has been recognized with numerous awards including the Harvey Award for Best New Comic, the International Alph Art Award for Best Graphic Novel and Italy's La Pantera Award, all for the comic novel *Cages* published from 1990 to 1996. His latest collection of short stories in comics form, *Pictures That Tick*, won Overall First Prize for the National Book Awards in 2002.

He has partnered as a graphic illustrator with such writers as Grant Morrisson (*Arkham Asylum*, the single most successful graphic novel ever published), SF Said, (*Varjak Paw*, recipient of the Smarties Gold Award), Stephen King (*Wizard & Glass*) and most notably, Neil Gaiman.

McKean and Gaiman met in 1986 and their many collaborations over the years have resulted in some of the most acclaimed and beloved literary projects of today. Their first book, *Violent Cases* (1987), has been printed worldwide and adapted for the stage. Other titles include *Black Orchid* (1988), *Signal To Noise* (1990) and *Mr. Punch* (1995), exhibited at the Victoria & Albert Museum as a National Book Award winner. McKean has also contributed all the cover illustrations and design for the World Fantasy Award-winning *Sandman* series of graphic novels. A collection of this work, *Dust Covers*, was published in 1998. More recently McKean and Gaiman released their first children's books *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish* and *The Wolves in the Walls* (NY Times Illustrated Book of the Year).

McKean has produced promotional campaigns for Smirnoff, BMW/Mini, Nike, and Eurostar as well as the films *BLADE*, *ALIEN RESURRECTION*, *THE KING IS ALIVE*, *DUST* and *SLEEPY HOLLOW*. In 1995, he created the image launching The Sony Playstation and in 1996 was one of four photographers chosen by Kodak to launch their new color film with a book, video and global ad package. His many magazine contributions include illustrations for *The New Yorker* and *Playboy* and he has designed, illustrated and photographed over one hundred and fifty album covers since 1990, including recent releases by Tori Amos, Real World, Toad the Wet Sprocket, Bill Laswell, Alice Cooper, Dream Theater, Counting Crows, Front Line Assembly, and Bill Bruford,

McKean recently founded Ferel Records with saxophonist Iain Bellamy. He is currently working on two feature film scripts, three books to tie in with the release of *MIRRORMASK*, extensive designs, films and photographs for a Broadway musical and a new children's book *Crazy Hair*, again partnering with Neil Gaiman.

## **Neil Gaiman—Screenplay, Story**

For more than 20 years, Neil Gaiman has been one of the world's most successful, honored and beloved writers in modern comics and has become a best-selling novelist as well. He is listed in the Dictionary of Literary Biography as one of the top ten living post-modern writers. Like so many of his works, his most recent novel, American Gods, received several awards including the Hugo, Bram Stoker and SFX awards.

His most popular title, the monthly cult DC Comics series, Sandman, was described by the LA Times as "The greatest epic in the history of comic books" and "the best monthly comic book in the world". Sandman received numerous honors including the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards for Best Writer (1991, 1992, 1993, 1994), Best Continuing Series (1991, 1992, 1993), Best Graphic Album-- reprint (1991), and the Best Graphic Album -- New (1993); and Sandman #19 took the 1991 World Fantasy Award for Best Short Story (the first comic ever to be awarded a literary award). Sandman the comic sold over a million copies a year and collections of the comic have sold several million copies as well, remaining in print to this day. After ending the original Sandman story, the return to the world of Sandman in 2003 with Sandman: Endless Nights was an international event. The book went straight onto the New York Times bestseller list (the first graphic novel by a comics publisher to do so) and won Gaiman two more Eisner Awards, for Best Collection and Best Story ("Death and Venice"). The covers of this wildly popular comic are among the many successful ventures with illustrator Dave McKean.

Other books from Gaiman and McKean include Violent Cases (1987), a meditation on memory, evil, and kids' birthday parties and winner of the Eagle Award as Best Graphic Novel (1988) and Coraline (2002), an international bestseller, a New York Times Bestseller and winner of the Hugo, the Nebula, the Elizabeth Burr/Worzalla Award, the BSFA award, and the Bram Stoker award. Their first book for children, The Day I Swapped My Dad For Two Goldfish (1997, reissued in 2004) was listed by Newsweek as one of the Best Children's Books. Among many other collaborations are Mr. Punch (a dark tale of childhood and puppets), Signal to Noise (a graphic novella series about a dying film director) and the children's picture book, The Wolves in the Walls, which Gaiman is currently working to adapt as a theatrical production.

Gaiman's notable television work includes the fantastical BBC TV series *Neverwhere*, based on his best-selling novel. He also wrote an episode for the final season of the cult show *Babylon 5*, "The Day of the Dead", the only episode in the last three seasons not to have been written by the show's creator, J. Michael Straczynski.

In 2002 Gaiman wrote and directed his first film, A SHORT FILM ABOUT JOHN BOLTON, a dark funny film currently scheduled for upcoming release on DVD. Many of Gaiman's literary works are also in development or production as feature films. Among them, Warner Brothers has optioned Sandman and the three-part series *Death; The High Cost of Living; Coraline* is being put into production by Will Vinton Studios; and The Jim Henson Company is developing *Neverwhere* with Gaiman as the film's writer.

**Lisa Henson—Executive Producer**

Lisa Henson is Co-Chief Executive Officer of The Jim Henson Company where she, along with her brother Brian, is responsible for the Company's strategic and creative direction. Henson oversees all television and feature film production for the Company from early development through post-production.

Current feature films include FIVE CHILDREN AND IT and the fantasy feature MIRRORMASK. She also recently produced GOOD BOY!, the live-action family film released by MGM. Current television projects in production include *Muppets' Wizard of Oz* and the animated series *Frances*. Henson is presently developing Neil Gaiman's Neverwhere, House of the Scorpion by Nancy Farmer and *Astroboy*, the successful Japanese franchise.

Prior to her current position, Henson, in partnership with producer Janet Yang, executive produced HIGH CRIMES, IVANSXTC, and THE WEIGHT OF WATER and also produced ZERO EFFECT. In her previous post as President of Columbia Pictures, she was in charge of all creative business affairs, administrative and production-related matters and responsible for a string of critical and commercial successes including BAD BOYS, MEN IN BLACK, FLY AWAY HOME, and the critically acclaimed, Academy Award®-winning SENSE AND SENSIBILITY. Prior to joining Columbia Pictures, Ms. Henson served ten years as a Production Executive at Warner Bros., working on such blockbusters as LETHAL WEAPON, BATMAN and BATMAN RETURNS.

**Michael R. Polis—Executive Producer**

Michael R. Polis is Senior Vice President of Marketing and Home Entertainment Worldwide for The Jim Henson Company as well as Executive Producer on MIRRORMASK. Other Executive Producer credits include *Bear in the Big Blue House Live!* and the Emmy®-nominated *Kermit's Swamp Years*. In addition to producing projects for the Company, he oversees all aspects of brand marketing, licensing and home entertainment and leads strategic initiatives for fantasy and science fiction brands such as the award-winning *Farscape* and the world-renowned fantasy films LABYRINTH and THE DARK CRYSTAL. Mr. Polis also oversees *Jim Henson Family Showcase* properties including *Frances* and *Fraggle Rock* through a partnership with HIT Entertainment.

Prior to his current position, Mr. Polis was Executive Director of Marketing for Universal Studios Home Entertainment responsible for marketing such films as BABE, THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK, E.T. THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL and *The Land Before Time* series.

### **Martin G. Baker—Executive Producer**

Martin G. Baker began his prolific career with JHC in 1979 and during his 20-year tenure worked on the feature film classics that inspired MIRRORMASK - THE DARK CRYSTAL, and LABYRINTH, notably his first project as an associate producer. Since then, he has gone on to produce such features as THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL, MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND and MUPPETS FROM SPACE as well as executive producing THE ADVENTURES OF ELMO IN GROUCHLAND. Mr. Baker's long list of television producing credits include the award-winning *Farscape*, *It's A Very Merry Muppet Christmas Movie*, *Jim Henson's Jack and the Beanstalk: The Real Story*, *Fraggle Rock*, *Jim Henson's The Storyteller*, *The Jim Henson Hour* and *Muppets Tonight*. He is currently in production on *Muppet Wizard of Oz* shooting in Vancouver.

### **Simon Moorhead—Producer**

Simon Moorhead has enjoyed a varied career working across a variety of production disciplines in both film & television. During this time he has been involved with many award-winning productions, including: A DISTANT DRUMMER, WIDOW MAKER, BIRDS OF A FEATHER, JIGSAW, LIFE AND LOVES OF A SHE-DEVIL, THREADS and the prophetic ITV mini-series *Chimera*.

Simon has produced, directed and written shows for the BBC, ITV1, Channel 4, National Geographic, Virgin Records, Kodak, Satchi & Satchi, Eurotunnel, Norwich Union, BT and Disco Volanti.

Throughout the last eight years Simon has produced Dave McKean's films and videos, including the award winning N[EON]. MIRRORMASK marks his first full-length feature film as a producer.

### **The Jim Henson Company**

The Jim Henson Company, an established leader in family entertainment for half a century, is recognized worldwide as a leader in puppetry, animatronics and computer graphics. Best known as creators of the world famous Muppets (the rights to which are now owned by The Walt Disney Company), Henson is the recipient of nearly 50 Emmy Awards and nine Grammy Awards. Additionally, Jim Henson's Creature Shop™ has received two Academy Awards for the visual effects and animatronic builds for the 1996 smash BABE, and the invention of the Henson Performance Control System—a powerful, custom-built puppeteering mechanism. Recent projects include the Emmy nominated FARSCAPE, the family film GOOD BOY! and the features FIVE CHILDREN AND IT and MIRRORMASK. The company is currently in post-production on the preschool series *Frances* and the television movie *The Muppets' Wizard of Oz*. Headquartered in Los Angeles with offices and production facilities in New York and London, The Jim Henson Company has a website located at: [www.henson.com](http://www.henson.com)

## ABOUT THE CAST

### **STEPHANIE LEONIDAS—Helena**

In *MIRRORMASK*, the new film from The Jim Henson Company, Stephanie Leonidas portrays Helena, a fifteen-year-old girl working for her family circus, who wishes – quite ironically – that she could run away and join real life.

Leonidas most recently appeared in *YES* from Adventure Pictures and *Fogbound* for Mulholland Pictures, which will come out June 24, 2005 from Sony Pictures Classics. She has appeared in many of the UK's most popular TV series including *Rose and Maloney* (*Katie*), *Beneath the Skin* (*Zoe*), *Wall of Silence* (*Tracy*) and *Night and Day* (*Della*). Her theater credits include *The Sugar Syndrome* and she can next be seen in the upcoming feature film *FEAST OF THE GOAT* from Future Films.

### **GINA McKEE—Joanne / Queen of Light / Queen of Shadows**

Gina McKee takes on three roles in *MIRRORMASK*, the new feature film from The Jim Henson Company. Playing Joanna, the heroine's mother who becomes suddenly ill, she also plays both of the opposing queens in the film's fantasy world.

In addition to her roles in Roger Michell's *NOTTING HILL* and Michael Winterbottom's *WONDERLAND*, McKee's extensive film credits include *THE CROUPIER*, *THERE'S ONLY ONE JIMMY GRIMBLE*, *WOMEN TALKING DIRTY*, *THE DIVINE SECRETS OF THE YA YA SISTERHOOD*, *THE LOSS OF SEXUAL INNOCENCE* and *NAKED*.

McKee received a Best Actress BAFTA for her role as Mary in the BBC television production of *Our Friends in the North*. She was also nominated for a BAFTA for her work in the BBC's *The Lost Prince* (*Lalla*). Other television credits include *The Forsyte Saga* (*Irene*), *The Blackwater Lightship* (*Helen*), *Mothertime* (*Caroline*) and soon to be screened in the UK, *The Baby War*.

### **JASON BARRY—Valentine**

Jason Barry plays Valentine, Helena's unreliable companion through the fantasy world of *MIRRORMASK*, the new feature film from The Jim Henson Company.

Barry's recent film credits include *CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE* and *KAOS* as well as *WHEN THE SKY FALLS* for 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, *NOOSE* with director Ted Demme, *TITANIC* with director James Cameron and *CIRCLE OF FRIENDS* directed by Pat O'Connor.

On television, Barry has recently completed filming ITV's *The Baby War*. He has also been seen in Granada's *Metropolis* as well as *Whiskey Echo*, *Absolute Power*, *Servants*, *Man & Boyall* for the BBC.

Notable stage work includes *The Plough and the Stars*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Love's Labours Lost* and *Beowulf*.

STARRING  
(in alphabetical order)

Valentine	JASON BARRY
Morris Campbell / Prime Minister	ROB BRYDON
Helena / Anti-Helena	STEPHANIE LEONIDAS
Joanne / Queen of Light / Queen of Shadows	GINA MCKEE

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: Lisa Henson, Michael Polis, Martin G. Baker

PRODUCED BY: Simon Moorhead

DESIGNED & DIRECTED BY: Dave McKean

SCREENPLAY BY: Neil Gaiman

STORY BY: Neil Gaiman & Dave McKean

MUSIC BY: Iain Ballamy

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: Antony Shearn

EDITOR: Nicolas Gaster