

the PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS

“Don’t ever let somebody tell you you can’t do something ... You got a dream, you gotta protect it ... If you want something, go get it. Period.”

In Columbia Pictures' *The Pursuit of Happyness*, Chris Gardner (Will Smith) is a bright and talented but marginally employed salesman. Struggling to make ends meet, Gardner finds himself and his five-year-old son evicted from their San Francisco apartment with nowhere to go. When Gardner lands an internship at a prestigious stock brokerage firm, he and his son endure many hardships, including living in shelters, in pursuit of his dream of a better life for the two of them.

SYNOPSIS

In *The Pursuit of Happyness*, Chris Gardner (Will Smith) is a family man struggling to make ends meet. Despite his valiant attempts to help keep the family afloat, the mother (Thandie Newton) of his five-year-old son Christopher (Jaden Christopher Syre Smith) is buckling under the constant strain of financial pressure. No longer able to cope, she reluctantly decides to leave.

Chris, now a single father, continues doggedly to pursue a better-paying job using every sales skill he knows. He lands an internship at a prestigious stock brokerage firm, and although there is no salary, he accepts, hopeful he will end the program with a job and a promising future. Without a financial cushion, Chris and his son are soon evicted from their apartment and forced to sleep in shelters, bus stations, bathrooms, or wherever they can find refuge for the night.

Despite his troubles, Chris continues to honor his commitment as a loving and caring father, using the affection and trust his son has placed in him as an impetus to overcome the obstacles he faces.

Columbia Pictures presents in association with Relativity Media an Overbrook Entertainment/Escape Artists Production *The Pursuit of Happyness* starring Will Smith, Thandie Newton and introducing Jaden Christopher Syre Smith. The film is directed by Gabriele Muccino and written by Steven Conrad. The producers are Todd Black, Jason Blumenthal, Steve Tisch, James Lassiter and Will Smith. The executive producers are Louis D'Esposito, Mark Clayman, David Alper and Teddy Zee. The director of photography is Phedon Papamichael, ASC. The production designer is J. Michael Riva. The film editor is Hughes Winborne, A.C.E. The costume designer is Sharen Davis. The music is by Andrea Guerra.

The Pursuit of Happyness has been rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for Some Language.

The Pursuit of Happyness will be released by Columbia Pictures on December 15, 2006.

IN PURSUIT OF CHRIS GARDNER

In 2003, executive producer Mark Clayman, a writer and actor who had been transitioning into producing, was one of many who saw a story about Chris Gardner on "20/20." As he recalls, "My wife and I are not avid '20/20' watchers, but we caught this segment, which discussed how Chris was faced with amazing obstacles, homelessness being at the forefront. There was a scene where he revisited a bathroom at a BART station with his son and he shared how he used to bathe him in the sink of the restroom. Since we had a son who was a year old at that time, we both were moved to tears by it. I saw it not as a rags-to-riches story but as a moving father and son tale. I turned to my wife and said, 'I've got to get the rights to this story.'"

Chris Gardner's phone had been ringing off the hook the morning after the "20/20" segment aired, but Clayman commanded his attention, Gardner recalls, "because he was honest, direct, sincere, to the point." A meeting was set up at the production company Escape Artists; the company's three partners, Todd Black, Jason Blumenthal and Steve Tisch, had, in the past, individually been responsible for such films as *Antwone Fisher*, *American History X*, and the Oscar®-winning *Forrest Gump*. "The way I saw it," says Blumenthal, "Chris Gardner's story was universal. It was about how far a father would go to protect his son and to keep him safe. It contained an emotional nucleus that touched everyone and we used that as a stepping stone into a story inspired by Chris Gardner's life."

His partner, Todd Black, was also moved — and inspired. "I immediately said, 'My God, this is a fantastic story. It's like *Rocky* — a guy who is completely beaten down and goes on to succeed.' It was definitely a movie, and we wanted to be the ones who made it."

Black and Blumenthal contacted producer James Lassiter, Will Smith's partner in Overbrook Entertainment. Lassiter was also impressed by the story: "I knew it would appeal to Will both as a man and as a father." Lassiter sent the "20/20" tape to Vancouver, where Will Smith was shooting *I, Robot*, and less than 24 hours later, the actor responded.

"From the moment I saw the '20/20' piece, I saw this story as the embodiment of the American dream," says Will Smith. "The concept this country is based on is the hope that any person, armed with their own will and determination, can create their life, can create their situation — from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high. Any time you see someone who displays that kind of greatness and diligence, the natural question you ask yourself is — would I have been able to do that? Would I have been man enough, father enough, husband enough to stand up and face the adversity the

way that person did — the way that Chris Gardner did? These were all questions I asked myself.”

PUTTING HAPPYNESS INTO WORDS

The next big step was turning a 15-minute television segment into a full-length feature film. “It’s always about finding the right writer,” admits Black. “Fortunately for us, we had just worked with Steven Conrad on *The Weather Man*. When we showed him the tape, he said, ‘I know how to make this into a movie. You’ve got to let me do it.’”

Despite giving his blessing to Escape Artists to develop a film inspired by his struggles, Gardner was initially wary of the license that needed to be taken to turn these events into a story for the screen, according to Blumenthal. “It was really important to us to meet him so we could reassure him that, no matter what changes we made for dramatic purposes, we would fight passionately to preserve the integrity of how he had lived, and continues to live, his life.”

After the initial meeting, the producers arranged for screenwriter Conrad and Gardner to meet in Chicago (where they both live). Gardner worked closely with the screenwriter, fielding many questions and serving as a sounding board. “Steve’s a Chicago kind of guy, which gave me a sense of comfort, since we had to spend a lot of time together. I told him my story and then he decided which elements could be used in the movie. Steve was very clear with me that he was a dramatist, not a biographer. I told myself from the very start, ‘Chris, you’ve signed away your life rights, so you’ve got to give Steve artistic license.’” (While the movie was being made, Gardner decided to write his own version of his story in the non-fiction [The Pursuit of Happyness](#), which was released earlier this year to strong reviews).

Among the most prominent changes were turning the character of Gardner’s son from an infant into a five-year-old boy and the elimination of the small stipend Gardner received from his internship. The script also required the creation of characters who

were composites of various people Gardner had encountered during that period of his life, including the mother of his young son.

“Chris was very honest with me about that period in his life,” says Conrad. “We both thought that the most important thing for the movie was to dramatize what it *feels* like to be broke. He was okay with some dramatic invention as long as I got the *feelings* right, especially what it’s like when you have no one to depend on but yourself.”

In addition, Conrad added some color by making the lead character a whiz at the Rubik’s cube (which was a fad in the early 1980s), though the real Gardner had never picked up a Rubik’s cube in his life. In the movie, the cube serves as a cue to help the audience understand the extraordinary skills that make Will Smith’s character stand out from the other candidates in the internship program.

The producers were very pleased with Conrad’s first draft. Black, who had known Conrad since the early 1990s and had gone on to produce his first screenplay, *Wrestling Ernest Hemingway*, observes, “Steve’s script was magical, like nothing I’d ever read before. He took the true-life happenings and combined them with some original dramatic material — and it all worked.”

Producer Lassiter was equally enthusiastic. “When I had watched the initial ‘20/20’ tape, I found it fantastic and inspirational, but I didn’t know how you could make a movie out of it. When I read the script, I was amazed. Steve absolutely captured the essence of what the story should be — and from that point on Will and I were in.”

THE PURSUIT OF A DIRECTOR AND A CAST

Though many directors expressed interest in taking on *The Pursuit of Happyness* after reading Conrad’s script, it was Smith and Lassiter who lobbied for Gabriele Muccino, despite the fact that he’d never directed an English-language film. One of Muccino’s

movies, *The Last Kiss*, had won Sundance's Audience Award when it premiered there in 2002, and his follow-up, *Remember Me, My Love* with Monica Bellucci, was admired by film critics around the world. "I had watched Gabriele's last two Italian films and was really attracted to the intricate nature of emotions he was able to understand and depict cinematically," says Smith.

Adds Lassiter: "When we met with Gabriele in Paris, he was really passionate about the material. But here's what really sold us. He said to us, 'As Americans, you guys don't really understand the American dream. To really appreciate the essence of the American dream, you have to be a foreigner.' That's when we realized his impression of the American dream would be original and different and give the movie a unique take."

"As soon as Gabriele said that Americans take the American dream for granted, he had me hook, line and sinker," says Smith. "I became intrigued by the idea of non-American eyes capturing the beautiful and the not-so-beautiful aspects of this story."

Muccino's attitude even managed to win over producer Todd Black. "I first met Gabriele at Will's house and said to him, 'You're not American and this is an American story.' He looked at me and replied, 'It's not *just* an American story; it's a *universal* story. There's homelessness everywhere in the world. This could happen to anyone.' Gabriele was smart in realizing that this movie could reach out to people all over the world. The idea of being able to pick yourself up, work hard and ultimately have that hard work and perseverance pay off — that is applicable to any human, not just an American."

For Muccino, the arc of *The Pursuit of Happyness* was appealing on an even more elemental level. "What really attracted me is the character's desperate attempt to survive, and that the most precious thing to him was protecting his child. Chris endures the unimaginable and still makes sure that not even the worst moments will have a bad effect on his son's life. It's truly a family's journey — a desperate and unfortunately real voyage that becomes epic simply because it touches on so many universal values."

As for working with Smith, Muccino maintains that “Will’s approach is completely honest. He has a real urgency to do something different, something dramatic and very real. It was a huge pleasure to take him on this journey. We had a fantastic relationship. I learned a lot from him, and hopefully, he also learned something from me.”

Early in the development process, the filmmakers started talking about the importance of the actor who would play Chris Gardner’s five-year-old son. They met with more than a hundred kids. “Then we met Jaden Smith and it was night and day,” says Blumenthal. “Jaden was this kid. He came in with sincerity, honesty and rawness. We cast the absolute best person for the job!”

Jaden Christopher Syre Smith also happens to be the seven-year-old son of Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith.

Producer Lassiter admits, “Hiring Gabriele was a gamble, but not as much as casting Jaden Smith in the part of Christopher. It was a big gamble because if Jaden didn’t absolutely nail it, it would look like nepotism.”

The elder Smith says, “There were concerns at the beginning that as his father, I would have difficulty focusing on my performance in our scenes together. But the reality turned out to be something completely different. When I would look in Jaden’s eyes filled with the pain and anger little Christopher was experiencing at that moment, it added to the reality of the scene because I really felt I was failing him as a father. It produced an overwhelmingly powerful emotion in me.”

Muccino appreciated that bond as well as the natural ease and chemistry Smith and his son shared off-screen and was determined to capture it with his camera lens. “The best example of that are the ‘knock-knock’ jokes in the film. They were not in the original script. Then, one day, I heard Jaden telling a ‘knock-knock’ joke during rehearsals. I thought it might be a good idea to introduce that kind of lightness to the movie and would be a reflection of the child’s condition as well. Although he and his father are

going through hell, he's still smiling and telling 'knock-knock' jokes, which shows that it hasn't touched him — proof that his father is protecting him. The movie even ends with a 'knock-knock' joke.”

Finding the right actress for the pivotal role of Linda was crucial. The filmmakers were looking for an actress who was extremely strong, who could tap the different emotional places in the movie. She needed to be a caring, compassionate and loving mother who starts out as the breadwinner of the family. She had to convincingly portray someone who is so unhappy that she has no choice but to leave her family and to try and find a better life alone.

Thandie Newton, who received rave reviews for her performance in the Oscar®-winning Best Picture *Crash*, was chosen to play Linda, a mother who ends up leaving her son in the care of his father. Says Black, “After seeing her in *Crash* and meeting with her, we all agreed that Thandie would be able to convey Linda's dilemma in a way that other actresses might not.”

Newton had her own take on the story. “I was incredibly moved by the strength of this father's love — not just for his son — but also his belief and love for himself. He did not want to abandon his son in the way that he had been abandoned as a child,” she says. “It's such a story of optimism and hope, despite the really tough spot that they find themselves in.”

In approaching Linda, Newton had a unique perspective. “I'm very aware from the past work I've done, and also from life, that mental health and depression can really make a person feel that they can't cope. I don't think most people would be able to endure this family's situation. I certainly wouldn't be able to. It's very important that you understand the pain that Linda is in when she leaves her family.”

Because Linda was a newly created character, Newton felt she had a bit more latitude in her portrayal. “Linda is a character of fiction, so I was left to create what I felt was

right within the context of the story. It was a challenge, but I feel very, very happy with how it turned out.”

A cameo role that wasn't originally in the first draft of Conrad's script, but the real-life Gardner insisted it be added to the film, was that of the Reverend Cecil Williams, who has spearheaded Glide, one of the most successful homeless programs in the country, which is housed in the Tenderloin area of downtown San Francisco.

“When I read the first script, Cecil Williams wasn't in it,” says Gardner, “so I called Todd Black and said, ‘Look, if there wasn't a Cecil Williams, there wouldn't be a Chris Gardner.’”

Later, when it came time to cast the role, the producers hired Reverend Cecil Williams himself. “I had to audition for the role and then I was hired by the producers to actually portray myself in the film,” laughs Williams. “I always wanted to be in movies. Some time ago, I had a very small role in a film, but working on this film has been a very different experience. This is my first major role in a motion picture and I am playing myself.”

Reverend Williams recalls his first connection with the real Chris Gardner. “I saw him in line in the 1980s. Chris really stood out from everyone else because he was the only man who always had a baby with him whenever he was in line. I knew that he had something to offer. He was always smart, always up to something. I knew he was going places, but I didn't know that he was as assertive and as well-meaning as he has turned out to be. When Chris finally moved to Chicago and began to put things together, especially his finances, I got this call from a man saying, ‘I want to make a contribution. You're my home church. You helped me. And now I want to help you.’ Chris is one of those people who received and is now giving back — and he's doing a good job of giving back.”

Besides inspiring a film about his struggles, the real Chris Gardner also proved to be an inspiration on the set of *The Pursuit of Happyness*. “Having Chris here for the inevitable times when we didn’t completely grasp the nature of a scene and have him tell us what he was actually thinking and feeling at that precise moment, was an invaluable asset for us,” says Smith.

Adds Muccino: “Chris was extremely inspiring for me and Will. We learned a lot from him. He has been hugely important — particularly in the brokerage scenes. We changed dialog and improved the way Will dealt with clients and entertained them as a result of Chris’ input.”

Gardner had always been a huge admirer of Will Smith’s, but when he heard that he was thinking of taking this role, Gardner was overcome. He certainly never expected to see portions of his life re-created by a major movie star. “I knew Will was a great actor, but I didn’t know how great until I watched him working on *The Pursuit of Happyness*,” says Gardner.

When actor Kurt Fuller, who plays Walter Ribbon, first encountered Gardner, he had no idea he was the person who had inspired the movie. “This man came up and started talking to me. He knew my name and movies I made 15 years ago. At first I thought, ‘Is this the head of the studio?’ It turned out to be the real Chris Gardner. He was such a charismatic, articulate, warm guy. You could just see how this guy drew people to him.”

Since Fuller was portraying someone who existed in Gardner’s past, he continues, “Having Chris on the set and having him recount not only what happened, but how he felt when it happened, was better than research. It was like having somebody whisper the truth in my ear. I completely connected with that.”

“The way I see it,” adds Lassiter, “Chris’ presence added nuance — he opened it up so there was room for humor and Will could be funny. The humor became heightened when a scene was at its most tense, something Will has a unique ability to do.”

For Muccino, the ease of the relationship between Chris and his son, as embodied by Will and Jaden, makes “the movie play like a love story — but in this case we don’t have a woman and man meeting each other. Instead, we have a father and son walking together through life. Their relationship is very strong, very powerful,” says Muccino.

Lassiter echoes those sentiments. “At the end of the day, this movie is about relationships and love. It’s about what you would do if you ever loved someone enough that you would be willing to do anything. You relate to this man who literally will do anything to protect his child.”

“I hope audiences will feel inspired to have faith in themselves after seeing this movie,” says Newton. “If you look at this guy, his story, and know that it really happened, I think it will allow you to appreciate the riches that life gives you and help give you the strength and courage to navigate some of the tricky parts.”

“25 years ago, Chris was homeless. The idea of this kind of escalation through society is something people dream about,” says Smith. “But to actually hear about someone who actually traveled that journey resonates with all of us.”

“The real Chris Gardner is a pillar, he is a rock,” adds producer Blumenthal. “He is an amazing man. My first idea for a logline on this movie was ‘Some superheroes are real,’ because in my eyes, what Chris Gardner did and how he led his life, makes him a superhero.”

“I want the audience to understand that this movie is not a fantasy,” says Muccino. “This was someone’s life. Someone really went through this kind of nightmare and succeeded.”

That someone was Chris Gardner, a loving father, successful financial broker, an inspirational speaker and published author. “My life has been portrayed in some media

outlets as a rags-to-riches story,” he says. “That part isn’t important. What is important is the commitment I made to my children to be there for them. Ask any parent and that’s going to be the common thread we all have — to be there.”

THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO CIRCA 1980

Production designer J. Michael Riva (who most recently designed the fantasy-themed sets for *Zathura* and has just finished *Spider-Man® 3*), costume designer Sharen Davis (who was nominated for an Academy Award® for designing the period wardrobe for *Ray* and most recently designed the upcoming *Dreamgirls*), and director of photography Phedon Papamichael, ASC (who shot *Walk the Line* and *The Weather Man*) teamed to re-create the early 1980s for *The Pursuit of Happyness*.

“The biggest challenge for me was to re-create the period authentically without getting fancy,” admits Riva. “The look of the 1980s is not a particularly memorable time in our culture. It’s a difficult time to mimic in any city, let alone San Francisco, because it wasn’t extraordinarily definable visually. We were all still reeling from Vietnam. The country was weary. Our reactions were more innocent, there was a self-imposed unconsciousness. It was the kind of time when a homeless guy with a 5-year-old could quietly fall between the cracks. The remaining iconography of the time is Michael Douglas with a lot of hair on TV in the “Streets of San Francisco.” To re-create a more mindless and definable look was the challenge for this picture and we chose our subtle markers carefully. Imperceptibility was the benchmark. In the ‘80s everyone smoked, advertising and billboards were naïve, innocent, there were buttoned down shirt collars and bad cars and *Raging Bull* was playing at the local cinema. Our work was to inject all the little things that people might not have noticed rather than blunder in with some huge iconography of the period.”

Executive producer Louis D’Esposito, who was in charge of logistics for the production of this ‘80s era film, reveals, “We bought fifty vehicles to have with us all the time so that

they could be parked to add texture to the shot. We also had four period buses — one dedicated for interiors, one for exteriors, and two as ‘passer-by’ vehicles. Plus, we would ask extras to bring any cars they might have that were from the 1960s or 1970s.”

In addition, says Riva, “We used a lot of old ads and signs, which we put up on billboards and buses. One of my favorites is a billboard of Angie Dickinson, with that great body, lounging on the side of a bus ad selling avocados, which was great.”

Another painstaking task, according to Riva, was creating the Dean Witter brokerage offices. “Building a set would have been the normal way to go, but Gabriele and I were committed to shooting this movie on location and taking our chances with the weather. It was all very exciting and I love working with that kind of confidence. Other challenges involved a crucial piece of equipment called a ‘Quotron’ — a prehistoric version of our current-day computers, which was the predominant stockbrokers’ tool in those days. They all had to work with screens in black with the old-style green cursors and letters. And we had to build 70 of them.”

Costume designer Sharen Davis also strove for subtlety in creating the film’s wardrobe. “We didn’t want anything to stand out,” says Davis. “We basically took the silhouette of the ‘80s and then understated the wardrobe. Fortunately, suits were very basic in 1981 — they almost look the same as today — which is tight-fitting with a flat front.”

Dressing Will and Jaden Smith was complicated by the fact that their characters don’t have money for food and shelter, much less wardrobe. “Will got that a hundred percent,” says Davis. “He didn’t care that he had to wear the same tie three days in a row or that his suit didn’t fit correctly. As for Jaden, he wore the most popular item for kids at the time, Osh Kosh B’gosh overalls, which they don’t even make anymore. A lot of his clothing we bought from eBay. I actually designed the little jacket that he wears throughout the movie.”

In fashioning a look for Thandie Newton's character, Linda, Davis explains, "Linda is a throwback to the '70s — she looks great but you can tell she's dated. She wears wide, bell-bottom jeans and her clothing is faded and old. You can still see why Chris is attracted to her, she's still sexy, but her wardrobe is dated."

The *Pursuit of Happyness* was shot primarily in San Francisco with a few days in downtown Oakland — the rich residential communities of Piedmont and Hayward where BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) has its training facilities and warehouses. D'Esposito oversaw the logistics of filming the movie in just 60 days. "San Francisco is a small city—absolutely beautiful — but small and difficult to move around in," he contends. "We had approximately 242 scenes to shoot, so we tried to 'hub' the scenes together so there weren't so many company moves."

"Overall," adds Riva, "San Francisco has such a distinctive architectural look. Its iconography is right up there with Paris. We had a tall order to fill — which was to maintain our low-key film tone, reserved and restrained and relying on the beauty of the city only when we wanted to contrast the life between the haves and the have-nots."

The main locations included the financial district where Chris worked, Chinatown where he put his son in daycare, the Tenderloin, where they sought out homeless shelters, and the numerous underground BART stations, where they ended up when all other options failed. "The visual strength of San Francisco suggests money and power, particularly in the financial district scenes. We wanted to show as much of that out of the window of Chris' office as we could," says Riva. "We were lucky to find a real location with a magnificent view of the city."

The newly built daycare facility, Mrs. Chu's, was located in Chinatown. "Gabriele wanted to have Chinatown somewhere in the picture, so I suggested to him that maybe Linda worked at a fancy hotel downtown and the logical place for her to take her child to daycare would be somewhere in Chinatown," explains Riva. "I found these great alleys, which isn't hard by the way, and this empty building. So with permission from the

neighbors, we replaced the facade and built an older, more authentic wooden structure onto the alley. We also built our interiors inside, so we could use it both for interior and exterior shooting, rather than having to go to a soundstage for the interiors. Of course, this only works with an adventurous director of photography like Phedon Papamichael. We were blessed to have him.”

For all its color and authenticity, San Francisco’s Chinatown has always been a notoriously difficult area in which to film. “We had to sign contracts allowing us to shoot with approximately 900 vendors, which required interpreters — five who spoke Mandarin and two who were fluent in Cantonese. Molly Allen, our location manager, had her hands full. It all worked like a charm.”

The other key location was the seedy Tenderloin neighborhood. Long regarded as the underbelly of one of the world’s most beautiful cities, it has housed many of San Francisco’s homeless and drug addicts since the 1960s. It’s also the home of Glide, the shelter that offered Chris Gardner and his son a place to stay after they had been evicted from their apartment. “After doing some research and learning how powerful Glide was, I made a personal commitment that some scenes would be shot there, in spite of the difficulties,” says Riva. “Besides, Glide is so much a part of Chris Gardner’s story, it would have been dishonest not to use the real thing. Thankfully, the producers were way ahead of me and had arranged for us to use a lot of the real people from Glide. It proved to be a very effective location, giving us the kind of reality you rarely can match otherwise. Glide became the soul of Gabriele’s movie. Shooting a movie this way was a dream that comes along only once or twice in a designer’s lifetime.”

ABOUT THE CAST

WILL SMITH (*Chris Gardner*) has recorded several platinum albums, starred in a hit television comedy series, and has become one of the entertainment industry’s most sought-after leading men. He has also been nominated for an Academy Award® and now is a producer of his recent films, including the blockbuster hit *Hitch*, and *The*

Pursuit of Happyness. Given his spate of recent successes, Smith is one of the most consistently successful movie stars working today, with hit films such as *Bad Boys*, *Independence Day*, *Men in Black™*, *Bad Boys II*, *Men in Black™ II* and *I, Robot* that have all opened at #1.

More recently, Smith voiced the central character, Oscar, for *Shark Tale*, the animated feature that was a box office giant. Some of Smith's other film credits include *Ali*, for which he received an Academy Award® nomination for his portrayal of the famed boxer, *The Legend of Bagger Vance* directed by Robert Redford, which earned him an NAACP Award nomination for Best Actor, and *Wild, Wild West*, whose theme-song he penned went gold. Also, the film's soundtrack, produced by his company Overbrook, went platinum.

Smith thrilled audiences in the suspenseful *Enemy of the State* and starred in two of the 50 all-time top-grossing films worldwide — 1997's summer smash *Men in Black™*, (for which he recorded the Grammy-winning title song) and 1996's *Independence Day*. Smith also starred in Columbia Pictures' *Bad Boys*, one of the top grossing films of 1995. His other film work includes a critically acclaimed performance in the Oscar®-nominated *Six Degrees of Separation*, *Made in America*, and *Where the Day Takes You*.

Smith was first recognized by NATO/ShoWest as the Male Star of Tomorrow in 1995, and subsequently honored as Male Star of the Year in 2002. In addition, he won the International Box Office Achievement Award in 1997 and was named 1999 Entertainer of the Year by the NAACP Image Awards.

Smith also serves as executive producer, along with his wife Jada Pinkett Smith, on the popular comedy series "All of Us."

A legendary music sensation, Smith made his first record as a high school senior and subsequently embarked on a rap career with friend Jeff Townes. Known as DJ Jazzy

Jeff and the Fresh Prince, they recorded several platinum and multi-platinum albums, winning two Grammys and three American Music Awards. Smith's first solo album, "Big Willie Style," sold eight million copies. His album "Willennium" and the featured single "Will2K" both went double platinum. Smith most recently recorded the popular "Lost & Found."

Smith made the transition to television as the star of "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air," a sitcom created for him by Quincy Jones. The hit NBC series wrapped its sixth and final season in 1996.

Smith is partnered with James Lassiter in Overbrook Entertainment.

THANDIE NEWTON (*Linda*) was critically praised for her performance in the Oscar®-winning *Crash*, Paul Haggis' feature film directorial debut. She also starred in Jonathan Demme's *The Truth About Charlie* with Mark Wahlberg, *Beloved* with Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover, and the blockbuster hit *Mission: Impossible II* with Tom Cruise.

Newton got her start in acting at age 16, when she won the lead role in John Duigan's critically acclaimed *Flirting*. Committed to continuing her education, she earned a BA with honors in anthropology from Cambridge University while also appearing in such feature films as Neil Jordan's *Interview With a Vampire* and James Ivory's *Jefferson In Paris*.

Other notable performances from the actress, who was born to a Zimbabwean mother and English father, include *Gridlock'd* opposite Tupac Shakur and Tim Roth and Bernardo Bertolucci's *Besieged*. She also made a guest appearance on the hit television drama "ER."

JADEN CHRISTOPHER SYRE SMITH (*Christopher*) is the seven-year-old son of Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith. He makes his feature film debut co-starring with his father in *The Pursuit Of Happyness*.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

GABRIELE MUCCINO (*Director*) came to the attention of American moviegoers when *The Last Kiss*, which he wrote and directed, won the audience prize at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival. *Entertainment Weekly* named it one of the ten best movies of the year. Muccino wrote and directed an equally impressive follow-up film *Remember Me, My Love* which featured Monica Bellucci. *The Pursuit of Happyness* is his first English-language film.

Born in Rome, Italy, Muccino attended the directing program the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. Upon completion, he created documentaries and shorts for RAI, Italy's national television network. His feature directorial debut, *That's It*, which he also wrote, earned him a nomination as Best Director at the Turin Film Festival in 1998. His subsequent film, *But Forever in My Mind*, received several nominations and awards at festivals around Europe, including the Grand Prix at the Paris Film Festival.

The Last Kiss, his third Italian movie, was a critical success and box-office hit in Italy, winning five David di Donatello awards (Italy's equivalent of the Oscar®), including Best Director. His next feature, *Remember Me, My Love*, won Best Producer, Best Screenplay and Best Supporting Actress from the Italian National Syndicate of Film Journalists.

STEVEN CONRAD (*Writer*) sold his first screenplay, *Wrestling Ernest Hemingway*, to producer Todd Black shortly after graduating from Northwestern University in the early 1990s. Their friendship grew over the years, with both men hoping to collaborate again on another feature film. That opportunity presented itself with *The Weather Man*, the critically acclaimed film starring Nicolas Cage and Michael Caine.

The Pursuit of Happyness marks their third production together, as well as the third produced feature film for the talented writer. Conrad more recently penned *Chad Schmidt*, a comedy which will star Brad Pitt with Escape Artists producing.

TODD BLACK (*Producer*) most recently produced *The Weather Man* starring Nicolas Cage and Michael Caine. He also produced the inspirational true-story drama *Antwone Fisher*, directed by and starring Denzel Washington.

In January 2000, Black and his partner, Jason Blumenthal, merged their production company with the Steve Tisch Company to form Escape Artists and made a deal with Sony Pictures to release their films domestically. Escape Artists produced writer-director Brian Helgeland's *A Knight's Tale* starring Heath Ledger, Mark Addy and Paul Bettany.

Prior to forming Escape Artists, Black was president of production at Mandalay Entertainment, where he developed and oversaw such movies as *Donnie Brasco*, *Seven Years in Tibet*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, *Les Misérables*, and *Wild Things*.

Recent Escape Artists projects include the film *Need*, directed by Ryan Murphy. Upcoming are such projects as *Knowing*, to be directed by Alex Proyas, the George Hickenlooper thriller *Diary*, which will star Jennifer Aniston, and *7 Pounds*, starring Will Smith, which will be released by Columbia Pictures.

Black attended the theatre program at the University of Southern California and began his professional career as a casting associate on various television shows.

JASON BLUMENTHAL (*Producer*) was born and raised in Los Angeles and attended Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Communications. After graduation, Blumenthal joined Wizan/Black Films in 1990. There, he was involved with the development and production of *Iron Eagle II*, *Split Decisions*, *The Guardian*, *Short Time*, and *Class Act*. The company executive-produced *Becoming Colette*, *Fire in the Sky*,

Wrestling Ernest Hemingway, A Family Thing, Dunston Checks In (co-producer), and *Bio Dome* (executive producer/story by credit).

Blumenthal was senior vice president of feature production at Mandalay Entertainment from the company's inception in 1995 through March of 1998. During his tenure, he managed Mandalay's production slate, which included such films as *The Fan* starring Robert De Niro and Wesley Snipes, *Donnie Brasco* starring Al Pacino and Johnny Depp, and *Seven Years in Tibet*, starring Brad Pitt.

Under Blumenthal's supervision, the company also oversaw *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, which remained in the #1 spot at the box office for three weeks and grossed more than \$130 million worldwide. He also oversaw the film's sequel, *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer*, as well as *Wild Things* and *Gloria*.

In April 1998, Blumenthal and his partner, Todd Black, formed Black & Blu Entertainment and entered into a first-look production deal with Sony Pictures Entertainment. In 2000, Black & Blu merged with the Steve Tisch Company (*Forrest Gump*) to become Escape Artists, which has since produced *A Knight's Tale*, starring Heath Ledger, and *Antwone Fisher*, directed by and starring Denzel Washington. Blumenthal most recently produced *The Weather Man*, starring Nicolas Cage and Michael Caine.

STEVE TISCH'S (*Producer*) television and feature film projects have consistently focused on the lives of everyday people and the significant impact they have made on society.

Tisch was recently named executive vice president of the New York Giants. Tisch, the son of the team's late co-owner Preston Robert Tisch, represents the family's 50-percent stake in the Giants football team.

Since April 2002, Tisch has been on the board of directors for Take Two Interactive Software, Inc., a leading worldwide publisher, developer, and distributor of interactive entertainment software, hardware, and accessories.

Currently, he is a partner in Escape Artists, an independently financed film production company formed in 2001 and based at Sony Pictures Entertainment. Escape Artists recently produced *The Weather Man*, starring Nicolas Cage and Michael Caine. Their upcoming projects include *Knowing*, *Nautica*, and *Diary*, which stars Jennifer Aniston. Escape Artists' other past producing credits include *Alex and Emma*, *Antwone Fisher*, and *A Knights Tale*.

Tisch served as executive producer of Gramercy Pictures' *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, *Snatch*, and the critically-acclaimed *American History X*, starring Academy Award® nominee Edward Norton. He also produced 1994's Best Picture Academy Award® winner *Forrest Gump*, which won six Oscars® as well as a Golden Globe for Best Picture.

Tisch began his career in entertainment while still a student at Tufts University. His summer jobs included being a film booker in his family's movie theatre chain, working for director John Avildsen and serving an apprenticeship under Otto Preminger. Upon graduation, Tisch continued in the entertainment industry as Peter Guber's assistant at Columbia Pictures and soon became a production executive at the studio. During his four-year tenure, Tisch supervised the production of such films as *The Lords of Flatbush*, *Tommy*, *The Last Detail*, and *White Line Fever*.

In 1976, Tisch left Columbia to produce his first motion picture, *Outlaw Blues*. During the shoot Tisch met Jon Avnet and the pair soon formed Tisch/Avnet Productions. Tisch/Avnet feature projects included the sleeper hit *Risky Business*, which launched the career of Tom Cruise, as well as *Deal of the Century* and *Coast to Coast*.

In 1984, Tisch/Avnet produced "The Burning Bed," the controversial made-for-television film starring Farrah Fawcett. The movie was one of the highest-rated television films ever aired on NBC and received 11 Emmy nominations.

Tisch/Avnet's other television film credits include "Silence of the Heart," "Something So Right," "Prime Suspect," "Homeward Bound" (winner of a Christopher Award), "No Other Love," and "Call to Glory."

In 1986, Tisch formed his own production company, the Steve Tisch Company, which produced *The Postman*, *Wild America*, *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, *Dear God*, *Corrina, Corrina*, *Looking for an Echo*, *Soul Man*, *Hot to Trot*, *Big Business*, *Heart Condition*, *Bad Influence*, and *Heart of Dixie*.

On the small screen Tisch has produced the made-for-cable movies "Keep the Change," "Afterburn" (which garnered three Emmy nominations), and "Judgment." His network telefilms include the highly rated "The People Next Door," "Evil in Clear River," and "Out on the Edge." Tisch also produced the CBS television series "Freshman Dorm" and "Dirty Dancing," based on the hit film.

Tisch was elected to the AIDS Project Los Angeles' Board of Directors in April 1991. During his tenure, Tisch served as both Board Chair and Chair of the Development Committee. His financial contributions have placed him among APLA's top donors and fundraisers. Tisch was honored with the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation's Vanguard Award at their 1995 Media Awards.

In addition, he has contributed his time and financial resources to such organizations as the H.E.L.P. Group and the ERAS Center. He is also a member of the Board of Advisors at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, Board of Trustees of The Geffen Theatre in Los Angeles, Sundance Institute, The American Cinematheque and the Board of Trustees of the Preston Robert Tisch Brain Cancer Center at Duke University.

JAMES LASSITER (*Producer*) is partnered with Will Smith in Overbrook Entertainment, a film and television production company. In 2005, Lassiter produced the romantic comedy *Hitch* and *Saving Face*, starring Joan Chen. In addition, he was an executive producer on the sci-fi thriller *I, Robot* and the comedy *Showtime* starring Robert De Niro and Eddie Murphy. He also served as a producer on the critically acclaimed *Ali*. In 2006, Lassiter produced *ATL*, starring platinum-selling recording artist T.I.

For television, Lassiter executive-produced the comedy “Getting Personal,” which starred Duane Martin and Vivica A. Fox, and currently serves as an executive producer on the CW network’s “All Of Us.”

Lassiter produced the soundtracks for *Wild Wild West* and *Men In Black™*, both of which won the American Music Award for favorite soundtracks.

Lassiter’s other notable achievements include winning the 2001 Outer Critic’s Circle Award for “Jitney,” an off-Broadway play written by August Wilson.

MARK CLAYMAN (*Executive Producer*) discovered the story of Chris Gardner when it aired on “20/20” in January 2003. Even though many other producers and agents contacted Gardner after the piece ran, Gardner chose Clayman to shepherd his story to the screen. Clayman brought this tale of hardship and ultimate success to Escape Artists, who jumped on the opportunity to turn the true story into a movie.

As a performer, Clayman spent many years in front of the camera appearing on such hit television shows as “24,” “Married With Children,” “Alf,” “Coach,” “Who’s The Boss,” “A Different World,” “Mr. Belvedere,” “Step By Step,” and “Saved By the Bell,” among many others. He also appeared in Disney Channel’s “A Thanksgiving Promise” and the feature film *Revenge of the Nerds III*.

Turning to writing, Clayman penned episodes of “The New Adventures of Robin Hood” and the feature film *Somebody to Love*.

Clayman began his producing career working through the ranks of television on such successful shows as “Just Shoot Me” and “Chicago Hope.” He has currently set up three different feature films and is developing three television series. He has also forged a relationship with a New York-based literary agency, Veralux, to funnel literary properties to set up as feature films.

LOUIS D’ESPOSITO (*Executive Producer*) most recently executive-produced *Zathura*. He also served as executive producer on the hit film *S.W.A.T.*, starring Samuel L. Jackson and Colin Farrell.

Prior to that, D’Esposito served as first assistant director on dozens of films, including *Sweet Home Alabama*, *Stuart Little 2*, *The Glass House*, *Hollow Man*, *Blast From the Past*, *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer*, *The Shadow*, *Demolition Man*, *Hero*, *Basic Instinct*, *Once Around*, *The Freshman*, and *Major League*.

D’Esposito began his career as a second assistant director on such films as *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *A Chorus Line* and *The Cotton Club*.

DAVID ALPER (*Executive Producer*) was, during the making of *The Pursuit of Happyness*, a managing partner and served as chief executive officer for Escape Artists. Previously, Alper worked at New Line Cinema as executive vice president of business affairs, playing a lead role in the negotiations of numerous projects including *Final Destination*, *Thirteen Days*, *Little Nicky*, and *I Am Sam*.

Alper’s other past positions include executive vice president for Lorimar Films and senior vice president of the MCA/Motion Picture Group, serving as the senior business executive for Lorimar Pictures and Universal Pictures, respectively. Alper began his entertainment career with the law firm Ervin, Cohen & Jessup.

TEDDY ZEE (*Executive Producer*) came to this project while he was the president of the film division of Overbrook Entertainment, a company formed by Will Smith and James Lassiter to acquire, develop and produce feature films. During that tenure, he served as a producer on the successful comedy *Hitch* and *Saving Face*, starring Joan Chen.

Prior to joining Overbook, he served as president of Davis Entertainment, where he coordinated an exclusive first-look deal with Twentieth Century Fox. He served as executive producer on *Life or Something Like It*, starring Angelina Jolie. Other films during his time at Davis include *Dr. Dolittle 2*, *Behind Enemy Lines*, and *Heartbreakers*. He also served as executive vice president of production at Columbia Pictures, where he oversaw *Charlie's Angels®*, *The Replacement Killers*, *Anaconda*, *Fools Rush In*, *The Devil's Own*, *Cable Guy*, *First Knight*, *My Girl*, *Mo' Money*, *Hero*, and *Stephen King's Sleepwalkers*.

Zee began his career with NBC. He also held positions at Touche Ross and Company and Paramount Pictures, where he worked his way to senior vice president of production. While at Paramount, he was involved with such films as *Indecent Proposal*, *Star Trek VI*, *Cousins*, *The Presidio*, and *Flashback*.

He graduated from the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University, later earning an MBA from Harvard University, where he served as a member of the Executive Board of the Asian American Policy Review at the JFK School of Government.

PHEDON PAPAMICHAEL, ASC (*Director of Photography*) is credited with such movies as *Identity*, *Moonlight Mile*, *Patch Adams*, *Mouse Hunt*, *Million Dollar Hotel*, *Phenomenon*, *Unhook the Stars*, *Unstrung Heroes*, *While You Were Sleeping*, and *Cool Runnings*, among others. He most recently filmed James Mangold's Oscar®-winning *Walk the Line*, starring Joaquin Phoenix and Reese Witherspoon, Gore Verbinski's *The*

Weather Man, starring Nicolas Cage and Michael Caine, and Alexander Payne's *Sideways*, which was an Academy Award® nominee for Best Picture.

Other notable achievements include winning the Best Cinematography Award at the Avignon Film Festival in 2000 for *27 Missing Kisses*. Papamichael was also honored with the Best Cinematography Award at the 1990 Cork Film Festival in Ireland for *Spud*. His television credits include the pilot for "White Dwarf" and the critically acclaimed miniseries "Wild Palms," both of which were nominated for ASC Awards.

J. MICHAEL RIVA (*Production Designer*) is an Academy Award® nominee, honored for his designs on *The Color Purple*. More recently, he designed Columbia Pictures' intergalactic adventure *Zathura*, *Stealth*, and the blockbuster hits *Charlie's Angels®* and *Charlie's Angels®: Full Throttle*. His other notable credits include *Evolution*, *Dave*, *Six Days Seven Nights*, *Congo*, *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai*, *Lethal Weapon*, *Lethal Weapon 2*, *Lethal Weapon 4*, *Ordinary People*, *Bad Boys*, and *Brubaker*.

In addition, Riva doubled as production designer and second unit director on such movies as *A Few Good Men*, *Radio Flyer*, *Scrooged*, and *Goonies*. Among his television credits are the Emmy Award-winning telefilm "Tuesdays With Morrie," starring Jack Lemmon and Hank Azaria, and "The 74th Academy Awards®," for which he received an Emmy nomination.

Upcoming for Riva is *Spider-Man® 3*, which will be released by Columbia Pictures on May 4, 2007.

HUGHES WINBORNE (*Editor*) most recently won an Oscar® for editing Best Picture winner *Crash* and previously edited the Academy Award®-winning *Sling Blade*. Winborne most recently edited Mark Rydell's *Even Money*.

Some of his other noteworthy films include *A Slipping-Down Life*, starring Lili Taylor and Guy Pearce, which was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize when it debuted at the

Sundance Film Festival, and *Rhythm Thief*, which won the Special Jury Prize in 1994, also at Sundance. In addition, Winborne edited *Employee of the Month*, *Stark Raving Mad*, *Nobody's Baby*, and *Buddy Boy*, as well as Ted Demme's short *The Bet*, another movie that debuted at Sundance and launched the late director's feature film career.

For television, Winborne has edited numerous episodes of the hit series "Alias" as well as the Emmy-nominated film "Walter & Henry."

SHAREN DAVIS (*Costume Designer*) was honored with an Academy Award® nomination and a Costume Designers Guild Award nomination in 2005 for her costume designs for Taylor Hackford's award-winning biopic *Ray*. Her work will next be seen in *Dreamgirls*.

Among Davis' many credits are *Akeelah and the Bee*, *Antwone Fisher*, *Rush Hour*, *Beauty Shop*, *Nutty Professor II: The Klumps*, *Doctor Dolittle*, *Double Take*, *Money Talks*, *Equinox*, *Younger and Younger*, the award-winning telefilm "Freedom Song," and three films for director Carl Franklin: *Out of Time*, starring Denzel Washington, *High Crimes*, starring Ashley Judd and Morgan Freeman, and *Devil in a Blue Dress*, starring Denzel Washington and Don Cheadle.

ANDREA GUERRA (*Music*) most recently composed music for the critically-acclaimed *Hotel Rwanda*, for which he (with Wyclef Jean and Jerry 'Wonder' Duplessis) earned a Golden Globe nomination for Best Original Song in a Motion Picture and a Grammy nomination for Best Song Written for Motion Picture, Television, or Other Visual Media.

Other films for which Guerra has composed the music include *Chen e sarà di noi*, *Le Barzellette*, *Io no*, *Soraya*, *Prendimi e portami via*, *Il Vestito da sposa*, *Le Chien, le general et les oiseaux*, *Passato prossimo*, *La Finestra di fronte*, *Un Posto tranquillo*, *Prendimi l'anima*, *Emma sono io*, *La Leggenda di Al*, *John e Jack*, *Angela*, *Respiro*, *Semana Santa*, *La Casa dell'angelo*, *La Luce negli occhi*, *Tornando a casa*, *Le Fate ignoranti*, *Una Lunga notte*, *Alice*, *Qualcuno da amare*, *Medley – Brandelli di scuola*,

Prime Luci dell'alba, The Protagonists, Femmina, Giochi d'equilibrio, Onorevoli detenuti, Ultimo taglio, Il Tocco: la sfida, Un Altro giorno ancora, Caro dolce amore, Italia Village, Troppo Sole, Allullo drom, Narcos, La Domenica specialmente, and Viaggio d'amore.

In addition, Guerra has worked on the television shows “Le Stagioni del cuore,” “La Guerra è finite,” “Grande fratello,” “Casa famiglia,” “Le Ragazze di Piazza di Spagna,” and “Un Prete tra noi.”

CHRIS GARDNER (*Associate Producer*) is the owner and chief executive officer of Christopher Gardner International Holdings with offices in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. Surmounting acute obstacles on his road to success, Gardner is an avid motivational speaker, addressing the keys to self-empowerment, beating odds, and breaking cycles. Gardner is also a passionate philanthropist committed to many charitable organizations.

Gardner serves as a board member of the National Fatherhood Initiative, whose mission is to improve the well-being of children by increasing the proportion of children growing up with involved, responsible, and committed fathers. Gardner was the recipient of the group’s Father of the Year Award in 2002.

Gardner also serves as a national spokesman for the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. The council, established by Congress in 1987, is responsible for providing Federal leadership for activities to assist homeless families and individuals.

In addition, Gardner reaches out to several programs, donating time, assistance, and funds. Foremost among these are the Glide United Methodist Church in San Francisco, which played an important role in Gardner’s own life, and The Cara Program, which assists the homeless and at-risk populations in Chicago with comprehensive job training and placement. At Glide, Gardner donates clothes and shoes, serves food in the kitchen, and speaks at services and events. He is also involved in a plan to revitalize and provide new housing in the neighborhood around Glide. At Cara, Gardner speaks

at counseling sessions, assists with permanent job placement, and also donates clothing and shoes.

Gardner is particularly committed to educational organizations. He serves on the board of the National Education Foundation and sponsors two annual awards: the National Education Association's National Educational Support Personnel Award and the American Federation of Teachers' Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel (PSRP) Award. He is also involved with the Chicago Teachers' Union, sponsoring activities and outings for Chicago public school kids.

In addition to the father of the Year Award, Gardner has also been honored by the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women (LACAAW) with the 25th Annual Humanitarian Award, and by the Continental Africa Chamber of Commerce with the 2006 Friends of Africa Award.

A Milwaukee native, Gardner has two children and resides in Chicago and New York.