



Dr. Seuss'
**THE CAT
IN
THE
HAT**

“Why do you sit there like that?
I know it is wet
And the sun is not sunny.
But we can have
Lots of good fun that is funny!”
—Dr. Seuss, *The Cat in the Hat*

Production Information

Today is a special day for Conrad and Sally Walden—even though they don’t think it is.

After all, what’s so special about being left with a sleeping babysitter while your mom is at work? And what brand of special is being forbidden from having anything even remotely resembling “fun”? Sitting and staring out the window feels pretty un-special, actually, and the rain outside looks about as far away from special as you can get.

All things considered—nope, not special in the least.

But that’s before a six-foot-tall talking feline appears, sporting a red-and-white-striped stovepipe hat, a jaunty red bow tie and a super-sized fondness for fun.

Now **that’s** special.

MIKE MYERS—whose unrivalled comedic talent brings one of America’s most beloved characters to life as no one else can—stars in the title role of Universal Pictures/DreamWorks Pictures/Imagine Entertainment’s *Dr. Seuss’ The Cat in the Hat*,

the highly anticipated live-action film adaptation of the cherished literary classic, produced by Academy Award® winner and producer of the blockbuster *Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, BRIAN GRAZER (*8 Mile, A Beautiful Mind*), and directed by BO WELCH (the three-time Oscar®-nominated film production designer behind such distinctive films as *Beetlejuice, Edward Scissorhands* and the *Men In Black* original and sequel). Based on the best-selling children's book by DR. SEUSS, the film is written by ALEC BERG & DAVID MANDEL & JEFF SCHAFFER (*Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas*).

It seems that Sally (DAKOTA FANNING) and Conrad (SPENCER BRESLIN), different as black and white, have pushed their single mom, Joan Walden (KELLY PRESTON), to the limit. Conrad's endless rule breaking (the indoor stair luge) has his mom seriously considering military school for her son—an idea planted by her just-this-side-of-smarmy neighbor and suitor, Lawrence Quinn (ALEC BALDWIN). Sally, tightly wound though well behaved, has bossed away every friend she has and divides her time between upbraiding her brother and inputting new *To Do* lists into her junior palm pilot.

And all the while their mom is just trying to keep domestic peace while balancing a successful career as a real estate agent for her germophobe boss, Mr. Humberflob (SEAN HAYES). But on the Saturday she is to host her company party, Joan's preparations have fallen prey to Conrad's shenanigans and she has laid down a mom-size decree: Sally and Conrad are not to leave the house while she is at work and are forbidden from making a mess or misbehaving in any way. The kids are left with little to do besides sit and stare out the window while their babysitter, Mrs. Kwan (AMY HILL), dozes in the den.

Until their unexpected guest—the original party animal himself—arrives to turn their world upside down by showing them that “it's good to have fun...but you have to know how!”

Anyone for a game of Cat and House?

Grazer, Welch, Myers and their team have crafted a highly-stylized, Seussian world where an uninvited visitor turns the ho-hum world of two children left alone into an all-out, adventure-filled trip through a fantasyland inspired by the visionary author and brought to the eye-filling screen by award-winning filmmakers, including: two-time

Oscar®-nominated director of photography EMMANUEL LUBEZKI, A.S.C. (*Sleepy Hollow, A Little Princess*); production designer ALEX McDOWELL (*Minority Report*); Academy Award®-nominated editor DON ZIMMERMAN, A.C.E. (*Liar Liar*); special makeup effects artist STEVE JOHNSON (*X2: X-Men United*); costume designer RITA RYACK (Oscar®-nominated for *Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas*); composer DAVID NEWMAN (*Anastasia*, nominated for an Academy Award®); and multiple Oscar®-nominated songwriter MARC SHAIMAN and songwriter SCOTT WITTMAN (both Tony winners for *Hairspray*). ERIC McLEOD (all three *Austin Powers*), GREGG TAYLOR (*Austin Powers in Goldmember*), KAREN KEHELA SHERWOOD (*Blue Crush*) and MAUREEN PEYROT (*A Beautiful Mind*) serve as executive producers, with ALDRIC LA'AULI PORTER (*Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas*), as associate producer.

About the Production

Originally published in 1957, *The Cat in the Hat* is one of the most beloved children's books ever written and remains one of the Top 10 best-selling hardcover children's books to this day. In an unusual business co-venture for the time, publishing houses Houghton Mifflin and Random House commissioned Theodor S. Geisel (a.k.a. Dr. Seuss) to create a primer for children using 220 new reader vocabulary words; Houghton Mifflin intended the book for classroom usage, with Random House aiming it at the home market. While school systems were reticent to adopt the book, *The Cat in the Hat* immediately took off with families, and Geisel's groundbreaking work firmly established him as one of the preeminent children's book author/illustrators in the business.

The fantastical world of Dr. Seuss has become well-known the world over, thanks to countless re-printings and translations of his books, as well as the numerous television adaptations of his works. But during the holiday season of 2000, Seussian fans and audiences were treated to a never-before-seen motion picture adaptation of one of the author's most beloved stories—*How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* The Universal Pictures release (produced by Academy Award®-winning filmmaker Brian Grazer and directed by Oscar® winner Ron Howard under their Imagine Entertainment banner and starring

Jim Carrey) became the Number One box office release for the year, signaling that moviegoers were eager to see their favorite Seuss creations on the big screen.

Under Grazer's stewardship and Howard's direction, *The Grinch's* transition from page to screen was as inventive as it was seamless. Grazer's respectful handling of the Dr. Seuss Enterprises' property rendered him, in the estate's eyes, a proven caretaker of the author's work. So the decision to entrust the movie rights for *The Cat in the Hat* to the filmmaker—who had not only brought Seuss' verse and fully-realized world to the screen, but managed to enlarge the author's vision to fill the larger medium and create an international blockbuster in the process—was a simple one.

Grazer, who recalled reading the book as a child, comments, “Because we grew up with these books, and because they have such universal themes and the illustrations ignite such fantasy in your mind as a child—the aggregation of all those feelings—it leaves an indelible, positive memory. And so when I realized I had a chance to convert first *The Grinch* and then, *The Cat in the Hat*, into movies, I was willing to do anything to bring them to the screen.”

Mike Myers had a similarly nostalgic memory about the children's classic and recalls, “My earliest memories of Dr. Seuss are the book mobile in Toronto, this traveling library, where we would check out his books. My mother was an actress in England, and she would read the books to me and other kids, who came by to listen because she was so good at it. My earliest memory of Dr. Seuss is *The Cat in the Hat*, which I loved—it's my favorite book. I loved the illustrations, and my mom read it with a Liverpool accent. That may be why it's my favorite book of all time.”

Myers notes that when Geisel wrote *The Cat in the Hat* in 1957, he was making a point about the proper way to have fun (responsibly!); upon review 45 years later, the book possibly has even more resonance today, with all of the high-tech distractions available to children in the 21st Century. For instance, it was one thing for a child of the 1950s to be grounded from watching television (with its limited choice of three networks), but if today's child were forbidden from using computers, cable, video games and the like...

Grazer concurs and says, “The Cat basically comes along and shows these bored kids how to have fun without the usual distractions. He is there to show them the power

is within you and you simply must appreciate it. And what he does is ignite excitement and joy within these kids for the things they have taken for granted and find passé. Ultimately, the Cat is an elegant anarchist, really.”

Grazer re-teamed the screenwriters from *The Grinch* (Alec Berg, David Mandel, Jeff Schaffer) and charged them to expand upon Seuss’ 1,620-word tome (give or take a super-hyphenated adjective or noun). His instructions were clear.

“The most critical aspect to making this movie is that you are paying homage to Dr. Seuss so—not to mix words here—we didn’t have the option to screw it up,” says Grazer. “Almost everyone has a memory of the book from their own childhood. And parents are still reading it with their children today.”

The filmmaker was mindful of the continuing popularity and the iconic stature of the Cat in the Hat. But by having the gifted Myers step into the paws of the fun-loving feline, he also saw an opportunity to bring the tale to a whole new generation of moviegoers, a good number of whom may (or may not) have read the book.

The expansion of the vocabulary-building Beginner Book into screenplay underway, it was decided that renowned production designer Bo Welch (recipient of four Academy Award® nominations) would make his directorial debut on the project and helm the re-packaging of a second Seuss classic for the motion picture screen.

The challenges of transforming a two-dimensional, stylishly rendered property into a three-dimensional, eye-filling screen fantasy seemed a perfect fit for Welch—the creator of such magically transporting filmic worlds as *Men in Black*, *The Lost Boys*, *Beetlejuice*, *Edward Scissorhands* and others.

The first-time feature director felt the project was right up his alley, where he could exploit his expertise in art direction and allow it to inform him as a film director. Welch says, “To be able to translate *The Cat in the Hat* for the screen—it’s an invitation into a great world where you can let your imagination run wild and you are not restrained by physics. There’s just a silliness and a joy to it that we worked to capture in every aspect, from the acting to the design. Every aspect has to fit into Seuss’ immaculate universe.”

Grazer notes, “Bo brings his considerable production design skills with him as a director, enabling him to not only oversee the creation of this amazing world of the Cat—

a heightened reality and a palette of dazzling candy colors—but to add and orchestrate all of these great characters as well.”

“I see him as a visionary filmmaker with a kind of sensibility that’s a combination of Tim Burton and Barry Sonnenfeld,” adds Mike Myers. “He created a great atmosphere on the set. His camera work is brilliant, he’s a great storyteller and he creates an amazing universe in which to play—it was a pleasure to come to work. He has thought through every aspect of the story. And on top of it all, he genuinely laughs at the stuff I do—that’s great for a comedian, really inspiring.”

For his first movie, Welch had to deal with a variety of challenging elements, including children, animals, special makeup and visual effects. Says friend and *Cat* cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki (who previously collaborated with Welch on *The Birdcage* and *A Little Princess*), “Bo handled it so beautifully it was like he had directed all his life.”

One of Alec Baldwin’s first movie roles was in *Beetlejuice*, which was designed by Welch. “I think it’s great for the movie business that Bo is directing because he is very clear on what he wants, yet is very easygoing and obviously his history proves that he is incredibly imaginative,” says Baldwin.

“What Bo has that all great directors have,” observes Kelly Preston, “is a great sense of cinematic timing. He knows just how to pace a scene, even down to a line, and in a comedy, timing is everything.”

Acknowledging that the Seuss books have linear narratives and that any subplots would need to be created, filmmakers were careful in taking the essence of the book and expanding the premise, increasing the scope of the tale to fill a motion picture and adding some characters in the spirit of Seuss. At its core, though, the story remains the same: two kids, Sally and Conrad, at home with seemingly nothing to do, are shown the marvels and risks of having fun by the titular talking feline.

In the hands of screenwriters, each child’s character is fleshed out and comes to represent opposite ends of a spectrum: Sally is orderly and task-oriented and her continual control mania has driven away her friends; Conrad is pure id, out to try anything on the path to fun, even if it means crashing through boundaries and rules set in place for safety’s sake.

Their mother (merely seen as a pair of legs at the ending of the book) is enlarged into a full maternal presence: real estate agent, single mother and neighborhood looker Joan Walden. Joan finds her time management skills seriously challenged by the conflicts of working for a demanding, persnickety boss (the newly created Mr. Humberfloob) and caring for two growing children, one of whom thinks nothing about destroying the kitchen in search of protective gear (a colander helmet, marshmallow bag and loaf of bread padding) for his latest adventure. Left with little choice and even less time, Joan, called back to the office prior to her party, opts to leave the kids with a babysitter, a large, dozy woman named Mrs. Kwan (also original to the screen version of the story).

Conrad's unruliness is a point of commiseration between next-door neighbor Lawrence Quinn (a phony and malevolent presence sprung from the imagination of the filmmakers) and his mom. Quinn is a seemingly successful businessman and stand-in paternal figure for Joan's children, using his proximity and wily charms to court his attractive neighbor. Underneath his smooth talk and glistening smile (ting!) lies a near-bankrupt, gold-digging lizard, out to snare Joan's house and income and ship her son off to military school.

Another character lifted from Seuss' tale is Conrad and Sally's pet, a nervous fish that (upon the arrival of the Cat in the Hat) miraculously receives the power of speech—and uses it to repeatedly warn the children of the rules they are breaking, of the trouble they are causing, of the dangers inherent in having fun. Priding itself as the voice of reason, The Fish (also voiced with manic comic aplomb by Sean Hayes) nags and cajoles, finding myriad ways to say, "I told you so!"

Also from the Seuss book are the twin mischief-makers who accompany the Cat, Thing 1 and Thing 2. Warbling their own indecipherable language and literally leaping from one catastrophic fun-making adventure to another, the Things end up making Conrad's messy attempts at fun look like...well, child's play.

And then, there's the character at the center of it all—Seuss' original creation, part furry Mary Poppins, part Willy Wonka, 100% Seuss...the Cat in the Hat. At first enchanted and entranced by the Cat, Conrad and Sally are drawn in by his exuberance—their day, all of a sudden, doesn't look so boring (even the rain stops and the sun begins

shining). But things (and Things) soon get out of control, the house is wrecked, Nevins the dog runs off and Quinn begins sniffing (and sneezing) around, certain that this time, his collaring Conrad in mid-destruction will finally win Joan over.

Surely there's a lesson to be learned somewhere in all this...

Cat Casting

"I honestly would say I wanted to play the Cat my whole life," says Mike Myers. The star and creator of a number of previous indelible comic creations was drawn to the project by the book read the world over. "That book, *Slaughterhouse Five* and *Fahrenheit 451* are my favorite books and all things considered, I still like *The Cat in the Hat* best. He's such a great character—you think he's an anarchist at the beginning and then you realize he's actually a teacher."

"The Cat is an icon in American 20th Century life and it takes the genius Mike possesses to inhabit that role in an honest way that I truly think Dr. Seuss would have approved of," says Grazer. "Mike brings irreverence to the Cat, which comes from his brilliance in understanding how pop culture works, so the movie is not just a benign children's tale. I suspect it's probably what Geisel would have done if he had written the book today, given how irreverent he was."

Like Grazer, Myers was clear on his priorities to the book: "More than anything, I wanted to make sure we honor the book. What I love about it is the main image—the cat balancing on a ball, with a rake and a cake, the fish, an umbrella and all that stuff—and that's what the whole message is: getting everything in balance."

Myers' excellence at playing a myriad of characters within a given storyline became one of the points of expansion for the Seuss story. Welch observes, "Mike's talent at characterization is legendary—it's part of what skyrocketed him to stardom. So what was interesting for us was to take the main character of the Cat and use him not only as the fulcrum of the story, upon which everything turns, but also branch varying characters off from the Cat, like colors from a prism."

In the process, the Cat inhabits some vibrant cameos—most bearing a slight resemblance to the title character and clothed in some variation of the signature black, red and white. The actor counts off, "I get to play Carmen Miranda, a bull fighter, a civil

protestor, a crazy infomercial chef and his ridiculous sidekick—the guy in the bad sweater who asks all the obvious questions—and several others.”

Most of the characters that appear—in addition to ratcheting up the on-screen fun quotient—serve to point the hapless Conrad and Sally along the way to arriving at (warning: psycho-babble word up ahead) self-actualization.

On why the Cat becomes these different characters, Myers continues, “In traditional mythology, a catalyst character that comes along to wreak havoc on the hero—or, in this case, two little heroes—will often change his shape in order to confuse or disorient the hero into crossing the threshold from the known world into the unknown. That is the long answer. The short answer is it was fun to wear different costumes.”

All this mayhem translates into controlled on-screen chaos—but chaos with intent, since the heart of the lesson Conrad and Sally learn is one their mother has been reiterating until she is (practically and proverbially) blue in the face.

Myers observes, “Somebody once said that comedians like to be the architects of their own embarrassment. Similarly with the Cat, there’s a lot of anarchy going on, but ultimately, you realize that he was the architect of the anarchy and it has had a purpose—to restore this family.”

The actor draws a further parallel to the author and says, “The Cat is a necessary anarchist, just as artists take on the role of anarchists, to shake people out of their complacency and to get them to see things differently. Dr. Seuss is one of those artists and it’s reflected in his characters, all wonderfully quirky and cool at the same time.”

While creating a look for a film was an ability its director had previously fully demonstrated, Welch knew that as a first time director on such an enormous and complex undertaking, he wanted to be able to rely on an experienced cast, so he set out to “hire great actors” to surround his gifted lead. With the Cat’s furry paws amply filled by Myers, filmmakers sought actors to play the subjects subjected to his controlled anarchy.

Welch saw Dakota Fanning in *I Am Sam* and was blown away how “this little blond girl held her own going toe-to-toe with Sean Penn.” After he read her for the part, the director felt the cute and canny actress would be able to convey Sally’s sweetness under her tightly wound, brittle exterior.

Fanning finds Sally, “a scheduled person who keeps track of everything. Everything for her has to be perfect, every hair in place, no spots anywhere. I can understand her but I certainly don’t want to be her.”

Spencer Breslin was similarly impressive when he auditioned with a unique adult/child quality. “He talks to you like an adult, with no shyness whatsoever, and he’s got a great, distinct voice and looks like a typical kid,” notes the director, who felt those were a fine combination he wanted brought to Conrad.

Breslin enjoyed working with Myers and the cast, but particularly liked the dangerous side of being Conrad. He says, “The stair luge was one of the best days I had. They had me riding a cookie sheet down the stairs in the house, and I was covered with all of this padding that I got from the kitchen. Man, I would have never thought to do something like that—it’s actually a cool idea.” He is quick to caution and adds, “And you should *not* try it at home!”

“Both of the kids stunned me with how focused they were during the day. Typical kids, like my kids, are easily distractible, but these two never forgot their lines and never had a false moment on-screen,” says Welch.

“I loved working with these kids so much,” adds Myers. “Spencer is a genius, he’s hilarious, and Dakota’s a great actress and so sweet. During filming the end scene where the Cat has to say goodbye to Conrad and Sally, I didn’t want to. I was enjoying myself with these great kids and our world was just so much fun.”

One of the new additions to Seuss’ tale arrives in the person of Lawrence Quinn, the family’s neighbor, who passes himself off as something much more than he is in his attempt to win over Sally and Conrad’s mother. The idea of Alec Baldwin came early on in pre-production from Welch.

The director observes, “Alec’s work reminds me that what gives me the greatest pleasure when watching movies is seeing actors play their parts convincingly—so well that they transmit their characters through the screen. With him, you get a sense that he’s having the time of his life, playing this loser with such great relish. Alec does it brilliantly.”

Baldwin delighted in diving into the part of Quinn and comments, “What’s fun about Quinn is that he is not what he pretends to be in real life. He presents himself to be

caring, sophisticated, educated, and he's really just a complete slob and pig. He's just pathetic and sad. So it was almost like playing two parts."

And speaking of body parts...as drawn in the book, the mother is no more than a leg as she enters the door at the end of the kids' adventure. Many times, the "mom" of a movie's central child is a thankless functional position—but when the slender book was expanded into movie form, the mom became Joan Walden, caring single parent just trying to raise her family.

"Kelly Preston has kids, and while not necessary for an actor, it really helped since she had a wonderfully natural way with the kids. She's just a naturally warm, loving person, and that shows. She really becomes that beautiful mom of storybooks. She looks like a million bucks," says Welch.

Preston offers, "Everybody reads and loves the book. I read it as a child and I'm reading it to my kids now and they almost know it by heart, so I was thrilled when they offered it to me. I was really excited, but it's probably the most excited my kids have ever been on anything I've ever been offered—literally, they were jumping up and down, they were so thrilled."

Filmmakers double-scored with the casting of Sean Hayes, who not only portrays Joan's boss, Mr. Humberfloob, but also supplies the external nagging conscience of Sally and Conrad—the voice of their angst-ridden, fussy, "the-sky-is-falling" pet fish.

Welch observes, "I think, in the book, the fish is the most nervous and uptight individual in the house. What occurred to me is that if you are that uptight and afraid, you end up basically living in a jar of water. Sean is an amazing inhabitant of the fish—you can hear how fraught he is. And he also shines as Humberfloob, taking the character and just running with it."

Hayes was attracted to the project given his admiration of *The Grinch* and observes, "The thing about *The Grinch* was that, in addition to it being so well written and directed, it had such a great visual style and flair. And they've done it again with this film. I remember reading *The Cat in the Hat* a hundred times as a kid and so I was intrigued how they could make it into a movie. The script is amazing and really honors the book's spirit."

Your Basic Six-Foot-Tall Talking Cat

With a gifted actor to play the Cat, filmmakers set about building the “cat suit” and the creature’s look to transform Myers into Seuss’ clever creation. Special makeup effects artist Steve Johnson and his company, Edge FX, were enlisted to help accomplish the tasks.

After the production of testers and prototypes, the final cat suit that emerged was fashioned out of angora and human hair, with a weight of a mere three pounds. But there’s more to a cat than its skin, and Myers found himself adorned with padding, a metal plate on the top of his head (which held the infamous red-and-white-striped hat in place via magnets) and assorted battery packs inside the suit to power the remote controlled tail and ears.

“I had more stuff in different parts of my body than I care to talk about publicly, really,” he jokes. “My ears were remote control, my tail was remote control—I don’t know how they did it. I really felt that NASA was probably involved somehow.”

As some of the filming was slated for exterior location shots (where the temperature often measured in the 90s), the suit was also designed with a port for a hose from a portable air-conditioning unit; on particularly oppressive days, an additional cooling device—a vest containing circulating cold water—was also sported by Myers...to keep the Cat cool.

The makeup scheme for the Cat also went through several iterations before the final design was agreed upon. Steve Johnson remembers, “In filmmaking, everything is an extremely collaborative process. Designs get changed until the right one is found. We first tried some very realistic approaches to the Cat’s face, including electrostatically flocking the face, attaching short hairs all over it—it was very soft and very cat-like. But Bo ultimately wanted something very graphic, the body slightly characterized and black and white lines on the face. In the end, we found a design that worked and really fit with the overall Seuss-inspired designs. I mean, the best thing about the Cat’s face is that it’s Mike Myers’, who really is a man of a thousand faces. Our designs got smaller and thinner, something that best suited Mike’s face when he performed. Now, the Cat’s become another one of his great characters, a blending of performer and look, not just a rubber mask applied to an actor.”

The makeup process for Myers took two-and-a-half hours to apply—the result of simplification of design and the practical limitations imposed by a shooting schedule that involved child performers with a legally restricted amount of working hours in a day.

The process didn't seem to faze Myers, who took it all in stride. "It is what it is. I would listen to music, or watch something to inspire me for the day ahead, but it wasn't hard...especially compared to the makeup for Fat Bastard [from *Austin Powers*], which took five hours to apply and smelled like my hockey bag."

Welch wanted the makeup very graphic and simple, so that the shapes were clear and with a marked distinction between the black and the white. The basic appliance that covered Myers' nose was made out of foam latex and was glued to his face, as were blender pieces (incorporating the hair used on the cat suit) that helped meld the makeup into the suit and blend the Cat's face in with his body.

Filmmakers and crew were able to transform Myers into the filmic Cat in the Hat, refining and modifying Seuss' original renderings into a three-dimensional suit and makeup, both of which were faithful to the illustrations...with one exception.

Johnson quips, "One thing that was impossible to re-create was to achieve the long neck on a human as Seuss drew the Cat. But all of us were very happy with the final look. It recalls the book character and allows Mike to also shine through."

"The first time I saw Mike in the suit and makeup it gave me a very light and joyful feeling," says Welch. "You have the memory of the book—and it was the first book I ever read—but of course the Cat never moves in the book. And to then see him come to life...it was a wonderful feeling."

How Myers brought the Cat physically to life was inspired by other famous felines (and one rabbit) from popular culture. "One of the big influences on me was the cartoon *Top Cat*, which in turn was inspired by the old Phil Silvers show. And then, there was Bert Lahr's *Cowardly Lion*. There's also a sort of a cultural tradition of the anarchist animal: *Top Cat* and *Bugs Bunny* being two prime examples," notes Myers.

It was somehow fitting that the object so closely linked to the Cat—namely his hat, the source of his amazing repertoire of tricks and astounding feats—also received a great deal of pre-production time as the filmmakers worked to create not only the Cat's basic, all-purpose, everyday hat, but the myriad of hat permutations. While the basic hat

was the primary creation of costume designer Rita Ryack, the specialty hats—those that transformed into more than a hat, including a CD player hat, a periscope hat, a hat that held tennis balls, a microphone hat and others—all fell under the domain of the prop makers.

Ryack fiddled with color, fabrics, sizes and shapes for a couple months, hoping to invoke the spirit of the book even though Dr. Seuss' designs always defied the laws of physics, be it a hat or a building. To get the hat to stay on the costume, powerful magnets were sewn into the hat that attached themselves to the metal skull plate under Myers' costume.

“I loved the way the hat came out,” says Welch, “and even though it looks simple, it was anything but that to make it aesthetically pleasing and practical at the same time. Without the proper hat, the magic of the movie doesn't work. It was as important as the Cat's makeup.”

“I don't think the magnets had a deleterious health effect on me, but I was able to pick up the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and I watched most of the Toronto Maple Leaf home games—it had a nice little side benefit,” adds Myers.

A Talking Fish and a Number of Things

Outside of the Cat, Sally, Conrad and their mom (or rather, her leg), Seuss created only three more characters within the pages of *The Cat in the Hat*: one shaky talking fish and two of the Cat's minions, able assistants in the execution of his destructive plans for fun (and in restoring the house to its former, normally clean state)—Thing 1 and Thing 2. Casting for the Things brought with it some challenges (more below), but to try and find a talking fish, filmmakers turned to the feature animation and visual effects house of Rhythm & Hues. (While primarily focusing on the Fish, the company also assisted in the Cat's astounding juggling scene and in creating the vortex that emanates from the Things' red crate.)

The Fish was somewhat of a unique character for Rhythm & Hues (responsible for some of the effects and animation in such films as *Cats & Dogs*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* and *Scooby-Doo*), in that the character has no shoulders, no hips and doesn't walk, so all of the physical performance had to come from the eyes,

head and fin motion. The soul of the fidgety pet lay with his voice, supplied by Sean Hayes, who found voicing the character significantly different from his usual on-camera jobs: firstly, he did not know what the final animation would look like and secondly, all of his work took place alone in a sound booth.

“The hardest part is not seeing what you’re speaking to,” says Hayes, “so you end up doing 50 different screams for the Fish just to give the director options on which way he wants the character animated.”

“I think the animators really captured Sean’s humor and personality and it reads very easily through the Fish,” says Welch. The director sums up the Fish as a cross between Tony Randall’s Felix Unger (compulsive about keeping things in their proper places and following every rule to the letter) and Don Knotts’ Barney Fife (reactionary when anything veers slightly off course or rules get broken). And even though it’s apparent to everyone present, the Fish feels it’s his duty to point out the rule, how it’s been broken and the possible dire consequences involved.

“He’s not exactly constructive in his criticism,” adds the director.

Doug Smith of Rhythm & Hues had lead animator Craig Talmy and his crew watch numerous episodes of the old *Andy Griffith Show* to get a sense of Knotts’ character, his alarmist nature and his manic energy.

Luckily, the creation of the Things was not nearly as computer dependent for the filmmakers, who decided upon casting four young actresses with dance or gymnastic training (all between the ages of eight and nine) to play the Things. Because of the shooting restrictions for children (their working hours are monitored and limited), employing two sets of Things and staggering their work schedules allowed filming to take place throughout the day. Stunt coordinator Jack Gill exploited the girls’ gymnastic and dance training and (with the aide of special stunt rigs) literally had them walking on walls during the scene where the Things are released from their red crate, eventually destroying the house. For the more demanding scene within the sequence when the pair attempt to evade capture by scampering on the ceiling and around the chandelier, the magic of CGI briefly stepped in to supply computer-animated stunt doubles.

Edge FX also created the makeup for the Things and Johnson considers that work some of the most effective to have come out of his shop. “When you see the Things for

the first time, you don't know what to think," says Johnson. "It's definitely different. A lot of the success we had was due to the fact that these girls loved being in the makeup. When we were testing before they cast the Things, the kids we used as models would tear at the makeup since they felt so uncomfortable in it. But it really helped our actresses find the crazy energy of the Things—not that an eight-year-old needs much help in that area."

Johnson kept the makeup very thin around the eyes and movement areas in the face so that the girls' personalities came through. To add to their Seussian appearance and make them look less like children, he also employed dentures that stretched their mouths and added to the facial distortion.

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

For Grazer and his team, the major difference between realizing *The Grinch* and *The Cat in the Hat* for the screen lay in the setting; while the former exists in a fantasy world of its own, the latter is a cautionary tale set in a place not too far from the world as it exists today. And where the Grinch came to life before the cameras on a soundstage, the Cat would be strutting a lot of his stuff on location, in the visually arresting town and suburbs of Anville.

"The genius of Seuss," comments Welch, "was that his stories always had a message but they were wrapped in magic and comedy, which gave them an 'anything goes' quality—enough of a balance where a talking cat seems natural."

From the beginning of his work on the film, one of Welch's primary goals was to lift the childlike simplicity of the visuals from the Dr. Seuss books and transport it into the movie. Instead of trying to replicate the book, he sought to capture the spirit by creating a world where much of it is realized with a child's perspective in mind—not a literal point-of-view with the camera set low and tilted up, but rather evoking, through design and visuals, how children envision the world around them. It was that mantra that drove the design of the architecture, particularly on the outdoor sets of the neighborhood, the town and the bizarre contraptions that the Cat utilizes.

Two separate color palettes were created: one for the Cat and the other for the world he drops into. The red, white and black of the Cat and his hat are seen only on him

or the props he utilizes (along with the rare addition of metal and natural woods seen on the Cat's vehicles). The remainder of the film is draped in yellows, greens (the interior of the houses), lilac (the house exterior) and other ice cream/pastel colors, with the additional of the bold, simple colors used for the town.

“The look and the tone of the movie is critical,” says Welch. “You have to create a context for a character like the Cat to exist in; if you put a six-foot-tall talking cat in a lovely hat and gloves and drop him into North Hollywood, it would be upsetting. And yet, we wanted the story grounded in enough reality to be able to access it from a real-life, human perspective. So the houses, cars and clothing look familiar but are just tweaked enough to set the movie on a different plane.”

This philosophy at the heart of the filmmakers' concept enabled Welch to shoot a good deal of the movie on location in Southern California, where adapting the environment to fit within the film's world was all that was needed to make it work. That adaptation, however, was still a monumental task and if not for Welch's previous experience as production designer and the talents of imaginative production designer Alex McDowell and a talented crew, the whole concept might have been nixed in favor of soundstage work.

The suburban neighborhood where the movie begins and the kids live had to have a fantastical element to it—a believability within its own hyper-realistic world, but also a uniformity, so that the children's boredom when grounded and staring out the window would make sense.

“Before we started,” notes McDowell, “Bo's description of the neighborhood and town was that on a scale of zero to 10, with zero being absolute reality and 10 being absolute fantasy, we were at about four at the beginning of the movie, dialing it up to 10 toward the end.”

One of Welch's primary objectives was to give the large sets—the neighborhood and the town center—a childlike simplicity that would get into the spirit of Dr. Seuss rather than trying to slavishly reproduce his work (little of which translates to practical three-dimensional construction).

The filmmakers settled on a rural valley near Simi Valley, California, where 24 houses (each 26-foot square and 52-foot tall) were constructed. Reinforcing the

symmetrical look, the houses all had four windows and were designed with the lack of ornamentation and clean lines found in children's drawings. Three streets that encircle the houses were paved; one mile of fence was constructed for the backyards; 220,000-square-feet of sod was laid down and 18 acres surrounding the set were hydro-seeded to give the area a lush, green appearance. The set took a total of four months to build and once the houses were painted their distinctive lilac color (with blues roofs), it was visible from a freeway miles away.

With real estate speculation being the favorite sport of Southern Californians, prospective buyers flooded Simi Valley real estate offices with calls about the "new" housing tract that had just sprung up. (The general consensus from the prospective buyers was that it looked like a great area, but many asked the question, "Why are the houses painted that funny color?")

"I would get chills every morning when I would drive to Simi Valley and first glimpse the neighborhood set," says Myers.

"The look of the neighborhood is based on an American architectural movement called New Urbanism," says McDowell. "It's about creating suburbia based on a more traditional, small-town style of living. In reality, it's about architecture in denial, but it suited our purposes beautifully."

The cars driven around the neighborhood are Ford Focuses that were painted to dovetail with the specific color palette. Having the same model car was part of the philosophy (or more of a joke, actually) that everything is repeated in the movie. The crafty viewer will recognize that everyone has the same house, curtains, front yard, trees (with "mullet" tops) and foliage with only slight variation. Nearly all the large trees were eucalyptus trunks with artificial Seussian tops, while the shrubs and flowers in front of the houses were all real and maintained by the busy greens department.

The production shot on location in Simi Valley during October, 2002, before moving on to the city of Pomona and its antique district. The oldest part of Pomona on Second Street, the facades of two blocks of antique shops, were turned into the town of Anville, which adjoins the suburbs where the movie begins. All the facades were fitted with gigantic symbols of the items sold within the particular store (e.g., the ice cream parlor had an oversized, styrofoam ice cream cone; a hammer and nails represented the

hardware store). Very little text was incorporated into the town and the street was again designed much like a child would see it.

The actual Pomona stores remained opened during construction, as well as on weekends and during non-shooting hours, so that with the added publicity that accompanied the filming, the merchants realized sales that mirrored (and some even outperformed) their recorded sales during the same time during the previous year.

The interior of the Walden house where much of the action takes place was constructed on Stage 28 on the Universal Studios lot. Much of the furniture in the house was supplied by furniture designer, artist and self-taught architect Roy McMakin, whose whimsical combination of art and design has established him as a leading furniture maker.

The furnishings on the set are reminiscent of the '30s and '40s, with the kitchen tilting more toward the 1950s. Welch adds, "Roy's furniture is all reminiscent of current furnishings, but it's been tweaked a little, so that it indicates to the viewer that everything is just a step away from the real world."

However much the filmmakers used Seuss illustrations as inspiration and building blocks for their motion picture version, one key visual from the book would prove to be a cornerstone to the tale and as such, was rendered as closely as possible to the original drawing: the seminal frame with Sally and Conrad staring wanly out the window, the panes spattered with raindrops and their pet fish, their only company.

"The look of the film," says set decorator Anne Kuljian, "emanates from that drawing—the window, the chairs the kids sit on and the table the fish bowl is on."

Going S.L.O.W and Cleaning D.I.R.T.

One of the more novel ideas that came from expanding the book into a movie was the invention of the Cat's "car" that served the purpose of getting the characters out from the house and to the neighboring town center.

Early in pre-production, Welch made a sketch of something that was part car, part plane and part boat. ("I wanted the car to have a sense of wit," he notes.) What it eventually became was the S.L.O.W., which stands for "Super Luxurious Omindirectional Whatchamajigger" and which fit in perfectly with the Cat's other

fantastical devices that he uses to deal with relatively simple problems. Designed by a team led by Harald Belker (who created the futuristic vehicles in *Minority Report*) and constructed by Tom Fisher's special effects crew, the S.L.O.W. was custom built from the ground up and was electrically powered by a dozen 12-volt batteries. The fiberglass body had a sprayed aluminum finish and was accented by African mahogany paneling that gave it a passing resemblance to a Chris-Craft speedboat from the 1940s. The shape of the S.L.O.W. (which could reach speeds up to 47 mph.) gave it a zeppelin-like appearance and at 23-feet long, the comparison was not that far off.

The S.L.O.W. was piloted blind by a driver concealed behind the front seat. The rear-view mirror was actually a camera connected to a monitor next to the driver. Another technician stationed outside of the S.L.O.W. communicated with the driver via radio, advising him of objects beyond the camera's field of vision and discussing maneuvers; the external technician also triggered various effects generated within the vehicle, such as flames and smoke.

Once the Cat and the Things have wreaked havoc, they employ the D.I.R.T. (Dynamic Industrial Renovating Tractormajigger) to clean the house. Unlike the S.L.O.W., the three-wheeled cleaning D.I.R.T.s were powered by motors from electronic wheelchairs and directed via remote control. The majority of the machines were practical (with fabricated arms inserted into nine receptacles in each machine), with additional hands and arms supplied courtesy of the wizardry of Rhythm & Hues.

The Phunometer, the device used by the Cat to measure the children's fun quotient, was one of the key props in the story, embracing Welch's (and Dr. Seuss') theory on balancing fun and chaos.

"From the beginning, my interpretation of the story was built upon this balance—so I thought we should have a physical manifestation of the concept, so we invented the Phunometer," explains the director.

The fun-measuring device was comprised of hundreds of moving parts and was the result of more than two months of design work. Bellfx Design & Fabrication created the Phunometer's dial that registers the varying stages of "fun" (e.g., Control Freak, Rule Breaker, Just Right, etc.), against which the kids are measured. Embodying the credo that more is indeed more, the device (executed by Neotech) has a telescoping unit that

extends to 32 inches and is constructed with machined, gold-plated aluminum. Like much of Seuss, it is over-evolved, clunky, indiscreet—the opposite of today’s sleek, high-tech world.

Bellfx Design also fabricated the Cat’s Kupkake-inator, which makes cupcakes (what else?). Like the other props, indirect and inefficient in its intended task, it’s a marvel of whimsy and, also like the D.I.R.T., was operated by remote control.

While many of the props and vehicles find their roots in the designs of Rube Goldberg (Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist, sculptor and author who created “inventions” that discovered difficult ways to achieve easy results), the film, at least according to director Bo Welch, is not too far from that thinker’s philosophy.

He sums up his experiences on the shoot and smiles, “I have a main character in complex makeup, the other two characters are kids, the fish isn’t really there, and there’s a dog, so the only thing we are missing is water. So I guess you could say that sometimes it has been a challenge. But hopefully, in the end, we’ve told Seuss’ story in a way that he’d have liked...simple enough, right?”

Myers closes by adding, “Bo has done three things for *The Cat in the Hat*: one, he’s been very faithful to the book and the spirit and the ideas of Seuss; two, he has brought the same sort of classic, ‘70s children’s films feel that we all wanted to achieve; and three, he’s achieved a kind of Saturday morning cartoon happiness. One of my happiest memories as a kid is lying on the floor watching TV on a Saturday morning with the sun streaming in the window—that time just felt like there was a world of possibilities.”

Universal Pictures / DreamWorks Pictures / Imagine Entertainment present A Brian Grazer Production: Mike Myers in *Dr. Seuss’ The Cat in the Hat*, starring Alec Baldwin, Kelly Preston, Dakota Fanning, Spencer Breslin. The music is by David Newman, with songs written by Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman. The associate producer is Aldric La’Auli Porter. The costume designer is Rita Ryack. The special makeup effects are created by Steve Johnson. The film editor is Don Zimmerman, A.C.E. The production is designed by Alex McDowell. The director of photography is Emmanuel Lubezki, A.S.C. The executive producers are Eric McLeod, Gregg Taylor, Karen Kehela Sherwood and Maureen Peyrot. The film is based on the book by Dr.

Seuss, with a screenplay by Alec Berg & David Mandel & Jeff Schaffer. *Dr. Seuss' The Cat in the Hat* is produced by Brian Grazer and directed by Bo Welch. ©2003 Universal Studios and DreamWorks LLC. www.thecatinthatmovie.com

Some F.U.N. (Factual, Usable Numbers) About *Dr. Seuss' The Cat in the Hat*

The Suburbs Around Anville (The Neighborhood in Simi Valley, California)

- 24 houses and 22 garages built.
- Height: 52' to top of chimney.
- Width and depth: 26' x 26' (not including front and back porches).
- 18 acres around the houses were hydro-seeded and 220,000 sq. ft. of sod was laid.
- One mile of fence was built.
- 7,000,000 gallons of water kept the area green during building and shooting.
- 12 miles of pencil steel was used to help sculpt the Suessian trees and bushes in Simi and Pomona.
- 500 gallons of lilac paint was used for the houses.

Cat Suit and Makeup

- Three Cat suits were made out of angora/human hair.
- Each weighed three pounds.
- Tail and ear movements courtesy of one battery pack (in the suit over Myers' stomach).
- It took Myers two-and-a-half hours to get made up, 10 minutes to get into the Cat suit, and 15 minutes to remove the makeup.

Town Center in Anville (Pomona, California)

- 60,000 cubic feet of styrofoam was used to create the icons on the storefronts.
- The Lollipop was 10 feet in diameter.
- The Bride and Groom were 14-feet tall.
- The Hot Dog was 26-feet long.
- 24 storefronts were dressed with paint and styrofoam icons.
- 600 gallons of paint was required to redress the storefronts.

S.L.O.W.

- The S.L.O.W. measures 22-feet long by eight-feet wide.

- Weight: 3,500 lbs.
- Built completely from scratch using one great plan.
- Can drive as fast as 47 mph.
- The wood is African mahogany (okay, no number there, but cool nonetheless).
- One propane tank in the rear creates the flames.
- One driver sits behind the front seat and drives by looking at a monitor (which is hooked up to a camera, disguised as the rear-view mirror).
- The driver is connected by radio to one partner outside the car, who controls the flames, smoke and gears via remote control.