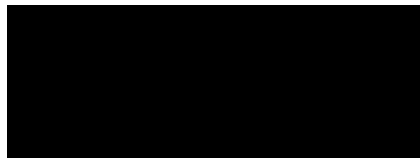


## Motion Film Group



# GUN HILL ROAD



**US Dramatic Competition**

**Opens August 5<sup>th</sup>**

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### **Log line:**

After three years in prison, Enrique returns to the Bronx to find his wife estranged and his teenage son stumbling towards a sexual transformation that will put the fragile bonds of their family to the test.

### **Synopsis:**

After three years in prison, Enrique (Esai Morales) returns home to the Bronx to find the world he knew has changed. His wife, Angela (Judy Reyes), struggles to hide an emotional affair, and his teenage son, Michael (newcomer Harmony Santana), explores a sexual transformation well beyond Enrique's grasp and understanding. Unable to accept his child, Enrique clings to his masculine ideals while Angela attempts to hold the family together by protecting Michael. Still under the watchful eye of his parole officer (Isiah Whitlock, Jr), Enrique must become the father he needs to be or, once again, risk losing his family and freedom.

Can a father's fierce love for his family overcome his street-hardened ideas about manhood and end the vicious cycle controlling his life?

Writer/director Rashaad Ernesto Green's first feature film is an intricate portrait of a family divided told with sensitivity, gentle humor, and a deep understanding of the environment that shapes its people.

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### ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

*Gun Hill Road* is the first feature-length film by Rashaad Ernesto Green, an award-winning director of short films such as *Premature*, *Cuts* and *Choices*. He began writing the story in 2009, setting the story in the Bronx, his birthplace, where generations, racial identity and cultural values intertwine to create a constantly evolving neighborhood with a rich sense of history and foundation in the Latino culture.

*Gun Hill Road* was filmed over 22 days in July and August of 2010, entirely on location in various Bronx locales including Dewitt Clinton High School and on Gun Hill Road itself. The latter is the Bronx street where Green's parents worked together as 18-year-olds at a McDonald's near Burke Avenue.

*Gun Hill Road* is a family drama set in the multiracial Bronx. An ex-con father played by Esai Morales returns from his latest three-year prison stint to find that everything has changed. His wife and child reject his attempt to re-establish himself as head of the household, and continue to harbor deep secrets that, if discovered, will tear at the fragile bonds of their embattled family.

Both Judy Reyes and Esai Morales are natives of the Bronx. They were attracted to the hometown story of *Gun Hill Road* and the chance to work with Green, a bright young director with roots in the neighborhood. And Green knew he wanted to cast them as his leads. He wrote the part of Enrique with Morales in mind.

“My brother and I watched *La Bamba* over and over again as kids and loved Esai Morales in the film,” says Green. “Esai is co-founder of the National Hispanic Foundation of the Arts with Jimmy Smits, Sonia Braga, and Felix Sanchez. I was fortunate to win the scholarship three years in a row. I got to know Esai as a person and already had a deep respect for him as an actor. He was my natural choice for the lead in *Gun Hill Road*. Judy Reyes, whose work I also love, was also my first choice for the role of Angela.”

“We've seen the gangster and prison stuff,” says Morales of his previous roles, “and now I finally have a chance to play someone I haven't played

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before: a New York Puerto Rican, which is what I am. Enrique is kind of a Biblical ‘Job in the ‘Hood.’ Everything happens to him in the weirdest ways and he tries to fix his son in the most un-artful ways possible.”

Reyes signed on to play the part of Enrique’s long-suffering and still smoldering wife, Angela, who finds herself in the middle of a conflict between the two people she loves most in the world. According to Reyes, "After reading this script there wasn't a doubt in my mind that I wanted to be a part of this powerful film. It was an honor to be included in this project, especially given the opportunity to work with such a talented cast and the brilliant Rashaad Ernesto Green. I hope this film resonates with audiences as much as it did with me personally."

For director Green, casting the role of Michael was more difficult. In the story, Michael's sexual transformation tears at the core of the father’s belief system. Green was determined to cast the role non-traditionally and outside of the normal means of finding talent through an agent or casting director. He was convinced that in order for the film to be successful, he needed to find the genuine article. In the spring of 2010, Green began what turned out to be an exhaustive search for “Michael” and his cadre of friends in some of New York City’s over-18 nightclubs and other centers of downtown nightlife, befriending young people and finding leads for actors. There were a lot of late nights, missed appointments, and frenzied auditions on the road to finding the person he finally cast as “Michael”—a Bronx native and non-actor named Harmony.

“We scoured every over-18 club, bar, parade, drag show and poetry slam in New York for weeks, staying out until three in the morning or handing out flyers at daytime events in the city. We knew it was not going to be easy to cast such a specific role. We had to find a person to really inhabit this role psychologically,” says Green. Just two months before production was slated to start, Green met Harmony Santana, who was working at a parade booth in Queens.

After two auditions, Harmony landed the role of Michael and then went through six weeks of intense acting workshops and rehearsals to prepare for the role. “Harmony had a sense of naturalism that was the right fit for this very challenging, hard-to-cast role and showed a lot of heart and dedication, dropping everything to work on this film for nearly three months,” says

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Green.

The cast and crew worked tirelessly to bring the script to life throughout three hot weeks in July and August. Says Morales of the shoot, "Rashaad is a burgeoning talent who will continue to do wonderful things. He knows what he's talking about and he gets people to do what he needs them to do. He puts a lot of work and effort into everything. He had an army of people and he gets everyone to work for him, and that's key. They all went for it and together we created something rather special, which hopefully bridges our understanding even more."

"Rashaad has written and directed a powerful story about a family struggling to reconnect as cultures, values and generations collide," said *Gun Hill Road* producer/executive producer Ron Simons. "We were blessed with a talented, hardworking cast and crew who brought the right combination of professional experience along with different perspectives on race, culture, sexuality, age and gender. With Rashaad's vision, we were able to make the story of *Gun Hill Road* resonate on the screen."

*Gun Hill Road* premiered January 24th in the Dramatic Competition at Sundance 2011. Selected for the 2010 Tribeca All Access Program, *Gun Hill Road* was also named recipient of the 2009 Spike Lee Fellowship, the Princess Grace Foundation Award, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association Grant, and was recognized by the Urban Arts Initiative in New York City and the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance. *Gun Hill Road* was also selected for the 2010 IFP Project Forum, which took place September 19 through 23, 2010.

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## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

by Rashaad Ernesto Green

This story is about real life and real people.

Inspired by my own family, *Gun Hill Road* provides a hard yet truthful glimpse into the Latino culture of the Bronx and how this particular family chooses to deal with a father who must readjust to his surroundings when he returns home from prison, and his struggle to accept his teenage child in transition.

Fathers like Enrique believe they are acting in the best interests of their children, by protecting them from hardship or the ills of society. They don't always see how their behavior can suffocate their children and prevent them from learning, discovering themselves, and living their own lives.

I feel for Enrique. I see him in pain, struggling and trapped within his own mental prison. The Bronx has shaped the way Enrique sees the world, his sense of manhood, and what it means to be a man. Bustling with music and life, from the Yankee caps and Puerto Rican flags blowing in the wind, to the cuchifritos and cat calling on every corner, what's not to love about the Bronx? But the world is constantly changing, especially the world that exists outside of the Bronx.

By making this film, I hope to encourage dialog about an issue in this community that needs to be addressed. It's happening right now. The old school culture of the Bronx is at war with its youth. The younger spirited generation is much more open minded and accepting of difference than ever before, leaving them at odds with their parents who raised them. I want to explore a side and complexity of the Bronx and Latino life that is rarely seen in films. At the end of the day, Enrique is a beautiful person who loves his child dearly. He just hasn't been equipped with the tools necessary to break his mental chains. The struggle that exists within Enrique is the same plight that plagues the entire Bronx. And if it's happening here, it's happening everywhere.

Peace & blessings.

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### CAST BIOGRAPHIES

#### **ESAI MORALES (Enrique)**

For years, award-winning actor Esai Morales has lent his outstanding acting talents to television, theater and films. Since his feature film debut in *Bad Boys* in 1983, the actor has continuously given performances that strongly resonate in the hearts and minds of audiences. After graduating from New York's High School for the Performing Arts, Morales made his stage debut in El Hermano. His other theatre performances include Salome and The Tempest.

For three seasons, Morales played Lieutenant Tony Rodriguez in the Emmy Award-winning series "NYPD Blue." He also starred in Showtime's "Resurrection Blvd.," PBS's drama series "American Family," FOX's "Vanished," and most recently USA's "Burn Notice." In 2002, Morales received the "Best Actor in a Television Series" award at the prestigious Alma Awards and was honored with Entertainer of the Year at the 17th Annual Imagen Awards for his work on *NYPD Blue*. He also received an Imagen Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor in a Television Series for his work in *American Family*. He received critical acclaim for his roles in the films *Rapa Nui* and *Mi Familia*.

Morales starred in the award-winning indie film *American Fusion* and recently wrapped the James Cotton film *La Linea* opposite Ray Liotta. Morales will next star in the film *Kill Kill Faster Faster*. His other film credits include *Fast Food Nation*, *The Virgin Of Juarez* and *La Bamba*, which remains the most commercially successful Latino-themed motion picture to date.

Esai Morales most recently starred as Joseph Adama on Syfy's hit series "Caprica."

A self-described "actorvist," Morales is involved in charities and non-profit organizations such as the National Hispanic Foundation, which he co-founded with actors Jimmy Smits and Sonia Braga. The foundation works to advance the presence and performance of Latinos in media, telecommunications and entertainment. He is also a founding board member of the Earth Communications Office (E.C.O.), and he is a national board

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member of the Screen Actors Guild.

### **JUDY REYES (Angela)**

Judy Reyes, best known for starring as the sassy, no-nonsense nurse Carla Espinosa on the comedy series “Scrubs,” stars in the film *Gun Hill Road* (directed by Rashaad Ernesto Green), which debuted at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, competing in the U.S. Dramatic category.

“Scrubs” received seventeen Emmy nominations throughout the show’s successful nine-season run and even earned a prestigious Peabody Award for the fifth-season episode “My Way Home.” The series also took home the coveted Humanitas Prize in 2002, 2008 and 2009, which is an award that honors film and television writing intended to promote human dignity, meaning, and freedom.

Reyes, born to Dominican parents, grew up along with three sisters in the Bronx as her family’s first-generation Americans. While performing at a talent show for her mother’s church, the triple-threat singer, dancer, and actress realized her passion for performing. After this life-changing performance, Reyes enrolled in theatre classes at Hunter College in Manhattan, and in 1992 she landed her first major acting role in the independent feature film *Jack and his Friends* opposite Sam Rockwell. From here she went on to perform extensively in the New York theatre. She is particularly proud of her work with the LAByrinth Theatre Company, a multicultural acting space in Manhattan where she is a founding member, along with Philip Seymour Hoffman, Sam Rockwell, John Ortiz and Lauren Velez, among others. She has served as a member of the Company in numerous productions over the past 15 years.

Reyes' other film credits include the independent picture *Dirty* opposite Cuba Gooding, Jr.; *Went to Coney Island on a Mission from God ... Be Back at Five* opposite Jon Cryer; *King of the Jungle* alongside John Leguizamo and Rosie Perez; and *Washington Heights*. Additionally, Reyes starred and produced the independent film *Glow Ropes: The Rise and Fall of a Bar Mitzvah Emcee*, co-directing with George Valencia. *Glow Ropes* screened and won the Best Film award at the 2005 HBO New York Latino Film Festival. She also acted in and co-produced *Taino*, a short film that was



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screened at the 1999 New York International Latino Film Festival and was one of four finalists to air on Showtime's Latino Filmmakers Forum.

Reyes' other television credits include a star turn opposite Doris Roberts in the 2006 Hallmark original movie "Our House." She had a recurring role as Tina on the acclaimed HBO series "Oz" and has appeared in "The Sopranos," "Third Watch," "NYPD Blue," and "Law and Order," among many other series. Her made-for-television movies include John Sanford's "Mind Prey" with Eriq La Salle. Reyes has received numerous award nominations and received the 2006 Alma Award for Outstanding Actress in a Television Series and the 2007 National Hispanic Media Coalition Impact Award for Outstanding Performance in a Comedy Television Series.

Reyes resides in the Hollywood Hills during production but frequently returns to her native New York. When she is not entertaining audiences, Reyes loves to do yoga, hike, salsa dance and spend time with her Chow-Shepherd mix Chulo.

### **ISIAH WHITLOCK, JR. (Officer Thompson)**

Isiah Whitlock, Jr., a veteran theater, film and television actor, was recently seen in *Cedar Rapids*, directed by Miguel Arteta and *Detachment*, directed by Tony Kaye. He can also be seen in Spike Lee's *The 25th Hour* and *She Hate Me*. His other film credits include *Brooklyn's Finest*, *Twelve*, *Main Street*, *Choke*, *Under New Management*, *1408*, *Enchanted*, *Kettle of Fish*, *Pieces of April*, *Duane Hopwood*, *Jump Tomorrow*, *Harlem Aria*, *The Fish in the Bathtub*, *Everyone Says I Love You*, *The Spanish Prisoner*, *Eddie and Goodfellas*.

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On television, Mr. Whitlock starred as Senator Clay Davis on HBO's "The Wire." Most recently, he has appeared on "The Unusuals" as Captain Leslie Morgan. Mr. Whitlock has been featured numerous times on "Law & Order: Criminal Intent" and "Law & Order: SVU." He has garnered guest leads on "The Chappelle Show" and has also been seen on "Rubicon," "Meet the Browns," "Human Giant," "New Amsterdam," "Madigan Men," "Wonderland," "New York Undercover," and the PBS documentary "Liberty," as well as "Third Watch" and "Ed." He can next be seen on Comedy Central's "The Onion Sports Show."

Mr. Whitlock was nominated in 2002 for a Lucille Lortel award as Best Featured Actor for his work in Four, which enjoyed an acclaimed off-Broadway run at the Manhattan Theatre Club. The Iceman Cometh, Merchant of Venice and Mastergate are among his Broadway credits, while Farragut North (Atlantic Theatre Co., Geffen Playhouse), The Cherry Orchard, Everything That Rises Must Converge, Up Against The Wind, A Lesson Before Dying, High Life, Edmond, The American Clock, White Panther and The Illusion comprise his off-Broadway credits. He was also part of the national tour of the play The Piano Lesson in the lead role of Boy Willie.

### **HARMONY SANTANA (Michael)**

Harmony Santana is a 20-year-old artist from the Lower East Side of Manhattan and a graduate of Elmwood Park Memorial High School in Elmwood Park, N.J. *Gun Hill Road* is Harmony's first film.

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### **CREW BIOGRAPHIES**

#### **RASHAAD ERNESTO GREEN (Writer/Director)**

Starting his career as an actor, New York native Rashaad Ernesto Green received his BA from Dartmouth College, MFA from the NYU Graduate Acting Program, and recently graduated from NYU's Graduate Film Program. After spending three years acting in theaters nationwide and working with directors such as Spike Lee, Rashaad worked as a teacher in the South Bronx before moving behind the camera to tell stories. Rashaad was included on the latest edition of *Filmmaker Magazine*'s elite 25 New Faces of Independent Film list as well as indieWIRE's 2009 Top Ten New Voices in Cinema.

The world premiere of Rashaad's film *Premature* won the Grand Jury Prize in the 2008 HBO Short Film Competition and screened on HBO. *Premature* has played over 40 festivals worldwide, was broadcast in England, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Kenya, Japan, and has garnered over 20 awards, including the Directors Guild of America Student Award and the National Board of Review Award. His short *Choices* premiered at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, and his short *Cuts* also screened on HBO. Selected for the 2010 Tribeca All Access Program, IFP's Independent Film Week, and a recipient of the prestigious Princess Grace Foundation-Cary Grant Film Award, Rashaad recently completed his thesis feature film *Gun Hill Road*, starring Esai Morales and Judy Reyes, which premiered in the 2011 Sundance Film Festival U.S. Dramatic Competition. *Gun Hill Road* was picked up by U.S. distributor Motion Film Group and will be released this summer. Find out more about *Gun Hill Road* at [www.gunhillroad.com](http://www.gunhillroad.com) & about Director Rashaad Ernesto Green at [www.mialmafilms.com](http://www.mialmafilms.com).

#### **RON SIMONS (Producer/Executive Producer)**

Ron Simons is a professional actor and producer based in New York City. He is founder of SimonSays Entertainment – a film, stage and television production company dedicated to developing and presenting the stories, fables and narratives of under-represented communities. His firm's debut

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film project *Night Catches Us*, starring Kerry Washington and Anthony Mackie, premiered in dramatic competition at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. It was distributed theatrically by Magnolia Pictures and was screened as part of the 2010 New Directors / New Films Festival by the Museum of Modern Art and the Film Society at Lincoln Center. It won *Outstanding Film* by Black Reels as well as the SIFF 2010 FIPRESCI Award for Best American Film (FIPRESCI Award). It went on to be nominated for both an Independent Spirit Award for *Best First Feature* and an NAACP Award as *Outstanding Independent Motion Picture*. His second film *Gun Hill Road*, starring Esai Morales and Judy Reyes, also debuted at Sundance as a Grand Jury Nominee in 2011 where it was picked up for theatrical distribution by Motion Film Group. More details about SimonSays Entertainment can be found at [www.simonsaysentertainment.net](http://www.simonsaysentertainment.net).

As an actor Mr. Simons has appeared in film and television with credits in projects such as *27 Dresses* (opposite Katherine Heigl & Ed Burns), *Night Catches Us* (opposite Kerry Washington), *Mystery Team*, “Law & Order,” and “Law & Order: Crimminal Intent.” He shares the London Stage Award for Acting Excellence for a play he co-developed: Boy Steals Train. He helped produce August Wilson’s final Broadway debut Radio Golf, as well as Ain’t Supposed to Die a Natural Death at Classical Theatre of Harlem.

Mr. Simons is a former Software Engineer having developed systems at Hewlett-Packard, IBM and later, as a Knowledge Engineer, developed Artificial Intelligence systems for F500 companies such as GM, Chrysler and Morton Thiokol. He is a former Marketing Executive at the Microsoft Corporation having managed multi-million dollar marketing campaigns for the Microsoft Mail family of products.

Mr. Simons is a recipient of the Heritage Award from Columbia College’s Black Alumni Council, is a Johnson & Johnson Leadership Award Fellow, IFP Cannes’ Producer’s Network Fellow as well as a Sundance Producers’ Summit Fellow. Mr. Simons holds a BA from Columbia College, an MBA from Columbia Business School and an MFA from the University of Washington’s Professional Actor Training Program.

**MICHELLE-ANNE SMALL (Producer)**

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Michelle-Anne Small launched A Small Production Co. in 2003 with her first feature film *Not Just Yet*. As a first time writer/director/producer, it was an ambitious project for the then filmmaking novice to take on. The story was a coming-of-age drama, which closely reflected Small's experiences, in the midst of her own quarter life crisis. Completed in October 2003, *Not Just Yet* was awarded a Melvin Van Peebles Maverick Award at the 2004 San Francisco Black Film Festival.

Over the next few years, Small continued to develop her craft on small-budget projects, such as *Ghetto Dog 2*, an urban drama, distributed by Lion's Gate Entertainment in 2005; *Pendulum*, a psychological thriller, starring Paul Ben Victor (*True Romance*); and *Back Stab*, an urban heist film, starring Chyna Layne (*Precious*), which premiered at Urban World Film Festival 2007.

In 2008, Small produced her largest production yet, *A Kiss of Chaos*, a Latino crime thriller, starring Adam Rodriguez (*CSI: Miami*), Judy Marte (*Raising Victor Vargas*), and Manny Perez (*Bella*), which premiered at the HBO American Black Film Festival in 2009, screened at HBO New York International Latino Film Festival 2009 and Won Best Feature at the SOHO International Film Festival 2010. *A Kiss of Chaos* was released by Maya Entertainment in December 2010.

Small has returned to her creative roots for her next project. She has penned a period drama, entitled *At Last*, which is currently in late development and has a production start date of July, 2011. She is also Co-producing *Stupid Cupid*, a romantic comedy with Saldana Productions, as part of a slate of projects to be executed through 2012.

### **NICK HUSTON (Co-Producer)**

Nick Huston is a co-founder of the New York City based production company Rosetta Films. From 2003 to 2007, Nick managed Gotham Sound and Communications, one of the largest production sound sales and rental facilities in the US. During his time at Gotham, Nick worked on various projects as a technical consultant including *The Departed*, *The Producers*, *Prairie Home Companion*, *Across the Universe*, "Sex and the City," "Law and Order," "Wife Swap," and "Project Runway," among others.

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Since then Nick has worked as a production office coordinator for (*Untitled*) and *Far From Family*. Nick has also produced several short films including *Stolen Lives* (Producer) which won the Audience Award for Best Short at the 2005 New York International Independent Film and Video Festival and was nominated for Best Short and Best Actress over all at the 2005 Latino Imagen Awards. In addition, Nick has strong technical background with five years' experience in television production.

Nick produced the 2009 Sundance Selection feature film *Once More with Feeling* starring Chazz Palminteri, Drea de Matteo, and Linda Fiorentino, directed by Jeff Lipsky and Executive Produced by Ed Carroll.

In 2009, Nick produced *Weakness*, starring Bobby Cannavale and Danielle Pannabaker, and the family film *Wind Jammers*. Both of these films premiered in 2010.

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## CREDITS

### CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Enrique Rodriguez.....	ESAI MORALES
Sugar.....	ROBERT SALZMAN
Prison Guard.....	TY JONES
Michael Rodriguez.....	HARMONY SANTANA
Fernando.....	ROBIN DE JESUS
Angela Rodriquez.....	JUDY REYES
Karina.....	VANESSA ASPILLAGA
Gloria.....	MIRIAM COLON
Jeanette.....	SHIRLEY RUMIERK
Pete.....	FELIX SOLIS
Danny.....	FLACO NAVAJA
Tico.....	FRANKY G
MC.....	CARIDAD DE LA LUZ
Antoine.....	DENNIS JOHNSON
Jai.....	CEEZ LIIVE
Samantha.....	GLEENDILYS INOA
Chris.....	TYRONE BROWN
Officer Thompson.....	ISIAH WHITLOCK JR
Boy in Locker Room.....	JEFF LIMA
Girl in High School.....	TASHIANA WASHINGTON
Girl 2 in High School.....	ZORA HOWARD
Officer Manager.....	RON SIMONS
Chef.....	ANTHONY GRASSO
Hector.....	VINCENT LARESCA
Tatiana.....	LAIZA LEE PIERCE
Mr. Donovan.....	ROBERT PRESCOTT
Manny.....	ADEL MORALES
Dice Player.....	LOUIS MARTINEZ
Young Man 1 in Park.....	EPHRAIM BENTON
Magdalena.....	KARINA CASIANO

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## CREW

Writer/Director.....RASHAAD ERNESTO GREEN  
Executive Producer.....ESAI MORALES  
Executive Producer.....RON SIMONS  
Producer.....RON SIMONS  
Producer.....MICHELLE-ANNE M. SMALL  
Co-Producer.....NICK HUSTON  
Director of Photography.....DANIEL PATTERSON  
Editor.....SARA CORRIGAN  
Production Designer.....MAYA SIGEL  
Composers.....ENRIQUE HANK FELDMAN & STEFAN SWANSON  
Casting Director.....SIG DE MIGUEL & STEVE VINCENT  
Costume Designer.....ELISABETH VASTOLA

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