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A
Cary Brokaw/ Avenue Pictures
Navidi-Wilde Productions
Jason Piette-Michael Cowan/ Spice Factory
Production

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S
**THE MERCHANT
OF VENICE**

A Michael Radford Film

Starring:

Al Pacino as Shylock
Joseph Fiennes as Bassanio

Jeremy Irons as Antonio
Lynn Collins as Portia

A Sony Pictures Classics Release

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CAST & CREW

Shylock Al Pacino
Antonio Jeremy Irons
Bassanio Joseph Fiennes
Portia Lynn Collins
Jessica Zuleikha Robinson
Gratiano Kris Marshall
Lorenzo Charlie Cox
Nerissa Heather Goldenhersh
Lancelot Gobbo Mackenzie Crook
Salerio John Sessions
Solanio Gregor Fisher
Old Gobbo Ron Cook
Tubal Allan Corduner
The Duke Anton Rodgers
Prince of Morocco David Harewood
Aragon Antonio Gil-Martinez
Stephano Al Weaver
Doctor Bellario Norbert Konne
Cush Marc Maas
German Count Jean-Francois Wolff
English Baron Pieter Riemens
Soldier Stephan Koziac
French Nobleman Tom Leick
Franciscan Friar Jules Werner
Leonardo Tony Schiena
Clerk Julian Nest

Directed by Michael Radford

Screenplay by Michael Radford

Produced by Cary Brokaw
Barry Navidi
Jason Piette
Michael Lionello Cowen

Executive Producers Manfred Wilde
Michael Hammer
Peter James
James Simpson
Alex Marshall
Robert Jones

Co-produced by Nigel Goldsack

Co-Producers Jimmy de Brabant
Edwige Fenech
Luciano Martino
Istituto Luce

Co-Executive Producers Gary Hamilton
Pete Maggi
Julia Verdin

Director of Photography Benoit Delhomme AFC

Production Designer Bruno Rubeo

Film Editor Lucia Zucchetti

Music by Jocelyn Pook

Casting Director Sharon Howard-Field

Costume Designer Sammy Sheldon

Make-Up and Hair Designer Ann Buchanan

Supervising Art Director Jon Bunker

INTRODUCTION

November 23 2003: Nine weeks of principal photography commenced on location in Luxembourg and Venice, Italy on director Michael Radford's THE MERCHANT OF VENICE, which he adapted and scripted from William Shakespeare's classic play.

Set in 16th century Venice, Shakespeare's timeless comedy/drama follows the fates and fortunes of a group of Christian noblemen and their interactions with the Jewish moneylender Shylock. Antonio (Irons) borrows money from Shylock (Pacino) to help his young penniless friend Bassanio (Fiennes) in his quest to win the hand of the fair Portia (Collins). Bitter at Antonio's insults, Shylock stipulates very specific terms if he defaults on the loan. As Antonio's shipping business is devastated by storms, Shylock is further angered by his daughter's elopement with the nobleman Lorenzo (Cox). The loan falls due and Shylock claims his forfeit in the form of a pound of Antonio's flesh. As Bassanio desperately tries to save Antonio from this fate, miraculous help comes from an unexpected quarter.

Written and directed by Academy Award nominee and BAFTA winner Michael Radford (IL POSTINO), THE MERCHANT OF VENICE attracted a high caliber cast headed by Academy Award winning actor Al Pacino in the role of Shylock. Considered one of the industry's most prestigious acting talents, Pacino has garnered countless awards for films as mesmerizing and diverse as the GODFATHER Trilogy, SCARFACE, SCENT OF A WOMAN, INSOMNIA and HEAT.

He was joined in the cast by Academy Award winner Jeremy Irons (REVERSAL OF FORTUNE, BEING JULIA) as Antonio and Joseph Fiennes (ENEMY AT THE GATE, SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE) as the lovestruck Bassanio. Starring alongside them are newcomers Lynn Collins (DOWN WITH LOVE, 50 FIRST DATES) as Portia, Kris Marshall (LOVE ACTUALLY, THE FOUR FEATHERS) as Gratiano, Heather Goldenhersh (SCHOOL OF ROCK, NICHOLAS NICKLEBY) as Nerissa and Charlie Cox (YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY YOU LOVE ME) as Lorenzo. John Sessions (GANGS OF NEW YORK, HIGH HEELS, LOW LIFES), Mackenzie Crook (PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN, THE BROTHERS GRIMM) and Zuleikha Robinson (HIDALGO) complete the cast.

The film has also attracted top creative technical talent including Cesar winning cinematographer Benoit Delhomme (SCENT OF GREEN PAPAYA, WINSLOW BOY), Academy Award nominated production designer Bruno Rubeo (GLADIATOR, DRIVING MISS DAISY), Academy Award and BAFTA nominated make-up and hair designer Ann Buchanan (SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE), costume designer Sammy Sheldon (CALCIUM KID, HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY) and editor Lucia Zucchetti (MOVERN CALLER, INTERMISSION).

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE is produced by Avenue Pictures, Spice Factory and Navidi Wilde Productions in association with the UK Film Council, Studios Delux and Immagine E Cinema. The film is produced by Cary Brokaw for Avenue Pictures, Barry Navidi for Navidi Wilde Productions and Spice Factory's Michael Lionello Cowan and Jason Piette. The film is a Movision presentation. Executive producers are Manfred Wilde, Michael Hammer, Peter James and James Simpson. THE MERCHANT OF VENICE is co-produced by Nigel Goldsack, Jimmy de Brabant for Delux and Edwige Fenech for Immagine E Cinema.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS



Shylock (Al Pacino)

One of the most dramatic and tragic characters in Shakespearian literature, Shylock embodies a range of characteristics as the central persona of the story – he is painted as the villain, but because of his complexity, he is seen as both a sympathetic and loathsome character.

Shylock is a loan shark in the Jewish “getos” of Venice in 1594 A.D. and father to Jessica, a beautiful but free spirited young woman. His status as a moneylender is unmatched and Shylock is approached by the merchant Antonio, who seeks a loan for Bassanio. Yet, all is not as it appears between Antonio and Shylock. Antonio has publicly denounced Shylock and other Jews for their practice of usury (loaning money at exorbitant rates of interest), and consistently hurts their business by offering loans with no interest. This set of circumstances, along with the persecution of Jews at the time, has made Shylock spiteful towards Antonio, who jumps at the chance to have the merchant in his debt.

The poet W.H. Auden has been quoted as saying this about Shylock’s character – “Those to whom evil is done, do evil in return.”



Antonio (Jeremy Irons)

A successful merchant residing in Venice, Antonio is an honorable man who comfortably lives the life of luxury. As generous as a person could be, Antonio shares a deep association with his friend Bassanio. When Bassanio approaches him about an endeavor of love he must embark on, Antonio offers his credit through Shylock, a local Jewish loan shark.

Antonio’s generosity and honor is unmatched and he accepts Shylock’s offer – no interest, but instead a pound of Antonio’s flesh if the loan is not paid on time.



Bassanio (Joseph Finnes)

The model of a typical Elizabethan lover and aristocrat – young, impulsive and romantic – Bassanio’s lavish lifestyle has left him deep in debt and desperately in love with the fair Portia. He turns to his close friend Antonio in an effort to secure enough funds to travel to Belmont and try this hand at proving his worth of Portia, who has been waiting for a suitor to solve her late father’s riddle of matrimony.



Portia (Lynn Collins)

As one of Shakespeare’s most intelligent and captivating heroines, Portia is a wealthy girl who lives on her family’s estate in Belmont. Upon his death, her father bequeaths a unique wedding challenge to any potential suitor – to win the hand of his daughter, a suitor must choose the correct casket of three available to prove his worth.

Out of all her suitors, she has already fallen in love with Bassanio and cannot hide her hope that he chooses the right casket. His decision weighs heavily on their future – if he chooses the wrong casket, they will never be together and Antonio will be negligent on his debt; if he chooses the right casket, they will treasure in their love for each other and Antonio will be spared.

Portia is above all a gracious and resourceful woman whose wit and playfulness drives her to great heights of success and love.

SYNOPSIS

Set in the lavish era of 16th century Venice, Shakespeare's most powerful play comes to bare in Michael Radford's *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*, which follows the interlocking lives of a captivating assortment of classic Shakespearean characters.

Bassanio (Joseph Finnes) is the typical Elizabethan lover and aristocrat – young, impulsive and romantic – whose lavish lifestyle has left him deep in debt and desperately in love the fair Portia (Lynn Collins) of Belmont. But to win her hand, he must prove his worth. To prove his worth, he must not only raise money he doesn't have, but he must also correctly solve the riddle of matrimony bequeathed by Portia's late father.

Determined to call Portia his bride, Bassanio employs the support of his dear friend Antonio (Jeremy Irons), a successful merchant residing in Venice. But with no word from his trading fleet, Antonio is short of resources and must use his credit for a loan. This loan comes in the form of Shylock (Al Pacino), a Jewish loan shark who, like all his people, is forced to live in "ghettoes" and has limited access to the city.

Yet, all is not as it appears between Antonio and Shylock. Antonio has publicly denounced Shylock and other Jews for their practice of usury (loaning money at exorbitant rates of interest), and consistently hurts their business by offering loans with no interest. This set of circumstances, along with the persecution of Jews at the time, has made Shylock spiteful towards Antonio, who jumps at the chance to have the merchant in his debt.

However, this time Shylock decides to offer his loan at no interest; instead, he demands a pound of flesh from Antonio if his loan is not repaid on time. Confident that Bassanio will return his good fortune three times over, Antonio agrees to the unusual terms.

As Bassanio travels to Belmont with Gratiano (Kris Marshall) to woo his beloved, other events threaten to ruin his quest before it is fulfilled. Portia, in the company of her lady-in-waiting Nerissa (Heather Goldenhersh), has already been welcoming potential suitors, who at any time could solve the mystery of her father's will which states that she must marry the man who correctly chooses one of three caskets.

Then Antonio's trade ships fail to produce any profit for the merchant. And, Shylock's daughter Jessica (Zuleikha Robinson) impulsively elopes with Bassanio's friend Lorenzo (Charlie Cox); in the process, she escapes with a fair amount of her father's personal wealth. This shatters Shylock to the core and causes him to focus all his energy on the repayment of the debt, almost taking out a lifetime of discrimination on the merchant.

Upon hearing of his friend's set of circumstances, Bassanio leaves Belmont and rushes home to find a solution to Antonio's predicament. But before Bassanio can arrive home, the loan is declared in default and the distraught and semi-deranged Shylock demands his pound of flesh from Antonio in order to fully seek his revenge.

The Duke (Anton Rodgers), the reigning power in the city, has called a legal expert to the court to proceed over these extraordinary hearings – is Antonio truly in default on his loan? Is the payment that Shylock is asking for justified? Can Bassanio return in time to save Antonio? In true Shakespearean fashion, all is not as it seems in a story wrought with morality, revenge, redemption and love.

THE HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

As one of Shakespeare's most compelling plays, the complexity of THE MERCHANT OF VENICE has frequently produced reluctance on the part of many directors and producers to attempt to bring it to the screen. In fact veteran director Orson Welles had once attempted the project but was finally forced to abandon it as too challenging to transform onto film.

Producer Navidi comments. "I met Michael Radford in LA and I'd always wanted to work with him. I suggested THE MERCHANT OF VENICE to him. He said, 'well, that sounds interesting but I've never done Shakespeare.' I said, 'even better.'" Navidi broached the subject with producer Cary Brokaw with whom he was working on another film project.

Brokaw had known Radford since the late 80's and had always been interested in working with him, so when Navidi mentioned him as a possible director Brokaw immediately embraced the idea. Michael Radford recalls the events. "Barry approached me at a dinner party and asked if I'd like to make THE MERCHANT OF VENICE and I said I'd never really thought about it. I hadn't directed Shakespeare on stage or a Shakespeare movie but I read the play, and said I'd be interested in doing it if we could get the right actor to play Shylock."

Radford, Brokaw and Navidi were of a single mind as to how to best approach the play. Their goal was to create a dynamic balance between the plays' tragic and comedic elements while keeping the drama alive and accessible. Perhaps the most important decision in adapting THE MERCHANT OF VENICE was the question of who would play the legendary and complex role of Shylock. Brokaw suggested Al Pacino with whom he was working on ANGELS IN AMERICA and Radford and Navidi were again in full agreement. "Al and I had become very friendly while working on ANGELS together," explains Brokaw. "One day at lunch I brought up the idea of filming THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. Al said, 'that's really interesting, I just started to think I was finally old enough to play Shylock.' Like me, Al thought of Shylock as one of the greatest roles of all Shakespearean characters."

When Pacino expressed strong interest, Brokaw organized a dinner between him, Radford and Pacino in New York. "Al felt immediately comfortable with Mike and the exceptional first draft of the adaptation Mike had written," recalls Brokaw.

Further to his meeting with Pacino, director Radford returned to the business of further refining the script. "I sat around wondering what on earth I could do because if someone asked you to write a script, you expect to be writing characters and dialogue but it's all already there, and it's all theatrical." It was on the advice of a close friend that Radford decamped London to the source of the play – the city of Venice. "I immediately started to get an understanding of how I was going to do this thing," he comments. "Because Venice basically has still remained a 16th century city." Radford jokes how "he wrote the script with my collaborator William Shakespeare. He just contributed the dialogue, the plot, the story, and the characters and I did all the rest."

As the script took further shape under Radford's touch, producers Brokaw and Navidi enlisted the help of Peter James and James Simpson from Movision along with producers Spice Factory to pull together the remaining portion of the film's financing. Spice Factory producer Jason Piette

explains what drew them to the project. “Shakespeare delivers something that is immediately intelligible and dramatic and there is no reason why that picture should not be as broadly popular as a more commercial film. And of course THE MERCHANT OF VENICE is a pitch in itself because it has not been made as a major movie before. It’s a great adaptation of a great play.”

Michael Cowan continues: “I remember first meeting Barry in London with Cary and then reading the script. I have to say that a teenager I was not one of those ‘I love Shakespeare’ type of guys but what attracted me to the script was that I thought the film had strong themes which was very much about today’s society - jealousy, prejudice and empowering of women. I thought there could be a crossover market if the film was cast right. I then met Michael Radford in Mezzo’s on Wardour Street and after a long afternoon left thinking here is a guy that will deliver a great film as he’s so passionate.”

CASTING

The attachment of Pacino in the role of Shylock proved the production was already attracting the beginnings of the high profile cast necessary to elevate this project beyond the realms of yet another Shakespeare adaptation. However in order to create the caliber of film the producers were aiming for, they needed to ensure that the remainder of the cast would be equally as comfortable with the Shakespearean words as with their own individual characters throughout the complexity of this text.

Michael Radford comments on the process. “Casting has nothing to do with writing, it has to do with thinking broadly and then letting go of the ideal. You strive to find someone who fits your imagined ideal of the character and then you immediately forget about it, you must, because you now have in front of you a human being who cannot be fitted into a rigid straightjacket and this is a mistake I think a lot of directors make. If you adapt your character to your actor, you’ll never be miscast.”

In counter-balance to the energy of Shylock, Jeremy Irons was cast in the complex role of Antonio. “I think I would have been very upset if he’d said no because I think he was perfect,” says Mike Radford. “Jeremy is not only a great Shakespearean actor but he’s a great movie actor. He’s just wonderful and of course he approaches things in a much different way from Al. Al is very precise, comes to it in a very painful way, but Jeremy is pure technique.”

Irons himself had no qualms about taking on the role. “I chose to do it because Mike and I had talked in the past about different things and it had never happened. I know Al, but I’ve never worked with him. I’m a great admirer of his and it’s nice to have a chance to do Shakespeare on film. Shakespeare is the playwright with the most meat. He’s an extraordinary writer of the human condition so it was an easy one to choose.”

Alongside these two heavyweights of the acting profession, the production was left to fill the other critical roles in the script. Producer Barry Navidi recalls the experience. “Sharon Howard-Field did a wonderful job casting this movie. She had never had this long to cast a picture and she’s an expert in casting these kind of movies as she was head of casting for the National Theatre for five years. She interviewed everyone, all the usual suspects out of the UK but Michael wasn’t excited about some of the English actors here and so we looked into the US and she came up with Lynn Collins who blew everybody’s mind.”

In fact this relatively unknown American actress became something of a casting coup for the production. Michael Radford has nothing but praise for her performance. “I think Lynn Collins is just the best Shakespearean actress of her generation. She is just extraordinary. She came in for a small role and that’s where casting was important, when you see somebody come in and you realize they have an immense ability.” For Collins, who had started her acting career in the role of Ophelia, the chance to play one of Shakespeare’s most interesting heroines alongside some of the industry’s greatest talents, was nothing short of an honor.

In comparison with the challenge of casting Portia it was almost anti-climatic how easily the production cast the role of Bassanio. As producer Brokaw remembers, “Joe Fiennes was our first and only choice to play Bassanio from day one. From the first day of rehearsal he delivered all colors you ever wished the character could have.”

FROM THE STAGE TO THE SCREEN

“THE MERCHANT OF VENICE is interesting because it is the most produced of Shakespeare’s plays the world over, which I was really startled to learn. It’s daunting and difficult because it combines such disparate elements,” comments producer Cary Brokaw on his first impressions of trying to adapt this text. Yet still, despite being frequently produced theatrically this play has never been committed to the screen. This in itself already presented a challenge for writer/director Michael Radford.

Radford was looking to create a cinematic THE MERCHANT OF VENICE, not merely putting a theatrical production on film. Aware that the medium of cinema allows for closer focus on individuals where emotions can be played out in expressions and subtle gestures, rather than just words, Radford took that into consideration when he was adapting the text. “Cinema demands a certain speed,” explains Radford. “You get there faster not because the words are not beautiful in the cinema but because you see so much closer what people are feeling. They don’t have to explain it to you. I just tried really to set it in as real a context as I possibly could, to make everyone feel as real as possible.”

He continues. “No one talks about the actual plays anymore. They talk about how it’s been done this time so I thought it might be rather fun to make a film of the play like a real movie, that affects you so that it actually grips you viscerally, so you care about the characters and you care about their dilemmas and all of those human flaws and weaknesses.”

In the spirit of revitalizing THE MERCHANT OF VENICE for today’s cinema, Radford left himself open to cutting and changing sections of the original text to make it more accessible for the audience. Brokaw was impressed at the resulting adaptation. “He found just the right things to cut,” he says. “It’s very dense and in adapting the play, he preserved virtually all of the great speeches and the great moments but found a way to bring it to life so the characters are real and vibrant.”

Producer Jason Piette elaborates. “If you acted it out on film from page 1 to the end, it would be over three hours long so the adaptation was already an interpretation just in terms of the approach it takes.”

The cast themselves were extremely thankful for this extra preparation time as actor Al Pacino praises the director’s decision to rehearse. “We found a way to rehearse because there’s no way to even think about doing this kind of stuff without getting together and rehearsing with the group. We sort of committed to each other and we talked to each other and engaged in a way that turned us into a troupe. There’s no other way to do it. You have to be a troupe and my hat’s off to Michael Radford for letting it happen.”

However despite the unexpected rehearsal time this very much remained a cinema production where all the cast remained conscious that though this was a stage play, nonetheless they were acting for the screen. Pacino found both advantages and disadvantages to playing this pivotal role straight onto film. “I’m happy I didn’t do the stage version of Shylock before I did this film because I think it helped me not to get into certain habits that the stage automatically leads you to because you have to project in theatre and it’s a different style because there is no close up.”

He muses. “Though I wish I was in a situation where I’d played a lot more Shakespeare than I have, because it’s good with Shakespeare to go through it once or twice and in a play, even if you’ve played a spear carrier, you were involved and engaged because you learn about a play when you do it, in a way that you can never learn by just reading it so the experience of going through it brings with it a lot of knowledge,” he concludes. “So the Shylock I do is really a film performance, it’s not a film Shylock but it’s not the way, probably, I would do it on stage. It’s just that with Shakespeare, there are times he gives you so much because he wrote for the theatre. I’m sure if he was alive today, and writing for films, a lot of these speeches would be different and they’d be cut down or sheered, turned into something else.”

Joseph Fiennes says in agreement that “Michael’s done a great adaptation and he’s pared it right down. It’s lean, it’s fat free, it’s to the point and it works beautifully with the camera. You can afford to cut a lot of those lines because that look can say so much between two people and you don’t get that on stage.”

As well as cutting sections from the play and replacing them with equally powerful visual images, Michael Radford also controversially added moments that he felt the play was lacking. Though he is quick to comment that did not include re-writing any of Shakespeare’s actual dialogue. “I began to realize that Shakespeare tends to come into his plays in the middle of the action and he doesn’t have any back story but it’s related by the characters as they appear on the stage, and that’s no good for a movie. So I decided to enter this one before the play started, without writing any Shakespeare lines. People say each other’s names, that’s not writing Shakespeare, that’s just people saying each others names so I constructed, while not a whole prologue, an introduction to the movie so you know exactly where you were, you knew what the quarrels between people were and are and you know the relationships between people. I think that was essential to the success or failure of this movie.”

Radford succeeded in his endeavor to establish the protagonists visually at the beginning of the play. “The first 20 pages of Michael’s script are all visual, introducing every character in the play and basically setting the ‘mise en scene’ of the entire movie,” says Barry Navidi.

“When he showed me the script and laid out the preambles to each scene, the moments of visuals that accompanied the verbal scenes and then the actual visuals within the verbal scenes, I thought there’s a chance here that there’ll be an understanding of Shylock in a way that you can’t quite get on stage,” concurs Al Pacino.

THE LOOK AND FEEL

The popularity of Shakespeare's texts have clearly led them to not only countless stage productions but also to a variety of unique screen adaptations, all resulting in different reactions from the audience. There have been the more traditional Kenneth Branagh's HAMLET, to the updated WEST SIDE STORY version of "Romeo and Juliet," the modern Baz Luhrmann ROMEO AND JULIET and the teenage version of "The Taming of the Shrew" called 10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU. However, Radford and his production team knew how they wanted to present THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

Producer Navidi explains that Michael Radford didn't want THE MERCHANT OF VENICE to be contemporary and in fact he finds those versions very uncomfortable. So he said we have to do it as 16th century Venice and the way we would blend in modern aspects, is by how they deliver the text and how we can introduce some of the production design and costume as far as bringing fusion into it."

Director Radford was very certain how he wanted his Venice to appear on the screen. "I tried to make it smelly and dirty. I don't like people appearing in neat, pristine costumes. People didn't wash a lot in those days and the place was smelly and dirty. I tried to make the weather count, I tried to make the fact people traveled by water all the time count."

One of those most pivotal to bringing 16th century Venice to cinema reality was cinematographer Benoit Delhomme. Cary Brokaw describes the vision. "We talked about the look the movie needed to have and he absolutely delivered. It's incredibly real but it's also rich and painterly. There's tremendous depth and really interesting use of light in every frame. A significant portion of the film is shot hand held which gives the film a lively and immediate quality. Period films tend to be shot in a way that's studied and formal. Mike and Benoit decided that this film would be different."

Producer Jason Piette also lavishes praise on Delhomme's technique. "If you print straight off the film, you'd think this was actually a painting. It's so extraordinary as it's matching studio with real Venice but more than that, it's really creating a place that you can walk through and feel you are there," he continues. "There's a murky, foggy feeling for it, there's furtive, secretive desires going on in this place, and that's really the feeling of it, but it's also very rich and luscious. There's this golden look to the thing but it's within this somber, very serious world."

Actor Al Pacino was also awestruck by the cinematographer's work. "The thing I really admire about Benoit is that when you look at this picture, you're there in 1596. You wonder how this is happening but you're there. The way he's painted this picture, it draws us in, it's riveting."

"Benoit has created a very mysterious, dark atmosphere, kind of seedy, sexy Venice," notes Joseph Fiennes. "It's not bright and beautiful, it's dark, dank and dirty. And yes, it's sexy."

Standing alongside the masterful filmmaking in creating 16th century was the costume design by talented designer Sammy Sheldon who had previously worked on a variety of period productions including "Gladiator," "The Canterbury Tales" and "Plunkett and Maclean." In this case, Radford did not want a strict depiction of costume during the period but a rather more stylized overall look. "English costumes of this period was very big and decorated with triangular skirts but

in Venice all through that century everything is much sexier and softer, really the proper kind of renaissance style,” comments Sheldon. “One of the big motivations for it was paintings, Mike liked Sargeant paintings, the whole kind of feel, texture, the lighting in it. They were used as a color reference.”

Sheldon describes the final look as it tied in with Radford’s vision for the film. “I wanted it to be very organic, very comfortable. We tried to do it grungy as well, dirty realism. Stripping the period bare to the point where it becomes clothing.”

Realism is the key word to Radford’s view of the film and this extended beyond the visual aspects to the characters themselves. In addition to stripping down the script to its bare essentials, Radford ensured that every line delivered by the cast was natural and real, conversation not a Shakespearean oratory. “I don’t like people declaiming,” he says firmly. “The one word which was a no-no on this movie was Shakespearean. I said, ‘I’d like you to deliver your lines as if it’s natural speech.’ I tried to make everybody feel as real as possible.”

“It became real people talking and I think that’s been surprising to all of us in this film, how easy it is to do that,” claims actress Lynn Collins. “All of a sudden, it doesn’t sound like you’re speaking verse. That’s been magical.”

Al Pacino speculates who “this picture is trying to do something that is quite ambitious in its own way, it’s staying with the text, it’s staying with the period but at the same time it’s employing a wonderful approach and a modern approach to the delivery of the language.”

“I think the challenge is to make it clear, precise, the audience doesn’t want to hear an actor sounding beautiful and Shakespearean,” remarks Joseph Fiennes. “They want to understand the inner motives of this character, their drive, their wants, their sort of, redemption. They’re not looking for an actor who’s sounding wonderfully beautiful with iambic pentameter. The discovery is bringing it back to 2004, making it relevant to an audience now, to an audience 10 years, 20 years down the line.”

“It won’t be milk-maidens and the colorful days of Good Queen Bess,” jokes John Sessions. “There’s some very bad Renaissance clichés you can fall into and I think Mike was very concerned to make it real. You’ve got to take the costume out of the costumes and the verse out of the verse, while understanding obviously what you’re saying.

Altogether the production were creating a Venice that was real and alive and vibrant, more approachable and comprehensible to an audience in the 21st century whilst remaining true to the original spirit of Shakespeare’s writing. “It’s great that we’re doing it in authentic period,” observes actor Mackenzie Crook. “It’s fantastic to be doing it in a way that Shakespeare presumably would have envisaged it. I think that Mike’s making the film that Shakespeare would have made.”

THEMES IN THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

“It’s a love story, it’s a romance, it has humor yet it’s also this profound, tragic, intensely powerful story about discrimination and prejudice and revenge. Balancing these disparate tones is a challenge,” reflects producer Cary Brokaw.

As with the majority of Shakespeare’s plays, he takes a variety of themes and interweaves them together so the complexity of the writing is a challenge for any production to take up. Pacino himself was originally wary of one of the main issues frequently raised in connection with this play. “I always felt there was a sting in the play that was Anti-Semitism and I felt this is interpreted in our world today. I felt it was prevalent in this piece so I personally stayed away from it but at the same time, I still felt the play should be performed. Then, as I delved deeper into the play, I see its relation to our world today and at the center of it is this person who was persecuted and over-reacts to the persecution which could happen to anyone.”

“This is a play about Anti-Semitism,” agrees Brokaw. “And about discrimination and about prejudice but it is not Anti-Semitic. Shylock is a very sympathetic character. We understand his pain, we understand the toll of discrimination he’s faced throughout his life and we understand why he acts in a way that is perceived to be extremely vengeful.”

For Michael Radford the contentiousness arose because Shakespeare made that distinction between the Christians and the Jews but for him, the play is not about religious differences, it is about flawed human beings. Producer Jason Piette sees it very simply. “It’s mainly a play which is more interested in the concept of forgiveness than it is whether or not Shylock is Jewish. We’re in a society now that is rent and torn apart by racism so obviously that aspect of the play is going to come under a big magnifying glass but to my mind that is not an issue. It’s so clear that Shakespeare is writing about racism but he’s not racist and the play is not racist. It’s a true statement about culture at a particular time.”

Allan Corduner also saw those aspects in the play. “It’s a play about intolerance, jealousy and people who go too far.”

Actress Lynn Collins considers that the depth in Shakespeare’s play could never solely be trivialized under the guise of racism. “What I want people to take away from this is it’s about human forgiveness and how do we rise above the norm for us, the prejudice and the differences. It’s not Christian versus Jew. It’s human and personal.”

Piette continues. “The message of the play is simply that forgiveness is absolutely key in the way that society works; in the interplay of individuals, in their love lives and in their daily lives. Without forgiveness, the society will become murderous.”

And in fact that is the situation that occurs with Shylock, who, given the opportunity to forgive, to let go of the hatred, finds himself unable to show mercy and as such his hatred ends up poisoning him and taking away everything of value he had left in his life. But that extreme courtroom scene remains ambiguous as neither Christian nor Jewish society retains any victory from the events. Shylock may have ostensibly lost his battle but for a man already so persecuted, how just was the

punishment he received. “Shakespeare was a skeptic,” expands actor John Sessions. “He was a man who constantly questioned all moral certainties and all moral commonplaces. He’s the first to take a look at the supposed integrity of Christian morality and to see the cracks.”

A further aspect of *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* that Michael Radford wanted to draw out but not underline too harshly was the relationship between Bassanio and Antonio. “We talked a lot about the homo-erotic story between Antonio and Bassanio,” explains Radford. “I do know this, I don’t know if they’ve ever had sex, but I do know that when Bassanio comes in and says I am going to get married, it’s as though a knife has gone into Antonio’s heart. It’s as though all the joy has gone from his life.” The ambiguity of Shakespeare’s writing allowed the scene to be interpreted in almost any way as is evidenced by the debate that ranged in the cast.

“I don’t think it’s an undertone,” reflects Fiennes. “I think it’s very palpable and I also think sexuality in the Elizabethan era is very different from today. I think the film is at its heart a love story but he never nails it into a homosexual love story or just a father/son story, it’s what the audience wants to take out of it, where you feel you read between the lines. I think in our day and age we get so obsessed with sexuality.”

“I think we’re terribly two dimensional in our understanding of sexuality nowadays,” says Jeremy Irons in agreement. “Male friendships in Elizabethan times were regarded as the highest form of friendship. So there’s this strange sort of paternal/filial relationship whereby an older man would befriend and maybe fall in love in a platonic way I believe, with a young man, lend him money if he needs it, support him and sort of dread the day when the young man falls in love and goes off and makes his own life. It’s what parents do in a way with their sons.”

Kris Marshall encompasses the complexities of the play. “It’s quite a paradox in a way. It’s a tragedy but it’s a comedy. It’s a love story and it’s a story of hate. It pretty much covers the gamut of human emotions; envy, jealousy, trust, love, money, racism and beauty. It covers so many different things and weaves between them almost effortlessly. And Antonio, as the merchant of Venice is kind of the main theme that links these stories together. I guess he’s the fulcrum of the piece.”

GENERAL PRODUCTION INFORMATION

Unexpectedly for a film that at first sight is so multifaceted and intricate, shooting itself proceeded extremely smoothly. Due to budget and time constraints the locations were split between exterior shots in a studio in Luxembourg and, most unusually, in Venice itself. Producer Barry Navidi credits the production's access to many of Venice's most treasured attractions to the popularity of cast member Al Pacino. "He's kind of a god in Italy," laughs Navidi. "I mean, the Mayor said, 'you want to close the Rialto bridge? We'll close it for you for 6 or 7 hours. This has never been done before. You want to shoot in the Doge Palace, we'll give you a section of it, which again has never been done before. We'll even close the Grand Canal once in a while.'" Navidi enthuses on how co-operative and how helpful the Venetians were to the film and concludes in awe. "The company moved four times in Italy and we had a very tight schedule and budget and yet we were on schedule and budget."

For the cast members, shooting in Venice was an unprecedented privilege to be able to see the exact locations where their characters might have walked as Venice itself had remained relatively unchanged since that era. "I'll tell you something it was a buzz filming on the balcony of the Doge Palace," smiles actor Allan Corduner. "We had to stop at one stage because the sun came out and there were these shafts of light. There's something ironic about being in Venice and stopping because the sun had come out."

Some of the history of Venice itself related closely to the film that brought it to life in many ways for the cast. Allan Corduner explains the background. "The merchants in Venice weren't really the Jews, because they weren't allowed to be. Jews were basically moneylenders. They weren't allowed to leave the ghetto without wearing a red hat that was the 16th/17th century version of the Star of David. So the whole notion of ghetto comes from Venice because that was the very first and after that the notion of ghetto sprang up as a word."

Radford expands the history. "It was the area they would jetare, which means to seal molten metal and it's where they made the lead shot for cannons and muskets and things and what they did was they sealed up this area and put all the Jews in there for their own safety at that time. It was very overcrowded and there were lots of things going on, not just people looking sanctimonious but also a lot of prostitution, thievery, skullduggery went on there."

Costume designer Sammy Sheldon made certain that her designs were in keeping with the laws of the time, which included the red hats for the Jews but there were other legal twists. She says that "prostitutes, courtesans were not allowed to wear pearls and they had to bear their breasts to prove they were women, and that they were courtesans. They also used to dress up as men, which is an issue in this film as they all dress up as men."

Sheldon also researched the part that masks played in Venetian life as some of the characters, especially when the younger noblemen are carousing or when they come to take Jessica, are hidden behind their masks. She found that in Venice masks were worn all the time to hide you if you were doing something you should not have done or did not want to be seen to be doing. "If you were a man and you wore a mask outside, you could do things that you didn't do if you didn't

wear the mask,” she mentions. “You could go and beg, you could visit a prostitute. There were times when you could and couldn’t wear it, set periods and they weren’t just for the carnival.”

As Sheldon worked hard to ensure the authenticity of the costumes whilst keeping to the vision that Michael Radford was creating on the screen, she found that with the crowds of extras and changes in shooting locations proved to be one of her biggest challenges. “The whole logistics of shooting in Luxembourg on the Venice set, knowing that you’ve got a limited budget and limited stock and then have to come to Venice and know that half the stock has got to be on bodies here. It’s kind of like a jigsaw,” she smiles. “The prospect of doing a Shakespeare, anyone would jump at, and the fact that it was 16th century, filming in Venice, with Al Pacino, I really wanted to do it.”

She smiles more on remembering her first meeting with Pacino as she flew to New York to discuss his costume. “On seeing my drawings, the first thing he said was... ‘I’m wearing a dress?’ And I was like, ‘no, no it’s a tunic.’”

For authenticity the production ensured not only that the costumes were on a par with 16th century Venice but for the main banquet scene after Bassanio’s and Portia’s wedding they brought in a home economist to create the perfect Venetian wedding feast. “Vegetables were available in Europe like garlic, aubergines, broad beans, turnips, leeks, onions, parsnips, beats and then fruit,” she says. “With the help of an Italian chef, they prepared an authentic boars’ head and fully cooked rabbits garnished with various herbs for that extra visual impact. But there are little things that you don’t think of when you’re doing food, you have to be aware of people with allergies, as you don’t know what every single actor’s allergies are, you have to be pretty basic. You should be aware that there are certain things that people shouldn’t eat or drink. But a lot of it is just for show.”

Director Michael Radford considers the production overall. “It was so difficult this film that everybody felt they had to pull together. People remarked on the intensity of what was going on, saying that there’s a real intensity that you don’t often find on a film set. People were really concentrating and a lot of it was down to Al. He set a tone and nobody would feel comfortable if they didn’t match that intensity.”

CAST BIOGRAPHIES



AL PACINO (“Shylock”)

Al Pacino is an eight-time Academy Award nominee. After receiving Best Actor nominations for *AND JUSTICE FOR ALL*, *THE GODFATHER PART II*, *DOG DAY AFTERNOON* and *SERPICO*, Pacino won an Oscar for Best Actor for his performance in *SCENT OF A WOMAN*, for which he also won a Golden Globe. He received three nominations as Best Supporting Actor for his roles in *THE GODFATHER*, *DICK TRACY* and in David Mamet’s screen adaptation *GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS*.

Recently seen in HBO’s television adaptation of Tony Kushner’s play *ANGELS IN AMERICA* for director Mike Nichols. Earlier in the year he was seen on-stage in Oscar Wilde’s *SALOME* both on and off Broadway and as Arturo Ui in *THE RESISTABLE RISE OF ARTURO UI* at Pace University. His most recent film credits include *PEOPLE I KNOW* and *THE RECRUIT*.

In 2002, Pacino starred in Christopher Nolan’s *INSOMNIA* and in Andrew Niccol’s *SIMONE*. In 1999, Pacino was seen in *THE INSIDER* for Touchstone Pictures as 60 Minutes reporter Lowell Bergman. The film received seven Academy Awards. Pacino also starred in *ANY GIVEN SUNDAY*. In 2000, Pacino completed his second directorial effort *CHINESE COFFEE* and also directed and starred *LOOKING FOR RICHARD*, a meditation on Shakespeare’s Richard III.

Pacino’s other film credits included *DONNIE BRASCO*, *THE DEVIL’S ADVOCATE*, *TWO BITS*, *HEAT*, *CITY HALL* and *CARLITO’S WAY*. Additional films include *FRANKIE & JOHNNY*, *THE GODFATHER PART III*, *SEA OF LOVE*, *REVOLUTION*, *SCARFACE*, *AUTHOR!AUTHOR!*, *BOBBY DEERFIELD* and *SCARECROW*.

After studying with Herbert Berghof and Lee Strasberg at the Actor’s Studio, Pacino made his professional acting debut in off-Broadway productions of *THE CONNECTION* and *HELLO, OUT THERE*. He won an Obie Award for *THE INDIAN WANTS THE BOX*. He won two Tony Awards for *THE BASIC TRAINING OF PAVLO HUMMEL* and *DOES A TIGER WEAR A NECKTIE?* He is also a longtime member of David Wheeler’s Experimental Theatre Company.

Pacino won the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Independent Feature Project (IFP) at their 1996 Gotham Awards. In 2000, Pacino was honored by the Film Society of Lincoln Center. He also received the Cecil B. De Mille Award by the Hollywood Foreign Press in 2001.



JEREMY IRONS (“Antonio”)

Jeremy Irons began his career in England in theatre at the Bristol Old Vic and then debuted in London in *GODSPELL* as John the Baptist. His work in the West End and at Stratford upon Avon culminated with his performance of *Richard II* for the RSC. He made his Broadway debut in Tom Stoppard’s *THE REAL THING* opposite Glenn Close, for which he won both the Drama League and Tony Awards for Best Actor.

Irons has played many roles for television, most notably in *LOVE FOR LYDIA* and *TALES FROM HOLLYWOOD*. His performance in *BRIDESHEAD REVISITED* brought him worldwide acclaim and nominations for an Emmy Award, the BAFTA and Golden Globe Award for Best Actor. In 1996, he directed and co-starred in *MIRAD, A BOY FROM BOSNIA*, a Channel 4 film about refugees.

On the big screen, he has starred in such films as Jerry Skolimowski’s *MOONLIGHTING*, Harold Pinter’s *BETRAYAL*, Volker Schlöndorff’s *SWANN IN LOVE* and *THE MISSION* with Robert DeNiro. Irons played opposite Meryl Streep in *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT’S WOMAN*, for which he received the Variety Club Award for Best Actor and a BAFTA nomination and Roald Dahl’s *DANNY, CHAMPION OF THE WORLD*. His performance in *DEAD RINGERS* brought him a Best Actor Award from the New York Film Critics Circle and a Canadian Genie. Irons starred again with Glenn Close in the film *REVERSAL OF FORTUNE*. For this, Irons received the 1990 Academy and Golden Globe Awards for Best Actor.

Irons went on to work in such films as Steven Soderbergh’s *KAFKA*, David Cronenberg’s *M. BUTTERFLY*, Bille August’s *THE HOUSE OF SPIRITS* further to creating the voice of Scar for Disney’s *THE LION KING*, followed by the action film *DIE HARD WITH A VENGEANCE* and Bernardo Bertolucci’s *STEALING BEAUTY*.

Irons’ more recent films include Wayne Wang’s *CHINESE BOX* and *MAN IN THE IRON MASK*. He played Humbert, Humbert in Adrian Lyne’s controversial film *LOLITA* and also co-starred in *LONGITUDE*, an A&E Granada film. Further film credits include *AND NOW...LADIES AND GENTLEMEN*, *THE TIME MACHINE*, *CALLAS FOREVER*, *LAST CALL* and *MATHILDE*. In 2003 Jeremy Irons debuted in the New York City Opera production of Stephen Sondheim’s *A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC*. Upcoming films include István Szabó’s *BEING JULIA* with Annette Bening, and Ridley Scott’s *KINGDOM OF HEAVEN*. Irons will be in Venice this autumn shooting *CASANOVA*, a film by Lasse Halstrom.



JOSEPH FIENNES (“Bassanio”)

Joseph Fiennes worked with the Young Vic Youth Theatre for eighteen months and went on to train at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He left Guildhall and went straight into the West End into the production of WOMAN IN BLACK. He continued in the West End starring with Bernard Hill in Arthur Miller’s A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE.

He then went on to star opposite Helen Mirren in A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY, directed by Bill Bryden. Fiennes again worked with Bill Bryden on SON OF MAN at the RSC. He went on to play numerous roles at the RSC including TROILUS AND CRESSIDA, THE HERBAL BED, AS YOU LIKE IT and LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS. Fiennes has also played Edward in EDWARD II for Michael Grandage at the Crucible in Sheffield, and most recently, played Berowne in LOVE’S LABOURS LOST at the National Theatre, directed by Trevor Nunn.

Fiennes grasped worldwide fame through his role as William Shakespeare in John Madden’s SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE alongside Gwyneth Paltrow. He played opposite Cate Blanchett in Shekhar Kapur’s ELIZABETH. Other screen credits are Jean Jacques Annaud epic ENEMY AT THE GATE with Jude Law, Milcho Manchevski’s DUST, KILLING ME SOFTLY with Heather Graham and LUTHER co-starring Alfred Molina. Fiennes will be next be seen in John Dahl’s THE GREAT RAID alongside Benjamin Bratt and Connie Nielsen, followed by Regis Wargnier’s MAN TO MAN opposite Kristen Scott-Thomas which will premiere at the Cannes Film Festival 2005.



LYNN COLLINS (“Portia”)

Actress Lynn Collins will display her tremendous range and versatility this year with supporting roles in numerous films. Collins appeared in the Box office hit 13 GOING ON 30, alongside Jennifer Garner and 50 FIRST DATES, with Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore.

Collins was born and raised in Texas but moved to New York when she was accepted into the esteemed Juilliard School in Manhattan to study acting. While at Juilliard, Lynn was honored with the two most prestigious awards given to drama students:

The Houseman Award, for exceptional ability in classical theatre and command of language and The Michel St. Denis Award, given to one member of the 4th year graduating class for outstanding achievement and commitment to the ensemble.

After graduating, Collins landed her first starring role on the New York stage, playing Ophelia opposite Liev Schreiber in The NYSF Public Theatre’s production of HAMLET. Numerous roles followed, both Shakespeare (Juliet in Sir Peter Hall’s production of ROMEO AND JULIET at the Ahmanson Theatre and John Barton’s Shakespeare special for PBS) and otherwise, including her first lead role on Broadway in Scott Elliot’s production of THE WOMEN at The Roundabout Theatre.

ZULEIKA ROBINSON (“Jessica”)

Actress Zuleika Robinson is an exotic in beauty and spirit as she is in name. She is of Indian, English and Arabic heritage, and her upbringing is equally as interesting. Born in London, Robinson was raised in the Far East, Thailand and Malaysia.

At 15 years old, she developed a penchant for acting that eventually led her to Los Angeles where she studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts.

Her unique beauty coupled with her honed talent helped garner her first lead role opposite Viggo Mortensen in Disney’s hit Western epic HIDALGO. The film tells the true story of long-distance endurance horse rider Frank T. Hopkins. Robinson portrays his romance Jazira, daughter of Omar Shariff.

She next traveled to London, Italy and Luxembourg to star as Al Pacino’s daughter in the film version of Shakespeare’s THE MERCHANT OF VENICE alongside Jeremy Irons and Joseph Fiennes for Sony Classics. (December 04). She previously appeared with Stellan Skarsgard and Selma Hayek in Mike Figgis’ unconventional feature film TIME CODE and was a series regular on Chris Carter’s Fox drama THE LONE GUNMAN.

KRIS MARSHALL (“Gratiano”)

As winner of the Best Newcomer 2002 at the British Comedy Awards, Kris Marshall found success in the role of Nick Harper in four series of the BBC Television’s hit comedy MY FAMILY. Amongst his other television appearances are in the series LIKELY LADS, THE BILL, TRIAL AND RETRIBUTION II, METROPOLIS, DR ZHIVAGO and more recently MURDER CITY and MY LIFE IN FILM.

Marshall’s film credits include the recent romantic comedy hit LOVE ACTUALLY directed by Richard Curtis. He had also worked with directors Shekhar Kapur on the epic FOUR FEATHERS, Richard Eyre on IRIS and Dudi Appleton in THE MOST FERTILE MAN IN IRELAND. In the theatre Marshall has taken on roles in THE INVENTION OF LOVE, HAPPY SAVAGES, THE UNEXPECTED GUEST, WINSLOW BOY and MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM.

CHARLIE COX (“Lorenzo”)

Newcomer Charlie Cox graduated from Sherborne School having won the Gerald Pitman Award for Acting. Whilst at Sherborne, he played Mugsy in Patrick Marber’s DEALERS CHOICE, Leo in THE WRITING GAME, Weasel in Andy Wilkinson’s CODE CRACKERS, Martin and Arthur in Alan Ayckbourne’s CONFUSIONS and Nym and John Bates in HENRY V. Since graduation, Cox has had a guest role in BBC Television’s hit series JUDGE JOHN DEED alongside Martin Shaw. His feature credits include the short film HOME FROM HOME, directed by Benji Fowler and the role of Theo in writer/director Matthew Parkhill’s love triangle thriller DOT THE I for Arcane Pictures. His next role will be that of Giovanni for acclaimed director Lasse Halstrom in the feature of CASANOVA.

HEATHER GOLDENHERSH (“Nerissa”)

Heather graduated with a BFA from the very prestigious acting conservatory, Julliard in New York, which also boasts amongst its other graduates Kevin Kline, Robin Williams and Lynn Collins. She immediately entered the theatre community in New York, working in the plays PSYCH, GOODNIGHT CHILDREN EVERYWHERE, FREEDOMLAND, LONG DAYS JOURNEY INTO NIGHT and THE CHERRY ORCHARD earning herself a very formidable reputation as one of the best young theatre actresses around, both in classical and contemporary comedy and drama.

Goldenhersh made her first foray into television appearing in the A & E movie of the week, THE GREAT GATSBY playing the tragic character of Myrtle opposite Toby Stephens’ Gatsby. In the film world she worked with PJ Hogan in UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, Doug McGrath in NICOLAS NICKLEBY as Fanny Squeers and Richard Linklater in SCHOOL OF ROCK with Jack Black. Prior to MERCHANT, she filmed KINSEY starring Liam Neeson and directed by Bill Condon, THOUGHT CRIMES directed by Sydney Lumet for HBO and THE HEIGHTS by Ishmail Merchant. She will next be seen in Academy Award winner John Patrick Shanley’s new play DOUBT.

MACKENZIE CROOK (“Lancelot Gobbo”)

A hugely popular face on British television since the success of the BBC’s BAFTA and Golden Globe award winning series THE OFFICE, Mackenzie Crook was the recipient of a 2002 Chortle Award and a 2001 nominee at the British Comedy Awards.

Transferring his talents to the big screen, Mackenzie’s most recent feature film credits include, PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN for Disney, NEVERLAND, THE GATHERING, THE LIFE OF PETER SELLERS, CHURCHILL THE HOLLYWOOD YEARS, PRINCIPALS OF LUST and STILL CRAZY. He will next be seen in Terry Gilliam’s new production THE BROTHERS GRIMM alongside Heath Ledger and Matt Damon.

JOHN SESSIONS (“Salerio”)

Well-respected comedian, film, television and theatre actor John Sessions has had successful solo work both in the theatre and on television. Amongst his solo work are the shows UNLIKELY STORIES, TALL TALES, SOME ENCHANTED EVENING, JOHN SESSIONS’ NEW YEAR SHOW, THE AMERICAN NAPOLEON, TRAVELLING TALES, AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR and PAINT SAID FRED. A selection of television work includes JUDGE JOHN DEED, THE KEY, MIDSOMER MURDERS, MURDER ROOMS, GORMENGHAST, IN THE RED, STELLA STREET, NICE DAY AT THE OFFICE and THE STATESMAN. Theatrically Sessions has starred in Scorsese’s GANGS OF NEW YORK, Mel Smith’s HIGH HEELS AND LOW LIFES, Kenneth Branagh’s IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER, Michael Hoffman’s A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM and Carl Francis’ THE HOLLYWOOD TEN.

GREGOR FISHER (“Solanio”)

Gregor Fisher is one of television’s most recognizable actors for his portrayal of the notorious comedy character Rab C Nesbitt for over ten years. His television career has seen him appearing in SCOTCH & WRY and five series of NAKED VIDEO, sketch shows for the BBC, as well as dramas such as BLOOD RED ROSES and THE TALES OF PARA HANDY. He won great

acclaim in the role of Perks in Carlton's new production of THE RAILWAY CHILDREN, played the lead in BBC sitcom BROTHERLY LOVE and triumphed as Squeers in Company Television's NICHOLAS NICKLEBY.

His numerous theatre credits include AS YOU LIKE IT, THE CHERRY ORCHARD, JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK and THE HOMECOMING. He appeared in Tom McGrath's play ONE, TWO, THREE at the Traverse that went on to the ICA and the Toronto Festival.

His film credits include ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE, 1984 and WHITE MISCHIEF and LOVE ACTUALLY.

ALLAN CORDUNER ("Tubal")

A veteran actor of stage and screen Allan Corduner has a variety of high profile productions to his name. Amongst his feature credits is the blockbuster epic from Ridley Scott, GLADIATOR, Mike Leigh's BAFTA nominated, New York Film Critics Circle winning and London Film Critics Circle nominated TOPSY TURVY, Stanley Tucci's JOE GOULD'S SECRET, Sandra Goldbacher's ME WITHOUT YOU. Further credits include ALIVE AND KICKING, EDWARD II, YENTL, MOONLIGHT MILE, THE GREY ZONE and A HIGHER AGENCY.

Television credits include the series' TRUST, DANIEL DERONDA, FOYLE'S WAR, FAT FRIENDS, LIVERPOOL ONE, MAD ABOUT YOU, INSPECTOR MORSE, MINDER, BUCCANEERS and NOSTROMO. Corduner's diverse theatrical background ranges from London's West End, the Royal Court, the Birmingham Rep all the way across to Broadway. THE COMEDIANS, the Olivier Award winner Dominic Cooke's FUCKING GAMES, TITANIC, ARSENIC AND OLD LACE, SERIOUS MONEY, AMADEUS and MISALLIANCE.

ANTON RODGERS ("The Duke")

Easily recognizable from a variety of stage and screen roles, Anton Rodgers has been a popular figure for many years. Amongst his television successes were lead roles in series FRESH FIELDS that led to FRENCH FIELDS, UPRISING, NOAH'S ARK, ZODIAC, MAY TO DECEMBER, AFTER THE WAR and THE FLAXBOROUGH CHRONICLES. Further small screen credits are on shows MIDSOMMER MURDERS, AFTER THE DANCE, STAR STRUCK, TALKING TAKES TWO and COMEBACK.

Theatrically Rodgers was a success in the children's classic CHITTY, CHITTY, BANG BANG at the Palladium, as well as starring in UNDER THE DOCTOR at the Comedy Theatre, A CHRISTMAS CAROL at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham, SOME SINGING BLOOD at the Royal Court and ST JOAN at the National. Feature films range from DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS and THE DAY OF THE JACKAL to THE SON OF THE PINK PANTHER, SECRET PASSAGE and IMPROMPTU.

THE FILMMAKERS



MICHAEL RADFORD, Director

Michael Radford was born in New Delhi, India to an English father and an Austrian mother. He grew up mainly in the Middle East, where his father served in the British army, and was educated at Bedford School and at Worcester College, Oxford. At the age of 25, having been a teacher for a number of years in Edinburgh, he went to the National Film School as one of the first 25 students in its inaugural year.

Upon graduating from the National Film School in 1974, he embarked on a series of documentaries, mainly for the BBC, including *THE MADONNA AND THE VOLCANO* (Grand Prix Nyon 1976) and *LAST STRONGHOLD OF THE PURE GOSPEL*. In 1980 he wrote and directed his first feature for BBC Scotland entitled *THE WHITE BIRD PASSES* adapted from the novel by Jessie Kesson. It was the success of this collaboration that led to the writing and making of *ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE*, one of the first films commissioned by Channel 4 for the cinema, selected for the Quinzaine des Realisateurs at Cannes in 1983 and winner of fifteen major prizes at festivals around the world. The critical success of this film launched his career in feature films.

Radford's next film, in 1984, was the cinematic adaptation of George Orwell's book of the same name and starring Richard Burton and John Hurt. Radford's 1984 won the British Film Award for best film and best actor, as well as numerous other international prizes. *WHITE MISCHIEF* starring Greta Scacchi and Joss Ackland, followed this in 1987. Although this has now become a cult film in the USA and round the world, it was a commercial failure at the time and Radford did not make another film for 6 years. During this period he went to live firstly in France, then Italy, writing screenplays and directing commercials.

It was his long-standing friendship with the Italian actor, Massimo Troisi that led to his writing and directing *IL POSTINO*, the first Italian film made by an Englishman. The film became one of the biggest grossing foreign language films of all time as well as being nominated for five Academy Awards, including Best director and Best screenplay and winning over thirty-five international awards including BAFTA's for Best Director and Best Foreign Film. It was a film made, however, under the most tragic of circumstances as the star of the film was dying during production and was not to live to enjoy its success.

Since *IL POSTINO*, Radford has co-written and directed *B-MONKEY*, starring Asia Argento and Rupert Everett, his first British film for 8 years, in 2001, *DANCING AT THE BLUE IGUANA* for Moonstone, an improvised film set in LA strip clubs. This was made with an ensemble group of actors including Darryl Hannah, Jennifer Tilly and Elias Koteas. He also directed Darryl Hannah in the highly successful London stage revival of *THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH*.

He has also, along with fifteen other major directors around the world, completed a compilation film entitled *TEN MINUTES OLDER*. Radford's sci-fi film entitled *ADDICTED TO THE STARS*, starring Daniel Craig, premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2003. He has recently returned from Santiago de Chile where he directed the Chilean actor on stage in the South American version of Allesandro Baricco's *NOVECENTO*.

CARY BROKAW, Producer

Cary Brokaw is a highly respected producer and film executive with extensive experience in film production, development, marketing and distribution. He has been President and CEO of the Avenue Entertainment Group since 1994 and Chairman and CEO of Avenue Pictures since 1987.

Cary Brokaw received a BA from USC Berkley and a MBA with honors from UCLA School of Management, beginning his career in the film industry at Fox, where he held a variety of marketing and distribution positions. He was integrally involved in overseeing the marketing and distribution of such pictures as JULIA, THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW, BREAKING AWAY, ALL THAT JAZZ and STAR WARS.

In 1980, Brokaw became Executive Vice President of the Cineplex Odeon Corporation overseeing the company's acquisition of Odeon Theatres before assuming the presidency of Island Alive Films in 1983. In 1986, Island Pictures films received seven Academy Award nominations and won Academy Awards for Best Actor and Best Actress, unprecedented for an independent company.

Brokaw formed Avenue Pictures in 1987, which produced DRUGSTORE COWBOY, AFTER DARK, MY SWEET, SWEETIE and THE FIELD. In 1992, they produced the 5 time Academy Award nominated THE PLAYER. Brokaw also produced AMERICAN HEARTS and SHORT CUTS. Further features are RESTORATION, VOICES FROM A LOCKED ROOM and they are in post-production on MINDHUNTERS.

As supervisor of Avenue Pictures Television, Brokaw and the company have produced the successful television movies SEE JANE RUN, A STRANGER IN TOWN, THE ALMOST PERFECT BANK ROBBERY, TWO MOTHERS FOR ZACHARY and TELL ME NO SECRETS. They produced AMELIA EARHEART: THE FINAL FLIGHT, PATH TO PARADISE: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTRE BOMBING and TIME SHIFTERS for Cable and also the Emmy Award winning WIT for HBO.

Last year Brokaw produced the Emmy nominated PATH TO WAR, directed by the late John Frankenheimer starring Sir Michael Gambon, Alex Baldwin and Donald Sutherland for HBO. Brokaw also produced NORMAL which was nominated for 6 Emmy Awards and the multi-award winning ANGELS IN AMERICA, winner of five Golden Globes, nominated for twenty-one Emmys, based on Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize winning plays, for HBO, directed by Mike Nichols and starring Al Pacino, Meryl Streep, Emma Thompson, Mary Louise Parker and Jeffrey Wright.

Most recently Brokaw produced CLOSER. Based on the play and adapted by Patrick Marber, the film is directed by Mike Nichols and stars Julia Roberts, Jude Law, Natalie Portman and Clive Owen. CLOSER will be released in December.

BARRY NAVIDI, Producer

After graduating with a Masters Degree in The Technique and the Art of Film making with special distinction in writing, directing and producing from the London Film School, Navidi worked as personal assistant to legendary director John Huston. Navidi formed a partnership with Danny Huston in 1986 and made the documentary of SANTA CLAUS THE MOVIE for

ABC US network. In 1987 Navidi produced the film MR CORBETT'S GHOST directed by Danny Huston, he followed this by overseeing the production of MR NORTH in 1988 and producing AUGUST HEAT for the BBC in 1990.

In 1992, Navidi moved his operation to Los Angeles where he developed a number of projects with a variety of studios including Columbia, Universal, Fox and Warner Bros. In 1996, he began the production of DIVINE RAPTURE starring Marlon Brando, Johnny Depp, Debra Winger and John Hurt. Three weeks into production the picture was halted permanently due to the inability of financial backers to fund the production. It is anticipated that it will go into production with a different cast in late 2004 under the title of HOLY MACKEREL.

Navidi was President of Sun, Moon & Stars productions in London from 1998-2000 developing and overseeing projects primarily for Europe. He executive produced BIG BAD LOVE in 2001 and currently has a number of projects in development.

MICHAEL COWAN and JASON PEITTE (Spice Factory), Producers

Since starting in 1994, producers Jason Piette (43) and Michael Cowan (38) have built Spice Factory into one of the UK's leading independent film production businesses.

To date, Spice Factory has actively produced, co-produced and co-financed more than 45 films. While many of their films have attracted top directors and star casts, Jason and Michael have also broken new writing, directing and acting talent. Their films span all genres and budget levels and have a combined production spend of approximately US\$350 million.

2003-04 productions for Spice Factory include: HEAD IN THE CLOUDS, directed by John Duigan (Cast: Charlize Theron, Penelope Cruz, Stuart Townsend and Thomas Kretschmann), THE STATEMENT directed by Norman Jewison (Cast: Michael Caine, Tilda Swinton, Jeremy Northam, Charlotte Rampling), A DIFFERENT LOYALTY directed by Marek Kaniévská (Cast: Sharon Stone, Rupert Everett) and THE BRIDGE OF SAN LUIS REY directed by Mary McGuckian (Cast: Robert DeNiro, Kathy Bates, F Murray Abraham, Harvey Keitel, Gabriel Byrne)

Other recent production highlights include \$TEAL directed by Gérard Pires (Taxi) (Cast: Stephen Dorff and Natasha Henstridge), UNDERTAKING BETTY (aka PLOTS WITH A VIEW) (Cast: Brenda Blethyn, Alfred Molina, Lee Evans, Naomi Watts), JERICHO MANSIONS (Cast: James Caan, Maribel Verdú, Geneviève Bujold, Jennifer Tilly), BOLLYWOOD QUEEN (Cast: Preeya Kalidas), PILGRIM (Cast: Ray Liotta), HONOUR THY FATHER (Cast Gérard Depardieu) and NAPOLEON (Cast: John Malkovich, Isabella Rossellini).

As well as having theatrical releases, Spice Factory productions have also featured well in numerous film festivals as well as winning awards. PLOTS WITH A VIEW was awarded a Welsh BAFTA, BOLLYWOOD QUEEN was selected for Sundance 2003, STRAYED (aka LES ÉGARÉS) was selected for competition in Cannes 2003, MR IN-BETWEEN was awarded best feature at Raindance 2001 and ANGEL FOR MAY has picked up 14 awards since 2001.

Spice Factory's joint ventures include, Movision (the UK tax and equity fund for film financing), Arclight Films (the film sales company with offices in Sydney and LA), Bluespice (a joint

venture with leading Italian producer, Peter Maggi, and his company Bluestar Movies), La Fabrique.FR (a French distribution and production joint venue already slated to do a French re-make of BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM).

Spice Factory's current slate, in various stages of production, includes PERFECT CREATURE with Dougray Scott and Saffron Burrows, BOWWOLF AND GRENDEL with Gerard Butler and M with Jim Cavaziel.

PETER JAMES, Executive Producer for Movision

After a film school education, his career began in scriptwriting and producing in North America.

He co-founded Quadrant Films, which became English-speaking Canada's largest film company during the 1970's, produced 9 movies and invested in and acquiring rights in many more including SHIVERS, the film that launched the movie careers of David Cronenberg (THE FLY) and Ivan Reitman (GHOSTBUSTERS).

Subsequently, during the 1980's and 1990's, he became an international best-selling author with fourteen novels published in 23 languages and world sales of over £50 million. In 1994, with Ian Steel, he co-founded Pavilion Internet plc, which was subsequently sold to EasyNet plc.

In 1998, he co-founded the film and television development company, Ministry of Vision Ltd (MOV), in partnership with James Simpson.

He is the executive producer of A DIFFERENT LOYALTY, HEAD IN THE CLOUDS and THE BRIDGE OF SAN LUIS REY.

JAMES SIMPSON, Executive Producer for Movision

He is a celebrated music writer and a pioneer of harnessing artificial intelligence to computerized music. After graduating from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama as a teacher, at the age of 24 he wrote and directed ULYSSES, a children's rock opera, which had a sell-out run at the Rainbow theatre, was filmed for BBC Television and won the Italian best International Children's Film Award.

He has written music for numerous television programs including Spitting Image, Through the Keyhole, Noel's House Party, and major commercials include Peugeot, Ford, Kelloggs, Natwest, Barclaycard, Fiat and Cadbury's. In 1997, he started writing with Peter James and in 1998 formed Ministry of Vision Limited (MOV).

He is the executive producer of A DIFFERENT LOYALTY, HEAD IN THE CLOUDS and THE BRIDGE OF SAN LUIS REY.

MINISTRY OF VISION (MOV)

MOV has recently produced, with Objective Television, the successful series for Channel 4, BEDSITCOM. It has been nominated in the best sitcom category for the Rose d'Or awards. Also, he is creating for Rocket Science Laboratories (the producers of Temptation Island and Joe Millionaire) MURDER MYSTERY – a 13-episode reality drama set in a haunted castle in Scotland.

MOV has just completed ten episodes of TIME TRAVELLER, a past life regression series starring celebrities and members of the public. MOV has a number of movies both in the UK and USA, including PAGE POSSESSION, DEAD SIMPLE, LAZARUS ASH, MAFIA WOMEN, MAKEOVER AND HELL PAGE.

NIGEL GOLDSACK, Co-Producer

Nigel Goldsack has worked as associate producer – line producer – co producer on a wide variety of projects. These range from the documentary EVEREST – OCEAN IN THE SKY filmed all over Tibet and up to 21,000 ft on Mount Everest, to features including Jane Campion's PORTRAIT OF A LADY, MY LIFE SO FAR, the 19th James Bond film THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH and Michael Hoffman's 1997 film of Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM with Kevin Kline and Michelle Pfeiffer. Prior to that, working as UPM/Location Production Manager on Brian de Palma's CASUALTIES OF WAR, RUBY CAIRO, SPIES LIKE US and TOMORROW NEVER DIES.

Currently involved in developing a number of his own projects including action-adventure film NATURAL CAUSES with director Andy Armstrong and the cold war thriller SITUATION VACANT.

BENOIT DELHOMME, Director of Photography

Benoit Delhomme was nominated for the Cesar for Best Cinematography in 1998 for his work on the film ARTEMISIA, directed by Agnes Merlet. He also won the Chalon Festival award for Best Lighting in 1994 for THE SCENT OF GREEN PAPAYA. Delhomme has used his talents to create the unique atmosphere for films WITH OR WITHOUT YOU for director Michael Winterbottom, THE WINSLOW BOY for David Mamet, L'IDOLE, directed by Samantha Lang and DRAGON ROUGE for Helene Angel.

Delhomme has collaborated with director Mike Figgis on THE LOSS OF SEXUAL INNOCENCE and MISS JULIE and director Benoit Jacquot on SADE and ADOLPHE. He also filmed WHAT TIME IS IT THERE, which won the Special Grand Jury Prize at the Chicago International Film Festival in 2001. Further credits are WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY, CYCLO, UN AIR DE FAMILLE, MADEMOISELLE PERSONNE, L'IRRESOLU. Amongst his commercial work are Thomas Cook, Tetley, Total, Dulux, Olivio and Rexona.

BRUNO RUBEO, Production Designer

Production designer Bruno Rubeo is a four-time collaborator with high profile directors Taylor Hackford and Oliver Stone. For Hackford he created the eerie atmosphere for DEVIL'S ADVOCATE, the strong, emotional background for PROOF OF LIFE along with the looks for BOUND BY HONOUR and DOLORES CLAIBORNE. Rubeo worked with Stone on SALVADOR, BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, starring Tom Cruise, the critically acclaimed PLATOON and TALK RADIO.

Rubeo received an Academy Award nomination for his designs on Bruce Beresford's DRIVING MISS DAISY. He has also brought to life post-civil war America in SOMMERSBY, updated the classic film THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR, as well as showing the hectic life behind the scenes at the air traffic control in PUSHING TIN. Other big screen designs were THE GREAT RAID, EVENING STAR, KINDERGARTEN COP, WALKER and BLOOD RED.

LUCIA ZUCCHETTI, Editor

Editor Lucia Zucchetti has previously already collaborated with director Michael Radford on his short film 10 MINUTES OLDER before taking on the editing of his feature THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. Zucchetti has also worked on the Best Newcomer winner at the British Independent Film Awards, RATCATCHER directed by Lynne Ramsey. She further worked with Ramsey on the feature MOVERN CALLER starring Samantha Morton, as well as Ramsey's short films GASMAN which won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, KILL THE DAY for which Zucchetti received the French Cesar Best Editing nomination and SMALL DEATHS which also won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

Other credits range from Stephen Frears' TV drama THE DEAL starring David Morrissey and Michael Sheen, the feature INTERMISSION starring Colin Farrell, directed by John Crowley, LONG TIME DEAD for Working Title and Jamie Thraves THE LOWDOWN.

SAMMY SHELDON, Costume Designer

Costume designer Sammy Sheldon who received a BAFTA nomination for her work on the BBC production of CANTERBURY TALES, also has styled various features, television programs, commercials and promos in her career. Currently at work on HITCHIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY with Sam Rockwell and John Malkovich for Disney, she has also styled THE CALCIUM KID with Orlando Bloom, BLACK HAWK DOWN, GLADIATOR and PLUNKETT AND MACLEANE. For television Sheldon has created looks for the shows ANCIENT EGYPTIANS, WANTED and DIY HARD.

Sheldon has worked on commercials as diverse as Coca Cola, Quorn, Orange, Yell.com, Magnet Kitchens, Ali G, Longines Watches, Chase Manhattan Bank and Sony Playstation. Her music promos include Badly Drawn Boy, Jemilia, Beverly Knight, The Brand New Heavies, Pulp, Eternal and the Cardigans.

ANN BUCHANAN, Make-up/Hair Designer

Make-up and hair designer, Ann Buchanan is one of the most experienced and well-regarded creatives in her field. Her career has encompassed BBC drama, advertising and editorial stills, commercials, opera and feature films. Her work has earned her both BAFTA and Oscar nominations.

Ann has worked with numerous acclaimed directors, including Mike Newell, Mike Figgis, Chen Kaig and legendary photographers Snowden, Donovan and Lichfield. Her artistes include Al Pacino, Paul Newman, Emily Watson and John Malkovich and singers from Sting to Pavarotti.

The prosthetic make-up for Willem Dafoe earned Ann an Oscar nomination for the film THE SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE. She is perhaps best known within the British film industry for her work on the commercial hit, FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL. Further feature credits are DOT THE I, KILLING ME SOFTLY, DUST, THIS YEAR'S LOVE, BEDROOMS AND HALLWAYS and AN AWFULLY BIG ADVENTURE.