

SUGAR

A Sony Pictures Classics release

Written and Directed by Anna Boden & Ryan Fleck

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 JEREMY KIPP WALKER
 Executive Produced by ANNA BODEN
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 Editor ANNA BODEN
 Production Designer ELIZABETH MICKLE
 Costume Designer ERIN BENACH
 Casting CINDY TOLAN, CSA
 Music Supervisor LYNN FAINCHEIN
 Music by MICHAEL BROOK

CAST

(In order of appearance)

Alvarez	JOSE RIJO
Alfonso	WALKI CUEVAS
Miguel	ALGENIS PEREZ SOTO
Umpire #1	SANTO SILVESTRE
Reyes	EMMANUEL NANITA CARVAJAL
Pedro	CESAR EMILIO MINAYA C.
Marcos	JOENDY BROWN PENA
Salvador	KELVIN LEONARDO GARCIA
Sanchez	MARCOS ROSA
Rudy	KARL BURY
Erica	ZAIDA ALEXANDRA HERNANDEZ
Abuela	LILIN SOTO GONZALES
Luis	DIONI FELICIANO
Carmen	TEODOSIA SANCHEZ REYES
Sofia	WALKY ALVAREZ
Jaime	LETILIER A. FOY, JR.
Javier	VICTOR MANUEL ADON
Floor Manager	RAUL ABRAHAM
Uncle Angel	MANUEL CACHE
Cousin Lupe	GISSELLE JIMENEZ
Prima Omayra	OMAYRA PEREZ SOTO
Aunt Lola	FRANCIA TERESA ANDUJAR
Cousin Felipe	MICHEL JUNIOR SANCHEZ

Neighbor Ana	HERNY SEVERINO
Uncle Jeffe	WILSON DANIEL
Frank	BRAULIO CASTILLO
Julio	CONRAD LAYTON
Antonio	CARLOS FERMIN
Jorge	RAYNIEL RUFINO
Waitress	MARLA FINN
Brad	ANDRE HOLLAND
Orlando	GERARDO J. RAMIREZ
Ed	JESUS A. DIAZ
Stu	MICHAEL GASTON
Helen Higgins	ANN WHITNEY
Earl Higgins	RICHARD BULL
Anne	ELLARY PORTERFIELD
Hilary	BARBARA P. ENGSTROM
Michael	LARRY E. DONALDSON
Clubby	ISSAC THOMAS RICHER SMITH
Jack Jefferies	RANDOLPH WEHOFFER
Umpire # 2	SCOTT BEHN
Jackass	JONATHAN GREGOIRE
Jeff	BRANDON STEINBRECHER
Randy	BRANDON ROBERT GORRELL
Travis	IAN R. WILEY
Wendy	HOLLY HANSON
Umpire #3	TED TIMBROOK
Umpire #4	DON UMLAND
Batter	CHRIS HARKINS
Reyna	ALINA VARGAS
Rafael	J. EDDIE MARTINEZ
Nikolai	SANDOR TECSY
Raquel	KAROLINA WYDRA
Oswaldo	JAIME TIRELLI
Caballo	RAFAEL ESPINAL
José	JOSE LUIS ROMERO
Hamlet	HAMLET ABREU
Jean	JEAN CARLOS RODRIGUEZ
Harrison	HARRISON ALVARADO
Roger	ROGER PENA
Umpire #5	RAMON CALDERON

SYNOPSIS

Sugar follows the story of Miguel Santos, a.k.a. Sugar, a Dominican pitcher from San Pedro De Macorís, struggling to make it to the big leagues and pull himself and his family out of poverty. Playing professionally at a baseball academy in the Dominican Republic, Miguel finally gets his break at age 19 when he advances to the United States' minor league system; but when his play on the mound falters, he begins to question the single-mindedness of his life's ambition.

The baseball academy where Miguel Santos has been training as a pitcher since he was signed at age 16 is a breeding ground for major league talent. Living at the facility during the week, players go through rigorous daily training, while scouts observe and grade their abilities. Sugar's uncommon ability on the mound is apparent, but there are thousands of teenagers across the island just like Miguel, all of whom hope for the opportunity to advance to the United States minor league system – just the first step of many on an arduous journey to the big leagues.

Miguel spends his weekends at home, passing from the landscaped gardens and manicured fields on one side of the guarded academy gate to the underdeveloped, more chaotic world beyond. In his small village outside San Pedro de Macorís, Miguel enjoys a kind of celebrity status. His neighbors gather to welcome him back for the weekend; the children ask him for extra baseballs or an old glove. To his family, who lost their father years before, Miguel is their hope and shining star. With the small bonus he earned when he signed with the academy some time ago, he has started to build his family a new house – one that has a bigger kitchen for his mom and a separate room for his grandmother.

Towards the end of their winter season, Miguel is called up to spring training in the United States – the next small step on his way to achieving his family’s dream of a big league contract. Family and friends come out of the woodwork to celebrate, and Miguel is on his way.

Miguel travels with several other Dominican rookies to the team’s spring training facility in Arizona. It’s his first time on a plane, his first time in a hotel room, his first time in a foreign land where a foreign language is spoken, his first time away from home. Miguel experiences a lot of firsts before he even sets foot on the enormous, immaculate spring training complex. Miguel quickly finds that he’s not the only superstar at spring training; there are hundreds of highly talented prospects all trying to land spots on one of the team’s minor league affiliates, including Brad Johnson, the highly touted 2nd baseman, who landed a million-dollar contract out of Stanford. Despite this new level of competition, Miguel proves himself exceptional on the mound even here, and lands a spot with the Single-A affiliate in Bridgetown, Iowa – the Swing. Brad Johnson and Jorge Ramirez, an old friend from the academy who was called up a couple years before, but has been slowed down by a lingering leg injury, are among the other players placed on the Swing.

In Bridgetown, Miguel is assigned to a host family, the Higgins, an aging Christian couple who live in an isolated farmhouse. The Higgins are devout Swing fans, and every year they house a new young player from the team. They try to treat Miguel like part of the family, inviting him to dinners, bringing him to church, and even encouraging a tenuous friendship between Miguel and their teenage granddaughter Anne.

Jorge, the more veteran player and the only other Dominican on the team, also tries to help Miguel learn the ropes. However, despite the Higgins' welcoming efforts and Jorge's guidance, the challenge of Miguel's acceptance into the community is exposed in small ways every day, from his struggle to communicate in English to an incident of casual bigotry at a local bar.

Miguel's domination on the mound masks his underlying sense of isolation, until he injures himself during a routine play at first. While on the disabled list, Jorge – his one familiar connection to home in this strange new place – is cut from the team, having never fully regained his ability following off-season knee surgery. The new vulnerability of Miguel's injury, coupled with the loneliness of losing his closest friend, force Miguel to begin examining the world around him and his place within it. Pressure mounts when Salvador, a young pitching phenom who used to play with Miguel, is brought up from the Dominican Republic to join the team. Miguel's play falters, and the increased isolation begins to take its toll on him. As his dream begins to fall apart, Miguel decides to leave baseball to follow another kind of American dream. His odyssey finally brings him to New York City, where he struggles to find community and make a new home for himself, like so many before him.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Filmmakers Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden burst onto the independent film scene in 2006 with their feature debut *Half Nelson*, a sensitively wrought drama that earned five Spirit Award nominations and brought its star, Ryan Gosling, an Academy Award® nomination for best actor. With *Sugar*, the talented and audacious writing and directing team has created another unexpected hero in Miguel “Sugar” Santos, a baseball hopeful who journeys from a poverty-ridden village in the Dominican Republic all the way to a minor league farm team in the U.S. An unconventional look at one immigrant’s story, *Sugar* examines and redefines what it means to chase after the American dream.

A lifelong baseball fan, Fleck thought he knew everything there was to know about the game. He knew that for decades the small island nation of the Dominican Republic has been supplying American teams with some of their most talented players: home run hero Sammy Sosa, the Alou brothers, pitching greats Juan Marichal and Pedro Martínez, and many more. But until a couple of years ago, he had no idea why. When Fleck and his partner Anna Boden learned that the Dominican Republic is home to training academies for every major league team in America, they were immediately drawn to the human side of the phenomenon. “We were less interested in the stories of the superstar Dominican players that we’ve all heard of,” says Fleck. “We wanted to know the stories of the guys that you’ve never heard of and you never will hear of.”

Sugar follows a talented young Dominican baseball player named Miguel on his journey to the United States to play for a minor league team in rural Iowa. “It’s not a typical story about someone trying to make good and lead the team to the championship,” notes Boden. “It’s about this particular person trying to adjust to a totally new world. It’s

a new take on the immigrant experience, with the hero ending up in a small town in Iowa instead of moving to a big city with a large immigrant community.”

In the Dominican Republic, where baseball has been popular for more than a century, the sport is often seen as the quickest way for a man to lift himself and his family out of poverty. An estimated 15 percent of major league players are Dominican-born, making the Dominican Republic second only to the United States in producing major league ballplayers. Even more impressive, more than 30 percent of players in the minor leagues, where up-and-comers are groomed for stardom, are from the island. Every year, hundreds of young hopefuls arrive at the academies eager to show their stuff to scouts from the U.S., but only a handful make it onto the rosters of major league teams.

“I think this is going to open a lot of people’s eyes to an aspect of the game they’re not familiar with,” says Fleck. “At the same time, it’s also a coming-of-age story and a self-discovery story, and I think many people will be able to relate to that experience.”

To research the film, Fleck and Boden began spending time in the Dominican Republic getting to know the local baseball community. One of their first meetings was with Junior Naboia. A former player, Naboia is now assistant general manager and director of Latin American operations for the Arizona Diamondbacks. He works out of Baseball City, the camp where most of the scenes on the island were shot.

Naboia, who experienced the difficult transition to professional player firsthand, became the filmmakers’ initial window into the world of the baseball academies. He introduced them to current players, former players and academy officials and explained how aspiring players age 16 and over come to the academies to have their potential

assessed. If they meet the academies' stringent standards, they may be invited to stay for anywhere from a few days to a maximum of four weeks for further evaluation.

"In that time, we have to decide if we like the kid and want to sign him or not," Naboia says. The stakes are extremely high. If a player is signed to a contract, he typically receives a bonus of about \$20,000, a small fortune in an impoverished nation where the average yearly per capita income is less than \$3,000.

But even before kids reach 16, they are often caught up in the island's vast baseball training industry. "There are independent private facilities that work with young players from an early age," explains Boden. "Some coaches start training kids from Little League age. Many kids go to school and then train in the afternoon, but others drop out of school at 12 or 13 to train full-time in hopes of achieving this nearly impossible dream. And if they don't make it, they don't have any sort of education to fall back on."

As Fleck and Boden listened to the stories of dozens of current and former players, Miguel's journey began to take shape on the page. "Although it's ultimately a pretty personal story about a very specific person and his journey, it came about through this accumulation of details of a common experience," says Fleck.

Once the script was ready, Boden and Fleck called *Half Nelson* producers Jamie Patricof, Jeremy Kipp Walker and Paul Mezey.

"They had put together a story that was honest," says Patricof. "It's not the story of a poor boy that comes out of the ghetto and makes it to the major leagues. It's about following your dreams and your passions, and at the same time, always making sure that the goal you're chasing is a goal you really want. "

Mezey was similarly drawn to the film's themes of self-discovery and identity. "It's a different viewpoint on a story of immigration, and it's also a story about understanding who you are as a person," he says. "Miguel's whole life is baseball. But he suddenly realizes that this thing that he's really good at, he's not exceptional at. Once that's stripped away, what do you do?"

Mezey's earlier films have included HBO Films' *Maria Full of Grace*, as well as *La Ciudad* and *Our Song*. Like *Sugar*, they were stories about the struggles of immigrants and the working class. "I thought it was really important for us to represent Sugar's world as authentically as possible," he says. "It's an obligation we had as storytellers."

The baseball community responded to the filmmakers' commitment to authenticity with an outpouring of support and goodwill. "Everywhere we went, we'd hear 'You're telling our story,' " says Mezey. "And everybody along the way has really wanted to help facilitate us in that."

With only a few exceptions, none of those cast as Dominican baseball players had ever acted before. To find an actor with the right combination of physical ability, drive and naïveté to play Miguel, the filmmakers auditioned more than 600 actors at casting sessions all over the U.S. and in the Dominican Republic. The filmmakers personally toured local ball fields and interviewed hundreds of baseball players in the Dominican Republic.

"If we found someone interesting, we'd bring him in for a callback to read from the script," says Boden. "A lot of them had no idea what they were doing, but their coach or manager had told them to come. Some of them thought they were going to be on PBS.

We got really lucky and we found some amazing young people who were just so natural and fun to work with.”

It was from among a group of young men playing softball that the filmmakers spotted Algenis Pérez Soto, whom they eventually cast as Miguel.

Like so many other Dominicans, Pérez had hoped to be one of the chosen few who are admitted to the academy. “Baseball is the most important sport in this country,” he says. “I played baseball until I was 20. Everyone wants to play baseball. Every father wants his children to have a chance to be the next Sammy Sosa or Pedro Martinez. It’s a sport that can change your life in one day.”

Pérez feels *Sugar* is a second chance to experience that life, albeit under different circumstances. “Because I never signed, it feels like a godsend. I was never in an academy when I was a baseball player. Being in the movie, I met a lot of important people, like José Rijo and José Cano. That didn’t happen when I was a baseball player, but it’s happening now.”

Producer Jamie Patricof has high praise for Pérez and for the daunting process that led the production team to him and the rest of the cast. “Finding the right Miguel was challenging. In the States, everyone wants to be an actor; down here everyone wants to be a baseball player. My hat goes off to Ryan and Anna because they spent months doing research and casting. They had to see probably a thousand kids, stopping from town to town, from baseball field to baseball field and setting up a camera, which is not a normal thing down here. Americans don’t just stop you and say, ‘Can you audition for a movie?’”

Pérez went through a rigorous training program before shooting began. He had given up playing baseball seriously several years earlier, and when he did play, he was a shortstop and second baseman, never a pitcher. To help him learn the playing techniques he would need to portray a rising young star on the mound, the filmmakers brought in a major league pitching coach who worked with Pérez for two months.

Pérez also worked one-on-one with Dominican baseball legend José Rijo. One of the preeminent pitchers in Major League Baseball during the 1980s and 1990s, Rijo was a three time All-Star and was named MVP of the World Series in 1990. “Algenis got the role not because he was a good pitcher, but because he is a good actor,” says Rijo. “But he’s also a good athlete, which made it easy for me. In the film, he looks like a professional pitcher. To have two months to do this role and to be this ready for it, he has to be a gifted player.”

One of the Dominican Republic’s best-known baseball players, Rijo was hired by the Washington Nationals to head up a training academy on the island after he retired. When the filmmakers were looking for a consultant to help organize the players and the teams, Rijo was one of the first names that came up.

In addition to his consulting role, Rijo also landed a part in the film as Alvarez, Director of the Kansas City academy. “He was so charismatic and charming, we had to put him in the movie,” says Fleck. “He had tons of great stories about when he played baseball. And he used to play for the A’s, my favorite team.”

Rijo’s life is in some ways the quintessential Dominican success story. He started playing baseball when he was six years old. As a Little Leaguer, he was a member of the Dominican National Team, and he signed with the Cleveland Indians when he was just

15. José Rijo recalls a Dominican saying that you can only leave the island two ways: by swinging the bat or by throwing the ball. “The main reason we play is that we are poor,” he says. “We are desperate to leave the country and find a way to help our families. I was throwing a ball and I was throwing it well, because that was the only way I could help my family.”

As tough as things are today for young players, Rijo says it’s a vast improvement on what he lived through. “When I first signed, there was nothing even close to this. We would just sign and go to the United States and start playing right away.”

Rijo was thrilled at the chance to work on the film. “I thought the script for *Sugar* was awesome when I first read it,” he says. “It’s about my life. And to be able to do something so different, to be acting and consulting for a movie, it was just an outstanding opportunity.”

Manny Nanita, who played minor league ball for the Minnesota Twins organization in the late 1990s, was cast as Reyes, the head coach at the academy where Miguel trains. Nanita was forced to retire as a player because of an injury and now works at the Boston Red Sox academy. “I know what these kids are going through. I came back to the Dominican to try and keep playing, but that didn’t work out.”

Like Miguel and most of his compatriots in the movie, neither Nanita nor Rijo spoke much English when they arrived in the U.S. Writer-director Ryan Fleck says this is typical for young ballplayers from the Dominican Republic. “For most of them, the number-one problem is language. Specifically, ordering food and finding food. They usually eat at someplace like McDonalds, where there are pictures.”

Even if a player is good enough and lucky enough to be sent to the States, his financial future is far from certain. “Starting salaries in the minor leagues average around \$1,000 per month,” says Fleck. “American players can get a significant signing bonus to offset a few years of low pay, but Dominican players are often paid far less than American kids getting signed out of high school or college.”

To lessen their financial burden and help them acclimate, many teams assign players to live with American host families during their first few seasons. While not all teams do this, Anna Boden says the filmmakers chose to set the story in a small town where this was the practice, “so that Miguel in the film would be able to experience the community in a much more intimate way.”

The Higgins family, who become Miguel’s surrogate family during his time in Iowa, represent a composite of real families the filmmakers interviewed while developing the script. “They’re baseball fans who have been doing this for years,” says Fleck. “They have extra room in their house and they like to take care of the players, but their number-one priority is seeing the team win.”

Sugar was shot on location in the Dominican Republic, Arizona, Iowa and New York City.

After initial scouting in the Dominican Republic, the filmmakers were convinced the island’s unique atmosphere and culture could not be replicated in another setting. “Even though this isn’t really a baseball film, baseball is one of the underlying themes, so every part of the baseball has to be accurate,” says Patricof. “In the Dominican Republic, we could shoot at a real academy. The players on our team are all players formerly signed

to the academies; the coaches are real coaches. We hired a baseball consultant who could watch every play to make sure that we were never cheating.”

Still, shooting in the Dominican Republic presented the filmmakers with some unique challenges. Accustomed to the clockwork efficiency of U.S. production teams, the filmmakers had to adjust to the island’s more languid pace. “Things are a little bit more fluid in the Dominican, in terms of schedules,” says producer Paul Mezey. “But I think it’s kind of good for everyone to slow down a little bit. Sometimes when everything runs like a machine, you don’t have the opportunity to discover things.”

Among the surprises the filmmakers encountered were chickens, cows and goats roaming the outfields of community ball fields. Also, because the Diamondbacks academy was fully operational during production, the crew had to work around the team’s playing and practice schedule.

“Any time you mount a production in another country there are always logistical hurdles to get through,” says producer Jeremy Kipp Walker. “And the scope of this film is large, with a lot of moving parts. We were dealing with baseball, opposing teams, lots of extras, lots of props. But we had a really good team and a lot of them spoke Spanish, so the language barrier wasn’t too difficult.”

Shooting on the tropical island presented director of photography Andrij Parekh, who previously worked with Fleck and Boden on *Half Nelson*, with unique opportunities as well as some difficulties. “There are things here you couldn’t shoot anywhere else and it was really important to capture those specific elements and locations,” he says. “On the other hand, working with the sun in the Dominican Republic was a huge challenge. Between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. the light is incredibly strong and almost bleaches

everything out. We were shooting mostly on baseball fields, so I couldn't really cover the set with anything to block the sun. I prayed for clouds every morning. It's really beautiful in the morning and really beautiful in the evening, but you can't shoot the whole movie in the morning or the evening."

Much of the shooting took place in the small town of Consuelo, just outside San Pedro. "We were initially introduced to the town because there is a ball field on the outskirts where a lot of the kids come and play," says Mezey. "We noticed a lot of similarities between the story of Miguel and those of the kids who converge on the local field to play softball and hardball. Then we started exploring the side streets of the town and found this beautiful street that became Miguel's street."

Having a U.S. film production descend on their town was a novel experience for the residents of Consuelo, notes Mezey. "At first, there was an incredible amount of curiosity and then an incredible amount of excitement. The community was very supportive of us, and a lot of them actually appear as extras in the movie because the day before Miguel leaves for the United States, there's a big party and the whole town comes out to celebrate."

Once the action in the film moves to the U.S., the filmmakers wanted to be just as accurate in their depiction of life among minor league players. To find the home for the Single-A team that marks the apex of Miguel's career, they spent days driving around Iowa. They eventually decided on Davenport, a small city on the banks of the Mississippi.

"The city and the team really embraced us," says Patricof. "We used the uniforms and the stadium of the real team."

To graphically illustrate Miguel's sense of dislocation when he arrives in the U.S., cinematographer Parekh created contrasting visual styles for the different locations.

“Miguel leaves a place of comfort for somewhere that is really strange and awkward for him. We wanted the Dominican Republic to feel really natural, sort of pastoral. Arizona and Iowa are more garish, with more neon and artificial lights. So I tried to give the Dominican Republic a softer palette and Arizona and Iowa have a stronger, brighter, punchier palette. When he gets to New York, which has a sizable Dominican population, I returned to that more comforting palette we used when he was at home.”

In New York Miguel begins to recover some of the joy that baseball brought to him after he discovers a community of fellow former pros who play weekend baseball at the real-life Roberto Clemente Ballfield in the Bronx's Crotona Park.

The filmmakers learned about this group during their research for the film, says Fleck. “It's an amateur league that has a ton of former professional players. We were shocked that there was this huge community of Latino players who were living in the Bronx and playing in this league. Some are in their 20s, some in their 40s, and they are still super-competitive, but they have a great time.”

For the former baseball players involved in the film, *Sugar* has been a unique opportunity to illuminate the struggles and sacrifices of young men trying to join one of the most elite groups of athletes in the world while adjusting to a new country, culture and language. “I'm sure when Americans go see a game and see Sammy Sosa, they think that Dominicans are great baseball players who make a lot of money in the big leagues,” says Pérez. “What they'll see here is the players who are up-and-coming, who are working really hard to become something.”

ABOUT THE ACTORS

Algenis Pérez Soto (Miguel “Azúcar” Santos)

Algenis Pérez Soto was born in Quisqueya, Dominican Republic. He has been playing baseball since he was nine. He was chosen for the lead role of Miguel Santos in Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck’s film *Sugar* after an extensive casting search that spanned the United States and the Dominican Republic. *Sugar* is his film debut.

Rayniel Rufino (Jorge Ramírez)

Rayniel Rufino was born in the Dominican Republic and moved to New York City at the age of four. Rufino has appeared in such films as *Liberty Kid*, which won Best Film at the New York Latino Film Festival, and *9 Digits*. His poetry and musical works have established him as a talented new voice in the New York artistic community.

Andre Holland (Brad Johnson)

Andre Holland has appeared in the films *Miracle at St. Anna*, directed by Spike Lee, and *Coming Soon*, as well as the television series “Law & Order” and “The Black Donnellys” and the ABC pilot, “The News.” His New York theatre appearances includes a tour-de-force performance in “Blue Door” at the esteemed Playwright's Horizons, in which he played four generations of ancestors and relatives; a three-person production of “The Tempest,” which was workshopped in Tuscany; plus “Much Ado About Nothing” and “As You Like It” at the New York Shakespeare Festival in Central Park. Holland trained at the NYU Graduate Acting Program, where he received an M.F.A., and Florida State University, where he received a B.F.A. in Acting.

Michael Gaston (Stu Sutton)

Michael Gaston has appeared in over 20 films, including the upcoming *Home* with Marcia Gay Harden, *Body Of Lies* with Leonardo DiCaprio, *Lonely Hearts*, *Stay*, *Far From Heaven*, *The Crucible* and *The Wedding Banquet*. He also has had roles in many TV dramas, including “Jericho,” “Blind Justice,” “Damages,” “Brotherhood,” “The Sopranos,” “Prison Break,” “Oz,” “Homicide: Life On The Street” and multiple “Law & Order” episodes. Gaston’s numerous on- and off-Broadway roles include “A Day in the Death of Joe Egg” on Broadway (with Eddie Izzard).

Jaime Tirelli (Osvaldo)

A graduate of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, Jaime Tirelli has been featured in such films as *Marathon Man*, *Carlito's Way* and *Fort Apache*, *The Bronx*, although he may be best known for his work as Hector the trainer in *Girlfight*. His other film credits include *House of the Spirits*, director John Sayles’ *Brother from Another Planet* and *City Of Hope*, *The Ministers*, *Chapter 27*, *The Brave One*, *Definitely, Maybe*, *Santa Mesa*, *I Believe in America*, *Yellow* and *Bella*. On stage, Tirelli has appeared in “Chronicle of a

Death Foretold" on Broadway, "In the Summerhouse" at Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont Theater, "Blade to the Heat" at the Public Theater and numerous plays for The Puerto Rican Traveling Theater. His television work includes a recurring role in NBC's "Kidnapped" and various "Law & Order" episodes.

José Rijo (Alvarez, Baseball Consultant)

José Rijo, a highly touted pitching prospect from the Dominican Republic, broke into the majors with the New York Yankees in 1984 when he was only 18 years old, the youngest player in either major league at the time. Rijo pitched in the 1990 World Series for the Cincinnati Reds, recording two victories, including a two-hitter in the fourth and final game. His performance earned him the World Series Most Valuable Player Award as the Reds won their first championship in 15 years. He was a member of the National League All-Star Team in 1994 and led the league in games started in 1993 and 1994. Rijo also led the National League in winning percentage in 1991, and in both strikeouts and strikeouts per nine innings in 1993. After fighting through many serious injuries during his career, Rijo marked his final season in 2002 with the Tony Conigliaro Award, given annually to the player who best overcomes obstacles and adversity through the attributes of spirit, determination and courage.

Ann Whitney (Helen Higgins)

Ann Whitney has appeared in a number of successful films with some very distinguished actors, starting with the John Hughes comedy classic *Home Alone*, in which she played the drugstore clerk opposite Macaulay Culkin. (Children still ask her if their toothbrushes are approved by the American Dental Association!) She played the Myoelectric Clinic Director in *The Fugitive* with Tommy Lee Jones, was the Singing Lady in an episode of "Columbo" with Faye Dunaway, played a lawyer opposite Morgan Freeman in *Chain Reaction*, and drew blood from Sandra Bullock and Bill Pullman in a scene from *While You Were Sleeping*. She also appeared in "Murder Ordained" with Kathy Bates and in multiple episodes of "Early Edition."

Richard Bull (Earl Higgins)

Born in Zion, Illinois, Richard served three years in Army Air Corps during World War II. He has appeared in various films, including: *The Satan Bug* and *The Hour of the Gun*, both directed by John Sturges, *The Russians Are Coming*, *The Russians Are Coming* and *The Thomas Crown Affair* both directed by Norman Jewison, *The Andromeda Strain*, directed by Robert Wise, and *High Plains Drifter*, directed by Clint Eastwood. Richard's television work includes four years as Doc on "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea" and nine years as Nels Oleson in "Little House on the Prairie." He appeared in HBO Films' *Normal* with Jessica Lange and Tom Wilkinson.

Ellary Porterfield (Anne Higgins)

Born in Bend, Oregon, Ellary Porterfield was discovered at a talent competition in Los Angeles in 2001. Her imitation of her seventh-grade teacher caught her future manager's eye and she was immediately signed. Since then, Porterfield has filmed three pilots. She made her feature film debut in *The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio*, starring Julianne Moore and Woody Harrelson. She played Moore's daughter, Tuff Ryan, in the film.

Porterfield splits her time between Oregon, Los Angeles and Durham, North Carolina, where she is a freshman at Duke University. In her free time, she enjoys attending her brother's high school basketball games, thrift store shopping, knitting and being a Cameron Crazy.

Alina Vargas (Reyna)

Alina Vargas was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in 1979. Following in the footsteps of her legendary musician father Wilfrido Vargas, she quickly became a Dominican pop sensation. Her first film, *Sanky Panky*, was one of the highest-grossing Dominican films in history.

Kelvin Leonardo Garcia (Salvador)

Kelvin Leonardo Garcia was born in La Romana in the Dominican Republic. Kelvin has been playing baseball all his life and has developed into a major league pitching prospect. He is currently training in the hope of signing with a major league team and attending their academy in the Dominican Republic. *Sugar* will be his film debut.

Joendy Peña Brown (Marcos)

Joendy Peña Brown was born in San Pedro de Macorís in the Dominican Republic, where he has been playing baseball since he was a child. Joendy frequently participates in his local church's productions as an actor and singer. *Sugar* will be his film debut.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden (Writers and Directors)

Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden's first dramatic feature film, *Half Nelson*, premiered at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival and went on to win numerous prizes, including three Gotham Awards for Breakthrough Director, Actor, and Best Feature Film. The film also received two Independent Spirit Awards for its lead actors, Ryan Gosling and Shareeka Epps, and an Academy Award® nomination for Gosling as Best Actor.

Fleck and Boden have also collaborated on several short films and documentaries over the past six years, including: *Have You Seen This Man?* (2002), *Gowanus, Brooklyn* (2004), and *Young Rebels* (2005).

Boden also serves as editor and executive producer on *Sugar*.

Paul Mezey (Producer)

Paul Mezey is a New York based independent producer and founder of Journeyman Pictures. Mr. Mezey has produced a number of critically acclaimed films including *Maria Full of Grace* which received a 2005 Academy Award Nomination for Best Actress in a Leading Role and *Half Nelson* starring Ryan Gosling which received a 2007 Academy Award Nomination for Best Actor in a Leading Role.

Mr. Mezey produced Azazel Jacobs' *Momma's Man* which premiered alongside *Sugar* at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. Mr. Mezey recently wrapped production on the film *Cold Souls* starring Paul Giamatti, Emily Watson, and David Strathairn. Projects currently in development include David Riker's *The Girl* starring Emily Blunt and Joshua Marston's upcoming feature *The Fortress of Solitude*, based on Jonathan Lethem's National Bestseller.

Other films produced by Mr. Mezey include: *Angel Rodriguez* (HBO Films), *Everyday People* (HBO Films), *Spring Forward* (IFC Films), *Our Song* (IFC Films), *The City (La Ciudad)* directed by David Riker, Mississippi Blues documentary *You See Me Laughin'* directed by Mandy Stein, and *The Ballad of Ramblin' Jack* directed by Aiyana Elliott, winner of the Artistic Achievement Award for documentary film at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival.

Mr. Mezey received the IFP/West Motorola Producer's Award at the Independent Spirit Awards in 2001 and was selected by Variety in 2004 as one of the "Ten Producers to Watch".

Jamie Patricof (Producer)

Jamie Patricof is the founder of Hunting Lane Films, a Los Angeles-based production company. He is the producer of *Half Nelson*, which premiered in 2006 and went on to win three Gotham Awards and two Independent Spirit Awards. In addition, the star of the film, Ryan Gosling, was nominated for an Academy Award® for Best Actor.

Patricof is also the producer of *Confessions of a Superhero*, a documentary film directed by Matt Ogens, which was released theatrically in the fall of 2007. Prior to that he produced *Point & Shoot*, which screened at the Tribeca and Hamptons film festivals and is now available on home video. Patricof is currently in pre-production on Derek Cianfrance's first feature film, *Blue Valentine*, which was the winner of the Chrysler Million Dollar Film Project.

Patricof was executive producer of the VH1 shows "Players: Ludacris" and "Run DMC and Jam Master Jay: The Last Interview," a tribute to the seminal hip-hop group. He was also creator and executive producer of "The Life," a 32-episode documentary series on ESPN. This behind-the-scenes look at athletes' lives off the field was nominated for an Emmy® Award. Before entering the world of television and film, Patricof worked at *Rap Sheet* magazine and Def Jam Records in marketing and promotions. He also produced a live stand-up comedy show in NYC that featured Dave Chappelle, Mike Epps, Colin Quinn and many others.

He lives with his wife and daughter in Los Angeles.

Jeremy Kipp Walker (Producer)

Jeremy Kipp Walker co-produced Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden's celebrated feature film *Half Nelson*, for which Ryan Gosling received a 2006 Best Actor Academy Award® nomination. He is a partner in the New York City-based film production company Journeyman Pictures, where his recent credits include *Maria Full of Grace*, *Everyday People*, *You See Me Laughin'* and *Angel Rodriguez*.

Prior to joining Journeyman, Walker worked in production at Woody Allen's Perdido Productions on the films *The Curse of the Jade Scorpion* and *Hollywood Ending*. He recently produced the Moroccan-based thriller *The Passage*, which premiered at the 2007 Toronto Film Festival. He is currently producing *Cold Souls*, written and directed by Sophie Barthes and starring Paul Giamatti, David Strathairn, Emily Watson and Dina Korzun.

Walker is an award-winning director in his own right, whose short films have screened at dozens of renowned film festivals, garnering top prizes at the Tribeca Film Festival, the Austin Film Festival, the Palm Springs International Film Festival, the New Orleans Film Festival and the Rhode Island Film Festival.

Andrij Parekh (Cinematographer)

Of Ukrainian and Indian descent, Andrij Parekh studied cinematography at the FAMU Film School in Prague and at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where he received his M.F.A. in 2003. He was nominated for the 1998 Eastman Excellence in Cinematography Award, apprenticed on *The Yards* (2000) with Harris Savides (*Gerry*, *The Game*), and is a recipient of the 2001 and 2003 ASC Heritage Award for Cinematography.

Andrij has shot 11 features to date, including *Sonos de Peixe*, (for director Kirill Mikhanovsky), *August* (for director Austin Chick), *Noise* (for director Henry Bean), *Half Nelson* and *Sugar* (for directors Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden). His films have played at many international festivals, including Cannes, Sundance and Tribeca. Andrij was named one of *Filmmaker's* 25 New Faces of Independent Film, was included as one of *Variety's* 10 Cinematographers to Watch and featured in *Hollywood Reporter's* "Next Generation—Crafts" article. He is currently shooting and producing *Cold Souls*, with creative collaborator and partner Sophie Barthes.

Elizabeth Mickle (Production Designer)

Elizabeth Mickle has worked as a production designer in the film and television industry for six years. Her first feature film, *Madness And Genius*, directed by Ryan Eslinger, received critical acclaim at the Toronto International Film Festival, as well as an Independent Spirit Award nomination. She was recognized for her design on the indie hit *Half Nelson* and received the *Hollywood Reporter's* 2006 Next Generation Award in the field of Production Design. She is currently designing *Cold Souls*, another Sundance Film Lab screenplay, by first-time director Sophie Barthes. Elizabeth currently lives in New York City.

Erin Benach (Costume Designer)

Erin Benach also collaborated with Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden on their previous film, *Half Nelson* starring Ryan Gosling for which he received an academy award nomination. In winter of 2007 she brought 1970's small town prostitution to Lori Petty's *The Poker House* starring Selma Blair and David Allan Greir. She is currently designing Sophie Barthes' *Cold Souls*, starring Paul Giamatti, Emily Watson, and David Strathairn. Erin currently resides in Los Angeles, CA and Brooklyn, NY.

Michael Brook (Music)

Born and raised in Toronto, in the early 80s Brook worked as an engineer with Daniel Lanois. At this time, he also met musical iconoclast Brian Eno. Brook also invented the infinite guitar, whose practitioners include U2's the Edge, Lanois and Brook himself. In 1985, Brook's first solo album, *Hybrid*, with contributions from both Eno and Lanois, was released to great critical acclaim. His second solo album, *Cobalt Blue*, also featured Eno among its larger cast of musicians. In between his own records and film scores, Brook has produced a number of influential albums for Peter Gabriel's Real World label

and collaborated with artists such as The Pogues, Bryan Ferry, Youssou N'Dour and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. □

Michael worked with the Edge of U2 on the soundtrack for the film *Captive* and in 1992 he composed and performed the acclaimed score for the Academy Award nominated documentary *The Fires of Kuwait*. Following work on the soundtrack to director Michael Mann's 1995 film *Heat*, Peter Gabriel recommended Brook to Kevin Spacey to score his directorial effort *Albino Alligator*, which led Brook to score Paul Schrader's 1998 feature *Affliction*. As a musician, Brook's electronically-enhanced guitar may be heard in many films including *Traffic* and on Hans Zimmer's scores for *Black Hawk Down*, *Mission Impossible 2* and *The Pledge*. Most recently, Brook composed the score for the Oscar-winning 2006 film *An Inconvenient Truth* and Sean Penn's Oscar-nominated *Into the Wild*. Brook also recently composed and produced the soundtrack for the highly-acclaimed multi-media exhibition *Ashes and Snow*.

Lynn Fainchtein (Music Supervisor)

Lynn Fainchtein has provided her musical expertise to a range of media, including film, television, radio and journalism. She has worked as music supervisor and soundtrack producer on such films as acclaimed Mexican filmmaker Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu's *Babel*, *21 Grams* and the Academy Award[®] nominated *Amores Perros*, as well as *Maria Full of Grace*, directed by Joshua Marston and winner of the 2004 Sundance Film Festival Audience Award. She has been music supervisor on all films produced by Canana Films, a production company founded by Gael Garcia Bernal and Diego Luna, including *Deficit*, *Chavez*, *Cochochi*, and *Voy a Explotar*.

Her recent credits include *Sin Nombre*, *X-mas, Inc.*, *Push*, *Sólo Quiero Caminar*, *Don't Let Me Down*, and *Violanchelo*.

Her other film credits include *La Misma Luna* and John Sayles' *Casa de los Babys*. Fainchtein has been music supervisor for Altavista Films' soundtracks and also served as the company's director of A&R.

She is currently a writer for *Rolling Stone* magazine, reporting from Mexico. She was previously with MTV Latinoamerica, where she worked as Director of Music Programming and producer/writer/interviewer for MTV News. In radio, she has also been a host, DJ, producer, programmer and director at Mexican stations, including Rock 101, Dimension 1030 AM, Espacio 59 and Imagen 90.5 FM.

Cindy Tolan, CSA (Casting)

Cindy Tolan is a casting director for film, television and theatre. Her film credits include *The Darjeeling Limited*, *The Namesake*, *Kinsey*, *Sherrybaby*, *Starting Out in the Evening*, *The Ballad of Jack and Rose*, *Personal Velocity*, *Loggerheads* (also co-producer), *Casa de los Babys*, *Angela* and the upcoming *The Private Lives of Pippa Lee*. Her Broadway credits include *Ally My Sons*, *Xanadu*, *Avenue Q*, *A Year with Frog and Toad*, and

Medea. Other theatre credits include *Resurrection Blues* (Old Vic, London). Among her television credits are HBO's "Flight of the Conchords", "The Return of Jezebel James", and the upcoming FOX series "Fringe".