

FROZEN RIVER
PRESS KIT



Written and Directed by Courtney Hunt

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Frozen River is the story of Ray Eddy, an upstate New York trailer mom who is lured into the world of illegal immigrant smuggling when she meets a Mohawk girl who lives on a reservation that straddles the US-Canadian border. Broke after her husband takes off with the down payment for their new doublewide, Ray reluctantly teams up with Lila, a smuggler, and the two begin making runs across the frozen St. Lawrence River carrying illegal Chinese and Pakistani immigrants in the trunk of Ray's Dodge Spirit.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I wrote this film after learning about women smugglers at the border of New York State and Canada who drive their cars across the frozen St. Lawrence River to make money to support their kids. The risk involved compelled me to write a story, not only about smuggling at the northern border, but also about what life circumstances would lead someone to take such chances. What I discovered was that a mother's instinct to protect her children is more powerful than any cultural, political or economic boundary line. Melissa Leo (Ray) and Misty Upham (Lila) embodied the unheralded struggle of single mothers of all ethnicities who are living on the edge.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Shot on the Panasonic Varicam in 24 days, in sub-zero weather in Plattsburgh, New York with a bare-bones budget, the production of Frozen River depended on many things going right. Weather was a constant factor and the crew braved fierce cold and night shoots to get the footage and make our days. The actors, many of whom were first timers, showed commitment on the level of professionals and the professionals, especially Melissa Leo, led them with generosity of spirit and great skill. The other enormous factor was the participation of the people of Plattsburgh, New York, who supported us in a thousand ways and ultimately gave Frozen River a home.

CAST BIOS

MELISSA LEO (Ray)

As a working actor for more than 20 years Melissa Leo is most widely known for her genius portrayal of Detective Kay Howard on **HOMICIDE: LIFE ON THE STREETS**. Leo studied Drama at Mount View Theatre School in London, England and later at the SUNY Purchase Acting Program. Among her memorable works: **THE YOUNG RIDERS**, **THE "L" WORD**, **21 GRAMS**, **THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA** and **HOLLYWOOD DREAMS**.

Leo credits also include: **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION** shot in Pakistan, **LULLABY** shot in South Africa, **RIGHTEOUS KILL** starring Robert DeNiro and Al Pacino, and **GRETA** starring Ellen Burstyn and Hillary Duff. She also appeared in the same role in the short, **FROZEN RIVER** that premiered at the New York Film Festival in 2004.

Selected Filmography

2008 Santa Mesa

2008 Lullaby
2007 Frozen River
2007 Mr. Woodcock
2007 Racing Daylight
2006 Falling Objects
2006 The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada
2005 Patch
2005 Hide and Seek
2003 21 Grams
2000 Fear of Fiction
1997 Under the Bridge
1992 Immaculate Conception
1988 A Time of Destiny
1985 Streetwalkin'
1985 Always

MISTY UPHAM (Lila)

Misty Upham, born in Kallispell, Montana, grew up in south Seattle, the fourth of five children. She began her career at the age of thirteen when she joined a community theater group, Red Eagle Soaring. What began as a summer workshop soon turned into a full-time job. By the age of fourteen she was writing and directing short skits and performing on tours throughout the northwest. In the next four years she would be accepted to several Seattle theater companies, all while attending high school. Her first break came in 2001 when she landed the role of Mrs. Blue Cloud in Chris Eyre's sophomore project SKINS ,where she portrayed a victim of domestic abuse on the Pine Ridge reservation. Upham additional credits include: Eyre's EDGE OF AMERICA, Rick Stevenson's EXPIRATION DATE, ABC's DREAMKEEPER and also starred in her same role as Lila across Melissa Leo in the short, FROZEN RIVER.

CHARLIE MCDERMOTT (TJ)

Charlie McDermott feature credits include M. Night Shyamalan's THE VILLAGE, David Wain's THE TEN, and Jay Craven's DISAPPEARANCES. McDermott is slated to begin work on his next project the UNTITLED TEEN ROAD MOVIE in early 2008 and he has been cast as the lead in the feature film FOR THE LOVE OF JADE scheduled for filming later in the year.

MARK BOONE JUNIOR (Jacques Bruneau)

Mark Boone Junior is best known for his roles in two films by Christopher Nolan, MEMENTO and BATMAN BEGINS and his work in Buscemi's TREE'S LOUNGE, LONESOME JIM and ANIMAL FACTORY. He has had a prolific career, appearing in over 70 films: David Fincher's SE7EN and THE GAME, John Singleton's ROSEWOOD and 2 FAST 2 FURIOUS, Raimi's THE QUICK AND THE DEAD, Carpenter's VAMPIRES, Malick's THE THIN RED LINE, GET CARTER, THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER, and DIE HARD 2.

FILMMAKER BIOS

COURTNEY HUNT (Writer/Director)

Courtney Hunt holds an MFA from Columbia University's Film Division. Her thesis film, *ALTHEA FAUGHT*, a short about the American Civil War, which she wrote and directed, was purchased by PBS in 1996 and aired on American Playhouse. It screened in film festivals including the Tribeca First Look Series, Edinburgh International Film Festival, Montreal Festival des Film du Monde, and the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival. The film also won Columbia's first Prize in Directing from New Line Cinema. Hunt's second short film, *FROZEN RIVER*, premiered in the New York Film Festival in September, 2004 and went on to screen at numerous other festivals, including Los Angeles, Nashville, Williamstown, and the American Indian Film Festival.

Hunt holds a law degree from Northeastern University and a B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College. She was born in Memphis, Tennessee.

HEATHER RAE (Producer)

Heather Rae has produced both narrative and documentary feature films. Her credits include: *TRUDELL*, about Native activist John Trudell, *Independent Lens' WATER FLOWING TOGETHER*, about master ballet dancer Jock Soto, *SAWTOOTH*, starring Adam Beach, Gary Farmer and Udo Kier, and *BACKROADS*, directed by Shirley Cheechoo. For six years, Rae ran the Native Program at the Sundance Institute and was a programmer for the Sundance Film Festival. Rae is Cherokee Indian and a mother of three.

CHIP HOURIHAN (Producer/Line Producer)

Chip Hourihan is an independent film producer whose projects include *MIND THE GAP*, and Hourihan's own dramatic feature *GLISSANDO*. Hourihan has also produced television programs, series, segments and promo packages for networks that have included NBC, CBS, Fox, TNT, TNN, MTV, ESPN, Showtime, Nickelodeon, Al Jazeera and TF1. Hourihan is a graduate of Yale University.

CHARLES S. COHEN (Executive Producer)

Charles S. Cohen, a real estate owner and developer, heads a multi-faceted real estate development company that develops, owns and manages office and showroom space in Los Angeles, Manhattan, Florida and Houston, including the Pacific Design Center (Los Angeles). He is also a principal of the Cohen Media Group, a film and media development consortium, and has served as a board member for the Hamptons Film Festival. He is a graduate of Tufts University and Brooklyn Law School.

DONALD A. HARWOOD (Executive Producer)

Donald A. Harwood is a partner in the law firm, Itkowitz & Harwood, in New York, specializing in complex civil litigation, commercial transactions, and entertainment law. He is a graduate of St. Lawrence University and the Northeastern University Law School.

MOLLY CONNERS (Co-Producer)

Besides *FROZEN RIVER*, Molly Connors recently produced *ASYLUM SEEKERS*, a feature film directed by Rania Ajami. She is currently developing Ajami's next feature project which will be shot on location in Libya.

REED MORANO (Director of Photography)

Reed Morano is a graduate of the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. With ten years of experience as a director of photography, her credits include OFF THE GRID: LIFE ON THE MESA, an award-winning documentary currently in release and nominated for a 2007 Gotham Award. Morano's work has aired on Fox Sports, A & E, E! Entertainment, TLC, NBC, CBS, and UPN, and has been showcased at film festivals around the world.

INBAL WEINBERG (Production Designer)

Inbal Weinberg, who has worked with Hal Hartley and Todd Solondz, has an extensive list of credits, including HALF NELSON, STEPHANIE DALEY, SORDID THINGS, and THE GIRL FROM MONDAY.

KATE WILLIAMS (Editor)

Kate Williams is an accomplished editor whose credits includes three of Steve Buscemi's directorial works: INTERVIEW, ANIMAL FACTORY, and TREES LOUNGE. Williams also edited the acclaimed GODDESS OF 1967, THE MYTH OF FINGERPRINTS, with Julianne Moore, Hope Davis and Blythe Danner, and THIS SO-CALLED DISASTER, a documentary about Sam Shepard directing his play 'The Late Henry Moss.' Williams also edited the HBO mini-series, EMPIRE FALLS, for which she received an Emmy nomination.

PETER GOLUB (Composer)

Peter Golub is a noted composer of numerous works for film, theatre, ballet and concert hall. Most recently, he composed music for THE GREAT DEBATERS, directed by Denzel Washington, DEMONOLOGY, and THE JOY OF GOING SOMEWHERE DEFINITE at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Golub also composed music for the film ENGLISH ONLY (produced by Universal), AMERICAN GUN, THE LARAMIE PROJECT, LOST (the American Film Institute's Directing Women' Workshop), and the British TV film, THE CAT BROUGHT IT IN. He served as dance music arranger on THE ADDAMS FAMILY, and conducted and orchestrated the films POISON and SWOON. Golub is the Director of the Sundance Composers Lab.

CAST LIST

MELISSA LEO	Ray
MISTY UPHAM	Lila
CHARLIE MCDERMOTT	T.J.
MARK BOONE JUNIOR	Jacque Bruno
MICHAEL O'KEEFE	Trooper Finnerty
JAY KLAITZ	Guy Versailles
BERNIE LITTLEWOLF	John Canoe
DYLAN CARUSONA	Jimmy
MICHAEL SKY	Billy Three Rivers

CREW LIST

COURTNEY HUNT	Writer/Director
HEATHER RAE	Producer
CHIP HOURIHAN	Producer/Line Producer
CHARLES S. COHEN	Executive Producer
DONALD A. HARWOOD	Executive Producer
JAY B. ITKOWITZ	Co-Executive Producer
MOLLY CONNERS	Co-Producer
ALFONSO TRINIDAD	Associate Producer
REED MORANO	Director of Photography
INBAL WEINBERG	Production Designer
KATE WILLIAMS	Editor
PETER GOLUB	Composer
SHAHAD ISMAILY	Composer
KERI LATIMER	Additional Music
TRACEY DEER	Additional Casting
ANNE MARIE DENTICI	Unit Production Manager
SHAMIKA PRYCE	Production Coordinator
LAURA MEHLHAFF	Assistant Producer
BRIAN RZEPKA	Art Director
ABBY O'SULLIVAN	Costume Designer
CRYSTAL SHADE	Key Makeup/Hair
MARTINA MELENDEZ	Wardrobe Supervisor
CRAIG SHILOWICH	Location Manger
ANDREW CESANA	Script Supervisor
KEVIN PAZMINO	First Assistant Director
VADIM EPSTEIN	Second Assistant Director
WARIS SUPANPONG	First Assistant Camera
MICAH BLOOMBERG	Sound
KEVIN ADAMS	Boom Operator