

AMAZON MGM STUDIOS



Directed by: Travis Knight

Screenplay by: Chris Butler and Aaron Nee & Adam Nee & Dave Callaham

Story by: Aaron Nee & Adam Nee and Alex Litvak & Michael Finch

Based on "Masters of the Universe" by Mattel

Produced by: Todd Black, p.g.a., Jason Blumenthal, p.g.a., Robbie Brenner, p.g.a.,
DeVon Franklin

Cast: Nicholas Galitzine, Camila Mendes, Alison Brie, James Purefoy, Morena Baccarin,
Jóhannes Haukur Jóhannesson, Charlotte Riley, Sasheer Zamata, Jon Xue Zhang, Christian
Vunipola, featuring Kristen Wiig, with Jared Leto and Idris Elba

Executive Producers: David Bloomfield, Bill Bannerman, Ynon Kreiz

Director of Photography: Fabian Wagner, ASC, BSC

Production Designer: Guy Hendrix Dyas

Editor: Paul Rubell, ACE

Costume Designer: Richard Sale

Music by: Daniel Pemberton

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Short Synopsis:

In *Masters of the Universe*, director Travis Knight brings the legendary franchise back to the big screen in this epic live-action adventure. After being separated for 15 years, the Sword of Power leads Prince Adam (Nicholas Galitzine) back to Eternia where he discovers his home shattered under the fiendish rule of Skeletor (Jared Leto). To save his family and his world, Adam must join forces with his closest allies, Teela (Camila Mendes) and Duncan/Man-At-Arms (Idris Elba), and embrace his true destiny as He-Man — the most powerful man in the universe.

Fabulous Secret Powers Are Revealed

The quest for power is universal. Everyone seeks it, but the ability to actually wield it well requires a different kind of inner strength.

That's the primary difference between He-Man and Skeletor, the embodiments of good and evil whose never-ending conflict has made *Masters of the Universe* beloved for so many decades. The hero is determined to prove himself worthy of the "fabulous secret powers" locked away inside Castle Grayskull, a cosmic stronghold that serves as the nexus point for transformative otherworldly might, while the villain seeks only a shortcut to these abilities so he can enact tyrannical control over others.

Nearly a half century after this fantasy realm was first introduced in the early '80s by toymaker Mattel, Inc., a new big-screen cinematic adventure full of high-stakes action, mystical lore and no small amount of self-aware humor arrives in theaters to bring that classic *Masters of the Universe* battle back to fans.

Nicholas Galitzine stars as Adam, a galactic prince who was exiled as a child from his home planet of Eternia when the terrifying forces of Skeletor seized the throne from his noble parents. The castaway child grew up on Earth, clinging to hazy memories of the heroic warriors that he once knew. Most prominent among them were fellow young swordmaster trainee Teela (played by Camila Mendes), and her adoptive father Duncan (Idris Elba), who as leader of Royal Guard was known by the honorable title Man-at-Arms. There was also a ragtag assortment of fighters with unique abilities: a brawler with an indestructible metal hand (Adam thinks of him as "Fisto,") a stout soldier who can batter through walls (Adam dubs him "Ram Man,") a bionic man with with a periscope head (a.k.a, "Mekaneck.")

Producer Jason Blumenthal (*The Pursuit of Happyness*, *The Equalizer* films) has been fighting to make this *Masters of the Universe* project for more than 17 years, and finally

Commentato [1]: added earlier reference to Teela

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brought it to fruition alongside his Escape Artist Entertainment partner Todd Black (a Best Picture Oscar nominee for 2016's *Fences*), and Robbie Brenner, the president of Mattel Films (a Best Picture nominee for 2013's *Dallas Buyers Club*.)

Blumenthal says that embracing the franchise's colorful outlandishness was the key to finally making it work. "You have to have a sense of humor because some of it could play a little off the wall," Blumenthal says. "A *Masters of the Universe* movie should understand the playfulness, understand that some of these characters have crazy names, and figure out a way to work that into the storytelling."

Prince Adam's evolution from awkward nobody to all-powerful He-Man is a lighthearted and adventurous take on the timeless hero's journey. In many ways, he was modeled after the ancient mythology and folktales chronicled in the beloved book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, by legendary scholar Joseph Campbell, which documented the parallels in storytelling from cultures around the world. Like many who have set out for adventure before him, Adam is a young person who heeds the call to action and rises to face seemingly impossible challenges, eventually harnessing the power of Grayskull to become the legendary protector He-Man.

"It's a story of self-acceptance, of becoming empowered, of realizing that power does not lie in anything else but yourself," says Galitzine. "And along the way we meet these really eccentric, fantastical, funny characters who bestow on him different points of growth."

Were these peculiar fighters he remembers from the royal palace all a dream? Adam's earthling friends think so, urging him to let go of such wild delusions. But he can't shed the sense that they were once real, that there must be a portal back to the world he remembers, and that he may contain hidden powers that could still be unlocked at the ominous gates of Castle Grayskull. Returning to Eternia would mean facing the skull-faced usurper Skeletor and his monstrous mercenaries: fiendish Beast Man, metal-toothed Trap Jaw, triple-eyed sniper Tri-Klops, and the sinister enchantress Evil-Lyn. Having longed for this return since childhood, Adam vows to do his best to restore the Eternia he remembers.

###

A Team of Filmmaking Fans

Masters of the Universe director Travis Knight made the same commitment. The filmmaker was just a boy in 1982 when Mattel introduced *Masters of the Universe* toys

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to the world, followed by a daily after-school cartoon that had kids hurrying home every afternoon to see Prince Adam become He-Man by raising the Sword of Power aloft to declare: “By the power of Grayskull ... I ... Have ... the POWER!!!”

Like the hero at the center of the story, Knight also cherished the memory of these extraordinary characters. The filmmaker behind the Oscar-nominated 2016 animated feature *Kubo and the Two Strings*, and producer of Laika Studios’ other stop-motion favorites *Coraline*, *ParaNorman*, *The Boxtrolls* and *Missing Link* got to work on this new *Masters of the Universe* film with the same passion Adam has to revisit the magic of the long-ago world he once inhabited.

“This project really is a dream come true for me because I’ve known these characters for pretty much my entire life,” Knight says. “I watched the cartoons, I played with the toys, I read the comic books. It’s been oddly moving for me to see it all recreated in real life.”

Knight has a history of reviving nostalgic favorites, having directed *Bumblebee*, the 2018 solo film focused on the yellow-hued shapeshifting robot from the *Transformers* franchise. As a kid, his own collection of playthings—particularly the rough-and-tumble plastic heroes of *Masters of the Universe*—gave him his very first experiences crafting narratives and dramas on the floor of his bedroom.

“A beloved childhood toy is a vessel for a kid’s imagination,” Knight says. “They tell stories with them, and that was the case for me. I had all these action figures. I had the Castle Grayskull playset—which I loved—and I would create these little adventures in my mind with my He-Man action figures. To be here 40-some odd years later and do it for real is a trippy experience.”

While Knight wanted to have fun with the more offbeat parts of He-Man’s lore, he also took the epic storytelling seriously. “To try to do it justice has been a challenge,” he says. “I know that a lot of people love these characters and this world, and so there’s a lot riding on it. Our hope is that we can honor the history, and we can honor the things that the fans love, while also bringing new fans into the fold.”

###

Unifying The Different Universes

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Part of delivering for the fans was recognizing how many different types there are. *Masters of the Universe* has existed in many forms since its debut in the '80s, and the screenwriters of the new film drew on parts of virtually all of them for this script.

At the foundation were the original Mattel mini-comics that came packaged with the action figures, as well as the legendary 1983-85 syndicated after-school cartoon produced by Filmation. Among the other inspirations were the 1987 live-action cult-classic movie starring Dolph Lundgren as He-Man, and the 2002-2004 animated *Masters of the Universe* revival series on Cartoon Network that deepened the lore of the characters. Netflix's *Masters of the Universe: Revelation* had a strong influence as well, and the new film even found a way to sneak in an homage to the mega-popular mid-2000s viral video that featured He-Man and friends singing along to the 1993 4 Non Blondes anthem "What's Up?"

"There've been so many iterations over the years, and each time it's been slightly reinvented," says screenwriter Chris Butler, an animation veteran who has worked on the scripts for *ParaNorman*, *Kubo and the Two Strings* and wrote and directed *Missing Link*. "So, as a fan, I've just taken the bits from each of those iterations that I've liked, really starting with the action figures and the Filmation series, and I've been able to pull that together into something new, hopefully."

That also meant he and fellow *Masters of the Universe* screenwriters Aaron Nee and Adam Nee (2022's *The Lost City*) and Dave Callaham (2023's *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*, 2021's *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*) wanted to not just tip their hats to the past but also add their own takes to the storyline. "You want to make it your own thing," Butler adds. "We want to make this version of He-Man as original and exciting as possible."

Among their changes was finding a way for Prince Adam to grow up far from Eternia and live a relatively normal life on Earth, so the wonder he feels toward his homeworld matches the surprise felt by the audience. "Anytime you have characters whose story goes back over 40 years, there's going to be a bunch of variations of that thing," Knight says. "The He-Man and Masters of the Universe in the early '80s is the one I always go back to, because that's where it started. The Prince Adam and He-Man of the Filmation series was kind of like the Clark Kent-Superman dynamic. He put on a facade of someone who was timid, who was a little bit lazy, and then he becomes He-Man and we see a different side of him."

The film's challenge was to show this duality in the character without making Adam a faker, pretending to be a mild-mannered know-nothing. "One of the things I loved about

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the original series was it had a feeling of sincerity,” Knight says. “It wasn’t trying to be cool, it wasn’t trying to be ironic. There was a heart to Adam in how caring he was. Even in the guise of He-Man, he’s this big, muscle-bound dude in furry knickers, and he was still the kind of guy you wanted to introduce to your mom. He was just a nice guy.”

The film’s solution was to make sure Adam’s journey to He-Man was a true evolution, rather than a false identity or alter-ego. “A key part of how we shaped the character is that He-Man and Adam occupy the same body, but they’re different characters,” Knight says. “We tried to find ways to meld them with one another, so that Adam is still Adam when he’s He-Man, and we see tiny bits of He-Man in Adam when he’s not.”

That was also a lens for exploring the dynamics of power and strength, which made the toys so appealing to kids when they first debuted. “The central theme of the movie is about humanity,” Butler says. “Having Adam grow up and spend his formative years on Earth, he really gets to be human. And that’s what he takes back to Eternia.”

They also saw the humor in that scenario. “You’ve got this world full of warriors waiting for their chosen one to come back and save them all from Skeletor, and what comes back is not a warrior at all,” Butler adds. “That’s a fun thing to play with. And it also gives the character of Adam somewhere to go and some nuance.”

###

The Powerhouse Producing Team

Masters of the Universe was designed to be the kind of story everyone can relate to, whether they grew up with He-Man long ago or are still growing up now.

“That’s the all-ages audience that we’re after. People who grew up with the brand and just want to remember what it was like to be a kid. Kids want to escape into this world, male or female,” says Blumenthal. “I think there is something for everybody in this film. There’s a message, there’s empowerment, there is wish fulfillment, not just for young boys who grew up wanting to be He-Man, but for young girls who look at Teela and say, I wanna be like her.”

The film is also being produced by Brenner and *Flamin’ Hot*’s DeVon Franklin. As president of Mattel Films, Brenner says her goal was to bring the imagination and passion of the toys to the big screen. *Masters of the Universe* follows the company’s international blockbuster success with 2023’s *Barbie*, starring Margot Robbie as the

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iconic doll, which earned Brenner her second Academy Award nomination for Best Picture.

The two toy-inspired films are vastly different in tone, but draw on the same sense of nostalgia and affection. “This is our second movie that we’re making, and it’s a huge franchise. It’s the complete opposite of *Barbie*, yet I think it appeals to all audiences,” Brenner says. “People are waiting to see what Mattel Films does next, and this movie is going to be super exciting and unexpected.”

In adapting the new film *Masters of the Universe’s* creative team tried to honor what made the toys themselves such a phenomenon. “The original idea for the toy was the toy makers asking themselves: What does every kid want?” adds Butler. “And what every kid wants apparently is power, the power to be able to not be told what to do. We wanted to tap into that.”

The power “to not be told what to do” has another name: playtime. As the filmmakers set forth to cast and shoot *Masters of the Universe*, they embraced that sense of freedom and experimentation wholeheartedly.

###

Holding Out For a Hero

The weight of *Masters of the Universe* rests squarely on the formidable shoulders of Nicholas Galitzine, who brings both modesty and the ferociousness to his portrayal of Prince Adam and his noble warrior identity He-Man.

Travis Knight recalls the first time he saw Galitzine in full-on He-Man mode during a camera test before principal photography began. “All the actors come out in their costumes, and it was like real-life action figures,” the director says. “Nick Galitzine transformed into He-Man for the first time, and he said the iconic line with the sword held aloft. I felt emotional about it because of how much these characters and this world has meant to me over the course of my life.”

Galitzine felt the same way. He had already put immense effort into physically transforming into someone who looked like he might actually be a sacred defender of the universe. “It was a really interesting day doing that camera test, because I felt like I had already endured a lot to get to that point,” Galitzine says. “That’s kind of the joy of playing a character like this. Every single week, you feel pushed to come in better, to work harder, to lift more. It’s been the greatest physical challenge of my career, and the

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mental growth as well as the physical growth that I achieved during this period of time has been so rewarding.”

That first day was “overwhelming” for all involved, he added. “But then of course, the real hard work ensued.”

Knight says part of casting Galitzine was finding an actor who already had the character’s traits within himself. “Nick’s just a sweet-hearted guy, and that aspect of Adam really comes through because that’s kind of who Nick is,” Knight says. “The way I think about Adam is that he’s sincere, he’s empathetic, and he’s thoughtful, but he also needs somewhere to go. He needs to come into his own. He needs to understand his own bravery in a way that he doesn’t at the beginning of the movie.”

Just like Prince Adam tests himself to live up to the expectations of Castle Grayskull’s champion, Knight said Galitzine himself stepped up to fulfill the responsibilities of leading an epic adventure movie. “A lot of people are familiar with Nick’s work in romantic comedies and costume dramas, and he can also be very funny, but what people haven’t seen him as, at this point, is an action hero,” the filmmaker says. “Nick has all the qualities that I’d want in a lead for this movie. He’s charming. He can move you to tears with his performances, but He-Man is the most powerful man in the universe, so he has to embody a physical form that, where you can see that manifested, takes incredible hard work and dedication.”

###

He-Man Powers Up and Takes Shape

There are no shortcuts to an action-figure physique. Galitzine says his He-Man regimen included “a ton of weightlifting” for about four months before cameras rolled. “You get into a pretty aggressive cut, doing cardio on top of that,” the actor says. “Then you’re shooting 12-hour days and fight sequences. It was definitely a constant challenge. I achieved a series of personal bests, and I don’t know if I’ll ever be better.”

Given that Galitzine was in peak condition, Knight let him take on even more physical acting responsibilities during the shoot. “He’s doing so many of his own stunts, learning the fight choreography, which is very, very complicated. It’s like a ballet. It’s like a dance,” the filmmaker says. “It’s so technical, but you have to make it feel spontaneous and fluid. He’s astonishing in how well he can adapt that stuff. And he has a presence. He *feels* like the most powerful man in the universe. It’s been remarkable to see that transformation.”

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Galitzine, meanwhile, says he had the most fun playing the vulnerable sides of the character, when he is still just a lost young man on Earth trying to recover the Power Sword and return to the mystical world he remembers. “We never really wanted to lose the fact that this guy is still Adam, you know?” Galitzine says. “He has doubts and we didn't want the muscles to take away from the growth of the character. It became this conversation of: Who is this person when he leaves Eternia? How does he evolve in those 15 years on Earth? What has forced him into his shell? Why does he believe in talking things out instead of using his fists?”

The role of Adam/He-Man is actually a duet of sorts, since the early scenes in the film required a child actor to play the character before he is banished to Earth. Artie Wilkinson Hunt, who turned 9 years old during the production, co-stars as this younger version of the hero. Behind the scenes, he and Galitzine bonded over a shared love of sports. “Nick plays big He-Man, I'm little He-Man,” he says. “But we're really close with each other. He's like my bigger brother in a way.”

The common trait between Adam and He-Man is not brawn but heart, established by Wilkinson Hunt in the early scenes and carried through by Galitzine in the rest of the film. “The really important thing that I always wanted to feel with Adam was that he held this sense of hope,” Galitzine says. “You know, even though he was without his family, he carried with him this hope that he was going to find the sword and find a way to get home.”

Once he does, Adam will confront his opposite: the hopeless, cynical, and sinister conqueror known as Skeletor.

###

Faithful Friends: Teela and Man-At-Arms

To get back to his homeworld, Adam must rely on some familiar faces from his past.

Chief among them is Teela, a former student from Adam's childhood who boosted his confidence by never going easy on him. As a kid, Teela was portrayed by Eire Farrell (one of the girls smashing dolls in the *2001: A Space Odyssey* parody in the *Barbie* movie.) Farrell, who was 12 during the *Masters of the Universe* shoot, said her character is remarkably brave and headstrong even as a child. “Teela is strong, loyal, a great warrior, and she has her own opinions,” Farrell says. “And she won't let anyone else sway her.”

Commentato [2]: I moved Teela up to be the first one in this section.

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The grown-up Teela is the first familiar face Adam encounters when he finally recovers the Sword of Power on Earth and can open the doorway back to Eternia. He is saved from one of Skeletor's ambushes thanks to Teela's expert pilot skills. Camila Mendes (known as Veronica on *Riverdale*, and the bride-to-be Tala in 2021's *Palm Springs*) plays the grown-up version of the warrior goddess, who has a mystical origin that gives her special insights into the power of Grayskull. Her talents and resilience is much-needed as she and her father, Man-At-Arms, try to remain vigilant during the dark reign of Skeletor.

"Teela is independent and self-sufficient. She had to grow up fast after her father sort of gave up on life a little bit," Mendes says. "She had to toughen up and look after herself, in addition to looking after her father. I think she's been hardened by that experience. But deep down, she has this inner sensitivity and really deep empathy."

While Adam has been lost on Earth, his old friend has risen through the ranks to become one of the top soldiers fighting back against the evil overlords who stole King Randor's throne. The tough, confident woman Adam encounters upon his return has changed a lot from the young fellow trainee he once knew. "Teela is living in this very masculine world and she's adopted those masculine qualities," Mendes says. "Then Adam comes back into her life, and he's been softened a bit. It's a nice contrast. I think Adam always brings this sense of humor and lightness and levity to Teela's life."

The original '80s cartoon and topline was before her time, but Mendes is among the millennial generation of *Masters of the Universe* fans who first encountered He-Man through the 4 Non Blondes sing-along spoof. "I really remembered that viral YouTube video of the 'Heyyyyy, yeah, yeah, yeah...' song," she says. "That was the most vivid imagery that I had."

Her father is another important figure from Adam's past: the loyal and stalwart Duncan, a.k.a. Man-At-Arms, who served Adam's father King Randor, and is still leading the revolt against Skeletor and his army years after the villain seized control of the planet. "As the king's Man-At-Arms, Duncan occupies a role of supremacy within this society. He's also kind of like Q in James Bond. He's a gadget man. He invents things," Knight says. "We see him doing all kinds of insane stunts, where gadgetry and intellect come into play, as well as physical brawn."

To play this role, Knight wanted an actor who emanated both brains and might. That led him to Idris Elba, who cancelled the apocalypse in 2013's *Pacific Rim*, guarded the

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bridge between worlds as the gatekeeper Heimdall in Marvel's *Thor* movies, and struggled for wisdom as a U.S. president in a dire crisis in 2025's *A House of Dynamite*.

"Idris might go toe-to-toe with Nick for the most charming man on the planet," Knight says. "He's warm and kind, and he feels like a warrior. He's a big dude, just naturally strong. For so many of the Eternians, that is how these guys are. Everyone looks like they haven't skipped a leg day at Gold's Gym. They're all just massive."

Elba was around 10 years old when Mattel first introduced *Masters of the Universe*, and he remembers being obsessed with the toys and cartoons when he was growing up in London in the '80s. "Everyone wanted to be He-Man," he recalls. "It's a massive slice of nostalgia and just being a part of it as an actor feels like an honor. I've got my son who's young and into it as well. So passing that on, and being in a film that he might want to see feels good."

That fatherhood element was actually a crucial part of Duncan's character. Not only is he the adoptive father of Teela, but Man-At-Arms is also responsible for training and looking after many of the up-and-coming fighters for Eternia. "Man-At-Arms is the head of the army. He basically trained all the soldiers there, including Adam when he was a kid. He is the protector, you know?" Elba says. "He's a tough guy, and old-school in that sense. He cares a lot, but also I think he's quite repressed. He doesn't really know how to express his feelings."

That leads to strain with the young people in his care who might need more comfort to accompany Man-At-Arms' demands and expectations. While Teela excels at her training, young Adam sometimes fears he is letting Duncan down. "They have a complicated history, and I thought it would be interesting and meaningful to explore the more strained relationship between a mentor and a mentee," Knight says.

Duncan goes on a journey of his own, reexamining his priorities and his bonds with both his daughter, Teela, and the now grown-up Adam. "We see how this man changes as a consequence of his relationships, which all goes to the core of what the movie's about," Knight says. "Idris embodies it beautifully."

###

Meet the Boneheaded Villain

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If Prince Adam embodies “The Hero With a Thousand Faces,” it’s fitting that his nemesis Skeletor is the villain with no face whatsoever.

They are the opposite in every way. While Adam’s quest is to prove himself worthy of the mantle of hero, Skeletor is defined by his dearth of values and integrity. The absence of a face is the physical manifestation of all the other missing pieces within this cosmic evil-doer.

“Skeletor, on his surface, seems like he just wants power and he’s willing to do whatever it takes, but it’s what’s lacking in him that makes him *want* that power,” says producer Jason Blumenthal. “And what’s lacking in him is what’s inside of Adam. I’d call it a moral compass. You either have one or you don’t. And if you don’t, you are evil.”

Skeletor is almost absurdly malevolent. He is not just a misguided figure who chooses a more cynical path. He actually recoils from decency and revels in being monstrous and destructive. Fans will recall Skeletor’s infamous line summing up his ethos in 1985’s *He-Man and She-Ra: A Christmas Special*: “I don’t like to feel good. I like to feel eeeevil!”

There’s something almost comical about how bad he wants to be bad. “Skeletor is one of the most iconic villains of all time, and when I think back to the great villains from my childhood, so many of them were funny. Or they were scary, or they looked cool—and Skeletor was all three of those things,” Knight says.

That outlandish sense of humor was what landed the role for Jared Leto, an Oscar-winner for *Dallas Buyers Club* who starred as The Joker in 2016’s *Suicide Squad* and Zack Snyder’s *Justice League*. “Jared was also a big fan of He-Man, and he understands the world, in addition to being an exceptional actor,” Knight says. “What I think a lot of people don’t know about Jared is that he’s also really, really funny.”

While Skeletor must be menacing, Knight says some sequences naturally tipped over into absurdist comedy. “We were shooting a scene and I was laughing so hard that he brought me to tears,” Knight says of Leto. “He will make these choices that you don’t see coming and that really does help to make Skeletor distinctive. He’s just an extraordinarily memorable villain.”

Post-production animators tried to mirror Leto’s onscreen expressions as they crafted the final visage for Skeletor, and the actor worked extensively with Knight to devise a voice that was unique, not an homage to any previous version of the character or other legacy villains. The filmmaker and actor ultimately came up with a deep, thundering

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resonance for this Skeletor, a contrast to his snivelling voice in the original animated series. Knight describes it as “both menacing and theatrical.”

Commentato [3]: added re voice

###

Friends and Allies of Eternia

Noble royals. A mystical winged guardian. A castle that looks terrifying but actually harbors the power of all that is good. These are just a few of the people and places that shape the fate of Eternia.

The first step of Skeletor’s master plan is to seize control of the planet by vanquishing Adam’s parents, King Randor (James Purefoy, of *Rome* and *The Following*) and Queen Marlena (Charlotte Riley, *Peaky Blinders* and 2009’s *Wuthering Heights*.) Adam sees his father as all-powerful, until Skeletor launches a successful surprise attack. “At the beginning of the movie, Skeletor invades this impregnable kingdom that we never thought anybody would be able to get into, and it’s deeply shocking,” Purefoy says. “It’s a great element of hubris that you think that you are invincible—until you’re not.”

Queen Marlena is actually an Earthling who long ago made her way to Eternia, and that background from the cartoons provides Adam an ancestral connection to both worlds. While his father is the model of strength, Marlena shows him how to be compassionate. “She’s a very calming presence,” Riley says. “Even when hard times befall her, she’s always this voice of reason. Everybody needs a bit of that in their life.”

Once the king and queen are dethroned and imprisoned, with their young son dispatched through a portal to faraway Earth, Skeletor intends to force his way into the locked heart of Castle Grayskull, where the mystical being known only as The Sorceress (Morena Baccarin, of the *Deadpool* movies and *Firefly*) guards the mysteries and secret powers it contains.

Despite the grim outward appearance of Grayskull, The Sorceress who dwells within is a benevolent presence who must ensure the energies she safeguards are accessed only by the right hands. “I often wondered, why does Grayskull have to look like that because it looks like it’s a bad guy’s castle,” the actress says. But of course, looks can be deceiving.

The Sorceress herself has the power to change her appearance, shapeshifting into an orange, white and blue falcon to circle high above Eternia to maintain her vigil over

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Castle Grayskull. Even in human form, she maintains elements of her raptor form in her costume and movements. “When I open my arms, it sort of flares out like bird wings and feathers and also when I’m doing spells and incantations, I studied how to move my hands and body in a way that resembles a falcon,” Baccarin says.

After Skeletor’s rise, The Sorceress begins a years-long siege in Castle Grayskull, holding back his legions as she awaits a pure-heart like Adam to return and summon the power of He-Man. “I think the message of the film is particularly important right now,” Baccarin says. “Finding the strength in yourself is something that we can all use. ‘I have the power!’ may seem silly to say but it’s actually inspiring because it’s tough sometimes to feel like you are enough and that you can rise up.”

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A Menagerie of Mighty Warriors and Minions

He-Man’s freedom fighting allies on Eternia include many veteran warriors that Adam knew from long ago—people he recalled only as “Ram Man,” “Mekaneck,” and “Fisto,” among others. They are aided in their mission by the high-tech automaton Roboto (voiced by *Bridesmaids* and *Palm Royale* star Kristen Wiig,) and Adam is also joined by Cringer, his green and yellow pet tiger (performed by Tom Wilton), who is timid and fearful but, like his human, contains hidden strengths.

Mattel Films president and producer Robbie Brenner explains that the original toy designers wanted the character names to match all of their respective powers. In the lore of the movie, however, they are given these monikers by someone who was just a kid when he first admired them, which is why they sound like playground nicknames. “There are hundreds of characters that populate the canon of *Masters of the Universe*,” Brenner says. “I don’t know where they came up with these names but it’s absolutely amazing.”

Ram Man is played by Jon Xue Zhang, a stunt performer turned actor who started his career in 2013’s *47 Ronin* and has appeared in Marvel’s *Eternals* and *Doctor Strange*. His character in *Masters of the Universe* is a sturdy fighter whose head and shoulders are reinforced with armor that allows him to become a human projectile during combat. “Ram Man is often described as the human battering ram,” Zhang says. “He’s got springs for legs. He’s very strong and he has a propensity for using his head to resolve problems. It may not be in the most intelligent way, but it’s certainly the most direct way.”

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Mekaneck is played by 6-foot-6 actor James Wilkinson, making his feature film debut in a role that extends his already towering height exponentially as his head rises up on a mechanical tower. "He had this crazy-bad injury with his neck," Wilkinson explains. "Man-At-Arms did a bunch of work on him and he then got this superpower of an extendable neck. Now he uses it to protect other people. So he had this tragic accident and then decided to help people."

Fisto is played by Jóhannes Haukur Jóhannesson, whose credits include fearsome figures in *Game of Thrones*, *Atomic Blonde* and *Captain America: Brave New World*. The character's actual name is Malcom, but his Adam-bestowed nickname refers to the prosthetic iron hand he wields in battle. "Fisto and Man-At-Arms, they're brothers. And my character saved his life in battle, but lost an arm in the process. So, Man-At-Arms builds him this fist," Jóhannesson says, explaining the backstory.

The Fisto performer, who also grew up loving the toys and cartoons, says this array of uniquely talented fighters is one reason *Masters of the Universe* endures. "I wouldn't say it random, it's more like: anything goes," Jóhannesson says. "Like, any idea you have, that's cool. We'll do that. You wanna see a bee man? Cool, here's a bee man. They just ran with it, which is so liberating and freeing."

The evil-doers are just as colorful, each with a special ability or characteristic that sets them apart. Skeletor's right hand is the nefarious enchantress Evil-Lyn, played by Alison Brie, of *Community*, *GLOW* and the recent horror film *Together*. She said portraying a *Masters of the Universe* villain gave her a chance to draw on her comedy skills while still menacing the galaxy. "I think the most exciting thing to me about this iteration of He-Man is the sense of humor," Brie says. "Skeletor and Evil-Lyn had a really funny rapport in the original series. Some of the iterations since then have been more serious, and I like that this movie has a meta quality. It's able to laugh at itself, but also deliver for the fans and take itself seriously when it needs to."

The key to the villainous pair is that they have a toxic love-hate relationship. "She vacillates between sort of loving Skeletor, and idolizing him, and being very excited for him to get the power, but secretly *she* wants to have all the power," Brie says. "She knows how to press his buttons, but she's also there to build him up. She notoriously has no loyalty to Skeletor. She likes to pretend that she does, but we all know the power dynamic between Evil-Lyn and Skeletor is super volatile."

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Don't expect a redemption arc for either of these evildoers. "For both Skeletor and Evil-Lyn, they really enjoy their evil antics," Brie says. "We're not going to uncover this other side to them that explains the reason behind it all. There doesn't have to be a reason. Evil-Lyn delights in her evilness and what semblance of power she has. I don't see us getting Evil-Lyn in therapy anytime soon."

Among Skeltor's other henchmen are the wild berserker Beast Man (played by Gary Martin), as well as the multi-eyed sharpshooter Tri-Klops (Kojo Attah, *The Beekeeper* and *In the Grey*), the spare-parts cyborg Trap Jaw (Sam C. Wilson, *House of the Dragon* and *Dodger*), prickly Spikor (stuntman James Apps, of *Andor* and 2022's *The Batman*), and spiral-horned Goat Man (Hafþór Júlíus Björnsson, best known as "The Mountain" from *Game of Thrones*.)

Despite playing a bad guy who can see over the horizon and through solid objects, the spinning disc of eyes that Attah wears as Tri-Klops was actually pretty limiting in terms of sight. "My vision's not great, but I make it work," he says. "I can probably see 25 percent through the little slits, and I can see underneath, so I'm not going to trip on anything. But in terms of a wider perspective, I'm relying on my sense of smell and my ears."

Trap Jaw also required some heavy-duty prosthetic work for Wilson. The battle-scarred fighter has been frankensteined back together, with the lower part of his face replaced with a sharp metal clamp, and a mechanical arm that can become a bludgeon or a blaster, depending on what's needed in a given fight. "The way that I play him, he's a really gruesome kind of guy," Wilson says. "His jaw hurts his head, so he's got a headache and none of it is very comfortable. With the amazing work that the prosthetics team has done, I can make this guy feel eerie and strange."

No pain, no gain—at least when it comes to playing one of Skeletor's enforcers. "Becoming Spikor is a bit of a journey," Apps says. "It's four or five hours in the makeup chair. You've got a three-part face: the chin, the central piece, and then the forehead, and finally a cowl with a neck. Then that gets stuck onto a two-part suit, double the thickness of a wetsuit with added muscles in it. So it's super hot."

The discomfort gives him something to channel into the bad guy's onscreen temperament. "Travis' vision of Spikor was a dude who is scary, powerful, and a part of Skeletor's team who is ready to rip anyone apart," Apps says.

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Goat Man, played by the 6-foot-9 bodybuilder Björnsson, looms above them all as a crimson-hued, demonic figure with immense curling horns on either side of his head. The 430-pound athlete, who won the 2018 World's Strongest Man championship and has been inducted into the International Sports Hall of Fame, says the muscle-bound *Masters of the Universe* characters are a favorite among his competitors.

"All of us were at some point influenced by these characters, which were so popular back in the day," Björnsson says. "I grew up with the generation that had He-Man, and being able to be a part of this was just an honor for me."

###

Connections to the 1987 Cult Classic

Two other Skeletor acolytes in the new *Masters of the Universe* were drawn not from the original topline or animated series, but directly from the 1987 live-action movie. Karg and Pigboy were two of the monstrous advisors to Frank Langella's Skeletor in that earlier film, and in the new version they get another moment in the evil-doer spotlight.

Karg, played by Hung Dante Dong (a stunt performer from *Doctor Strange and Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*), is maniacal by nature but distinguished by his long, flowing locks. "He's ... well, how should I say it? He's a crazy, crazy character," Dong says. "But he does his hair every morning! So basically he goes from elegance and classiness to living for the fire."

Despite Pigboy's surly demeanor, this minion of Skeletor's has a surprisingly heartwarming backstory. Mattel created the cameo role for the 1987 film as a prize for a young fan. Countless kids submitted their names to the drawing, and the role was ultimately won by then 8-year-old Richard Szponder of the Chicago area. Ever since, Pigboy has had a special place in *Masters of the Universe* lore.

"I'm such a nerdy fan of so many different things myself, so I get how important this source material can be to fans," says Arun Bassi (*School's Out Forever*), who took on the role of the porcine henchman in the new film. "Pigboy was made by Mattel for fans, so it was quite special for me to carry on into this new universe."

Another important figure from the 1987 *Masters of the Universe* also makes an appearance in the new film: None other than He-Man himself, **Dolph Lundgren**, who

Commentato [4]: Added some good stuff from that Lundgren interview here.

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shares a scene alongside Galitzine's Adam as a surprisingly insightful weightlifter at the local gym.

The veteran actor's other memorable roles include the Russian boxer Ivan Drago from *Rocky IV* and the title role of the vigilante in the 1989 Marvel Comics adaptation of *The Punisher*. He-Man remains one of Lundgren's signature performances, however, and the entire team behind the new movie was eager to get him back onscreen as an homage.

"It's kind of daunting that it's been 38 to 39 years since I was last on Eternia," Lundgren says. "It feels really cool to be back, though."

Lundgren himself helped shape the role of the mysteriously wise man who gives Galitzine's Adam crucial guidance and encouragement. It became a true passing of the torch between the performers. "The original cameo was something different. It wasn't as much of a role model," Lundgren says. "If I was going to be part of it, I wanted to make it special and make it something where the young He-Man could take the older He-Man's words of wisdom with him, which he does now. And the director and producer liked my idea, so that's what ended up in the script. 'The muscles don't make the man, kid.' That's what I've learned in my life."

As an enduring fan of *Masters of the Universe*, Lundgren even said he was excited to watch the new version and see the various ways the original world of the toys and comics is brought to life. "Technology is so advanced now that you can make this a very interesting journey, more exciting than it was in 1986," Lundgren says. "The reason *Masters of the Universe* has survived and has so many fans is the story has something really special about it. Something positive and inspiring, you know. It's a very inspirational type of story, I think."

###

Sounds of the Universe:

Composer Daniel Pemberton and Queen guitarist Brian May

Everyone who grew up with *Masters of the Universe* can hum along with the jaunty theme song of the Filmation cartoon, so one of the challenges of the movie was to come up with its own unforgettable score.

That made Daniel Pemberton one of the most crucial parts of the *Masters of the Universe* team. The British-born composer co-wrote "Hear My Voice" with singer Celeste

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for the movie *Trial of the Chicago 7*, which won both of them the 2021 Academy Award for Best Song. His other credits as a composer include 2015's *Steve Jobs*, 2018's *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* and its 2023 sequel, 2020's *Birds of Prey*, and the recent blockbuster *Project Hail Mary*.

"I've been a huge admirer of Daniel Pemberton's work for as long as I've been aware of his work," says director Travis Knight, who praised his chameleon-like ability to blend inventive new material with styles of music that feel nostalgic and beloved. "He comes up with a new inventive take on each one of these genres that he plays around with," Knight says. "It really is extraordinary. And yet one thing that binds all of his work together is he always knows how to beautifully and authentically tap into the emotion of the story that he's telling."

One of the primary influences was the British rock band Queen, which blended heavy metal and pop sensibilities to create triumphant, bold songs that still feel vibrant and new decades later. The band also composed music for the 1980 movie *Flash Gordon*, which was one of the many inspirations for Mattel's toy designers back when *Masters of the Universe* was first being developed. Knight says that movie was one of his influences too.

"The big musical touchstone for me in this movie was Queen. I was a huge Queen fan when I was a kid," Knight says. "There's something about their music that is operatic and theatrical and dense and layered, but there's a sincerity at the core of it. And that, in a nutshell, is what our movie's about. It's bigger than life, it's larger than life. To me, that's Queen's music."

In his first meeting with Pemberton, the composer brought up the band's contributions to the 1980 *Flash Gordon* movie, without being prompted. "Immediately I knew, okay, we're on the same page," Knight says.

Pemberton came loaded with other ideas, as well, fusing classical music with retro pop. "He wanted to bring a little bit of a disco-inflected Abba influence to some of the score, which is not something that I had thought of originally," Knight says. "You combine that with some of the kind of romantic orchestration you would find in a big sweeping fantasy epic, and it's a weird combination. Operatic rock 'n' roll, disco, romantic instrumentation— the combination of those flavors gave us something that was really unique and distinctively *Masters of the Universe*."

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When it came time to actually record the music at London's famed Abbey Road studios, Pemberton also helped recruit Brian May himself, the legendary guitarist of Queen, as one of the musicians. "Unbeknownst to me, Dan was a friend of Brian's son, Jimmy, when he was a kid. They were mates, so he actually knew Brian," Knight recalls. "There was already a connection there, and one night when we were recording the score in Abbey Road, Brian happened to be there working on one of the Queen reissues. It was just happenstance that it came together like that."

Pemberton reconnected with May and pitched him on potentially working on the project. "He was down for it. He actually knew *Masters*, which was a bit of a surprise for me, but he was completely excited about the opportunity and really thought he could deliver something unique to the score," Knight says.

Like He-Man's Sword of Power, May has his own legendary weapon—a guitar he handmade called The Red Special, which he plays with a vintage British sixpence coin instead of a plastic guitar pick. Naturally, May's stand-out contribution was utilized to underscore Prince Adam's most transformative moments. "Brian has that very distinctive sound. As soon as you hear that guitar, that Red Special, you know who it is. It's like ascending to the heavens. It's like a choir of angels," Knight says. "I feel very lucky that it's on our score."

May's contributions were delivered later during a marathon session at his home recording studio with Knight and Pemberton. "I thought maybe we'd be lucky and he would give us like a couple of hours where he'd work with us, but come nearly midnight Brian was still slogging away, coming up with riffs for us in our movie," Knight says. "I couldn't believe how lucky we were. It was just a joyful experience as a lifelong Queen fan to be sitting right next to Brian and to watch him play with his sixpence and hear that majestic music come out of that 60-year-old guitar. It really was, it's like a bucket list moment."

To top it off, May turned out to be the keeper of a fairly extensive *Masters of the Universe* toy collection as well. "After the session, something really extraordinary happened," Knight says. "Brian disappeared for a few minutes. I thought, oh, he's probably tired. He's been jamming away all day. And he comes back a few minutes later and he's got two huge boxes of *Masters of the Universe* toys. And it turns out he still had his son's toys up in the attic and he brought them down. He starts pulling them out and he recognized all the characters. He knew who Skeletor was. I could not believe that I was sitting in Brian May's house having a conversation with him about *Masters of the Universe*. It was really a pinch-me moment."

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The Queen guitarist's performance is woven throughout the score, but it rises to prominence whenever the hero needs to summon his inner strength. "Basically every time you hear a certain sound that has to do with the power and Adam's emotional journey, that's Brian playing," Knight says. "To me, the most iconic moment is when Adam transforms for the first time into He-Man and we wanted something that was a real showstopper musically. I mean, who better than one of the greatest guitarists who's ever lived? So the big featured instrument on that transformation sequence is from Brian May, and it gives me goosebumps every single time I hear it."

###

The Building Blocks of Eternia: Sets and Locations

With an epic cast in place, the team behind *Masters of the Universe* got to work building the world itself.

"*Masters of the Universe* is a thousand different pieces all working in conjunction with one another that have to be done in a certain order," says executive producer Bill Bannerman (*The Twilight Saga*), who has been helping to shepherd the project for more than 13 years. "It was my job to make sure that the machine gets built correctly and executed correctly, and the production plan comes together in a way that alleviates all the pressure points of a really intense chess game."

It all started with the script, then the casting of the ensemble, and before cameras could roll an army of behind-the-scenes artists had to get to work. "You have to then start world-building," Bannerman says. "And to do Eternia, you have to build it from scratch. You can't just go to a Costco or a Walmart or wherever and pull it off the shelf, so to speak. We made everything from costumes, to props, to jewelry, to rocks, to columns, to artwork on the walls. Then there were the vehicles, props such as swords or shields or helmets or armor—there's a whole smorgasbord of elements."

Director Travis Knight embraced the idea of starting from scratch, although he had decades of toys and comics to serve as inspiration. "Creating a world out of nothing is no small feat," Knight says. "But it's one of the things I love most about filmmaking. Coming from a background in animation, where you start with absolutely nothing, you get nothing for free, everything that exists onscreen is a choice."

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His primary goal was that Eternia shouldn't feel pristine or overly modern. Instead, it should feel ancient. Even its technology had to feel like it had been around for a long time. "We wanted to make sure it was a world that felt lived-in," Knight says. "It couldn't look like it was just constructed on a sound stage. It had to have history. There were choices behind the architecture that go back, hundreds and hundreds of years. This is a place that has traditions. To bring the world to life in the best possible way, it required us to find some of the finest designers and craftspeople in the world."

Among them was production designer Guy Hendrix Dyas, a two-time Oscar-nominee for 2010's *Inception* and 2016's *Passengers*, who was brought aboard to craft the look of Eternia. He already had vast experience manifesting otherworldly places, having designed the productions of everything from the comic book realms of 2003's *X2: X-Men United* and 2006's *Superman Returns* to the surreal alternate-dimension in Stephen King's 2021 Apple TV mini-series *Lisey's Story*.

Knight called Dyas "the tip of the spear" as the production got underway. "We were letting Guy's freak flag fly," the director joked. "He really embraced the insanity that is Eternia. It's such a kitchen sink world. It's got all these things that should not play well together: fantasy, swords, and sorcery, and robots, and magic. You don't want it to feel like a crazy quilt. You need it to feel like these things are enmeshed and entwined, and natural. So, Guy had an extraordinary challenge."

Dyas built the sets for this ancient world on the relatively new soundstages at Sky Elstree Studios in the north London area. When they filled five stages with sets, the *Masters of the Universe* production also moved outside. "They have a fantastic back lot, which we absolutely filled with the famous Jaw Bridge, which is the front of Castle Grayskull, as well as a large courtyard, which we've built for various places within the palace of Eternia," Dyas says. "So we had a very big footprint."

He also had an immense amount of research homework to do as he got to work designing—venturing the lava flows in Iceland and untouched forests in Ireland to garner inspiration. He also revisited the Filmation animated series that he had long-ago loved as a boy. "I watched every single episode of the animation, which was wonderful because some of them brought back memories from my childhood," Dyas says. "And then I realized there were a whole bunch that I missed. Maybe I was in detention at school or something? I don't know. So that was a bit of a treat."

The most complex and demanding set was also the most exciting to create: the inner sanctum of Castle Grayskull. "Thanks to Chris Butler's extraordinary script, I was able to

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distill it down to something akin to a temple, a sacred place where this magical sword would be kept," Dyas says.

The real life Wells Cathedral in Somerset, England, which was first consecrated in 1239, served as one of the inspirations. "I knew that I would be able to use certain orders of architecture to make a set like this work and feel believable next to Wells Cathedral," Dyas says. "Gold and natural stone felt right for this kind of environment. It also gave it a great sense of history. Grayskull goes back for generations and generations, and conveys the idea of a very, very historical, mysterious place that had been around way before our characters."

###

Looking Sharp: Armor, Costumes and Haircuts

Costume designer Richard Sale dressed the heroes and villains of Eternia in the *Masters of the Universe* film, but he also had countless people from our own world in mind as he created the various looks.

"I always think about it as not just designing costumes for the film, but you're designing the costumes for people to dress up at Comic-Con or at Halloween," says Sales, whose previous credits include *Jurassic World: Rebirth* and *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. "They're not just going to be seen on the cinema screen or on TV. Fans are so key, and there's something really cool about designing things that you know people are going to pore over to try and replicate and wear."

Sale and director Travis Knight bonded over a passion for retro movies. "We both enjoyed a love of the '80s aesthetic," the costume designer says. "Some of my original pitches to Travis involved the early *Superman* films, and *Flash Gordon*. This movie is very reminiscent of that kind of colorful action film. We wanted to keep all of it fun, really, but maybe bring in a little sinister, gothic element, especially with Skeletor and some of the villains. We wanted to keep them quite dangerous, and didn't want them to become too campy or over the top."

Other times, it meant adapting toy designs to be more contemporary and realistic. "We identified those Teela elements that we wanted to keep: the popped-up collar, her white and gold signature look," Sale says. "But making her look like a serious fighter was the key."

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In the Filmmation cartoon, Prince Adam always wore distinctive royal garb, which Sale tried to emulate even in Galitzine's earthbound version of the character. "Travis was eager to have that pink color, which is so reminiscent of Adam from the cartoons and from the toy line," Sale says. "And we added on a slightly larger fitted shirt because obviously, we're trying to hide Nick's physique whilst he's Adam. We just tried to capture the mundanity of Adam's life, going to the office day after day."

Once he arrives back on Eternia and summons the power of Grayskull to become He-Man, the baggy pink shirt disappears in favor of form-fitting straps of armor. Sale devised Galitzine's He-Man costume in collaboration with hair and makeup designer Pippa Woods. "Pippa has been brilliant, especially for He-Man, who is wearing relatively very little until you get the hair and the tan," Sale says. "Then, all of a sudden, it becomes the character."

Woods, whose credits include *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms* and the 007 film *No Time To Die*, was already well-versed in the look of He-Man and his faithful friends when she signed on to the film. "I am an '80s baby. So, I actually grew up with *Masters of the Universe*," she says. "Obviously, being a fan myself, I know how exciting it is when you start to see all these characters come alive. It makes you want to do the absolute best you can."

She described her approach to the hair and makeup as teamwork with the actors. "I kind of said to Nick at the beginning when I first met him: 'It's basically me and you. You work on the muscles and we'll get your hair right,'" Woods says. That meant dying Galitzine's darker hair to He-Man blond, and cutting it to approximate the action figures and cartoon—without going full bowl-cut. "It had to be a certain length and a certain silhouette. So, even though we weren't going with the classic kind of He-Man bob, we wanted to give that silhouette that was immediately recognizable," Woods says.

With so much exposed skin in his barbarian-like armor, Woods also had to consider makeup from top to bottom on the actor. "He's obviously worked on the body, but he was never going to have that kind of tan, plastic action-figure finish that we needed," she says. "So, there's been loads of research and testing on different types of tan to make him sheen the right amount."

Woods also tried to bring some reality to the classic look of Camila Mendes' character. "Bringing Teela to life, obviously, she's got the iconic red hair and blue eyes. Camie has dark hair and dark eyes, and so we knew it was going to be a big transformation for her.

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We didn't go for the big fiery kind of flame-red hair, but we wanted to do something that, again, felt more modern, but also suited Camie and made her look the absolute best that she can."

On the sinister side, Skeletor doesn't have a face, so Woods focused her hair and makeup talents on Alison Brie's Evil-Lyn. "When we originally did her makeup, we wanted it to be a bit more glam, and very well put together. But after seeing it on camera, I think Travis felt it was a bit *too* done and maybe Evil-Lyn doesn't have the time to do her makeup like that," Woods says. "We reigned it in and played with a more broken-down version. What was interesting about her look was that if we put any color on her at all, she felt too warm and too soft. So, we pretty much removed all the color from her makeup. No blush. We actually made a lipstick which dulled her lips to give her that cold kind, dark look, which actually worked the best."

###

The Tools of Battle: Props Built With Real Magic

Every toy in *Masters of the Universe* also came with an array of accessories, so the distinctive prop weapons of the film became a crucial way to reflect the characters' personalities. Among the most important was He-Man's signature blade.

"The Sword of Power does have this very iconic design," says Knight. "As with many of these choices that we've made on the film, I always go back to the source material. I remember playing with a toy and it had this really odd shape. So we took that as the foundation for what we did, and we brought a degree of elegance to the sword. What our props team has done looks beautiful."

That was handled by property manager Steven Morris, whose credits include *Project Hail Mary*, *F1: The Movie*, and *Barbie*. "The sword is the story," the propmaster says. "Once he had the sword in his hand, he just looked complete."

Although there is only one Sword of Power in the mythical lore, there were many, many of them on set. "We have had, in total, around 20 swords," Morris says. "We have our hero version for close-ups, we have a lightweight one. We have some that are soft, and a stubby one. We have a lightweight version. Plus, we've got a super bendy version for action. There was a beat where they rolled down the hill and he had it in a harness in his Adam look, which was what the bendy version was for. So yeah ... plenty of swords."

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Like so many others who worked on the movie, Morris was a lifelong fan of *Masters of the Universe*. "It's pretty cool to work on something that I watched as a child now that I'm a so-called adult," he says. "I'm still a bit of a child. It's very surreal and I think it's just paying back the childhood dream."

In virtually every case, Morris says the props team tried to emulate the original toys and animated weapons, while giving them a modern, live-action update. "Teela's sword had to be slick, elegant, very much like a character really, with some lovely finishing and a red stone in the hilt," the propmaster says. "Man-At-Arms was like a walking weapons system. He carries a mace, a sidearm, a boot knife, a grappling hook, a grenade belt. A lot of these weapons had to be concealed within his armor in order for him to be able to come alive in battle scenes."

Then there was Skeletor, whose signature weapon had to match the mystique of He-Man's Sword of Power. Morris found a way to add some actual magic to the prop. "The Havoc Staff had a magnetic version, which was quite interesting," Morris says. "It allowed Jared to be able to put the staff down at any point and the electromagnet on the bottom would connect with a plate in the floor, so it could just be free standing."

All the people who worked on this *Masters of the Universe* film, both behind the scenes and in front of the camera, shared one common characteristic: a sense of play. Just as many of them did with the toys when they were young, all of these artists drew on the power of their imaginations to bring the world to life in the best way possible.

"I think that's something that generations of fans of *Masters of the Universe* have tapped into, this idea of being the best version of yourself," Knight says. "That is a core part of what *Masters* has always been, and it's essential to how we've shaped this movie."

###

Masters of the Universe History

- The "Masters of the Universe" topline was created by Mattel and first introduced to the public in 1982. Each action figure came with a mini-comic that told a story from the fantasy world of Eternia.
- He-Man and Skeletor each came with half of the Sword of Power, which could be connected and used as a key to open the drawbridge mouth of Castle Grayskull.

Commentato [5]: added history here

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- In September 1983, the original *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* cartoon was produced by Filmation. It aired after school, Monday through Friday, and was syndicated around the world. Each episode ended with a public service message from the characters.
- 130 episodes of the cartoon were created over the next two years. Some holiday specials were produced after that and the toys remained wildly popular for years to come.
- A girl-focused toyline, "She-Ra: The Princess of Power," was introduced in 1984 as a companion piece to "Masters of the Universe." Filmation made 93 episodes TV for a series based around her.
- A live-action "Masters of the Universe" movie was released by Cannon Films in 1987, starring Dolph Lundgren as He-Man and Frank Langella as Skeletor.
- He-Man and the "Masters of the Universe" franchise was revived several times over the years. *The New Adventures of He-Man* cartoon aired in 1990, set in a futuristic world; and a 2002-2004 reboot returned focus to the original show's fantasy realm of Eternia with more backstory about the origins of Skeletor and the different societies inhabiting that faraway planet.
- *Clerks* filmmaker Kevin Smith oversaw a revival called *Masters of the Universe: Revelation* for Netflix in 2021. Another CG animated series called *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* reimagined the hero and his friends in a 2021-2022 series.
- The new film version of *Masters of the Universe*, directed by Travis Knight, draws from all the original source material to tell a story set in a fantasy kingdom where ancient magic and state-of-the-art technology blend together amid an epic struggle between good and evil.

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About The Cast

NICHOLAS GALITZINE (Adam/He-Man) is an actor celebrated for his captivating performances, earning both critical acclaim and a devoted fan base. He is known for his standout performance in Prime Video's highly anticipated film *The Idea of You*, starring alongside Anne Hathaway. The trailer broke records as the most watched for any original streaming movie, and the film became Amazon MGM Studios' No. 1 romantic comedy debut of all time, attracting nearly 50 million viewers within its first two weeks on Prime Video. Galitzine also starred opposite Julianne Moore in *Mary & George*, the 17th-century limited series on Starz. His performance was widely praised, with critics calling it "the electric energy underpinning the new seven-part series."

Nicholas' breadth of work spans blockbusters and indie films, with an exciting slate of upcoming projects. His recent work includes a starring role in *100 Nights of Hero*, an indie adaptation of Isabel Greenberg's graphic novel, alongside Emma Corrin, Maika Monroe, and Charli XCX, as well as the upcoming Amazon MGM comedy *The Sheep Detectives*, set to release in May 2026, where he joins Hugh Jackman, Emma Thompson, Nicholas Braun, and Molly Gordon. Galitzine will also feature beside Eva Longoria in the upcoming *Wings of Freedom*, a Mexico-set animated adventure film by French screenwriter and producer Laurent Zeitoun. Nicholas will star in period piece *The Mosquito Bowl*, directed by Peter Berg, with Bill Skarsgård, Ray Nicholson, and Tom Francis, as well as Brian Welsh's thriller *The Return of Stanley Atwell* for Hera Pictures alongside Ella Purnell.

Galitzine's other credits include Prime Video's *Red, White & Royal Blue*, which became the #1 movie worldwide on Prime Video at launch, cultivated a massive global fan base, and earned a "Certified Fresh" audience rating on Rotten Tomatoes. Galitzine recently wrapped production on the sequel, *Red, White & Royal Wedding*, directed by Jamie Babbit. He also starred in Netflix's *Purple Hearts* as the male lead opposite Sofia

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Carson. Directed by Elizabeth Allen Rosenbaum, *Purple Hearts* was the platform's #1 film worldwide for three consecutive weeks and became the 7th most successful Netflix film of all time at release, surpassing titles like *The Kissing Booth 2* and *The Irishman*.

CAMILA MENDES (Teela) has established herself as a dynamic and versatile performer who is quickly emerging as one of the entertainment industry's brightest young talents.

Most recently, Mendes wrapped production on the upcoming action thriller film, *Viva La Madness*, co-written and directed by Guy Ritchie. Up next, she will begin production on *Tommy Karate* opposite Pete Davidson, Simon Rex, Paul Walter Hauser, and Justin Chon.

Mendes stars in and co-produced the fashion-fueled comedy *Idiotka*, which had its world premiere at SXSW 2025, making its debut in the Narrative Spotlight section. The movie, which is set in the vibrant, eccentric world of West Hollywood's Russian enclave, unspools against the high-stakes drama of a *Project Runway*-style reality show. The film was released on February 27, 2026.

Mendes starred in and executive produced Amazon's semi-auto-biographical coming-of-age story *Música*, opposite the film's writer and director, Rudy Mancuso. The movie follows a young man plagued by the music in his head, who must come to terms with an uncertain future while balancing love, family and Brazilian culture in Newark, New Jersey. The film premiered at SXSW and is currently available on Prime Video.

She also starred in and executive produced Amazon's romantic comedy *Upgraded*, opposite Archie Renaux and Marisa Tomei. Directed by Carlson Young, the film follows Ana, an aspiring art intern, as she juggles the demands of her daunting boss, finding romance, and following her dreams. *Upgraded* reached #1 Title Worldwide on Prime Video during opening weekend.

Mendes starred opposite Maya Hawke in Netflix's dark comedy *Do Revenge*, directed by Jennifer Kaytin Robinson. The story follows two teenage girls who form an unlikely friendship to go after each other's bullies.

Mendes starred as Veronica Lodge in Greg Berlanti's hit CW breakout drama *Riverdale*, which concluded its seventh and final season in August 2023. The series was the most popular teen drama TV show in the world 2021-2022, according to Parrot Analytics.

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Mendes starred as Melody in Amazon Studio's adult animated comedy series *Fairfax*. She also can be seen in the hit sci-fi romantic comedy *Palm Springs* opposite Andy Samberg and Cristin Milioti. The film had a record acquisition deal at Sundance by Hulu in 2019 and scored a Golden Globe nomination for Best Motion Picture, Musical or Comedy. Mendes also starred in Netflix's thriller *Dangerous Lies*, which earned her a nomination for Female Movie Star at the 2020 People's Choice Awards.

In 2023, Mendes and her business partner Rachel Matthews co-founded Honor Role, a feature film and TV production company focused on dynamic, character-driven stories crafted by sharp filmmakers with a distinct point of view. Their debut film, *Griffin in Summer*, premiered at the 2024 Tribeca Film Festival, where it earned the Founders Award for Best U.S. Narrative Feature and was nominated for a GLAAD Award in the category of Outstanding Film – Limited Release.

ALISON BRIE (Evil-Lyn) is a Golden Globe-nominated actress, writer, and producer known for her dynamic performances across television and film.

She most recently produced and starred in the body-horror film, *Together*, opposite Dave Franco, which premiered at the 2025 Sundance Film Festival to stellar reviews and was released by Neon.

Brie is well known for her starring role in the Emmy Award-nominated series, *GLOW*, which ran for three seasons. For her performance, she received back-to-back Golden Globe nominations for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series – Musical or Comedy and four SAG Award nominations for Female Actor in a Comedy Series and Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series in 2018 and 2019. Brie was also nominated for two Critics Choice Awards for Best Actress in a Comedy Series in 2019 and 2020. During season three, Brie made her directorial debut with the episode, "Hollywood Homecoming."

Brie also starred in the award-winning drama series, *Mad Men*. For her performance as Trudy Campbell, Brie won a 2009 SAG Award for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series. Additionally, the show won four Emmy Awards, three Golden Globe Awards, two BAFTA Awards, eight AFI Awards and a Peabody Award. While Alison was in production on *Mad Men*, she was simultaneously starring on the acclaimed comedy series, *Community*. For her role as Annie Edison, she received a Critics' Choice Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series in 2018 and the show won the 2012 Critics' Choice Award for Best Comedy Series.

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Brie's additional film credits include Amazon's *Freelance* opposite John Cena; Dave Franco's *Somebody I Used To Know* which she co-wrote, produced, and stars alongside Amy Sedaris and Jay Ellis; Jeff Baena's *Spin Me Round*, which she co-wrote, produced and starred in, Steven Spielberg's Academy Award-nominated *The Post*, opposite Meryl Streep; Emerald Fennell's Academy Award-winning *Promising Young Woman*; James Franco's Academy Award-nominated *The Disaster Artist*; Leslye Headland's *Sleeping With Other People*, opposite Jason Sudeikis; Jeff Baena's *Joshy* and *The Little Hours*, opposite Aubrey Plaza and Dave Franco; Nick Stoller's *The Five-Year Engagement*, opposite Emily Blunt and Jason Segel; Etan Cohen's *Get Hard*, opposite Will Ferrell and Kevin Hart; *How To Be Single*, opposite Dakota Johnson and Rebel Wilson; Wes Craven's *Scream 4*; *The Kings Of Summer*; *Save The Date*, opposite Lizzy Caplan; Dave Franco's directorial debut, *The Rental*; Jeff Baena's *Horse Girl* (2020 Sundance Film Festival) which she co-wrote, produced and starred in; and Clea DuVall's critically acclaimed *Happiest Season*.

On TV, Brie also appeared in Peacock's adaptation of Liane Moriarty's *Apples Never Fall*, opposite Annette Bening, Sam Neill, and Jake Lacy, as well as Apple TV+'s anthology series *Roar*, in an episode opposite Hugh Dancy, executive produced by Nicole Kidman. Brie also directed an episode of *Marvel 616*, an anthological documentary series, released on Disney+ in 2020.

Additionally, Brie lent her voice to "Uni-Kitty" in *The Lego Movie* and its sequel which have grossed over \$660 million worldwide as well as the animated feature, *Weathering With You* with Lee Pace and Riz Ahmed. She voiced the character of Diane in Netflix's first original adult animated series, *Bojack Horseman*, which received back-to-back Primetime Emmy nominations for Outstanding Animated Program in 2019 and 2020, a Critics Choice award for Best Animated Series in 2016, and four Annie Award nominations for Best TV/Media - General Audience, winning in both 2019 and 2020. In 2017, Brie received an Annie Award nomination for Outstanding Achievement in Voice Acting in an Animated TV/Broadcast Production.

JAMES PUREFOY (King Randor) may be best known for playing Mark Antony in the award-winning HBO series *Rome* and Joe Carroll in the acclaimed series *The Following* opposite Kevin Bacon. He most recently appeared in heavily recurring roles in *The Veil* (FX) opposite Elisabeth Moss, *Land of Women* (AppleTV+), and *The Recruit* (Netflix). He can next be seen joining the final two seasons of *The Witcher* for Netflix.

Recent TV credits include *Marie Antoinette* (BBC/Canal+) *Pennyworth* (Epix), starring in *Hap & Leonard* (Sundance TV), *Altered Carbon* (Netflix), *Sex Education* (Netflix), *El*

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Candidato (Amazon), *No Man's Land* (Hulu), *A Discovery of Witches* (AMC), and *The Philanthropist* for NBC.

Film credits include starring in the first instalment of *Resident Evil*, playing Rawdon Crawley in Mira Nair's *Vanity Fair* opposite Reese Witherspoon, *A Knight's Tale* alongside Heath Ledger, *Churchill* opposite Brian Cox, *High-Rise*; the feature adaptation of the classic JG Ballard novel, directed by Ben Wheatley, Chris Foggin's *Fisherman's Friends*, Stephen Campanelli's action thriller, *Momentum* opposite Olga Kurylenko, *Wicked Blood* opposite Sean Bean and Abigail Breslin as well as *Solomon Kane*, *Ironclad*, and *John Carter*.

He joined the Royal Shakespeare Company in his final year at the Central School of Speech and Drama and spent six years in lead roles in the UK theatre. He last starred on stage in *FlarePath* opposite Sienna Miller at the Haymarket Theatre directed by Trevor Nunn.

Purefoy hails from Taunton, England.

MORENA BACCARIN (The Sorceress) — An actress of remarkable range and poise, Morena Baccarin has built an impressive body of work across film and television, consistently drawing audiences and critics to every role she takes on.

Baccarin currently stars in *Sheriff Country*, the breakout spin-off of CBS's hit series *Fire Country*, leading the series as 'Mickey Fox' — a tenacious small-town sheriff navigating the demands of law enforcement, family, and community politics. The series has dominated its Friday night time slot since its October 2025 premiere, ranking among the top five broadcast series overall and earning a second season renewal.

She recently starred in the Amazon/MGM Studios feature *The Wrecking Crew* opposite Dave Bautista and Jason Momoa, which was released earlier this year. She also reprised her beloved role as 'Vanessa' in the franchise's third installment, *Deadpool & Wolverine*, opposite Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman — a franchise she first joined in 2016, followed by *Deadpool 2* in 2018. Additionally, she appeared in George Nolfi's sci-fi thriller *Elevation* opposite Anthony Mackie, and reunited with Gerard Butler in the sequel to *Greenland*, directed by Ric Roman Waugh.

Her recent feature work further includes *Fast Charlie* opposite Pierce Brosnan, directed by Phillip Noyce; *Last Looks*, an action-suspense film directed by Tim Kirkby opposite Charlie Hunnam and Mel Gibson; and *The Good House*, an Amblin feature opposite

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Sigourney Weaver and Kevin Kline. Additional film credits include *Ode to Joy* opposite Martin Freeman and Jake Lacy for IFC; the narrative documentary *Framing John DeLorean* opposite Alec Baldwin, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival; and a cameo in Paul Feig's comedy *Spy* opposite Melissa McCarthy, Jason Statham, and Rose Byrne.

On the small screen, Baccarin most recently starred as criminal mastermind 'Elena Federov' in NBC's thriller heist series *The Endgame* alongside Ryan Michelle Bathé — a project she also produced — and appeared in episodes of CBS All Access' *The Twilight Zone* and the Viaplay series *Home Invasion*.

Morena captured the attention of audiences and critics alike with her Emmy-nominated performance as 'Jessica Brody' in Showtime's award-winning *Homeland*, starring alongside Claire Danes, Damian Lewis, and Mandy Patinkin. She led the Lifetime miniseries *The Red Tent*, based on Anita Diamant's beloved novel; starred in Fox's *Gotham* and ABC's sci-fi drama *V*, in which she played a character who shifted between human and extraterrestrial form; recurred as 'Erica Flynn' on CBS's *The Mentalist*; and began her career in Joss Whedon's critically acclaimed *Firefly* and its big-screen adaptation *Serenity*. Internationally, she starred as the romantic lead in the fourth season of Brazil's *Sessão de Terapia* opposite Selton Mello, based on Showtime's *In Treatment*.

Baccarin is actively involved with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and serves on the board of Waterwell, a civic-minded theatre company based in New York that inspires audiences and students to engage with the world around them.

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Baccarin moved with her family to New York City at the age of seven. A graduate of the prestigious Juilliard School, she resides in New York City with her husband and two children.

JÓHANNES HAUKUR JÓHANNESSON (Fisto) is a classically trained Icelandic actor that will be seen next in American historical drama, *The Brink Of War*. He plays opposite Jeff Daniels, Jared Harris, and J.K. Simmons, the film explores the high-stakes negotiations to dismantle nuclear arsenals and prevent global destruction. In addition, Johannes recently wrapped *The Boy In The Iron Box* produced by Guillermo del Toro. A supernatural and psychological horror experience he costars with Rupert Friend and Kevin Durand that's expected to be released late 2026.

Johannes can recently be seen in *Captain America: Brave New World*, and the final season is *Succession*, in a seven episode recurring arc for HBO. He can also currently be

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seen the Roland Emmerich Gladiator epic *Those About To Die* opposite Anthony Hopkins and *Miss Fallaci* for Paramount.

Mr. Johannesson played the series antagonist of Olaf Haraldsson in the first two seasons of Netflix's, *Vikings: Valhalla*.

Johannes played "Kovic" in the 2021 Paramount Feature Film, *Infinite*, opposite Mark Wahlberg, directed by Antoine Fuqua. He is currently finishing up on the indie feature *Zone 414*, opposite Travis Fimmel and Guy Pearce. He recently wrapped his recurring arc on *Cursed*, the Frank Miller and Tom Wheeler Netflix series starring Katherine McNamara. Johannes plays an incredible role of "Cumber The Ice King". Johannes recurred on the Netflix show *The Letter For The King* and also played the role of "Åsatrumannen" in the HBO series *Beforeigners*.

Johannes was previously seen in theaters worldwide in the lead role of "Tau" in Albert Hughes' *Alpha* which is the first film from Jeff Robinov's Studio 8 shingle with SONY.

He can also be seen as one of the leads in the Netflix series *The Innocents* (2018), costarring Guy Pearce, and played the villain role of "Baris" in the Sony feature film *Bloodshot*, opposite Vin Diesel and Eiza Gonzalez.

He can also be seen as "Captain J. Rouverol" in *Where'd You Go Bernadette* (2019) alongside Cate Blanchett and Kristen Wiig, directed by Richard Linklater as well as *The Sisters Brothers* (2019) alongside Jake Gyllenhaal, John C. Reilly, and Joaquin Phoenix. Jo also can be seen in five episodes of the YouTube Red series *Origin* (2018) as well as playing the role of "Vlad" in the Warner Brothers feature film *The Good Liar* (2019), directed by Bill Condon and co-starring Helen Mirren and Ian McKellen. He played the role of "Johans" in the Netflix Feature Film, *Eurovision*, alongside Will Ferrell.

Prior to the above, Jo played the key linchpin role of "Yuri Bakhin" in David Leitch's *Atomic Blonde* (aka *The Coldest City*) opposite Charlize Theron and James McAvoy. Johannes plays a KGB agent with crucial information that both Theron and McAvoy are vying for post collapse of the Berlin wall:

In addition, Johannes recurred in the HBO hit series *Game Of Thrones* and on the Netflix hit series *The Last Kingdom*. An exceptionally talented Icelandic actor, he can be seen in the Nicolas Winding Refn (Cannes 2011 Best Director for *Drive*) produced Icelandic thriller *Black's Game*. Jo was a series regular (role of the apostle "Thomas") on the NBC

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series A.D. He originally started his career in the studio system playing the role of "Cain" in Darren Aronofsky's film *Noah*.

CHARLOTTE RILEY (Queen Marlena) is an acclaimed British actress. Born in Stockton-on-Tees, she studied English and linguistics at Durham University before training as an actor at LAMDA.

Her breakthrough role was her portrayal of Catherine Earnshaw in ITV's 2009 adaptation of the beloved Emily Brontë novel *Wuthering Heights*, where she starred opposite Tom Hardy. Critics praised the adaptation for its "gritty realism" and "standout performances" noting Charlotte's was "ravishing."

Charlotte is best known for her role in the epic BBC drama *Peaky Blinders* as May Fitz Carleton starring alongside Cillian Murphy, Paul Anderson, Joe Cole and Sophie Rundle. The hugely popular crime drama is based upon the exploits of the Peaky Blinders gang, operating in Birmingham during the aftermath of the First World War.

This Spring, she starred in BBC drama series, *Babies*, written and directed by the award-winning Stefan Golaszewski. The series follows a couple navigating the emotional challenges of pregnancy loss starring Paapa Essiedu, Siobhán Cullen and Jack Bannon. The series is a warm and touching drama which explores the delicate tightrope of love and loss in a young couple's desire to become parents.

Later this Summer, Charlotte joins the multi-E Emmy-nominated hit Apple TV series *Ted Lasso* in its fourth season. The sports comedy-drama series, starring Jason Sudeikis, Hannah Waddingham, Brett Goldstein and Nick Mohammed, charts the life of American college football coach Ted Lasso, who is hired to coach an English soccer team destined for failure. The series has received critical acclaim,

She is currently filming Phoebe Waller Bridge's highly anticipated *Tomb Raider*, playing Amelia Croft, Lara Croft's mother who has been cryogenically frozen, opposite Sophie Turner who plays Lara.

In 2025, she starred opposite Jack Whitehall in the psychological thriller *Malice* for Amazon, and as 'Kat' in season 4 of Andy Wolton's comedy series *Trying* for Apple TV; which returns for season 5 later this year. Charlotte also features in BBC comedy *Smoggie Queens*, set in her home town of Middlesbrough, and follows a gang of friends fiercely proud of their North Eastern town and their small pocket of the LGBTQ+ community; she will also appear in the next season which airs in May.

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In 2017, Charlotte co-founded the company The WonderWorks; a flexible, affordable childcare provider dedicated specifically to families working both in front of and behind the camera. It was created to tackle one of the biggest barriers facing parents in the industry, enabling them to return to work with confidence while knowing their children are supported, and has been her central focus and passion in recent years.

Other television credits include Amazon's *The Peripheral*, BBC and FX's *A Christmas Carol* opposite Guy Pearce, BBC's *Press* written by Mike Bartlett, ITV's *Dark Heart* and the BBC adaptation of Mike Bartlett's play *King Charles III* where she played Kate Middleton.

In film, Charlotte has featured in the 2018 comedy *Swimming With Men*, action thriller *London Has Fallen*, historical adventure drama *In The Heart Of The Sea* and sci-fi *Edge Of Tomorrow* alongside Tom Cruise.

SASHEER ZAMATA (Susie) can be seen in *Marvel's Agatha All Along*, the WANDA VISION Spin off, and Netflix's animated series *Exploding Kittens*. She was one of the leads of the ABC show, *Home Economics* with Topher Grace and can be seen in the Showtime series +, *Waco: The Aftermath* alongside Michael Shannon. Previous select TV Credits include *Woke* on HULU and a series regular role on SNL for four seasons.

Sasheer starred opposite Joe Keery in Eugene Kotlyarenko's independent feature *Spree*, which premiered at Sundance. She also starred in Lionsgate's Stella Meghie directed, *The Weekend* opposite Dewanda Wise, which went to TIFF, SXSW, and Tribeca before its theatrical release. Other Select feature credits include *Sleight*, *I Feel Pretty* and *Deirdre And Laney Rob A Train*.

Sasheer is also a stand-up comedian and can be heard hosting her podcast, *Best Friends*, with best friend, Nicole Byer. She also serves as ACLU's Celebrity Ambassador for Women's Rights.

JON XUE ZHANG (Ram Man) is a British actor and stunt performer recognized for his dynamic work across film and television. With a strong foundation in martial arts and combat performance, he brings physical intensity and authenticity to action-driven roles. His recent credits include appearances in Netflix's *The Brothers Sun*, *The Gentlemen*, and Marvel's *Eternals*. He is set to appear next in *Sirius*, starring Mads Mikkelsen.

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KOJO ATTAH (Tri-Klops) is a British-Ghanaian actor quickly emerging as a compelling new face in action cinema, combining physical precision with a quietly magnetic screen presence. Kojo has built a growing body of work across major film and television, with credits including *Wrath of Man*, *The Beekeeper*, and the forthcoming *In the Grey*. On the small screen, we see him in Netflix's *Supacell* and long-running British drama *Midsomer Murders*.

Drawing on a rich cultural perspective and a grounded approach to performance, Attah is steadily positioning himself as one of the most intriguing action talents to watch. Off screen, that same discipline underpins his craft. An avid Muay Thai practitioner, Attah brings a fight-trained authenticity to his roles, seamlessly blending athleticism with performance. The result is a presence that feels not only cinematic, but convincingly real— further setting.

Other previous work includes: *Murder at the Embassy* (2025), *A Question of Service* (2022), *Banged Up Abroad* (2021 episode), *Troy: A Total War Saga* (2020), *The Royals* (2018 episode), and *Vera* (2017 episode.)

CHRISTIAN VUNIPOLA (Hussein) previously starred as the lead in American High's *Miguel Wants To Fight* for Hulu, the indie film *Singing In My Sleep* from writer/director Nick Wilson, and *Double Exposure* from director Howard Goldberg. Vunipola's previous feature credits include roles in Searchlight Pictures' *Not Okay* and STX Films' *Queenpins*.

KRISTEN WIIG (Roboto) is an Oscar nominee and twelve-time Emmy nominee who has become a formidable voice in the industry not only as an actor but as a writer and producer, spanning from her iconic performances on *Saturday Night Live* to the box-office hit *Bridesmaids*, which broke records as the highest grossing female-led R-rated comedy.

In addition to her Oscar and Emmy nominations, Wiig has received SAG Award nominations, a Golden Globe nomination and a BAFTA nomination. Wiig can currently be seen in the Apple TV+ series *Palm Royale*, where she stars as Maxine Simmons, and serves as an executive producer. The series — which takes place in the late 1960s and follows Maxine's attempts to secure her place within the high society of Palm Beach — received 11 Emmy nominations, with Wiig being nominated for Best Actress in a Comedy Series. Wiig has completed season two of *Palm Royale*, and can also be seen in Netflix's critically acclaimed documentary *Will & Harper*, an intimate portrait of the ever-evolving friendship between Will Ferrell and Harper Steele. Wiig co-wrote and performs

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the song *Harper And Will Go West* for the documentary, which was shortlisted for the Oscars and garnered a Critics' Choice nomination for Best Song.

Last year, Wiig revisited her role as Lucy Wilde, Gru's supervillain wife, in Universal's *Despicable Me 4* and reprised her role as Brenda in Amazon's *Sausage Party: Foodtopia*. Wiig's extensive voice work can additionally be heard in *How to Train Your Dragon* (Ruffnut), FOX's animated series *Bless the Harts* (as Jenny Hart), Netflix's show *Big Mouth*, Cartoon Network's *The Looney Tunes Show* (earning an Emmy nomination), *The Simpsons*, and the Oscar-nominated film *Her* (as SexyKitten).

Also last year, Wiig hosted *SNL* for her fifth time and received an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Guest Actress in a Comedy Series. During her seven-season stint on *SNL* as a regular cast member from 2005-2012, Wiig earned four consecutive Emmy nominations for Best Supporting Actress, playing memorable characters as the Target Lady, Lawrence Welk singer Doonese, the constant one-upper Penelope, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Suze Orman.

In 2021, Wiig co-wrote, produced and starred in the smash comedy *Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar*, which was nominated for a Critics Choice Award. In 2020, Wiig portrayed Barbara Ann Minerva, aka Cheetah, in *Wonder Woman 1984*, marking her entry into the DC Comics universe. Wiig has garnered success in mainstream cinema with notable roles in Paul Feig's *Ghostbusters*, Ben Stiller's *Zoolander 2*, Liza Johnson's *Hateship Loveship*, Adam McKay's *Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues* (starring alongside Steve Carell), Judd Apatow's *Knocked Up*, *Girl Most Likely*, *MacGruber*, Drew Barrymore's *Whip It*, *Ghost Town*, *Walk Hard*, *Friends with Kids*, Greg Mottola's *Paul*, and *Adventureland*, as well as *All Good Things* opposite Ryan Gosling. Her previous film credits also encompass Netflix's *A Boy Called Christmas*, Alexander Payne's *Downsizing*, co-starring with Matt Damon, Darren Aronofsky's *Mother!*, Ridley Scott's Oscar-nominated *The Martian*, Ben Stiller's *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, and Richard Linklater's *Where'd You Go, Bernadette*, alongside Cate Blanchett.

Wiig's varied performances in independent films have been some of her most lauded work, including Craig Johnson's critically acclaimed *The Skeleton Twins* (opposite Bill Hader), Sebastian Silva's *Nasty Baby*, Marielle Heller's *The Diary of a Teenage Girl*, and Shira Piven's *Welcome to Me*, which Wiig also produced alongside Gary Sanchez Productions.

Wiig's television performances include roles in Will Forte's Emmy-nominated comedy series *The Last Man on Earth*, Netflix's *Wet Hot American Summer: First Day of Camp* and

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Wet Hot American Summer: Ten Years Later, and in the Will Ferrell-produced IFC series *The Spoils of Babylon*, earning her both Emmy and SAG nominations. Wiig has also made guest appearances on popular shows such as NBC's *30 Rock*, HBO's *Bored to Death*, *Arrested Development*, Comedy Central's *Drunk History*, and IFC's *Flight of the Conchords* and *Portlandia*.

Born and raised in Rochester, New York, Wiig honed her comedic skills as a member of The Groundlings, a legendary Los Angeles-based improvisational and sketch comedy group prior to being a cast member on SNL for seven seasons. Wiig's creative endeavors transcend boundaries and platforms, captivating audiences with her diverse talents and engaging performances across film, television, and animation, establishing her as a dynamic force in the entertainment industry.

HAFÞÓR JÚLÍUS BJÖRNSSON (Goat Man) is an Icelandic professional strongman and actor, widely regarded as one of the greatest strength athletes in history. Born in Akranes, Iceland, he stands a 6-foot-9 and has achieved global recognition through both elite strength sport and international film and television.

In strength sport, Björnsson has won the sport's most prestigious titles, including World's Strongest Man, Europe's Strongest Man, and the Arnold Strongman Classic. In 2018, he became the first athlete to win all three major strongman titles in the same calendar year. Across his career, he has set 129 world records and notable feats of strength, making him one of the most prolific record-breakers in strength-sport history. His all-time deadlift world record stands at 510 kg (1,124 lb), achieved at Giants Live in Birmingham, England.

Björnsson is known worldwide for portraying Ser Gregor "The Mountain" Clegane in HBO's *Game of Thrones*. His screen career also includes roles in film and television, including *The Northman*. Combining extraordinary athletic achievement, global screen recognition, and a commanding public presence, Björnsson remains one of Iceland's most recognisable international figures and one of the most powerful athletes ever documented.

SAM C. WILSON (Trap Jaw) is making his mark on the acting world with roles across film and television, becoming one of the most engaging and intense emerging actors in the UK.

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With a star-making year of activity coming up, Sam will appear in *Blade Runner 2099*, and stars alongside Erin Doherty, Helena Bonham-Carter and Bill Nighy in the '70s-era period drama *California Avenue*, set for release via BBC1 and iPlayer later in 2026.

Sam's career began when the incredibly versatile and naturally gifted actor from Cardiff was thrust into the limelight as Bill Sikes in the *Oliver Twist* TV prequel *Dodger* for the BBC – which aired in 2022.

Having previously honed his craft shows such as *Stella* alongside Ruth Jones, *The Capture* alongside Callum Turner, Holliday Grainger and Paapa Essiedu, and *Hanna* for Amazon Prime with Dermot Mulroney and Esme Creed Miles, Wilson was fast becoming one of the most impressive new character actors in the UK.

In addition, Sam's deep, gravelly voice-work is as distinctive and captivating as anyone working in the industry today. From car ads through to kick-ass Korean noodles and high-end video games, his powerful delivery elevates film, TV and gaming to another level.

With multiple theatre credits to his name (*The Seagull*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *As You Like It* and many more), Sam's screen profile continued to grow with key roles in hit shows such as *House of Guinness*, *Under Salt Marsh*, *House of the Dragon*, *The Responder* and *Small Town*, *Big Story*.

Outside of his acting work, Sam is seriously passionate about education and has taught A-level maths and physics for the past 10 years between acting jobs, traveling around London on his motorbike to tutor scores of teens during lockdown. He also previously worked for The Big Issue at their offices in Cardiff, dealing directly with the charity's homeless vendors on a daily basis and even created a fundraiser for the vendors, reading Dylan Thomas (who else!) for 24 hours at a local Theatre.

Sam is also a keen writer and producer, previously creating a show called *Sideways Momentum* about living with addiction, which sold out at the Bunker Theatre in Southwark, London. He is currently working on a handful of other self-penned projects, which he hopes to bring to fruition in the next few years, alongside a short film he just completed called *Stealing Werner*, based on an idea about two slacker documentary makers who decide to steal Werner Herzog.

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JARED LETO (Skeleton) is an actor, musician, director, and entrepreneur. His two decades of work as an actor have encompassed a host of intense and transformative performances. Leto's performance as AIDS patient Rayon in Jean-Marc Vallée's *Dallas Buyers Club*, opposite Matthew McConaughey, earned him Best Supporting Actor honors from several critics' organizations. He was named Best Supporting Actor by the New York Film Critics Association, Los Angeles Film Critics Association, and Broadcast Film Critics Association. He gained his first Academy Award, Golden Globe, and Screen Actors Guild Award nominations for the role, all of which he won.

Leto most recently starred in *Tron: Ares*, Disney's latest installment of the Tron series, alongside Gillian Anderson, Evan Peters, Greta Lee, and Jodie Turner-Smith. He also served as a producer on the film. Recent credits include starring opposite Anne Hathaway in Apple TV+'s limited series *WeCrashed*, which depicted the rise and fall of WeWork, and which he also produced.

Leto's transformational performance in Ridley Scott's *House of Gucci*, starring alongside Lady Gaga, Adam Driver, and Al Pacino, earned him Best Supporting Actor nominations from both the Screen Actors Guild and Critics Choice. His performance in John Lee Hancock's *The Little Things* earned him nominations for Outstanding Supporting Actor from both the Screen Actors Guild and the HFPA Golden Globes.

Leto's other performances have included Darren Aronofsky's *Requiem for a Dream*; *Prefontaine* as real-life athlete Steve Prefontaine; David Fincher's *Fight Club* and *Panic Room*; *American Psycho*; *Lord of War*; *Alexander*; *Lonely Hearts*; *Girl, Interrupted*; *The Thin Red Line*; *Mr. Nobody*; *Suicide Squad*; *Blade Runner 2049*; and Disney's *Haunted Mansion*.

Leto was honored with a Gotham Independent Film Award for his documentary feature *Artifact*, which he produced with Emma Ludbrook; the film also won the People's Choice Award for documentaries at the 2012 Toronto International Film Festival. He later directed *A Day in the Life of America*, which premiered at the 2019 Tribeca Film Festival.

Leto is the frontman for the multi-platinum selling band Thirty Seconds to Mars, alongside his brother Shannon Leto. They recently released their sixth studio album, *It's The End Of The World But It's A Beautiful Day* via Concord Records. The album heralded a new era for the band, exploring both the darker sides of the human experience and themes of hope. The lead single "Stuck" debuted at #1 on the Alternative radio chart, marking the fastest chart climb of the band's career.

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The band has toured globally, performing over 300 shows in nearly 60 countries to more than 3 million people, breaking the Guinness World Record for the longest-ever concert tour by a rock band. Thirty Seconds to Mars has sold over 10 million albums worldwide, with music videos garnering more than 350 million YouTube views, and has received numerous awards including MTV Awards, a Billboard Music Award, and honors from NME, Kerrang!, and Fuse.

Leto has worked with Gucci on several campaigns, including The North Face x Gucci collaboration and the Gucci Guilty fragrance campaign alongside Lana Del Rey. He is also an avid climber and recently accomplished a historic feat by completing the first-ever climb of the Empire State Building.

IDRIS ELBA (Duncan/Man-At-Arms) is an award-winning actor, producer, director, and musician, continually securing his place as one of the most versatile performers in Hollywood. In 2016, he became the first male actor to receive dual SAG awards in one evening — Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Supporting Role and Outstanding Performance in a TV Movie or Miniseries.

Most recently, Elba reprised his Emmy-nominated role as Sam Nelson in Season 2 of Apple TV's *Hijack*, where he also served as an executive producer. He also returned to voicing the character of Chief Bogo in the record-breaking *Zootopia 2*, which achieved the biggest opening weekend of all time for an animated movie. In 2025, Elba also starred in the Netflix thriller *A House Of Dynamite*, directed by Kathryn Bigelow. The film premiered at the 2025 Venice Film Festival and received a 13-minute standing ovation along with rave reviews.

Next up, he will be starring in the survival thriller *Above The Below*, which he co-directed with Martin Owen. He recently wrapped production on Paramount's *Children Of Blood And Bone*, where he will appear alongside an ensemble cast including Viola Davis, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Cynthia Erivo, Amandla Stenberg, Damson Idris, Regina King, Lashana Lynch and more. He has also wrapped filming on the Apple Originals feature *This Is How It Goes*, where he directed and acted alongside co-stars Wunmi Mosaku and Charlie Cox. It was also recently announced that Idris will also return for a new *Luther* movie with Netflix.

In the Summer of 2025, Idris starred in Amazon's action-comedy *Heads Of State* opposite John Cena and Priyanka Chopra. The film was released on Prime Video on July 2, 2025 and held the title as Prime Video's #1 movie worldwide for two weeks.

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In December 2024, Elba reprised the animated role of Knuckles in the *Sonic The Hedgehog 3* film which was released on December 20, 2024 and also starred Jim Carrey, Ben Schwartz, and Keanu Reeves. Staying in the action-packed world of the *Sonic* Franchise, Idris also recently starred as Knuckles in the *Knuckles* animated television series. The series was released in April 2024 by Paramount + and set the record as the most watched Paramount + original series of all time.

Elba's career skyrocketed on the small screen in some of the U.K.'s top-rated shows. Soon after, Elba landed the role of Stringer Bell in HBO's critically acclaimed series *The Wire*, which garnered an NAACP Image Award nomination. In 2010, Elba landed the title role on the BBC mini-series *Luther*, earning him a Golden Globe Award, SAG Award, and four Primetime Emmy Award nominations. The series returned in 2019 for its fifth season.

In 2005, Elba began his film career with the Golden Globe-nominated projects *American Gangster*, *Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom*, and *Beasts Of No Nation* which also received a SAG Award. He also starred in *The Mountain Between Us*, *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* and *Avengers: Infinity War*, and the Oscar®-nominated film *Molly's Game*. Elba has also loaned his voice in such projects as *The Jungle Book*, *Finding Dory*, *Zootopia*, which grossed over \$600 million worldwide and the Oscar winning short "The Boy, The Mole, The Fox And The Horse." In 2019, he starred opposite Dwayne Johnson and Jason Statham in the hit action film *Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs & Shaw*. Other credits include Netflix's *Concrete Cowboy*, Warner Bros.' *The Suicide Squad* where he starred opposite Margot Robbie and John Cena, Netflix's *The Harder They Fall* opposite Regina King, the George Miller directed *Three Thousand Years Of Longing* opposite Tilda Swinton, Universal's thriller *Beast* and starring opposite Cynthia Erivo and Andy Serkis in the feature film installment of *Luther: The Fallen Sun*.

In 2024, Elba launched 22Summers, a full service production company. Its first project launched was the four-part docuseries *Erased: WWII Heroes Of Color* for National Geographic.

In 2018, Elba was named People Magazine's Sexiest Man Alive. In July of the same year, Elba launched his record label, 7Wallace Music.

DOLPH LUNDGREN (Surprise Cameo) is an internationally recognized actor, filmmaker, and entrepreneur whose career spans more than four decades. He made his motion picture debut in the *A View to a Kill* (1985) and rose to global prominence with his breakout role as Ivan Drago in *Rocky IV*, directed by Sylvester Stallone. He has since

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starred in more than eighty films, including *The Expendables 4* and *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom*, cementing his status as a global action icon.

In addition to acting, Lundgren is an accomplished filmmaker, having directed eight feature films. His most recent project, *Wanted Man* (2024), which he co-wrote and directed, marks his latest work behind the camera. Through his production company, Thor Pictures, he continues to develop projects across film and television.

Lundgren is also a highly accomplished martial artist, holding a fourth-degree black belt and earning championship titles across international full-contact karate competitions. He was selected by the U.S. Olympic Committee to serve as Team Leader of the U.S. Olympic Pentathlon Team at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games.

In fall 2026, Lundgren will release two major projects: a feature documentary about his life, and his first autobiography, offering a comprehensive look at his career and creative journey.

Expanding into the spirits industry, Lundgren is the founder and CEO of Hard Cut Vodka, a premium vodka brand available in the United States. Drawing on his background in chemical engineering, Lundgren applied his understanding of distillation and formulation to help develop the brand bringing a technical perspective to the creation. In 2026, the company closed a successful equity crowdfunding campaign, raising over \$630,000 from more than 200 investors. The brand is now focused on scaling production, expanding distribution, and increasing its presence in key U.S. markets.

About the Filmmakers

TRAVIS KNIGHT (Director) is an award-winning filmmaker, producer and business executive who sits as the President & CEO of LAIKA. He served as lead animator on *Coraline* and held that position as well as producer on *ParaNorman* and *The Boxtrolls*. He was nominated for an Academy Award® and won the Visual Effects Society Award and BAFTA® Award for Best Animated Film for *Kubo and the Two Strings*, his directorial debut. Under his leadership, LAIKA has garnered worldwide distinction for its melding of the age-old craft of stop-motion with the most cutting-edge cinematic advances and manufacturing techniques. As a result, every LAIKA film has been Oscar®-nominated for Best Animated Feature. Travis made his live-action directorial debut in 2018 with

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Paramount's *Bumblebee*. He sits on the Board of Directors for LAIKA, NIKE and the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures.

CHRIS BUTLER (Screenwriter) won a Golden Globe for LAIKA's *Missing Link*, which he wrote and directed. He also wrote the original screenplay for ParaNorman, directed by himself and Sam Fell. Chris was a writer on BAFTA-winning *Kubo and the Two Strings*, for which he additionally acted as Head of Story, and was Head of Story for LAIKA's first movie, *Coraline*. Prior to his time at LAIKA, Chris amassed a decade's worth of experience designing and storyboarding on numerous high profile animated projects, including Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride*. Chris has received two Academy Award® nominations, a BAFTA® nomination and five Annie Award nominations, as well as the first ever GLAAD award nomination for an animated feature. In addition to developing new animated projects, he most recently wrote the screenplays for LAIKA's upcoming *Wildwood*.

AARON NEE & ADAM NEE (Screenwriters) began their career with a self-financed micro-budget feature film, *The Last Romantic* (IFC Films), which premiered at SXSW and landed them in the 25 Filmmakers to Watch list for Filmmaker Magazine that year. Their follow-up feature, the adventure-comedy *Band Of Robbers*, again garnered great festival and critical praise. They next directed the Paramount action-comedy hit *The Lost City*, starring Sandra Bullock, Channing Tatum, Brad Pitt, and Daniel Radcliffe, which premiered to critical acclaim and box office success. The Nee Brothers wrote and are set to direct their original feature *Calamity Hustle*, which was sold in a bidding war to Warner Brothers as a package with Channing Tatum and Ryan Reynolds attached to star. The Nees have a first-look producing deal at Warner Brothers via their production company Persons Attempting and are actively developing projects across film and television. They previously rewrote a live-action Lego film for Universal Pictures, rewrote two Kevin Hart action-comedy movies for Netflix, were involved in early development of *Minecraft*, and had a script deal with Bad Robot and Paramount Pictures.

DAVE CALLAHAM (Screenwriter) is a Chinese-American screenwriter who grew up in Northern California and moved to Los Angeles in 1999, where he worked as an assistant before selling his first script – a thriller – in 2002. Since then, he has written across multiple genres, including action (*Godzilla*, *Mortal Kombat*) comedy/horror (*Zombieland 2*), enormous flops that almost derailed The Rock's career before it even started (*Doom*) and superhero tentpoles (*Shang-Chi And The Legend Of The Ten Rings*, *Spider-Man: Across The Spider-Verse*.) He has also written and produced for television, creating the

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2017 masterpiece *Jean- Claude Van-Johnson* for Amazon Prime. He lives somewhere in the general vicinity of Los Angeles with his family.

ROBBIE BRENNER (Producer) is President of Mattel Studios and Chief Content Officer. She joined Mattel in 2018. In her role, Ms. Brenner is responsible for creating full-length feature films based on Mattel's iconic portfolio of brands in partnership with major studios, to be distributed globally in movie theaters and on streaming platforms.

Ms. Brenner has over 30 years of experience in the film industry, including two Academy Award® nominations for Best Picture for *Barbie* and *Dallas Buyers Club*.

Ms. Brenner produced the cultural phenomenon *Barbie* in 2023, directed by Greta Gerwig and starring Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling. The film achieved the largest global box-office in 2023 and became the industry's 14th-highest grossing movie of all time. The *Barbie* movie was nominated for eight Academy Awards including Best Picture, and received the Oscar for Best Original Song. In 2018 Ms. Brenner also produced the independent film *Burden*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and won the U.S. Dramatic Audience Award that same year.

Ms. Brenner worked at Relativity Media, which she joined in 2009 as Executive Vice President of Production and was integral to the studio's acquisition of the Sundance documentary *Catfish*, which became a cultural sensation. She was promoted to President in 2011 and oversaw the development and production of several movies such as *Immortals*, *Safe Haven*, *Mirror, Mirror*, *Out of the Furnace*, *The Fighter*, and many more that topped box office upon release.

Previously, Ms. Brenner worked at Miramax and at 20th Century Fox, overseeing and shepherding dozens of feature films.

For her leadership on the *Barbie* movie, Ms. Brenner was honored in 2023 as The Hollywood Reporter's Producer of the Year and its Women in Entertainment Power 100. Ms. Brenner was also featured in Variety's Women's Impact Report and the Variety500 for her distinguished achievements among media executives and creatives worldwide. She was named in 2024 to Forbes' 50 over 50 list, celebrating her visionary work as a culture creator in the entertainment industry.

Ms. Brenner received a bachelor's degree in Film from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Executive Branch.

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TODD BLACK (Producer) is one of Hollywood's most respected producers, having worked with many of the top talent in the industry, both in front and behind the camera. Black's long-time collaboration with Denzel Washington began when he brought *Antwone Fisher* to the Academy Award-winner. Washington decided not only would he star in the film, but he would also direct the touching drama, cementing their partnership as producer and director. When Washington stepped behind the camera to direct *The Great Debaters*, Black was again his producer. That movie went on to earn a Golden Globe nomination for Best Drama. In addition, both *Antwone Fisher* and *The Great Debaters* earned the Producer Guild's Stanley Kramer Award.

When they partnered on *Fences*, Washington's third time directing, the movie went on to win Screen Actors Guild Awards for both Washington and Viola Davis, as well as nabbing a Best Actress win for Viola Davis at the Academy Awards, and a nomination for Best Picture for Black. The pair would then release the film *A Journal for Jordan*, starring Michael B. Jordan and Chante Adams. Most recently, another joint production would be the August Wilson classic, *The Piano Lesson*, starring John David Washington, Danielle Deadwyler, and Samuel L. Jackson.

Black has also produced movies in which Denzel Washington starred. These include the critically acclaimed *Roman J. Israel, Esq.*, which garnered Washington a Best Actor Academy Award nomination for his performance in the title role, as well as Tony Scott's *The Taking of Pelham 123*, *The Equalizer* franchise and *The Magnificent Seven*, all directed by Antoine Fuqua.

In addition, he partnered as a producer with Denzel Washington on the five-time Oscar-nominated *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, starring Viola Davis and Chadwick Boseman. Among Black's other numerous credits as a producer are recent hits *The Upside*, starring Kevin Hart and Bryan Cranston, *Troop Zero*, starring Viola Davis, Allison Janney, McKenna Grace, and Jim Gaffigan, that earned glowing reviews, and the action-comedy *The Man from Toronto*, starring Kevin Hart and Woody Harrelson.

In addition, he produced *The Pursuit of Happyness*, (which earned Will Smith an Academy Award nomination as Best Actor), *Hope Springs*, starring Meryl Streep and Tommy Lee Jones, *Sex Tape*, starring Cameron Diaz, *Southpaw*, starring Jake Gyllenhaal, *Knowing* and *The Weather Man*, both starring Nicolas Cage, and *Seven Pounds*, starring Will Smith.

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In 2021, Black produced *Being the Ricardos*, written and directed by Aaron Sorkin, starring Nicole Kidman and Javier Bardem, and both actors were nominated for an Academy Award. In 2022, Black produced *Emancipation* starring Will Smith and directed by Antoine Fuqua. Other recent releases include *Cassandro*, starring Gael Garcia-Bernal, which earned much acclaim at this year's Sundance Film Festival, as well as *The Equalizer 3*, with Denzel Washington and Antoine Fuqua reprising their roles as star and director, respectively.

Black entered the entertainment business as a casting associate after attending USC's School of Theater. Shortly after getting out of school, he produced a *Disney Sunday Night Movie*. Black next went on to produce *Fire in The Sky* for Paramount Pictures and *Wrestling Ernest Hemingway* for Warner Bros. In 1995, Black became President of Motion Picture Production at Mandalay Entertainment where he managed *Donnie Brasco*, *Seven Years in Tibet*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, and *Wild Things*, to name a few.

A few years later, he teamed with producer Jason Blumenthal to create Black & Blu Productions. In 2000, Black and Blumenthal joined Steve Tisch, producer of *Risky Business* and *Forest Gump*, among others, to form Escape Artists which has a first-look production deal with Sony Pictures. Their first film, which Black personally oversaw throughout the filmmaking process, was *A Knight's Tale*, starring Heath Ledger. Escape Artists has gone on to make movies that have grossed more than \$1,000,000,000 at the worldwide box office. These films include mega hits *The Pursuit of Happyness*, *The Equalizer*, *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Upside*.

Just recently, Black and his company have jumped into television with three extraordinarily received series. The first, *Perpetual Grace, Ltd.*, starring Sir Ben Kingsley and Jimmi Simpson, and was a critical darling. The second, *Servant*, a collaboration with famed auteur M. Night Shyamalan, debuted on Apple TV+, and has garnered a huge viewership of Apple subscribers, as well as a fervent following amongst its many fans, with its fourth and final season having just debuted. Most recently, the series *Dr. Death* on Peacock, starring Alec Baldwin, Christian Slater, and Joshua Jackson, has been met with quite the positive reception, and has been a huge hit for the streaming service. A second season was released starring Edgar Ramirez and Mandy Moore.

Released last year was the film *Highest 2 Lowest* starring Denzel Washington and Jeffrey Wright and directed by Spike Lee. This film was made in collaboration with Apple and A24. Also, on the horizon is *Madden*, also made in partnership with Amazon Studios, starring Nicolas Cage and Christian Bale, directed by David O. Russell – as well

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as *Voicemails for Isabelle* for Netflix, written and directed by Leah McKendrick, and starring Zoey Deutch. Black is currently in production on the film *The Social Reckoning*, written and directed by Aaron Sorkin, starring Jeremy Allen White, Mikey Madison, and Jeremy Strong. On the television front is *DTF St. Louis*, created by long-time collaborator Steve Conrad, and starring David Harbour, Jason Bateman, Linda Cardellini, and Richard Jenkins, for HBO was met with much acclaim.

JASON BLUMENTHAL (Producer) is partnered with Todd Black and Steve Tisch in Escape Artists, the successful production company behind such blockbusters as *The Pursuit Of Happyness*, *The Equalizer* and *The Magnificent Seven*.

Other films that Blumenthal has produced under the Escape Artists' banner include *The Equalizer 2* and *The Equalizer 3* starring Denzel Washington, *Southpaw*, starring Jake Gyllenhaal, *Unfinished Business*, starring Vince Vaughn, *Sex Tape* with Cameron Diaz, *Hope Springs*, starring Meryl Streep and Tommy Lee Jones, *The Back-up Plan* with Jennifer Lopez, Tony Scott's *The Taking of Pelham 123*, *Seven Pounds*, starring Will Smith, and *Knowing* and *The Weather Man*, both starring Nicolas Cage.

In 1990, after graduation from Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Communications, Blumenthal joined Wizan/Black Films, where he met Producer Todd Black. There, he was involved with the development and production of *Iron Eagle II*, *Split Decisions*, *The Guardian*, *Short Time*, *Class Act*, *Wrestling Ernest Hemingway*, *Dunston Checks In*, *A Family Thing*, and *Bio Dome*. They also executive produced *Becoming Colette* and *Fire In The Sky*.

Blumenthal became Senior Vice President of feature production at Mandalay Entertainment at the company's inception in 1995. He managed such films as *The Fan*, *Donnie Brasco*, *Seven Years in Tibet*, *Les Misérables*, *Wild Things*, *Gloria*, and *The Deep End of the Ocean*. One of Mandalay's biggest box office successes was *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, which was #1 at the box office for three weeks and grossed more than \$130 million worldwide. It spawned the sequel, *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer*.

In April 1998, Blumenthal and his partner, Todd Black, formed Black & Blu Entertainment, entering into a first look production deal at Sony Pictures Entertainment. In 2001, Black & Blu merged with the Steve Tisch Company to become Escape Artists while still maintaining their first look deal at Sony Pictures. Escape Artists has also been behind several hit television shows. Partnering with M. Night Shyamalan, Escape Artists released four seasons of *Servant* for Apple TV+. Also out are two well-received seasons

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of the series *Dr. Death*, for Peacock. The second season starred Mandy Moore and Edgar Ramirez.

Upcoming projects include *Madden*, made in partnership with Amazon Studios, starring Nicolas Cage and Christian Bale, directed by David O. Russell – as well as *Voicemails for Isabelle* for Netflix, written and directed by Leah McKendrick, and starring Zoey Deutch. On the television front is *DTF St. Louis*, created by long-time collaborator Steve Conrad, and starring David Harbour, Jason Bateman, Linda Cardellini, and Richard Jenkins, for HBO.

BILL BANNERMAN (Executive Producer) graduated with Specialized Honors in Film from York University in Toronto, Canada. After receiving several scholarships, including the Famous Players Award of excellence, a screening of his student work at the Montreal Film Festival led to an invitation to Los Angeles to intern on various projects, including *One from the Heart* directed by Francis Ford Coppola.

With some mileage in Visual Effects, Bannerman segued into production and began a lengthy journey on well over 30 projects as an Assistant Director working with several acclaimed directors including Clint Eastwood, John Boorman, Michael Crichton, Frank Marshall, Jerry Paris, Michael Anderson and Sydney Lumet. One particular project was working closely with the legendary Japanese auteur, Haruki Kadokawa on the three-year mega-budget 14th Century Japanese Civil War epic *Heaven and Earth*, where Bannerman designed and directed the complicated battle sequences, filmed in three countries. It was the same project where the world record was set for the largest number of saddled horses (800) used in a motion picture war sequence.

Following his time with Kadokawa, Bannerman connected with Clint Eastwood on a number of projects including the Oscar-winning film *Unforgiven*, *A Perfect World*, *The Bridges of Madison County*, and *Absolute Power*, among others. (Bannerman's contribution to *Unforgiven* also won him the prestigious DGA award in 1993).

In the late 90's, MTV Films & Paramount Pictures convinced Bannerman to produce several of their projects including *Dead Man on Campus* and the Nick Stahl heroin drama *Wasted*. Following this period, Bannerman went on to executive produce *Chill Factor* for Warner Brothers, before re-joining with Gale Hurd on the first installment of Marvel's *Hulk* franchise for Universal Pictures. By 2003, Bannerman was executive producing back-to-back projects for MGM. First up was Jim Henson Picture's *Good Boy* with partners Lisa Henson and Kristine Belson, followed by the reboot of the 70's classic *Walking Tall* with Dwayne Johnson. |

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In early 2006, Sam Raimi tapped Bannerman to executive produce the sequel to his successful-horror franchise *The Grudge II*, which filmed entirely in Japan for Sony Pictures. In late 2007, he went on to shoot Jeff Wadlow's mixed martial arts *Never Back Down* followed by the cult horror remake *Sorority Row* and finishing off 2008 with Julianne Moore's *6 Souls*, all for Summit Entertainment.

In late 2008, Bannerman began an extensive four year run co-producing the highly successful *Twilight Saga* alongside producers Wyck Godfrey, Marty Bowen and Karen Rosenfelt, based on the New York Times best-selling book series created/written by Stephanie Meyer. Filmed around the globe, the saga covered Chris Weitz's *New Moon*, David Slade's *Eclipse* and finished with Bill Condon's *Breaking Dawn: Parts I & II*.

As a follow-up in 2013, 20th Century Fox tapped Bannerman to co-produce the sequel *Percy Jackson: The Sea of Monsters*, which then led to Rob Letterman's *Goosebumps* for Sony Pictures in 2014. Fox brought Bannerman back into their fold, to produce the final phase on Marvel's *The Fantastic Four* before asking him to take over their next action franchise, Shane Black's reboot of his original script *The Predator*. Most notably, over a 12-year period starting in 2013, Bannerman began work with the dynamic producing team of Todd Black & Jason Blumenthal (Escape Artists) on Mattel's *Masters of the Universe* for Sony Pictures.

During this term it allowed Bannerman the opportunity to re-unite with producer Neil Moritz for their second project together, the Netflix thriller *Spenser Confidential* helmed by Pete Berg. Bannerman then rejoined Escape Artists during Covid and executive produced the Kevin Hart action-comedy (directed by Patrick Hughes) *The Man from Toronto* for Sony Pictures and Netflix.

FABIAN WAGNER (Director of Photography) is an acclaimed cinematographer known for his striking visual storytelling and atmospheric imagery across film and television. Best known for his work on *Game of Thrones*, where he earned Emmy recognition for the iconic "Battle of the Bastards" episode, Wagner has built a reputation for crafting immersive, cinematic worlds through bold composition and dynamic lighting. His credits span major productions including *Zack Snyder's Justice League*, *Sherlock*, *The Crown*, and *House of the Dragon*, showcasing a versatile style that blends technical precision with emotional depth, and jumping between big Hollywood blockbusters and smaller more independent movies.

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With a keen eye for scale, texture, and movement, Wagner continues to be one of the industry's most respected cinematographers, shaping some of modern entertainment's most memorable screen moments. Wagner is a member of both the American and British Society of Cinematographers. Aside from shooting he is an active supporter of diversity and equality in the film industry and his program First Steps Cinematography is now in its 13th year and has helped numerous young people from different backgrounds start a career in the industry. In 2024 First Steps Cinematography was honoured with the Special Achievement Award by the British Society of Cinematography.

PAUL RUBELL, ACE (Editor) is an accomplished film editor whose notable credits include Paul Greengrass's *The Lost Bus*, Kenneth Branagh's *Thor*, and various films directed by Michael Bay, including *Transformers*, *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*, *Transformers: Age of Extinction* and *The Island*. He previously worked with *Masters of the Universe* director Travis Knight on *Bumblebee*.

He served as additional editor on *The Avengers*, *Jungle Cruise*, *Ambulance*, and *Mulan*. Further projects include *The Fate of the Furious*, *Need for Speed*, *xXx*, and *Hancock*.

Rubell has had a long-standing collaboration with director Michael Mann. Their work together began with *The Insider*, which earned him Academy Award, ACE Award, and Golden Satellite Award nominations, followed by *Collateral*, which brought him additional Academy Award, BAFTA, and ACE nominations, and a Golden Satellite win. Their partnership continued with *Miami Vice* (a Satellite Award nominee), and *Public Enemies*.

Rubell's early work includes *Blade* with Stephen Norrington and *The Cell* with Tarsem Singh. He has also been recognized for his work in television, receiving an ACE win and an Emmy nomination for *Andersonville*, an Emmy nomination for *My Name Is Bill W*, and an ACE nomination for *The Burning Season*.

GUY HENDRIX DYAS (Production Designer) is a two-time Academy Award-nominated production designer and a BAFTA Award winner for Best Production Design. He gained global recognition for his gravity-defying dreamscapes in *Inception* and his elegant futuristic environments in *Passengers*. A graduate from the Royal College of Art in London, Guy began his career in Tokyo as an Industrial Designer for Sony, establishing the interdisciplinary foundation that defines his work today.

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RICHARD SALE (Costume Designer) is a British film costume designer who has built a career working on major studio productions, progressing from assistant roles on large-scale franchises to lead designer credits. He is known for his work on both major studio productions and independent films, with a focus on detailed, character-driven costume design. His lead costume designer credits include *The Last Days on Mars* (2013), *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom* (2023), and *Back in Action* (2025.)

Alongside his lead work he has collaborated on numerous major franchise films as an assistant costume designer, including *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015), *Doctor Strange* (2016), *Ready Player One* (2018), *Wonder Woman 1984* (2020) and *Jurassic World Rebirth* (2025). Experience on these major studio productions has helped establish his reputation and contribution to contemporary, large-scale, effects-driven filmmaking.

PIPPA WOODS (Hair and Makeup Designer) is a hair and makeup artist based in the UK, working across film and television. After her training just over 20 years ago, she spent years working the indie film circuit while refining her skills across all disciplines before focusing her attention on prosthetics and wigs.

She spent years working on sketch shows and comedy TV learning to create instantly recognizable characters which made her fall in love with character design.

She has since worked on a wide range of productions from period dramas, sci-fi, fantasy and contemporary pieces such as the James Bond film *No Time To Die* and the TV series *Fleabag* and is now known for her invisible transformations with wigs and her minimalist, contemporary style in her design work.

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