

A FILM BY DESTIN DANIEL CRETTON

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SHORT TERM 12 was the toast of this year’s South by Southwest (SXSW) festival, winning both the

Grand Jury Prize in the Narrative Feature Competition and the Audience Award.

Told through the eyes of Grace (Brie Larson), a twenty-something supervisor at a foster-care facility for at-risk teenagers, Short Term 12 is written and directed by Destin Cretton. Passionate and tough, Grace is a formidable caretaker of the kids in her charge, and in love with her long-term boyfriend and co-worker, Mason (John Gallagher Jr). But Grace’s own difficult past, and the surprising future that suddenly presents itself, throw her into unforeseen confusion, made all the sharper with the arrival of a new intake at the facility: a gifted but troubled teenage girl with whom Grace has a charged connection.

While the subject matter is complex and often dark, Short Term 12 finds truth, and humour, in

unexpected places.

SHORT TERM 12 – Written and directed by Destin Daniel Cretton. Produced by Maren Olson, Asher Goldstein, Joshua Astrachan, Ron Najor. Executive producers are Frederick W. Green, Douglas Stone, David Kaplan. Director of Photography is Brett Pawlak. Edited by Nat Sanders. Production design

by Rachel Myers. Original Music by Joel P. West. Costume Design by Mirren Gordon-Crozier and Joy

Cretton.

Synopsis

Outside a group home for troubled teens, a 20-something member of the facility’s line staff, MASON (JOHN GALLAGHER, JR.), shares a humorous story with a new member of the team, NATE (RAMI MALEK), just as their supervisor, GRACE (BRIE LARSON) pulls up on her bicycle. But the fun is quickly interrupted by the top-of-the-lungs yell of a lanky young boy, as he makes a wild dash, attempting escape – not an uncommon occurrence at Short Term 12. An initiation of sorts for Nate, they calmly chase after the boy, carefully and lovingly easing him to the ground until his crazed energy subsides. Mason continues his story, as if nothing has happened.

As part of the daily routine, Grace awakens the facility’s resident wise guy, LUIS (KEVIN HERNANDEZ)

with a squirt gun. She explains to Nate that their job is neither parent nor therapist – they are there

to create a safe environment. The kids in their charge are meant to stay with them for no more than

12 months, though many stay longer – until the county can find a place for them in foster homes or

elsewhere.

At a “community meeting” between the teens and the staff, Nate is introduced – and inadvertently insults the kids – drawing particular rancor from MARCUS (KEITH STANFIELD), an otherwise soft-spoken, tall, black teenager who is about to turn 18 and leave the facility.

After the meeting, Grace is told by her boss, JACK (FRANTZ TURNER) to expect a new arrival, JAYDEN (KAITLYN DEVER), a teenage girl whose self-destructive behavior has left her bouncing from one group home to the next. Jayden’s father is a friend of a friend, Jack confides – and he commissions Grace to take especially good care of her.

Upon Jayden’s arrival, Grace finds her to be a quiet, intelligent, smart-assed girl, ready to flaunt the

rules, as needed, to cope – and to survive. Grace is inexplicably drawn to her new charge.

On her way home from work, Grace takes a side trip to a clinic, where a nurse informs her that she

is pregnant. Grace has no interest in discussing any of the available options – except abortion. She goes home to her loving boyfriend – who we now understand is Mason (as colleagues at Short Term

12, they don’t acknowledge they are a couple). Mason is busy cooking a homemade Mexican meal. Grace tells him nothing of where she’s been or what she’s just been told.

After they eat, the two relax on the couch, quietly making drawings of each other – hers quite good, his not so good. A warm couple, clearly in love, Mason tries to get Grace to open up about what’s on her mind, but she is unable to. He notes that they haven’t had sex in over a week, which Grace attempts to remedy – though their passionate kissing stops abruptly when Grace pushes Mason away with an unaccountable, reflexive slap to the face, bloodying Mason’s nose.

The next morning’s community meeting introduces Jayden to the group, where she announces she has no interest in wasting time on the short-term relationships she expects to find there. Later, the kids play whiffle ball, though Jayden opts to keep to herself. In the game, Luis taunts Marcus, who retaliates by hitting him and knocking him to the ground. Grace pulls Marcus aside and speaks to him with remarkable candor, noting that he’s about to leave the facility, that he’s putting himself at

risk and that she doesn’t want to see him go to jail – a place where her own father has spent the last ten years. Marcus looks at Grace with regard and surprise – but he doesn’t open up to her.

Back inside the facility, Mason takes a turn. He asks Marcus if he has any new lyrics he’d like to try out on him. Marcus nods, but warns Mason that there’s a lot of cussing in them. Mason says he won’t tell anyone.

Marcus raps with a startling depth of feeling, rhyming about the abuse he suffered at the hands of his mother – and leaves Mason speechless. Marcus then asks if, before his imminent release from Short Term 12, he could have Grace shave his head for him.

Grace visits with Jayden in her new room. Noticing Jayden’s artistic ability, Grace reveals that when she was a girl, she would draw pictures of her own mother’s many boyfriends – something Jayden has a surprising insight into, though, ever the smart-ass, Jayden also makes Grace laugh about it.

Grace and Mason give Marcus the haircut he requested. After his head is shaved, Marcus looks down at the floor and inquires if his head appears lumpy – if there are scars from the regular beatings he received from his abusive mother. Grace and Mason tell him that there are no scars, that he looks great. Marcus looks at himself in the mirror and cries openly, likely for the first time in years.

That night, Grace finally breaks the news to Mason about her pregnancy – news which is, at first, met with shock. . . and then exhilaration. Mason is excited about the kinds of parents that he knows he and Grace will be.

The next morning, Grace is disturbed to learn that the higher-ups have taken many small dolls away from SAMMY (ALEX CALLOWAY), the quiet boy who ran wild a few days earlier (as the film opened). This is apparently meant to be a “lesson” to Sammy, even though the dolls were his only comforting connection to his sister.

Jayden, meanwhile, is expecting a birthday visit from her dad, but – as has perhaps been the case too many times before – he never shows up. Jayden goes to her room and slams the door shut. Grace, Mason and Nate have to force it open, in case Jayden might attempt to hurt herself. No longer the droll smart-ass, Jayden lashes out at Grace, smashing a cupcake in her face. The team gently subdues her, Grace responding calmly and skillfully and with as much care as possible, as Jayden releases her grief and anger.

Knowing what has happened, the normally stoic and tough Marcus tells his house-mates to create birthday cards for Jayden, who, at that point, is in the “Cool Down Room” with Grace.

Grace sits quietly with Jayden in the Cool Down Room – and, after noticing Jayden’s self-inflicted

scars, reveals to Jayden a few scars of her own – telling Jayden the story of how she got them. Jayden is touched and upset and unleashes her anger and frustration on the blow-up dog doll that’s been put in the Cool Down Room expressly for that purpose. Grace joins Jayden in pounding the inflatable dog – and there is a bit of release for both of them.

Jayden sees the birthday cards that Marcus and her housemates have made for her and is touched by them. There are more cupcakes – this time with candles – and Jayden seems, for the first time, to be letting down her guard and allowing herself to be a part of the community at Short Term 12.

But Jayden’s mood quickly shifts again and moments later, she goes AWOL. She heads to her father’s house, with Grace in pursuit, but her father is not home and Jayden finally returns outside where Grace is waiting for her. Jayden cries and Grace comforts her. The two return to Short Term 12, where Jayden shares a children’s story that she has written. It’s a tale about a shark who

befriends an octopus. The octopus gives up pieces of its body to the hungry shark, believing that’s what is necessary in order to have a friend. It’s an oblique parable, but Grace is certain that Jayden is suffering abuse at the hand of her father – and that this is the only way Jayden knows to tell her.

She asks Jayden if her Dad has ever hurt her. Jayden does not answer, but a tear rolls onto the page of her story. Grace throws an arm around her.

Mason and Grace join a large gathering of people of almost every size, color and age – from eight months to 80. It is the anniversary party of an older Latin couple – Mason’s foster parents. Mason makes a toast, thanking his parents for providing a loving home for him, adding “Happy Anniversary, you guys. Everything good in my life is because of you.”

Later, on the dance floor, Mason asks Grace to marry him – and she accepts.

The couple is awakened by an early morning phone call, bringing the news that Grace’s father

is about to be released from prison. This is the first hard moment of what will turn out to be a very difficult day. At work, Grace learns that Marcus’ pet fish – the only soul in which Marcus feels he can safely confide – has died, and that Marcus thinks Luis is responsible. Grace tries to get Marcus to talk about it – but he refuses.

Grace is then completely stunned to discover that Jayden’s father has picked his daughter up and taken her home. Believing that Jayden is suffering abuse at her father’s hands, Grace storms into her boss’ office, and tells him in unsparing terms that Jayden should not have been sent home to her dad. Jack cuts her off and tells her that her job is not to interpret tears, that there are trained therapists who do that – and that she is just line staff. Grace, furious, grabs Jack’s desk lamp and smashes it. She returns to the residence at the facility only to discover that Marcus has slashed his

wrist. She wraps the wound in a pillowcase, clamps it with her hands and, nearly beside herself, cries for help.

In a daze at the hospital, Grace tells Mason she simply can’t go on. He tries to help, and pleads with

Grace to share what’s troubling her, but she is once again unable to.

When Mason pushes her, Grace tells him that she can’t she can’t marry him and that she can’t have his baby – and that she’s already made the appointment to have an abortion. Stunned, Mason walks away and tells Grace to do whatever she wants… because he is done.

Grace sets off on her bike – and pedals fiercely. Suddenly, she is at Jayden’s house. She breaks in and stumbles on a baseball bat in the garage. She picks it up and walks up the stairs of the house. She finds Jayden’s father, asleep in his bedroom, the television droning. She looks like she is about to wield the bat on Jayden’s sleeping father’s head – when her young friend stops her.

The two instead sit outside, where Grace finally reveals that she suffered abuse at the hands of her own father – and that she stood up in court and testified, putting her father in jail. She confides that this is something she hasn’t ever told anyone – and that she hadn’t even been thinking about it herself, until she met Jayden. And now… she has discovered that she is pregnant and faced with the prospect of becoming a parent herself. She admits that she doesn’t know what she is doing, but that she just wanted to help Jayden.

Jayden confides to Grace the harm that she’s suffered from her father – this time much more

explicitly The two then find a good use for the baseball bat: smashing the windows of Jayden’s dad’s car. It proves to be an exhilarating catharsis – and we feel that things will begin to change for both of them.

Grace returns home to Mason, who tells her that Marcus is going to get better, to which Grace responds, “I think I am, too.”

About Short Term 12

The world of group homes is not an unfamiliar one to SHORT TERM 12 writer/director Destin Cretton. In fact, he loosely modeled one of the film’s characters, Nate – an unsure newcomer to the line staff at the facility – after himself.

“After I graduated from college,” from Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, ”I couldn’t find work, and a friend of mine mentioned a group home for troubled teenagers that was hiring,” the director recalls. On his first day, a seemingly nice kid had a lovely chat with Cretton – and then blew up and threw a chair at him from across the room. “It was by far, one of the scariest experiences I’ve ever had – at first. I was really afraid of doing something wrong and messing up these kids more than they already were. But after a month or so, I fell in love with it.” He stayed on for two years.

It is an experience that stuck with Cretton, even as the Hawaiian native was getting his Master’s Degree in Film and New Media from San Diego State University. There, a few years later, he created a 20 minute short for his thesis project, titled “Short Term 12” – based on his experiences at the home. The film went on to win the Jury Prize at Sundance in 2009 – and prompted Cretton to make a feature version. “I was kind of a novice filmmaker, and somebody told me that if you were going to

Sundance, you’d better have a feature script ready. So I wrote one.” That script eventually found its way to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, where it was one of five scripts in 2010 to win the Nicholl Fellowship. “That was a big stamp of approval,” he says.

The short had featured a male, named Denim, as the lead supervisor of the home’s “Line Staff,” the home’s counselors who tend to the kids each day. But for the feature version, Cretton decided to switch things around, creating a new character, Grace, in the supervisor’s role.

Cast in the role was actress BRIE LARSON, of whom Cretton was a fan – not only for the searing emotional role she played in Oren Moverman’s “Rampart” (as Woody Harrelson’s eldest daughter), but for her comedic work on “United States of Tara.” “She’s just so raw and spontaneous, even in comedy scenes,” the director says. “She always feels like she’s shooting from her instincts, as opposed to some kind of pre-planned, rehearsed performance.”

Larson, who was filming another project in Georgia, was sent the script, and immediately connected. “Within 10 pages, it was just a role that really spoke to me,” the actress says. “I felt it had a lot of great architecture to it, and was just a big space for me to work and play with.” She and Cretton spoke via Skype, and, says the director, “I saw Grace very quickly in her. She was really funny, but she also had something about her that was extremely thoughtful. She would stop and think about things, and it was in those moments where I saw a combination of intensity and lightness, and I knew she would kick ass as Grace. And she did.”

The actress immediately dove in to develop her character, the director notes. “She worked her tail off to get under Grace’s skin, and it was a joy to watch. She asked smart questions and devoured as much information as she could, to become an expert not on group homes, but on Grace – and the different things she could be feeling at every moment. It’s the reason her performance is believable and realistic – she had a specific take on everything for her. She never does the same thing twice.”

Grace is, at her core, complex, due to the abuse she has suffered, which is not revealed to the audience – nor even to those closest to her – until late in the film, a quality that Larson found most appealing. “For me, the best part about any character is their secret,” she explains. “And to do an entire film about someone trying to keep it together because of a secret they have eating away at

them is really fascinating to me.”

Keeping the secret a secret, while giving the audience enough to know there’s indeed something hidden, was a terrific challenge for the actress. “I found it incredibly refreshing to explore – especially in a movie where it’s more about the things that aren’t said than what is said. Stories like that stay with you longer, because they strike an uncomfortable chord – they help the audience feel that whatever it is could easily happen in real life.” Adds Cretton, “Grace is continually walking the line of being extremely vulnerable and being an extremely strong woman. And that’s difficult to portray.”

Creating that hidden darkness was part of a day’s work for Larson – actually 20 days’ work – something she had to learn to manage. “I think this was actually the longest period for me of playing someone who’s going through some darkness for a very long period of time,” she recalls. “I’d go in a corner and drink a lot of black coffee and get myself feeling really ill and say, ‘I’m going to the pit.’” The trick was in not staying there. “I actually found a nice groove of being able to swim in the deep end and then return to shore. It took me awhile, but I realized that just because your character’s going through hell, it doesn’t mean you have to put yourself through hell, too. You do the work, then you come home, cook dinner and watch ‘The Simpsons’ and remember who you actually are.”

Playing opposite Larson as her gentle, supportive boyfriend and colleague, MASON, is JOHN GALLAGHER, JR, one of the stars of HBO’S “The Newsroom” and a Tony-winning actor on Broadway for “Spring Awakening.” “I read Destin’s script in one sitting, and counted seven scenes that just brought me to tears,” he recalls. “I’ve never had that kind of physical reaction to reading a script. That told me right away that this was something really special, something that had a lot of heart.”

The role of Mason – warm, kind, understanding and supportive, but with a good sense of humor

– was a particularly good fit for the actor. “I read it and said, ‘I know who this guy is, and I think I could have a lot of fun with this.” Notes Cretton, “John is that way on and off screen. He’s nice, caring, witty, patient and charming – everything Mason is, both with the kids in the home and in his relationship with Grace. It was an instant choice for me. Plus, we were Skyping, and, at the time, he had this big beard, and I saw that and just knew, ‘Ah – that’s Mason.’”

Mason also needed to be a good storyteller – he regularly keeps his colleagues rapt with sometimes hard-to-believe stories of his life and work. “That’s something I had seen him do on ‘The Newsroom,’” Cretton recalls. Adds Gallagher, “That’s one thing that jumped out the first time I read the script.

I love stories in any form. And on ‘The Newsroom,’ everybody is forced to memorize these long passages of dialogue, and just spew them out without any hesitation. And besides, Mason loves the attention.”

The humorous aspect of the character is no accident – in fact, it’s necessary, Cretton says. “Humor is very much a part of the reality of the group home setting – it’s part of survival there. He’s kind of an anchor, in a lot of ways, for a lot of the mayhem that’s going on around, both with things going on with the kids and with Grace.” Gallagher agrees. “It’s something that I noticed when I went and

visited one of the group homes. The line staff keep it very light – nothing inappropriate, but they joke with the kids, try to keep a friendly, happy, easygoing environment.”

Mason is anything but the goofball he sometimes portrays in his role at the home. “John and I talked about it early on,” the director explains. “Mason knows that he’s taking on the role of the bumbling, goofy guy – but he uses it. He’s not clueless, he knows what he’s doing. It’s not an escape from reality – he uses it to deal with reality.” Adds Gallagher, “He’s happy to play the role of the jester, if it can be used positively and effectively. He’s able to use it to diffuse situations in an appropriate way before they get out of hand.”

Part of why Mason seems, for the most part, fairly unrockable, is his upbringing, revealed when he and Grace attend his foster parents’ 30th anniversary party – a party packed with similarly grateful foster children the couple have raised. “I wanted to make sure that we saw an example of the foster care system truly working,” says Cretton. “It’s a system that is really beautiful at times, and that’s not normally portrayed in films or on television. It’s important for people to see that aspect.”

The idea for giving Mason that kind of background came early in the writing process. “I asked myself, ‘Why would Mason be working in a place like this?’ It’s not incredibly uncommon for people who work at these facilities to have some kind of tie to the foster care system themselves or have

similar backgrounds to some of the things the kids are going through.”

Mason’s good nature comes out of the loving world he happened upon sometime earlier in his life,

in the form of his Latino foster parents. “It’s hard to get Mason down,” says Gallagher. “He found his way, as a child, in and out of facilities like Short Term 12, never really finding a family or any self worth, until he found them. I think he knows he got a second chance, and it’s something that’s made him an eternal optimist.”

That quality makes him invaluable to everyone around him, Cretton says. “One of the big themes of this movie is finding ways to break cycles, and to believe that you can. Just because your parents treated you in an unacceptable way, doesn’t mean that you have to turn out that way and do the same things to your kids.” Mason is a glimmer of hope, not only for the kids, but for Grace. “He shows that you can go through a messed up past, and come out a fairly healthy person on the other side. He understands where he came from, and has dealt with it on a certain level.”

Grace and Mason are truly soulmates. “They’re kindred spirits,” says Gallagher. “They both come from broken homes and were dealt pretty unfair hands as children. And so that’s something that brings them together, having gone through traumatic experiences in their young life. And now, they’re adults, and are able to have someone that knows what that kind of struggle is like.”

The actors began to explore the couple’s relationship not long before shooting began, when Cretton sent them out on a faux dinner date. Gallagher recalls, “He gave us an envelope full of little questions and games and conversation pieces. Throughout the meal, every minute or so, Brie would reach in and take one out.” The questions would be, for example, “How do you think Grace

and Mason met?” “We would talk it out. So before we even got on set, Destin had already given us these tools to start building a foundation and a history and a backstory for these characters.”

The two live a simple life – the kind $12 an hour counseling jobs can afford, but one which they cherish, and one which they spend all day keeping a secret “at the office.” “Their home life is almost like a completely different movie, which is something I love,” Larson says. “You get to see the most unglamorous, unromantic parts of a relationship. The mundane things – cooking dinner, sleeping

next to each other, brushing our teeth. Destin chose such interesting periods of time to show. But it made it clear this is a relationship that’s lived in.”

A relaxing evening in the couple’s apartment can consist of something as simple – and intimate – as making drawings of each other while seated on the sofa. “That was actually one of my favorite parts of the film, doing those drawings,” Larson recalls. Gallagher was dispatched to a nearby CVS to grab some paper and crayons, and then instructed by his director to attempt eight different sketches of Mason’s sweetheart (all of Grace’s drawings in various scenes in the movie, including this one, were done by Cretton’s girlfriend, Nikki Chapman, herself a talented artist). As seen in the film, most of Gallagher’s were. . . not so good.

“I asked John, ‘Are you trying to be bad?’” Larson laughs. Each take, the actor would show her a different sketch, in order to get a different reaction from his scene-mate. “I still have one of them. I kept one.”

The couple’s closeness is often seen in times when Grace is seemingly in the middle of a hellish situation at the group home, when an appropriately-placed quip from Mason can be exactly what she needs. When one of the kids, for instance, has a meltdown and smashes a cupcake Mason

had made into Grace’s face, he once again is able to disarm the situation, enquiring, “So how’s my cupcake?” eliciting a smile from his girlfriend.

“That’s the beautiful balance of that relationship,” Larson notes. “If she gets stuck in the mud, he is so good at pulling her back to reality and grounding her. When things get out of control, he’s the one that’s pulling her back to center.”

“I think he matured before she did,” says Cretton. “He’s able to look at her and know what she’s thinking. It helps her snap out of it, and keeps her from spiraling down in what could otherwise be terrible situations.”

Mason’s warmth and kindness are still no match for the scars left over from childhood abuse. “He

wants to be there for her, but she can’t really allow herself to be vulnerable,” Gallagher explains. “She will go into her head and get stuck there. And it puts a strain on the relationship.”

“She just can’t,” Larson offers. “Even with someone there who’s willing to walk through the dark stuff with her – which, to me, is a truly romantic thing. But what happened to her is so horrible, she feels like it’s a lie – that no one would believe that anybody would be capable of that much evil,” [i.e. the wrongs inflicted on her by her jailed father]. As skilled as Grace is with communication tools, which she capably applies daily in her work with the kids, she is unable to apply them to herself, in even the safest of relationships. “She thinks if she tells anyone, she’ll unravel.”

The Kids of Short Term 12

Interestingly, the one person Grace is able to begin to open up to is one of those she is responsible for, one of the kids of SHORT TERM 12, some of whom are played by young actors with little or no feature film experience.

Finding teens who could play disturbed children effectively – and realistically – took some time. “It was a long process with the kids,” Cretton explains. “We just kept seeing more and more kids, even searching outside the bounds of our casting office. We just wanted to find kids who felt very authentic and very real.”

The role of Sammy, for instance, the quiet, lanky youngster who dashes towards escape in the beginning of the film, was played by 13-year-old Alex Calloway, who answered a Craig’s List-type casting ad. “His father had sent in a cell phone video as an audition from Georgia. We knew he was perfect.”

Once cast, it was a matter of getting all the players – adults and kids alike – on the same page. Prior to filming, the entire cast met for a day of games, stories and improv at a house where several of the producers were staying. Everyone learned “Big Booty,” the rhythmic word game seen in the film, something Cretton had resurrected from his college days. “It’s one of those ‘Whisper Down the Lane’ type of games, where it’s all about timing,” Gallagher explains. “We would go and practice that whenever we had a break until we finally shot the scene.”

Larson also spent time with each child individually, to learn and develop the characters’ relationships with Grace. “We just talked and figured out the past of the kids – what I know and then what I shouldn’t know,” she says. “Everybody was allowed to have their secret.”

The adults, as well as the kids, were taught the “take down” maneuver described earlier, used to carefully and gently lower an irate child to the ground to allow them to cool off. “In your training, you’re taught to physically restrain a kid who’s having a violent outburst and talk them down and keep them safe,” Cretton explains.

“There’s a specific type of descent that staff members have to learn,” Gallagher adds. “There’s a proper way to restrain a young child who’s losing their temper, hitting back and having a violent outburst. You can’t have someone that’s trained like a police officer come in and deal with a person who’s 15 or 12 – their training is more intense. You have to be careful so nobody gets hurt.”

Gallagher and Larson each spent a day shadowing real “line staff,” as they are called, at a local group home in Los Angeles. Explains Gallagher, “Line staff are there from morning until night, to be on hand, to watch over the kids, help them stick to a routine, make sure they’re going to school, get their meals, take their meds and do activities.” They’re technically not therapists, but end up unofficially acting as counselors, Cretton notes. “I might compare it to the difference between a medic and a doctor. You’re basically trained to handle extreme situations when they arise, and to handle them for a short period of time until someone more professional can get there.”

Line staff have to strike a balance between being a supervisor and being a friend. “You can’t try and be their parent, because these kids are too smart for that,” Larson explains. “And you can’t be saccharin either, because they’re too smart for that, too. They’ve been so badly abused in every possible way – they can’t even trust people who are talking really sweetly to them, because they know they want something from them.” It’s really a matter of ‘thick and thin’ – to be strong for the

kids no matter how they behave. “They need to know you won’t abandon them no matter what happens. Everybody else has run out on them. That’s something I learned shadowing a real staff member. It’s not just a matter of loving them and having patience. It’s more about tough love.”

Larson also learned another important lesson from one of the two female line staff she shadowed. “She said to me, right at the beginning, ‘You have to be able to go home and let it go. If you don’t, you will crack.’ There are people who crack after just a couple of weeks. It’s really hard dealing with broken kids. If you can’t find peace, you’re gonna get eaten alive. I applied that to the movie in every aspect – for myself and for Grace.”

Gallagher picked up another lesson, which he tucked away and used for Mason. “One of the things that struck me was the ease with which the line staff preside over everything,” he recalls. “They knew everybody’s name, everybody’s backstories, knew what they’d been through. And they knew how to best talk to each kid, individually – to not just have a blanket way of dealing with everyone. And they knew how to do all that and make it seem very, very easy to accomplish, which I wanted to bring to Mason.”

As mentioned, Grace finds unlikely help for herself through her work with a quick-witted, but brooding

15-year-old named JAYDEN, played by actress KAITLYN DEVER. “She was one of the few girls who came in and just read the scene so naturally – actually underplayed, but real,” Cretton recalls. “She’s one of the most talented actors I’ve ever worked with.”

Especially important for the young actress was the ability to portray someone with a thick skin, but whose pain must also be visible, in only the slightest amount, to the audience. “Jayden is very protective, with a very thick shell. But every once in a while, what is bubbling inside just breaks through,” Cretton notes. “That’s definitely a challenge for a 15-year-old actress, to show emotion without flaunting it. Jayden is somebody who would not want anyone to see her crying. But

Kaitlyn was able to let us see that, underneath that thick shell, she’s still just wanting to be a normal, vulnerable 15-year-old girl.”

The arrival of Jayden in Grace’s life presses a long-forgotten button for the young counselor. “Grace immediately sees herself in Jayden,” Cretton points out. Only later is it revealed that the two share

a similar history. Says Larson, “They’re two sides of the same coin, in a lot of ways. And they’re truly gifts to each other, even if they don’t realize it at first. They’re able to clearly see things in themselves because they’re seeing them in the other person.”

There are several points in the film in which the two – Grace, particularly – share moments from

their lives that they have never told anyone – an inappropriate move for a staff member in such an environment, but nonetheless helpful for both. “It see-saws back and forth who is counselor and who is being counseled,” Cretton says.

“It’s definitely crossing the line for her job,” Larson admits. “But I think in Grace’s mind, she feels like Jayden needs to have at least one person in her life that that can look her in the eye and say, ‘I’ve been there, and you don’t have to do it this way. You don’t have to feel you’re all alone – there are other people out here for you.’ And one of those ways is talking about it.”

Jayden herself finally lets loose after suffering yet another experience of her father letting her down, forgetting to pick her up on her birthday. She yells at Grace and the others – telling Grace that she hates her. Grace, however, responds not with hurt but with a simple, “You don’t have to like me right now,” allowing the teen to have her pain, instead of trying to shut her down.

“That’s one of the things I learned when I visited a real group home – you can’t take this stuff personally,” Larson says. “These kids are having meltdowns all the time. You learn that they don’t hate you – you’re just the one there when it’s going on, so you’re the one who gets it. What I learned it’s about is staying strong and being there for the other person, making sure you’re still there, even

if they’re spitting in your face.” That is something which is important for Jayden’s recovery, Cretton notes. “That’s how she begins to trust Grace. She knows she’ll stay with her, even through horrible moments in her life.”

The scene was actually based on an experience Cretton had had in his work as line staff. “We had a kid whose dad didn’t show up for his birthday. And it was the same thing – he slammed his door, we

tried to open it, and he started wailing on my face. And an hour later, we were sitting side-by-side in the cooldown room. Once he calmed down, he was apologetic and we were back to being good friends. It had nothing to do with me.”

While Larson had to learn how to come in and out of living in her character’s darkness, this apparently came quite naturally to Dever. “We’d do a take of that scene, and I’d yell ‘Cut!’ and she would turn back into her normal 15-year-old goofball self,” Cretton recalls. “And then she could just drop back in as soon as I’d say, ‘Action.’”

“Kaitlyn has an amazing ability to go in and out,” Larson notes. “She can fully commit to a character, really understanding who this person is, but then when the cameras are off, she is herself, cracking jokes, running around. She’s a remarkable actress, and I learned so much from her. There are a lot

of parallels between what Grace learns from Jayden and what Brie learned from Kaitlyn!”

Equally stirring is the performance of 21-year-old KEITH STANFIELD, who plays MARCUS, a quiet teen whose inner turmoil is only expressed in his music. Stanfield is the only actor to return from Cretton’s short film version of SHORT TERM 12, made when the actor was only 14. The director says, simply, “Keith is the real deal.”

Cretton had hoped to bring the young actor back to reprise his role – but was unable to locate him. “I was trying to find him during the whole casting process. But he hadn’t really acted since we shot that short in 2008. He didn’t have a cell phone and he wasn’t responding to any e-mails.” Towards the end of the process, the two finally connected, and Stanfield came down from Victorville and read for the part. “He read the sides in my apartment, and I videotaped it and sent that to all the producers – one of whom it made cry. We found our Marcus.”

Stanfield describes his character as having “a personality shell.” “He’s been traumatized so much and so many times, mostly by his mother, who beat him and had him selling crack on the street since he was eight, that he never wants to be hurt that way again,” he says. “He lashes out at the drop

of a hat, he has no emotional control. He wants people to think he’s a hot head, so that they’ll stay away. That’s the only mechanism he’s been able to teach himself – there’s never been anyone there to show him a better way.”

The flip side of the coin, though, is a soft heart, which ekes its way out on occasion, such as when, after seeing Jayden have a blowout on her birthday over her father, Marcus brings a pile of craft supplies into the living room and has his housemates make a batch of birthday cards for her. “That scene just made me cry when I read it,” notes Gallagher. “Moments like that just reach out and grab your heart.” Adds Stanfield, “He has a good spot in his heart – everyone does. His shell is just a ploy, and I think anyone who also has suffered the way he has can see through it.”

Marcus had personal appeal to the actor. “His story is really about overcoming your own inner conflicts, and that’s something I identified with,” something that wasn’t lost on his castmates. “I don’t know where he’s at in his life,” says Larson, “but it matched up in a way with Destin’s script that just brings an absolutely honest performance. Keith is just this deep well of sorrow and a lot of heart. It just flows from him. It’s real. He’s an amazing find.”

Getting to know Stanfield on set wasn’t easy – on purpose. The actor deliberately steered clear

of developing relationships with his fellow actors, choosing instead to stay alone in the world of his character, even to the point of avoiding having lunch with anyone. “He told me, ‘My character does not trust anybody, and I don’t trust you,’” Larson recalls. It was tough, but effective, Gallagher says. “It made the scenes stronger. It kept the tension onscreen, because it made us have to work a little harder to get him to open up – which was real. And Keith isn’t that way when he’s out of character. He’s loving and gentle, actually.”

“When I get on camera, I want it to be real,” Stanfield notes. “When I go on set, I don’t want to be

acting. I’m just Marcus.”

His quietness helps the actor deliver perhaps the most heartbreaking scene in the film, when Grace shaves his head. “It’s a milestone for him,” he explains. “He’s made a very adult decision on his own, to change and start over. He’s realized that maybe he might be the cause of a lot of the difficulties

in his life, and shaving his head is a symbol of starting over. It’s the baggage of his past coming off.”

When Marcus finally looks up and sees himself in the mirror, he cries – as did just about everyone that was on set with him. “We shot, I think, just three or four takes, and after each one, I left the room crying,” Larson remembers. Adds Cretton, “Everyone was just sitting in silence while we were doing it, watching this somber moment happen. It felt so real for everybody.”

Gallagher had a similar reaction when, after Marcus is disciplined and sent to his room, Mason comes to him and asks Marcus if he has any new lyrics. Marcus asks Mason to keep a beat with a small drum – and raps over the beat. “That’s really the first time Keith connected with John,” Cretton notes. “He wouldn’t let it happen offscreen either.” Adds Stanfield, “He trusts Mason, because Mason doesn’t respond as an authority figure, he responds more like a friend. Marcus is anti-social

– rapping is the only way he can express himself. He doesn’t even do it in public, but he does it for

Mason. It’s a lyrical depiction of his pent-up anger.”

If Stanfield’s rapping seems natural, it’s because he actually does rhyme. “I’ve been rapping for a few years,” he says. “I actually use it to express my own struggles.” His music also appears over the closing credits, and elsewhere in the film.

The rap he delivers in the scene, by the way, started off as a basic rhyme from Cretton, though it needed a little work. As Gallagher recalls, “Destin wrote something and gave it to Keith, but Keith took one look at it and said, “Uh. . . this isn’t gonna work.” Stanfield adds, “I knew what he was trying to say, but it was kind of a watered-down version of true struggle. I tweaked it.” Cretton was more than happy with the results. “Keith knew how to make it cool,” he says.

Despite his steps toward progress, Marcus tries to take his own life. “It was after his fish, Nas, died,” the actor explains. “Animals don’t judge – Nas was the one creature he could really confide in and not

be judged. Without Nas, he had no one.”

Rebirth

Marcus isn’t the only character going through change in SHORT TERM 12. Grace’s inner struggle over her history with her father is brought to the fore upon learning that he is about to be released from prison. “Grace has this issue inside herself that she’s constantly trying to fight and avoid,” says Cretton. “Now she has to deal with it, whether she wants to or not.”

Grace is struggling to keep the various threads of her life together, but after Jayden is picked up by her father, Marcus tries to kill himself, and Grace begins to fear the return of her own father into her life, things begin to fall apart. “She feels like she’s losing control,” Cretton explains. “And that’s a common theme in abusive relationships, a sense of loss of control.” Adds Larson, “There was actually a line in the script that got cut, where she says, ‘Why can’t I be in control of just one thing?’”

She finally becomes almost catatonic. “There’s a wall she can’t get past,” Larson says. “I call it a ringing of the bell. She’s at her wit’s end. She’s, like, ‘Don’t anyone ask anything of me – I’ve given enough of myself.’ Everything’s accumulated, and she’s got nothing left to do but jump off.”

Grace makes her way to Jayden’s house, where, after breaking in and finding a baseball bat, goes upstairs to smash the girl’s father’s head in. “She doesn’t want to kill anyone,” Larson explains. “What she really wants to do is to make the madness in her own head stop.”

The two go outside and put the bat to a more constructive use: smashing the windows of the sleeping dad’s car before returning to the home and beginning anew. “We shot that just before sunrise on, I believe, the last day of filming,” Larson recalls. “I only got one take – we only had one windshield, so I was kind of nervous.” The actress was only supposed to hit the window about three times, but, she says, “I got in my head not to stop until I smashed a hole in it!”

It was a cathartic experience, not only for her but for everyone who’d weathered the difficult shoot. “I had spent 20 days playing this character that’s trying to keep it together – working myself up and then suppressing it, thinking of all these pressures and bad things, and then I’d enter a scene and try not to think about it. It was driving me mad. So, yes, it was cathartic to take it out on that car.”

“Her laugh at the end of that was real,” notes Cretton. “It was the perfect release for Grace, and for all of us.”

**DESTIN DANIEL CRETTON (Writer / Director)**

Destin Daniel Cretton was born and raised in Maui, Hawaii, where he spent 3 of his summers picking pineapples in the fields near his home. He has a BA in Communications from Point Loma Nazarene University and is completed his Masters in Film at San Diego State University.

He’s written and directed 4 award-winning short films: *“Longbranch: A Suburban Parable”* (Premiered at the 2002 Tribeca Film Festival), “Bartholomew’s Song” (2006 Student Academy Finalist), “Deacon’s Mondays” (2007 Student Academy Finalist, 2007 Angelus Winner, HBO Films Best Student Film Award), and “Short Term 12”, which won the U.S. Jury Prize at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, followed by

top awards at Seattle International, Aspen Shorts Fest, Independent Film Festival Boston, CineVegas, GenArt, and was short-listed for the 2010 Academy Awards.

His feature film debut I AM NOT A HIPSTER premiered to critical acclaim at the 2012 Sundance Film

Festival.

Along with his narrative work, Destin has also directed two feature-length documentaries. DRAKMAR: A VASSAL’S JOURNEY premiered on HBO Family in 2007 and won the Best Documentary Award at the

2006 Comic Con. BORN WITHOUT ARMS premiered on TLC/Discovery in 2009.

The script for Destin’s second feature SHORT TERM 12 (based on the short of the same title), which will premiere at the 2013 SXSW Film Festival, was one of five to win a 2010 Nicholl Screenwriting Fellowship from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

**BRIE LARSON (Grace)**

At just 23, Brie Larson has already built an impressive career as one of the more versatile young actresses working today as she has moved effortlessly from one genre to another with every project she takes on.

Brie had two films at this year’s Sundance Film Festival, “The Spectacular Now” opposite Shailene Woodley, where she plays Miles Teller’s seemingly perfect girlfriend. Brie also co-stars in Joseph Gordon-Levitt’s directorial debut, “Don Jon’s Addiction” playing his cynical/realist younger sister.

She was recently seen in the hugely successful film, “21 Jump Street” as the love interest to Jonah Hill, and received rave reviews for her supporting role in the Oren Moverman film “Rampart”, playing the incorrigible, defiant daughter of Woody Harrelson, a dirty cop in the Los Angeles’ Rampart division.

Brie garnered substantial acclaim for her portrayal of “Kate”, Toni Collette’s sarcastic and rebellious daughter, in Showtime’s breakout drama *United States of Tara*, which was created by Academy Award-winning writer Diablo Cody and based on an original idea by Steven Spielberg.

Other notable credits include Edgar Wright’s “Scott Pilgrim vs. the World” where she played the rock star ex-girlfriend of Michael Cera, and Noah Baumbach’s “Greenberg” as a young temptress flirting with Ben Stiller. She has appeared on stage at the prestigious Williamstown Theater Festival in the role of “Emily” in “Our Town,” and recurred on the F/X cult favorite series, “The League” as an overly amorous Au Pair.

In addition to acting, Brie is a writer and director. Her short film, “The Arm” won the prize for Best

Comedic Storytelling at last year’s Sundance Film Festival.

A native of Sacramento, Brie started studying drama at the early age of 6, as the youngest student ever to attend the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco.

Brie currently resides in Los Angeles, CA.

**JOHN GALLAGHER JR. (Mason)**

New York actor, John Gallagher Jr. has shown his talent and versatility in television, film and theater. Currently, Gallagher is filming the second season of Aaron Sorkin’s smash hit THE NEWSROOM for HBO.

He stars as ‘Jim Harper’ opposite Jeff Daniels, Emily Mortimer, Alison Pill, Olivia Munn and Dev Patel. The show follows journalists as they set out on a patriotic and quixotic mission to do the news well in the face of corporate and commercial obstacles and their own personal entanglements.

Gallagher’s other television credits include: LAW & ORDER: SVU, LOVE MONKEY, LAW & ORDER: CI, NYPD BLUE, ED, THE WEST WING, and LAW & ORDER.

No stranger to the big screen, Gallagher’s past film credits include: MARGARET, JONAH HEX,

WHATEVER WORKS, THE GOOD STUDENT, and PIECES OF APRIL.

Gallagher most notable achievement is his Tony award win for his performance as ‘Moritz Stiefel’ in Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater›s rock musical SPRING AWAKENING; he also received a Drama Desk and Drama League nomination. He also recently played Johnny aka ‘Jesus of Suburbia’ in Green Day›s Broadway musical, AMERICAN IDIOT and Lee in the 2011 critically acclaimed Broadway production of JERUSALEM.

His other theatre credits include: David Lindsay Abaire›s Pulitzer Prize Winning Play RABBIT HOLE, CURRENT EVENTS, KIMBERLY AKIMBO, PORT AUTHRORITY and FARRAGUT NORTH.

**KAITLYN DEVER (Jayden)**

Kaitlyn Dever (pronounced “dee-vur”) is one of Hollywood’s fastest rising young talents. From work with talents such as Clint Eastwood to Diane Lane, Dever has steadily proven to industry decision makers that she is one to watch. She was born in Phoenix, Arizona, and at the age of 16, she already has several high profile films and television credits under her belt. Dever is currently starring on the ABC show *Last Man Standing* as Tim Allen’s character’s youngest daughter, and will soon be seen shining in the films *The Spectacular Now* and *Short Term 12*. She showcases her versatility

in the critically acclaimed coming-of-age comedic drama *The Spectacular Now* as “Krystal,” the protective, know-it-all best friend of Shailene Woodley’s character; and the much darker drama *Short Term 12,* where she plays “Jayden,” a troubled teenager living in a group home for troubled youths alongside Brie Larson. *Short Term 12* will premiere at SXSW 2013, and *The Spectacular Now* recently premiered to rave reviews at Sundance 2013 and will screen again at SXSW

In 2012, Dever wrapped a two season-long arc playing “Loretta McCready” on the FX drama *Justified*, for which she received critical acclaim. She appeared in the HBO movie *Cinema Verite* with Diane Lane, Tim Robbins and James Gandolfini, and played a lead role in the 2009 HBO movie, *An American Girl: Chrissa Stands Strong*. On the Starz comedy series *Party Down*, she played Megan Mullally’s daughter, and later guest starred on the 2011 season premiere of the Emmy-winning HBO series *Curb Your Enthusiasm* starring Larry David. She also has starred in episodes of Emmy winning TV shows: *The Mentalist*, *Modern Family* and *Private Practice.*

Dever’s film credits include Cameron Diaz’s comedy *Bad Teacher* for Sony Pictures and the Warner Bros. film, *J. Edgar,* starring Leonardo DiCaprio, and directed by Academy Award-winning director Clint Eastwood.

Hollywood is taking notice. In 2012, Dever was nominated three times at the 33rd Young Artist Awards for her roles in *Bad Teacher, Last Man Standing* and *Justified.* She currently resides in Los Angeles with her parents and two younger sisters.

**RAMI MALEK (Nate)**

Rami Malek is on the heels of costarring in Paul Thomas Anderson’s *The Master* opposite Philip Seymour Hoffman, Joaquin Phoenix, and Amy Adams. Prior to this, he was best known as Merriell “Snafu” Shelton from HBO’s EMMY award-winning mini- series “The Pacific” produced by the team

of Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks. He also played the role of Pharaoh Ankmenrah in the box office

smash hits *The Night at the Museum* and *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian.*

Following his star-making turn on *The Pacific,* Rami was cast opposite Rooney Mara and Casey Affleck in *Ain’t Them Bodies Saints,* a Sundance award-winning independent film. He recently appeared in the latest Twilight installment, *Twilight: Breaking Dawn Part 2,* and will next be seen in Spike Lee’s adaptation of the acclaimed Korean thriller *Oldboy,* and in videogame adaptation *Need For Speed.*

**KEITH STANFIELD**

Keith Stanfield made his film debut in Destin Daniel Cretton’s Sundance award-winning short film SHORT TERM 12. He returns as “Marcus” in the feature length film by Cretton which will premiere this March in the Narrative Competition at the 2013 SXSW film festival.

**MAREN OLSON (Producer)**

Maren Olson is the President of independent film company Traction Media, LLC, where she is responsible for the creative development, packaging, financing and sale of independent films. Since joining the company in 2005, Ms. Olson has represented domestic and/or worldwide distribution rights to over 60 finished films, including Academy Award winner THE SECRET IN THEIR EYES*,* festival favorites such as AN OVERSIMPLIFICATION OF HER BEAUTY, NATURAL SELECTION and RED FLAG*,* and Sundance Audience Award winners THIS IS MARTIN BONNER, VALLEY OF SAINTS and KINYARWANDA.

Ms. Olson’s previous industry experience includes working in script development for producer Lawrence Bender (KILL BILL, GOOD WILL HUNTING, PULP FICTION). While at Lawrence Bender Productions she helped develop films INNOCENT VOICES, THE CHUMSCRUBBER and KILLSHOT*,* and also acquired and developed popular Japanese fantasy series THE GUIN SAGA for the company.

She graduated from the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television with a B.A. in

Film Production and a minor in Business.

**ASHER GOLDSTEIN** (Producer)

Asher Goldstein produced Destin Cretton’s feature debut I AM NOT A HIPSTER as well as his follow up SHORT TERM 12. He also served as an Executive Producer on the documentary ANGELS IN EXILE, narrated by Charlize Theron, and is currently in post on Spirit Award Nominee Asiel Norton›s feature film ORION. As an executive at Traction Media, he is engaged in various aspects of the indie-film business including sales, production, and packaging. Under the Traction banner, he

has represented award-winning films such as NATURAL SELECTION, AN OVERSIMPLIFICATION OF HER BEAUTY, and THIS IS MARTIN BONNER. Asher has also written for several online publications, including *The Huffington Post*. He graduated with Honors from NYU’s Kanbar Institute of Film &

Television, where he was the recipient of the King Family Screenwriting Award.

**JOSHUA ASTRACHAN** (Producer)

In July 2012, Joshua Astrachan co-founded Animal Kingdom, a new film and television production company, under whose banner he just produced SHORT TERM 12 by writer/director Destin Daniel Cretton.

In 2007, Astrachan founded Locomotive, a film and television production company, with producing partner Lucy Barzun Donnelly. With Locomotive, Astrachan produced Jennifer Westfeldt’s celebrated ensemble comedy FRIENDS WITH KIDS. The film premiered at the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival and was theatrically released by Lionsgate and Roadside Attractions in March, 2012.

Prior to Locomotive, Astrachan was a producer for the better part of a decade for the great American film director, Robert Altman. He produced Altman’s last film, A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION (2006), written by Garrison Keillor and starring, among others, Meryl Streep, Lily Tomlin, John C. Reilly, Woody Harrelson and Kevin Kline. Astrachan also produced THE COMPANY (2003), Altman’s narrative feature set in the world of dance, starring Neve Campbell, James Franco and the company members of the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago.

Astrachan co-produced the critically-acclaimed, Academy Award-winning and seven-time Oscar- nominated GOSFORD PARK (2001), for which Altman received the Golden Globe and New York Film Critics Circle Award as Best Director.

Prior to working in film, Astrachan was co-founder and Artistic Director of NEW ARTS, a not-for-profit theater production company that developed and presented new plays by American writers in New York City.

**RON NAJOR** (Producer)

Ron graduated from San Diego State University with a master’s degree in Television, Film, and New

Media. While there he was selected three times to receive National Student Emmy Awards. Ron’s

first produced independent feature film I AM NOT A HISPTER was an official selection of the Sundance Film Festival in 2012. SHORT TERM 12, which is an official selection of SXSW 2013, is his follow up feature and marks his second collaboration with writer/director Destin Daniel Cretton.

**FREDERICK W. GREEN** (Executive Producer)

After a long career on Wall Street, Fred is now a full-time movie producer. His interest in filmmaking dates back to 2003, when he executive produced GUNS & MOTHERS, a documentary on gun control. Exploring this contentious issue through the eyes of two mothers on opposite sides of the debate, this critically acclaimed doc was featured on the PBS series *Independent Lens* and shown on more than

300 PBS affiliates.

In 2006, Fred was co-executive producer of Robert Altman’s last film, A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION*.* It was on the set of that film where Fred met his current filmmaking partner, Joshua Astrachan, who also produced Altman’s GOSFORD PARK and THE COMPANY.

Last year, Fred’s production company brought FRIENDS WITH KIDS to the big screen. Fred’s latest project, produced under his company’s new banner—Animal Kingdom—is SHORT TERM 12.

**DOUGLAS STONE** (Executive Producer)

Douglas Stone is the founding partner of the boutique law firm Stone, Meyer, Genow, Smelkinson

& Binder, LLP and is the firm’s managing partner. Mr. Stone represents actors, writers, directors and

producers, and plays an active role in the packaging, financing, and exploration of independent films.

Mr. Stone is also a principal of Traction Media. Traction endeavors to further the interests of independent filmmakers, representing films for the sale of distribution rights as well as producing and packaging feature film projects.

In addition, Mr. Stone is President of the Board of Directors of the Santa Barbara International Film

Festival.

**DAVID KAPLAN** (Executive Producer)

David Kaplan is an independent film producer, financing consultant and sales agent. A part of the newly-formed NYC-based production shingle Animal Kingdom, David most recently served as Executive Producer of Destin Cretton’s feature SHORT TERM 12, the first film under the new company’s banner. 2012 also saw David Executive Produce Joe Swanberg’s DRINKING BUDDIES and package the financing for Jordan Vogt-Roberts’ TOY’S HOUSE (Official Selection, Sundance ‘13). Prior to co- founding Animal Kingdom, Kaplan served as a packaging agent at Cinetic Media and the Director

of Development at Killer Films. He is currently in pre-production on Gillian Robespierre’s directorial debut, OBVIOUS CHILD.

**NATHAN KELLY** (Co-Producer)

Nathan’s approach to filmmaking was shaped while working for producers Scott Rudin (THERE WILL BE BLOOD; REVOLUTIONARY ROAD; NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN) and Georgia Kacandes (HUGO; BAD TEACHER). In addition to SHORT TERM 12, Nathan’s credits include Michael Mohan’s SAVE

THE DATE (Sundance ‘12); Anastacia Junqueira’s short film THREE FORMS OF INSOMNIA (Cannes

‹12); Rick Rosenthal’s DRONES; Brin Hill›s IN YOUR EYES; Daniela Amavia’s BEAUTIFUL NOW*;* and Joss

Whedon’s MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING (Toronto ‹12, SXSW ‹13)

**M. ELIZABETH HUGHES** (Co-Producer)

M. Elizabeth Hughes received her B.A. in Communication with a minor in Theatre from Wesleyan College in 2006. While at Wesleyan, M. Elizabeth directed two plays, one of which she adapted from a short story. M. Elizabeth earned her M.F.A. in Film and Television Producing from Chapman University in 2008. Following graduation, she produced the feature film HERPES BOY starring Beth Grant (No Country For Old Men, Donnie Darko), Ahna O’Reilly (The Help) and Academy Award Winner Octavia Spencer (The Help). HERPES BOY toured the festival circuit and won several awards, including Audience Award at the Austin Film Festival and Best Comedy at Comic-Con International Film Festival. Following HERPES BOY, M. Elizabeth worked on WE LIVE IN PUBLIC the winner of the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at Sundance 2009. In early 2011 she produced MISS DIAL, which premiered at the Macon Film Festival in 2013 and is now available in all major video on demand outlets. She line produced the film SAVE THE DATE starring Alison Brie and Lizzy Caplan, which premiered at Sundance 2012. M. Elizabeth line produced MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, a modern adaptation of the Shakespeare play directed by Joss Whedon, which will be theatrically released in June 2013. She recently line produced SHORT TERM 12, which will premiere at SXSW 2013. She is currently in pre-production for her next feature, DOMAIN.

**AMANDA JOHNSON-ZETTERSTROM** (Co-Producer)

Amanda heads up Development and Production at newly formed NYC production shingle, Animal Kingdom. There she most recently co-produced Destin Daniel Cretton’s SHORT TERM 12, which will premiere at the 2013 SXSW Film Festival. She’s also worked with Luca Guadagnino (I AM LOVE) on his short film “Here” for Starwood hotels. Prior to working at Animal Kingdom, Amanda was Director of

Development at Locomotive, where she worked closely on Jennifer Westfeldt’s FRIENDS WITH KIDS.

**BRETT PAWLAK** (Director of Photography)

Born and raised in the suburban landscape of Southern California, after a youth filled with making movies with childhood friends and classmates, his love for the craft of telling stories through the camera led Brett to attend the Los Angeles Film School, where he majored in Cinematography, in the schools Immersion Filmmaking Program. Leaving with a substantial amount of shorts and music videos under his belt, Brett set his sights of making a name in narrative features and commercials.

Soon to be a member of the International Cinematographers Guild, Brett has shot internationally for the likes of Warner Bros, 343 Industries, Bryan Singer, as well as numerous commercial companies, shooting spots for Google, Mercedes, Lucky Charms, and more. In 2009, Brett accompanied the short film “Short Term 12” to the Sundance Film Festival, where the film took home Jury Prize for

Best Short Film, and returned in 2012 with the film I AM NOT A HIPSTER. Most recently Brett won Best Cinematography Awards for his work on “H+: The Digital Series, at the IAWTV Awards, as well as for his work on ‘HALO 4: Forward Unto Dawn” at the 2013 Streamy Awards. Brett is excited for the release of “Short Term 12” at SXSW.

**NAT SANDERS** (Editor)

Nat Sanders is a film editor who cut the critically-acclaimed MEDICINE FOR MELANCHOLY, nominated

for three Independent Spirit awards, and the Sundance Jury Prize-winning HUMPDAY, recipient of the John Cassavetes Independent Spirit award. In 2009, Nat was named one of the “25 New Faces of Independent Film” by Filmmaker Magazine. Recent credits include OUR IDIOT BROTHER, YOUR SISTER’S SISTER, THE DO-DECA-PENTATHALON and SHORT TERM 12.

**RACHEL MYERS** (Production Designer)

Raised in Portland, Oregon and trained as a Set and Costume designer with an MFA from the Yale School of Drama, Rachel’s love for the Art Department began working as a PA on Tim Burton’s CORPSE BRIDE**.** Most recently she designed BLUE Starring Julia Stiles, directed by Rodrigo Garcia and produced by Jon Avnet for the premier channel, WIGS and “Video Game High School” directed by Freddie Wong, for which she was nominated for a *Streamy Award* for her

Production Design. Select film credits include SHORT TERM 12, SAVING LINCOLN and **LIMINAL** (winner of Best Art Direction - Barcelona International Film Festival ’09; Punta del Este Festival ’10; Action

on Film Festival ’09). Rachel has Art Directed for ABC and NBC television’s “Mistresses” and live events such as The Golden Globe Awards. She has Production Designed television, music video and commercial projects for clients including: Hewlett Packard, CVS, Soul, Pampers, The History Channel, Ray Ban, L›oreal, Marriott and Getty Images. She has also designed for regional theatre including Center Theatre Group, South Coast Repertory, The Shakespeare Theatre, The Getty

Villa, Robert Wilson›s Watermill Center and Williamstown Theatre Festival. She is faculty at California

State University Channel Islands and is a member of Art Directors Guild 800 and United Scenic Artists

829.

**JOEL P WEST** (Composer)

Joel P West is a songwriter and composer working in San Diego, recording under his own name

and with chamber-folk band The Tree Ring. He has written original songs and score for a number of

short films as well as two feature films, Sundance 2012 selection I AM NOT A HIPSTER and SXSW 2013 selection SHORT TERM 12. In 2012 he was awarded a Creative Catalyst Fellowship through The San Diego Foundation, under which he recorded The Tree Ring’s second full-length album Brushbloom in collaboration with chamber group Camarada.

**MIRREN GORDON-CROZIER** and **JOY CRETTON** (Costume Designers)

Joy Cretton grew up on the small, simple island of Maui but has always had a love and flair for fashion. Childhood days were spent creating costumes out of anything and everything she could find lying around the house, which her older brother Destin then featured in his creative, magical home videos. With six home-schooled siblings, there was never a lack of actors for them to dress up or direct! Along with her move to LA, brought opportunities to work doing costume design on some

short films, including Destin’s Sundance-winning short, “Short Term 12”, the feature-length, I AM NOT A

HIPSTER and now the feature-length version of SHORT TERM 12.

**ONNALEE BLANK** (Supervising Sound Editor)

Onnalee Blank had a promising career as a professional ballet dancer until an injury forced her to find a new passion, which she did in sound. After working with legendary music producer Rick Rubin and composer Danny Elfman, she found her way to Todd-AO in 2006 where she built an award- winning career as one of the few female re-recording mixers in the industry.

Working closely with Academy Award winning Re-recording Mixer Michael Minkler, she developed her creative talents and contributed to nearly forty feature films and more than twenty TV series, encompassing over 150 episodes including “CSI: NY” and the HBO series “Girls.”

Onnalee was awarded the 2012 Emmy Award for Outstanding Sound Mixing for a Comedy or Drama

Series for her work on HBO’s “Game of Thrones.”

**BRANDEN SPENCER** (Supervising Sound Editor)

Branden Spencer has been a sound editor at Soundelux in Hollywood for nearly his entire career since joining the company in 1998. Working closely with renowned Supervising Sound Editors such as Wylie Stateman and Mark Stoeckinger, Branden has contributed his creative talents and organizational skills to more than 65 films, and noted directors including J.J. Abrams (STAR TREK),

Ridley Scott (ROBIN HOOD), Oliver Stone (SAVAGES), and Quentin Tarantino (DJANGO UNCHAINED, and INGLORIOUS BASTERDS).

Branden is a six-time MPSE Golden Reel nominee for sound Editing.

**IAN VERTOVEC** (Digital Intermediate Colorist)

A Chicago native, Ian studied still photography at Southern Illinois University before transitioning to film editing, cinematography, and digital compositing. His work at SIU won him four Regional Emmys®.

Ian’s recent feature credits include HITCHCOCK, TEXAS CHAINSAW 3D, SNITCH, DARK SKIES, and

LORDS OF SALEM. His collaboration with Director David Fincher and DP Jeff Cronenweth on

THE SOCIAL NETWORK and THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO has been recognized with two consecutive ASC and Oscar® nominations for Best Cinematography.

At Light Iron, which Ian co-founded, he currently serves as Supervising Digital Intermediate Colorist.

**KERRY BARDEN, PAUL SCHNEE, RICH DELIA** (Casting Directors)

Kerry Barden, Rich Delia and Paul Schnee are Casting Directors at Barden/Schnee casting. Recent credits include the upcoming film adaptation of AUGUST OSAGE COUNTY with Meryl Streep and Julia Roberts, PRISONERS with Hugh Jackman and Jake Gyllenhaal, DALLAS BUYERS CLUB with Matthew McConaughey and Jennifer Garner, PITCH PERFECT with Anna Kendrick, ADMISSION with Tina Fey and Paul Rudd, YOU’E NOT YOU with Hilary Swank, THE ICEMAN with James Franco and Michael Shannon, THE HELP with Viola Davis and Octavia Spencer, LOVELACE with Amanda Seyfried and Peter Saarsgard, MACHINE GUN PREACHER with Gerard Butler, DOLPHIN TALE with Morgan Freeman and Ashley Judd, and MIRROR MIRROR with Julia Roberts and Armie Hammer. In 2011 they won the

Artios Award for Best Ensemble for WINTER’S BONE and won the same award in 2012 for THE HELP.

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY DESTIN DANIEL CRETTON

PRODUCED BY MAREN OLSON ASHER GOLDSTEIN

PRODUCED BY JOSHUA ASTRACHAN RON NAJOR

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER FREDERICK W. GREEN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DOUGLAS STONE DAVID KAPLAN

CO-PRODUCERS NATHAN KELLY

M. ELIZABETH HUGHES AMANDA JOHNSON-ZETTERSTROM

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY BRETT PAWLAK

EDITOR NAT SANDERS

PRODUCTION DESIGNER RACHEL MYERS

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY JOEL P WEST

COSTUME DESIGNERS MIRREN GORDON-CROZIER JOY CRETTON

SUPERVISING SOUND EDITORS ONNALEE BLANK, C.A.S

BRANDEN SPENCER

DIGITAL INTERMEDIATE COLORIST IAN VERTOVEC

CASTING BY

KERRY BARDEN PAUL SCHNEE RICH DELIA

Grace

BRIE LARSON

Mason

JOHN GALLAGHER JR.

Jayden

KAITLYN DEVER

Nate

RAMI MALEK

Marcus

KEITH STANFIELD

Luis

KEVIN HERNANDEZ

Dr. Hendler

MELORA WALTERS

Jessica

STEPHANIE BEATRIZ

Kendra

LYDIA DU VEAUX

Sammy

ALEX CALLOWAY

Jack

FRANTZ TURNER

Nurse Beth

DIANA MARIA RIVA