



SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES Presents

A HYPEROBJECT INDUSTRIES / GARY SANCHEZ Production



Starring

Ralph Fiennes	Anya Taylor-Joy
Nicholas Hoult	Hong Chau
Janet McTeer	Reed Birney
Judith Light	Paul Adelstein
Aimee Carrero	Arturo Castro
Rob Yang	Mark St. Cyr
and John Leguizamo	

Directed by.....Mark Mylod  
 Written by.....Seth Reiss & Will Tracy  
 Produced by.....Adam McKay, p.g.a., Betsy Koch, p.g.a., Will Ferrell  
 Executive Producers.....Michael Sledd, Seth Reiss, Will Tracy  
 Director of Photography..... Peter Deming, ASC  
 Production Designer..... Ethan Tobman  
 Edited by.....Christopher Tellefsen, ACE  
 Music by.....Colin Stetson  
 Costume Designer..... Amy Westcott  
 Casting by.....Mary Vernieu, CSA, Bret Howe, CSA

## **THE MENU**

A couple, Margot (Anya Taylor-Joy) and Tyler (Nicholas Hoult), travel to a coastal island in the Pacific Northwest to eat at an exclusive restaurant, Hawthorn, where the reclusive, globally celebrated Chef Julian Slowik (Ralph Fiennes) has prepared a lavish tasting menu for select special guests. Joining the couple are three young, already inebriated tech bros, Bryce (Rob Yang), Soren (Arturo Castro) and Dave (Mark St. Cyr), an older wealthy couple and repeat clients, Anne and Richard (Judith Light and Reed Birney), renowned restaurant critic Lillian Bloom (Janet McTeer) and her slavish magazine editor Ted (Paul Adelstein), and a famous middle-aged movie star (John Leguizamo) with his assistant Felicity (Aimee Carrero). Hosted by the immaculately dressed front of house staff led by general Elsa (Hong Chau), the evening unfolds with increasing tension at each of the guest tables as secrets are revealed and unexpected courses are served. With wild and violent events occurring, Slowik's motivation begins to rattle the diners as it becomes increasingly apparent that his elaborate menu is designed to catalyze to a shocking finale.

Searchlight Pictures presents, a Hyperobject Industries / Gary Sanchez production, THE MENU, from director Mark Mylod. Starring Ralph Fiennes, Anya Taylor-Joy, Nicholas Hoult, Hong Chau, Janet McTeer, Reed Birney, Judith Light, Paul Adelstein, Aimee Carrero, Arturo Castro, Rob Yang, Mark St. Cyr, and John Leguizamo, written by Seth Reiss & Will Tracy. The film is produced by Adam McKay, Betsy Koch and Will Ferrell. Director of Photography Peter Deming, ASC, Production Designer Ethan Tobman, Editor Christopher Tellefsen, ACE, Composer Colin Stetson and Costume Designer Amy Westcott, round out the production team.

## **starters**

### **THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE MENU**

A few years ago, while visiting Bergen, Norway, screenwriter Will Tracy (“Succession”) took a boat to a fancy restaurant on a nearby private island. “I’m a bit claustrophobic, and as we sat down to eat, I saw the boat that dropped us off leaving the dock,” Tracy recalls. “It was a small island. And I realized, ‘Oh, we’re stuck here for four hours. What if something goes wrong?’.”

Tracy brought the idea to his longtime screenwriting partner Seth Reiss (“Late Night with Seth Meyers”), and together the pair conceived a satire with a story structure matching the narrative beats to the courses of a high-end restaurant’s tasting menu. From amuse bouche to dessert, ratcheting up tension and amplifying the unusual circumstances while retaining authentic elements of the hospitality industry.

The script made its way into the hands of producers Adam McKay and Betsy Koch. The satirical thriller was in line with the pair’s other recent work at Hyperobject Industries, including McKay’s climate change parody *Don’t Look Up* and director Mimi Cave’s dark comedy *Fresh*. “Adam and I are always looking for sharp satire and unconventional genre films, and this had both in spades,” Koch says. “I read the script and it was the first time in a really long time that I read any script twice in a row. I sent it to Adam and from there it was about convincing Will and Seth to let us produce this movie.”

“I loved how the script combined humor and biting satire,” McKay adds. “It was fun but dark, and it indicted an exclusive culture in a surprising way. It reminded me of *The Trouble with Harry* in tone and humor—which is one of my all time favorite movies. The film mixes biting class satire with humor, darkness and a healthy dash of absurdity. Does that sound like a recipe? I swear I didn’t mean to do that.”

“Satire gives you purchase to operate on a slightly heightened reality,” Reiss continues. “It opens the door for fiction, though it all makes logical sense within the reality we’re creating – everything flows from that world.”

The screenwriters then sent the script to Mark Mylod, who was immediately taken by the characters and the approach to the restaurant world. Well-known as a television director for Emmy® Award winning series like “Game of Thrones” and “Succession”, Mylod had also previously worked on a particular episode of Succession” written by Tracy. That episode was largely set at a dinner party, and for that Mylod had embraced an approach inspired by Robert Altman’s *Gosford Park*, which he also brought to *The Menu*.

“We wanted to be really careful in skewering the industry and walked this tightrope, poking at it while remaining deeply respectful of the artform and the humans who are involved,” Mylod notes. “When I got involved, I did my own personal dive into that world to educate myself on how it worked and the level of commitment and the stress of maintaining that extraordinary level of art night after night. It destroys people. It’s incredibly high pressure.”

The writers and Mylod ultimately brought a sense of humanity and emotion to each character – even those who seem unlikeable.

## ***second course*** **THE INGREDIENTS**

Casting the film was a fun challenge for Mylod because the story required a diverse ensemble of skilled actors. While Chef Julian Slowik (Ralph Fiennes, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *The Constant Gardener*), the mastermind behind the Hawthorn restaurant, is the central figure in the kitchen, all of the other characters really build out that world, both in the dining room and in the kitchen.

“I got really lucky with the cast, but there is an old adage that good things come to good scripts and this was certainly a case of that,” Mylod says. “One of those good things was Mary Vernieu, the casting director who is a bona fide genius. I described the tone and the way I wanted to work in this Altman-esque fashion of having everybody present on set the whole time. I needed the kinds of actors who were intelligent and confident enough for that and to leave some room for improvisation. Gradually, one by one, we built each guest table.”

Though many of the characters, both guests and staff, seem insufferable on the surface, their purposefully clichéd traits eventually unravel to reveal more complicated backstories and personalities. For the cast, that was a particularly compelling element.

“I was a huge fan of Mark and his ability to take a group of characters who are inherently unlikeable and get the audience to like them and enjoy being around them,” says Nicholas Hoult (*The Favourite*, “The Great”), who plays Tyler. “All of these characters are distasteful in many ways, but you also want to spend time with them and, in some weird way, root for them.”

Throughout the evening, the staff at Hawthorn serves six tables of guests, each representing a certain type of person who has infuriated or disrespected Chef Slowik, from long-time disaffected patrons, to pompous food critics, to know-it-all foodies.

### **The Chef**

Chef Slowik (Ralph Fiennes), an established, renowned restaurant chef, is at the top of his game. But he’s also made a Faustian pact in order to rise through the industry and helm Hawthorn, which he doesn’t own, putting him at the mercy of investors. The Academy Award® nominated Fiennes (*The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *Schindler's List*, *The English Patient*, *The Constant Gardener*) concocted a full backstory for the character as someone whose artistic purity has been tarnished by his wealthy clientele.

“He’s come to loathe the elite consumer, and himself, for being corrupted by them,” Fiennes explains of Slowik. “They’re a clientele that can never be satisfied. He’s a perfectionist and constantly having to maintain a level of perfection for people who never really appreciate it. The appeal of the script was that it considers the whole spectrum of the characters in a framework of a dark comedy.”

“Chef’s Table”, the series that meets innovative culinary stars from around the world, was an obvious source of inspiration for Fiennes. While Chef Slowik is not specifically based on one specific real-life chef, Mylod did send the actor a number of episodes from the series including the one on Chicago chef Grant Achatz, who runs the 3 Michelin star restaurant Alinea.

“Slowik is quite a complex character,” Mylod explains. “I wanted to show his dedication to the elevation and innovation of his artform, to the point of putting his own life on the line – so mesmerizing and extraordinary. Ralph and I were both very determined not to present the character as a caricature. We wanted to find his humanity and his pain, and understand his actions. Not to forgive or condone them, but to at least give them context and authenticity as best as we could.”

Fiennes also spent quite some time on set with Michelin-starred chef Dominique Crenn, also featured in “Chef’s Table”, who brought to life the menu that appears in the film and consulted with the filmmakers, to learn about how a chef relates to their kitchen staff.

“I had the cliché of the chaotic kitchen in my head, with the chef shouting over everything,” Fiennes recalls. “But when Dominique told me about her kitchen and how she liked to work, that is how I saw Slowik’s kitchen: the control and the power is in the kitchen staff’s dedication to the chef and his food. There is no loudness or violence. Just a nod, a look, and little mutterings of correction or encouragement.”

## **The Unexpected Guest**

Margot, played by Emmy-award Nominee Anya Taylor-Joy (*Last Night in Soho*, *The Witch*, “The Queen’s Gambit”), is an outlier among the guests at Hawthorn. She has joined Tyler (Nicholas Hoult) as his date for the meal, but she is at first puzzlingly disinterested in Chef Slowik’s food and has contempt for the overly precious presentation of the dishes.

One of the film’s most compelling dynamics unfolds between Chef Slowik and Margot, who isn’t supposed to be at this particular dinner. She disrupts the chef’s vision for the evening, but he seems to respect her.

“It was interesting because Margot is an enigma,” explains Taylor-Joy. “In the script she’s quite sardonic, and it’s fun to be able to improv with that. She is tough, funny— and she’s very, very quick. She knows her job; to figure out what the person she’s with wants and how to be that ideal. It was truly fun to play her.”

“There’s a game-recognizes-game situation going on there,” continues Taylor-Joy. “But, also, I think they both dislike the same things. What’s wonderful about the way that Ralph has played Slowik is that rather than being an out and out madman, we do feel this empathy for him because he just loves something so much but also happens to be a little bit insane. There are moments where it’s fascinating, you don’t know whether to be frightened or have empathy for this person who clearly just loves food and is upset that these people have tainted the thing that he loves more than anything else in the world.”

Fiennes adds, “It’s a weird connection because it isn’t romantic. It’s more like he identifies with her. He has a very binary view that there are those who serve or give or make possible and those who take or purchase. This division is very important to him—you’re either “with us or with them”. She doesn’t buy that all. And she doesn’t really like his food. She thinks there’s a big bullshit factor in what he’s doing.”

## **The Foodie**

Nicholas Hoult plays Tyler, a culinary obsessive who thinks he knows far more about fine dining than he actually does. He namedrops fancy kitchen equipment and insists on pulling out his phone camera, even though Hawthorn doesn’t allow photographs of the food.

Hoult explains of his character, “It’s his dream come true getting to go to this restaurant; he’s been saving up for a long time to go there. He had plans to go with an ex-girlfriend who then broke up with him, so he’s brought Margot for the evening because at Hawthorn you can’t have a table for one. He’s a character who you can like on some level because of his passion and the enjoyment that he gets out of this restaurant. But he’s also someone who has got a lot of deep psychological issues.”

Tyler’s know-it-all approach is also comical – and gets on people’s nerves. For Hoult, the character’s inability to be his authentic self was compelling. “Something that Mark talked to me about is that we all have masks that we gradually create and wear and layer upon ourselves,” Hoult says. “We see them fall off in front of us throughout this story. Tyler is there under all these delusions of who he is.”

Tyler’s relationship with Margot initially appears to be romantic, but Tyler actually has employed Margot, an escort, as his dining companion. Their dynamic shifts as the evening goes on and more details about Chef Slowik’s ultimate plan become apparent.

Hoult notes, “Margot is very much playing a role for Tyler that evening, this cool girl who he never had dates with in school.”

## **The Critic & Her Editor**

Lillian Bloom, played by Academy Award Nominee Janet McTeer (“Ozark”, *Albert Nobbs*), is a well-recognized food critic whose reviews can make or break a chef’s career.

Throughout her years in the restaurant industry, Lillian has become arrogant with an overly inflated ego. She has a history with Chef Slowik, who she claims to have discovered, and is joined for the meal—at Hawthorn’s center table—by her yes man – her editor Ted, played Paul Adelstein (*Mothers and Daughters, Intolerable Cruelty*).

“My character is somebody who adores food – adores restaurants,” McTeer says. “But somewhere along the way it’s become about the review. It’s become about being clever – and it’s become about her. She’s overly respected and self-important.”

“Lillian really put Chef Slowik on the map, so Ted and Lillian take credit for him in a lot of ways,” Adelstein adds. “I think there’s a fun mirror dynamic between Ted and Lillian in that Ted also takes credit for Lillian. Ted is always trying to match her but also show that she’s the alpha.”

To prepare for the role, McTeer spoke with chef and food writer Ruth Reichl. Lillian embodies exactly what critics are not supposed to do. McTeer says. “Ruth and I talked about how at a certain point it can become all about the critic. But a good restaurant critic should be anonymous. Ideally, you’d go into a restaurant and you don’t know they are there. But my character shows up with pink hair and a great suit so people will *know* she’s there.”

## **The Celebrity & His Assistant**

The purposefully unnamed Movie Star, played by John Leguizamo (*The Survivor, Moulin Rouge!*), is hoping to transition from a failed acting career to hosting a travel food show, so he is there for research. He is accompanied by Felicity, his assistant, played by Aimee Carrero (“The Offer”, *Wander Darkly*), who is desperate to quit and get away from him.

“I portray a super obnoxious American egotistical actor who is full of himself,” Leguizamo explains. “His career is on the downturn, so he becomes even more erratic and ugly. Aimee and I played off all that toxic behavior between actors and their assistants. She feeds on my insecurities and I feed off of her insecurities. Neither really know what to do at a place like Hawthorn.”

For Carrero, the relationship between the actor and Felicity was a way of looking at power. While Felicity initially seems like a good person, it becomes clear that she has the same level of entitlement as the other guests.

“Even though she’s his assistant she has all the power in the relationship,” Carrero. “Her mother is a big studio executive. She wants this to be her last evening working for the Movie Star, but he doesn’t want to hear it. Felicity actually has a lot of love for him, but she doesn’t respect him. When you feel like you’re doing everything for someone, a lot of resentment can build up. She has to do a little dance around his fragile ego.”

## The Wealthy Couple

Richard and Anne, played by Tony Award winners Reed Birney (*Mass*, *The Hunt*) and Judith Light (*tick, tick... BOOM!*, “Transparent”), are a well-to-do older couple who have dined at Hawthorn multiple times. Although they are regulars, the pair doesn’t seem to enjoy—or even really remember—the experience of Chef Slowik’s cuisine. Birney and Light have known each other since 1982 but had never worked together. The actors wanted to embody the sort of long-term couple who has stopped relating to one another.

“Richard and Anne are those people that you see sitting there in a restaurant, and you look at them through the entire meal and notice that they have not said a word to each other,” Light explains. “They have been to Hawthorn eleven times. They are moneyed and go to places just because they can get in.”

Over the course of the evening, secrets are revealed about Richard, who seems to recognize Margot. As the action builds, and the direction of the meal becomes clearer, Anne becomes less subdued and more outspoken, discovering that she’s been betrayed.

Of Anne, Light says, “This experience on this night brings out her courage, and her ability to speak the truth she has long known. It’s a truth that she has not let herself know before this, and that’s pretty powerful stuff.”

## The Tech Bros

Also dining at one of Hawthorn’s highly coveted (and fateful) tables are Bryce, Soren and Dave, a group of obnoxious young tech employees played by Rob Yang (*The Kitchen*, “Succession”), Arturo Castro (“Broad City”, *Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk*) and Mark St. Cyr. (*Marshall*). The trio work for Doug Varick, who owns Hawthorn, which gives them an added sense of privilege. The characters represent the nouveau riche entitlement experienced in the restaurant scene in more recent years. They are all used to giant expense accounts.

Says St. Cyr, “There was an industry boom in the tech age where people that are at the front of the curve can get really wealthy really quickly. For these characters, the power that comes with wealth has definitely gone to their heads. They’re young and rich, and they have no issues flaunting it, although none of them feel like they were born into a really wealthy class.”

Castro, who plays Soren, was familiar with the vibe of his character after appearing on the TV series “Silicon Valley”.

“These guys feel like they’re entitled,” Castro notes. “They have a chip on their shoulder any time anything’s ever denied or not to their liking. In some ways though I think Rob and Mark have an intense vulnerability about them and that makes them three-dimensional.”



Yang reflects, “Bryce is deeply conflicted about what his life has amounted to even though he’s got all this money. He’s got this real douche sense of ‘If there’s a problem, I can throw money at it.’ To me, this film is about putting up a mirror to each one of these diners. There’s a real dynamic in this story between people who are entitled and not concerned with others, and then the service side of giving. It’s about takers and givers.”

## **The Staff**

Hawthorn’s staff live on the island where the restaurant is located, sharing a bunkhouse. They have a cult-like demeanor and work with precision and a clear dedication to Chef Slowik. The chef’s right-hand restaurant captain is Elsa, played by Hong Chau (*Downsizing*, “Watchmen”). She’s severe, composed and does the Chef’s bidding without question. The restaurant’s first line team also includes the sommelier (Peter Grsoz), and sous chefs, Katherine (Christina Brucato) and Jeremy (Adam Aalderks).

“Elsa maintains her composure under all circumstances and she’s really about following through on Chef Slowik’s plan,” Chau explains. “She’s a very enigmatic character. We don’t know a lot about her. One of the challenges was that there was so little information about her on the page. Mark and I had a lot of conversations about how to make this character more dimensional and to humanize her. I think it’s really interesting for the audience to wonder about her and never actually get any answers.”

The relationship between Chef Slowik and his staff reveals their unwavering belief in his vision. They will follow through on his plan for the evening almost blindly, no matter what.

“Elsa admires and looks up to Chef Slowik for his tenacity in terms of standing firm in his beliefs,” Chau continues. “I think it’s sometimes really hard for people who work in a service industry to stand their ground because there’s the idea that the customer is always right, and you are there to serve them.”

## ***main course*** **THE EXECUTION**

*The Menu* was filmed in and around Savannah, Georgia, in the fall of 2021. Mylod collaborated with cinematographer Peter Deming, who has extensive experience shooting horror and thriller films, including *Mulholland Drive* and *The Cabin in the Woods*.

“Peter really knows his craft, his camera placement and lighting are top notch,” Mylod says. “We talked about very specifically wanting an evolution, like a focusing spotlight, to show more and more pressure on the characters. We wanted to have an emotional coldness to the place, and yet not so cold that it was uncomfortable to watch. He just threaded the needle with that. It felt naturalistic and also beautiful.”

Mylod wanted to keep the cast members on set during every scene, even if they weren't involved in the particular shot. He encouraged them to bring in their character research and talk about it with each other. Because the backgrounds and sets were so precisely crafted, the cast were able to learn their movements easily; every scene was choreographed carefully.

"I specifically shot the film so that any spontaneous moment was covered by two cameras so that we could take it as a whole and not have to manipulate it with other performance takes," Mylod explains. "That allowed the actors, and specifically Ralph, to experiment within the parameters the spectrum of Chef's behavior."

Filming overall was a process the actors enjoyed, often taking inspiration from each other's work. "Mark creates his safe space for you to improvise if you want to," Leguizamo says. "Being on this movie was like being in a master class of acting. They would do Reed and Judith's scenes and all the actors would be on set watching it and we'd all applaud. And then Paul and Janet would do a scene and we would all watch and just be in awe. It was incredible."

## **The World of Hawthorn**

Although the film's action plays with the boundaries of reality, it was important to build a cinematic world that felt authentic. Hawthorn, which shares its name with a beautiful flower that releases foul-smelling odor, had to be as real as possible, evoking the very best of a global fine dining destination. To create the sparse, contemporary restaurant and its surrounding buildings, Mylod brought in production designer Ethan Tobman (*Free Guy*, *The Report*, *Room*), who found in the film the perfect marriage of his two greatest loves: food and film. Tobman immediately saw an opportunity to do something unique that would augment the experience.

"Every design choice I make is guided by a character's perspective and their emotional journey," Tobman explains of his process. "Early on, Mark and I latched onto the idea that Chef Slowik is inspired by nature. Every ingredient he chooses for a dish is going to be something he would have found in that landscape because he is inspired by God's creation and natural, organic forms. The irony, though, is that the process has become perverse for him."

Because the majority of the film takes place inside Hawthorn, each detail had to be carefully considered. The kitchen where Chef Slowik and his team create their dishes is intended to evoke a church, a place of worship with a literal cross on the back wall. The bathroom where Margot seeks solace at one point during the meal has a harsh rock wall that expresses the recurring theme of modernism and nature colliding. It hints that there is no escape from Hawthorn. There is also the large locked door, which suggests there is more of the world to be uncovered. For that doorway, which appears in two different

places on Hawthorn Island, Tobman drew inspiration from Florentine frescos, as well as Luis Buñuel's 1962 film *The Exterminating Angel*.

Inside the restaurant, there are two sculptures that were created for the set by Ben Butler. The décor in the dining room is rigid and minimalist, while the kitchen has a slightly more chaotic sensibility. Much of the furniture was purposefully uncomfortable. As the story unfolds, the set and camera angles were shifted slightly to reflect each course.

"The restaurant transforms throughout the film," explains set decorator Gretchen Gattuso. "It evolves from course to course. My biggest question was, 'How is this set going to evolve?' It was written in such an interesting way because it's so exclusive and so private. It's such a unique experience for people to come to this restaurant, and it only seats twelve people—the actual kitchen where you prepare meals is just as big as the actual seating area. We tried to bring in some elements of open flame and fire because that's a new trend in restaurants, and chefs are starting to incorporate those into their kitchens."

Over the course of the meal, before the sun sets over the water, the exterior landscape is visible through a large picture window, subliminally making the audience want to escape. The view is a reference to German Expressionism and Finnish architecture. "It's dramatic, asymmetrical, impressive and austere," Tobman notes. "There's something a little chilling about it."

The production team used a number of famous restaurants as inspiration for the set design as well as the dishes themselves, including the now-closed Swedish restaurant Fäviken, helmed by chef Magnus Nilsson, the acclaimed Catalan restaurant El Bulli, envisioned by chef Ferran Adrià, Thomas Keller's French Laundry located in Sonoma, and the work of René Redzepi, chef of Danish destination restaurant Noma.

"On the one hand, we wanted to make it uniquely Slowik's vision," Tobman explains of Hawthorn, which he describes as "rustic modernism". "From the moment you arrive at the island there are very strong visuals that you don't really see that in the real world. It's not practical. That's definitely a reference to the experience you're going to have there. Also none of the food is practical in any way. It requires twenty thousand dollars worth of equipment to create, and if it's not eaten within three minutes, it falls apart. Nature is portrayed similarly. It's been twisted, or pushed, or pulled into specific geometric shapes that would never exist were it not for human interference."

While the interior of Hawthorn was a set, the exterior was built on an actual location in Savannah, Georgia. Tobman and his team covered an existing barn, which is typically rented for weddings, with a concrete façade and used black mulch and white limestone to complete the restaurant's evocative entrance. The massive door, which rotates open to invite the diners in, is an imposing focal point, suggesting a sense of imprisonment as it hinges shut. Other filming locations also included Ft. McAllister State Park, World Trade Center Atlanta, Skidaway Island Community Gardens, Driftwood Beach on Jekyll Island, Hampton Island Retreat and Tybee Island – all throughout Georgia.

## The Dishes

In Hawthorn's kitchen, Chef Slowik conceptualizes artistic plates of food that are inspired by the environment. As each course arrives, the visual design needs to signify two things to the audience: Where is the story emotionally? How far has it ventured into the absurd? To achieve this—and to craft dishes that were edible for the actors—the filmmakers collaborated with renowned chef Dominique Crenn, who has earned three Michelin stars for her San Francisco restaurant Atelier Crenn.

"She definitely brought an expert's eye to the production when it came to the mechanics of running a world class restaurant," producer McKay notes. "Dominique is one of the greatest chefs in the world. But maybe her biggest contribution was providing insight into the dynamics of gender, race and worker/employer relationships that exist in all professional kitchens."

Crenn was joined by Partner/Executive Pastry Chef, Juan Contreras, who cooked and built the plates of food that appear onscreen. The pair collaborated with food stylist Kendall Gensler, who helped retrofit each dish to work for the camera and under the lights. In the end, all of the dishes were visually compelling and completely edible.

"All the dishes we created in collaboration with the ideas of the writers and the director were challenging at times yet extremely interesting for me," explains Crenn. "It took me away from what I'm doing in real life but to also create something that I have never created before. It was so much fun."

"I was absolutely paranoid about authenticity," Mylod adds. "Dominique Crenn was key to our process. She is an incredible world class chef, and her food is extraordinary in terms of its artfulness, but it also has an emotional warmth. We specifically wanted Chef Slowik's creations to have an emotional coldness. To be beautiful, but somewhat dead. That's obviously an extension of where his soul is and where his psyche is and where we find him in the story. That enabled Dominique to play her role creating Chef's menu. That was part of the attraction for her, as well as poking fun at the excesses of her own artform. She was in on the joke."

The producers also brought in local Savannah chef John Benhase to teach the kitchen staff cast knife skills, plating and the etiquette of working in a restaurant kitchen. It was important for Chef Slowik's staff to move in practiced unison as they cooked and served the dishes for the diners. The background action in Hawthorn's kitchen was carefully considered so that the staff, many of whom were played by local actors with restaurant experience, was preparing the next course as the drama unfolded in the dining room.

"It is this precise, set menu for just a very small amount of people, so it's very planned out and very choreographed, in reality and also in the movie," Benhase explains. "So we were being really intentional with the background movements to ensure nothing

seemed unplanned or unfocused. Then I was able to add authenticity to the precision, which was a good balance, making it look really dialed in.”

He adds, “We focused really hard on each course being planned out, so that whatever we were cooking was always the next course. All of the things were chronological.”

The dishes had to be immaculate and coordinated with the script. One particular course, “Man’s Folly,” as conceived by Crenn, comments on the industry’s inherent sexism. The final course of the meal is a dessert covers the entire table, offering a Jackson Pollock-esque tableau of swirls and drops. That dish was a remarkable challenge for the crew.

David Gelb, the creator of “Chef’s Table”, along with the series’ contributor Chloe Weaver, consulted with the filmmakers and worked with production to shoot close ups of the food following principal photography in their style.

“I really felt that when we added those shots in, the film was just fundamentally right,” Mylod recalls. “I felt like we had the balance of satire and food porn. The food is real. With the close-ups we were doing and the level of authenticity we were after, it was really difficult to fake. Everything that’s present on camera was real.”

## **The Looks**

Accuracy was also essential in the characters’ appearances, with costume, hair and makeup design. Costume designer Amy Westcott (*Black Swan*), researched Michelin-starred restaurants, looking at photographs of both the chefs and the types of people who typically frequent them. The directive from Mylod was to keep everything based in reality and not make anything too stylized or fantastical.

“He wanted it to be really grounded so that people who work in these worlds would understand it and say, ‘Oh yeah, this is right,’” Westcott explains. “Those details had to be right. But it was important to also give it something interesting – we wanted it to have these little flair points and tiny details that you had to look very hard to see.”

Chef Slowik was the starting point for the kitchen staff, whose uniforms, emblazoned with a Hawthorn “H,” evoke his. The chef’s whites feature a Mandarin collar to suggest a priest-like character.

“I didn’t want the costume to decide for you who this person was,” Westcott says. “It was keeping him as pristine and straight and clean and Zen as possible. We landed on the single-breasted jacket, which is unusual for a chef – they usually have it double-breasted. It was all about the fit and making sure that it looked tailored and not lumpy and big—sometimes chefs wear these oversized chef jackets. We wanted to really make him a world apart from the regular chef that you would see, but also make him realistic in that world.”

“He’s like a cult leader,” Fiennes adds. “He has a kitchen staff completely devoted to him. One of the first things I said to Mark, especially in the conversation with Amy who designed the clothes, was that we shouldn’t have any indication on his uniform that he’s anything other than ordinary. It should be like a priest or surgeon. We did away with any embellishments, any little vanity insignia. For him, food is like a religion.”

On the other side of the spectrum, each diner’s look reveals something about their personality and their relationship to the narrative. Margot wears a brilliant purple dress, which is the only place purple appears in the film. Her red hair also stands out in the neutral modern set. She wears boots to showcase a tougher side in juxtaposition to her glamorous sexy dress. “What you see of Margot is what she wants you to see,” Westcott notes. “It’s what she’s selling.”

The tech bros don expensive suits and sock-less loafers, while Lillian’s vibrant pink hair and colorful outfit allow her to stand out amongst the others. Tyler’s suit, slightly dressier than one might anticipate for a dinner out, reflects his expectations for the evening.

“They’re beautifully made costumes, but also I think they sum up the characters so perfectly and make each character such an individual when you watch them,” Hoult says. “We’re in these costumes for the whole film, so it had to be exactly right for those moments. You have to capture it instantly. The moment she showed me the drawings and ideas for this suit and who she thought Tyler was, I understood immediately.”

For Judith Light’s Anne, Westcott wanted a dress that would blend into the background, almost as if the character herself had faded out of perception. Light notes, “I tried on a zillion different things, and finally it was just the perfect costume for this character. The shoes that I wore were the same color as this dress, and there is a perfection to the pearls, a lady-like quality.”

Hair department head Adruitha Lee and make-up department head Deborah LaMia Denaver collaborated to ensure that each character’s look felt true to who they were in the story. It was a practical challenge as the story takes place over the course of several hours, as well as a creative one. Each guest’s look slowly degrades and wears down as the evening goes on, beginning with their boat ride to Hawthorn Island.

“We wanted them to arrive perfectly coiffed and stunning, but then the boat ride and the humidity takes effect,” Denaver notes. “Each character has their individualities, and we wanted each actor to have a defined look.”

“Stunning, but not predictable,” Lee adds. “We gave it a little bit of an edge. As the scenes went on, the characters took on a more and more frazzled look, which as very much on purpose.”

***for dessert***  
**THE DISH**

Like its characters, *The Menu* is not what it appears to be from the outset. Each course unravels a new aspect of the story, allowing the viewer to take a wild, unexpected adventure along with Hawthorn's guests. As a satirical thriller, the film reflects on deeper issues without being too didactic or overbearing. It's dark and unnerving but fun as well.

"Satire is one of those things where you have this nervous laughter but you hear everybody else in the cinema laugh, too," says Taylor-Joy. "If we don't understand it ourselves, we can see the mirror that satire is holding up to our world. However, it also allows you to laugh at it and I think that's a really good way of processing that emotion. My favorite films are the films where once you leave you keep thinking about them and you want to have discussions."

Castro adds, "The power of satire is that it softens the blow. When you're laughing, you're open. They say a laugh is a scream without the fear of judgment. When you're this open and suddenly you get hit with a hard truth, you've been disarmed."

Although the events of *The Menu* border on absurd, it also seriously asks for consideration about how we interact with those who serve us.

"I'm so grateful that I've been able to be a part of it," Crenn says. "It's important for people to understand that a kitchen is not just cooking. It's so much more complex than that. As humans, we're going through a lot of contradictions sometimes. It's important to be a little bit more respectful and conscious about others, especially when we serve food to another person. And not to be entitled walking into a restaurant. I think this movie is actually going to bring a lot of respect to our industry. It might be a dark film, but I feel there's a lot of things that you can reflect on and become conscious of."

"It's a very entertaining film, but beyond that I hope the grotesque characters and deranged exclusivity that runs through the movie lands, as well," McKay adds. "In a dream world maybe even a few audience members ask some questions about service, entertainment and our relationship with food."

Finally, Mylod hopes *The Menu* entertains while also spotlighting the impressive, undeniable level of artistry that exists within fine dining—a form of expression he has a newfound regard for thanks to the film.

"My takeaway was how incredibly hard it is to be at the top of your game and sustain that world," he reflects. "I look at those chefs who maintain that level of artistry and invention and evolution. I have no idea how they do it, and there's sheer, incredible work that goes into that from every level. From the people bringing your order to the people creating the menus, it's an incredibly hard industry. To do that night after night, I have a huge respect for them. I hope the audiences will get a sense of that, as well."

## FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

### **MARK MYLOD (Directed by)**

Mark Mylod has been the executive producer on the first three seasons of “Succession” on HBO. He most recently won a DGA for his directing on the season three finale. He has also collected Golden Globe and Emmy Awards for the series and was just nominated for an Emmy award for his directing on season three. Some of his other credits include “The Affair”, “Game of Thrones”, and “Shameless”. Mylod resides in Brooklyn.

### **SETH REISS (Written and Executive Produced by)**

Seth Reiss was born in Connellsville, Pennsylvania, in 1983 and graduated from Boston University in 2005. He is an Emmy nominated writer for his work on “Late Night with Seth Meyers” and was formerly the head writer of *The Onion*.

### **WILL TRACY (Written and Executive Produced by)**

Will Tracy is currently in an HBO overall deal and was part of the inaugural staff of HBO's Emmy Winning “Last Week Tonight with John Oliver”, where he worked for four seasons, earning him three Emmy Award Nominations and two wins, as well as three WGA awards. He left after the 2018 season to join the season two staff of HBO breakout “Succession”. Will is a former editor of *The Onion* and while he loves his hometown of NYC, is ready to move for a great show.

### **ADAM MCKAY, p.g.a. (Produced by)**

Academy Award winning writer/director/producer Adam McKay's most recent feature, *Don't Look Up*, is one of Netflix's most successful films of all time and stars Jennifer Lawrence and Leonardo DiCaprio as two low-level astronomers who must go on a giant media tour to warn mankind of an approaching comet that will destroy Earth. The film received four Oscar and BAFTA nominations, including Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay, and earned McKay a WGA Award for Original Screenplay.

McKay's 2018 feature *Vice*, starring Christian Bale and Amy Adams, went on to receive many accolades including eight Academy Award nominations, six Golden Globe and BAFTA nominations, and a DGA nomination for McKay. The WGA honored McKay with the Paul Selvin Award that recognizes a script that best embodies the spirit of the constitutional and civil rights and liberties. In 2015, McKay and Charles Randolph adapted Michael Lewis's New York Times best-selling book, *The Big Short*. Starring Christian Bale, Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling, and Brad Pitt, the film went on to receive much critical acclaim as well as Academy Award, BAFTA, and Golden Globe nominations for Best



Picture and won the 2016 PGA for Best Picture. McKay earned Academy Award, BAFTA, and Golden Globe nominations for Best Director, and he and Randolph won Best Adapted Screenplay at the Academy Awards, BAFTA, WGA, and USC Scriptor Awards. Other recent work includes his role as a producer on Searchlight Pictures' social thriller *Fresh* (2022) starring Daisy Edgar-Jones and Sebastian Stan, directed by Mimi Cave, and written by Lauryn Kahn. He also served as an executive producer on Olivia Wilde's directorial debut *Booksmart* (2019), Netflix's hit show "Dead to Me" (2019), and writer/director Lorene Scafaria's *Hustlers* (2019). Upcoming film projects include *Bad Blood* for Apple that will tell the story of Theranos' Elizabeth Holmes with Jennifer Lawrence starring.

For television, McKay serves as an executive producer on the critically acclaimed HBO show "Succession". McKay directed the pilot for which he won the 2018 DGA Award for Drama Series. The show won the 2019 BAFTA for Best International Series and the 2020 Emmy and Golden Globe for Best Drama Series. Most recently, he executive produced and directed the pilot of HBO's drama series "Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty". He is also an executive producer on HBO's late-night series "Game Theory with Bomani Jones". McKay's upcoming work includes the HBO limited series inspired by Bong Joon Ho's Academy Award Best Picture *Parasite*, a limited series based on Miami Herald investigative reporter Julie K. Brown's book about Jeffrey Epstein, and an HBO anthology series adapted from David Wallace-Wells' *The Uninhabitable Earth*.

McKay's production company, Hyperobject Industries, has a wide-ranging focus from comedies, dramas, horror, documentaries, and documentary-series, that cover politically charged and challenging subjects with which McKay has become synonymous. Hyperobject Industries develops original podcasts, including "Death at the Wing" which McKay hosted, and "Broken: Seeking Justice" with Sony Music Entertainment's Three Uncanny Four Productions. McKay also executive produced HBO documentaries *Q: Into the Storm* and *537 VOTES* from Billy Corden and Alfred Spellman as well as *Painting with John*, the unscripted series, created by musician, painter, and actor John Lurie.

McKay made his name in the comedy world as a founding member of the Upright Citizens Brigade. In 1995, McKay and Will Ferrell happened to start on the same day at Saturday Night Live, where he became Head Writer. McKay and Ferrell's time at SNL led to collaborations that established their unique absurdist style on the now classic *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy* (2004) followed by the hit *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby* (2006). McKay has consistently entertained audiences with a string of movies, including *Step Brothers* (2008), *The Other Guys* (2010) and *Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues* (2013). He has also produced numerous others including hits *Get Hard* (2015), *Daddy's Home* (2015) and *Daddy's Home 2* (2017), and independent titles such as *Welcome to Me* (2015).

In 2016, McKay joined the Creative Council of Represent.Us, the largest grassroots anti-corruption campaign in the US to pass laws that stop political bribery, end secret money, and give voters a stronger voice. McKay is passionate about the climate crisis and is

affiliated with numerous climate organizations. He also supports DSA LA, Homeless Health Care LA, and Amnesty International.

### **BETSY KOCH, p.g.a. (Produced by)**

Producer Betsy Koch works across film and television for Adam McKay's Hyperobject Industries. Koch is a two-time Primetime Emmy nominee for projects she produced during her tenure at Funny or Die – Sarah Silverman's HBO Special, *We Are Miracles*, which went on to win an Emmy for Outstanding Writing in a Variety Special, and the highly acclaimed web series "Between Two Ferns" with Zach Galifianakis. She also served as a producer on *The New Negroes* and *Robbie* for Comedy Central.

### **MICHAEL SLEDD (Executive Producer)**

A graduate of The University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Michael Sledd began his career working in distribution at Lot 47 under the tutelage of indie icon, Jeff Lipsky. Sledd then segued into physical production, working his way from production assistant to production manager on such films as *Transamerica*, *Detachment*, and *Robot & Frank*.

In 2012, independent stalwarts Parts & Labor brought Michael aboard *Ain't Them Bodies Saints* as Co-Producer. Helping bring David Lowery's distinctive voice to life opened creative doors for Sledd. *Saints* producer, Cassian Elwes, introduced him to producers Rachel Winter and Robbie Brenner who immediately set *Dallas Buyer's Club* up for business with director Jean Marc Vallee. Working side by side with these passionate creatives, *Dallas Buyer's Club* became the wonderful success story that it has long deserved to be.

Since then, Sledd has been an executive or co-producer on *I, Tonya*, Todd Haynes' *Dark Waters*, John Lee Hancock's *The Founder*, and Alfonso Gomez-Rejon's Sundance Jury and Audience Award winner *Me & Earl and The Dying Girl*. His favorite activity is turning oxygen into carbon dioxide.

### **PETER DEMING, ASC (Director of Photography)**

Peter Deming, ASC, has had a hand in a variety of notable and award-winning projects, and is known for his collaborations with high profile directors such as David Lynch, Sam Raimi, Wes Craven, and Jay Roach.

Most recently, Deming worked on 20th Century's *The New Mutants* directed by Josh Boone, *Capone*, a BRON Studios project directed by Josh Trank, as well as Lionsgate's *Now You See Me 2* directed by Jon M. Chu. Teamed with David Lynch, Deming worked on the omnibus *Hotel Room*, the noir thriller *Lost Highway*, starring Bill Pullman, Patricia Arquette, and Balthazar Getty, and the Oscar nominated *Mulholland Dr.*, for which

Deming won Film Independent Spirit Award. Alongside Wes Craven, Deming worked on *Scream 2, 3, & 4* and *Music of the Heart* starring Meryl Streep, and while working with Jay Roach, Deming had a hand in the *Austin Powers* films, *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* and *Austin Powers in Goldmember* as well as the drama *Mystery Alaska* starring Russell Crowe. In addition to these credits, Deming shot the horror films *Drag Me to Hell* and *Evil Dead II* for director Sam Raimi, and then reteamed with the director on the highly popular *Oz: The Great and Powerful*. Deming is also the cinematographer behind the critically acclaimed series "Twin Peaks the Return" for Showtime, for which he was awarded a Primetime Emmy nomination. Deming's other noteworthy credits include Showtime's "The Good Lord Bird", starring Ethan Hawke, and Drew Goddard's meta-horror film *The Cabin in the Woods*. Deming was also the recipient of the Best Cinematography award at the Sundance Film Festival for the Hudlin Brother's comedy *House Party* in 1990.

### **ETHAN TOBMAN (Production Designer)**

Ethan Tobman is a Production Designer born in Montreal, Canada. Notable TV and features include the Academy Award-winning *Room*, *Free Guy*, "Pam & Tommy", *Beautiful Boy*, *The Report*, and Beyonce's visual albums *Black Is King* and *Lemonade*. In 2021 and 2022, he received Art Directors Guild awards for *Black Is King* and Taylor Swift's "All Too Well", respectively.

Upcoming projects include *Madame Web* for Sony.

Notable music videos and nominations include Beyonce's "Formation" and "Run the World", Kendrick Lamar's "All The Stars", Ariana Grande's "No Tears Left To Cry", and Ok Go's "The Writing's On The Wall", as well as live Grammy and tour performances for Beyonce, Kendrick Lamar, and Taylor Swift.

He has set designed multiple covers for Rolling Stone, Harper's Bazaar, L'Homme Vogue and Entertainment Weekly. While attending NYU, Tobman's short *Remote*, which he wrote, directed and production designed was selected for the Cannes International Film Festival.

### **CHRISTOPHER TELLEFSEN, ACE (Editor)**

Academy Award-nominated film editor Christopher Tellefsen, ACE, began his career in New York's late '80s independent film scene, gaining recognition with Whit Stillman's *Metropolitan*. He also edited Stillman's *Barcelona*, Wayne Wang's *Blue in the Face*, Larry Clark's controversial first film *Kids*, and David O. Russell's comedy *Flirting with Disaster*.

Tellefsen crossed over to his first studio picture with Milos Forman's *The People vs Larry Flynt*. Thriving on a balance between independent and studio films, he next edited Harmony Korine's cult classic *Gummo* before editing Harold Ramis' *Analyze This*. In

London in the late nineties, he edited Jez Butterworth's *Birthday Girl* and *Changing Lanes*, for Roger Michel.

Additional credits include Forman's *Man on the Moon*, Robert Benton's *The Human Stain*, M. Night Shyamalan's *The Village*, *Capote*, *Fair Game*, *The Drop*, *Moneyball*, *Assassins Creed*, and *A Quiet Place*.

Last year he edited *The Many Saints of Newark* with Alan Taylor and David Chase.

Tellefsen is currently working on *Nyad*, a biographical film of the intrepid swimmer, Diana Nyad directed by Chai Vasarhelyi and Jimmy Chin.

### **COLIN STETSON (Music by)**

Colin Stetson was born and raised in Ann Arbor, spent a decade in San Francisco and Brooklyn honing his formidable talents as a horn player, eventually settling in Montreal in 2007. Over the years he has worked extensively, live and in studio, with a wide range of bands and musicians including Tom Waits, Arcade Fire, Bon Iver, TV On The Radio, Feist, Laurie Anderson, Lou Reed, Bill Laswell, Evan Parker, The Chemical Brothers, Animal Collective, Hamid Drake, LCD Soundsystem, The National, Angelique Kidjo, Fink, and David Gilmore. Meanwhile he has developed an utterly unique voice as a soloist, principally on saxophones and clarinets, his intense technical prowess matched by his exhilarating and emotionally gripping skills as a songwriter. Stetson's astounding physical engagement with his instruments (chiefly bass and alto saxophones) produces emotionally rich and polyphonic compositions that transcend expectations of what solo horn playing can sound like. Stemming from that approach and aesthetic, he has been contributing regularly to the world of film, TV, and game scoring over the past decade with such titles as *Hereditary* (2018), *The First* (2018), *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018), *Color Out of Space* (2019), "Barkskins" (2020), *Mayday* (2021), "Among The Stars" (2021), *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2022), and *Uzumaki* (2022).

### **AMY WESTCOTT (Costume Designer)**

Amy Westcott, Costume Designer, designed the critically acclaimed film *Black Swan* (2010) for which she received a BAFTA Award nomination and won the Costume Designers Guild award.

In 2008, Westcott worked with Mickey Rourke on the Oscar nominated film *The Wrestler* directed by Darren Aronofsky, for which she won the Costume Designers Guild award.

Other notable credits include Alan Taylor's *The Many Saints of Newark* (2021), Josh Trank's *Capone* (2020), M. Night Shyamalan's *The Visit* (2015), Dan Gilroy's *Nightcrawler* (2014), M. Night Shyamalan's *After Earth* (2013), Mark Mylod's *What's Your*

*Number?* (2011), Noam Murro's *Smart People* (2008), Noah Baumbach's *The Squid and the Whale* (2005), and many more.

Westcott most recently worked with Tobias Lindholm on *The Good Nurse* starring Jessica Chastain.

## CAST BIOGRAPHIES

### RALPH FIENNES (Chef Slowik)

Ralph Fiennes made his feature film debut as Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* in 1992. His film credits include *Schindler's List*, *The English Patient*, *The Constant Gardener*, *The End of the Affair*, *The Reader*, *Quiz Show*, *Oscar and Lucinda*, *Onegin*, *Spider*, *Sunshine*, *Strange Days*, and *The Hurt Locker*. He played Lord Voldemort in the *Harry Potter* series and the role of M in *Skyfall*, *Spectre*, and *No Time To Die*.

Fiennes most recent film credits include, *The King's Man*, *The Dig*, *Official Secrets*, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *A Bigger Splash*, *Kubo and the Two Strings*, *Hail Caesar!*, and *The Lego Batman Movie*. Forthcoming films include: *The Forgiven*, *The Four Quartets*, and Wes Anderson's *Wonderful World Of Henry Sugar*.

Fiennes made his feature film directorial debut in 2011 with *Coriolanus* in which he also starred in the title role. In 2013 he directed and starred in *The Invisible Woman*. And his film *The White Crow* about Rudolf Nureyev was released in 2019.

His television work includes David Hare's trilogy "Page Eight", "Turks and Caicos", and "Salting the Battlefield". He played T.E Lawrence in *A Dangerous Man: Lawrence After Arabia* and also appeared in "Prime Suspect", and "Rev".

Fiennes' work at the National Theatre includes *Antony and Cleopatra* opposite Sophie Okonedo, for which he received the Evening Standard Best Actor Award, *Man & Superman*, *Oedipus*, *The Talking Cure*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, *Fathers and Sons*, and *Ting Tang Mine*.

His extensive work at the Royal Shakespeare Company includes *Troilus & Cressida*, *King Lear*, *Love's Labour Lost*, *Henry VI in The Plantagenets*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *King John*, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, and Ibsen's *Brand*, which later transferred to the Haymarket Theatre.

For the Almeida he has appeared as Richard III for which he received the Evening Standard Best Actor Award, *Richard II*, *Coriolanus*, *Ivanov*, and *Hamlet* all directed by Jonathan Kent. *Hamlet* was presented at The Hackney Empire and then The Belasco Theater on Broadway where Fiennes received the Tony Award for Best Actor.

Fiennes returned to Broadway in 2006 and received a Tony Nomination for his role in Brian Friel's *The Faith Healer* following a run at The Gate Theatre Dublin. In 2016 Fiennes played Solness in *The Master Builder* directed by Matthew Warchus at the Old Vic theater for which he received the Evening Standard Best Actor Award.

In 2020 Fiennes appeared at The Bridge Theatre in David Hare's *Beat The Devil* and toured the country in 2021 in his production of *The Four Quartets* before a season at The Pinter Theatre in London. Both productions were performed under social distancing

regulations. In 2022 he played Robert Moses in David Hare's new play *Straight Line Crazy* directed by Nicholas Hytner which will open in New York in October 2022.

Fiennes has been the recipient of many significant awards and nominations for his work on film and in the theater. He was nominated for Academy Awards, Golden Globes, and BAFTAs for his roles in both *The English Patient* and *Schindler's List*, winning the BAFTA for Best Actor in a Supporting Role for the latter. He was also nominated for BAFTAs for *The End of an Affair* and *The Constant Gardener*. He was nominated for the BAFTA for Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director, or Producer for *Coriolanus*. Most recently he was nominated for a Golden Globe and a BAFTA for his leading role in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. Fiennes has also been honored with the Variety Award for Film Achievement, The Richard Harris Award by the British Independent Film Awards, and The Empire Film Legend Award.

### **ANYA TAYLOR-JOY (Margot)**

Anya Taylor-Joy burst onto the scene with her performance in A24's *The Witch*, which won her rave reviews when it premiered at the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. In his debut feature, writer/director Robert Eggers tells the story of a pilgrim family that is besieged by a supernatural force. She went on to win the Breakthrough Actor Award at The Gotham Awards and Best Female Newcomer Award at The Empires for her performance.

Taylor-Joy captivated audiences globally in Netflix's critically Emmy award winning series, "The Queen's Gambit". Based on Walter Tevis' 1983 novel of the same name, the show is Netflix's biggest limited scripted series to date and was streamed by a record-setting 62 million households in its first 28 days. For her portrayal of Beth Harmon, she won the Golden Globe, Critics' Choice, and Screen Actors Guild awards and was nominated for an Emmy award.

Alongside Nicole Kidman and Alexander Skarsgård, Taylor-Joy's newest release is *The Northman*. Directed by Robert Eggers, this Viking revenge saga is set in Iceland at the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> century for Focus Features. She's currently in production of David O. Russell's forthcoming feature for New Regency and the titular role in *Furiosa*, a spinoff feature of George Miller's multi-Oscar winning blockbuster *Mad Max: Fury Road*, which is set to premiere in May 2024.

Her extensive filmography includes Edgar Wright's BAFTA nominated *Last Night in Soho*, Autumn de Wilde's *Emma*, for which she was nominated for a Golden Globe, *Split* and *Glass*, the second and final installments in M. Night Shyamalan's *Unbreakable* trilogy, Focus Features' critically acclaimed *Thoroughbreds*, the animated musical adventure comedy film, *Playmobil: The Movie* for StudioCanal, Universal's *Marrowbone*, Fox's *Morgan*, Marvel's *The New Mutants*, and Amazon's *Radioactive*.

On television, Taylor-Joy starred in the BBC/PBS Masterpiece miniseries "The Miniaturist", voiced the character of Brea in Netflix's critically acclaimed fantasy series,

“The Dark Crystal”, and starred in the fifth season of the gangster period epic, “Peaky Blinders”.

## **NICHOLAS HOULT (Tyler)**

Nicholas Hoult has become one of Hollywood’s most sought-after actors. Known for blockbuster films like the *X - Men* franchise as well as for award-winning films like *The Favourite*, his upcoming projects reflect his agility with appearances in international franchises as well as character-driven dramas.

Hoult can currently be seen starring in Hulu and Tony McNamara’s critically acclaimed series “The Great”. Hoult’s performance garnered him an Emmy nomination in the Lead Actor in a Comedy Series category as well as Screen Actors Guild nominations. The show chronicles the rise to power of Catherine the Great (Elle Fanning) and her explosive relationship with husband Peter (Hoult), the emperor of Russia. Season two of the series premiered in November 2021, and season three is currently in production.

Up next, Hoult will portray the titular role in Universal’s *Renfield*, directed by Chris McKay and written by Ryan Ridley. This dark fantasy, horror-comedy tells the story of Renfield (Hoult), a henchman to Count Dracula who leaves his line of work after falling in love. The film is set to release on April 14, 2023, and also features Nicholas Cage and Awkwafina.

Hoult recently launched his production company, Dead Duck Films, with which he has a first look television deal with “The Great” producers, MRC Television, and Civic Center Media. The first project in development under the banner’s deal is “Wildfire Johnny”. The series, which is based on a short story from author Kevin Wilson, chronicles the story of a young man who discovers a discarded straight razor with a note promising whoever possesses this blade will gain access to its magic. Hoult will star and executive produce, with Gianna Sobol writing and executive producing.

In 2021, Hoult appeared in Taylor Sheridan’s drama, *Those Who Wish Me Dead*, alongside Angelina Jolie. The film tells the story of a young murder witness who finds himself pursued by twin assassins in the Montana wilderness. Last year, Hoult appeared in *The True History of Kelly Gang*, based on Peter Carey’s novel about the Australian bush-ranger Ned Kelly and his gang as they flee from authorities during the 1870s. The film, directed by Justin Kurzel, premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival.

In 2020, Hoult starred in “Crossing Swords”, an animated Hulu series created by John Harvatine IV and Tom Root about a “goodhearted peasant” (Hoult) who lands a coveted squire position at the royal castle. The series also features the voices of Luke Evans, Seth Green, and Tony Hale.

In 2019, Hoult starred in Dome Karukoski and Searchlight Pictures’ biopic *Tolkien*, playing famed author J.R.R. Tolkien opposite Lily Collins; and in the Simon Kinberg directed *X-Men: Dark Phoenix* (the 10th installment of *X-Men*), in which he reprised his role of Hank



McCoy/Beast. Previously, Hoult appeared in *X-Men: Apocalypse*, *X-Men: First Class*, and *X-Men: Days of Future Past* alongside an all-star cast including Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence, and James McAvoy.

In 2018, Hoult starred alongside Olivia Colman, Emma Stone, and Rachel Weisz in Searchlight Pictures and Yorgos Lanthimos' Oscar-nominated and BAFTA-winning film, *The Favourite*, written by Tony McNamara.

In 2017, Hoult starred as J.D. Salinger (author of "The Catcher in the Rye") in the Danny Strong directed biopic, *Rebel in the Rye*. Strong directed the film from his own screenplay, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. Hoult starred in a second film at Sundance the same year titled *Newness*. The drama, directed by Drake Doremus, chronicles the story of two millennials (Hoult and Courtney Eaton) in Los Angeles navigating their relationship in a social media-driven hookup culture.

In 2015 Hoult starred as Nux opposite Charlize Theron and Tom Hardy in George Miller's critically acclaimed, and Oscar-nominated film, *Mad Max: Fury Road*. He also starred that year opposite Kristen Stewart in *Equals*, a futuristic love story set in a world where emotions have been eradicated, directed by Drake Doremus.

In 2013, Hoult played the zombie character R in the cult classic *Warm Bodies* in which his character slowly starts to become human again after falling in love with a girlfriend of one of his victims. In 2009, he was seen in Tom Ford's critically acclaimed directorial debut *A Single Man* opposite Colin Firth and Julianne Moore for the Weinstein Company. Hoult made his West End debut the same year in *New Boy* alongside Mel Giedroyc and Ciara Jason. The play, which opened to outstanding reviews and sold-out performances, was adapted and directed by Russell Labey.

Hoult first received critical acclaim at only 11-years-old when he starred opposite Hugh Grant in *About a Boy* as the young Marcus Brewer. He also starred on the acclaimed television series "Skins". Other credits include *Sand Castle*, *Jack the Giant Slayer*, *Young Ones*, *Kill Your Friends*, *Dark Places*, *Collide*, *Clash of the Titans*, *Coming Down the Mountain*, *Kidulthood*, *Wah-Wah*, and *The Weather Man*.

## **HONG CHAU (Elsa)**

Hong Chau is best known for her role in the Paramount film *Downsizing* as Vietnamese amputee and political activist Ngoc Lan Tran. For her performance, she was nominated for Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actress – Motion Picture, the Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role, and several other awards for best-supporting actress. Before *Downsizing*, she appeared in the HBO television series "Treme" and the Warner Bros.' film *Inherent Vice*. She has appeared as a guest star in several TV series, including Netflix's "Bojack Horseman" and HBO's "Big Little Lie", amongst others.

Her performance in *Driveways*, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, earned her a Best Female Lead nomination for the 2020 Film Independent Spirit Awards.

Chau can currently be seen in the HBO series “Watchmen” and the Amazon series “Homecoming”. Up next for her are two A24 films, *The Whale*, opposite Brendan Fraser and *Showing Up* (dir. Kelly Reichardt), opposite Michelle Williams. Hong is kept very busy, as she also recently wrapped on *Asteroid City*.

Chau was born to Vietnamese parents who lived in a refugee camp in Thailand after fleeing Vietnam in the late 1970s. After growing up in New Orleans, Chau majored in film studies at Boston University and pursued an acting career.

### **JANET McTEER (Lillian)**

Considered one of the most respected stage actresses in the U.S and England, Janet McTeer garnered critical acclaim, winning the Laurence Olivier, Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, and the Theatre World Award, for her stunning portrayal of Nora in Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (marking her Broadway debut). At the 2019 Tony Awards McTeer was nominated for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role for her captivating work as Sarah Bernhardt in Theresa Rebeck’s *Bernhardt/Hamlet*, directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel. In 2017 McTeer starred opposite Dominic West in the revival of Christopher Hampton’s *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, directed by Josie Rourke and was nominated for an Olivier Award for Best Actress. For her work in Phyllida Lloyd’s *Mary Stuart*, both in London and on Broadway, she earned a Drama Desk Award, a Tony nomination, and an Olivier nomination for Best Actress. Her prolific theater credits include the Broadway and West End runs of *God of Carnage*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Grace of Mary Traverse* for The Royal Court Theatre, and *Uncle Vanya* for the National Theater (both of which earned her Olivier Award nominations), *About Nothing* in the West End, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* for the RSC.

On the big screen, McTeer received her first Oscar nomination for Best Actress in a Leading Role, and won a Golden Globe Award, in director Gavin O’Connor’s *Tumbleweeds*. She was then nominated for both a Golden Globe and an Academy Award for her starring role opposite Glenn Close in *Albert Nobbs*. Other film credits include director David Leveaux’s *The Exception* starring opposite Christopher Plummer, *Angelica*, *Hannah Arendt*, *Waking the Dead*, *Tideland* written and directed by Terry Gilliam, *The Woman in Black*, director Kenneth Branagh’s *As You Like It*, and director Maggie Greenwald’s *Songcatcher* among others.

On the TV side, McTeer starred in the last two seasons of the award-winning Netflix series “Ozark”, earning her a Critics’ Choice nomination for her role as Helen Pierce, the ruthless cartel lawyer. McTeer was originally attached to star in the Showtime series, “The President is Missing”, created by Anthony Peckham before the pandemic. Other television credits include the BBC “Honorable Woman” miniseries, in which she received a Critics Choice nomination for her work opposite Maggie Gyllenhaal and Stephen Rea,

Facebook's "Sorry For Your Loss", "White Queen" (Starz), where she was nominated for a Golden Globe Award, HBO's "Into the Storm", which garnered her an Emmy and Golden Globe nomination, the miniseries "Parade's End" with Benedict Cumberbatch and the acclaimed FX legal thriller, "Damages".

McTeer was born in Newcastle, England. She attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) and upon graduating she began her acting career on stage by joining the Royal Exchange Theatre. She was awarded Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the 2008 Queen's Birthday Honours List for her services to drama.

### **REED BIRNEY (Richard)**

Reed Birney has been working in film, television, and theater for decades. Among his earliest credits are Albert Innaurato's Broadway comedy *Gemini* in 1974 and Arthur Penn's *Four Friends* in 1981.

A celebrated member of the New York theater community, Birney recently won a Tony Award for *The Humans*. He has received numerous other awards and nominations for plays including *Casa Valentina*, *Man from Nebraska*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Blasted*, and *Circle Mirror Transformation*. On television, he can be seen on the current season of HBO's "Succession" and Hulu's "The Handmaid's Tale", as well as the Apple TV+ series "Home Before Dark". He is also well known for his performance as Vice President Donald Blythe in the Netflix series "House of Cards".

In film, Birney received a Gotham Award nomination this season for his performance in the Bleecker Street feature *Mass* opposite Ann Dowd, Jason Isaacs, and Martha Plimpton. The film also received the Robert Altman award at the Film Independent Spirit Awards, honoring the ensemble cast, director, and casting team. Birney was also recently seen in the Universal/Blumhouse thriller *The Hunt* and Netflix's *The Forty-Year-Old-Version*, and at Sundance in *Lost Girls* and *Strawberry Mansion*.

Birney lives in New York.

### **JUDITH LIGHT (Anne)**

Judith Light is known for her extensive body of work onstage, as well as in television and film. She most recently received a star on the Hollywood walk of fame.

Light recently co-starred in Ryan Murphy's "Impeachment: American Crime Story" on FX and appeared in Lin Manuel Miranda's *tick, tick...Boom!* for Netflix. Her current projects include "Julia", HBO Max's drama series on Julia Childs and Starz' horror comedy "Shining Vale". She also just wrapped production on *The Young Wife* for FilmNation.

Light starred in the anthology series “Manhunt: Deadly Games”, which can currently be found on Netflix, as well as Ryan Murphy’s Netflix series “The Politician”, and in the musical finale of “Transparent”, Amazon Prime’s Golden Globe-winning series, created by Joey Soloway, for which she received a Golden Globe nomination and multiple Emmy and Critics’ Choice nominations. Her role in Ryan Murphy’s “The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story” garnered her an Emmy nomination and Critics Choice nomination.

In 2012 and 2013, Light won two consecutive Tony and Drama Desk awards for her performances in *Other Desert Cities* and *The Assembled Parties*; these two performances made her the first actress in nearly two decades to win consecutive Tony Awards. Light also received the 2019 Isabelle Stevenson Tony Award for her extensive philanthropy work. Light was just awarded the Excellence in Media Award from GLAAD. She is on the Board of Directors of the MCC Theatre in New York.

### **PAUL ADELSTEIN (Ted)**

Paul Adelstein is an actor, writer, producer, and director. He co-created, served as co-showrunner, and acted in and directed episodes of the dark comedy “Imposters”, which ran for 2 seasons. He wrote, produced, and co-starred in the first two seasons of “Girlfriend’s Guide to Divorce”.

As an actor, Adelstein was a series regular on “Private Practice” for six seasons, directing numerous episodes. Other series regular roles include “Prison Break”, “True Story”, “Scandal”, “I Feel Bad”, and “Chance”. Film roles include work with the Coen Brothers and Harold Ramis, as well as the upcoming release *The Greatest Beer Run Ever* directed by Peter Farrelly.

### **ARTURO CASTRO (Soren)**

Arturo Castro can most recently be seen in Joseph Gordon-Levitt’s Apple series “Mr. Corman” produced by A24. Castro will next be seen in the Daniel Radcliffe film *Weird: The Al Yankovich Story* which is premiering at the opening night of the Toronto Film Festival’s Midnight Madness section. Castro can currently be seen playing a role in Antoine Fuqua’s Amazon series “The Terminal List” opposite Chris Pratt, Riley Keough, Taylor Kitsch, and Constance Wu.

Next up, Castro will be playing a role in Doug Liman’s re-make of *Road House* for Amazon/MGM opposite Jake Gyllenhaal and Conor McGregor.

Castro first broke out in the beloved role of Jaime in the Comedy Central series “Broad City” and went on to be writer, executive producer, and star of his comedy sketch series “Alternatino”. He can be seen in “Narcos” season two, where he played the menacing son and tyrant of a Colombian drug lord. Castro’s recent credits include *Flipped* opposite Will

Forte and Kaitlin Olson for Quibi, Disney's CGI/live-action remake of the classic *Lady and the Tramp*, Henry-Alex Rubin's independent feature *Semper Fi* opposite Jai Courtney, Leighton Meester, and Finn Wittrock, and a role opposite Vin Diesel in Ang Lee's *Billy Lynn's Long Half Time Walk*.

### **ROB YANG (Bryce)**

Rob Yang's television and film credits include "Succession" (HBO), "The Resident" (Fox) "The Americans" (FX), "Living With Yourself" (Netflix), "The Now" (Quibi/Roku).

Upcoming credits include BBC's season two of "The Capture", and series regular roles on "American Rust" (Showtime/Amazon Freevee) and the new series "Rabbit Hole" for Paramount+.

### **MARK ST. CYR (Dave)**

Mark St. Cyr starred in seasons one and two of the Disney+ series "High School Musical: The Musical: The Series", where he played the dry and sarcastic STEM teacher Mr. Mazzara. He can also be seen opposite Danny Ramirez in the independent film *Root Letter*, as well as opposite Alicia Witt in the romantic comedy *Modern Persuasion*. Mark is an alum of the ABC Discovers Talent Showcase.

### **JOHN LEGUIZAMO (Movie Star)**

A multi-faceted creator, John Leguizamo has established a career that defies categorization. With boundless energy and creativity, his work in film, theater, television, and literature covers a variety of genres, continually threatening to create a few of its own.

Leguizamo received a Special Tony Award at the 2018 Tony Awards after wrapping an extended Broadway run of *Latin History for Morons*, his latest one-man show, delivering his take on 500 years of Latin History spanning the Aztec and Incan Empires to World War II.

Leguizamo's *Ghetto Klown*, a graphic novel adaptation of his Broadway one-man show of the same name, was nominated for an Eisner award. He also released a comic book, *Freak*, based on his solo show of the same name.

Recently, Leguizamo earned both a Critics' Choice and Emmy Award nomination for his role as Raymond Santana Sr. in the Netflix series "When They See Us", and an Emmy nomination for his role in the Paramount Network television series "Waco" alongside Taylor Kitsch and Michael Shannon. His directorial debut, *Critical Thinking*, was selected to premiere at SXSW Film Festival.

Leguizamo has garnered numerous other accolades throughout his career including an Emmy Award, a Drama Desk Award, as well as nominations for Tony Awards and Golden Globes.

Mr. Leguizamo's film credits include, but are not limited to: *Carlito's Way*, *To Wong Foo: Thanks for Everything Julie Newmar*, *Romeo + Juliet*, *The Pest*, *Moulin Rouge!*, *Summer of Sam*, *The Lincoln Lawyer*, and *The Ice Age* franchise.

Leguizamo currently resides in New York City with his wife and two children.

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