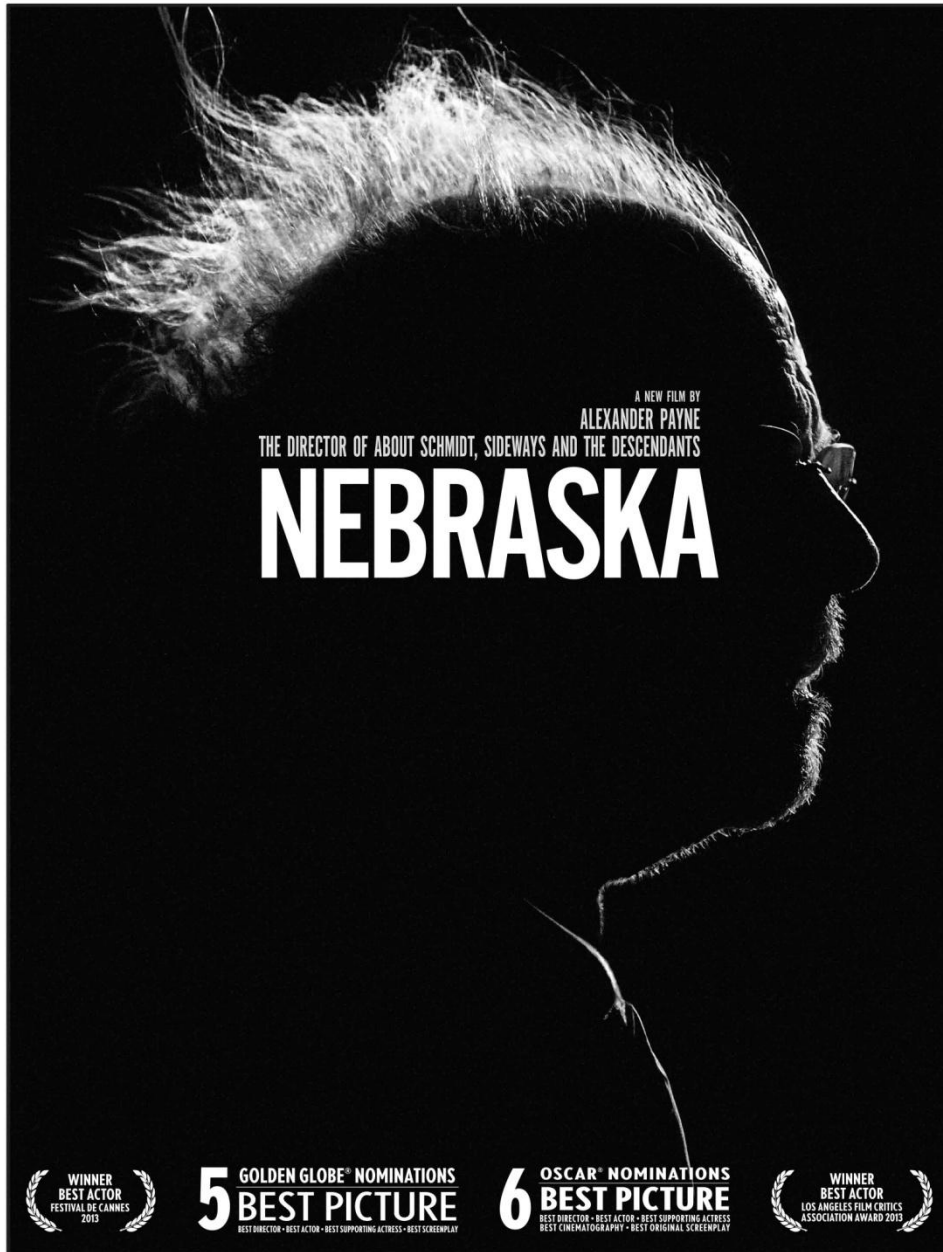


Persmap



PARAMOUNT VANTAGE PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH FILMNATION ENTERTAINMENT, BLUE LAKE MEDIA FUND AND ECHO LAKE ENTERTAINMENT A BONA FIDE PRODUCTION
STARRING
BRUCE DERN • WILL FORTE • JUNE SQUIBB • STACY KEACH • BOB ODENKIRK
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS GEORGE PARRA JULIE M. THOMPSON DOUG MANKOFF NEIL TABATZNIK PRODUCED BY ALBERT BERGER & RON YERXA WRITTEN BY BOB NELSON DIRECTED BY ALEXANDER PAYNE

cinéart

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NEBRASKA

Een Film van Alexander Payne

Na ontvangst van een brief van een neploterij, denkt de knorrige vader Woody Grant dat hij in één klap rijk is geworden. De 'prijs' van één miljoen dollar kan hij ophalen in Lincoln, Nebraska, ruim duizend kilometer van zijn woonplaats. Hij is vastbesloten om zijn fortuin te incasseren - zelfs als het betekent dat hij de afstand te voet moet afleggen. Zijn zoon David voelt zich gedwongen hem te vergezellen. Onderweg stoppen ze in het geboortedorp van Woody, waar familie en oude bekenden al snel hoogte krijgen van hun missie en Woody het gesprek van de dag wordt.

NEBRASKA, de nieuwe film van Alexander Payne (o.a. THE DESCENDANTS, SIDEWAYS en ABOUT SCHMIDT), is een tragikomische roadmovie over familielevens in *America's Heartland*.



Winnaar Beste Acteur (Bruce Dern) - Filmfestival Cannes 2013
Golden Globe nominatie - Beste Regisseur (Alexander Payne) 2013
Golden Globe nominatie - Beste Scenario 2013
Golden Globe nominatie - Beste Film, musical/komedie 2013
Golden Globe nominatie - Beste Acteur, musical/komedie 2013 (Bruce Dern)
Golden Globe nominatie - Beste Vrouwelijke Bijrol, musical/komedie 2013 (June Squibb)

Land: USA – Jaar: 2014 – Genre: Comedy, Drama – Speelduur: 115 min.

Releasedatum: 27 februari 2014

Distributie: Cinéart

Voor meer informatie over de film:

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*Persmap en foto's staan op: www.cinéart.nl
Persrubriek - inlog: [cinéart](http://cinéart.nl) / wachtwoord: *film**

CAST

Woody Grant	BRUCE DERN
David Grant	WILL FORTE
Kate Grant	JUNE SQUIBB
Ross Grant	BOB ODENKIRK
Ed Pegram	STACY KEACH
Aunt Martha	MARY LOUISE WILSON
Uncle Ray	RANCE HOWARD
Bart	TIM DRISCOLL
Cole	DEVIN RATRAY
Peg Nagy	ANGELA MCEWAN
Aunt Betty	GLENDORA STITT
Aunt Flo	ELIZABETH MOORE
Cousin Randy	KEVIN KUNKEL
Uncle Verne	DENNIS MCCOIG
Uncle Albert	RONALD VOSTA
Nöel	MISSY DOTY
Bernie Bowen	JOHN REYNOLDS
ER Doctor	JEFFREY YOSTEN
George Westendorf	NEAL FREUDENBURG
Jean Westendorf	EULA FREUDENBURG
Dale Slaasted	RAY STEVENS
Kathy Slaasted	LOIS NEMEC
Mechanic	FRANCISCO MENDEZ
Mechanic	JOSE MUÑOZ
Bartender	CATHERINE RAE SCHUTZ
Sheriff	TERRY KOTROUS
Sheriff	DENNIS MCCAIVE
Waitress	RACHEL LYNN LEISTER
Receptionist	MELINDA SIMONSEN
Cub Photographer	NOAH MATTEO
Mark	SCOTT GOODMAN
Janice	COLLEEN O'DOHERTY
Karaoke Singer	SHERRY RISTOW
Karaoke Singer	ROGER STUCKWISCH
Uncle Cecil	FRANKLIN DENNIS JONES
Stunt Coördinator	ERIK RONDELL
Stunts	DAN EPPER
	CHUCK HOSACK
	CARRICK O'QUINN
	JAMES PALMER
	CRAIG RONDELL
	ANTHONY SCHMIDT
	TIM SITARZ
Appliance Store Employee	JASON SPEIDEL
Used Car Salesman	BOB KNOLLENBERG
Bar Patrons	ROBERT DACH
	SHERRY FERRIS

Interview with Alexander Payne- director

Nine years after Alexander Payne first fell in love with a story that he describes as a “magic carpet ride” into the rural heartlands of America, *Nebraska* has finally completed its long journey to the big screen.

Payne was first handed Bob Nelson’s screenplay back in 2004 just as he was finishing *Sideways* and that was one of the reasons why, at that time, *Nebraska* went on a back burner.

Sideways was the funny, poignant tale of two eccentric friends, Miles (Paul Giamatti) and Jack (Thomas Haden Church) who embark on a road trip to Santa Barbara’s beautiful wine country to mark the latter’s last days as a bachelor before he returns to Los Angeles where his wedding will take place.

Nebraska is the bittersweet story of an increasingly befuddled father (Bruce Dern) and his son (Will Forte) trekking across state lines to cash in what Woody is convinced is a \$1 million winning lottery ticket. His son, David, knows that it’s just a promotional flyer but to humour him, he agrees to take the trip from their home in Billings, Montana, to the lottery office in Lincoln, Nebraska.

After *Sideways*, which won Payne and co-writer Jim Taylor the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay and was nominated for a further four Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Director, the filmmaker wasn’t quite ready to embark on another road movie and so the script for *Nebraska* sat in the desk in his office waiting for the right moment.

“I was busy doing other stuff and I didn’t want to follow up *Sideways* with another road picture because going back in the car at that point would have been punishing,” he explains.

“So I kept it in the drawer for nine years and these cats, Albert (Berger) and Ron (Yerxa) the producers and Bob (Nelson) the writer were kind enough and patient enough to wait for me.

“I would read it about every two or three years praying that I still wanted to make it and that I hadn’t outgrown it somehow or projected more on to it than wasn’t really there and I found that, no, on the contrary I wanted to make it more and more.

“And then last year when I said, ‘OK let’s do it...’ I did a re-write on it, not a major one, I just kind of bevelled its edges and I was able to infuse it with a bit of personal experience such as taking care of my own ageing folks. That played into it.”

Nebraska premiered at this year’s Cannes Film Festival where Bruce Dern was named Best Actor for his remarkable performance as an ageing man clearly showing increasing signs of dementia. Payne, who the previous year had served on the jury at the prestigious festival, was delighted to take *Nebraska* there for the main competition.

“As a director you say, ‘why don’t we try to go to Cannes?’ and the producers and studio people sometimes say, ‘what if the critics kill you? What if the public doesn’t like it? What if you don’t win an award?’

“And I say to hell with ‘what if?’ Let’s go to Cannes and have a beautiful experience. What if we die the day after? We’ve just been in the South of France seeing a bunch of movies and meeting some cool people and going to some fun parties. It’s great. It’s life. We have to think about our experience of life more than results.”

Payne shot the movie in black and white and *Nebraska* is stark and hauntingly beautiful, with his camera capturing the often bleak landscapes and economically depressed towns.

“Am I making a statement about that? No. Yes, it’s there; it’s present because when you turn on the camera you capture the zeitgeist and you can’t help but do so.

“Even if you fight it, it plays into it. And being in that small town and seeing evidence of decay there – some endemic and some caused by the crisis – it all becomes part of it and it enhances the story and makes me seem brighter and deeper than I really am.”

When father and son stop over in Woody’s former hometown of Hawthorne they meet a colourful succession of relatives and friends who are all convinced – despite David’s protests – that Woody is about to become a millionaire. Along the way, David learns more of his father’s past and the background of his relationship with his mother, the cantankerous Kate (June Squibb).

"The father and son relationship was always there. But I never thought, 'oh I can't wait to make this father-son relationship film..' I always thought, 'that would be a cute little comedy to make a kind of a road trip film. It will be fun to see Billings (Montana)..'

"But then once I dig into it there's that father and son relationship and the mother and the cousins. The big challenge was casting to get those people with some degree of verisimilitude to the real McCoy."

He had previously worked with Bruce Dern's daughter, Laura, in his first feature, *Citizen Ruth* (1996), and they had stayed friends. When he first read the script nine years ago, Dern senior sprang to mind as a potential Woody.

"Really, Bruce leapt to mind even back then and years went by and it came time to pull trigger, and I considered about 30 other guys about the same age to make sure I was doing the right thing and I found I was. And then I cast Mr. Dern.

"And of course all of the time, his daughter Laura was calling me saying, 'cast my Dad! Cast my Dad!' But I was not going to let that influence me, I don't think," he laughs.

Payne had long hoped to make a film in black and white and *Nebraska*, he feels, was the perfect story.

"I thought it would be the right thing to make in black and white. And that's a big thing. It's like getting the casting right. What's the look of the film going to be? And I just thought it lent itself very well to black and white," he explains.

"And yes, it's true, I'd always wanted to make a film in black and white. I'd admired that (Peter) Bogdanovich, Spielberg, Scorsese, Woody Allen had done so and had great success with it – arguably some of their finest work is in that format.

"I'm not the first guy to find inspiration in black and white and I thought it was right for this one."

Payne's other films as a director are *Citizen Ruth* (1996), *Election* (1999), *About Schmidt* (2002), *Sideways* (2004) and *The Descendants* (2011).

Q and A follows:

Q: What's it like bringing a film to the Cannes Film Festival?

A: It's a rush but look, ever since God died in the 19th century we have cinema so why not go to the Notre Dame of cinema, which is what the Palais des Festivals in Cannes is. It's at once big and intimidating but it's also sweet and intimate. And Thierry (Fremaux, Cannes Film Festival director) is delightful and there's Gilles Jacob (president of the Festival) the archbishop. It's the Church of Film and I don't know that it exists like that anywhere else and they take it seriously. And to take something of the heart that seriously is very beautiful. As a director you say, 'why don't we try to go to Cannes?' and the producers and studio people sometimes say, 'what if the critics kill you? What if the public doesn't like it? What if you don't win an award?' And I say to hell with 'what if?' Let's go to Cannes and have a beautiful experience. What if we die the day after? We've just been in the South of France seeing a bunch of movies and meeting some cool people and going to some fun parties. It's great. It's life. We have to think about our experience of life more than results.

Q: Do you take that attitude into making your films?

A: One of the reasons I love making movies is because I love the act of it and I like how it's a magic carpet into people's lives.

Q: How did this magic carpet ride, *Nebraska*, start?

A: This script came to me - it fell out of the sky, about nine years ago. The same producers who had produced *Election* for me previously handed me this script and I thought it would make a fun little movie.

Q: You see it as a little movie?

A: Well, you know it's not a big epic statement, it's a modest little, austere film but it was a nice little magic carpet into rural Nebraska where, as a cosmopolitan Omahan, I'd never really been before so it was fun.

Q: But why the nine-year period before it came to the screen?

A: Well, because I was busy doing other stuff and I didn't want to follow up *Sideways* with another road picture because going back in the car at that point would have been punishing. So I kept it in the drawer for nine years and these cats, Albert (Berger) and Ron (Yerxa) the producers and Bob (Nelson) the writer were kind enough and patient enough to wait for me. I would read it about every two or three years praying that I still wanted to make it and that I hadn't outgrown it somehow or projected more on to it than wasn't really there and I found that, no, on the contrary I wanted to make it more and more. And then last year when I said, 'OK let's do it...' I did a re-write on it, not a major one, I just kind of bevelled its edges and I was able to infuse it with a bit of personal experience such as taking care of my own ageing folks. That played into it.

Q: Did you also change the script to reflect the financial crisis that's happened?

A: Am I making a statement about that? No. Yes, it's there, it's present because when you turn on the camera you capture the zeitgeist and you can't help but do so. Even if you fight it, it plays into it. And being in that small town and seeing evidence of decay there – some endemic and some caused by the crisis – it all becomes part of it and it enhances the story and makes me seem brighter and deeper than I really am.

Q: But what did you like when you first read the script and what did you still like all those years later when you came to make it?

A: I liked that the script suggested a mid-Western early sort of Jim Jarmusch story. There was a feeling of austerity. The script is basically only lines of dialogue with no description, it's very austere. The original script I read was maybe 84 pages and I thought it could be kind of fun.

Q: Was the father-son relationship at the heart of it for you?

A: Yes, the father and son relationship was always there. But I never thought, 'oh I can't wait to make this father-son relationship film..' I always thought, 'that would be a cute little comedy to make a kind of a road trip film. It will be fun to see Billings (Montana)..' but then once I dig into it there's that father and son relationship and the mother and the cousins. The big challenge was casting to get those people with some degree of verisimilitude to the real McCoy.

Q: Did you have Bruce Dern in mind for the role of Woody from the start?

A: Well, Henry Fonda and Walter Brennan were unavailable. And Percy Kilbride – if you remember him – was also unavailable. And this is essentially a glorified *Ma and Pa Kettle* film (laughs). Really, Bruce leapt to mind even back then and years went by and it came time to pull trigger, and I considered about 30 other guys about the same age to make sure I was doing the right thing and I found I was. And then I cast Mr. Dern. And of course all of the time, his daughter Laura was calling me saying, 'cast my Dad! Cast my Dad!' But I was not going to let that influence me, I don't think (laughs).

Q: And you'd worked with June Squibb before in *About Schmidt*. Was she on your mind for this role right from the beginning?

A: Well, Geraldine Page was unavailable. I'm always casting dead people (laughs). I wrote *About Schmidt* for William Holden.

Q: *Nebraska* wasn't written by you, but do you often have actors in mind when you write?

A: Sometimes they are literary characters and it's if I'm writing a play or a novel. But every once in a while it can help you to imagine a certain actor doing it to determine what he or she might say next. And it's a perfectly legitimate direction to tell an actor, 'OK, do it like Victor Mature would do it..' Any window you can get to nudge the process along is a good thing.

Q: Which part of the process do you like most? The writing, the filming or do you prefer it when you get in the editing suite?

A: I like it all but editing is the Promised Land – it's the natural state of man and that's where you can have some modicum of normalcy and life again. You can work bankers' hours and put the film together in a process unique to the cinema, which is montage. And I have a very good relationship with my editor (Kevin Tent) and we have done all of my films together. I also have a wonderful relationship with my casting director (John Jackson), that's a wonderful partnership and we work in a very unique way. But one process I really love is location scouting – being out in the fields.

Q: And you do that yourself? Don't you have a location scout?

A: It's both for me, but I'm there all of the time. I've got scouts going out looking and they will say, 'hey I think I found something, here's a snapshot..' And I'll say, 'OK, let's go.' But I also get involved in cold scouting and knocking on doors. Nothing has changed for me, really, since film school. I have to be there with the raw material. It's all so personal.

Q: Is casting the most important part of the jigsaw?

A: In this type of narrative cinema we're doing it's screenplay and casting. Everything else is super important – framing, coverage, montage, music, it's all important but casting and screenplay are the two things that give you the most problems in the editing room if you have screwed them up. How the screenplay is functioning can screw you up if it's not right and if you have picked the wrong people for the characters then you have to cut around them or do all sorts of other tricks, cut out scenes, and it's just a pain in the ass. I've just been teaching advanced filmmaking at UCLA where I went to school and boy, it was something seeing the work there. I had students who were editing their thesis films and I had other ones who were working on their screenplays and I was constantly able to point to the problems in editing and those farther along, saying, 'you see the problems he is having? You can avoid that now if you fix your screenplay..' And another thing I would say was 'don't start shooting until you have found the right actors..' Too many people, both amateur and professional, rush into production before it's ready. You can't put your roast in before you oven is hot.

Q: Do you have any pressure when it comes to casting?

A: Yes, they are saying to me 'we want a really bankable 76 year old star..' (laughs). Who is there? Gene Hackman won't come out of retirement and he hasn't made a film since 2004. I wrote him a letter to discern his possible interest in the project but you don't hear a peep out of the guy. But no, they left me completely alone. If somehow I had cast a big star in Will Forte's part – if that were Brad Pitt or somebody like that, I would have had more money with which to make the film, the budget wouldn't have been quite as shrink wrapped and the black and white not quite such a discussion.

Q: Was it a discussion?

A: Oh yeah. Mostly the discussion was 'no, we're not doing that..' (laughs). And then it was 'well, I can't see doing it in colour with all respect..'

Q: Why was it such a sticking point for you?

A: I thought it would be the right thing to make in black and white. And that's a big thing. It's like getting the casting right. What's the look of the film going to be? And I just thought it lent itself very well to black and white. And yes, it's true; I'd always wanted to make a film in black and white. I'd admired that (Peter) Bogdanovich, Spielberg, Scorsese, Woody Allen had done so and had great success with it – arguably some of their finest work is in that format. I'm not the first guy to find inspiration in black and white and I thought it was right for this one.

Q: When you watched films as a child a lot of them were in black and white...

A: Yes, we only had a black and white TV and even now I mostly watch old films so most of the films I watch are in black and white.

Q: And what will be next for you?

A: I don't know what my next film is but I do know that I want to do something really different.

Q: Do you go to an office and write?

A: I'm going to start that now. I'm going to sit there and look through my computer files of possible future film ideas and start to tease one out.

Q: Is that how it happened with *Sideways*?

A: *Sideways* fell out of the sky. That was an adaptation and Jim and I wrote that screenplay in about four months. That was a quickie because the book was ready to adapt. But I don't know what the hell I'm going to do next. I've finished this film and I'm going to do some travelling over the summer. I'm going to Bologna to watch old movies at that wonderful festival they have there and then we'll see what comes next.

About the Production

“We are now authorized to pay one million dollars to Mr. Woodrow T. Grant of Billings, Montana.”

-- Notice from Mega Sweepstakes Marketing mailed to Woody Grant

In Alexander Payne’s “Nebraska” a father and son steer the American road comedy into a vanishing Midwest on the trail of a dubious fortune – and in search of an understanding of each other that once seemed impossible.

This is the story of the Grant family of Hawthorne, Nebraska. Now transplanted to Billings, Montana, stubborn, taciturn Woody (Bruce Dern in a role that won Best Actor at the Cannes Film Festival) is well past his prime -- such as it ever was -- and possibly his usefulness, but he believes he’s got one last shot at mattering: a notice that he’s the lucky winner of a million-dollar sweepstakes.

To claim his fortune, Woody insists he must quickly get to the sweepstakes company’s office in Lincoln, Nebraska – a 750-mile journey that seems unlikely given that he can barely shuffle down the road a few blocks, at least not without stopping for a drink. Worried for his father’s state of mind, it falls to Woody’s reluctant, baffled son David (Will Forte) to accompany him on a trip that seems hilariously futile on the surface.

Yet, their odd journey becomes a kind of modern family odyssey. When Woody and David make a pit-stop in their hometown of Hawthorne – with the Grant’s tart-tongued matriarch (June Squibb, “About Schmidt”) and anchor-man son (Bob Odenkirk, “Breaking Bad”) joining them – word of Woody’s fortune makes him, momentarily, a returning hero. Then it brings out the vultures. But it also opens a view into the unseen lives of David’s parents and a past more alive than he ever imagined.

Shot in a black and white Cinemascope that mirrors the dusky beauty of small-town USA and the film’s high contrasts of humor and heartbreak, the film gives comic consideration to questions of family roots and family riddles, delusion and dignity, self-worth and the quiet yearning for a dash of salvation.

Paramount Vantage presents in association with FilmNation Entertainment, Blue Lake Media Fund and Echo Lake Entertainment, a Bona Fide production of “Nebraska,” directed by Alexander Payne from a screenplay written by Bob Nelson. The producers are Albert Berger & Ron Yerxa; and the executive producers are George Parra, Julie M. Thompson, Doug Mankoff and Neil Tabatznik.

THE ACTOR'S DIRECTOR – Alexander Payne

“I never knew the son-of-a-bitch even wanted to be a millionaire.”

-- Kate Grant

Often perceived as an “actor’s director,” Alexander Payne allows his actors to strip their performances down to the rawest, essential elements of comedy, tragedy and humanity. Payne knew that the subtle, emotional story of “Nebraska” would only succeed if driven by risk-taking, naturalistic performances.

“Alexander is someone who says, go ahead, take risks and I’ll catch you,” says Bruce Dern. “He doesn’t want you to act in the conventional sense – he wants all the characters to become real people. He gets to a level where you are pouring out what’s in your heart – and all the emotions and baggage that come with it.”

Payne could also relate to what has become a nearly universal experience in our aging society: watching one’s parents grow older in ways that can be both confounding and revealing. “As someone with two older parents myself, I was able to relate to David. I haven’t been in his exact situation of course, but I know those same emotions,” he says. “One thing I really liked about the story was David’s wish to give his father some dignity. That theme was important and personal to me.”

And then there is the film’s setting in Payne’s home state, which he says just brings him that one step deeper inside the story. “In many ways, this story could be set anywhere in the U.S., but since it takes place in a state I know well, it gave me a chance to bring out a lot of details,” he explains. “I’m from Omaha, which is more of a city than where the Grants are from, though, so the chance to explore rural Nebraska was almost exotic to me.”

There was little doubt in anyone’s mind that Payne would take the story of the Grants and make it inimitably his own. “When you see one of Alexander’s movies, you immediately know it couldn’t have been directed by anybody else,” points out producer Albert Berger. “He has a unique way of revealing human behavior in all its warts and all its glory, and he revels in those moments when people are behaving badly, yet recognizably. All of us see ourselves in these characters.”

That relatability in the characters emerges in part because of the way Payne works with his actors, accompanying them into that still rare territory of dead-true performances.

“He reminds me of Preston Sturges and Frank Capra,” comments Dern. “He wants to examine what human beings do and why they do it. He is fascinated by human behavior and that comes out in the way he directs.”

Co-star Stacy Keach points to two key elements that set Payne outside the mold: “He has tremendous attention to detail and an acute understanding of an actor’s process.” Keach continues, “Having been an actor himself, I think Alexander really understands what actors go through, and also what they are capable of delivering in terms of showing a variety of colors and different emotions all in the same moment. That makes him an inspiration.”

Adds Will Forte: “Working with Alexander was an amazing experience for me. From a technical point of view, everything he does is magnificent. But he also taught me that it’s about more than that. It’s about building an inclusive, family atmosphere and about treating people in a way that gives them a wonderful, exciting environment to work in. The way he works, you can’t imagine why anyone does it any other way. He really helped me to get out of my head playing David.”

Executive producer George Parra (“Silver Linings Playbook,” “Sideways,” “The Descendants”), who has been working with Payne since “Election,” and also served as assistant director on “Nebraska,” says that as impressed as he was watching Payne direct on set, he’s even more awed by how audiences respond to the indelible characters Payne brings to the fore. “People look forward to his films because he has such a grasp on life’s comedy and tragedy. His comedies are dramatic and vice versa,” he summarizes. “There aren’t many directors who can do that in every film.”

JUST BE DERNYSY – Bruce Dern

“Beer’s not drinking.”

-- Woody Grant

“When I first read “Nebraska,” I knew that I had to go after it as hard as I could,” recalls Bruce Dern. The role was unlike any for which he had ever been considered -- and Dern was especially gratified that Payne asked him to leave behind his iconic film persona and explore entirely new directions. “I think it was a lot like when he worked with Nicholson on ‘About Schmidt,’” Dern observes. “For so many years I’ve been told, ‘just be Dernsy, give us that.’ Jack is the same way. Well, he doesn’t want to be Jack in every movie. And I don’t want to be Dernsy, and Alexander has brought something more and demanded that of me. He wanted to see the qualities I could bring within Woody, not the qualities Woody brings to me. I relished the chance to do that.”

“With Woody, I was able to do something I’ve never done before. He’s not an angry rebel or a nasty killer. He doesn’t involve all those Dernsies,” he says referring to all the sly mannerisms of the dark-hearted which he once honed. “He’s a guy who lives like he lives and he isn’t interested in changing. In a way, he’s a monument to a lot of people like him who built America.”

In casting “Nebraska,” Payne was interested in just one thing: authenticity. That’s how Bruce Dern wound up in the role of Woody Grant. It was an especially fitting match for Dern, a man legendary for playing the irreverent and malevolent but now a septuagenarian. His six decades-long career includes a diversity of unforgettable performances and an Academy Award® nomination for “Coming Home” – yet he has never had a leading role anything like Woody. With this role, Dern was able to sink his teeth into an ordinary man’s living, breathing soul – and the result garnered him both joyful analyses from global critics and the coveted Best Actor Award when the film premiered at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival.

From the minute Woody Grant first existed, people started envisioning Dern in the part. “Bruce was actually the first person Alexander mentioned, but then he went through 100 possibilities before he finally determined that indeed, Bruce was absolutely right for the part,” recalls Berger.

Once he was sure, Payne never looked back. He watched as Dern dove into the role with a gusto and originality befitting his experience – yet going beyond that to something both starkly human and transcendent. “It was up to Bruce as an actor how to approach him. He told me he saw Woody as a guy who checks out for about 20 minutes of every hour,” Payne recalls.

For most, Woody’s particular mix of confusion and clarity, disgruntlement and hope, would have been tough to make believable and authentic. Dern, however, found that precarious balance. “It’s an extremely challenging role,” notes producer Ron Yerxa. “Bruce walks a tight-rope between being repressed and emotionally open, between being curmudgeonly and sympathetic, between being comical and true. There are so many ways he could have fallen off the wire, but he never lost a step.”

Dern has always been somewhat of a rule-breaking actor, having come to the fore in an era of counter-cultural anti-heroes. After auspiciously cutting his teeth with two masterful directors – in Elia Kazan’s “Wild River” (1960) and Alfred Hitchcock’s “Marnie” (1964) -- he starred in a series of darkly comic, character-fueled stories that defined a shifting American cinema. He shot John Wayne in “The Cowboys,” played Jack Nicholson’s con man brother in Bob Rafelson’s “King of Marvin Gardens,” became an offbeat space hero in Douglas Trumbull’s environmentalist sci-fi hit “Silent Running,” undertook satire as a beauty pageant sponsor in Michael Ritchie’s “Smile,” and brought the devastating experience of a soldier returning from Vietnam to audiences in Hal Ashby’s “Coming Home.”

He became renown for playing heavies, villains and criminals – recently playing a brutal slave owner in “Django Unchained” -- but he also carved out his own space as a kind of consummate iconoclast.

Still, he was stunned to find perhaps the best, and perhaps the most movingly iconoclastic role he's ever come across at the age of 76.

Dern sees Woody, at bottom, as a man trying to believe he's finally going to be lucky in life.

"Woody's someone who stopped dreaming a long time ago," the actor observes. "But he's determined to finish out his life living it his way. Maybe he's lost a little bit upstairs. But as far as he's concerned, he's really going to get that million dollars. Maybe for the first time in his life, he really wants something, and it just happens to be this."

He also relished exploring fatherhood – albeit a fatherhood as full of flaws, misunderstandings and bewildering behavior as any in real life. "I never really had much of a relationship with my own father," Dern notes, "but by the end of the movie, I felt I found him through Alexander."

For Payne, Dern brought the all the contradictory qualities he sought. "He was able to be ornery but heartbreaking at the same time," he says. "The thing for which I was most grateful to Bruce is that he trusted me, a phenomenal gift to any director. He would try anything. At one point in the car, my only direction was 'please put yourself in a pathetic, crumpled heap,' and he did *exactly* that."

Dern gives a lot of credit to Payne, who he first met when his daughter starred in Payne's debut film, "Citizen Ruth." "I've never been given a role this fabulous in my entire career," Dern says. "I also have never been this blessed with a director. I've worked with several geniuses in my career – Kazan, Hitchcock, Trumbull, Coppola and Tarantino – and Alexander Payne just joined the list. What you need from a director is assurance to take risks and he is all about risk taking, but he also gives you faith that you always have a guide. He lets you go for it, but he's there to support you."

He goes on: "Every single day you go to work for Alexander, you feel you just might do something that's never been done before. A lot of days he captures lightning in a bottle."

Part of the way Payne worked with Dern was simply to create an early bond. "For many, many weeks before shooting started, we hung out together and talked about everything *but* the film, so that by the time we were shooting, everything was just able to flow very naturally," the director says.

Screenwriter Bob Nelson was exhilarated to see the way Dern embodied moments he took from real life, including the scene that turns from wrenching to hilarious when David takes Woody in search of his lost teeth on a desolate train track. "In that scene, Bruce shows there's still a lot going on upstairs with Woody. You aren't sure but then you realize he's still got that spark. You see he still has moments of absolute clarity and part of him is trying to make amends," says Nelson.

His fellow cast and crew members were equally struck by how deeply Dern buried himself beneath Woody's tough old hide.

"Working with Bruce was a pleasure on so many different levels," says Will Forte. "On a professional level, it was like going to acting school each day with a master. I learned so much and I soaked in all these amazing stories about Alfred Hitchcock, John Wayne and Jack Nicholson. On a personal level, he is such a fun, sweet person. At times he's playfully cantankerous, but he's actually a big softie beneath that exterior."

"I think Bruce has created one of the finest comic characters on screen," comments Bob Odenkirk.

"He's extremely entertaining to watch at every moment."

Says Stacy Keach: "Just as Jack Nicholson gave one of his greatest performances for Alexander Payne, I think this is a truly great performance from Bruce."

Sums up Albert Berger: "Bruce really delivered the cherry on top of all the work he's done over the years. He is wonderfully unpredictable as Woody. On the one hand he came to the set fully prepared. On the other hand, he was able in the moment to bring so many different flavors to Woody, Woody at times seems lost, at times he seems angry, at times he seems like an innocent child. Alexander wanted to see all of those aspects of his character and Bruce gave him every color and dimension."

THE GOOD SON – Will Forte

“He doesn’t have Alzheimer’s, he just believes what people tell him.”

-- David Grant

Playing opposite Dern’s Woody is Will Forte as his son, David, who finds himself on a road-trip he’s not entirely sure is such a good idea with a father he’s not entirely sure he can communicate with, let alone get close to. Forte, best known as a cast member of “Saturday Night Live” and as the spoof action star “MacGruber,” reveals an entirely different side of his talent in a role that is as dramatic as it is quietly, darkly funny. A lovelorn stereo salesman, and a man who seems to mostly be spinning his wheels in his own life, David has no idea just how far this trek into his family past will take him. Payne notes that Forte’s audition won him over. “I believed him,” he explains. “Will communicates a ready sincerity and sweetness, and also a sense of damage. And since we were putting together a family, we really felt that Bruce Dern and June Squibb could produce this person.”

Forte knew it was going to be a step outside the box for him, and that excited him. “I’m used to doing crazy comedies and I didn’t even know doing a film like this was in the realm of possibility,” he says. “To work with Alexander Payne, who is such a hero of mine, was a dream come true situation.” He was determined to give it his all. “It wasn’t lost on me that this was an amazing opportunity to do something different. But it’s been a big challenge, too,” he admits. “There are comedy elements in this story, but they’re rooted in real life, and what’s interesting is that Bruce and June have most of the really funny moments. David is actually the straight man.”

On the set, everyone was impressed by Forte’s never-before-seen facility for subtlety, and for moving between the amusing and the touching. “Will is a big, big discovery in this part,” says Berger. “He brings a wonderful every-man presence that invites audiences into the story.”

Part of that comes through a performance that is built on conflicted feelings towards Woody, says Forte. “David is frustrated by his father at the same time that he cares about his father at the same time that he regrets not knowing him that well. He sees this trip as his one chance to take another look at his father.”

To bring all that out, Forte had to carve out a complex relationship with Dern. “It was intimidating,” he admits, “but it was also magical.”

MOMMY DEAREST – June Squibb

“Keith White. He wanted in my pants, too, but was so boring.

See what you could have had, Keith, if you hadn’t talked about wheat all the time?”

-- Kate Grant

“Nebraska” might be a father-son story, but it is a woman who instigates some of the most remarkable moments -- as June Squibb takes on Kate Grant’s razor tongue, wicked sense of humor and impenetrable strength as a wife and mother devoted to her family through thick and thin. Previously, the Illinois native who made her debut in Woody Allen’s “Alice,” played Jack Nicholson’s wife in Payne’s “About Schmidt,” but this was an entirely different type of role. Yet Squibb says she had a handle on it from her first videotaped audition. “I don’t know if it was a shock or a surprise to Alexander, but I knew who this woman was and I think he got that from the tape I made,” she says. “She doesn’t just say these things, she means them. There’s no pretention at all about her.” Squibb found great joy in Kate’s unapologetic bluntness. “There’s no filter with her,” she muses. “Words come out of her mouth as she’s thinking them. She has very definite ideas about who she is and who her husband is and who her sons are, and that is just who she is. But I love her dearly. She’s funny, yet she also protects the family and she’s quite a formidable person.”

Kate is also more than she might appear, especially to her son David, who discovers a whole unsettlingly lusty side of his mother’s youth in Nebraska in the course of his trip. Revealing that part of the character was key to Squibb’s multi-layered performance.

“Kate and Woody went to a small-town high school, where she was probably a pretty sexy young woman,” comments Squibb. “I kept thinking of the wiles she must have used to get Woody, and I’m sure sex was part of it. Of course she was also Catholic, but she used her wiles to say ‘no more hanky-panky until I get a ring,’ and in her mind, all the boys wanted her. It’s the way she sees herself.” On the set, that portrait of a woman who tells it like it is, no matter how inappropriate, became honed in Squibb’s close collaboration with Payne. “He and I have a relationship that is like dancing, because he let me move in a way that seemed right to who this woman is – and then he started tweaking that and giving me ideas to incorporate. I remember him doing this same thing with me in ‘Schmidt,’ but this time there was much more. We were working like that constantly and it was very exciting.”

The results excited the entire team. “June dove into the center of this feisty, irrepressible, uncensored mother who is full of desire and fiery opinions and she was something,” concludes Yerxa

THE FAVORITE – Bob Odenkirk

***“A home would be in his best interest –
which, let’s face it is more than he ever thought about with us.”***

-- Ross Grant

If David seems to be following in his dad’s footsteps, his brother Ross, is the family celebrity – a news anchor seen daily on television. Taking the role is Bob Odenkirk, the actor, writer and director known for his iconic role as “criminal lawyer” Saul Goodman on the acclaimed “Breaking Bad.”

Odenkirk was intrigued by the contrasts between the two brothers. “David’s more of an aimless, kind-hearted fellow compared to my hard-charging, modern type of guy,” he explains. “My character is a newscaster, so I’m on the go, I’m making it. I’m getting places and I’m on TV. Ross is a little more egotistical and he’s angrier towards his parents and more judgmental of Woody as an alcoholic. And yet, I think this adventure we all go on brings the whole family closer. Along the way, people soften towards each other and open up a bit. It’s a human comedy, but with a lot of tenderness.”

He was thrilled to work with his cast mates. “It was a crazy gift to be a part of this movie,” he says. “I love all these people and they are each great for their characters. Forte is a friend, so it was a lot of fun to be brothers. Bruce Dern as a dad is the greatest crotchety, hard-driving, irascible, crusty old guy you could be ever entertained by. And June Squibb who is such a sweet lady, plays a wife who is justifiably peeved at putting up with Woody for years, and she plays it to the hilt.”

Something different for Odenkirk was the rhythm Payne brought to “Nebraska,” full of wide-open spaces and subtle moments where people change by moving just an inch or two towards each other. “My character on ‘Breaking Bad’ has loads of dialogue, so this was a whole different beast,” he explains. “Many scenes in ‘Nebraska’ have very little dialogue. Alexander really pushed us to sensitize ourselves to all the communication that takes place just through glances and wordless moments.”

THE VETERAN– Stacey Keach

“I’m a man with a real strong sense of right and wrong.

And if Woody hit it rich, and I don’t see any of it, that’s wrong.”

-- Ed Pegram

When Woody arrives back home in Nebraska it isn’t long before he leaks the secret of his supposed fortune – and it isn’t long before some of his old friends, enemies and acquaintances try to cash in. The man most determined to share in Woody’s dream, one way or another, is his long-ago business partner, Ed Pegram, played by screen and stage veteran Stacy Keach, who first came to the fore in John Huston’s 1972 classic “Fat City” and has recently been seen in “The Bourne Legacy.”

Keach also happens to have long-ago friendship with Bruce Dern (the two starred together, along with Robert Mitchum, in the 1982 sports drama “That Championship Season”), which made his playing Pegram a fortuitous choice. “The casting couldn’t have been better in that respect, because I hadn’t seen Bruce in almost 30 years, just as Ed hasn’t seen Woody in almost 40,” he notes.

As with his cast-mates, the story pulled Keach in. “What Alexander captures in ‘Nebraska’ is a slice of Americana that we haven’t seen before. It’s a story that reflects a lot about what America is in the heartland and in the heart,” he observes.

While his character brings moment of comic relief, as well as tension, to the film, Keach makes little distinction between comedy and drama. “I’ve been teaching a course by Skype at George Mason University and I’m always telling my students: ‘if you’re doing comedy don’t try to be funny, just try to be real. The comedy will take care of itself.’ That’s reality,” he says.

In one sequence, Ed Pegram sings an unlikely Karaoke version of “In The Ghetto,” the 1969 Mac Davis song about inner-city poverty that became a hit for Elvis Presley, in a Nebraska restaurant. Though the effect is dryly comic, Pegram, who has never left the town where he grew up, is dead serious. “I really felt that Ed relates to that song,” comments Keach, who is also an accomplished composer. “Not that Ed grew up in the ghetto, of course, but I think he identifies with victims in a strange way. I’ve never sung in a movie seriously. I’m an actor who can carry a tune kind of, but I think that’s just about enough for Ed. I felt it was his idea of a cross between Elvis and Johnny Cash.”

Moments like these give the character a depth that gives his aggressive fortune-seeking a humanity.

“Alexander wanted somebody in the role of Ed Pegram who could be intimidating, yet also open up an avenue of sympathy towards the character,” says Berger. “On the face of it, Ed’s a bully, but Stacy found a way to embrace all of Ed and create a very complex performance.”

Other standouts in the ensemble include Tim Driscoll and Devin Ratray as Woody’s trouble-prone nephews; and Angela McEwan as the newspaper editor who once carried a torch for Woody. Several smaller roles, including Aunt Betty and Uncle Cecil, were cast locally with non-actors.

Much of the cast doesn’t say much but it’s how they say so little that becomes humorous, human, or both. “There aren’t many filmmakers who do as much comedically with silence as Alexander,”

observes Yerxa. “The humor comes in part from the audience filling in what’s going on in the characters’ minds. Often, Alexander’s philosophical ideas are so deeply entwined in the characters and the absurd situations; they just flow into the story. A great example is the scene where David’s uncles are talking about an old Buick and Uncle Ray says ‘Those cars’ll run forever. Whatever happened to it?’ and Uncle Verne says ‘Stopped running,’ and Uncle Ray replies, ‘They’ll do that.’ It’s a very funny scene but it gets to the idea that you have to accept reality one way or another.”

Berger notes that no matter how large or small a character’s presence in the film, Payne is 100% focused on actors as individuals. “One of the great pleasures of the film was watching Alexander with the actors,” he says. “I think of David standing at the Woody’s hospital bedside – and Alexander’s note to Will was, ‘look at this man, stare down on him as an albatross that’s been around our neck for the last 35 years.’ The kind of humor and humanity he is able to express with the actors is a real treat.”

ABOUT THE CAST

BRUCE DERN'S (Woody Grant) tremendous career is made up of playing both modern day heroes and legendary villains. Through decades of critically acclaimed performances, Bruce has acquired the reputation of being one of the most talented and prolific actors of his generation. A celebrated stage actor, Bruce was trained by famed director Elia Kazan at The Actor's Studio and made his film debut in Kazan's "Wild River" (1960). In the 1960's, Bruce also found success as a distinguished television actor. He appeared regularly in contemporary Western TV-series as well as Alfred Hitchcock's television series. Hitchcock was such a fan of Bruce, he cast him in both "Marnie" and, "Family Plot" (Hitchcock's final film).

During the 1960's, Bruce went on to work with director Roger Corman and appeared in several of his classic and decade defining films including "Wild Angels." He received critical success for films such as "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?" and "Drive, He Said" and went down in history for his role as Long Hair in "The Cowboys" in which he became the first man ever to kill John Wayne.

Bruce went on to star in such classic films like "The King of Marvin Gardens" with Jack Nicholson and Ellen Burstyn as well as playing Tom Buchanan in "The Great Gatsby" (for which he received a Golden Globe nomination). It was his brilliant and powerful performance in Hal Ashby's "Coming Home" that earned him both an Academy Award® and Golden Globe nomination.

Bruce co-starred with Charlize Theron in "Monster", one of the most critically acclaimed independent films of all time, and he can also be seen on the HBO series "Big Love." Most recently Bruce has worked with iconic directors Francis Ford Coppola in "Twixt" and Quentin Tarantino in "Django Unchained."

Other credits include: "Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte" with Bette Davis, Douglas Trumbull's "Silent Running," Michael Ritchie's "Smile," "Middle Age Crazy" with Anne Margaret, Jason Miller's "That Championship Season," "Tattoo" with Maude Adams, "The 'Burbs" with Tom Hanks, "The Haunting" with Catherine Zeta Jones, Billy Bob Thornton's "All The Pretty Horses," Bob Dylan's "Masked and Anonymous," "Down in the Valley" with Edward Norton, "Astronaut Farmer" with Billy Bob Thornton and "The Cake Eaters" with Kristin Stewart. His other outstanding films include the much heralded "After Dark My Sweet," "Harry Tracy," "On the Edge," "Laughing Policeman," "Posse," the great John Frankenheimer's "Black Sunday" and Walter Hill's "The Driver."

WILL FORTE (David Grant) has established himself as one of the most versatile actors in film and television. He spent eight seasons making audiences laugh on "Saturday Night Live" and has been extremely busy with projects in film and television ever since he wrapped his final season in 2010. In addition to "Nebraska," also stars in "Run and Jump" which debuted at this year's Tribeca Film Festival, and he has completed filming a role in an untitled Elmore Leonard film, which he will star in opposite of Jennifer Aniston, Isla Fisher and Tim Robbins. In addition, he will appear in "Grown Ups 2" and will voice a character in "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2."

Last summer Forte was seen in a trio of studio films, including "That's My Boy" opposite Adam Sandler and Andy Samberg, "Rock of Ages," as well as "The Watch" opposite Ben Stiller, Jonah Hill and Vince Vaughn. Forte was previously seen in Universal's feature film adaptation of "MacGruber." In addition to starring in the lead role, he co-wrote the script with Jorma Taccone and John Solomon. Additionally, he was seen in "A Good Old Fashioned Orgy" opposite former "SNL" co-star Jason Sudeikis, "Tim and Eric's Billion Dollar Movie," "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men" written and directed by John Krasinski and lending his voice to Sony's hit animated film, "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs." Forte wrote and starred in the feature "The Brothers Solomon," opposite Will Arnett and "SNL" cast mate Kristen Wiig.

Forte also has had very memorable guest starring roles on the hit comedies "How I Met Your Mother," NBC's award-winning "30 Rock," "Parks and Recreation," "Up All Night," "Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!" and on HBO's "Flight of the Conchords." He is also a frequent guest on

"Conan," portraying a crazed Ted Turner. Additionally, he has lent his voice to a handful of animated series including Fox's "Allen Gregory," "The Cleveland Show" from creator Seth McFarlane and "Sit Down, Shut Up" from creator Mitch Hurwitz, as well as MTV's "Clone High."

Forte came to "SNL" from L.A.'s improv-sketch theater "The Groundlings" where "SNL" alum Will Ferrell, Phil Hartman and Maya Rudolph got their respective starts. Forte has a great deal of experience behind the camera - serving as producer on "That 70's Show" and as story editor for "3rd Rock from the Sun" and "Action," as well as working as a writer for "Late Show with David Letterman" and the MTV Movie Awards.

JUNE SQUIBB (Kate Grant) has appeared in "About Schmidt" as Jack Nicholson's wife, Helen, and "Welcome to Mooseport" with Ray Romano and Gene Hackman. Other films include "In and Out," "Scent of a Woman" and "Far From Heaven." Independent films include "Atlas Shrugged, Part I," "Just Add Water," "The Man Who Shook The Hand" and "Would You Rather."

Her television appearances include recurring roles in "Ghost Whisperer," "The Young and the Restless," "Judging Amy" and "The Bill Engvall Show." Guest star appearances include "Cold Case," "Castle," "The Middle," "Two and a Half Men," "Curb Your Enthusiasm" and "House."

On Broadway June was Electra, the electrifying stripper, in "Gypsy" with Ethel Merman. Other Broadway shows include "Happy Time," "Gorey Stories" and "Sacrilege." She is a regional theatre stalwart having worked through the years in such venues as Baltimore Center Stage, Philadelphia's Wilma Theatre, Buffalo Studio Arena and Dallas Theatre Center where she most recently played the role of Stella, matriarch of the family, in Horton Foote's "Dividing The Estate."

BOB ODENKIRK (Ross Grant) is an American actor, comedian, writer, director and producer. He is best known for his award winning appearances in Breaking Bad and The Larry Sanders Show and as co-creator and co-star of the HBO sketch comedy series Mr. Show with Bob and David.

In the 1980s and 1990s, he worked as a writer for such notable shows as Saturday Night Live, Get A Life, The Ben Stiller Show, and The Dennis Miller Show. In the mid-1990s, Odenkirk and David Cross created the Emmy-winning sketch comedy program Mr. Show, which ran for four seasons and ultimately became a cult success. In the early 2000s, Odenkirk discovered Tim Heidecker and Eric Wareheim and produced their television series Tom Goes to the Mayor and Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!. He has directed three films: 2003's Melvin Goes to Dinner, which won the Audience Award at the SXSW Film and Music Festival, 2006's Let's Go to Prison, and 2007's The Brothers Solomon.

Most recently, Bob shot a significant supporting role opposite Will Forte and Bruce Dern in Alexander Payne's next movie Nebraska at Paramount, which premiered at Cannes.

STACY KEACH (Ed Pegrum) has played to grand success in classic and contemporary theater's greatest roles, and he is considered a pre-eminent American interpreter of Shakespeare. His SRO run as King Lear at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, D.C., received the rave reviews. Keach has accepted three Helen Hayes Awards for leading actor. Last fall, he and Stockard Channing took their critically acclaimed roles in the Jon Robin Baitz play "Other Desert Cities" to the Booth Theater on Broadway. Keach received an Outer Critics Circle nomination for his performance in the Lincoln Center presentation. He also won the 2011 Audie Award for best original work for the Mike Hammer radio novel "The Little Death," in which he reprises his role as Mike Hammer and also composed the musical score.

This life of acclaimed accomplishment in theatre, film, television and spoken-word recordings and the artist's dramatic personal story are the compelling subject of "All in All: An Actor's Life On and Off the Stage," Keach's memoir will be published by Lyons Press a division of Globepequot on October 15, 2013.

Perhaps best known around the world for his portrayal of hard-boiled detective Mike Hammer, Keach is also known for his portrayal of Ken Titus in the Fox sitcom "Titus," Warden Henry Pope in the hit series "Prison Break" and Robert "Pops" Leary in the FX series "Lights Out." Keach was seen

on the CBS hit show "Two and a Half Men." In 2012, he appeared in the HBO hit comedy series "Bored to Death."

This year includes key film and television roles, including "Nebraska," directed by Academy Award® winner Alexander Payne and starring Bruce Dern and Will Forte (Christmas 2013). He also has a starring voice role in the Disney animated feature, "Planes." Keach undertakes a crucial role in Frank Miller's "Sin City: A Dame to Kill For," directed by Robert Rodriguez and Miller (August 2014). He's also made recent guest appearances on "30 Rock," "1600 Penn," "The Neighbors" and "Anger Management," and continues to be the voice of CNBC's "American Greed," now in its seventh season. His original song "Anything for Money" is featured on the show.

Keach began his professional career with the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1964, doubling as Marcellus and the Player King in "Hamlet," directed by Joseph Papp with Julie Harris as Ophelia. Keach rose to prominence in 1967 in the off-Broadway political satire "MacBird," for which he received the first of his three Obie awards. He played the title roles in "Henry 5," "Hamlet" (three times), "Coriolanus," "Richard 3," "Macbeth" and "King Lear" in Robert Falls' modern adaptation at Chicago's Goodman Theatre. In 2014, Keach will return to the Shakespeare Theater in Washington, D.C., as Falstaff in both parts of "Henry IV," directed by Michael Kahn

Keach was a Fulbright scholar to the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, attended the University of California at Berkeley and the Yale Drama School. He was recently appointed Heritage Professor by George Mason University, where he taught acting via Skype.

Keach has been married to actress, singer, Yoga instructor Malgosia for 27 years. They have two children, son Shannon, 25, a graduate student at NYU, and daughter Karolina, 23, currently studying at Pepperdine University.

A STORY YEARS IN THE MAKING– Pre Production

“Am I the only sane one in this family?”

-- Kate Grant

Perhaps fittingly, “Nebraska” first began with a real Midwesterner’s attempt to push his boundaries. The Illinois-based sketch comedy writer Bob Nelson decided to try his hand at writing something closer to the bone. What he lacked in experience, he made up for with years of watching and observing the kind of characters he wanted to write about: the amusingly reticent, unpretentious Midwesterners who might work their whole lives, go to war, raise children and have their own private struggles without ever telling their stories, not even to their own kids.

“I just wanted to write a story about real people,” Nelson says. “I like stories that have that real human quality and I wanted to write something about the joy of living and the sadness that goes with it. I also wanted to write something that might move people because I’ve spent ten years writing comedy. Mostly, I wanted the people in this film to seem so real that you get totally immersed in their lives.”

The truthfulness of Nelson’s script for “Nebraska” emerged out of his own family experiences. “I raided family stories to set up the structure of the story and then I invented around that,” he explains.

Another inspiration for Nelson came from true tales of senior citizens showing up at publisher clearinghouses ready to claim their sham winnings. “That’s what started me wondering what would happen if your old dad was the guy insisting that he won,” the writer recalls. “What would you do? I thought a certain kind of son might take him anyway, and that’s what started this whole journey.” But what starts out as quixotic quest for a million dollars becomes even more so a search for something more important to father and son – something akin to unspoken forgiveness. “David wants to look at his dad as a good man, even though he has his problems,” says Nelson. “And deep inside Woody, he wants to set things right with his family, even if he has no clue about how to do that.”

The potent blend of humor and human need in Nelson’s screenplay quickly attracted the attention of executive producer Julie M. Thompson, with whom he had worked on a PBS project. “I laughed so much and it was so heartfelt to me,” Thompson recalls of the script. “Coming from the Midwest myself I totally bought into these characters.”

Thompson was so taken with it, she in turn handed it to producers Albert Berger and Ron Yerxa, renowned for bring to the fore a string of influential comedy-dramas, including Payne’s “Election,” Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris’ “Little Miss Sunshine” and Todd Field’s “Little Children.” Given the script’s title, Berger and Yerxa immediately thought of Payne, and they sent it to him almost a decade ago, not long after they had all completed “Election.”

“It was such a beautiful story, told with wit and insight, that we immediately thought of Alexander,” recalls Berger. “We had just worked with him on ‘Election’ and it was a very successful relationship. At the time, we thought Alexander might mentor another director on it. He read it very quickly, called us back and said he had a director in mind and we said, ‘Who?’ He said, ‘Well, me.’ Ron and I were delighted. We couldn’t think of a better choice. The only twist was that he had just made ‘About Schmidt’ and he was about to start on ‘Sideways.’”

The producers were happy to give Payne the room to make the film when he was ready.

“Alexander’s films are very distinctive,” notes Yerxa. “They are always filled with big ideas, yet he embeds those ideas in a humorous, surprising narrative, so that just as you’re fully enjoying the entertainment, he hits you with something fresh about life. ‘Nebraska’ gave him that kind of material to work with. It’s about a situation in life most of us face when our parents are getting older. It’s about a son trying to make an emotional connection with someone who seems to be

completely closed off – and his discovery that there’s something generous and dignified deep inside his father. How a family comes to finally express their love for one another is a really attractive theme, both for us and for Alexander.”

Thompson was thrilled. “I knew that Ron and Albert, two producers especially adept at character driven stories, would really understand this material and bring it to life. We had the right producers, the right director and we just had to wait for the right time.”

There would indeed be a bit of a wait, but Payne’s love of the story never left his mind, and in the wake of his success with “The Descendants,” the recipient of five Academy Award® nominations, he returned at last to tackle it. Payne always liked that “Nebraska” was a grown-up, unsentimental story, but now it was even timelier.

“I received this beautiful screenplay 9 years ago, and what appealed to me then was that it was humorous and melancholy, like life. I also liked that the writer really lived what happens in this story, so it feels personal,” says Payne. “By the time we made it, all these other things were happening in our society, and it came to feel like modern Depression-era story. But I think any film takes on the time in which it is made. The winds of the period blow through it, whether consciously or unconsciously.”

THE HEARTLAND – Location

“My dad built all of this.”

--Woody Grant

For Alexander Payne, “Nebraska” is a kind of home-coming to the Midwestern setting of his first three films – “Citizen Ruth,” “Election” and “About Schmidt” -- which established his deadpan-funny vision of Americana, before he took journeys to California and Hawaii in the equally acclaimed “Sideways” and “The Descendants.”

Yet, this is a homecoming to a place that has been changing. It’s a place that has unwound into strings of fading towns that might not have much in the way of 21st Century economic prospects, but still nurture a way life that once defined the country as we knew it. It’s also a place that highlights the dilemmas of Woody and David Grant, a father and son who aren’t quite sure what to make of one another’s futures.

Payne chose the locations for “Nebraska” with a meticulousness that is part and parcel of his style. Indeed, his unending quest for naturalistic settings often becomes one of the main challenges of his productions. Notes Berger: “Alexander casts locations just as carefully as he casts the actors.”

Given that the film would be black and white, tone was an essential consideration for both locations and costumes. It was a new experience for everyone. “I’ve never designed for black and white before, but we drew what we could from classic, old movies,” notes production designer Dennis Washington, whose films include “The Fugitive,” “Prizzi’s Honor,” and “Stand By Me.” “We had to kind of relearn tactics used in the past – and then we coupled those with new digital tactics.”

That education began as soon as Washington joined the film. “When we were scouting, I started taking pictures in color and transferring them to black and white, so I could see the changes. You might think it’s obvious what’s going to change but it’s not. Your focus goes to one thing in color, but in black and white, suddenly it is elsewhere. So I began to understand all that. Later, everything we learned helped us to focus subtlety where it should be, to work with the lighting, and to know when and how we could bring the contrast up to get that gorgeous quality of black and white photography.”

Plainview, Nebraska – a town that echoes its humble, straightforward name – stood in for Hawthorne. “We wanted a town that could give you a feeling for where Woody came from, the kind of town that hasn’t changed all that much. Plainview is a vibrant little town – it’s not necessarily like the town in the script – but it has some of that feeling of being set in its own time,” says Washington. He goes on: “Hawthorne is meant to be a place that is not too cute. It hasn’t been gentrified. You see a mix of the new and old, but you get the feeling that this town just hasn’t moved that much. It’s surviving, and so are the people. All the work we did on the town was very subtle.”

For the sake of filming, many street signs were changed from Plainview to Hawthorne, which did have its consequences. “I understand there was a Fed-ex driver looking for a Plainview address and all he could find was Hawthorne, so he was desperately lost in the middle of town,” laughs Washington.

This was Washington’s first time working with Payne, an experience he savored. “I don’t know if I’ve ever spent as much time with the director scouting locations, and talking about theory and the story,” he elucidates. “Alexander told me at the start, ‘I’m very particular with locations’ and he puts his money where his mouth is. He was out there with us going to strangers’ doors and saying, ‘You don’t know us, but we’d like to look at your house.’ He always has something very specific in mind, but he is always open to opportunity. You will be in the car with him and he’ll suddenly stop and say ‘Look at that sign. We’ve got to have that sign.’ All of that enriches the story in every moment.”

For costume designer Wendy Chuck, who has worked with Payne since “Election,” “Nebraska” was a true study in subtlety – as she worked meticulously to allow the characters to seem the very opposite

of meticulous, to be as casual, natural and real as anyone you'd meet on a Midwestern street. For Bruce Dern's Woody, she took a bottom-up approach. "It started with finding the right shoes," she explains. "He does all this walking in the cold. So I started with what I took to be 'old man' comfortable shoes. Then, I decided to keep him in the same jeans the entire movie. You think 'oh just jeans' but we wanted just those kinds of pants that maybe you bought too long and eventually they start to fray at the bottom. We put some real age and patina on his pants."

Similarly Chuck's team put Woody's plaid shirts through a cement mixer and soaked them with lemon to fade them out into something as worn out as he is. The shirts are topped off with the jacket that takes Woody through the whole movie. "We got lucky, finding the perfect jacket in the Salvation Army in Norfolk, Nebraska, which is as local as you can get," says Chuck. "It had all the right texture, all the age and it gives Bruce just the right shape for his performance. It gives him a layered look – and I feel like part of who this man is is having a lot of layers. So that's what you see in Woody."

David starts out in contemporary men's casuals but as the film's goes on, he ultimately echoes his father's plaids and jeans. "We see them coming a little closer together," Chuck observes. "David has many of the same kinds of items as Woody but in slightly different versions."

Though she might have been working with such everyday items as June Squibb's easy-going button-downs or Stacy Keach's trucker hats, Chuck had the sense she was creating a luminous portrait of everyday life. "From the first week on this film, I was on a high because I felt like I was contributing to what I consider to be a work of art," she says. "It's so very exciting to wake up every day and feel passionate about what you do, to be excited to go to the set, to see people that you love, to collaborate with them and every night, to want more of that experience. To be hungry for more, that's a gift."

On the heels of principal photography, Payne and his longtime editor Kevin Tent, who has cut all his films, began to weave the narrative into its final form. The final touches included a score by Mark Orton, the composer and multi-instrumentalist known as a member of the genre-defying chamber group the Tin Hat Trio.

"Alexander started off using a temp track by Tin Hat Trio, but he fell so in love with the music, he brought Mark in to do more," explains Berger. "Mark's music has a haunting, soulful quality that is very cinematic. The score he gave us really fits the landscape and the quality of the characters – there's that same mix of humor and depth to it."

That same combo of the funny and finely-observed imbues the whole film, but the filmmaking remains understated to the point that the audience is invited to bring their own experiences into the mix.

"I think for many people there's a road trip with a parent, or a moment with a parent, that you always wanted to have happen," concludes Yerxa. "Maybe it never did happen, but it's always there in your mind. 'Nebraska' takes that journey."

THE NEW BLACK, AND WHITE – Cinematography

“It took you two days to drive 750 miles? What are you, driving a dump truck or something?”

-- Cole

One of the first decisions Alexander Payne took in making “Nebraska” was to shoot the film in black and white. He knew it would be a risk, but it was central to his vision of the story. “Visual style was my window into the picture,” he notes. “Black and white just felt like the right choice for this film, because that’s always how I read it and saw it,” explains Payne. “I’ve also always wanted to make a film in black and white. It’s such a beautiful format. And this modest, austere story lends itself to a visual style as stark, plain and direct as the lives of the people in the film.”

Everyone involved in the film was intrigued by the idea, despite the uncertainty that surrounds black and white as a medium in today’s film world. Says Berger: “Alexander has always been interested in an authentic look, but black and white gives this story something iconic. He and DP Phedon Papamichael use black and white and Cinemascope to really add to the storytelling. At times, I was put in mind of John Ford’s work or Peter Bogdanovich’s Last Picture Show – it’s a film that fits into that kind of American tradition of visual storytelling. And Phedon is such an amazing DP that it was exciting to give him this chance to really stretch his talent.”

Yerxa adds, “Phedon really has an ability to find beauty in the mundane. I think the look of the film has the quality of taking you into the Midwest America in your mind. It allows you to consider what goes into our quintessential idea of Americana in an inviting and atmospheric way.”

If anything the black and white focused the filmmaking even more. “Every frame was meticulously planned to create this black and white world,” noes George Parra. “Alexander and Phedon are into pure filmmaking. There aren’t a lot of crane shots or steady cams, so it’s a very Billy Wilder kind of storytelling.”

The actors were equally on board. “This film is perfect for black and white because it allows you to focus on human behavior,” observes Stacy Keach. “There are no distractions.”

Papamichael, who also shot “Sideways” and “The Descendants” with Payne, says that Payne talked about black and white from moment one. “That’s how he saw it in his head,” he says, “so even though there was a series of struggles about how to make it happen, that was always the plan.”

The specifics of tone and texture emerged from a series of tests. “We did lots and lots of testing,” Papamichael recalls, “to find the particular look of black and white that was right for the film.

There’s nothing stylized about it, though. It’s a high-contrast look that supports the human comedy and really sets that mood.” Papamichael notes that they all wanted to make the most of the opportunity creatively. “We definitely knew this might be the only time in our lives we’d have a chance to make a black and white film, which I think is a dream of a lot of filmmakers, so we really enjoyed it. At the end, there was the feeling of ‘how can we ever go back to making color films again?’ It’s like a whole new reality.”

To fully explore that reality, he and Payne perused film noirs, Italian Neo-Realism and contemporary American film such as “The Last Picture Show” (notably, Papamichael’s father shot the sequel to “The Last Picture Show,” “Texasville”), but the biggest driving factor was the characters. “The way that the black and white works with the texture in Bruce Dern’s face alone, with all of the subtleties of his performance, is so powerful,” he notes. “Equally important was the decision to shoot with anamorphic lenses, which really lend themselves to these landscapes -- the vastness of them, the power of the sky, the texture of the fields, the feeling of Midwestern communities.”

The decision to shoot with Arri Alexa cameras came after extensively testing color and black and white stock, and realizing digital would offer the most range and flexibility. In post-production, a layer of authentic film grain was then added to the digital print to echo the warp and weave of celluloid. This was the first time Papamichael had shot in the Midwest, and he found himself charmed by the ocales and more so the people. “You have wonderful, archetypal landscapes, but some of my favorite scenes to shoot came in these little, powerful moments that are so human,” he says.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

The grandson of Greek immigrants, **ALEXANDER PAYNE (Director)** grew up in Omaha, Nebraska, where he was educated by Jesuits. He later studied History and Spanish Literature at Stanford University before earning an MFA in Film Directing at UCLA.

His first two feature films were the comedies "Citizen Ruth" (1996) and "Election" (1999). About Schmidt premiered in competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 2002. Both "Sideways" (2004) and "The Descendants" (2011) won Oscars® for Best Adapted Screenplay and were nominated for four others, including Best Picture and Best Director. Four of his six feature films were filmed in Nebraska.

GEORGE PARRA (Assistant Director, Executive Producer) an accomplished Assistant Director and Producer, has worked on over 50 feature films. Covering all genres from big action films such as Terminator 2, The Rock, and XXX. As well as working on studio classics such as Ghost, The Mask of Zorro and The Fast and Furious. His success came from smaller, more independent films, which have always been more appealing to him, such as Election and Sideways and recently The Descendants and The Silver Linings Playbook.

Mr. Parra collaborated both as an Assistant Director and now as a Producer, with directors such as Alexander Payne, Peter Yates, Oliver Stone, James Cameron, Michael Bay, Rob Cohen, Martin Campbell, and David O'Russell to name a few.

After Graduating from San Diego State University, with a degree in Film and Theatre, he began his career working with directors such as James Cameron and Francis Ford Coppola on their films The Terminator and Peggy Sue Got Married. Shortly afterwards became a member of the Directors Guild of America and worked his way into the studio system.

His collaboration with his directors escalated when asked to Produce his first feature film, Sideways with his long standing associate Alexander Payne. Sideways went on to receive five Academy Award nominations, one win, seven Golden Globe Nominations, two wins, as well as ninety one other nominations worldwide.

Now a member of the Producers Guild of America, he has been steadily Producing a number of films for various companies as well as developing his own projects. Mr. Parra is currently Exec Producing NEBRASKA, being directed by Alexander Payne.

Mr. Parra brings 27 years film production experience along with and an impeccable reputation. His experience covers all areas of physical production, dealing with budgets ranging from 1 million to 45 million dollars. His many years in the feature film business opens up a vast catalog of accomplished directors and technicians. As well as a strong relationship with all the major bond companies, all unions, and all major production vendors.

Along with experience working in most major cities in the US, has also worked in Eastern and Western Europe, the South Pacific, and Mexico. Mr. Parra is fluent in Spanish and resides in Malibu California as well as a residence in Deer Valley Utah.

JULIE M. THOMPSON (Executive Producer) was born in Woodstock, Illinois. This small northern Illinois town was already known in the film world as the home of the Todd School for Boys, where Orson Welles got his schooling. This town lore propelled Julie toward the films of Orson Welles, and a love of the craft of filmmaking was born in her. Woodstock was later to become famous as the location for Groundhog Day.

After a summer in Europe, Julie came to California at age sixteen to study film and television and earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from San Diego State University. To help pay for college, she sang and played guitar in bars and coffeehouses throughout the state. In San Diego, she worked at the famous Heritage Coffee House with Tom Waits, and heard some of the most groundbreaking singer songwriters of the era.

After moving to Los Angeles, she worked in television commercials and made educational films for

American Indian Centers, working alongside then fledgling filmmakers Phil Alden Robinson and Martha Coolidge.

Julie helped to manage a West Hollywood recording studio for producer/musician Alex Hassilev of the Limelites. Her first project as a record producer was for singer-songwriter, Holly Near. She also produced records for folk legend Malvina Reynolds, the author of the iconic "Little Boxes," who was an early mentor.

In the early 1980's she co-produced a number of large anti-nuclear concerts at the Hollywood Bowl featuring Peter Paul and Mary, Richie Havens, Harry Chapin, Joan Baez, Lily Tomlin, George Carlin, Bonnie Raitt and the Eagles.

Concurrently, Julie resumed her work in her first love, filmmaking. She produced an award winning documentary film, THE WILLMAR 8. The film told the story of a group of women in a small Minnesota town who stood up to their employer, the town bank, when they were passed-over for promotion, and instead, asked to train young male business school graduates who would be taken on at the bank for higher salaries and fast track positions. The project was directed by Lee Grant and after a successful showing on PBS, was made into a television movie. The film is still used in working women's organizations to this day.

During this time Julie got to know three pivotal influences, Allard K. Lowenstein, Peter Yarrow, and actor/activist Mike Farrell. When the former Congressman and UN Under-Ambassador Lowenstein was shot and killed in his office in New York City, Farrell and Thompson joined forces to make a documentary about Lowenstein's political life entitled Citizen: The Political Life of Allard K.

Lowenstein. It aired on national PBS in 1984. The film was also produced and edited by Irish filmmaker Brogan de Paor. Mr. de Paor and Ms. Thompson married in 1986. Citizen earned honors and awards at the Houston International Film Festival, the American Film Festival, and the Chicago International Film Festival.

Throughout the late 1980's and early 1990's, Julie combined filmmaking and event production with media consulting, working for the LA WEEKLY, where she created two radio programs; REAL POLITICS, with Harold Meyerson, for KCRW, and along with Larry Mantle, FILM TALK, still running on KPCC. FILM TALK remains the most comprehensive film review program in Los Angeles.

Concurrently, she began producing film compilations and short films for public fundraising events, including tribute films to honor Alfre Woodard, Haskell Wexler, Oliver Stone, Bernice Regan Johnson, and Harry Shearer, among others.

Also in that capacity, she produced 6 years of Liberty Hill Foundation gala dinners, helping in her small way to establish the foundation as a nexus for social change and support of grassroots organizing in Los Angeles. She has served on the Advisory Board of Liberty Hill for many years. It was at Liberty Hill that she met producer Ron Yerxa, of Bona Fide Productions.

In the 1990s, she turned her attention to television movies, working for CBS-TV, and Dan Wigutow productions, either as co-producer (GUILTY HEARTS- MINISERIES, CBS), associate producer (RAISING WAYLON, COLOR OF LOVE, DR. QUINN MEDICINE WOMAN-), or post production supervisor (MONDAY AFTER THE MIRACLE, BEFORE SHE WAKES, STOLEN WOMEN, MURDER AT 75 BIRCH). During her time at CBS, Julie also worked with Tom Selleck and his company on a television series she had created.

Julie also produced the micro budget independent film, THE NORTHERN KINGDOM, directed by Dorothy Lyman and shot on location in Andes, New York.

In 2002 Julie was the series producer for a PBS Series, EYES OF NYE, produced for and at KCTS-TV, Seattle. It was at KCTS that Julie met writer Bob Nelson, a sketch comedy artist already well known for "Almost Live," a weekly comedy show which aired in Seattle for almost a decade. Bob Nelson had just written his first screenplay, NEBRASKA, and asked Julie to read it to see if she thought it was ready for presentation in Hollywood. With some small tinkering, she did indeed think it ready. Julie fell in love with the script and presented it to Ron Yerxa and Albert Berger, with Alexander Payne in mind to direct. Alexander Payne became "attached" to the project almost immediately but it was not until 2012 that it came to fruition.

NEBRASKA went into production in the Fall of 2012 with Payne at the helm. It will be released by

Paramount Pictures in November of 2013 and has already garnered acclaim at the Cannes Film Festival, where leading man Bruce Dern won the Best Actor Award, and the film was enthusiastically received and reviewed.

Whenever possible, Julie uses her filmmaking skills to help grassroots groups working on social issues to get their message out. Julie is former Board President of the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking, based in Los Angeles.

In 2010, Julie and her husband Brogan de Paor started the Los Angeles Activist Video Archive, filming long oral histories on video with LA based activists and philanthropists, and posting edited interview footage on their web site, www.activistvideoarchive.org

A writer as well as producer, Julie is currently shopping two original screenplays.

ALBERT BERGER (Producer) formed Bona Fide Productions with Ron Yerxa in 1993. Their producing credits include Stephen Soderbergh's *King of the Hill*, Alexander Payne's *Election*, Anthony Minghella's *Cold Mountain*, Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris's *Little Miss Sunshine*, and Todd Field's *Little Children*.

Berger's executive producing credits include the award-winning documentary *Crumb*, the *Wilco* documentary *I Am Trying to Break Your Heart*, *Hamlet 2*, and the Levon Helm documentary *Ain't In It For My Health*.

Bona Fide premiered their film *Nebraska* directed by Alexander Payne in competition at the Cannes Film Festival where it won the Best Actor Award for Bruce Dern. They just completed production on *Low Down* starring John Hawkes, Elle Fanning and Glenn Close and *The Necessary Death of Charlie Countryman* starring Shia Labeouf, Evan Rachel Wood and Melissa Leo. Production has recently begun on *The Leftovers*, an HBO pilot written by Tom Perrotta and Damon Lindelof and directed by Peter Berg. Their upcoming films include Norwegian director Joachim Trier's American debut *Louder Than Bombs*.

After graduating from Tufts University, Albert Berger returned to his native Chicago where he owned and managed the Sandburg Theatre, a revival showcase for obscure and classic films. He attended Columbia University film school before moving to Los Angeles to write scripts for Paramount, TriStar, MGM, Orion, and producer Roger Corman. Berger went on to serve as Vice President of Development for Marvin Worth Productions at Paramount Pictures, where he worked on several projects, including *Malcolm X*.

RON YERXA (Producer) formed Bona Fide Productions with Albert Berger in 1993. Their producing credits include Stephen Soderbergh's *King of the Hill*, Alexander Payne's *Election*, Anthony Minghella's *Cold Mountain*, Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris's *Little Miss Sunshine*, and Todd Field's *Little Children*.

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Ron Yerxa graduated from Stanford University and worked in a variety of fields before becoming an independent producer.

BOB NELSON (Screenwriter) is a screenwriter with projects in development at Paramount, Warner Brothers, Pixar, and Universal studios. His original script "*Nebraska*" will be released in the fall of 2013 for Paramount Pictures, directed by Academy Award winner Alexander Payne, director and co-writer of "*Sideways*," "*Election*," and "*The Descendants*."

Also in development at Paramount is Nelson's adaptation of the French film "Intimate Strangers." David Heyman, producer of the Harry Potter films, is developing the script "Bill From My Father," for Warner Bros.

"Young at Heart," inspired by the documentary of the same name, was penned for Universal Pictures and Working Title Films.

Nelson is working with Chris Rock on the adaptation of the French film, "La Premiere Etoile." He spent six months at Pixar Animation Studios as a writer in residence.

Nelson plans to direct his second original screenplay, "The Tribe," with Joel McHale, star of NBC's "Community" and E Entertainment's "The Soup" attached, and produced by the Mr. Mudd company, makers of "Juno."

Before screenwriting, Nelson was a journalist, talk radio producer, and wrote for Comedy Central, Fox Television, VH-1, and Bill Nye the Science Guy. He was a performer in the original Bill Nye PBS series, "Bill Nye the Science Guy" and a writer and performer for "Eyes of Nye."

Nelson was a cast member, writer, director, and segment producer for the iconic Seattle sketch show, "Almost Live!" on the NBC affiliate KING-TV, where Bill Nye the Science Guy and actor Joel McHale also began their careers. The program was named the best local program in the United States for several years and won over 100 Emmys. Nelson received five Emmys for writing and one for performing. Besides a two year run on Comedy Central, "Almost Live!" was twice syndicated nationally.

Nelson was born in Yankton, South Dakota and grew up in the Seattle, Washington area. He currently lives on Whidbey Island, north of Seattle, with his wife Valerie Howell.

JOHN JACKSON (Casting Director) began his career in film as an actor in Los Angeles. While in LA he studied with legendary acting coaches Stella Adler and Jose Quintero and trained at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco. Working under the professional name John Durbin, he appeared in a combination of over one hundred films, television movies, series television and plays. Returning to the Midwest in the 1988, John met filmmaker Alexander Payne. The two have collaborated on five films, SIDEWAYS, ABOUT SCHMIDT, ELECTION, CITIZEN RUTH, and THE DESCENDANTS. He also cast Mr. Payne's newest feature project entitled, NEBRASKA, in theaters November 2013.

As his interest in acting diminished, his work in casting grew. John has had the great good fortune to cast films for other established directors such as; Korean director Joon-Ho Bong (THE HOST), French writer/director Jennifer Devoldere (SHOE AT YOUR FOOT) and Daniel Myrick (THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT).

Dividing his time between LA and his home in Iowa, John spends his free moments between film projects working with the Brigit St. Brigit Theatre Company located in Omaha, Nebraska as both an actor and a director. The theatre presents a full season of classic plays ranging from Shakespeare to Neil Simon. This is their 19th season. /www.bsbtheatre.com

DENNIS WASHINGTON (Production Designer) came from an architectural design and theater background. Born in Santa Monica, California, He grew up around MGM, Fox, and all the Hollywood studios. He has designed pictures with the aim of reality, and a visual sense to support and enhance the film experience. Dennis has traveled the world with his work, and his own passions. He has worked with such directors as John Huston, Sydney Pollack, Ron Shelton, Rob Reiner, Alexander Payne, and has designed films from Prizzi's Honor to Stand by me, The Dead, No Way Out, The Fugitive, Dante's peak, The General's Daughter, Thirteen Days, Nebraska, and more. Dennis resides in Los Angeles and Budapest, and continues to fulfill his love – film design.

PHEDON PAPAMICHAEL (Cinematographer), an award winning Director and Cinematographer, was born in Athens, Greece and moved with his family to Germany, where in 1982 he completed his education in Fine Arts, in Munich. Working as a photojournalist brought Phedon to NYC in 1983, where he started crossing over into cinematography.

His first feature film, the 35mm black & white SPUD, earned him the Award for Best Cinematography at the Cork Film Festival, Ireland. Following a call from John Cassavetes, his cousin and later collaborator, Phedon moved to Los Angeles. While continuing to work on short and experimental films, he began his feature career as a Director of Photography for Roger Corman, for whom he photographed seven feature films within two years.

Phedon now counts forty-four feature films to his credit as Director of Photography, including the early block-busters AMERICA'S SWEETHEARTS, starring Julia Roberts and Catherine Zeta-Jones, MOUSE HUNT, PATCH ADAMS, starring Robin Williams, and PHENOMENON, starring John Travolta and directed by Jon Turteltaub, for whom he also shot WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING and COOL RUNNINGS.

His credits include many critically acclaimed films, such as UNSTRUNG HEROES (Un Certain Regard, Cannes 1995), directed by Diane Keaton, UNHOOK THE STARS, starring Gena Rowlands and directed by Nick Cassavetes, and THE LOCUSTS (Mezzogiorno, Venice Film Festival 1997).

THE MILLION DOLLAR HOTEL directed by Wim Wenders and starring Mel Gibson, was chosen as the Opening Film of the 2000 Berlin Film Festival and won the Grand Jury Prize, the Silver Bear, as well as the Golden Camera. The European co-production, 27 MISSING KISSES, directed by Oscar nominated filmmaker Nana Djordjadze, premiered at Directors Fortnight in Cannes 2000. It garnered the Grand Prix Award at the 2000 New York/Avignon Film Festival, the Audience Award at the 2000 Montpellier Film Festival, as well as the Kodak Vision Award for Best Cinematography. In 2000 both films received a CAMERIMAGE nomination, for Best Cinematography.

In 2001 Phedon shot MOONLIGHT MILE (Berlinale, 2003), directed by Brad Silberling, starring ACADEMY AWARD winners Dustin Hoffman, Susan Sarandon and Holly Hunter. It was followed by IDENTITY, directed by James Mangold, and SIDEWAYS (ACADEMY AWARD WINNER: Best Screenplay, NOMINEE: Best Picture) directed by Alexander Payne.

The list continues with his second Gore Verbinski collaboration THE WEATHER MAN, starring Nicolas Cage and Michael Caine and WALK THE LINE (GOLDEN GLOBE: Best Picture), again directed by Mangold and starring Joaquin Phoenix, who was nominated for a Best Actor ACADEMY AWARD and Reese Witherspoon, who won an ACADEMY AWARD for her performance. It also won the GOLDEN FROG at CAMERIMAGE (President's Award 2005), for Best Cinematography.

More recently Phedon shot the critically acclaimed Western 3:10 TO YUMA, starring Russell Crow and Christian Bale, 10 ITEMS OR LESS, directed by Brad Silberling, starring Morgan Freeman, and the block-buster PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS, for which Will Smith received an ACADEMY AWARD nomination and in 2008 he completed photography on Oliver Stone's W.

In 2010 he returns to longtime collaborators James Mangold with KNIGHT & DAY and Alexander Payne with THE DESCENDANTS (ACADEMY AWARD WINNER: Best Screenplay, NOMINEE: Best Picture, GOLDEN GLOBE WINNER: Best Picture), starring George Clooney, for whom he photographed THE IDES OF MARCH (GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINEE: Best Picture) in 2011. Phedon most recently wrapped Judd Apatow's new film THIS IS 40.

JOHN LATENSER V (Location Manager) is a seasoned location manager who has spent his career working on award-winning motion pictures, television series and documentaries. A longtime colleague of Alexander Payne, Latenser has served as location manager on five Payne films beginning in 1995 with "CITIZEN RUTH." Other collaborations with Payne at the helm include: "ELECTION," "ABOUT SCHMIDT," "SIDEWAYS" and "NEBRASKA." Like several others involved with the motion picture, Latenser is a native of the film's namesake Nebraska.

Latenser is a member of the Location Managers Guild of America (LMGA) and location manages films nationwide. A true location manager to the core, Latenser enjoys working with directors, who strive to film entirely on location without any stage days, as is the case in Alexander Payne's "NEBRASKA" and Jason Reitman's upcoming "LABOR DAY."

In addition to "NEBRASKA," Latenser is credited with the title of Location Manager in several of Paramount Pictures' feature films ranging from "TRANSFORMERS" and "TRANSFORMERS: DARK OF THE MOON" to "UP IN THE AIR," "FUN SIZE" and "LABOR DAY."

A former television producer, Latenser resides in the Washington, DC area, where he has been based for more than two decades. He is married and has two children.

KEVIN TENT (Film Editor) has teamed with director Alexander Payne for over fifteen years. Their first collaboration was on CITIZEN RUTH, starring Laura Dern. That was followed by ELECTION, which earned Kevin his first A.C.E. Eddie nomination, ABOUT SCHMIDT, which earned him his second, SIDEWAYS in 2004 which earned him his third and finally THE DESCENDANTS IN 2010 which earned an Academy nomination and a win for best edited dramatic feature from A.C.E. Their most recent collaboration has been on NEBRASKA starring Bruce Dern and Will Forte.

Tent began his career at Roger Corman's New Horizons Studio, located in Venice, CA where he cut countless classics such as NOT OF THIS EARTH and HOLLYWOOD BLVD. II.

Some of his early credits include HOMAGE, a 1996 Sundance Festival premiere. GUNCRAZY the independent and underground hit directed by Tamara Davis, and SINCE YOU'VE BEEN GONE directed by David Schwimmer. Other editing credits include Pieter Jan Brugge's psychological kidnapping drama THE CLEARING starring Robert Redford, Helen Mirren and Willem Dafoe, the late Ted Demme's drug epic BLOW, starring Johnny Depp and Penelope Cruz. He also cut James Mangold's GIRL INTERRUPTED starring Winona Ryder and Angelina Jolie. He has worked on a number of projects with Barry Sonnenfeld.

He has also worked as an additional editor on many films including VALENTINE'S DAY for director Gary Marshall. THE GOLDEN COMPASS, FACTORY GIRL starring Sienna Miller & Guy Pearce and MONSTER IN LAW starring Jane Fonda & Jennifer Lopez.

Some of his most recent work can be seen in DISCONNECT the multi-storied suspense drama directed by Henry Alex Rubin and starring Jason Bateman, Frank Grillo and Alexander Skarsgard.

CREW

Unit Production Manager	MADS HANSEN
First Assistant Director	GEORGE PARRA
Second Assistant Director	SCOTT AUGUST
Sound Design, Supervision and Re-Recording Mixer	FRANK GAETA
Re-Recording Mixer	PATRICK CYCCONE JR.
Executive Music Producer	RICHARD FORD
Art Director	SANDY VENEZIANO
Set Decorator	BEAUCHAMP FONTAINE
Lead Person	JON BUSH
Buyer	ELLE LIEN
Set Designer	AHNA PACKARD
Art Department Coördinator	JESSICA RIPKA
Graphic Artist	NATHAN CARLSON
Set Dressers	MARK HANKS
	CHRISTOPHER L. WILLIAMSON
	LORA D. DAVIS
	JOEY LYNCH
	GREGORY S. ROHDE
	CAROLE MARIE ZACEK
On-Set Dresser	CHAD R. DAVIS
Script Supervisor	REBECCA ROBERTSON-SZWAJA
Still Photographer	MERIE WEISMILLER WALLACE, SMPSP
First Assistant Photographer	JEFF PORTER
Second Assistant Photographers	STEVE WOLPA
	MARTIN MOODY
"B" First Assistant Photographer	HARRY ZIMMERMAN
Steadicam Operator	DAVID LUCKENBACH
"B" Camera Operator	TARI SEGAL
Chief Lighting Technician	RAFAEL E. SANCHEZ
Assistant Chief Lighting Technician	SCOTT SPRAGUE
Chief Rigging Electrician	A. SPIKE SIMMS
Electricians	KEVIN COWAN
	GEOFFREY ERNST
	JAKE HOSSFELD
	CHRIS WEIGAND
First Company Grip	RAY GARCIA
Second Company Grip	RODERICK G. FARLEY
First Company Rigging Grip	CHARLES EHRLINGER
Dolly Grip	DAVID PEARLBERG
Grips	DENNIS BUFFUM
	NATE BUFFUM
	HILTON C. GARRETT III
	ERIK F. HILL
Second Unit Cinematographer	RADAN POPOVIC, SAS
Production Consultant	STEPHEN ABARIOTES
Location Manager	JOHN LATENSER V
Assistant Location Managers	JAMIE VESAY
	TODD FEASER

Production Accountant	ANNE RYAN GAUER
First Assistant Accountant	KENDRA LIEDLE
Second Assistant Accountant	LOUISE DECORDOBA
Payroll Accountant	SANDRA L. YEARY
Accounting Clerk	JODY BEAUDIN
Second Second Assistant Director	DEBRA M. BURGESS
Production Coördinator	KIMBERLY K. BILSTEIN
Assistant Production Coördinator	GREGORY S. CARR
Production Secretaries	JASON ZORIGIAN
	PHILIP JONCAS
	TESSA V. WEDBERG
	WES FORD
Sound Mixer	JOSE ANTONIO GARCIA
Boom Operator	JONATHAN FUH
Cable Person	JAY COLLINS
Property Master	HOPE M. PARRISH
Assistant Property Master	THOMAS MILLER
Post Production Supervisor	RICK REYNOLDS
Assistant Editor	MINDY ELLIOTT
Apprentice Editor/VFX Artist	BRIAN BAUTISTA
Post Production Assistant	JOSH LAND
Costume Supervisor	JEANNINE BOURDAGHS
Key Set Costumer	MARGARET ROBBS
Costumers	ANDY ANDERSON
	MEGAN KLIMKOS
Seamstress	RUTH CIEMNOCZOLOWSKI
Makeup Department Head	ROBIN FREDRIKSZ
Makeup Artist	JAY WEJEBE
Hair Department Head	WALDO SANCHEZ
Hairstylist	MELANIE SMITH
Factotum	DEIDRE BACKS
Assistant to Mr. Payne	ANNA MUSSO
Assistant to Messrs. Berger & Mr. Yerxa	BOON FOX
Assistant to Mr. Parra	CHELSEA KRANT
Assistant to Mr. Dern	WENDY GUERRERO
Casting Assistant	LINDSAY TRAPNELL
Production Assistants	EMILY BENSINGER
	ALEXIS DVORAK
	SHANNON GAUER
	ELIAS HEARTNET
	JACOB HEGER
	JIMMY HELM
	RUDY JANSEN
	MASON KENTON
	GRETA METHOT
	BENITO SANCHEZ
	SONIA V. TORRES
	ERIC WILLIAMSON
Construction Coördinator	WES CLOWERS
Construction Foreperson	GREG BERGER
Scenic Artist	BILLY JONES
On-Set Scenic Artist	P. GAIL BRIANT

On-Set Painter	EMBER SOBERMAN
Transportation Coördinator	GARY EDELMAN
Transportation Captains	DON POOLE
	BILLY SCOLES
	PHIL HELMAN
Picture Car Coördinator	THOMAS W. REBBER
Medics	KEVIN O'LEARY
	JASON MAHONEY
Catering by	TONY'S CATERING
Craft Service	JEFF WINN
	NIKOLA RUDELA
	ANTON MUETZ
	ALEJANDRO CORDERO
	MARIO AGUIRRE
Dialogue and ADR Supervisor	DAVID BACH
Sound Editor	JOE IEMOLA
Foley Mixer	SCOTT CURTIS
Foley Artists	ALICIA STEVENSON
	DAWN LUNSFORD
Sound Editorial	SOUND FOR FILM
Sound Mix Technician	JARED MARSHACK
Re-Recorded at	AUDIO HEAD
Digital Intermediate and Set Dailies by	TECHNICOLOR HOLLYWOOD
Senior Digital Film Colorist	SKIP KIMBALL
Additional Digital Film Colorist	NICOLAS HASSON
Digital Intermediate Editor	MARK SAHAGUN
Digital Intermediate Producer	MARISA CLAYTON
Dailies Colorist	JEREMY VOISSOM
Dailies Supervisor	DENISE WOODGERD
Digital Imaging Technician	LONNY DANLER
Project Manager	LADD LANFORD
Film Timers	MATO DER AVANESSIAN
	JIM PASSON
Titles	ERIC LADD
Preview Projection Supervisor	ANTHONY DAVIS
Dolby Sound Consultant	BRYAN ARENAS
Clip Researcher and Clearances	JUDE JANSEN
Product Placement	STONE MANAGEMENT, INC.
Visual Effects by	BARNSTORM VFX
Visual Effects Supervisor	LAWSON DEMING
Visual Effects Producer	CORY JAMIESON
Coördinator	JENNIFER VAN HORN
Compositors	BILL PARKER
	PAULA SCHMITT
	JOHN ROSS
Visual Effects by	FURIOUS FX
Executive Visual Effects Supervisor	DAVID LINGENFELSER
Executive Producer	SCOTT DOUGHERTY
Compositor	SEAN O'CONNOR
Music Score Recorded by	MIKE MOORE
	TOM HARDISTY
Music Score Mixed by	MARK ORTON

Assisted by
Music Score Recorded at

JESSE EMERSON
DEAD AUNT THELMA'S STUDIO

Music Score Mixed at
Music Contractor

EASTWOOD SCORING STAGE
WARNER BROS. STUDIOS
CAMP WATERTOWN STUDIOS
PETER ROTTER

Musicians

Violin

MEGAN ORTON

Violin, Stroh Violin

CARLA KIHLESTEDT

Accordion

ROB BURGER

Clarinets

BEN GOLDBERG

Trumpet

ARA ANDERSON

Piano

BRYAN PEZZONE

Plucked Strings, Antiques

MARK ORTON

MUSIC

"THEIR PIE"

(Originally from the motion picture *Sweet Land*)

Written by Mark Orton

Performed by Mark Orton & Megan Orton

Courtesy of Ali Selim

"FOOL FOR THE CITY"

Written by David Peverett

Performed by Foghat

Courtesy of Bearsville Records/Rhino

Entertainment Group

By arrangement with Warner Music Group

Film & TV Licensing

"IMMIGRATION"

Written & Performed by Mark Orton

Courtesy of Camp Watertown Music

"TO THE LEVEE"

Written & Performed by Mark Orton

Courtesy of Camp Watertown Music

"IMPACT V.4"

Written by Tom Snider & Randy Wachtler

Performed by Tom Snider

Courtesy of Warner/Chappell Production
Music

"HOME AND HEARTH"

Written & Performed by Mark Governor

Courtesy of Citysound Music

"NIGHT OF THE SKEPTIC"

Written by Mark Orton

Performed by Tin Hat Trio

Courtesy of Camp Watertown Music

"IF YOU LOSE AN ANGEL"

Written by Buck Quigley

Performed by Cathy Carfagna

Courtesy of Zuma Caterina Records

"NEW WEST"

Written by Mark Orton

Performed by Tin Hat

Courtesy of Bag Productions Records

"TOMB OF DEATH"

Written by Adam Drake & Terry Devine-King

Courtesy of Audio Network

"THE GAUNTLET"

Written & Performed by Jesse Friedman

Courtesy of Jingle Punks Music

"MURDER ON THE NILE"

Written & Performed by Kerry Muzzey

Courtesy of Jingle Punks Music

"DRUMS FOR VICTORY"

Written by Marcello De Francisci

Courtesy of MusicBox a division of ole

"DOCTOR"

Written by George Tipton

Courtesy of ABC Studios

"HERBERT'S STORY"

Written & Performed by Mark Orton

Courtesy of Camp Watertown Music

"EL SANTO CACHON"

Written by Luis Brito Lopez

Performed by Los Embajadores Vallenatos
Courtesy of Discos Fuentes / Miami Records /
Sunflower Entertainment

“WE CAN LAST FOREVER”

Written by John Dexter & Jason Scheff
Performed by Chicago
Courtesy of Warner Bros. Records Inc.
By arrangement with Warner Music Group
Film & TV Licensing

“KISS THAT MEMORY GOODBYE”

Written by Dave Eric Smith & Larry Wayne
Penny
Performed by Larry Wayne Penny
Courtesy of Crucial Music Corporation

"Brownie's Pie"

(Originally from the motion picture Sweet
Land)
Written by Mark Orton
Performed by Mark Orton and Megan Orton
Courtesy of Ali Selim

“IN THE GHETTO”

Written by Mac Davis
Performed by Stacy Keach
Courtesy of Pocket Songs

“CHECK YES OR NO”

Written by Dana Hunt & Danny Wells
Performed by George Strait
Courtesy of MCA Nashville
under license from Universal Music
Enterprises

"Magna Carta"

(Originally from the motion picture Sweet
Land)
Written by Mark Orton
Performed by Mark Orton and Carla Kihlstedt
Courtesy of Ali Selim

“TIME AFTER TIME”

Written by Robert Hyman & Cyndi Lauper
Performed by Sherry Ristow
Courtesy of Stingray Music

“GREEN GREEN GRASS OF HOME”

Written by Claude Putnam, Jr.
Performed by Roger Stuckwisch
Courtesy of Robert Berry

“I THOUGHT I HEARD YOU CALLING MY NAME”

Written by Lee Emerson
Performed by Porter Wagoner
Courtesy of RCA Nashville
By arrangement with Sony Music Licensing

"THE AMBUSH"

Written by Mark Orton
Performed by Mark Orton & Carla Kihlstedt
Courtesy of Camp Watertown Music

"BILL"

Written by Mark Orton
Performed by Tin Hat Trio
Courtesy of Camp Watertown Music

“DIMINISHED CAPACITY”

Written & Performed by Robert Burger
Courtesy of Tzadik

Soundtrack Album on
iTunes
HILLBILLY HANDFISHIN'
COURTESY OF DISCOVERY ACCESS

GOLDEN GIRLS
COURTESY OF ABC STUDIOS

WHEEL OF FORTUNE
COURTESY OF CALIFON PRODUCTIONS INC.