

**MO'NIQUE**  
**PAULA PATTON**  
**MARIAH CAREY**  
**SHERRI SHEPHERD**  
**LENNY KRAVITZ**  
**AND**  
**INTRODUCING**  
**GABOUREY SIDIBE**

**A LEE DANIELS FILM**

***PRECIOUS: Based on the Novel "Push" by  
Sapphire***

Directed by  
**LEE DANIELS**

Based on the novel by  
**SAPPHIRE**

Produced by  
**LEE DANIELS**  
**SARAH SIEGEL-MAGNESS**  
**GARY MAGNESS**

Executive Producers  
**OPRAH WINFREY**  
**TYLER PERRY**  
**LISA CORTÉS**  
**TOM HELLER**

2009, 109 mins., 35mm

**PUBLICITY:**

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**PRECIOUS: Based on the Novel “Push” by Sapphire**

**The Cast**

Mo’Nique	Mary
Paula Patton	Ms. Rain
Mariah Carey	Mrs. Weiss
Sherri Shepherd	Cornrows
Lenny Kravitz	Nurse John
and introducing	
Gabourey Sidibe	Precious
Stephanie Andujar	Rita
Chyna Layne	Rhonda
Amina Robinson	Jermaine
Xosha Roquemore	Joann
Angelic Zambrana	Consuelo
Aunt Dot	Tootsie
Nealla Gordon	Mrs. Lichenstein
Grace Hightower	Socialworker
Barrett Isaiah Mindell	Tom Cruise
Kimberly Russell	Katherine
Bill Sage	Mr. Wicher
Susan Taylor	Fairy Godmother

**PRECIOUS: Based on the Novel “Push” by Sapphire**

**The Filmmakers**

Directed by	Lee Daniels
Produced by	Lee Daniels
	Sarah Siegel-Magness
	Gary Magness
Executive Producers	Oprah Winfrey
	Tyler Perry
	Lisa Cortés
	Tom Heller
Co-Executive Producer	Simone Sheffield
Co-Producer	Mark Mathis
Associate Producer	Asger Hussain
Screenplay by	Geoffrey Fletcher
Based on <u>Push: A Novel by Sapphire</u>	
Director of Photography	Andrew Dunn, B.S.C.
Editor	Joe Klotz
Composer	Mario Grigorov
Music Supervisor	Lynn Fainchtein
Production Designer	Roshelle Berliner
Costume Designer	Marina Draghici
Casting by	Billy Hopkins and Jessica Kelly

## **PRECIOUS: Based on the Novel “Push” by Sapphire**

### **Synopsis**

Winner of three awards at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, including the Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award in the U.S. Dramatic Competition, Lee Daniels’s PRECIOUS: BASED ON THE NOVEL “PUSH” BY SAPPHIRE is a vibrant, honest and resoundingly hopeful film about the human capacity to grow and overcome. Set in 1987, it is the story of Claireece “Precious” Jones (Gabourey Sidibe), a sixteen-year-old girl born into a life no one would want. She’s pregnant for the second time by her absent father; at home, she must wait hand and foot on her mother (Mo’Nique), a poisonously angry woman who abuses her emotionally and physically. School is a place of chaos, and Precious has reached the ninth grade with good marks and an awful secret: she can neither read nor write.

Precious may sometimes be down, but she is never out. Beneath her impassive expression is a watchful, curious young woman with an inchoate but unshakeable sense that other possibilities exist for her. Threatened with expulsion, Precious is offered the chance to transfer to an alternative school, Each One/Teach One. Precious doesn’t know the meaning of “alternative,” but her instincts tell her this is the chance she has been waiting for. In the literacy workshop taught by the patient yet firm Ms. Rain (Paula Patton), Precious begins a journey that will lead her from darkness, pain and powerlessness to light, love and self-determination.

Lionsgate in association with Oprah Winfrey and Tyler Perry present A Lee Daniels Entertainment / Smokewood Entertainment Group Production of PRECIOUS: BASED ON THE NOVEL ‘PUSH’ BY SAPPHIRE. Starring Mo’Nique, Paula Patton, Mariah Carey, Sherri Shepherd, Lenny Kravitz and introducing Gabourey Sidibe, PRECIOUS: BASED ON THE NOVEL ‘PUSH’ BY SAPPHIRE was directed by Lee Daniels from a screenplay by Geoffrey Fletcher based on the novel Push by Sapphire.

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## **PRECIOUS: Based on the Novel “Push” by Sapphire**

### **About the Production**

Producer/Director Lee Daniels first read Sapphire’s novel *Push* when it was published in 1996. “I had to take a breath, it affected me so much. I knew so many people who were just moments away from being the characters in the book—they were extremely identifiable to me on every human level.” Daniels also identified with the book’s ‘80s setting: “I understood the lingo, the political and cultural world she wrote about, because it was my world at the time. And of course I responded to what everyone does when they read it—the uncompromising honesty of her story-telling.”

*Push* was the first novel written by Sapphire, a New-York-based poet previously known for her performances and her poetry and prose collection *American Dreams* (1994), filled with raw and vivid portraits of people whose lives have been blighted by poverty, violence, and abuse. “These people are not invisible,” says Sapphire. “We hear about them every day. But they are totally misunderstood, and I wanted to show what’s behind the statistics.” Like Ms. Rain in her book, Sapphire worked in Harlem teaching reading and writing to teenagers and adults. “The inspiration for *Precious* was the resilience, intelligence, and beauty of the many young women I taught who persevered despite horrendous circumstances in their lives,” she says.

By any standard, *Push* is an uncompromising, extreme, and shocking book that presents challenges for readers. “I pushed the envelope, because it needed to be pushed,” says Sapphire. “The stories I told needed to be told.” Daniels and screenwriter Geoffrey Fletcher faced a daunting task: making a film that was true to the spirit of the novel without alienating the audience due to the extreme subject matter. “We knew we couldn’t tell it exactly as written,” says Daniels. “It was just too hard-core.”

Daniels found his take on *Precious* by incorporating his own childhood memories into her character. “I was never sexually abused, but I was physically abused,” says Daniels. “When bad things happened to me or I saw bad things happen, I would fantasize.” Daniels relates a harrowing memory: “When I was twelve, I saw someone killed. I remember very clearly that I went into a bubble and I became a prince in a silver crown, knighting someone with my scepter. I just dropped into a place right there, so I wouldn’t feel the pain. My imagination was God’s way of protecting me and keeping me sane.”

Drawing on Daniels’ childhood fantasy life, Paul’s screenplay allowed *Precious* to temporarily escape the harshness of her reality. Paul also re-imagined and elaborated some of the supporting roles: Nurse John (played by Lenny Kravitz), glimpsed only briefly in the book, was essentially a new character who added compassion to *Precious*’ world; and the alternative school receptionist Cornrows (played by Sherri Shepherd) was fleshed out with boyfriend troubles and a cheeky sense of humor.

The financing for “*Push*” came from producers Gary Magness and Sarah Siegel-Magness of Smokewood Entertainment Group (SEG), who had teamed with Daniels to produce “*Tennessee*.” “I wasn’t previously familiar with the book, but I soon discovered that it had been an important and affecting book for a number of my friends who had read it in high school,” says Sarah Siegel-Magness. “When my husband and I set up our company, we set off to tell amazing stories. And that’s what *push* is. It really doesn’t matter what socio-economic background you have—the book really grips you and pulls you in.” Siegel-

Magness took an active role in the production and was present on set every day. “Sarah’s support was unwavering,” says Daniels. “She fed a positive force in me to do my very best.”

Casting Precious was an enormous challenge. “After you shoot through the agency submissions, the harsh reality hits you,” says Daniels. “Hollywood doesn’t exactly turn these girls out.” The production set up open casting calls in Los Angeles and New York, led by casting director Billy Hopkins. “We selected a group of ten girls who were from New York, New Jersey, and Maryland,” says executive producer Lisa Cortés. “None of them had acted before, but they had very strong auditions, and they had the look that we felt depicted Precious properly.” The ten young women were then put through an acting “Boot Camp.” “It was kind of like ‘American Idol,’” says Daniels. “Each week they would improve and I would eliminate a couple of the girls.” Still, Daniels wasn’t satisfied. “There was no one who Lee felt completely understood the full range of emotions that the character would go through and could play her with full authenticity,” says Cortés. So, despite production set to begin in mere weeks, Daniels told Hopkins to resume casting.

24-year-old Harlem resident Gabourey “Gabby” Sidibe hadn’t been planning to audition for the film. She had a few college acting credits, but had no ambitions to be an actress. “I didn’t think I would get the part,” she remembers, “so why waste the time?” But a friend kept urging her, and, coincidentally, her mother, singer Alice Tan Ridley, had once been approached to play the mother in an earlier production, so Gabby had read the book. When she read for the part, she did so with minimal preparation, but her spot-on embodiment of the character left the casting directors speechless.

Tapes of Sidibe’s audition similarly wowed other members of the production team, leading to a second audition the next day, and a meeting with Lee Daniels. “We spent a couple of hours talking about the character in depth,” says Daniels, “Gabby said a lot of things that made me know that she understood Precious, even disagreeing with me about some aspects of the character’s behavior based on her own real life experiences. She wasn’t kissing ass to get the job – she gave me the facts and just blew me away.”

Sidibe remembers the meeting: “We kept talking, and I was getting kind of antsy about when we were going to get to the audition, and then he just came out and said, ‘I want you to be in my movie.’ And I said, ‘but--’ And he said, ‘No but, I want you to play Precious.’ And I started crying. It was a very clichéd response, but it had all happened so fast: the first audition was Monday and this was Wednesday—Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday...boom!”

Sidibe had used a very simple take on Precious to guide her through the audition. “I think Precious feels as though she’s the ugliest person in the room,” she says. “That’s the sadness of her, that she’s struggling to be like someone else, struggling to be normal, because she thinks she isn’t. I’ve known plenty of girls like Precious. She’s in me, too. I haven’t felt that in a long time because I’ve grown up and I’ve come to realize that I am normal and there is no such thing as ‘normal’ anyway. So I drew on ‘High School Gabby’ to play her.”

Sidibe’s last minute casting meant that she had six short weeks to get ready for the first day of shooting. Despite initial nervousness, once she got on set, she fit right in. “Gabby is living her truth,” says Daniels. “Even the most seasoned actors can’t stand up to the truth.” Sidibe agrees: “It’s not hard for me to tap into Precious’ emotions because the script is very raw and open. I feel for Precious, so I can be sad and cry when I’m supposed to.” Mo’Nique, who plays Precious’s mother, Mary, explains: “We’re fat girls and

we've cried a lot! That's why it comes so easily. We've been called fat ass, fat pigs, fat bitch, piggy, porky! So some of those tears are very real."

As demanding as it was to cast Precious, Daniels felt that Mo'Nique's character was even more difficult. "It's hard to find Precious, but once you find her, she is the heroine and has the audience's sympathy. But who could play a macabre character like Mary and make it believable?" Certainly Mo'Nique's image as a high-energy comedienne makes her seem an unlikely choice for the angry and sadistic Mary, but Daniels had seen Mo'Nique's dramatic range on his directorial debut, "Shadowboxer." "Mo'Nique gave a face to Mary," says Daniels. "It's never explained in the book why Mary does the things she does, but Mo'Nique's performance helps us understand her."

Mo'Nique concedes that most people might call Mary a monster. "She doesn't know any other way," she explains. "She knows, 'I'm not going to bathe myself, I'm not going to take care of myself, I'm not going to take care of my daughter, I'm not going to take care of anything.' She allows herself to go deeper and deeper into that horrible place. But what happened in her life to make it turn out like this?" Daniels adds: "As a filmmaker and a storyteller, I always look for the gray area, and that's what Mo'Nique helped me accomplish with Mary. Everybody, even the most 'evil' person was somebody's baby at one time."

Precious's problems are compounded because she is illiterate. She enrolls in the Each One Teach One Alternative School, where she studies reading and writing with a group of young women whose home lives are as challenged as her own. Paula Patton ("Déjà Vu") plays Ms. Rain, Precious' dedicated teacher. "Ms. Rain is teaching them the basics, but she's also teaching them how to respect themselves and others," says Patton. "She's sort of like a mom—but a tough love mom. These kids come from the streets and if they see any vulnerability in you, they're going to see it as a sign of weakness. So she puts up a wall: either you want to be in her class to learn or you don't."

Daniels was surprised by Patton's interpretation of Ms. Rain. "I always saw Ms. Rain as somebody who had lived a life similar to the girls in the class," he says. "Paula brought sophistication and flair to Ms. Rain, and that increased the contrast between them. Ms. Rain is an educated African-American woman with a certain way of thinking that is very different from Precious'. Ms. Rain wants Precious to give up her baby for adoption so that Precious and her child can each have a better life. Precious comes from the ghetto, and her concept is that you are going to take care of it because it's your blood and it's what you want to do."

Grammy-winning rock musician Lenny Kravitz plays John, a hospital nurse who takes an interest in Precious. "In the book, there's a Spanish EMS guy who says, 'Push, Precita, PUSH!' when Precious gives birth," says Daniels. "Geoffrey Fletcher took this moment and gave this character a name and a continuing role in the story." A real friendship develops between John and Precious while they're in the hospital, and later on, he is the one she runs to after she flees her mother's home with her baby. "John has a thug background, he's been in prison," says Daniels, "but he really cares about Precious. He's sort of like her real-life angel and he takes her under his wing."

When Precious makes her initial trip to the Each One Teach One school, she meets the school's receptionist, Cornrows, played by actress/comedienne and co-host of ABC's "The View," Sherri Shepherd. "When Precious comes in, Cornrows is a little rough on her," says Shepherd. "Precious

interrupts her in the middle of arguing with her boyfriend, but there's something about Precious' spirit that draws Cornrows to her, more so than any of the other kids in the school."

As soon as she arrived on set, Shepherd realized that Daniels was not going to let her rely on her typical persona. "I came in here and I had my makeup on and I had my wig, and he said, 'I don't want any of Sherri! I might have to bind your breasts down!' And I said, 'Lee, I love my boobies, don't bind them! Don't take my wig away!' But they took away my wig and cornrowed my hair, put on shoulder pads and black lipstick and 1987 fingernail polish. Let me tell you, when you're wearing cornrows, your head is pulled so tight that you get a facelift!"

Daniels pushed all of the cast, taking them out of their comfort zones. "We'd do a scene," says Sidibe, "and in the script it's supposed to be something very simple, like A, B, and C will happen, but Lee throws in D and F and a lot of other stuff! It's always a rollercoaster and a surprise." "He goes for the unconventional and the unexpected," says Patton. "He pushed me to my limits and forced me to go deeper and deeper." "He won't accept no for an answer," says Mo'Nique. "It's like, 'We can be here all night long. But this is what I need you to deliver to me.'"

When an actress dropped out at the last minute, superstar Mariah Carey, a long-time friend of Daniels and one of the stars of his previous film, "Tennessee," jumped in to play the small role of Mrs. Weiss, Precious's social worker. "I insisted that she show up on set at a bare minimum," says Daniels. Carey had to share a trailer and came with one bodyguard, not her usual entourage. She had no time to study the character and had to play scenes with Mo'Nique and Sidibe, who already had months of preparation. "While Mariah's "Tennessee" character, Krystal, was somewhat deglamorized, she was also very sexy," Daniels explains. "Mrs. Weiss is really deglamorized. It was hard for her to do it, but I also think it was a great growing experience for her."

Essence Magazine founder Susan L. Taylor plays a Fairy Godmother in a fantasy that inspires Precious. "The opening fantasy of the film is a fashion shoot, where Precious imagines herself a model," says Daniels. "Susan's character gives her an orange scarf. This scarf will take on a big resonance in the story." Casting Susan Taylor was not arbitrary. "Susan Taylor is an iconic figure for women," says Cortés. "Her inclusion says so much about the ability to transcend, to possess self-love, and be more than a survivor."

Nearly all of "Push" was shot in New York City in late 2007. The only exceptions were Precious and Mary's apartment and a fantasy dance routine, both filmed in a studio. The locations stretched from Inwood, the northernmost neighborhood in Manhattan (past 200th Street), through Harlem and all the way to Coney Island Hospital, where the scenes of Precious' baby's birth were filmed. The Each One Teach One School was constructed on an empty floor in Brooklyn's Municipal Building, near City Hall. Working inside the cramped quarters of tenement buildings was taxing for the production team, but it added greatly to the film's authenticity. Although the hours were long and the weather conditions were often harsh, the spirits were high, largely due to the upbeat exuberance of its director and its young star.

"I learn something from Gabby every day," says Daniels. "You know, she's lived and walked this girl and she still walks her. People have a predisposition about obese people. I take for granted that when I'm walking on the street that people aren't going to turn around and snicker. I'm not going to pretend and say

that people don't, because they do, and I've been with her when it's happened. But Gabby is aware of who she is and she carries it with pride."

"I love the way I look," says Sidibe. "I'm never going to be a size two. I'm just not structured that way. So I have to work with what I have, and this is what I have. And goddamnit I love it! One thing that is so exciting about this film is that I got to meet and work with Mo'Nique, who is all about making people feel comfortable in their bodies." Sidibe's voice breaks when she talks about meeting Mo'Nique for the first time. "I told her, 'I used to watch you on TV and wish that I could be like you and wish that I could do what you do.' And she was so nice, she just smiled and said, 'But you are, honey. You're doing it.'"

While Sidibe certainly never had to face the kind of hardships that Precious does in "Push," Precious's path still mirrors Gabby's journey to self-acceptance and empowerment. "Precious is a dragon slayer," says Daniels. "She's immune to pain and ridicule, and she slowly finds out that she's beautiful. It's a slow discovery, but it happens. We know that she's going to be okay. She learns how to read. She learns how to love herself."

The word 'push' is often associated with awakening and growth: it strengthens your body, it opens doors, it's cried out during the moments of birth. 'Push!' is a command, but it is something that no one else can do for you. "'Push' means push your mind," says Sidibe. "Do not settle for where you are. If you're between a rock and a hard place, push yourself out through the side. There's always room to push further. You are better than you are. All you have to do is push yourself."

"We all have our own journey and our own destiny, and it's a struggle every single day to get through the next minute," says Daniels. "But if Precious can get through what she gets through, we can absolutely get through it."

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## **PRECIOUS: Based on the Novel “Push” by Sapphire**

### About the Cast

GABOUREY SIDIBE (Claireece “Precious” Jones) was born in Brooklyn, New York, the daughter of R&B/Gospel singer Alice Tan Ridley and Ibnou Sidibe, a native of Senegal. When her parents separated, Gabby moved to Harlem with her mother and older brother. A graduate of Washington Irving High School, she was pursuing a degree in psychology at Mercy College and working as a telephone customer service representative when she was cast in “Push.” While she never studied theatre, she played the lead role of “Torch” in a lesbian version of the play “Beirut” at Lehman College in the Bronx, followed by roles in Lehman productions of “Peter Pan,” “The Wiz,” and “The Vagina Monologues.” She also appeared in the musical revue “Uptown Serenade,” in which she sang two Ella Fitzgerald songs. Following “Push,” she welcomes the opportunity to continue acting.

Award-winning comedienne MO’NIQUE (Mary) is a role model for voluptuous women everywhere, proving that you don’t have to be a size zero to be sexy and fabulous. She previously teamed with Lee Daniels on his feature debut “Shadowboxer,” where she played Joseph Gordon-Levitt’s drug-addict girlfriend. She hosted VH1’s hit “Charm School,” and recently was seen in her stand-up comedy special, “I Coulda Been Your Cellmate,” and in the film “The Better Man,” opposite Martin Lawrence.

Mo’Nique gained immense popularity with performances on “Showtime at the Apollo,” “Def Comedy Jam,” “Apollo Comedy Hour,” “Snaps,” “BET’s Comic View,” The Montreal Comedy Festival and Uptown Comedy Club, and with her starring role on the hit TV series “The Parkers.” During the show’s five-year run, Mo’Nique earned numerous awards, including four NAACP Image Awards for Outstanding Actress in a Comedy Series. Her film credits include “Beerfest,” “Phat Girlz,” “Domino,” “Soul Plane,” “Hair Show,” “Three Strikes,” “Baby Boy,” “Two Can Play That Game” (NAACP Image Award Nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Motion Picture), and “Good Fences.” Mo’Nique also starred in “The Queens of Comedy” stand-up tour, which aired on Showtime and was released as a Grammy-nominated album (for Best Spoken Comedy Album). Mo’Nique was also the first female host of NBC’s “Showtime at the Apollo,” a role she held for three consecutive years. In 2005, Mo’Nique created and hosted the Oxygen TV special, “Mo’Nique’s F.A.T. Chance,” America’s first full-figured reality beauty pageant. It was the highest-rated show in the history of the cable network, and earned a 2006 NAACP Image Award nomination for Outstanding Variety Special. Her musings on life are featured in the New York Times bestseller *Skinny Women are Evil* (2003) and its recent follow-up, *Skinny Cooks Can’t Be Trusted*. Mo’Nique’s latest project is a personal clothing line for fashionable full-figured women.

PAULA PATTON (Ms. Rain) has had starring roles opposite Denzel Washington in “Deja Vu” and in the Deep South Prohibition musical “Idlewild,” opposite Outkast’s Andre 3000 and Big Boi, as well as

Terrence Howard, Ving Rhames and Patti Labelle. Her other film credits include the romantic comedy “Hitch” (opposite Will Smith), the mystery “Mirrors” (with Kiefer Sutherland), and the political satire “Swing Vote” (with Kevin Costner).

Born in Los Angeles, Patton attended the Hamilton School for the Performing Arts, where she acted in school plays. After graduation, Patton and three other young documentary filmmakers were featured in the PBS series “The Ride.” She graduated Magna Cum Laude from USC Film School, and went on to produce documentary segments for the Discovery Channel’s “Medical Diaries.” After a year attending acting classes, Patton decided to pursue a professional acting career. She resides in Los Angeles with her husband, musician Robin Thicke.

Regarded as one of the preeminent rock musicians of our time, LENNY KRAVITZ (Nurse John) has transcended genre, style, race, and class in his musical career, one that revels in the rich influences of '60s and '70s soul, rock, and funk. Kravitz’s talents as a writer, producer, and multi-instrumentalist have resonated through seven platinum and multi-platinum albums. From 1999 to 2002, he won four consecutive Grammy Awards, setting a record for the most wins in the “Best Male Rock Vocal Performance” category. In 2004, he received his sixth Grammy nomination in the category for his sixth album, “Lenny.” Kravitz’s collaborative efforts are as varied as his influences, having worked with Madonna, Slash, Aerosmith, Jay-Z, N.E.R.D., Mick Jagger, P. Diddy, and Alicia Keys. He fulfills his creative vision beyond the recording industry through enterprises such as Kravitz Design, that undertakes various high-concept commercial, residential, and product design projects. Kravitz’s most recent album, “It Is Time For A Love Revolution,” was released in February 2008.

MARIAH CAREY (Mrs. Weiss) is a singer, songwriter, record producer, music video director, and actress who has received five Grammy Awards and thirty-three nominations. Uniquely melding R&B, soul, gospel, and hip hop influences, Carey has recorded the most US number one singles for a solo artist (18, surpassing Elvis Presley), and is in second place among artists with the most singles in the rock era. She has been recognized as Billboard’s “Artist of the Decade,” and “Best-Selling Female Pop Artist of the Millennium” at the 2000 World Music Awards. Her five-octave voice was voted “Greatest in Music” (MTV 2003) and Number One on the “22 Greatest Voices in Music” (Blender Magazine). Carey’s “The Emancipation of Mimi” was 2005’s best-selling album and a Grammy-winner for “Best Contemporary R&B Album.” Her eleventh studio album, “E=MC<sup>2</sup>,” released in April 2008, debuted at number one on the Billboard 200, and remained there for two consecutive weeks.

Carey began her acting career with a small role in the 1999 romantic comedy “The Bachelor” and followed with the lead in the semi-autobiographical “Glitter,” with Terrence Howard. She received rave reviews for her performance in the independent film “WiseGirls,” which premiered at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival. Carey previously teamed with producer/director Lee Daniels for the film “Tennessee,” which premiered at the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival.

Comedienne/Actress SHERRI SHEPHERD (Cornrows), a native of Chicago, moved to Los Angeles where she worked as a legal secretary, until friends encouraged her to put together a stand-up act. She got her first break with a role on the TV series “Cleghorne!” She appears every week as co-host of ABC’s “The View.” She also has a regular role on the Emmy-winning series, “30 Rock,” as the wife of Tracey Morgan’s character. Recently, she voiced the mother of Ben Stiller’s lion character in the animated feature “Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa.” Her other feature film credits include “Beauty Shop,” “Cellular,” “Guess Who,” and “Who’s Your Caddy?” Shepherd has also released her own comedy DVD, “No Refund, No Exchange.”

Shepherd co-starred for four seasons with Andy Dick on the ABC workplace comedy, “Less Than Perfect,” and had recurring roles on “Everybody Loves Raymond.” Other TV credits include “Friends,” the animated series “Brandy & Mr. Whiskers,” “Joan of Arcadia” (as God), “Suddenly Susan,” “The Jamie Foxx Show,” “Emeril,” “Wednesday 9:30 (8:30 Central),” and “Wedding Bells.”

SUSAN L. TAYLOR (Fairy Godmother) is synonymous with Essence magazine, the brand she built, and has served as its fashion and beauty editor, as Editor-in-Chief, and Editorial Director. A legend in the magazine publishing world, Taylor was the first and only African American Woman to be recognized by the Magazine Publishers of America with the Henry Johnson Fisher Award—the industry’s highest honor—and the first to be inducted into the American Society of Magazine Editors Hall of Fame. She is the recipient of the NAACP President’s Award for visionary leadership and has honorary degrees from more than a dozen colleges and universities.

A fourth-generation entrepreneur, Taylor grew up in Harlem working with her father in his women’s clothing store. She founded her own cosmetics company, a first for Black women, which led to her position as beauty editor at Essence. She is the author of four books, including her most recent, All About Love, Favorite Selections from In the Spirit on Living Fearlessly.

Taylor is an avid supporter of a host of organizations dedicated to advancing the Black community, including the National Cares Mentoring Movement, a campaign to recruit one million able adults to mentor African American students. She is also a cofounder of Future PAC, the first national PAC devoted to providing support and funding for progressive African American women seeking federal and state-level political offices. She is co-chair, with Danny Glover, of Shared Interest, a capital campaign to raise money to build housing in the rural areas of South Africa, and serves on the boards of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. She has worked passionately to help restore the lives of people in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

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### **About the Filmmakers**

LEE DANIELS (Director/Producer) began his career in entertainment as a manager after a chance meeting with a Hollywood producer who recognized that Daniels had the business and artistic savvy to succeed. He initially represented talent that included several Academy Awards nominees and winners.

“Monster’s Ball,” the first production of Lee Daniels Entertainment, marked Daniels as the first African-American sole producer of an Academy Award winner, earning substantial critical and box office success. The film was nominated for two Academy Awards in 2002—Best Original Screenplay and Best Actress, for which Halle Berry won an Oscar. Daniels’ next producing effort was “The Woodsman,” starring Kevin Bacon, Kyra Sedgwick and Mos Def, which made its premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in 2004. Nominated for three 2005 Independent Spirit Awards, the film received the CICAIE Arthouse Prize at the Cannes Film Festival; Jury Prize, Deauville International Film Festival; and Special Mention for Excellence in Filmmaking from the National Board of Review.

Daniels made his directorial debut with “Shadowboxer,” starring Helen Mirren, Cuba Gooding, Jr, Stephen Dorff, Vanessa Ferlito, Mo’Nique, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, and Macy Gray. It had its world premiere at the 2005 Toronto International Film Festival, and Daniels received a nomination for the New Directors Award at the 2006 San Sebastian Film Festival.

He recently produced “Tennessee,” a road movie starring Adam Rothenberg (“Mad Money”), Ethan Peck, Lance Reddick (“Lost”), and Mariah Carey, directed by Aaron Woodley from an original screenplay by Russell Schaumburg.

Outside of his work in film, Daniels briefly stepped into the world of politics and community development. Upon the request of Harlem neighbor and former President Bill Clinton, Daniels produced public service announcements to inspire young people of color to vote. The effective campaign was launched in March 2004 and featured actor/musician LL Cool J and Grammy winner Alicia Keys. Daniels, who is based in New York City, is the father of twins, Clara and Liam.

SARAH SIEGEL-MAGNESS (Producer) was nominated for Entrepreneur magazine’s “Young Entrepreneur of the Year” award at age thirty, and has remained a vibrant role model, especially for young women seeking to turn their passions into profits.

Along with husband Gary Magness, she recently launched Smokewood Entertainment Group, partnering with Lee Daniels. Their first project was the Southern gothic drama “Tennessee,” which made its world premiere at the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival. Among other projects in the pipeline is an educational documentary about an indigenous tribe in Brazil.

A native of Boulder, Colorado, Siegel-Magness inherited a knack for business from her parents, Celestial Seasonings founders Mo and Peggy Siegel. Her first entrepreneurial stint came while attending the University of Colorado's Business School, opening a wildly successful Celestial Seasonings Kiosk in Boulder's Crossroads Mall. Upon graduation in 1995, she initially pursued a career in music, moving to New York City to intern for EMI World Records, eventually landing a permanent position there and becoming the first person in their executive training program, developed to train and promote top executives from within the company.

Embracing her love of fashion, at 25 she began her own clothing company by identifying an unfilled apparel niche: the lack of low-cut underwear to accompany the low-rise pants trend. Designing a new intimate apparel collection, So Low ([www.SoLowStyle.com](http://www.SoLowStyle.com)), Siegel-Magness has since grown the company into a broader contemporary lifestyle collection focused on sportswear. So Low projects a retail sales volume of more than \$15 million this year and is currently sold in over 365 stores and online retailers, including Bloomingdale's, Nordstrom, National Jeans, Olive & Bettes, and Shopbop.com. The brand has also become a favorite among such stars as Christina Aguilera, Jessica Simpson, Gwen Stefani, Lindsay Lohan, Cameron Diaz, Jaime Pressley, Kirsten Dunst, and Lucy Liu.

Siegel-Magness' humanitarian and philanthropic work has benefited the Food Bank of the Rockies, New Yorkers for Children and, most prominently, the Fresh Air Fund, which assists disadvantaged children through efforts such as weekend and summer vacations, including Camp Mariah, named for Fresh Air Fund board member and supporter Mariah Carey.

GARY MAGNESS (Producer) is the Chairman of the Magness Investment Group LLC, headquartered in Denver, Colorado. The Magness Investment Group manages Gary's extensive and diverse investment portfolio that includes significant holdings in real estate and oil and gas, administers his family foundation and numerous trusts, and oversees more than thirty operating businesses.

Gary is the son of Bob Magness, a former cattle rancher who became a pioneer in the cable TV industry. Gary and his brother Kim grew up alongside the business; their first jobs required them to build microwave towers and string coaxial cable in Montana, Wyoming, and Utah. The cable business, after a number of mergers, has become one of the largest telecommunication companies in the world, Liberty Media. Gary remains a significant stockholder in the cable industry.

After studying Agribusiness at Pierce College in Tarzana, California and Western State College in Gunnison, Colorado, Gary followed in the family footsteps and became a premier cattle rancher with Magness Land & Cattle, headquartered in Platteville, Colorado. He is also an amateur car collector and race-car driver.

Gary and his family have been active in supporting a number of local, national, and international charities through the years. They have contributed millions to schools and universities in the Denver area including St. Anne's and the University of Denver. He recently donated \$1 million to the Food Bank of the Rockies.

LISA CORTÉS (Executive Producer) is Senior VP of Production for Lee Daniels Entertainment. She is known for her creativity in developing and producing highly successful projects that cross over genres, inventively weaving music and narrative in a variety of media. As head of production at LDE, she is responsible for finding and developing new projects and directors and supervising all aspects of production. Cortés began her tenure with Lee Daniels during production of the Academy Award winning feature “Monster’s Ball” and has gone on to produce “The Woodsman,” “Shadowboxer,” and “Tennessee.” She also produced Prashant Bhargava’s “Sangam,” shown at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival.

Cortés’s multifaceted career began as a member of the original team that founded Russell Simmons’ Def Jam Records. For a decade she served as Vice President of Artist and Repertoire for Mercury Records, where she signed the seminal rap group Black Sheep, produced several Grammy-nominated albums, and founded Loose Cannon Records. Cortés is a graduate of Yale University and has lectured at various universities about cinema, hip-hop culture, and Black aesthetics. She serves on the Boards of Trajal Harrell Dance Style and Yaddo.

TOM HELLER (Executive Producer) began his career in the film industry as an agent trainee at International Creative Management in New York before moving on to Writers and Artists Agency as a motion picture literary agent representing writers and directors, including two Academy Award-nominated writers. In 2000, Heller moved to Miramax Films, and spent four years in the Office of the Co-Chairmen. For two years, Tom served as Head of Business Development at Lee Daniels Entertainment.

Born in Philadelphia, Heller graduated cum laude with a BA in English from the University of Pennsylvania. He also has an MBA in Media Management and Marketing from Columbia University. He recently started a film production and finance company, and his next project as a producer is Rogrigo Garcia’s “Mother and Child.”

SAPPHIRE (original novel author) is a New York City-based author and performance poet. In addition to *Push*, she has published *American Dreams* (1994), a collection of prose and poems, and *Black Wings & Blind Angels* (1999), a book of poetry. *American Dreams* attracted unwanted notoriety in 1994 when a passage from her poem “Wild Thing” was taken out of context by Senator Jesse Helms in his argument to lower funding for The National Endowment of the Arts. Born in Fort Ord, California, she spent her first twelve years on army bases in California and Texas. As a teenager she lived in South Philadelphia and Los Angeles. She graduated from City College in New York with a degree in Dance, and received an MFA from the writing program at Brooklyn College, where she was the 1994 recipient of the MacArthur Foundation Scholarship in Poetry. From 1983 to 1993 she lived in Harlem, where she taught reading and writing to teenagers and adults. Her debut novel *Push* brought controversy and critical acclaim upon its publication in 1996, and won the Book-of-the-Month Club’s “Stephen Crane Award for First Fiction,” the Black Caucus of The American Library Association’s “First Novelist Award,” and England’s “The Mind Book of the Year Award.” Her poetry has also appeared in numerous anthologies, including *High Risk 2: Writings on Sex, Death & Subversion*; *Critical Condition: Women on the Edge of Violence*; and *Women on Women: An Anthology of American Lesbian Short Fiction*.

ANDREW DUNN, B.S.C. (Director of Photography) is an award-winning British cinematographer. His credits include Robert Altman's "Gosford Park" and "The Company," "Miss Potter," "The History Boys," "Mrs. Henderson Presents," "Hot Rod," "Hitch," "Sweet Home Alabama," "The Count of Monte Cristo," "Ordinary Decent Criminals," "Practical Magic," "Ever After," "The Crucible," "The Bodyguard," and "L.A. Story." For "The Madness of King George," Dunn received a BAFTA nomination for Best Cinematography, a Best Cinematography Award from the British Society of Cinematographers, and Best Technical/Artistic Achievement from the Evening Standard British Film Awards. He has also won three BAFTA TV Awards for Best Film Cameraman (for "Threads," "Edge of Darkness" and "Tumbledown").

Born in London, Dunn knew by age seven that he wanted to be a cameraman, and started making films in his early teens. After studying film at the London Polytechnic, he joined the BBC as an editor, and made his debut as a cinematographer in 1981 with Bill Forsyth's "Andrina." He was an acclaimed director of photography for television series, movies and mini-series throughout the eighties, before focusing his attention on feature filmmaking in the nineties. Before shooting "Push," Dunn completed "Good," starring Viggo Mortensen.

ROSHELLE BERLINER's (Production Designer) worked on Clark Gregg's "Choke," which won a Special Jury Prize at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. Some of her other notable films as production designer include George Ratliff's "Joshua," Katherine Dieckmann's "Diggers," and David Ricker's "La Ciudad." She recently worked on Austin Chick's "August," starring Josh Hartnett, and Carlos Brooks' "Quid Pro Quo," with Nick Stahl and Vera Farmiga. Berliner has a fine arts degree from Parsons School of Design which led to the start of her career as a Production Designer.

JOE KLOTZ (Editor) was an editor on the Comedy Central hit "Chappelle's Show," as well as "The Upright Citizen Brigade." He edited Phil Morrison's "Junebug," which premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival and launched the career of Amy Adams, who won a Special Jury Prize for her performance. The film also screened at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival's Critics Week. Klotz also edited two other Sundance prize-winners: James Strauss's "Grace is Gone," starring John Cusack, which won the 2007 Audience Award for Narrative feature; and Clark Gregg's "Choke," starring Sam Rockwell and Anjelica Huston, which won an ensemble acting award in the 2008 festival and was released by Fox Searchlight. His other credits include Sol Tryon's "The Living Wake," which premiered at CineVegas, and Talmage Cooley's comedy "Patriotville."

Born in Bucharest, Romania, MARINA DRAGHICI (Costumes) came to the United States in 1984 as a political refugee. She has designed over 170 productions for theater, opera, ballet, and film. Her credits as a costume designer include the films "30," "The Grey Zone," "Twelve and Holding," "Heights," "The Night Listener," "The Cake Eaters," "Standard Operating Procedure," and the TV pilots for "Dexter" and "Babylon Fields." Draghici has worked often at New York City's Public Theatre, including Caryl Churchill's "The Skriker" (Drama Desk and American Theatre Wing Association nominations) and

“Hamlet” and Shakespeare in the Park productions of “The Taming of the Shrew,” “Cymbeline,” and “Mother Courage.” Her other theatre work includes “Lysistrata,” “Hedda Gabler,” “It’s the Truth,” “Dream on Monkey Mountain,” and “Richard III.” Draghici also designed costumes for the operas “L’Italiana in Algeri” and “Les Indes Galantes” for the Paris National Opera, “Thais” for Opera de Nice, and “La Traviata,” for Grand Opera de Bordeaux, which was made into a movie. She recently designed the costumes for Sally Potter’s upcoming film, “Rage.”

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