



WALDEN MEDIA PRESENTS

# NIM'S ISLAND

*Abigail* *Jodie* *Gerard*  
**BRESLIN FOSTER BUTLER**

WALDEN MEDIA PRESENTS A PAULA MAZUR PRODUCTION "NIM'S ISLAND" WRITTEN BY PATRICK DOYLE DIRECTED BY JEFFREY KURLAND  
 STYLING BY STUART LEVY & S.C.E. COSTUME DESIGNER BARRY ROBINSON EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS STUART DRYBURGH EDITOR STEPHEN JONES PRODUCED BY PAULA MAZUR BASED UPON WENDY OBB  
 SCREENPLAY BY JOSEPH KWONG & PAULA MAZUR AND MARK LEVIN & JENNIFER FLACKETT DIRECTED BY MARK LEVIN & JENNIFER FLACKETT

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**On April 4th Adventure Rules**

## NIM'S NAUTICAL GLOSSARY

ALOFT: Anything above the highest deck of a ship is said to be aloft

ASTERN: Anything directly behind the vessel is considered astern

BOW: The extreme forward end of the ship

BUCCANEERS: The name given to the pirates who plundered Caribbean coasts in the 17<sup>th</sup> century

CELESTIAL: Pertaining to the sky or stars, especially for navigation

FATHOM: A depth of six feet or 1.8 meters

FURLING: Gathering in the sail and lashing it down

GALE: A strong wind, usually greater than 28 knots

GANGPLANK: The portable bridge that links a ship and the wharf

HURRICANE: A ferocious wind of 64 to 71 knots

JACOB'S LADDER: A rope ladder used to climb aboard or aloft the ship

KEEL: The backbone of a ship, along the centerline of the bottom

KNOT: A measure of speed equal to one nautical mile (6,080 feet) per hour

LATITUDE: A measurement of how far north or south of the Equator a place is located

LEEWARD: The direction opposite the way the wind is blowing

LONGITUDE: The position of any place on earth measured in degrees east or west of Greenwich, England

MERIDIAN: Imaginary lines running north and south around the earth that cross the equator

PORT and STARBOARD: The left and rights sides of the ship, respectively

STERN: The rear of the boat

ZENITH: The point in the heavens directly above the head of the observer

## **About the Production**

*Dear Alex Rover,  
My father 's missing at sea and my island is being  
invaded.  
I need you Alex Rover!*

Anything can happen on **NIM'S ISLAND**, a place where imagination runs wild and adventure rules. Here, a feisty young girl named Nim (ABIGAIL BRESLIN), surrounded by her exotic animal friends and inspired by legends and books, leads an amazing tropical existence that mirrors that of her favorite literary hero: Alex Rover, the world's greatest adventurer. When her island is threatened she reaches out to her hero for help.

But what Nim doesn't know is that the acclaimed author of the Rover books is, in fact, Alexandra Rover (JODIE FOSTER), a retiring, fainthearted recluse locked away in a big city apartment. Now, as Alexandra nervously ventures forth into the world and Nim faces the biggest challenge of her exciting young life, they must both draw courage from the fictional gallantry of Alex Rover, and find strength in one another to save Nim's Island.

An adventure comedy, **NIM'S ISLAND** is about becoming the hero of your own story -- as a girl who thought she was alone and a grown woman who thought she was scared of the world discover they can be so much more than they ever dreamed. The film features Academy Award® nominee Abigail Breslin (*Little Miss Sunshine*) in the spunky title role; Academy Award® winner Jodie Foster in a rare comic turn as Alexandra Rover; and heartthrob Gerard Butler (*300*, *P.S. I Love You*) in a dual role as Nim's real father and valiant fictional idol Alex Rover.

**NIM'S ISLAND** is directed by husband-and-wife team Mark Levin and Jennifer Flackett (*Little Manhattan*) from their own

screenplay written with Paula Mazur and Joseph Kwong, based on the acclaimed novel by Wendy Orr. The producer is Paula Mazur (*Corrina, Corrina*) and the executive producer is Stephen Jones (*Superman Returns*).

Shot on location on the sandy beaches of Australia's Gold Coast and the lush rainforests of Hinchinbrook Island, the behind-the-scenes team who bring Nim's world of natural and imaginary wonders to life includes Academy Award®-nominated director of photography Stuart Dryburgh (*The Piano, Bridget Jones' Diary*), production designer Barry Robison (*Wedding Crashers*), Oscar®-nominated costume designer Jeffrey Kurland (*Ocean's Eleven, Bullets Over Broadway*) and editor Stuart Levy (*Any Given Sunday*).

#### **FINDING NIM'S ISLAND:ABOUT THE STORY**

In 2002, author Wendy Orr published Nim's Island, a tale that brought to life a whimsical, adventure-filled tropical paradise like no other and two irresistible heroines: bold young Nim, who leads a modern-day Swiss Family Robinson lifestyle filled with excitement on a remote isle surrounded by her scientist father, close animal companions; and adventure writer Alexandra Rover, who leads a completely opposite life of seclusion and high anxiety in her big city apartment - that is, until her biggest fan reaches out to her for help.

When fate brings Nim and Alexandra together, it appears that no two people could be any more different. Nim craves the thrill of great journeys and true friendships, while Alexandra is a comical bundle of frayed nerves. But the two quickly discover that they share something vital in common - a belief in the power of the imagination, and a love of Alexandra's fictional creation, Alex Rover, whose boundless courage and derring-do will

inspire them to go amazing places and make close connections of which they once only dreamed. Nim ultimately finds herself in the midst of one of the greatest adventures of all: becoming a family.

Says Orr, "Nim's story is about the idea that we can all be a lot braver than we think. Whether you're fighting off marauding pirates or leaving your apartment to cross the world, we're all capable of just so much more than we believe."

The Los Angeles Times called Orr's book, "a refreshing fantasy tale . . . with ample doses of suspense and comedy" and noted that "readers will want to believe everything about the likeable Nim and her idyllic isle."

Fast-forward a few years and film producer Paula Mazur suddenly discovers Nim's Island in a Santa Monica library bin. Intrigued by the title, she takes the book home to read to her children, and inspiration instantly strikes. "I found it such a beautiful story, so well-written, with such strong characters, with this father, daughter and author who are all destined to find one another, that right away I thought 'I'd love to see this movie,'" Mazur recalls. "I especially loved that Nim is such a great role model. She's a can-do kid who takes on everything that she encounters with enthusiasm and humor."

Mazur was thrilled to find that the screen rights to the story were available and quickly put a screenplay adaptation into motion, soon after joining forces with Walden Media, who have become renown for their ability to take beloved family novels from page to screen with both integrity and creativity.

As the search began for screenwriters to raise the story to a richer cinematic level, both Mazur and Walden were agreed on the pair they hoped would take on the task: Mark Levin and Jennifer Flackett, the husband-and-wife team

who, among many diverse projects, recently wrote and directed the critically acclaimed *Little Manhattan*, about two 11 year-olds who fall in love when they literally come face-to-face in a Manhattan karate class. Celebrated as that rare, smart, witty comedy for audiences of all ages, the film demonstrated the duo's affinity for evoking strong emotions and sophisticated humor within a family film context.

"The tone of *Little Manhattan* was very real and not sentimental and the script was so clever and beautiful. I just had a gut feeling they were the right people for ***NIM'S ISLAND***," says Mazur, "and Walden felt the same way."

New parents themselves, Levin and Flackett and fell very quickly into love with Nim and all the delightfully offbeat characters, both human and animal, Orr brought to life in her novel. Says Levin: "We saw the foundation for a beautiful movie, and we took great inspiration from our daughter in approaching how to write and direct the movie, because we wanted to create something that she would love, and also something that reflected her, because to us she is a lot like Nim."

Adds Flackett: "We were really excited to try to capture that sense of a child's love of running and jumping and having adventures. There aren't many roles like that for girls, and we wanted to give that to our daughter. We've also both always loved the kinds of really potent family films that transcend age and time and we definitely saw the potential for that in this story."

In approaching the adaptation, Mark and Jennifer began with what they saw as the heart of the movie. "The core of it is about people trying to make a connection. It's about a father who's trying to get home to his little girl, a girl who's trying to reach out to her hero in her hour of need, a writer trying to connect with the world and with

the person she always wanted to be, and most of all, about a family trying to restore itself. These are the themes of the book, and they are what always drove us in creating the movie, from the screenplay to the set," Levin summarizes.

While the themes remained the same, the pair explain that as they worked with the screenplay they did outwardly expand some of the events of the novel to create more drama and visual excitement on the screen. "Everything that happens in the movie also happens in the book, but we took the basic events and made them all just a little bit bigger and more cinematic," notes Flackett.

Having also at one time worked on the acclaimed, hit television show *The Wonder Years*, Levin and Flackett confess they both love writing from the fresh, and often fearlessly perceptive, angle of a child's point-of-view. "There's something about the twelve year-old psyche that is a lot of fun and also very poignant as a point of view, because it's such a transformative time in everybody's life," says Levin. "For us, there was also a lot of joy that came from being able to use so much imagination in all of Nim's world."

Levin and Flackett have always found that they prefer to work together, rather than apart, and by the time they were done with the screenplay for ***NIM'S ISLAND*** and heading into production, the duo notes that they, just like their characters, had been brought even closer as a family by the process. "For me and Jennifer this is the best possible way to live and create," sums up Mark. "What's so exciting about doing this together is that we have the opportunity to let our imaginations wander to the same wild places. It's a very creative partnership."

**NIM'S QUEST: ABIGAIL BRESLIN PLAYS A YOUNG ACTION HEROINE**

The heroine at the very center of **NIM'S ISLAND** is, of course, Nim herself, the fiery, feisty, colorful youngster who leads a truly wild life, romping on an awe-inspiring, far-away island with a Sea Lion named Selkie for a best friend.

From the minute Nim, her island life and her powerful imagination popped into author Wendy Orr's head, she knew she was onto something very special. "Nim is fiercely courageous, loyal and resilient. She has her flaws when you're a writer there are certain characters you create that you love more than others, and Nim is one of those that I really, really fell in love with as I was writing," confesses Orr.

The filmmakers of Nim's Island felt precisely the same way about Nim, which led to a dilemma: how would they ever find a young actress who could capture those very special feelings in a complex performance combining comedy, action and moving family moments? The initial plan was to undertake a worldwide search to find an unknown Nim, but then something happened to change the filmmakers' minds - the runaway smash comedy *Little Miss Sunshine* hit the theatres and introduced the world to the distinctive talents of Abigail Breslin. At the extraordinary age of 10, Breslin garnered an Academy Award® nomination for her richly nuanced role as a would-be pre-adolescent pageant contestant and proved her widespread appeal as a young actress who defies the mold.

"When we saw Abigail's performance it became very clear that we didn't need to do a worldwide search at all!" remarks Paula Mazur. "When we met her, we were even more certain she could inhabit Nim beautifully."

Mark Levin and Jennifer Flackett remember indelibly the minute they met her. "We were both like, wow, she is so original and real and emotionally accessible. And her

smile is so fantastic," says Flackett. "She is so much a kid living her life in extraordinary circumstances and that really comes across as Nim."

On the set, the directors note that Abigail was so creative and collaborative, they entirely stopped thinking of her as a "child actress" at all. "She's very tapped into her emotions, but not in a cloying way. It's very genuine and beautiful and you really feel it, especially when Nim is missing her father," adds Levin. "Everyone involved in the production was blown away by Abigail's performance."

Abigail says that what first drew her to the role was Nim's amazing life of action, adventure and unbridled imagination. "It was something new that I'd never done before," says Abigail. "I got to do a lot of climbing and running, and flying on the zip-line, which was really fun. And sword fighting! I also did a lot of training for the scenes in the water, I learned how to do duck dives, how to hold my breath under water, and even how to scream under water. It's not as hard as you think - you just open your mouth and scream right away, so that none of the water goes in."

Abigail continues: "And then I got to have fun getting to know all of Nim's friends - the Sea Lions and the Bearded Dragons and the Pelicans -- and it was so cool."

Like Nim, Abigail found herself constantly challenged by leading this tropical existence far from the usual pre-teen suburbia. Stunt coordinator Glenn Ruehland watched as the role transformed the young actress both physically and mentally. "Abigail went from being this sophisticated girl from New York to a real action girl by the end of production," remarks Ruehland. "She went through underwater swimming training, zip line training, and was

even towed through the water by 400-pound Sea Lions. She got a vast amount of experience in action in this one role and we watched her develop great confidence."

Abigail loved the physical challenges but she notes that the really big things that happen to Nim start when she joins forces with Alexandra Rover - and they happen under the skin. "What I loved most is that Nim and Alexandra come to see that they both have more strength inside than they ever believed," she says. "They also see that everyone needs other people, no matter who they are. Everyone has times when they need someone they love just to be there for them."

**NIM'S HOPE:**  
**JODIE FOSTER IS ADVENTURE WRITER ALEXANDER ROVER**

When Nim finds herself feeling alone and threatened on her island, she at last decides to try to reach out to the one person she is certain can help her: Alex Rover, the swashbuckling hero of the novels she loves. But Nim is about to find out that Alex is actually *Alexandra*, a writer with a vast imagination who secretly leads a shockingly narrow existence - so narrow she hasn't left her San Francisco apartment in months! Fearful of nearly everything, right down to invisible microbes, Alexandra appears to be just a shadow of the intrepid adventurer she has created - but unable to let Nim's call for help go unanswered, she discovers that she, too, has a hero within.

To play Alexandra, the filmmakers knew they needed an actress who could be at once comically petrified and emotionally true and, once again, set off on a search for this rare combo . . . when a twist of fate changed everything. For, even as they were searching for an actress, an actress was pursuing them: Jodie Foster, the

Academy Award®-winning screen star, writer and director who had already fallen in love with **NIM'S ISLAND** when she received an early draft of the script.

The filmmakers were thrilled and surprised. "You don't necessarily think of Jodie Foster and comedy in the same vein," admits Paula Mazur. "But Jodie really wanted this role, and she's certainly one of the best actresses alive, so we thought that if she believed she could pull it off, she certainly could. And of course she far surpassed anything that we could have imagined. Everyone was excited to have this great opportunity to share Jodie's incredible talent to appeal to a really broad audience."

Like Abigail Breslin, Foster started her career at a young age, garnering her first Oscar® nomination at age fourteen for her performance in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*. She went on to become one of the film world's most sought-after dramatic actresses, as well as an accomplished writer and director, garnering two Academy Awards®, among numerous other accolades, for searing performances in *The Accused* and *Silence of the Lambs*. With that pedigree, everyone was intrigued to see what she would do with the humorously unhinged role of Alexandra Rover, adventure writer and agoraphobic *extraordinaire*.

Says Mark Levin: "Once Jodie took on the role of Alexandra, we simply couldn't imagine it any other way. Her performance is a lot of fun because Jodie takes that harder, darker image you normally have of her in films and kind of turns that on its ear for this role! The idea of her playing this writer leading an agoraphobic life and discovering her inner child started to seem like the perfect journey for Jodie to take the audience on. The lightness and energy she ultimately brought to the comedy was remarkable."

Foster says it was the spirit of the tale that captivated her so completely from the start. "It's a wonderful story that inspires girls - and boys - to take adventures and really experience the world. Nim shows what being the hero of your own life story is all about," she says, "as opposed to the kind of passivity that we see so much of today. I think people need to remember that at any age."

Her own adventurous side also was intrigued by the chance to dive into a performance driven by pratfalls, cold sweats and lots of very physical comedy. "It's rare that I find a comedy that I feel I can really sink my teeth into, but this was certainly it," Foster says of the screenplay. "I also feel that there is something very touching in Alexandra's awkwardness and wackiness. I've made a lot of dramas about fear and part of the humor of Alexandra is that she is completely plagued by fear. But her fears are simply the spider that's crawling on her computer, or someone tapping her on the shoulder, or even stepping outside her front door. So that was an interesting twist. And it was fun to explore the kind of inner courage Alexandra needs to find just to go through an airport and eat strange food and leave everything she's familiar with behind."

Once Alexandra heads to Nim's Island, however, her life takes a sharp turn and she finds herself in situation she once only imagined in her head - riding a zip-wire through the tree-tops of the jungle, swimming with giant whales and flying in helicopters, not unlike her fictional adventurer Alex Rover. Although Foster says she's never really been an extreme outdoors sort of person, stunt coordinator Glenn Reuhland was impressed with how she attacked the role's many action scenes in the air, on land and underwater. "Jodie's ability to go into any situation,

even in the underwater tank, and be very relaxed and comfortable was just fantastic," he says. "She's a very, very fit woman and that shows in her performance."

As Foster prepared for the role, it got even more personal when she discovered that Nim's Island was on her elder son's summer reading list. "We got his summer reading list and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, it's Nim's Island so we read the book together and then he read it to his little brother, which was just lovely," she recalls. For author Wendy Orr, the Foster family's love of the book was especially gratifying. "To hear that the book got Jodie's son excited about reading was just so special for me and it brought layers of meaning to Jodie being cast as Alexandra," she says.

Once on the set, Foster hit it off right away with Abigail Breslin. "Abigail's a wonderful little actress," Foster says. "There are parts of her that remind me of when I was a kid, especially since she's already been doing this for a long time. She has very natural instincts about how to be real and just doesn't stress out about it at all."

She also got a big kick out of Gerard Butler in the role of Alexandra's creation and alter ego, Alex Rover, with whom she maintains a constant back-and-forth banter as she faces one fear after another. "I love Alex because he's just a great character," she says. "He has this amazing life where he does things like escape out of a pit of spiders but now he has to spend his time with this neurotic, eccentric middle-aged woman. And Gerard brings such a great sense of humor to that. He was wonderful to work with."

Butler was equally thrilled to work with Foster, noting that they had to navigate a less-than-conventional divide between fiction and reality in her scenes with Alex

Rover, the worldly character who sprang out of her sheltered imagination. "We had such a great time together, sometimes I had to pinch myself," he confesses. "We had great fun experimenting and discovering new ideas and I think her character is hilarious. Alexandra and Alex have a dynamic that is very unexpected."

The natural charm and humor of Foster's performance put everyone involved in the production at ease. "Jodie brought something wonderful to the story which was a sense of reality," sums up Jennifer Flackett. "You know, Alexandra is always crashing into trees and falling down and is engaged in all this physical comedy, but Jodie, who is so sharp, brought a very authentic quality to all that that made it not only very, very funny but believable, too."

#### **NIM'S HEROES:GERARD BUTLER AS JACK AND ALEX**

In a story that is in part about the power of the imagination to shape who you want to be, Gerard Butler gets to play roles on both sides of the reality-fantasy divide: starring as both Nim's brilliant, inventive scientist father who finds himself far from home and the dashing, lionhearted fictional adventurer Alex Rover, whom Nim hopes can help save them.

Although the filmmakers had originally thought of casting two separate actors in the roles, Butler, who recently came to the fore as a steely warrior in *300* and then did a romantic turn with Hilary Swank in *P.S. I Love You*, convinced them to take a more daring approach. "Gerry really inspired us to cast him in both roles," explains Mark Levin, "because with him as both Jack and Alex it seemed so right and appropriate. He has the range and the charisma to be able to do justice to both characters, to

show how they're really two sides of the same coin, and that really enhances the story-book quality of the movie. We also loved that there's a strong tradition of this in classic stories; for example, in Peter Pan, one actor often plays both Wendy's father and Captain Hook."

Butler reacted with great enthusiasm to the script. "I found it hard to resist," he admits. "I thought it was so very charming and fun and adventurous. And I was very excited by the challenge of playing two characters at once."

Each of his characters has his own unique journey. "Jack is a marine biologist with a young daughter and a broken heart," Butler explains. "He's a quirky character who's mostly passionate about plankton, but he goes through something very difficult and emotional trying to get back to his daughter. And then there's Alex, who's the classical definition of an action hero, an Indiana Jones type. He's bigger-than-life and full of energy and passion. But he's also a man who essentially only lives in others' imaginations, so there's a lot of humor to him, and the trick is also that he is really the alter ego of Jodie Foster's character, Alexandra. He's the one who has to push her to the more courageous side of life."

The filmmakers' excitement increased when they began to see the natural chemistry between Butler and Jodie Foster working its magic. "The scenes when Alex gets Alexandra out of her apartment are just a tour de force. They are both so funny and alive and have this great opposite energy that sets off sparks," observes Paula Mazur.

Butler found that he held great affection for both characters, but says that, in the end, his favorite of the pair was actually the more down-to-earth Jack rather than the invincible Alex Rover. "I really enjoyed Jack because

he has such a beautiful, tender relationship with his daughter. Alex was tremendous fun to play, but Jack I felt more in my heart," he comments.

In playing Jack, Butler especially enjoyed working so closely with Abigail Breslin. "That was the best," he muses. "She's smart, she's funny, she's humble and, of course, so very talented. The only problem for me was that she had a 'swear jar,' and with my being a Scotsman - well, it cost me about half my salary! No matter where I was, she always heard me." Later, in a gesture Nim herself would no doubt admire, the "swear jar" proceeds were donated by Abigail to the ASPCA.

**NIM'S CREATURES:**  
**SEA LIONS, BEARDED DRAGONS AND PELICANS**  
**JOIN THE CAST**

Until Alexandra Rover comes into her life, Nim's primary friends are of the animal sort. Indeed, her closest companions on her island include Selkie the Sea Lion, Fred the Bearded Dragon and Galileo the Pelican - which meant that the film would have to find ways to bring these most unusual yet essential characters to life. That formidable task fell to the film's animal trainers, John Medlin and Katie Brock, the latter of whose credits includes working with the menagerie of the acclaimed *Babe: Pig in the City*.

Selkie the Sea Lion was an especially key role to cast, because this giant sea mammal is as dear and loyal to Nim as any family Golden Retriever, despite the fact that it weights 400 pounds and lives in the ocean. To find a suitable Selkie, Brock and the filmmakers turned for help to Sea World Australia, near where they were shooting on Queensland's Gold Coast. The aquarium suggested two of

their most highly trained adult male Sea Lions - Spud and Friday -- who were used to performing in local shows and already knew how to do such unusual Sea Lion things such as salute, kiss and hug.

Spud and Friday turned out to be especially affable cast mates. Though their sheer size and strength can make them formidable, Australian Sea lions are known as wonderfully curious animals, very adaptable to new situations and brimming with spirited energy. "Sea Lions have big personalities and make great characters," notes Brock.

Brock worked with both Spud and Friday so that the production would always have a double or stand-in if one Sea Lion wasn't "in the mood" for a certain behavior. While the Sea Lions were already highly trained, they did have to learn a few new movie tricks. "The hardest thing for Spud and Friday was that they are used to working one-on-one very closely with their trainers but now they had to learn to work at a distance while on camera, which wasn't easy," Brock explains. Adds Medlin: "They also had to get used to working with all the cameras and lights and a crew surrounding them, something Sea Lions aren't exactly used to!"

Perhaps the most important thing Spud and Friday had to learn to do was get along famously with Abigail Breslin. "We started building their rapport from the very beginning," says Brock. "We had her feeding them and petting them every day before production even began."

Abigail admits she was a bit taken aback when she saw how incredibly out-sized she was by her glossy-coated marine mammal co-stars. "They were much bigger than I thought they'd be!" she says. "But I wasn't really scared because they're so cute and I had a lot of fun with them. Learning to do all the tricks with them was amazing. The

only thing I didn't like was the smell of the fish I fed them as their reward!"

The Sea Lions responded in kind to Abigail's affection. "Whenever Abigail would walk in the room, the Sea Lions would just run up and give her a kiss," recalls Levin. "They developed a beautiful relationship with Abigail and we were able to capture that in the movie."

Producer Paula Mazur says that the Sea Lions brought more to the table than she had ever thought possible. "At first weren't sure how much they could do, but when Katie showed us what they were capable of, we went back to the script and started injecting even more interaction with Selkie," she explains. "They, and of course their trainers, were just brilliant, and so much easier to work with than we ever imagined. They also really took to Abigail, and she to them, which was wonderful."

Another, even more unusual animal joined the cast to play Fred, Nim's Bearded Dragon, a type of exotic lizard named for the expandable pouch under its jaw that resembles a hanging beard. Despite their mythic-sounding name, Bearded Dragons are reptiles that are known for being quite docile and for enjoying human contact, which made them a great choice for the film. Ultimately, John Medlin cast five Bearded Dragons - Goblet, Steve, Crusher, Calico and Alice - who all shared the role.

"We used Steve most of the time because he would do anything," explains Abigail Breslin. "But if he started to get a bit too active we'd bring in Goblet, then Calico, then Alice, then Crusher. That was our plan."

Goblet actually gave birth to about a dozen or more eggs during filming. The first one that hatched was called "Nim" and the second "Abigail."

Still it wasn't always easy working with such primitive creatures for whom filmmaking is a mystery.

"Lizards are real straight men. They don't give you a lot in terms of acting range!" laughs Jennifer Flackett.

Rounding out the main animal cast were several Pelicans, the large water birds famous for their enormous bills, who took on the role of Nim's message-carrying friend Galileo. The film's Pelicans also hailed from Sea World, where they were already trained to fly on command. Surprisingly, Pelicans are quite responsive to training, loving both praise and fish treats. "A little bit of praise goes a long way with Pelicans," says Brock. "They'll work for a bit of loving which really helps."

Still, as Paula Mazur notes, "Pelicans are just quite odd. The casting session for the Pelicans was the strangest I've ever had in my life. We all stood in a big circle and out marched all these Pelicans and we stood there saying things like 'I like the way that one cocks it's head!'"

While most of the animals seen in Nim's world are real, a special few are animatronic, including the Sea Turtles, a wonderful ancient species too endangered and fragile to participate in film production. Animatronic supervisor John Cox explains that he became a mini expert in turtle biology as he created the amphibians for the film. "We visited some real Sea Turtles at Sea World and took lots of photographs and measurements, and explored all the details of their scales and shells and movement to build ours," Cox says.

Cox also created a stand-in animatronic Sea Lion for the few scenes which weren't safe for Spud and Friday to perform. "The animatronic Sea Lion was modelled directly after Friday," he explains. "Luckily, Friday didn't mind being measured and came right up to us! But the hard thing about sea lions is that they are like a big bag of jelly and constantly changing shape so sculpting that stand-in

was one of our biggest challenges." The fake Friday was finished off with specially constructed fur and a coating of oil to keep him looking as wet and glossy as the real thing.

One of the biggest fans of the film's animals turned out to be author Wendy Orr. Recalls Brock: "When Wendy came to the set and met the Sea lions, she just started crying. She said, 'I can't believe you've actually brought these animal characters life; I never dreamed that Sea Lions could really do what I wrote in the book!' So we were very proud of them."

### NIM'S WORLD:THE DESIGN

*NIM'S ISLAND* takes place largely on a remote sea island alive with both natural enchantment and a youngster's unlimited imagination. To find locations that would capture the charm, beauty and dangers of Nim's life in the middle of the ocean, the production journeyed all the way to the other side of the world -- to Australia, itself a giant island nation lined with lush rainforests, golden beaches and stunning underwater reefs.

"We needed a true tropical environment, as well as a place that had a really strong film infrastructure. We also needed to find a place that looked like 'the most beautiful island in the world'! We found all of that and more in Australia," says Paula Mazur.

Ultimately the production would shoot on Queensland's Gold Coast, renowned for its sun-splashed beaches, on soundstages (where the Sea Lions could safely romp in water tanks and through the specially constructed treehouse where Jack and Nim live) and on Hinchinbrook Island - once home to Aborigines and now an Australian National Park filled

with luxuriant forests, sweeping sandy beaches and mangrove-fringed shores - a wild paradise worthy of Nim.

In designing the look of the film, Mark Levin and Jennifer Flackett teamed up with a trio of artisans: cinematographer Stuart Dryburgh, who won an Oscar® nomination for his lyrical and evocative work on Jane Campion's New Zealand-set epic *The Piano*; production designer Barry Robison, whose designs have spanned from the comedy hit *Wedding Crashers* to the forthcoming *X Men: Wolverine*; and costume designer Jeffrey Kurland, who was Academy Award® nominated for Woody Allen's period drama *Bullets Over Broadway*.

Dryburgh says he was attracted to the film because it was a chance to delve a bit into magical realism, a style with which he's always been fascinated. "The idea with *NIM* was to hit a lovely balance between the real world and a more fantastical world of imagination," he explains. "Nim's Island definitely feels like a real-world place, but we wanted to make it just a little bit more special."

One of the challenges for Dryburgh was finding ways to visually match scenes that were shot on soundstages, especially the treehouse set, with those shot in real rainforests. Comments Dryburgh: "That's where lighting comes in. Another thing we did to give our theatrical rainforest a more natural look was to put in an atmosphere of water vapour, so there was constantly a sense of mistiness and dampness to all the vegetation. We placed a very complex rig onto the roof, sort of like the kind of thing you would use inside a huge greenhouse to mist tropical plants. It was extremely effective."

As for Dryburgh's favorite shot, he demurs that he has several, but notes: "Every once in awhile you catch things that really stand out and one of those for me is when Nim is standing at the front of her father's boat when they're

going out to the supply ship. You've got the ship sailing, Jack driving, the beautiful islands behind, the sun shining and it's just a really uplifting, magical moment."

Production designer Barry Robison worked closely with Dryburgh to maintain that sense of what he calls "reality but a dreamy reality" in the look and style of the film's major sets. Robison began with extensive conversations with Levin and Flackett about how to create and contrast Nim's thrilling treehouse on the island with Alexandra's isolated house in the middle of San Francisco. "I've never worked with two directors with such strong design sensibilities," he says. "So right away, it was a fun process."

At the center of that fun would be building Jack and Nim's fanciful treehouse-style home and laboratory from scratch. This unusual household had to work on a practical level yet also evoke unusual childhood dreams. "I think nearly everyone has dreamt of living in a treehouse like Nim," says Levin. "It's a really fun and magical place because of that."

Robison had at first hoped to construct the treehouse on the limbs of an actual tree inside a real rainforest on Hinchinbrook Island, where the production would shoot much of the outdoors footage of Nim's Island -- but his plans were toppled by . . . animals. When Robison learned that Nim's Sea Lions friends would need to be on a soundstage to assure their safety, he tapped into his theatrical background to create a slice of outdoor wildness with an elaborate indoor set. "Building that set on a stage was very brave of everybody," says Robison. "And working with Stuart Dryburgh really made the difference. He's a fantastic Director of Photography who was able to make the treehouse feel a part of the island."

When it came to the blueprints for the eccentric abode, Robison worked closely with art directors Jacinta Leong, Deborah Riley and Supervising Art Director Colin Gibson as well as a group of young architectural students from local colleges in Brisbane, in a feat of intense engineering. "We had to first construct the tree, which was based on the complex structure a real fig tree with an incredible root system, and then the main house of top of that and then Jack's lab," he explains. "I really wanted to bring a very young, fresh, spontaneous feeling to it, so it was great to work with so many young people who think outside the box."

The *piece de resistance* of the treehouse was Nim's bedroom, a second-story hideaway reached by an elaborate staircase and featuring an inspirational peaked roof with a crow's nest lookout over a panoramic view. Befitting Jack and Nim's love of nature, the treehouse also featured a lot of modern "green" innovations, including solar and wind power generation, a roof designed to catch rainwater and even composting areas. Robison used sustainable bamboo wood and biodegradable plastics throughout.

"Barry thought a lot about what it means to be living off the grid on an island in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, growing your own food, and living a self-sustaining way," explains Flackett. "All the green touches bring a very modern and real aesthetic to Nim and Jack."

The details were important, but it was the overall picture that excited Robison. "In the end the most important thing is that the treehouse had a very light, fun feeling - it had the essence of Nim," Robison summarizes, "and when you were in that space, it really felt magical."

The directors, too, were thrilled with what Robison and his team achieved. "The treehouse truly felt like home, like the kind of place we'd really like to live.

And that's what we wanted to get across - it's a very special place that's not like anywhere else."

Robison was equally challenged by another key set: Alexandra Rover's Victorian-style San Francisco apartment, where the author of the world's most popular adventure novels hides away from a world that secretly seems all too big and scary to her. He had to come up with a way to make her place feel like an oasis right in the middle of a claustrophobic, chaotic city. "This was a very complicated set that took all of my theatrical training," notes the production designer, "When you see Alex open the front door, and you see the Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco beyond, it's all forced perspective, which was a real challenge to pull off."

Inside Alexandra's home, the design team filled the space with an eclectic array of objects from every corner of the planet. "You get the sense of a woman who has tried to live a very worldly life without ever leaving her home," notes Mazur. "This feeling was really important to Jodie."

Although Robison had a blast with both the apartment and the treehouse, his favorite design in the film is even more whimsical: he adores the film's eye-catching opening sequence of a ship riding through paper cut-out waves as Nim recounts the rocky story of her life so far. Inspired by the clever, artsy fun of pop-up books and a child's-eye view of memory, Robison convinced the directors to allow him to design the 3-dimensional imagery with miniatures, models and paper puppets rather than using the more conventional CG. "Sometimes the simplest tricks are the most magical because kids have imaginations that love to run wild," he says of his approach. "I believe you don't have to be told everything, and that sequence turned out to be pure and simple enchantment."

That sense of enchantment was felt throughout the production for Mark Levin and Jennifer Flackett, both in the performances and in every aspect of the film's design. Sums up Levin: "Everyone worked together to create this beautiful place and this wonderful story and to really reflect the worldview of Wendy Orr's book. **NIM'S ISLAND** becomes a place where you can escape into imagination and I think people will find that it's not quite like anywhere else they've been - it's an original experience."

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## ABOUT THE CAST

**ABIGAIL BRESLIN (Nim)** is one of the most versatile, charismatic and sought-after actors of her young generation. A talented and engaging performer, she had the enviable role of playing leading lady to Mel Gibson - at the tender age of five. Since starring opposite Gibson in M. Night Shyamalan's 2002 film *Signs*, Abigail has been able to use her unique talents to do both comedy and drama as well as quirky and unusual roles.

Most memorable is her role in the critically acclaimed *Little Miss Sunshine*, the irreverent, antic comedy which created a sensation at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. For her performance as Olive, the ambitious young girl obsessed with winning a beauty pageant, Abigail received a Best Actress Award from the Tokyo International Film Festival and was nominated for an Academy Award®, a SAG Award and a BAFTA Best Supporting Actress Award.

Abigail also made an impression with her performance in *Raising Helen* for director Garry Marshall, in which she starred opposite Kate Hudson as well as her older brother, Spencer Breslin. She has also completed roles in the independent drama *Keane*, directed by Lodge Kerrigan and produced by Steven Soderbergh; in *The Ultimate Gift*, co-starring James Garner; and had a surprise role as a perky Elf in *The Santa Claus 3*.

She was most recently seen in *No Reservations* for director Scott Hicks co-starring opposite Catherine Zeta-Jones and Aaron Eckhart, and can also be seen in the romantic comedy *Definitely Maybe* opposite Ryan Reynolds. She has currently completed filming the starring role in *American Girl*.

On television, Abigail has had guest roles on *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Navy N.C.I.S.*, *What I Like About You* and *Grey's Anatomy*. She lives in New York City.

**JODIE FOSTER (Alexandra Rover)**, a two-time Academy Award® winner, won her first Oscar® for her poignant performance as a

rape survivor in *The Accused*, for which she also won Golden Globe and National Board of Review Awards. She won her second Academy Award® for her work in the 1991 Oscar®-winning Best Picture, *The Silence of the Lambs*, as well as a Golden Globe and BAFTA Award and a New York and Chicago Film Critics Awards for Best Actress.

Foster received her first Oscar® nomination at the age of 14 for her performance in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, also winning awards from the National Society of Film Critics and the Los Angeles Film Critics. That year she also became the only American actress to win two BAFTA Awards in the same year, earning Best Supporting Actress and Best Newcomer for *Taxi Driver* and *Bugsy Malone*. She earned another Oscar® nomination and won a Screen Actors Guild Award for her work in the title role of *Nell*, which also marked her first film as producer.

Foster most recently starred in *The Brave One* for director Neil Jordan, garnering a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actress. Before that, she starred in Spike Lee's *Inside Man* and the thriller *Flightplan*, and made a cameo appearance in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's French-language film, *A Very Long Engagement*.

In all she has appeared in more than 40 films including *Panic Room*; *Anna and the King*; *Contact*; *Maverick*; *Sommersby*; *Shadows and Fog*; *Stealing Home*; *Siesta*; *Five Corners*, for which she won an Independent Spirit Award; *The Blood Of Others*; *The Hotel New Hampshire* ; and *Foxes*. In addition, the multi-lingual Foster loops all of her own dialogue in French for all of her films.

Foster began her career at age three, appearing as "The Coppertone Girl" in a memorable television commercial. Emerging as one of the most successful child actresses of the day, she made her feature film debut in 1972's *Napoleon and Samantha*, followed by the role of Becky Thatcher in the 1973 musical version of *Tom Sawyer*. In 1974, Foster gave a stand-out performance in Martin Scorsese's hit *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. Two years later, Scorsese cast her in the

pivotal role of the young prostitute, Iris, in *Taxi Driver*, which was only one of five films in which the young actress appeared in 1976. She also starred in *Bugsy Malone*, *Echoes of a Summer*, *The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane* and the original *Freaky Friday*, for which she earned her first Golden Globe Award nomination.

Behind the camera, Foster made her directorial debut with the acclaimed *Little Man Tate*, in which she also starred. She then directed and produced *Home for the Holidays* starring Holly Hunter, Anne Bancroft and Robert Downey, Jr. In 1992, Foster founded her production company, Egg Pictures. In addition to *Nell* and *Home for the Holidays*, the company has produced the features *Waking The Dead* and *The Dangerous Lives of Altar Boys*, in which she also appeared. She also served as an executive producer on the Showtime movie *The Baby Dance*, which won a coveted Peabody Award and received four Emmy Award nominations and three Golden Globe Award nominations, both including Best Movie Made for Television. Egg Pictures also presented the award-winning French film *Hate* in the United States.

Foster graduated with honors from Yale University in 1985, earning a B.A. in Literature.

**GERARD BUTLER (Alex Rover/Jack)** is best known for his memorable role of Leonidas, King of Sparta, in the big-budget adaptation of Frank Miller's graphic novel *300*.

Gerard was most recently seen in the smash hit *P.S I Love You*, opposite Hilary Swank. He will next be seen in Guy Ritchie's new film *RocknRolla*, also starring Thandie Newton, to be released in Fall of 2008 and he recently wrapped the futuristic thriller *Game* for Lionsgate. He made his feature debut in Miramax's highly acclaimed *Mrs Brown*, in which he played Billy Connolly's brother, Archie Brown. Other credits include *One More Kiss*, which won the Audience Award at the Toronto Film Festival; *Harrison's Flowers*; *Shooters*; Wes Craven's *Dracula 2000*; *Reign of Fire*; *Timeline*; a starring

role opposite Angelina Jolie in *Tomb Raider II*; *Dear Frankie*; the starring role as the Phantom in *The Phantom of the Opera*, produced by Andrew Lloyd Webber's Really Useful Group, directed by Joel Schumacher; *Beowulf & Grendel* and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, co-starring Charlotte Rampling and Alan Bates.

Television credits include the title role of Attila, the historic warrior, in the USA Network mini-series *Attila the Hun*, directed by Dick Lowry; ITV's *The Jury*, co-starring Derek Jacobi and Anthony Sher; the two-part BBC psychological drama *Little White Lies*; the cult Channel 4 series *A Young Persons Guide To Becoming A Rock Star* and a starring role in ITV's *Lucy Sullivan Is Getting Married*. Theatre credits include *Trainspotting*; *Snatch* for the Soho Theatre Company and a starring role opposite Rachel Weisz in the Donmar Warehouse production of Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer*.

### ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

**MARK LEVIN and JENNIFER FLACKETT (Directors/Screenwriters)** are that rare Hollywood creature: The husband-wife writer-director team. This unique species is half man-half woman, yet speaks with one creative voice. As married filmmakers, Levin & Flackett spend literally twenty-four hours a day together, seven days a week, sharing in every step of the process side by side. As you can imagine, these days, the comments that Levin & Flackett hear most often are "How do you do it?," "My wife and I need our time apart," and the always popular, "My husband and I would kill each other."

To friends and colleagues, they are not known individually as "Mark" or "Jennifer" but singularly as "Mark and Jen." **NIM'S ISLAND** is their second movie as film directors, after accomplished careers as screenwriters and television creator-executive producers. They were drawn to write and direct **NIM'S ISLAND** by their desire to create an adventure movie that they could share and enjoy together with their daughter and son.

The first film that Levin & Flackett directed was *Little Manhattan*, the romantic comedy about first love, based on their original screenplay. It was released by New Regency and Twentieth Century Fox in 2005.

Levin & Flackett have been working as a creative team for over twelve years. Their feature film careers began when their first screenplay, *Drive*, was purchased by Scott Rudin and Paramount Pictures. They subsequently adapted the classic children's book *Madeline* into the motion picture starring Frances McDormand. They also wrote the romantic comedy *Wimbledon* for Working Title Films and Universal Pictures. Other movies they have contributed to as screenwriters include *The Perfect Storm*, *Speed Racer* and the Walden Media/New Line co-production *Journey 3-D* to be released in July 2008. In television, Levin & Flackett have written and produced pilots for all the major broadcast networks, including ABC's *Roadie*, CBS's *The Mysteries of 71st Street*, Fox's *The Third Degree*,

and ABC's *Born In Brooklyn*.

Before getting married and beginning their exclusive collaboration, Levin & Flackett wrote separately. Levin had attended the Yale School of Drama as a playwright, then went on to write and produce the much-loved television *The Wonder Years* for over fifty episodes. He also created and executive produced the NBC/Amblin Entertainment television series *Earth 2*. Flackett, a graduate of Wesleyan University, began her career as a writer on Steven Bochco's *Civil Wars* and *LA Law*, among others.

After graduating with honors from NYU Film School, **PAULA MAZUR'S (Producer/Screenwriter)** first feature was *Home Of The Brave*, a concert film by rock performance artist Laurie Anderson, which premiered at Cannes. She subsequently produced Jonathan Demme's *Swimming to Cambodia*, followed by the Academy Award®-winning short film *The Appointment of Dennis Jennings*, starring Steven Wright and Rowan Atkinson, which also won an Ace Award; and then the film version of Lily Tomlin's Tony Award winning Broadway play *The Search For Intelligent Life In The Universe*, which was nominated for Emmy and Spirit Awards, won an Ace Award for best comedy special, and garnered an American Comedy Award. Other film credits include *Corrina, Corrina* starring Whoopi Goldberg and Ray Liotta.

For television, Paula produced and directed *Bakersfield Country*, a PBS special on country music starring Merle Haggard and Buck Owens. The show was awarded three Emmys for Best Special, Best Performance and Best Editing; HBO's *Kathy and Mo: The Dark Side*, which won an ACE Award for Best Comedy Special and the HBO comedy *Pros & Cons*, which premiered at the U.S. Comedy Arts Festival, winning Best Actor. She also produced the film version of the wildly popular off Broadway play *The Vagina Monologues*, which world premiered on HBO.

Mazur is currently adapting *Tangerine* for HBO Films, which she is producing with Danny DeVito. In development are the features *Out of Gas*, to be directed by Dean Parisot, and

the film version of Steve Martin's play *Picasso at the Lapine Agile*, adapted and to be directed by Fred Schepisi, featuring an all-star ensemble cast.

**STUART DRYBURGH (Director Of Photography)** was born in London and moved to New Zealand at a young age. He was nominated for an Academy Award for his work on Jane Campion's *The Piano*.

Other film credits include the smash-hit *Bridget Jones's Diary*; *No Reservations*; Martin Scorsese's *Shine A Light* (as camera operator); *The Girl In The Park*; *The Painted Veil*; *Aeon Flux*; *In My Fathers Den*; *Beautiful Country*; *The Recruit*; *Kate And Leopold*; *Runaway Bride*; *Analyze This*; *Portrait Of A Lady*; *Lone Star*; *Once Were Warriors* and *An Angel At My Table*.

Television credits include Lasse Halstrom's pilot *New Amsterdam*; the HBO movie *Poodle Springs* and the HBO pilot for *Sex And The City*.

**JEFFREY KURLAND (Costume Designer)** was nominated for an Academy Award® for his work on *Bullets Over Broadway* and won a BAFTA Award for his work on *Radio Days*. He was also nominated for a Costume Designers' Guild Award for *Ocean's Eleven* and won the Costume Designers' Guild Award for *Erin Brockovich*.

Other film credits include *Collateral*; *Nancy Drew*; *The Reaping*; *My Best Friend's Wedding*; *Mighty Aphrodite*; *Shadows And Fog*; *Crimes And Misdemeanors*; *Hannah And Her Sisters*; *The Purple Rose Of Cairo*; *Streets of Gold* and *Confessions Of A Shopaholic*.

**BARRY ROBISON'S (Production Designer)** credits as production designer include the forthcoming *X Men Origins: Wolverine*; *Rendition*; *You, Me and Dupree*; *Fun With Dick And Jane*; *Wedding Crashers*; *Highway*; *The Rookie*; *Candyman*; *Bubble Boy* and *October Sky*.

**STUART LEVY (Editor)** first worked with directors Mark Levin and Jennifer Flackett as supervising sound editor on their feature film *Madeline*. Other credits as editor include the recently completed *Sleepwalking; Chicago 10; The Nativity Story; Faceless; Any Given Sunday; Confidence* and *Red Eye*.

**WENDY ORR (Author)** is an Australian author of children's, young adult and adult fiction, including *Ark in the Park, Peeling the Onion,* and *The House at Evelyn's Pond*. Her books have been published in sixteen countries and have won or been shortlisted for awards in Australia, UK and the USA.

Wendy was born in Canada, studied occupational therapy in London, married an Australian farmer while still in college, and has lived in Australia since graduation. She is now an Australian citizen. Her first book, *Amanda's Dinosaur*, was published in 1988. She became a full time writer two years later after a serious car accident forced her to give up occupational therapy.

Nim's Island was published in Australia in 1999, followed by the USA, Germany, Italy, Spain and Korea. It will soon be published in the UK, Brazil, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Taiwan and Israel, with other sales currently under negotiation.