

WHOLE NEW THING

Press Kit

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Whole Thing Productions
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Synopsis

EMERSON THORSEN, 13, lives with his parents KAYA and ROG in their eco-home in the wilds of Nova Scotia. He's just had his first wet dream, and completed writing and illustrating his first book, all 1000 pages of it. Meanwhile, the homeschooled youth can barely add $2 + 2$. His mother enrolls him in the local school. There, Emerson's English teacher is DON GRANT. At 42, the solitary Don has settled into a life of perpetual adolescence, paying regular visits to a park washroom for anonymous sex. In the classroom, Emerson stirs things up. Surprisingly, Don sees a bit of himself reflected in Emerson. Emerson, initially scornful of his teacher, quickly develops his first crush – on Don. The precociously confident boy, raised in a household of casual nudity and sexual openness, throws himself into this awakening of his heart with dangerous abandon. This is going to be a Whole New Thing. For everyone.

PRODUCTION NOTES

When a precocious, homeschooled 13 year-old boy is sent to the local, rural school for the first time, it's going to be a whole new thing. For everyone.

A beguiling and provocative comedy/drama about the discovery of sex and the longing for intimacy, *Whole New Thing* vividly brings to life the rites of passage of youth and middle age. Smart, funny, poignant, and captivatingly intense, brilliantly acted and visually lush, *Whole New Thing* is at once richly entertaining and thought-provoking.

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"A coming of age story about a precocious youth who realizes he is not an adult, and some adults who grow up." That's how co-writer/director Amnon Buchbinder proposed, late in the summer of 2004, a story to co-writer Daniel MacIvor and producer Camelia Frieberg. Nine months later, to the day, the complete motion picture had its cast & crew screening. What happened in between was the proof of Buchbinder's thesis that "a story is a living thing."

It helps, of course, to have an incredibly talented and dedicated team of people to bring the story to life as a motion picture!

One role was cast before the script was written: the part of Don Grant was written for Daniel MacIvor. Next to be cast was Rebecca Jenkins as Kaya. Jenkins has appeared in every feature MacIvor has written or directed; and Buchbinder was a long-time fan. Newfoundland-raised and Los Angeles-residing Robert Joy, in Toronto for a lead role in George Romero's *Land of the Dead*, showed up in the audience for Daniel MacIvor's one-man show, *Cul-de-Sac* and engaged MacIvor in conversation afterwards. Aware that Joy was already on Buchbinder's short-list of possible actors for Rog, MacIvor immediately gave him a script. Callum Keith Rennie, a friend of MacIvor's for over a decade, agreed to play the role of Denny without even reading the script. Even the role that should have been most challenging to cast, that of the 13 year-old, sexually and intellectually precocious Emerson, was filled quickly. By the time Aaron Webber left the room, the filmmakers knew they had their Emerson. The anticipated country-wide search was called off.

Meanwhile, with dynamo producer Camelia Frieberg wielding the phone and legal eagle producer Kelly Bray vetting the paperwork, the funding was falling into place. The first domino to fall was ThinkFilm, which made an offer for Canadian rights one week after they were handed the screenplay – an impressive response in an industry where three month wait times are not uncommon. Soon after, the Nova Scotia Film Development Corp., Chum Television, Astral Media's Harold Greenberg Fund, and the Movie Network lined up.

There was much discussion along the way about the story's provocative elements. "You better know what you're doing," the filmmakers were told more than once.

Attracted by the screenplay, some of the most experienced crew members in the Nova Scotia industry signed on. Amongst the team that had come together were many people who had collaborated before.

Producer Frieberg had previously worked multiple times with both MacIvor and Buchbinder. The partnership between Frieberg and Bray was established on a project Buchbinder had written. Many of the crew – notables including Costume Designer Lin Chapman, First Assistant Director Mary Reynolds, Continuity Supervisor Maggie Thomas, and Sound Recordist Jim Rillie-- had worked on one or both of the feature films MacIvor directed; and the majority of the crew, in the context of the small Nova Scotia film industry, had worked with one another numerous times. No wonder that a family atmosphere quickly prevailed. Into that mix came some key newcomers, notably line producer Anita McGee, who had recently relocated from Newfoundland to Halifax – herself an established filmmaker.

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This dream team had their work cut out for them.

As Buchbinder described it, the filmmakers were posed with three challenges like to those faced by the heroes of fairy tales.

“We had three impossible tasks. You know, like *climb the glass mountain*, or *spin the flax into gold*. First, we were tasked to *write the script in two weeks*. Then, we were required to *shoot the movie in 15 days amidst three record breaking winter storms, and with only 5 days of pre-production*. Finally, we were challenged to *cut the picture in 5 weeks*.” And for good measure, Buchbinder had to lead the expedition while commuting between Halifax and Toronto where he still had a full-time teaching position in the film department at York University.

The second impossible task, shooting the movie in 15 days with only a week of prep, could clearly only be accomplished with a tremendously committed and experienced crew. Yet the budget did not allow for such a crew to be paid anything close to their normal rate.

Nevertheless, an ace crew did sign on. They did so for the same reasons they got into the business in the first place – to make a film they believed would be good and one that they could take pride in. They did so because they believed in Frieberg, MacIvor, and Buchbinder, and because they liked the script. And there’s something about low-budgets that’s charged, almost like it’s a dare.

Normally, impossibly short schedules are accommodated by impossibly long hours. But to make an affordable flat-rate deal with a crew of this calibre, the producers made a promise that working hours, including travel, would not exceed 12 a day. It was a terrifying commitment to make. But the beauty of it was that it was the hard work and professionalism of the crew that ultimately made it possible to fulfill it.

Finally, with their story as a guide, the creative team accomplished the impossible. The days stayed within twelve hours, the film was finished on time and budget. And just as

in those fairy tales, which end with a glorious wedding, the results were not diminished but somehow extravagantly enhanced by the impossibility of the accomplishment.

"The crew was amazing," says Buchbinder. "We had hardly finished a shot before they were moving on to the next one."

The small lighting/electric crew, rigging lights in gruelling, snowy conditions, worked under the direction of legendary gaffer Christopher Porter. Porter resides in Nova Scotia but works all over the world and does only one film a year. He had already completed his film for 2005 (Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain*) but after Frieberg gave him the script to read he decided to undertake only his third Nova Scotia film (he previously worked on *Marion Bridge* and *The Shipping News*).

The movie's low budget had called into question the viability of shooting on film. The producers were concerned that budget would allow only a video shoot, but Buchbinder argued that the story needed the visual delicacy that could only be provided by celluloid. Line Producer McGee got on the phone and elicited amazing deals from Fuji, Eyes Post Group, Deluxe Laboratories and neg cutter Catherine Rankin. Still, to make it work, Buchbinder was required to make do with an extremely low shooting ratio. There was only enough film to do a few takes of every shot – a significant challenge to a story where performances are of crucial importance. The results onscreen show how committed the actors were, delivering the goods from the first take.

Under Director of Photography Christopher Ball, csc, the camera crew also did incredible work. "We almost never had to do a retake as a result of a camera problem," says Buchbinder. "That's unheard of, at least in my experience. And Christopher Ball is a wizard of an operator!"

Similarly wizardly was Production Designer Bill Fleming. With a miniscule budget and a tiny team, he brought the story's settings to life.

Production took place one-third in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia, where a one-of-a-kind straw bale house provided the dwelling for main character Emerson and his parents; and Spryfield, a suburb of Halifax with a mixture of urban and rural flavours, where all the remaining locations had to be found within a five minute radius due to the very tight shooting schedule. The decommissioned Spryfield public school that plays the "Chezzbrook County Middle School," where Emerson is sent to school for the first time, stood in for a number of other locations, and provided the crew with a home base.

Weather was important to the film. The script was written with the intention of a January shoot, and snow was conceived as an central element in the story's image system. But January in Nova Scotia is a notoriously unpredictable month for weather. As it happened, the 15 days of shooting brought every conceivable weather situation, including heavy rainfall, three city-closing snowstorms, and 8 days of minus 25 degree temperatures.

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Anchoring the film are two astounding performances. As Don Grant, Daniel MacIvor delivers the performance of his considerable career. With the mixture of gravity and levity akin to prime Jack Lemmon, MacIvor plays a flawed and unhappy man, in a portrayal so rich with honesty, humor and heart audiences cannot help falling in love with him. As the 13 year-old protagonist Emerson, Aaron Webber makes an electrifying screen debut, fearlessly bringing to life a remarkably complex character for his age. Revealing Emerson as alternately annoying, appealing, haughty, warm and finally utterly winning, Webber makes an indelible impression.

They are ably supported by some of the finest actors in the country. Rebecca Jenkins, Robert Joy, Callum Keith Rennie, Hugh Thompson, Kathryn MacLellan, Jackie Torrens – a marvelous mixture of comedic and dramatic talents (in many cases within the same actor).

Two components were assembled for the film's memorable soundtrack. The director's brother, David Buchbinder, working to an impossible deadline, delivered a rich and haunting score, played on a panalopy of unusual instruments, with Arabic, Celtic, African, and Rock melodic elements. For the songs which provide an important element of the story, Daniel MacIvor enlisted the collaboration of his friend Joel Gibb, who provided three songs performed by his widely celebrated group The Hidden Cameras, whose unique, feel-good, gender mixing provocations fit in so well with the movie.

Early audiences have swooned for the Whole New Thing's mixture of penetrating thoughtfulness and emotional warmth, captivating performances and visual elegance, provocative subject matter and sense of humor.

Crew & Cast Biographies

Amnon Buchbinder
Daniel MacIvor
Camelia Frieberg
Kelly Bray
Christopher Ball
David Buchbinder

Aaron Webber
Rebecca Jenkins
Robert Joy
Callum Keith Rennie

Amnon Buchbinder

Director/Co-Writer

WHOLE NEW THING is Amnon Buchbinder's second feature film. He has been involved with film since receiving a Super 8 camera in 1970 for his 12th birthday. His short films span dramatic, experimental, documentary, and performing arts genres, and have been screened at festivals around the world. Amnon is an Associate Professor of Film at York University where he has been teaching screenwriting since 1995. His critically acclaimed, Genie-winning first feature film *The Fishing Trip* (1998) was made in collaboration with his students. His book, *The Way of the Screenwriter* is to be published fall, 2005 by House of Anansi Press, Toronto. Amnon has taught professional screenwriting workshops and worked as a creative consultant and story editor with filmmakers, producers, and screenwriters across Canada. He was previously a Programmer with the Toronto International Film Festival and Director of Programming at the Vancouver International Film Festival. He received his BFA and MFA in Film at California Institute of the Arts. He lives in Toronto with his wife and two teenaged sons.

Daniel MacIvor

Co-writer, Associate Producer, DON

Born in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia in 1962, performer, writer and director Daniel MacIvor is widely recognized as one of Canada's most remarkable artistic talents. He has been creating theatre since 1986. His plays include *Somewhere I Have Never Travelled*, *Yes I Am And Who Are You?*, *See Bob Run*, *Wild Abandon*, *This Is A Play*, *2-2 Tango*, *The Soldier Dreams*, *Marion Bridge*, *You Are Here* and *In On It*. With long-time collaborator Daniel Brooks, he has created *The Lorca Play*, *House*, *Here Lies Henry* and *Monster*, which have travelled throughout Canada, the U.S., Europe, Israel and Australia. Daniel has written and directed numerous short films, and the features *Past Perfect* (2002) and *Wilby Wonderful* (2004). Daniel can be seen in Thom Fitzgerald's *Beefcake*, Don McKellar's CBC series *Twitch City*, and Jeremy Podeswa's *The Five Senses*, for which Daniel was nominated for a Genie Award. He wrote and starred in two films by Laurie Lynd, the acclaimed short *The Fairy Who Didn't Want to be a Fairy Any More*, and the feature adaptation of his play *House*, and wrote the Toronto-City Award-winning *Marion Bridge* (2002) based on his play.

Camelia Frieberg

Executive Producer, Producer

Camelia Frieberg has been widely recognized as a producer with a remarkable knack for choosing creatively outstanding projects, and accomplishing the near impossible feat of getting them financed. She has worked with many of the most exciting Canadian filmmaking talents of her generation, and is best known for her six-film collaboration with Atom Egoyan, which climaxed with the academy-award nominated and Cannes-multi-award-winning *The Sweet Hereafter*. She was back at Cannes two years later with

Jeremy Podeswa's Genie-winning *The Five Senses*. Previously she had produced Podeswa's first feature, *Eclipse*. Her other producing credits include Srinivas Krishna's indo-Canadian classic *Masala*, Daniel MacIvor's *Past Perfect* and *Wilby Wonderful* and has recently completed producing *Whole New Thing* together with Kelly Bray directed by Amnon Buchbinder. She was an executive producer for Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood*, Lea Pool's *The Blue Butterfly* and Amnon Buchbinder's first feature, *The Fishing Trip*. Frieberg is completing her second screenplay which she is co-writing with Garfield Lindsay Miller and intends to direct the feature film in January/February 2006 in Nova Scotia. Frieberg has been awarded the Toronto WIFT Crystal Award for Excellence in Production and Vancouver's WIFT 'Woman of the Year'. She serves on the board of Astral Media's Harold Greenberg Fund. Camelia relocated from Toronto to rural Nova Scotia six years ago.

Kelly L. Bray

Producer

Whole New Thing marks Kelly Bray's debut as a feature film producer. Ms. Bray has 17 years of legal experience, including 11 years in the film and television industry. Currently, she is producer of a number of feature films in development. Recently, she acted as associate producer, and business and legal affairs consultant on *Body of Knowledge* a documentary for Life, Discovery Health and the IFC, and legal and business affairs consultant on *Lunar Jim*, a television series for CBC, SRC and BBC Kids.

Previously, Ms. Bray was Vice President, Business Affairs at Salter Street Films Limited/Alliance Atlantis where she was directly involved with the producers on the feature film *Bowling for Columbine*, as well as numerous television documentaries, dramas and comedies. Prior to that, Ms. Bray was Vice President Legal and Business Affairs at Sullivan Entertainment and a lawyer in Business Affairs department at Nelvana Limited.

Ms. Bray received a LLB from Dalhousie University in 1985 and an MBA from the University of Toronto in 1996. She also holds a BA from Carleton University. She is a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada and a Barrister of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia.

Christopher Ball, csc

Director of Photography

Christopher Ball began his film career at the age of nine when he discovered a home movie camera in his parent's attic. Several thousand feet of film and some years later, he graduated from Ryerson Polytechnical University in Toronto with a Bachelor of Applied Arts degree. Since then, his work as a Cinematographer and Camera Operator has taken him to Europe, the Caribbean and across Canada. Christopher has shot four theatrical feature films, including *Stolen Heart* (1998), which he also co-produced. He has also produced, shot, assistant directed and directed award winning dramas, TV

series, documentaries, commercials, short films and music videos. Christopher's body of work has toured numerous festivals, aired on HBO, TMN, CBC, VISION TV and several foreign broadcasters and played in theatres worldwide. He has recently received acclaim for the theatrically released feature, *Black Swan*, the short film *Quality Viewing* and the Arctic documentary, *Diet of Souls*.

David Buchbinder

Composer

DAVID BUCHBINDER is trumpeter, composer and cultural inventor. He leads numerous music groups, composes for concert, theatre, film and television, and presents large-scale performance projects and has toured extensively in North America & Europe. He has been involved in the creation and presentation of world music and jazz since 1987 and has earned a reputation as one of its compositional and instrumental leading lights, through the FLYING BULGAR KLEZMER BAND, recently nominated for their third JUNO Award in five recordings, and his creation of ASHKENAZ: A Festival of New Yiddish Culture. He is the composer/creator/producer of SHURUM BURUM Jazz Circus, a unique music-centered extravaganza for eleven musicians and seven movement artists from the worlds of circus and modern dance.

David has composed the scores for five feature films, including his brother's *The Fishing Trip*, and Saul Rubinek's *Jerry and Tom* (starring Joe Mantegna, Sam Rockwell, and Ted Danson), as well the short *Stone of Folly*, awarded the Cannes Film Festival Prix du Jury. He has received numerous grants and resident fellowships for study, composition and performance. He was nominated for the 2002 Louis Applebaum Award for Excellence in Film and Television Composition, and is the recipient of the 2003 ASIFA Animation Society Award for Excellence in Soundtrack Composition.

Aaron Webber

Emerson

Whole New Thing is Aaron Webber's first film, and his professional acting debut. Born in 1989, Aaron has lived his whole life in Chester Basin, Nova Scotia.

He was bitten by the acting bug at age 11, and since then has played numerous roles in community and youth theatre productions at the Chester Playhouse including Gollum in *The Hobbit*, and the title roles in *Peter Pan* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Upcoming is Mortimer in *The Fantasticks*. Aaron has been playing drums for half his life, and his progressive thrash band, Counter Melodies, are now busy recording their first album, *Some Assembly Required*. Bands that inspire Aaron include Propagandhi, Rise Against, and Choke. Aaron recently finished Grade 10 at Forest Heights Community School in Chester Grant, Nova Scotia. His favourite subjects are Math and Physics. He has been a vegan for three years, and hasn't had a haircut since he got a mohawk in grade six.

Rebecca Jenkins

Kaya

Rebecca Jenkins is one of Canada's most beloved performers. She burst into the spotlight with her charismatic acting and singing performance in Anne Wheeler's *Bye Bye Blues*, for which she received a Best Actress Genie Award. Her feature films include *Interstate 60*, *Bob Roberts*, *Darrow*, *South of Wawa*, *Cowboys Don't Cry*, *The Republic of Love*, and Daniel MacIvor's *Past Perfect*, *Marion Bridge* and *Wilby Wonderful*.

On television, Jenkins is well known for her starring roles in the successful CBC/Alliance series *Black Harbour*, and in Atlantis's *Destiny Ridge*. She recently played the lead in *The Sunrise*, one of a series of Margaret Atwood short stories. Jenkins' guest starring appearances include A&E's *Nero Wolfe*, CTV's *The Associates*, as well as *Outer Limits*, *Beyond Reality*, *Avonlea* and *Street Legal*.

Jenkins' many starring roles in movies for television include CBS's *And Never Let Her Go*, *Guilty Hearts*, *Catch A Falling Star*; Disney's *Angels in the Infield*; ABC's *The Ruby Silver*; and NBC's *Bad Prospects*, *Till Death Do Us Part*, *Honour Bright* and *Harvest*, for which she received a Gemini Award nomination as Best Supporting Actress. Her films for cable include Showtime's, *Bad Prospect* and USA Networks' *Split Image*.

Robert Joy

Rog

After attending Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship, Joy returned to St. John's Newfoundland and joined the comedy group CODCO. Although he moved to New York three years later when he was cast as Peter in *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Joy remained involved with the planning of and performing in the Codco feature film *The Adventures of Faustus Bidgood*.

In 1980, Joy made a sensational film debut in Louis Malle's *Atlantic City* opposite Susan Sarandon. He then alternated between work on the New York stage, and roles in other films such as *Ragtime*, and *Ticket to Heaven*. Subsequent film roles include Madonna's boyfriend in *Desperately Seeking Susan*, Harriet's dad in *Harriet the Spy*, Denzel Washington's antagonist in *Fallen* and the troubled father in *The Divine Ryans* (with Pete Postlethwaite). Currently, Joy can be seen as one of the leads in George Romero's *Land of the Dead*. He was one of the leads in the HBO comedy series *The High Life* and the ABC series *MDs*. He has guest starred on many shows including *Alias*, *Without a Trace*, *The Agency*, *Gideon's Crossing*, *Star Trek: Voyager* and *Law & Order*.

Callum Keith Rennie

Denny

Born in Sunderland, England, raised in Alberta, Callum Keith Rennie is one of the most distinctive and celebrated acting talents in Canadian film and television. He has worked

for most of Canada's leading filmmakers, and always makes a strong impression, whether appearing in Canadian classics such as *Double Happiness* (Best Supporting Actor Genie nomination), *Hard Core Logo*, and *Last Night* (Genie winner), Hollywood studio fare such as *Blade Trinity* and *The Butterfly Effect*, or American Indie productions like *Memento*.

Callum's Television work has been equally diverse, ranging from *Due South*, *Twitch City* and *My Life as a Dog* (Gemini winner for Best Actor) to *Battlestar Galactica* and *Steven King's Kingdom Hospital*.

Callum previously collaborated with Daniel MacIvor and Rebecca Jenkins in MacIvor's feature film *Wilby Wonderful*. Recently he also appeared with Rebecca in *Five People you Meet in Heaven*.

Callum has prominent roles in a handful of upcoming releases, including the South Africa-lensed mini-series *Whiskey Echo*, opposite Ving Rhames and Freddie Prinze Jr. in Keoni Waxman's *Pool Hall Prophets*, shot in New Orleans, and in *Snow Cake* with Sigourney Weaver, Alan Rickman, and Carrie-Anne Moss.

Callum resides in Vancouver, British Columbia.

INTERVIEWS

Amnon Buchbinder

Daniel MacIvor

Camelia Frieberg

Aaron Webber

INTERVIEW WITH AMNON BUCHBINDER (Director, Co-writer)

You co-wrote the script with Daniel MacIvor. How did that collaboration come about?

I didn't know MacIvor well, but we shared a producer in common – Camelia Frieberg produced two films that he wrote and directed, and I had developed a series of screenplays with her as producer and she exec produced my first feature. I story edited MacIvor's films, and he acted in a table reading of one of my screenplays and he liked it a lot. He expressed an interest in collaborating, which was really flattering because Daniel is prodigiously talented and probably the smartest writer I'd ever story edited for. Meanwhile, I was developing a script for Camelia, with Daniel consulting as story editor, and she suddenly called me up in August of 2004, after I finished the first draft of a 10-page outline. She wanted to know if I could have a screenplay of it done in time for the film to be shot in January, as she had some money in a performance envelope at Telefilm that had to be spent by then. I was dubious: the story was complicated and I did not feel it could be written very quickly, it wasn't low budget enough, and it was set in the summer! I proposed instead that Daniel and I write something from scratch, something simpler, suited to the available money, and to a winter shoot in Nova Scotia.

And where did the particular idea for this story come from?

MacIvor had just recently told me about having a crush on his male schoolteacher when he was in Grade 5 or so. When the idea arose that we write something from scratch, I took a shot in the dark and said, "let's write a script about that." Not MacIvor's experience in particular, just that basic situation.

What appealed to you about MacIvor's anecdote?

Partly it was feeling, "now there's a story I haven't seen before." Once you start to imagine it as a movie story, of course you are thinking about the kid *doing* something about this crush. And what appealed to me was the combination of innocence – the purity of first love, and the naïveté, of imagining it might be possible to fulfill the crush, combined with the danger of it. I felt from the first moment that there was the potential to take something that could be really creepy and inappropriate, and use it to look at one of life's most beautiful things. Something about that contrast seemed a good way to look at love and see some things about it that we don't often notice.

How did the story develop from MacIvor's anecdote?

Our first thought was that the boy in our story had to be on the adult side of puberty, if we were going to invoke sex, and we always felt there had to clearly be a sexual element to the crush. There have been so many coming of age stories, and few deal directly with the experience of a boy achieving physiological sexual maturity, though certainly every boy goes through it. The discovery of the forces of sex alive in your own

body at that age, my God it's just about the biggest thing that ever happened to you. So that was part of what the story was going to deal with. Then it was a question of figuring out the kid, because clearly while a lot of kids have crushes on their teachers, it's a pretty rare thing for the kid to actually do something about it. So Emerson was conceived from that starting point. Then we thought about the teacher and the adults around him, and decided that since we had this precocious kid who clearly thought he was already an adult, we could contrast him with adults who, like most adults in some way or another, haven't entirely grown up. So that's how I pitched the concept to Camelia before we really got into writing it: "coming of age story in which a precocious kid finds out he's not an adult yet, and the adults grow up."

Presumably she liked it.

Yes. Daniel and I got right to work. After a few days, Camelia informed us that if we could deliver a draft by August 31, she could get in for some funding deadline that would help put the thing together for a January shoot. Now, this is August 24 that she's telling us this, and all we have at that point is the characters and some basic ideas. At first I said, "that's impossible." I'm a big believer in outlining. Daniel and I both write drafts quickly. I could do it in a week – if I had a good outline. Which we did not. But Daniel was convinced we could do it, and the idea made a certain sense for me, as this was the last week I was going to be fully available, since I have a full-time teaching position at York University and the term was going to start at the beginning of September. So we went for it.

How did you and Daniel work?

During that week, I wrote, about 15 pages a day, and at the end of each day Daniel read them and we spent several hours on the phone – he was in Halifax and I was in Toronto - discussing where things might go the next day. That went fine until the last day's writing, up to the moment of the kiss – which by the way was the only specific story event we had already decided on when we started to write the draft! There was one day's writing left at that point, and everything I wrote on that day, the last 20 pages of the script, missed the target totally. And it was August 30. I thought I had failed. And that evening Daniel was leaving Halifax for the Toronto Film Festival to attend the world premiere of his feature film *Wilby Wonderful*, so we couldn't really even discuss the problems. Things did not look good.

So what happened?

Daniel wrote a new final act on the airplane! Actually he figured it out on the airplane, but his laptop battery died, so he took a cab to his Toronto office when he arrived at 11 pm on August 30, and wrote it out and emailed it to me. I loved what he had done, revised it the next morning, and we had the whole thing in to Camelia by deadline.

How similar was that first one-week draft to the one you shot?

I would say 80% the same. The plot actually changed almost not at all; mostly we just strengthened the scenes. We each rewrote everything the other had done, so that it

quickly became impossible to tell who had done what, which is generally the way it should be in a collaboration. I can't say enough how amazing it was to work with Daniel. He is just incredibly creative, and he has the fastest mind I've ever encountered. Plus he's absolutely hilarious. That was almost a problem on set. He cracked me up constantly.

How did you end up as the one directing? Macivor has directed two feature films.

I got to direct this film because of Daniel's support. He had just directed *Wilby Wonderful* for Camelia, and I hadn't directed a film in 7 years, having written several ambitious screenplays during that time that had not been able to attract financing. There was a point at the beginning where either of us might have done it, and in fact Daniel would have been the more pragmatic choice from the producers' point of view because he lives in Nova Scotia. But I badly wanted to and Daniel stepped aside.

You said the story started with MacIvor's anecdote. Is Emerson based on the young MacIvor?

There is some Daniel and some Amnon in all the characters. At 13 I was writing and self-publishing a magazine – a fanzine about horror movies – that had readers on four continents. I was an annoying know-it-all. I grew up in a politically radical household, our family moved to Canada when I was 11 from the U.S. in 1969, I went to a small school where all the other kids had been together since Grade 1, I got beat up. I was constantly getting in trouble for mouthing off politics in class. I never had a crush on a teacher, but I certainly had crushes, on both girls and boys, and always unattainable, or at least I thought they were. I guess that's where I'm different than Emerson, he thinks his unattainable crush is attainable!

Another thing from that point of my life that I gave Emerson was Shakespeare. I still have a copy of the complete works of Shakespeare I bought for \$2.00 when I was 10. At the time, I wanted to be an actor. I used to take Shakespeare recordings out of the library and read the play while listening to the Royal Shakespeare Company.

But meanwhile, the other main character, Don, is a teacher, which is something that you do.

Again, there are bits and pieces of both Daniel and I in all of the characters. What's fascinating is that it was often Daniel who was working me in, and I working Daniel in, but without knowing it. He would say, "how did you know this about me?" and I would shrug, because I hadn't known it, it just seemed right. And the same thing happened with him. The story knew.

In terms of teaching, I realized that one of the things that appealed to me in the original concept was the opportunity to explore some things that I've learned after 10 years of teaching. I've found that there is a strong current of Eros involved if you are a teacher who loves the thing you are teaching about. I am not using Eros as a synonym for sex. I think Eros has more to do with the individual's connection to the larger world, rather

than necessarily another individual. I did a lot of preparatory work with Aaron Webber, the wonderful young actor who plays Emerson. We spent days discussing the script. At one point I asked him, "why do you think Emerson falls in love with Don." He said, "I'm not sure why exactly, but it has something to do with Shakespeare." That's Eros.

Also, as a teacher, I am interested in the way that students inspire teachers. We've seen so many films about inspiring teachers, I wanted to make one about an inspiring student, because honestly, as a teacher I get a lot of my inspiration from my students! It's quite clear to me that the better a group of students – the more awake, interested, etc. – the better I am as a teacher.

There's also Emerson's book – he really starts to fall for Don when Don agrees to read his book.

There is a deep relationship between creativity and sexuality that really interests me. I find it mysterious, I don't understand it. But it's there. I guess that's where Eros comes in, it applies to both. Also, let's remember that this is a story about a writer. Emerson is a writer and an artist. To be an artist is to hunger for experience, and I think it's part of why he does what he does.

You talked about the element of danger. The story could very well have been tragic.

In fact, in writing it, it was always easier to imagine tragic outcomes. Mostly having to do with the weight of societal disapproval and misunderstanding coming crashing down on Don and Emerson. But we were never interested in going there, both because it was the most obvious place to go, and because it didn't interest us thematically. Ultimately we did not want the point of the relationship to be the fact that it was intergenerational, or that it was male/male, or that it was teacher/student. I was looking for the universal, and I wasn't personally interested in the theme, "the forces of normalcy will crush those who are different," that's a cliché where stories about difference are concerned. Tragedy just seemed too easy.

The speech Don gives about comedy and tragedy, in fact, came directly out of my reflection on this fork in the road. I always wanted the film to be a comedy, in that classical sense that Don talks about; and also in that I wanted it to be funny, because it's about human foibles, and how woven they are with human grandeur. Not everyone saw it that way. In fact I think few people read the script as a comedy. Even my co-writer said to me at one point, "I think you have to let go of the idea that this is a comedy." And of course, it's not "American Pie." But personally I find it quite funny. And as we were making it, I think everyone increasingly began to see the humour. Ironically, Daniel, who started out so skeptical, contributed many of the funniest moments!

You seem to have attempted a light approach to rather touchy subject matter.

Definitely, I was clear about the need to do that from the beginning. Let's face it, there are few things more taboo in our culture than the idea of a sexual relationship between

a 13 year old boy and an adult man. Now of course, that does not come about in our story, and we always knew that the one kiss was as far as we would go. We were always clear, and the script was always clear, that Emerson was pursuing Don, and – though the audience can wonder about how Don will respond - by the end it is clear that he has not the slightest inclination to go there with Emerson.

I wanted to treat the longings of all the characters – not only Emerson’s crush on Don, but Don’s sojourns to the washroom for anonymous sex, and Kaya’s affair, and Rog’s depression over the failure of his work – with dignity, even reverence, even though they are all problematic. Tragedy is the human view, and comedy is the divine view, it’s compassionate. I wanted to look at these difficult corners of the human heart with that compassionate eye. The humor lies in the fact that our longings are so much bigger than our awareness, than our ability to comprehend them. We act, and only begin to understand by facing the consequences of our actions.

So you wrote the screenplay in two weeks. How did the production come together?

With amazing speed. Production started January 8, right on schedule.

What about your cast?

Well, it started with Macivor. It was clear from the beginning that he was going to play Don. Imagining him in that role was a big part of what carried me through the writing. I knew he’d be brilliant and I have not been disappointed. I felt like I was directing Jack Lemmon. He has a perfect comic sense but also great heart and depth.

Once the script was written, it was apparent that the most significant immediate challenge would be casting the crucial and extremely challenging role of Emerson. I’d had a very positive experience casting young actors in difficult roles in *The Fishing Trip*, so I felt fairly confident we would find someone, but I also figured it would be difficult and demand an extensive search. When Aaron Webber walked in the door, it hit me that I was wrong about the “difficult” part. Our producer Camelia Frieberg had seen Aaron in an amateur youth theatre production, and a bunch of summers at the Chester Youth Theatre was about the extent of his acting experience. Talk about getting thrown in the deep end! Not only a lead role, but also one with so much complexity and really quite risky in its demands. Well, the boy swam beautifully. It was like we watched Aaron growing up as an actor over our 15 days of shooting. He more than held his own, and he was working with three of the smartest and quickest actors anywhere! Aaron’s very different from Emerson in many ways, but he somehow conveys the perfect mixture of maturity and innocence. There’s no question his performance is the revelation of a terrifically exciting talent.

I’ve been an admirer of Rebecca Jenkins for a long time. She’s one of those actresses who combine great beauty with great truthfulness, and as she matures she just keeps getting better, more truthful and more beautiful. Her performance in *Whole New Thing* burrows right into the most difficult aspects of the character. Kaya is a woman who we

could easily judge a flake. But Rebecca gives her real weight, even while she's also so buoyant in that unique Rebecca way. I never considered anyone else for the role.

Robert Joy, what a pro. There is so much intensity, humor and pathos in his performance. He's a tremendously generous actor. He has these incredibly improvisational skills going back to Codco in the 70's, he's so attuned to where the heart of a scene is. In fact he was challenging us at the script stage. I must have rewritten his potluck explosion scene 10 times because he kept questioning it, and as a result it's one of the best things in the movie.

What were the primary challenges of production?

Lack of time and money. Which is not unusual. But our case was more extreme. We had one week of prep, and had to shoot the movie in 15 days. And it was clear to me that the movie needed real visual delicacy. It needed authentic performances. It couldn't be slapped together. Everyone who read the script had the same reaction: impossible. The crew is too small, the time is too short, and the money is too little. I mean, 15 days? But somehow, something took over, and everyone we wanted to work with said yes! And somehow we all made it happen. In spite of three huge snowstorms that dropped a metre of snow on us.

You know, there's the FAST/GOOD/CHEAP triangle. Supposedly you can only have two of those. Somehow we managed to beat the system.

How?

My short answer is, the same way we wrote the script in two weeks. In other words, the story. I have a theory that a story is, or can be a living thing. And I mean, living even before the writer writes it down. I've written a book about this ("The Way of the Screenwriter," 2005, House of Anansi Press). I believe that our efforts on the film have been pulled into timesaving coherence by the story itself. A lot of my effort as director was geared to support that process.

I described it to the crew this way: that we were living a fairy tale. We wanted to marry the princess. To do this it was necessary to accomplish an impossible task. Climb the glass mountain, say. How do the humble heroes of fairy tales accomplish impossible tasks? They get help from magic, which is another way of saying they work humbly with invisible forces. In our case, the invisible force was the very thing we sought to make manifest, our story.

People think directing is about control. That's nonsense. Of course, you are the one making decisions. For example, it was my decision to cast Aaron Webber as Emerson. But I had nothing to do with Aaron walking through the door. I had nothing to do with the miraculous fact that a 15-year-old boy, with exactly the right look, spirit, maturity, commitment, and skill, happened to live in the Halifax area and show up to our first audition.

The speed with which the script came together characterized the whole process of making the movie, then?

This movie was made in 9 months, from conception to completion – precisely. The first screening was 9 months to the day from the film’s conception. We wrote the script in two weeks, we shot it in 15 days, we cut the picture in 5 weeks. (A normal low budget picture edit is 10 weeks.) I’m still in a state of amazement about this. I do not recommend it, particularly. Many of the filmmakers I admire most, for example Chaplin, Tarkovsky, Tati, Kurosawa, made films in an environment that was rich with time! That’s one of the reason there are scarcely any real masters any more in cinema, filmmakers don’t get the time it takes. But for some reason this movie just wanted to happen fast! I’ve likened it to a heart transplant. We’re transplanting our story from the invisible world to the outer world, and we moved fast so that it would arrive alive.

The 9-month thing is even more outrageous because when the project came together so suddenly, I did not have time to take a leave of absence from my teaching position. I continued to teach classes and handle my administrative duties as Associate Chair of York University’s Department of Film through those nine months, except for during the weeks we were actually shooting. The same with Daniel – he was working on so many other things I lost count.

What was your visual approach to this story

Well, first of all I was determined to shoot it on film. Due to our low budget there was a lot of pressure to shoot DV or HD. But I just felt the story really needed a kind of visual delicacy that would be lost using a video capture medium. I was lucky to have such supportive producers, they bit the bullet and we shot on 35mm. With a 15-day schedule, we needed to keep things simple to create a distinct look but work fast. (Also, because of shooting on film, I had a very low ratio, 7:1, so I had to know what I wanted!) Some of the visual principles were: surround Emerson with light, as if for him there were no boundaries between inside and outside. With Don, do the opposite: rigid boundaries. Overall we went for a feeling of seeing the world with fresh eyes. We also designed some visual progressions in the story, through both lighting and camera movement, but I’d rather let viewers discover those than spell them out. I worked with motifs of fire and ice, and the colours red and blue.

I had amazing collaborators! My dop Christopher Ball is aside from being an excellent dop, a genius operator, and our gaffer Christopher Porter is a force of nature, he travels all over the world working with directors like Jim Jarmusch, Wim Wenders, and Ang Lee. Bill Fleming is one of the most experienced production designers in the country, he works on huge productions, but he comes from a theatre background and was incredibly creative about working with limited means.

What was it like shooting in Nova Scotia?

I want to make all my movies there now! Or at least bring the crew I had there wherever I shoot. I’ve never seen a crew like this. Really incredible at their jobs, and

great people. We had a fantastic time. And obviously the support the province gives to production is great. I wish Ontario would do that.

The only downside, and this wasn't really Nova Scotia in particular – our budget was so low, and our schedule was so short, we were extremely limited in where we could shoot. The locations had to all be very close together, like 5 minutes apart. Except for the family house, which was in Mahone Bay, an hour out of Halifax.

This is the second time you've worked with your brother as composer

I love working with David. We grew up very close, there are just the two of us and we're only 15 months apart in age. Very little words are required for communication. There are two great things about David as a composer. The first is that he really understands the particular role of film music, the way it voices things going on in the story's inner world. The second is that his musical experience is incredibly diverse. I think the score he came up with reflects both of these qualities. He had very little time to compose and record the score, just a few weeks.

INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL MACIVOR (Co-Writer, Associate Producer, Don)

How did you and Amnon end up working together? What was the experience like as a writer and later when you performed the role?

Amnon had worked with me as a story editor for my two feature films "Past Perfect" and "Wilby Wonderful". We had an easy yet intense connection, which eventually developed into a friendship. I loved the co-writing experience, my work in the theatre has always been very collaborative and so it felt natural for me. Early on I had said that I wanted to play the role of Don, Amnon agreed that this would be a good fit, and so that was a given from the get go. The best work I've done as a film actor is when I've had an intimate relationship to the script development.

What do you want to say about the co-writing experience?

I think it's important to be able to collaborate; it's a healthy and satisfying way to make art. One can't "own" an idea; we share ideas with one another and then with an audience.

What would you like to say about the story?

Although at its core WNT is a coming of age story about a 13-year-old boy, it is also about several people, of various ages, growing up. In some ways Emerson has to "grow-down", he has been living in an adult world, he is advanced beyond his age, more developed than the adults he deals with. In Emerson's coming of age he becomes a boy, Don and Rog and Kaya become adults.

What's Don about?

Don is a man whose fear of intimacy has cut him off from his heart. He's in denial about what he really needs in his life.

On the page, Don can go either way. Can you talk about your approach to the character-- some of the choices that made him a likeable guy?

There is much about Don's character than I can identify with. Don is just a guy trying to survive and not get hurt in the process. I simply played him from what I knew.

The relationship between Don and Emerson is rather delicate. What was Aaron like to work with? What did he bring to Emerson and what did he provoke out of Don?

From the beginning it was important to me that Don's relationship with Emerson was not sexual from Don's side of the equation. It is Emerson who has a conflict around the love/sex divide. Aaron was a joy to work with, innocent and wise at the same time. A wonderful, natural actor. Also, I recognized a lot of my younger self in Aaron; this I think made the chemistry more profound, truer.

What about the rest of the cast? What were Rebecca, Bob and Callum like to work with? Kathryn and Hugh?

Rebecca, Callum and Kathryn are part of my film family. I've worked with Rebecca and Kathryn in both of my features, I will work with them again and again I hope. Callum I've known since before he started making movies, I love him, he is a great friend and a pleasure to work with. Hugh is someone I have wanted to work with for a long time. He's a very solid, talented, sexy actor. A perfect "boyfriend" for me. And Bob was someone I've known of for years, from way back in the day when I was working in Newfoundland in the early 80's. He was something of an icon then, having gone off to Hollywood and worked with people like Susan Sarandon and (yikes) Madonna. He's an intense actor with an electric presence.

In many ways, you were a part of making this film happen-- outside of performance. What was your part in the bigger picture?

Having shot both of my features in Nova Scotia and with Camelia most of the crew were "our" crew. I guess for them in some way we were the connectors for them to the project initially, Amnon was not really known to them. I think I also served as a bit of an instigator for Amnon to push through to realizing the project, an optimism coach, helping him to re-evaluate what was possible. I also had input on casting and music. Most areas of the project were a continued collaboration between Amnon and I. The only place I backed way down was on set, we had decided early on that it had to be clear to everyone who the director was. Amnon and I had a code, if I stepped over the line (which I am known to do as a quick-thinking fast-talker) Amnon would say, "Hey Daniel, I love you." It was nicer than saying "Shut up and back off". I don't think he ever had to tell me he loved me though.

What were some of your most memorable moments of making WNT?

I guess for me it was really all about the team, the larger sense of collaboration that was going on. This is a crew that I love dearly; many of them have become friends. Working in sub-zero Nova Scotia temperatures and seeing that everyone was there for the story to be told, that was pretty special. It's what film making should be.

INTERVIEW WITH CAMELIA FRIEBERG (Producer)

How did Whole New Thing come about?

I had been working with Amnon for many years developing screenplays and had also produced two of Daniel MacIvor's films (Past Perfect, 2002) And Wilby Wonderful (2004). I had helped put the two of them together as script and story editors for each other's projects. The chemistry between them was great. They are very different people, creatively. Daniel moves at the speed of light and Amnon comes at every decision with a great deal of deliberation before moving forward. So I was eager to find a project that would really marry their talents.

I had an envelope of money at Telefilm that I could allocate to any project and I felt that if it was possible to create something that could be shot at a certain period of time in Nova Scotia and within a certain budget, it should also be possible for me to raise the remainder of the money to make it become a reality. So I spoke to Amnon and Daniel at about the same time about this idea and as they had just been working on something else together for me, they were both raring to go. I asked for them to put together an outline as soon as possible. I recall that this was sometime in late August and I gave them a week or so to come up with an outline.

When did Thinkfilm become involved and what did that mean for the project?

Amnon sent me an outline that I thought was great. The story was rich with possibilities and the characters were very compelling and fresh. It seemed like a film that could be shot on a very modest budget and I felt confident that I could pitch it and hopeful that I could raise the remaining portion of the money. I called Thinkfilm and spoke directly to Jeff Sackman. I described the project, the people involved and without hesitation he said they would love to come on board. We didn't even have a script at that point, though Amnon and Daniel were hard at work on it. The 1st draft was ready a week or so later and at that time Kelly and I sent it to Michael Baker at Think who gave us some great comments and was very enthusiastic.

How do you know Amnon and Daniel? What gave you the idea that these guys would work well together?

Amnon and I have known each other since we were about 12 years old. I have a role in one of his first super 8 films as we took an art class together. Subsequent to that initial artistic collaboration, we lost touch for many years and then started working together again about 12 years ago. I have developed a number of screenplays with Amnon and acted as Executive Producer on his first feature THE FISHING TRIP (1998). I hire him whenever possible to act as script or story editor because he is such an astute reader and so sensitive to the mystery of how story works. Daniel and I first worked together over 20 years ago when I was a ruthless first assistant director and he was an actor on a feature film. Over the years we have had many fruitful collaborations, as he was integrally involved both as actor and story editor on both of Jeremy Podeswa's features that I produced, ECLIPSE and THE FIVE SENSES.

From a producer's pov, what's been the most surprising thing about the Whole New Thing experience?

I hate to say this because we haven't exactly crossed the finish line yet, but it has felt like this production has been charmed in certain respects. Most astonishing has been the speed with which everything has come together and, despite that speed, we have never felt that we were being compromised artistically. Everything just fell in to place as if it was truly meant to be. There is an enormous delight in working on something that doesn't feel as if it has already had the life sucked out of it. It's hard to describe how nourishing and exciting it is to work on a project with a real consciousness and respect for the organic process of collaboration both in creating a story and keeping and cherishing the integral life force of the story alive at all times. Even at the risk of sometimes working with a script that felt that it was still in a bit of a nascent form, the speed with which this story and project came together really meant that we were tapping something very elemental and truthful. I think every single person who worked on the film felt that their contribution to the whole was integral and they are absolutely right.

How did you meet Kelly Bray and when did you decide she would be a good partner for this film?

Kelly and I had met in the very small film circles of Halifax a year or two before working together. At the time she was working as head of Business and Legal Affairs at Salter Street Films. I remember thinking to myself, she's a smart cookie and one day I'd like to work with her. Once Salter dissolved I had the opportunity to talk to her about developing a project together. It was a script that I had optioned from a writer with limited experience and had asked Amnon to take over. Kelly and I teamed up on that project and developed it together and soon realized that we made a very strong team. I have enjoyed every minute of my collaboration with her and think we complement each other in many different ways. I know we'll be working together for many years to come.

You were the one who first saw Aaron Webber. Can you talk a little about seeing him perform and then bringing him to Amnon's attention?

Three summers ago I took my kids to see a theatre production of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. It was part of an excellent summer youth drama program offered through Chester Playhouse. It was directed by John Shurko with whom I had worked on *Past Perfect*, Daniel Macivor's first feature film. Aaron was astonishing in that play and his raw talent really stood out for me. The following summer we saw him again at Chester Playhouse playing Gollum in *The Hobbit*. It was a jaw dropping performance, as he really was able to reach into the tormented soul of that creature with a maturity that was unbelievable. At that moment I knew that I had to find a film project for him. When *Whole New Thing* was still at the outline stage I already had cast Aaron in my mind. This is obviously not something you can say to the director... So I had to move carefully on this one. When I suggested that Amnon come out and begin casting for the role I told him that I had someone in mind. He was already talking about a nationwide cattle call. Nevertheless, he agreed to see Aaron first. Daniel and Amnon were both

immediately struck by what Aaron embodied and that was the end of the talk about a nationwide search.

What's your conclusion about Aaron's performance in this film?

Aaron grew each day both as a performer and as a young man before our eyes. It was quite incredible because it so happens that as a result of the necessities of scheduling and pragmatics, we played all of the script that takes place at his home with his parents in the first week. All of the material where he moves out into the world of the school and beyond followed in the last two weeks of shooting. This felt like an actual growth pattern for Aaron who grew out of the very hermetic environment of the family unit into his own independent sense of self over the course of the shooting. His work in the film is truly remarkable and I am confident others will recognize it as a breakout performance.

What about the rest of the cast-- how did that fall into place?

Daniel and I had worked with Rebecca Jenkins on both of his features and we both fell in love with her the way that everyone who works with her does. So from our perspective the role of Kaya just seemed like an obvious choice. Amnon was also a huge fan of hers so it was a natural decision to offer her the role. She has really grown into such a rich and graceful place over the last few years, it's been so rewarding to see that happen. Callum is also someone that Daniel and I have enjoyed working with so much on previous projects and even though this was a smaller role, there was no one we could imagine who could embody the sexiness and silence of that man more perfectly than Callum. We were just really fortunate that he was available and interested. Bob Joy came about as a result of a happy coincidence. He went to see a play of Daniel's in Toronto and they spoke after the performance. Amnon had also considered him earlier on in the casting process so when his name came up again we all agreed that he could bring the gravity and sympathy necessary to the role of Rog.

What were some of the most memorable moments of making WNT?

Well, I think we had all prayed for snow as the script called for a specific look of deep winter... But when the first snowstorm hit we all became very aware that you have to be careful what you wish for, you just may get it. Halifax was blanketed in more snow than imaginable and the crew was honestly debating whether we should unroll sleeping bags at our location and just keep working through it all. It's pretty much what we did in a way. Despite three snowstorms in less than two weeks, each of which brought the city to a standstill, we only lost one day of shooting. The crew was unbelievably loyal and talented. We really came together as a big family with Aaron as our young precocious and precious son.

A few years ago you decided to make Nova Scotia your home. Can you talk a little about what it is like to make films here?

Making films in Nova Scotia has been the most rewarding experience imaginable. I was so burnt out when I left Toronto and really needed a way to re-imagine what filmmaking

could mean. For me, this has been the gift of working here. The crews are better than I could have ever imagined and the sense of collaboration has taken me back to the years when I first dove into filmmaking over twenty years ago, when it really was all about creating a family of talented people who gathered around a shared dream of making a story come alive. The province itself is also very supportive with tax credits and equity financing that simply isn't available elsewhere. I also have to sing the praises of the local Telefilm office. It has been a bit of a revelation to have them onside as they have been. They have really supported these projects in every way imaginable so that I have truly felt them to be onside as partners in these endeavours.

INTERVIEW WITH AARON WEBBER (EMERSON)

What were your feelings about getting invited to audition for Whole New Thing?

I was actually really surprised. At the time I had little to no connections to the film industry. I was just so surprised that someone knew who I was to call me up.

What was the audition like?

It was really great. The production didn't have a casting director so when I did the audition I had the opportunity to do it with Daniel MacIvor and Amnon Buchbinder. They gave me a lot of attention during the audition and they let me go through the sides a couple of times.

When you read the script, how did you feel about taking on what a lot of people would say is challenging material? What aspects did you find difficult? What aspects did you find interesting?

The interesting aspects of the script hit me before the difficult ones did. I remember the first time I opened the script reading, "FIRE slowly pull back to reveal that we are in a SAUNA" and from that point I was able to clearly visualize the story. I felt that I was no longer reading the script but that I was in fact watching the film. The next day I read it again and the same thing happened except that I started to visualize the story with myself in it. Then I was able to see how challenging the material was going to be. Some of the scenes I read a couple of times over and felt a certain level of discomfort with, others I read and knew that they were just going to be hard scenes to act. For several days I didn't think that I was going to take the part, in fact during the callback when they offered me the role (at which point I had already read the script a few times through) I decided to myself that I wasn't going to do it. It was a few days later when I realized what an amazing opportunity I had been given - to be brought into the world of film by a group of very talented artists who could see the potential in an inexperienced actor such as myself - that I decided that it was impossible for me to not do the film.

What was it like to get inside the skin of the character Emerson? What parts of him did you relate to? What parts did you not?

Emerson is a very interesting boy and close to impossible to completely understand. As the end of the film shows us, his own parents who are the closest people in the world to him "can't even begin to imagine what he's dreaming". Emerson has a lot going on in his life and a lot going on in his imagination. What is important about Emerson is that he feels that knowing yourself and being yourself isn't a matter of fulfilling society's expectation, being what you're supposed to be or what other people want you to be, but rather finding out who you really are by exploring the world around you. In other words "I feel therefore I am" as opposed to "I am therefore I feel." That's really the essence of the film for me. It is about several different people, all with different problems and issues that they have to deal with and they're all on a journey to find the right path that will make things better for themselves. That doesn't always mean going back to how

things “used to be” because in many cases the problems that exist started because of the way things “used to be”. Making solutions to their life problems can be made by them making changes in their lives, by these people creating a “Whole New Thing” for themselves. In many ways I can relate to Emerson, the way that he struggles as a youth, how he is challenged to survive in a world full of “scary grown-ups” who seem to have a path of expectations that are all set out for him to follow. Emerson is a very interesting individual. I hope you have the opportunity as I once did to meet him!

What kind of preparation/rehearsal did you have with the director and the other actors?

Amnon and I met several times during the months before shooting started. We would talk about the script, the characters. We would also talk about Emerson, who he was how he related to the other characters and issues in the script. Then on two separate days, we had the opportunity for rehearsal. One day Daniel, Amnon and I journeyed to the school to check out a couple of rooms and rehearsed several scenes while we were there. We also rehearsed at the house that in the film belonged to the Thorsens with Daniel, Robert, and Rebecca on the last day before shooting started.

What was it like acting on film after your previous experience being in theatre?

Very difficult. After having acted in the theatre for the past five years where I learned how to project my voice and exaggerate all my body movements and facial expressions so that 150 people could see what I was doing, acting on the set of Whole New Thing was challenging at first. It took nearly two days for me to really get the hang of acting on set. Thankfully I was with a group of very understanding cast and crew who seemed eager to give me tips and help me out. John Shurko the 3rd AD on set I had known for several years as the director of the theatre school I went to every summer. A combination of Amnon and he led to me being able to tone everything down and get the scenes done correctly.

What was most difficult about the filming? Most enjoyable?

Most difficult? See the last question. Most enjoyable would have been the chance to meet all the people I did. Everyone I met on set was really friendly and so knowledgeable. They were all so into what they were doing. The crew showed me how things worked and what everything was. The actors gave me tips and clued me in on all the “good things to know while shooting a movie”. Stuff like “action means go, and cut means stop you’ve done something wrong”. And I’ll never forget when Daniel showed me how to read my first call sheet (sob, sob, sob) that memory is still very sentimental to me.

What was it like to work with Daniel MacIvor?

Working with Daniel was (in short) an excellent opportunity for me as an actor. His level of experience as a professional actor and his understanding of the script and the characters involved (him being the co-writer) made creating Emerson and his

relationship with Don Grant an inspiring task. Daniel seemed to be very good at creating little things on the spot. During blocking he'd try something new which would make me try something, etc. Some scenes had a kind of snowball effect.

What was it like to work with Rebecca Jenkins and Robert Joy?

The first thing I noticed about Rebecca and Robert when I got on set was that they became friends with me really quick. 24 hours after having met them I felt as though I had known them my whole life. They were both so friendly to me on set. When I look back on it now, the relationship I had with the two of them in real life very much contributed to the family dynamic we shared in the film. It was great to have had the opportunity to work with the two of them.

How about the director, Amnon Buchbinder?

Amnon understood the script more than any other person involved in creating the film. He was so great to work with and was so influential when it came to creating Emerson. We had so many great conversations before the shoot began, that when I arrived on set I was confident about my character, I was confident about the story and I was confident of what my job was. He helped me through everything all the way through the shoot. I can only hope to have the chance to work with him sometime in the future.

Did you see any of the footage before the film was completed? What was it like to see the completed film?

The first time I actually saw anything from Whole New Thing was at a cast and crew screening in Halifax NS. It was really amazing to see how it all cut together. Because all of the scenes were shot out of sequence you can't really appreciate the work you've done until you see them all together at once. I was also really interested in all of the scenes that I wasn't in and the scenes that I wasn't even on set to see shot.

How do you feel that working on Whole New Thing affected you?

Working on Whole New Thing was overall a great experience. I had the opportunity to meet so many amazing, educated and artistic people and to learn about acting in film and about the film industry in general. I got a lot of contacts that will help me get future roles. Whole New Thing really put me on the track of where I want to go as an actor. The name of the film is so appropriate, don't you think?

Credits

THINKFilm
Presents

A
Palpable Productions
and
Acuity Pictures
Production

An
Amnon Buchbinder
Film

starring
in alphabetical order

Rebecca Jenkins

Robert Joy

Daniel Maclvor

Callum Keith Rennie

and introducing
Aaron Webber

COSTUME DESIGNER
Lin Chapman

PRODUCTION DESIGNER
Bill Fleming

MUSIC COMPOSED BY
David Buchbinder

EDITED BY
Angela Baker

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Christopher Ball, csc

LINE PRODUCER
Anita McGee

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER
Daniel Maclvor

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Camelia Frieberg

PRODUCED BY
Camelia Frieberg
and
Kelly Bray

WRITTEN BY
Amnon Buchbinder
and
Daniel Maclvor

DIRECTED BY
Amnon Buchbinder

Produced and Developed with the
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Produced with the participation of the
Nova Scotia Film Development Corporation



Produced with the participation of
ASTRAL MEDIA THE HAROLD GREENBERG FUND



Produced in Association with



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Produced with the assistance of the
Nova Scotia Film Industry Tax Credit

and

THE CANADIAN FILM OR VIDEO
PRODUCTION TAX CREDIT



CAST

(in order of appearance)

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| EMERSON | Aaron Webber |
| ROG | Robert Joy |
| KAYA | Rebecca Jenkins |
| DON | Daniel MacIvor |
| MS. MCPHERSON | Kathryn MacLellan |
| TODD | Drew O'Hara |
| JEFF | Ryan Hartigan |
| BUDDY | Geordie Brown |
| DENNY | Callum Keith Rennie |
| CLAIRE | Jackie Torrens |
| MESSAGE GUEST | Lisa Lelliott |
| LAURA | Leah Fassett |

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| DEBRA | Samantha Spencer |
| TERI | Rebecca Regan |
| DON'S MOTHER | Marguerite McNeil |
| CLAUDE | Hugh Thompson |
| MRS. COLLEY | Linda Busby |
| OFFICE MAN | Brian Heighton |
| School Kids | Dylan Aucoin |
| | Alexandra Ashley |
| | Caleb Buchbinder |
| | Stephanie Chapman |
| | PJ Crosby |
| | Leah Cunningham |
| | Toni Grossett |
| | Bruce Murphy |
| | Branden O'Brien |
| | Colin Rogers |
| | Mitchell Taylor |
| Washroom Men | Terry Coolen |
| | Darcy Lindzon |
| Teachers | Dennis Brown |
| | Pauline Kaill |
| | Veronique MacKenzie-Bourne |
| Party Guests | Susan Bone |
| | Peter M. Davison |
| | Armand H. DeGrenier |
| | Don Himmelman |
| | Sally Lawrence |
| | Rob Moir |
| | Grace McKnight |
| | Paul Newton |
| 1st Assistant Director | Mary Reynolds |
| Lighting Designer | Christopher Porter |
| APM/Prod. Coordinator | Nancy MacInnis |
| APM Assistant | Megan Forsythe |
| 2nd Assistant Director | Bruce Zwicker |
| 3rd Assistant Director | John Shurko |
| Daily 3rd Assistant Director | Lisa Fennell |
| Production Accountant | Colleen McMaster |
| 1st Assistant Accountant | Shawn Kerr |
| Script Supervisor | Maggie Thomas |
| 1st Assistant Camera | John Cochrane |
| 2nd Assistant Camera | Becky Parsons |
| Loader | Andrew Stretch |
| Stills Photographer | Chris Reardon |

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Production Sound Mixer | Jim Rillie |
| Boom Operator | Frank Kavanagh |
| Sound Technician | Andrew Rillie |
| 1st Assistant Art Director | Ulo Greer |
| Props Master | Keith Currie |
| Props Assistant | Michael Pettit |
| Set Decorator | Darlene Lewis |
| Assistant Set Decorator | Colin Paul |
| Construction Coordinators | André Lacroix |
| | Richard Fraser |
| Special Effects | Clark Biesele |
| Best Boy Electric | Flora Planchat |
| Lighting Technician | Gerald Gillis |
| Dailies | David Wishart |
| | Louis Boudreau |
| Generator Operator | Gary Mitchell |
| Key Grip | Doug Betts |
| Dailies | Rick Gillis |
| | Gary Sandover |
| | Dean Skerrett |
| Wardrobe Set Supervisor | Melinda Cook |
| Set Costumer | Diana Redmond |
| Daily Costumer | Victoria Rockwell |
| Key Make-up | Betty Belmore |
| Key Hair | Barbi Jollota |
| Daily Make-up/Hair | Colleen Ryan |
| Locations Manager | Margo Mosher Swain |
| Locations Assistant | Lynn Rotin |
| Location Security | Brian R. Shaw |
| Transportation Coordinator | Kelly Peterson |
| Transport Captain | Melvin (Merv) Geddes |
| Drivers | Debi Jonatanson |
| | Kristin Arason |
| Chef | Lothar Mayer |
| Catering Assistants | Katharina Mayer |
| | James Pike |
| | Krista MacDonald |
| Key Craft (HFX) | Philip Dinn |
| Craft Assistant | Richard Colp |
| Craft (MB) | Robin P.G. Joost |
| | Wolfgang Munch |
| Post Production Coordinator | Anita McGee |
| Post Production Supervisor | |

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| & Assistant Editor | Roz Power |
| Assistant PM (prep) | Fay Sullivan |
| Production Assistants | Mike Snider Joe McKibbon Matt Johnson Kathryn Mallinson |
| Assistant to Mr. Buchbinder | Mike Thorn |
| Guardian to Mr. Webber | Marjorie Webber |
| Background Casting | Susan Foulkes |
| Casting Assistant | Tara Bennett |
| Stand-In | Rose Marie Walton |
| Fight Coordinator | Réné Curley |
| Safety/First Aid | Blair Christian |
| Tutor | Suzy Kerr |
| Associate Producer | |
| Development | Geneviève Appleton |
| Legal & Business Affairs | Rob Aske Stewart McKelvey Stirling Scales Kelly Bray |
| Post Production Accountant | Jeff Corkum |
| Auditors | Lyle Tilley Davidson |

Thorsen House provided by Grace McKnight & Don Himmelman
Puppets by Elyse Pomeranz and Susan Cain

"The Fire of Evermore"
Illustrations by Lynn Rotin
Text by Ishai Buchbinder

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Post Production Sound | Tattersall Sound and Picture |
| Supervising Sound Editor | Jane Tattersall |
| Dialogue Editor | Graham Jones |
| Sound f/x Editor | Robert Warchol |
| First Assistant | Jean Bot |
| Mixers | Allen Ormerod Kirk Lynds |
| Tattersall General Manager | Peter Gibson |
| Dolby Sound Consultant | Thomas Kodros |
| Titles and Opticals | Film Effects Inc. |
| Production Laboratory | THE LAB in Toronto Inc. |
| Transfer House | Eyes Post Group |
| Post Production Laboratory | Deluxe Toronto |
| Timer | Vaughn Killin |
| Negative Cutter | Catherine Rankin |

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Fraser & Hoyt Insurance Ltd.

Financial Services provided by
RBC Royal Bank

Original Music
Composed, Arranged, Conducted & Produced by
David Buchbinder

Music Recording Engineered & Mixed by
David Travers-Smith

Mark Duggan: Kalimba, balofon, marimba, percussion
Kirk Elliot: Violin, flutes, bowed psaltery, vielle, celtic harp, etc.
Andrew Downing: Acoustic bass
John Johnson: Recorder, flutes
Levon Ichkhanian: Oud, guitars, bouzouki
Music Copyist: Mike Sawarna

Songs Performed by The Hidden Cameras:

“I BELIEVE IN THE GOOD OF LIFE”
“WE OH WE”
“BUILDS THE BONE”

Words and Music by Joel Gibb
Published by A Common Enemy

THANKS TO

Michael Baker
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Gilles Bélanger
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Diane Boehme
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Ralph Holt

Noah Kenneally
Denise Langis
Mary Young Leckie
Shira Levine
Al Lindsay
John Lutz
Maureen Dorey-Lukie
Nan MacDonald
Michelle Marion
Kent Martin
Ken MacIntosh
Wendy MacKeigan
Ann MacKenzie
Steve Mayhew
Mike McAdam
Neil McAdam
Shandi Mitchell
Paul Norris
Jeremy Podeswa

Rob Power
Richard Rapkowski
Anne Reynolds
Rob Riselli
Kent Ritchie
Jeff Sackman
Don Sinclair
Sarah Thomas
Gary Vermeir
Gord Whittaker
Bruce Webber
Corinne Webber
Linda Wood
Doug Woods

Community of Mahone Bay
Community of Spryfield
Gazebo Café
Halifax Regional Municipality
National Film Board of Canada
South Centre Mall, Spryfield
Stéphanie Martel, Manus Humana line

Faculty, Staff and Students of the
Department of Film, York University

Filmed on location in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia
and Halifax Regional Municipality

ACTRA DGC IA 667 IA 849

PS ATLANTIC THE LAB in Toronto Eyes Post Group
Tattersall

DOLBY DELUXE Laboratories FUJI FILM

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