

MAY DECEMBER

Official Competition / Cannes International Film Festival 2023

Rocket Science presents a MountainA Production a Gloria Sanchez Production A Killer Films Production
In association with Taylor & Dodge and Project Infinity

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Logline:

Twenty years after their notorious tabloid romance gripped the nation, a married couple buckles under the pressure when an actress arrives to do research for a film about their past.

Director's Statement:

MAY DECEMBER explores one of the great talents of the human species: our colossal refusal to look at ourselves. Through the narrative premise of a film being made about a particular American family, a family born out of a public scandal that became a national media event, an actress descends upon Savannah, Georgia to study the woman she'll be portraying and the lives that have carried on as a family ever since. It is through this delicate process of narrative exploration that this strange, unsettling story is framed, and that we come to learn about the past, the matriarch at the center of the scandal and her young husband, a Korean American, whom she began her affair with when he was 13-years old.

All lives, all families, are the result of choices, and revisiting them, probing them, is a risky business. But it's hard to think of more volatile romantic choices than these, and all the more so when so many defenses have been called upon to shut out such unanimous contempt and judgment from the world. The rigid stasis Elizabeth, the actress, begins to penetrate is the result of two stubborn decades of Gracie and Joe Atherton-Yoo's persistence, now on the final days leading up to their two remaining children's high school graduation.

But as Elizabeth observes and studies Gracie and her world, and gets to know her husband Joe, her reliability as narrator begins to falter. The honest portrait she hopes to erect, her own investment in revealing truths, becomes clouded by her own ambitions and presumptions, her own denials. And as Joe comes more and more into focus, both for us and to himself, we begin to see more similarities between Elizabeth and Gracie than either seem capable of seeing in themselves. Through this quiet shifting of perspective, the film moves from single to double to triple portrait.

What so appealed to me about Samy Burch's exceptional script, which Natalie Portman sent me in 2020, was how it navigated potentially volatile subject matter with a kind of observational patience that allowed the characters in the story to be explored with uncommon subtlety. It simmered with moral and narrative ambiguity which, as a film, would enlist the viewer into an active and excited state of watching and questioning. With such compelling material, the project provided me the long-awaited opportunity to work with Natalie Portman—to ignite the reflexive whirligig of an actress playing an actress—and if that were

not enough, to pair her with Julianne Moore in the fierce and inscrutable role of Gracie. Completing the triad would be no simple feat; but the casting of Charles Melton as Joe would serve to fill in the storied past and depict the treacherous present with astonishing subtlety.

Immediate cinematic associations were undeniable: *PERSONA*, of course, and other of Bergman's films which put women in confrontation with one another, or which put characters, in key moments, in direct address to the lens, like in *AUTUMN SONATA*, *WINTER LIGHT* or various films of Godard's. This direct address, when our three central characters confront themselves in mirrors, would become a through-line in *MAY DECEMBER*. In addition, films about older women and younger men, like *THE GRADUATE*, *SUNSET BOULEVARD* or *SUNDAY BLOODY SUNDAY* (or the more traditional inverse variety, like in *MANHATTAN* or *LOLITA*). But particularly those examples in which a stylistic minimalism, like in *THE GRADUATE* or *MANHATTAN*, is nearly indistinguishable from how the film succeeds.

Due to shifting schedules the production was launched quickly during the second half of 2022, creating a kind of synergy that would benefit our budget and extremely tight shooting schedule. But everyone involved took hold and shared in the creative strategies that provided both an economy of style and a way, I hoped, to invigorate how the film would be experienced. One might call it an excited, at times mordant, suspense, often reflected in the film's uncommon use of music. Michel Legrand's score for Joseph Losey's 1971 film, *THE GO-BETWEEN*, began as a working document during my preparatory stages, but quickly spilled into production, where the score was played throughout the film's shooting (in ways I'd never used a singular existing score before) and on through the cutting of the film. Composer Marcelo Zarvos, in the end, used the Legrand score in combination with his own compositions for his arrangement of the film's completed music. The result, like many of my films, along with its stylistic references, is a kind of dialogue between the themes and narrative strategies in *MAY DECEMBER* and those of other films, directors and eras of filmmaking it evokes.

The film's remarkable script and its three lead performances (filled out by Cory Michael Smith, Elizabeth Yu, Gabriel Chung, Piper Curda, among others) and all of the beauty and nuance provided by my creative partners, have restored what I believe is still possible in cinema: to find identification in the least likely places, and be compelled and surprised by a story and its characters without ever being entirely comfortable with who is right or wrong.

—Todd Haynes

Cast:

Elizabeth Berry....NATALIE PORTMAN
Gracie Atherton-Yoo....JULIANNE MOORE
Joe Yoo....CHARLES MELTON
Georgie Atherton....CORY MICHAEL SMITH
Mary Yoo....ELIZABETH YU
Charlie Yoo....GABRIEL CHUNG
Honor Yoo....PIPER CURDA
Tom Atherton....D.W. MOFFET
Morris....LAWRENCE ARANCIO

Crew:

Directed by
TODD HAYNES

Screenplay by
SAMY BURCH

Story by
SAMY BURCH and ALEX MECHANIK

Produced by
NATALIE PORTMAN
SOPHIE MAS
CHRISTINE VACHON
PAMELA KOFFLER
GRANT S. JOHNSON
TYLER W. KONNEY,
JESSICA ELBAUM
WILL FERRELL

Executive Producers
MADELEINE K. RUDIN
THOMAS K. RICHARDS
LEE BRODA
JEFF RICE
JONATHAN MONTEPARE
SAMY BURCH
ALEX BROWN
THORSTEN SCHUMACHER
CLAIRE TAYLOR

Co-Produced by
TIMOTHY BIRD

Director of Photography
CHRISTOPHER BLAUVELT

Production Designer
SAM LISENCO

Editor
AFFONSO GONÇALVES, ACE

Costume Designer
APRIL NAPIER

Casting by
LAURA ROSENTHAL

Music from the film THE GO-BETWEEN by MICHEL LEGRAND

Adaptation and original music by MARCELO ZAVROS

About The Cast:

Natalie Portman | Actor & Producer (MountainA)

Natalie Portman is an Academy award-winning actress (BLACK SWAN), director, author, and activist. In Summer 2022, Portman was seen on the big screen with her return to the Marvel universe as 'Jane Foster' in THOR: LOVE AND THUNDER.

Previously Natalie appeared in Pablo Larraín's film, JACKIE, in which she starred as First Lady Jacqueline F. Kennedy. For the role, Portman was nominated for an Academy Award, a Golden Globe, a Screen Actors Guild Award, a BAFTA Award, and won the Critics' Choice Award. She wrote, directed, produced, and starred in A TALE OF LOVE AND DARKNESS, which made its world premiere at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival and its North American premiere at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival. Other past film credits include Noah Hawley's LUCY IN THE SKY, Brady Corbet's VOX LUX and Alex Garland's highly anticipated second feature, ANNIHILATION.

Natalie and her producing partner Sophie Mas recently inked a first-look TV deal with Apple TV+ for their production company MountainA. Through this deal, they are producing the Apple Original limited series LADY IN THE LAKE, which will be Natalie's TV acting debut. MountainA is also producing the upcoming drama MAY DECEMBER from director Todd Haynes where Natalie will star opposite Julianne Moore. Additionally, MountainA is producing a three-part docu-series ANGEL CITY on HBO which follows the creation of the National Women's Soccer League team, Angel City Football Club, of which Natalie is a founder. Natalie's other past production credits include the documentary EATING ANIMALS, which she executive produced and narrated. The film examines mankind's dietary choices and is based on Jonathan Safran Foer's memoir.

In addition to her film work, Portman devotes her time to several humanitarian causes, with an emphasis on supporting women and girls.

In Fall 2020, Portman released her debut picture book, *NATALIE PORTMAN'S FABLES*, which is a New York Times' Bestseller.

Portman is a Harvard graduate with a degree in psychology and studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Julianne Moore | Actor

Julianne Moore is known for her breadth of work with many memorable performances from the big to the small screen. She is an Oscar, BAFTA and Emmy award winning actor, and the first American woman to be awarded top acting prizes at the Berlin, Venice and Cannes film festivals.

Most recently, Moore starred in the A24's *SHARPER* alongside Sebastian Stan and John Lithgow. She played a leading role in *WHEN YOU FINISH SAVING THE WORLD*, directed by Jesse Eisenberg and premiered at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival. In 2021, she starred in Apple TV+'s *LISEY'S STORY*, based on the Stephen King novel, and *DEAR EVAN HANSEN* opposite Ben Platt. Moore can next be seen in *MAY DECEMBER*, directed by Todd Haynes and premiering at Cannes Film Festival as well as SKY TV and AMC's limited series *MARY & GEORGE*. She is currently filming *ECHO VALLEY* directed by Michael Pearce for Apple Films.

In 2015, Moore won an Academy Award, Golden Globe, BAFTA and SAG Award, among others for her role in *STILL ALICE* with Kristen Stewart, Alec Baldwin and Kate Bosworth. In 2014, she received the Palme D'Or, Best Actress at the Cannes Film Festival for her work in *MAPS TO THE STARS*. Moore is the ninth person in Academy history to receive two acting Oscar nominations in the same year for her performances in *FAR FROM HEAVEN* (Best Actress nomination) and *THE HOURS* (Best Supporting Actress nomination), after receiving many critics' awards as well as SAG and Golden Globe nominations for both. In 2012, she won the Primetime Emmy award for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Miniseries or a Movie for her role as Alaska Governor Sarah Palin in the HBO original movie *GAME CHANGE*. This role also garnered wins at the 2013 SAG Awards and Golden Globe Awards. Her additional honors include the Excellence in Media Award at the 2004 GLAAD Media Awards, the Silver Bear Award at the 2003 Berlin International Film Festival, the 2002 Copa Volpi as Best Actress at the Venice Film Festival, the Actor Award at the 2002 Gotham Awards and the "Tribute to Independent Vision" at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival.

Moore's has starred in over 70 films including: *GLORIA BELL* (also credited as Executive Producer), *THE GLORIAS*; *AFTER THE WEDDING*; *KINGSMAN: THE GOLDEN CIRCLE*; *HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY 1 & 2*; *CRAZY, STUPID, LOVE*; *THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT*; *A SINGLE MAN*; *THE FORGOTTEN*; and *THE BIG LEBOWSKI*.

Julianne is a NY Times bestselling author for her children's book series *Freckleface Strawberry*. In 2015, she became Founding Chair of the Everytown for Gun Safety Creative Council, a creative community established to help amplify the movement to end gun violence in America.

Charles Melton | Actor

Charles Melton is one of Hollywood's most versatile actors who continues to captivate audiences with his charismatic performances on film and television.

Melton recently wrapped production on *MAY DECEMBER* directed by Todd Haynes in which he stars opposite Julianne Moore and Natalie Portman. His past feature credits include the Paramount+ comedy *SECRET HEADQUARTERS* opposite Owen Wilson and Sony's *BAD BOYS FOR LIFE*, the highly

successful third installment of the BAD BOYS franchise. In 2019, he played the lead role of 'Daniel Bae' in the Warner Bros.' feature, THE SUN IS ALSO A STAR, opposite Yara Shahidi. Directed by Ry Russo-Young and based on the New York Times best-seller by Nicola Yoon, the film chronicles the whirlwind romance between 'Daniel,' the son of Korean immigrants, and 'Natasha,' played by Shahidi.

On television, Melton is currently shooting The CW's series RIVERDALE. In its seventh and final season, the series is a modern-day reimagining of the Archie Comics. He can be seen in the Peacock mystery-drama series POKER FACE opposite Natasha Lyonne and in Mel Brooks' HISTORY OF THE WORLD, PART II for Hulu.

In 2021, he was announced as a Special Olympics Global Ambassador.

About the Crew:

Todd Haynes | Director

Passionate about the visual arts since childhood, Todd Haynes studied art and semiotics at Brown University. In 1987, he created the short film SUPERSTAR: THE KAREN CARPENTER STORY with Barbie dolls. Since then, he has tirelessly continued to address questions of gender and identity. His first feature film POISON, inspired by Jean Genet, was released in 1991 and won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance. After SAFE (1995), which revealed Julianne Moore, he conjured David Bowie during the Ziggy Stardust period in VELVET GOLDMINE (1998), then paid homage to Douglas Sirk in FAR FROM HEAVEN (2002). In 2006, he had six actors play Bob Dylan in I'M NOT THERE. He then directed the mini-series MILDRED PIERCE (2011), before returning to feature films with CAROL (2015), WONDERSTRUCK (2017), DARK WATERS (2019), followed by the documentary THE VELVET UNDERGROUND (2021).

Samy Burch | Writer & Executive Producer

Samy Burch is a screenwriter based in Los Angeles. MAY DECEMBER is her first produced screenplay. Other upcoming credits include COYOTE V. ACME (Warner Bros.) starring Will Forte and Wile E. Coyote.

Christopher Blauvelt | Director of Photography

Christopher Blauvelt is a third-generation film craftsman who combines his extensive experience with a fresh creative eye. A protégé of Harris Savides, Chris worked with Harris on films for directors Noah Baumbach, David Fincher, Tom Ford, Spike Jonze and Gus Van Sant.

Chris' work as a cinematographer includes Sofia Coppola's edgy commentary on spoiled youth, THE BLING RING, THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ELEANOR RIGBY for director Ned Benson, Jeff Preiss' directorial debut LOW DOWNt Low Down. Sundance awarded him Best Cinematography at the 2014 festival. I AM MICHAEL for director Justin Kelly premiered at Sundance in 2015. Chris lensed INDIGNATION the directorial debut of Focus Features veteran James Schamus. In 2017, Chris was chosen by one of his lifelong mentors Gus Van Sant to shoot DON'T WORRY HE WON'T GET TOO FAR ON FOOT, based on the autobiography of the Portland Oregon native, and quadriplegic cartoonist John Callahan. He then went on to shoot the directorial debut of Jonah Hill'S MID90'S and director Autumn De Wilde's EMMA, starring Anya Taylor-Joy, for Working Title and Focus Features.

Chris has a long working partnership with Kelly Reichardt, including MEEK'S CUTOFF, NIGHT MOVES, CERTAIN WOMEN, and FIRST COW. Their newest film SHOWING UP was in the main competition at the Cannes International Film Festival in 2022 and opened in theaters in April.

In addition to his award at Sundance, Chris has been named by Variety and Indiewire as a "Top DP to Watch".

Sam Lisenco | Production Designer

Some of Sam's credits as production designer include; JUDAS AND THE BLACK MESSIAH (dir. Shaka King; Nominee— Best Picture, Academy Awards 2021, Winner— Movie of the Year 2021, AFI), KAJILLIONAIRE (dir. Miranda July, 2021), BEASTIE BOYS STORY (dir. Spike Jonze, 2020, Nominee— Outstanding Documentary, 2020 Primetime Emmy Awards, Winner— Best Music Documentary, Critic's Choice Documentary Awards 2020), UNCUT GEMS (dir. Josh and Benny Safdie, 2019, Nominee— Critics Choice Award, Best Picture 2020, Nominee— Film Independent Spirit Awards, Best Picture 2020, Nominee— Gotham Awards, Best Picture 2019, National Board of Review Top Ten Film of the Year 2019), Independent Spirit Award Best Feature nominated FRANCES HA (dir. Noah Baumbach, Nominated— Film of the Year, London Critics Circle 2012), and FX's THE BEAR (dir. Christopher Storer; Winner— AFI Awards 2023, Best TV Program, Nominee— Best Comedy Series, Critics Choice Awards 2023, Winner— Best New Series, Film Independent Spirit Awards 2023), Lisenco was both designer and producer for the Safdie Brothers on their 2003 breakout feature DADDY LONGLEGS (Breakthrough Award— Gotham Awards (2009), Cassavetes Award— Independent Spirit Awards (2010), Official Selection— Cannes Film Festival (2009), Official Selection— Sundance Film Festival (2010), International Critics Prize Winner (2010). Additionally, Lisenco designed many of Lena Dunham's early short films, as well as her first narrative feature, CREATIVE NONFICTION (Official Selection— SXSW Film Festival (2009).

New York born and raised, Sam Lisenco received his BS in Film at Boston University in 2006.

Affonso Gonçalves, ACE | Editor

Affonso Gonçalves has edited over forty films, including three Sundance Film Festival winners: Benh Zeitlin's BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD, Debra Granik's WINTER'S BONE, and Ira Sachs' FORTY SHADES OF BLUE. Gonçalves' other film credits include; Jim Jarmusch's ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE, PATERSON and THE DEAD DON'T DIE; Ira Sachs' LOVE IS STRANGE and LITTLE MEN; Jonas Carpignano's three films, including the latest A CHIARA. He worked on the first season of the HBO series True Detective with Cary Joji Fukunaga. He teamed up with Todd Haynes on the HBO mini-series Mildred Pierce the movies CAROL, DARK WATERS and the Documentary THE VELVET UNDERGROUND. He edited Maggie Gyllenhaal's first film, THE LOST DAUGHTER, Olivia Wilde's second movie DON'T WORRY DARLING and Gina Gammil and Riley Keough Camera D'Or winner WAR PONY. His next project is MAY DECEMBER with Todd Haynes.

April Napier | Costume Designer

April Napier came to costume design from a background in fine arts and has amassed an impressive list of credits in feature films, commercials and music videos.

Prior to MAY DECEMBER, she designed costumes for Kelly Reichardt's SHOWING UP, which made its premiere at Cannes 2022, and stars Michelle Williams, Hong Chau & André 3000. This was her 3rd collaboration with Reichardt; previously she designed 2020's FIRST COW, starring John Magaro & Orion Lee, and CERTAIN WOMEN, starring Kristen Stewart, Michelle Williams, and Laura Dern.

April also designed the Oscar-nominated LADY BIRD, directed by Greta Gerwig, BOOKSMART, the directorial debut of Olivia Wilde and THE MUSTANG, directed by Laure Clermont-Tonnere.

April's other films include: the Charlize Theron thriller DARK PLACES, and BAD WORDS, directed by and starring Jason Bateman, A GLIMPSE INSIDE THE MIND OF CHARLES SWANN III, helmed by Roman Coppola, with Bill Murray, Jason Schwartzman and Charlie Sheen, GENTLEMEN BRONCOS, directed by Jared Hess, HESHER, starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt & Natalie Portman, and directed by Spencer Susser, as well as JULIA, starring Tilda Swinton and directed by Erick Zonca, which made its debut at the 2008 Berlin Film Festival.

Napier received the CDG award for short form Apple Spot, VERTICAL CINEMA, directed by Damien Chazelle, and has worked with a host of distinguished directors including Robert Altman, Wong Kar Wai, Michael Mann, Kim Gehrig, Jonathan Glazer, Francis Lawrence, Jake Scott, and Mike Mills.

Napier's numerous music video credits include the award winning "Closer" by Nine Inch Nails, directed by Mark Romanek. She also has designed videos for The Killers, Radiohead, Foo Fighters, Alanis Morissette, The Wallflowers, David Bowie, Marilyn Manson, Morrissey, Macy Gray, Lenny Kravitz, Wyclef Jean, Beth Orton, Live, Soundgarden, and Bush among many others. Her styling work has been featured in Rolling Stone, Interview, Paper Magazine and Details.

Christine Vachon & Pamela Koffler | Producers (Killer Films)

Christine Vachon and Pamela Koffler co-founded the independent production company and industry stronghold, Killer Films, in 1995. Over their nearly 30 years, they have produced more than 100 films, including some of the most celebrated and important American independent features: KIDS, FAR FROM HEAVEN, BOYS DON'T CRY, I SHOT ANDY WARHOL, CAROL, HAPPINESS, HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH, ONE HOUR PHOTO, STILL ALICE, and FIRST REFORMED. In television, they executive-produced the Emmy and Golden Globe-awarded miniseries MILDRED PIERCE for HBO as well as the Emmy Award-winning limited series HALSTON for Netflix. Recent releases include Janicza Bravo's ZOLA (A24), six-part documentary series, PRIDE (FX), and Todd Haynes' THE VELVET UNDERGROUND (Apple TV+). Upcoming releases include Celine Song's PAST LIVES (A24), Rebecca Miller's SHE CAME TO ME, and Aaron Schimberg's A DIFFERENT MAN (A24).

Sophie Mas | Producer (MountainA)

Sophie Mas is the co-founder of MountainA with Natalie Portman. Working across Europe and the US, her producing credits include, among others, Luca Guadagnino's CALL ME BY YOUR NAME, Robert Eggers' THE WITCH, James Gray's AD ASTRA, and Antoneta Alamat Kusijanović's MURINA, winner of the Caméra d'Or at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival.

Jessica Elbaum & Will Ferrell | Producers (Gloria Sanchez)

Gloria Sanchez Productions is led by Jessica Elbaum and Will Ferrell. Jessica Elbaum originally launched Gloria Sanchez Productions in 2014 with a focus on female voices in comedy, and from that point the company has expanded into multiple genres and platforms in both film and television. Elbaum was named one of Variety's "10 Producers to Watch" shortly after the launch and appeared in the Hollywood Reporter's "The 40 Most Powerful People in Comedy" in 2019 and 2021. Actor/Writer/Producer Will Ferrell's credits include ANCHORMAN: THE LEGEND OF RON BURGUNDY, ELF and STEP BROTHERS, among many others. Gloria Sanchez Productions has two multi-year first-look deals, one in television with Netflix, and a film deal at 20th Century Studios. The Netflix deal came on the heels of the incredible overnight success of DEAD TO ME, with its third and final season now streaming. In 2020,

DEAD TO ME was nominated for four Emmy Awards including “Outstanding Comedy Series” and “Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series” for both Christina Applegate and Linda Cardellini.

In 2021, BARB & STAR GO TO VISTA DEL MAR, starring Kristen Wiig and Annie Mumolo was released under the Gloria Sanchez Productions banner. The movie was nominated for a Critics’ Choice Award in the category of “Best Comedy.” Following BARB & STAR’s critical success, Gloria Sanchez will reteam with Kristen Wiig and Annie Mumolo for Disney’s untitled Cinderella Evil Stepsisters live-action film, for which Wiig and Mumolo will pen the script. Also in the pipeline, THEATER CAMP directed by Molly Gordon and Nick Lieberman, starring Ben Platt, Molly Gordon, Noah Galvin, Jimmy Tatro, Ayo Edebiri, Owen Thiele, and Patti Harrison; and the HBOMax quired AM I OKAY? starring Dakota Johnson and co-directed by Tig Notaro and Stephanie Allynne. Gloria Sanchez recently wrapped an untitled comedy for Hulu starring Sandra Oh and Awkwafina, in which the two will play sisters, alongside Ferrell, Holland Taylor, and Jason Schwartzman.

Gloria Sanchez’s recent film credits include Christmas musical SPIRITED starring Ferrell and Ryan Reynolds for Apple TV+, EUROVISION, starring Will Ferrell and Rachel McAdams, as well as HUSTLERS, starring Jennifer Lopez and Constance Wu, which garnered awards recognition and grossed over 150 million dollars worldwide. Gloria Sanchez also produced Olivia Wilde’s critically acclaimed feature directorial debut, BOOKSMART, starring Beanie Feldstein and Kaitlin Dever.

Grant S. Johnson | Producer (Project Infinity)

Grant is the Principal of Project Infinity, a production and financing company that manages Grant’s body of work and seeks out other opportunities in the entertainment industry.

Grant recently directed action-thriller AGENT GAME (Lionsgate and Sony Pictures) starring Dermot Mulroney, Jason Isaacs, and Mel Gibson.

Grant and Project Infinity produced and financed the upcoming Todd Haynes’ drama MAY DECEMBER, starring Natalie Portman and Julianne Moore, and the upcoming comedy SUMMER CAMP, starring Diane Keaton, Kathy Bates, and Eugene Levy.

Grant wrote, directed, and produced the previous films FRAT STAR and NIGHTHAWKS. Grant is also a producer of the Broadway musicals THE BAND’S VISIT, winner of 10 Tony Awards, including Best Musical, and A BRONX TALE.

Tyler W. Konney | Producer (Taylor & Dodge)

Tyler W. Konney is a producer and executive. A New York City native, he graduated from the University of Southern California and serves as the President of Taylor & Dodge. He involves himself in all aspects of film, including development, financing, packaging, production, and sales.