

Mongrel Media Presents

# NIAGARA MOTEL

A Film By  
Gary Yates

Based on George F. Walker's *Suburban Motel* plays

Starring

Anna Friel, Craig Ferguson, Wendy Crewson, Caroline Dhavernas and  
Kevin Pollak

(2005, Canada, 90 min.)

Distribution

mongrel  
MEDIA

1028 Queen Street West  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6J 1H6  
Tel: 416-516-9775  
Fax: 416-516-0651  
E-mail: [info@mongrelmedia.com](mailto:info@mongrelmedia.com)  
[www.mongrelmedia.com](http://www.mongrelmedia.com)

Publicity

Bonne Smith  
Star PR  
Tel: 416-488-4436  
Fax: 416-488-8438  
E-mail: [starpr@sympatico.ca](mailto:starpr@sympatico.ca)

High res stills may be downloaded from  
<http://www.mongrelmedia.com/press.html>

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### Logline

*Niagara Motel* captures the comic and tragic moments in the lives of eight people, each going through a personal crisis, as they cross paths at a low-rent motel in Niagara Falls.

### Synopsis

Niagara Falls is a romantic destination for newlyweds and a symbol of beginnings, promise and potential. Not this Niagara Falls. In *Niagara Motel*, tragedy waltzes with comedy in an intense dance of life. *Niagara Motel* is about people who are at the Falls for other reasons than tourism. They are all, for various reasons, in personal crisis and at the end of their tether. They are adrift, as in a fishbowl, where we can observe them thrashing, struggling and fighting for their lives. The characters veer from one extreme to another. You can laugh at them one moment and see right through to their flaws the next.

One of them is **Loretta Bourgogne** (played by Caroline Dhavernas), the young, sexy and pregnant waitress at the Motel's diner. She has her hands full with people who all want something from her. There's **Dave** (Tom Barnett), the underachieving stapler salesman who is dating Loretta to impress his boss. There's **Michael** (Kevin Pollak), the small-time hustler who wants to exploit Loretta's "special quality" in the world of adult porn videos. And there's **Gilles** (Normand Daneau), the father of Loretta's unborn baby, who wants her back home in Quebec. Gilles is the best friend of Loretta's dead husband, Stephane, who was eaten by a bear. Loretta also has to deal with Stephane's parents, **Claude Gagnon** (Pierre Collin) and **Lucille Gagnon** (Daniele Lorain), who charge into the restaurant demanding that she return home because they have rights to her unborn child. Loretta struggles to get out from under all these people who see her not as who she is but who they want her to be.

Staying in one of the rooms at the Motel is **Denise** (Anna Friel), a recovering drug addict, and her husband **R.J.** (Kris Holden-Ried), an ex-con who mended his life in prison. The couple is desperately trying to regain custody of their baby from social services. They manage to completely alienate themselves from social worker **Helen Mackie** (Janet-Laine Green), the person who holds their fate in her hands, when Denise, whose raw desperation to get her child back burns white hot, sets off a bizarre and hilarious chain of events and buries Helen alive (believing she is dead).

In another room are **Henry** (Peter Keleghan) and **Lily** (Wendy Crewson), a middle-class couple in a marriage that is precariously on the edge of collapse. Their story is about another kind of failure entirely; the sour unhappiness of being middle aged and not amounting to much. Henry, a former corporate manager, is out of a job and is looking for one in Niagara Falls. Lily is bitterly unhappy because she's used to so much more - and now they're on the verge of

bankruptcy. Henry tries in vain to find gainful employment but can't stomach the humiliating job interviews he knows are beneath him. He feels so degraded that he picks fights and even contemplates suicide. Knowing that some money has to come from somewhere, Lily makes friends with **Sandy** (Krista Bridges), a prostitute who works out of the Motel. Lily figures that if Sandy can make so much money, why can't she?

**Phillie Phillips** (Craig Ferguson), the Motel's woeful, drunken janitor, is a ghost of a man. Like a Greek chorus, Phillie lurches around the lives of the three sets of characters, all the while moving toward his own epiphany, a fall over Niagara Falls.

The owners of the Motel and restaurant are **Boris** (Damir Andrei) and his daughter **Sophie** (Catherine Fitch), immigrants from Serbia. Boris, a loudmouth, yells at his staff and at his customers. Kind-hearted Sophie meddles in the lives of others, especially Loretta's. In the middle of a screaming fit, Boris drops dead in the restaurant. Sophie invites Loretta to stay at the Motel where Loretta could have her baby and live in peace.

## Background

**George F. Walker's** 1997 *Suburban Motel*, six separate plays that take place in the same motel room with interlocking characters, had achieved a cult status among theatre goers in Canada. When Producer **Bernard Zukerman** of Indian Grove Productions saw the plays, he fell in love with them and bought the film rights. "They were funny, sad and tragic," he says, but there was too much material to fit into a film. Zukerman, Walker and his writing partner **Dani Romain** finally chose three of the six plays to work into a film script. Zukerman explains: "We chose the Loretta story ["Featuring Loretta"] because it was so funny; the Henry and Lily story ["The End of Civilization"] because it features a middle class couple and economic despair; and the R.J. and Denise story ["Problem Child"] because it is about a working class couple whose crisis is so dramatic."

By the summer of 2003, Zukerman and Producer **Michael Prupas** of Muse Entertainment Enterprises, had a feature film script that they were immensely proud of. "George demonstrated again why his writing is so compelling and unique," Zukerman says. "We were laughing uproariously one moment then moved to tears by a powerful scene a minute later."

Getting the financing of the film together was the next step – and perhaps the greatest challenge. "We first got Mongrel Media on board as the Canadian distributor," says Prupas. "Then Christal Films, an affiliate of Lions Gate Films, came in as distributor for the province of Quebec. To secure more financing and to be able to tap into the enormous talent pool that the U.K. offers, we decided to co-produce with a British company. It was a haphazardous process and we certainly had our ups and downs with financiers and distributors."

Both Zukerman and Prupas knew what kind of movie they wanted to make. Says Prupas: “We wanted to make a film that is accessible, entertaining and original, without it being particularly Hollywood. When **Phyllis Laing** of Buffalo Gal Pictures joined the producers’ team, she wanted *Niagara Motel* to be a film in which “audiences see a piece of themselves and a piece of their own lives,” she says.

The search for a director led to **Gary Yates** who had just received critical acclaim for his first feature film *Seven Times Lucky* at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival. Done on a shoestring budget, “it was visually rich with extraordinary performances,” says Zukerman. Walker and Romain also liked Yates and a true collaboration began.

Yates considered the *Niagara Motel* script “very different from *Seven Times Lucky* in that *Niagara Motel* is a true, sprawling ensemble piece very much like Robert Altman’s or P. T. Anderson’s films, two filmmakers I really like... This was a directorial challenge: to work with such a large cast, so many characters and multiple story lines.

## The Script

**Simon Cozens**, the editor of *Niagara Motel*, was struck by the “emotional integrity of the characters’ stories.” These are universal stories, he says, of “people caught in desperate situations, not necessarily through faults of their own, trying to pull themselves out, but sometimes getting themselves into more trouble.”

**Caroline Dhavernas**, who plays Loretta, says that everyone on the set, the crew and cast, loved the script. “We had moments during the shoot that we had trouble keeping it together and not laughing... These dark comedies are always so much fun because it’s like laughing at a funeral. It’s so intense and pathetic that you have to laugh.”

**Wendy Crewson**, who plays Lily in the film, says she loves the dark side that Walker explores in his writing. “It’s bleak and heartbreaking yet funny at the same time. This is so difficult to do and he does it so well.”

**Ian Wilson**, the director of photography, read the script in England and was instantly drawn to it. “I adore dysfunctional characters because they’re more interesting than ordinary characters. Every character in this script has some kind of malignant dysfunction or shortcoming, which is bound to make good cinema. Another thing that attracted me, too, was the fact that there are several stories in it. Each one can be treated differently visually.”

**Anna Friel**, who plays Denise, a former prostitute trying to get her baby back from social services, says the script “was the most well written in a pile of scripts I had received and the dialogue was very sharp. I loved it.”

### **Casting**

Yates looked forward to casting the film because “the emotional lives of the characters are so compelling,” he says. “None of them are tourists at Niagara Falls. They are there for other reasons. But their desperation threatens to suck them into the currents of the Falls. They are on the verge of madness; some in a high comic sense, and some in a tragic sense.”

“We were very lucky because actors who read the script loved the material,” says Prupas. Zukerman adds that the script gave performers a chance to do both comedy and drama. “It’s a rare opportunity for actors to do both in one film,” he says.

The producers and Yates approached actors from the UK, English-speaking Canada, Quebec, and the US. Yates points out that “one can’t cast in a bubble... You need to cast people who compliment each other within their stories and also in contrast to the other stories, both physically and psychologically.” In the end, “We ended up with a spectacular cast,” Yates says. “Casting, they say, is 80 per cent of the director’s work. If you cast the film properly, the director gets to sit back and let it happen.”

**Craig Ferguson** says he joined the cast because he was attracted to the “haunted quality” of the script. “For me, the Niagara Motel is like the Haunted House for dead relationships. It kind of sang to me in a funny way,” he explains. “Another reason I wanted to do this movie because it’s about well rounded characters who have comedic, tragic and desperate moments in their lives, just like all people have. My character Phillie is more psychologically complicated than the usual, normal characters I’ve been asked to play.”

**Kevin Pollak**, who had starred in Yates’ *Seven Times Lucky* just a year earlier, read the *Niagara Motel* script that Yates had sent him. “He asked me as a friend to give him feed-back as to whether or not he should do it.” Pollak couldn’t think of one negative thing to say about the script. “This script was so solid, interesting and funny,” he says. He felt a connection with Michael, one of the characters who courts Loretta. Pollak describes Michael as “a hustler who’s either charming or annoying, depending on how you look at it.” He told Yates, “Let’s do it!”

### **The Challenges**

“We had many obstacles thrown at us, mostly by private and governmental financiers,” says Prupas. “To qualify the picture for one financing rule required us to start shooting by the end of August 2004. So we had a very short time to scramble with casting and pre-production.”

Laing concurs. “Bringing this project to fruition was a miracle. We had three days to get everything going. We had to find an instant office, an instant production facility and an instant crew. And everything had to be top notch to put the best possible film together... And serendipitously it all happened.”

Prupas is amazed at how, “one way or another, all the pieces haphazardly or suddenly came together. We kept dodging bullets that would have killed this picture on many different occasions and we got through it all. I think part of the strength of this film is derived from the hazards we’ve lived through.”

### **The Preparation**

Finding the principal location, a motel, was high on Laing’s list of things to do as soon as the project was green lit. Production Designer **Deanne Rohde** was hired on a Saturday, to start working on Monday, but she started right away. “It was really important to find a motel before anything else because it was the anchor piece from which would develop the look of the whole movie,” Rohde explains. “So I got into my car with Art Director **Ricardo Alms** and we drove about 12 hours and visited every little town in a 40-mile-wide circle around the city of Winnipeg. We finally found what we were looking for in Steinbach.”

The Dutch Connection Motel in Steinbach was “way too nice,” says Rohde. “We had to make it look run down... The owners were shocked when they saw what we did to it.” Rohde and her crew repainted it, built additional rooms, gutted an unused laundromat and made it into the motel office and Phillie’s room. Luckily, there was an existing trailer park behind the motel and the production rented one of the trailers for Loretta’s home.

Another location was Selkirk, Manitoba. A small Prairie town, its main street had to be turned into the tourist Mecca of Niagara Falls. Rohde explains: “Niagara Falls is like a little Las Vegas, colourful, glitzy and over the top. We sent someone to shop for tourist souvenirs at Niagara Falls and she came back with a van-full of towels, hats, socks, shopping bags, purses and even back-scratchers.” Much to Rohde’s surprise, her shoppers also found Niagara Falls moving pictures and knickknacks in an Asian store in Winnipeg!

The motel’s restaurant, a key location, was also found in Selkirk. The “Riverside Grill” restaurant was cute and pristine, like the motel, says Rohde, “So our painters had to age the walls to make them look tobacco stained. The owners were horrified, but we cleaned it all up after the shoot.”

Two motel rooms were built in studio: Lily and Henry’s Honeymoon Suite was decorated in various reds to symbolize heat and tension. The walls and ceiling in R.J. and Denise’s room were full of cracks to represent the state of their degenerating relationship.

Location Manager's **Michael Cowles** greatest challenge was "to recreate Niagara Falls in the middle of the Prairies," he says. "We worked with what we have in Manitoba: the Red River, the St. Andrews Lock and Dam in Lockport and some picturesque towns and villages." The lock and dam, commonly known as the "Lockport Bridge," was originally constructed in 1910 to regulate water levels and facilitate navigation along the Red River from Lake Winnipeg to the City of Winnipeg. This structure served very well as a stand-in for Niagara Falls. Two scenes were shot here: One was of Phillie wading into the water in preparation for his suicidal plunge over Niagara Falls. The other was of Henry, sitting on one of the towers above swirling water, contemplating suicide.

"Because our locations were so far apart," explains Production Manager **Anastasia Geras**, "we had to double up on set dressers and construction crews."

Costume Designer **Linda Haysman** had no prep time to build costumes so she shopped for them. "We spent days going through racks and racks of used and new clothing at Value Village stores in Winnipeg," she recounts. She found wonderful clothes that defined the essence of the characters: overalls for Phillie, bouncy skirts for Loretta, worn-out cardigans for Denise, checked construction shirts for R.J., mismatched jackets and ties for Dave, flamboyant shirts for Michael, dowdy, long sleeved jerseys for Sophie and even high-heeled "hooker boots" for Sandy, the motel prostitute. For Boris, the Serbia-born motel owner, Haysman visited Winnipeg's ethnic stores and found a Russian-style, knitted vest "that, along with the gold bracelet, necklace and watch that he wears defined Boris at a glance."

## The Shoot

Principal photography went exceptionally well, despite the fact that some of the key crew had never worked together before. The DOP Wilson arrived from England. His camera operator **Chris Tamaro** and two camera assistants, **Glenn Pineau** and **Meredith Bugden** came from Toronto. Wilson's gaffer, Michael Auger, came from Vancouver and his key grip, **Francois Balcaen** from Winnipeg.

**Tom Barnett**, who plays Dave in the film, says that Yates had "a steady calm about him that is a wonderful asset, especially in a crazy comedy like this when things could bubble over into real crazy-land. Gary kept calm and kept a lid on things, bringing a sense of reality to the film."

"It was the most relaxed set I had ever seen," says Geras. "The teamwork and effort that the crew put into this picture constantly amazed me. Not every set is like this. For many in the crew, the opportunity to work with Gary and with a veteran DOP like Ian Wilson was very special. They all believed they were working on a very special movie."

The two most difficult days of the shoot, according to Geras, were the ones at the Lockport Bridge. She explains: "One has to take a lot of precautions with an actor going into rushing water. Even though the water wasn't deep where Ferguson walked in, anything can happen, so you have to make sure that nothing does. We had cranes on bridges and roads shut down and emergency lifesaving crews on standby." The day went smoothly and was "great fun," says Geras. "Everybody rose to the challenge, all the way through."

Another scene shot here was of Henry sitting high up on the Lockport Bridge overlooking very turbulent water. To be able to do the scene, Peter Keleghan had to climb down a ladder from the bridge to one of its concrete bases. He was held in place with wire, with a stuntman hiding behind him. "We shot the scene from cranes above so that you don't see how safe and secure the actor actually was but it looked really scary," Geras recounts.

## The Camera

"We were very fortunate to get one of England's greatest cinematographers; Ian Wilson," says Zukerman. "He has so much experience that he can light a room very quickly. He helped make our tight schedules."

Comedy is often lit in high key light, but Yates wanted to go the other way - with low key, darker, dramatic lighting. "Ian Wilson was thrilled to do that," says Yates. "Ian had of course shot *The Crying Game*, one of the great neo-noirs. We were very much on the same page creating a darker look for this picture.

Wilson says that he uses lighting to amplify the text and the characters. In *Niagara Motel*, each set of characters is very different. "Lily and Henry's sequence, for example, is spooky and darker than the others. I used just one light on them which gave a stark look with silhouette effects. But I don't think too much about lighting. It just comes naturally. If you tend to think about lighting effects they become an affectation," he says.

With R.J. and Denise, Wilson used warmer lights. "These two are the saddest of them all, and perhaps I was sympathetic to their plight. Again, I lit them by instinct." The Loretta sequences, because they are so comic, were lit in a higher key, says Wilson.

Wilson used Cooke lenses for the cameras which "give brilliant colours and are incredibly sharp with wonderful contrast," he says. The film stock used was Kodak, ASA 50 to 500.

As for the movement of the camera, camera operator Chris Tamaro says that Wilson wanted it to "evaluate the characters in an objective fashion. In some movies the camera is part of the action as it amps up the tension or covers the

characters in a close way. But our camera was the impassioned observer, letting the characters bring themselves and their situation onto film.” Because the story is so character driven “we placed the cameras at the best angle to understand the intent and irony of their dialogue,” he adds.

Cousins, the film’s editor, says that the camera in *Niagara Motel* finds “interesting, new ways of looking at little elements. I love the shots at high angles where you can see the characters in the foreground and in the background and see things played out in one shot, rather than doing cut and reverse shots all the time... the camera movements lead you into the story so it’s fluid and natural.”

## The Experience

“Winnipeg has fantastic crews and services to produce films. *Niagara Motel’s* crew created an environment where the cast could walk on the set completely relaxed, confident and ready to bare it all,” Yates says.

Laing concurs: “Everyone really enjoyed working on set because we had a fun, calm, relaxed and respectful crew. A lot of that came from Gary and Ian. They set the tone.”

Wilson gives a lot of kudos to Yates for being so collaborative. “He was always open to suggestions. Other directors aren’t and they don’t like their vision being impaired by other people’s ideas.”

## The Main Characters

### Phillie – Played by Craig Ferguson

*Phillie is the motel’s woeful, inebriated janitor, who lurches drunkenly around the three sets of characters, all the while moving toward his own epiphany, a fall over Niagara Falls.*

Phillie is a broken man. He came from Scotland to Niagara Falls on his honeymoon. Then tragedy struck. While on the tour boat “Maid of the Mist,” his bride fell overboard. She drowned and her body was never found. Phillie took a job at the Niagara Motel to be near where his young wife died.

Phillie is not able to move on. Everyday he relives the great tragedy of his life. He copes by drinking himself to oblivion. But he is moved by the plight of others and wants to help. “He’s an optimistic, psychotic, suicidal, screw-up of a man,” Ferguson declares.

Phillie moves through the film like a drunken ghost. When he tries to help Denise and R.J., he almost causes another disaster to happen. “This is a man who cannot tie his own shoelaces but he still tries to help, and fails,” Ferguson says. “Phillie is finally forced into a position of dealing with his problems. But he can’t deal with them so he decides to kill himself instead by throwing himself off Niagara Falls. By some miracle he lives and is baptized by the Falls. He walks from his own little corner of hell, out of the darkness.”

**Lily - Played by Wendy Crewson**

*Lily feels betrayed by her husband and angry that they’re on the verge of bankruptcy. Knowing that money has to come from somewhere, she considers prostituting herself for it.*

Lily’s life and marriage are going downhill. Not only has her husband, Henry, lost his job, he had an extramarital affair. She feels enormously betrayed and angry that Henry has screwed up so badly. To make sure that Henry doesn’t fail again, she leaves her children with relatives to accompany him to Niagara Falls, where he has a job interview.

“They’re a couple in enormous crisis. They’ve been living beyond their means and the bottom has fallen out. They’re desperate, thinking they’re sinking further. So they panic. They do extreme things. So much bitterness and blame comes up from under a marriage when a crisis like that hits. Lily is so angry she can barely control her resentment and the sarcasm in her voice,” Crewson says.

After a fight with Henry, Lily finds herself alone at the Motel, with no cash and overdrawn credit cards, feeling abandoned. She notices a prostitute working in the Motel. The hooker drives a red sports car, comes and goes as she likes, seemingly has money to spend and fun relationships with guys. The two women become friendly and go to a bar. The next day Lily considers joining the world’s oldest profession.

“She finds out that she can’t,” Crewson recounts. “It’s a humiliating experience that ultimately makes her sympathetic to her husband and empathetic to his situation. She realizes that they’re in fact partners and that they must work together to pull their lives back up.”

**Denise – Played by Anna Friel**

*Ex-drug addict Denise spirals dangerously out of control when her baby, who she feels was unjustly taken from her, is not released from foster care.*

Denise and her husband R.J. return to Niagara Falls for what Denise thinks is a reunion with her baby daughter, who had been taken from them and placed in

foster care. But social worker Helen Mackie judges Denise as “not ready” to take on the responsibilities of home and motherhood.

“Denise is holding in a huge balloon of anger. She tries to suppress it knowing it will spoil her chance of getting the baby back - but then it just all comes out,” says Friel. To drown her pain and anger, she spends the night carousing with the bad boys she used to know at the pool room. But she spirals even more out of control. “She has a desperate want and need for her baby, who was unjustly taken by social services. She won’t feel whole until she has the baby back. She doesn’t feel needed by anyone, except by her baby,” says Friel.

When Helen comes for a surprise “site visit” to Denise’s room at the Niagara Motel, Denise attacks and wrestles her down. Helen is knocked out by the TV set that drops to the ground and Denise thinks she’s killed her. Frantic and hysterical, she, with Phillie’s drunken help, attempts to bury the body at the back of the motel. R.J. arrives in the nick of time. Denise, in the grip of despair, takes a gun and drives to the home of the foster mom, determined to take the baby by force. R.J. has followed her and once more saves them.

“My character goes from hope to hell,” says Friel. “She goes from hoping that’s she’s getting the baby back to total and utter despair.” Friel predicts that audiences will feel sympathetic towards Denise. “She’s endearing, even though she’s so full of anger.”

Friel describes Denise as “quite dysfunctional who takes out her anger on R.J. But, still, there’s a lot of love between them and they’re co-dependent. You see that at the end of the film when he says ‘I need you’”.

### **Michael – Played by Kevin Pollak**

*Michael is a small-time hustler who appreciates Loretta’s sexuality and wants to exploit her “special quality” to make adult porn videos.*

Michael comes to the Niagara Motel restaurant for bacon and eggs every morning. Naturally he notices the beautiful, young, new waitress, Loretta. In fact, he is very aroused by her and believes that she has a “special quality” that excites men. So he makes her a proposal. He will promote her as an exotic dancer and take her to Japan where men appreciate such special qualities.

Pollak describes his character Michael as a “shark that swims until he finds food and then he pounces.” For him, Loretta is a means to putting money in his pocket.

Loretta is interested in making money quickly, but she balks at being an exotic dancer and going to Japan. Then Michael convinces her to star in some adult porn videos that he will produce and direct. She finally agrees to star in his film,

but to Michael's chagrin, asks Dave to be her "stud." Michael buys a stolen video camera from a thief and he's set to go. The porn production evening in Loretta's trailer is the comic highlight of the film.

"Michael is a hustler for sure, but whether he's charming or annoying depends on how you look at it," says Pollak. "Michael may also be smitten by Loretta. He is definitely into the game of pursuing her, along with Dave and Gilles."

**Loretta** – Played by **Caroline Dhavernas**

*Sweet and naïve Loretta, the beautiful, young waitress at the motel restaurant, has her hands full with all the people who want something from her.*

Loretta's life is not simple. Her husband, Stephane, a reckless thrill seeker, was eaten by a bear on a camping trip. Discovering that he had cheated on her, Loretta sleeps with his best friend Gilles, and becomes pregnant. To get away from his and her family's demands, she leaves her home in Quebec and comes to Niagara Falls to start a new life. But both Gilles and her in-laws arrive at the restaurant demanding that she get herself back home. In the meantime she has become friendly with Dave, a customer at the restaurant, and she has also been propositioned by Michael to work for him as an exotic dancer or porn star.

Loretta is a natural beauty and men are attracted to her. She doesn't try to be sexy purposefully. Dhavernas explains: "I think a woman is sexy when she's not trying too hard and her sexuality comes naturally. I think Michael sees that quality in her and wants to exploit it in some way.

"Somehow Loretta has always been surrounded by men who are complete idiots. She finally realizes that idiotic men have been a pattern in her life and she's ready to say no to them," Dhavernas adds.

Even though she's trying to get away from people who tell her how to live her life, Loretta learns that life has a way of forcing decisions. She will become a mother, unless she decides not to keep the foetus. She realizes that this difficult, life-changing decision has to be hers alone.

"I fell in love with Loretta when I read the script," says Dhavernas. "She's sweet but also strong. Everyone in her life thinks she's too naïve and so they're always telling her what to do. Her situation is very sad but funny at the same time.

"Somehow I'm not worried for her. She grows and becomes stronger. I know that in the end she's going to be just fine."

**Dave – Played by Tom Barnett**

*Dave, a stapler salesman in a boring job, believes that Loretta will turn his life around but he must win her away from the attentions of the hustler, Michael, and her ex-boyfriend Gilles.*

Dave is a salesman who works out of his car selling staplers and office supplies. He's a regular, nice guy with a boring life and boring job. Then he meets sweet Loretta at the Niagara Motel restaurant and they start dating. Dave hopes that if Loretta meets his boss she would greatly impress him and the boss would give him a promotion.

Barnett explains: "Dave is at a crossroads in that he wants his life to change. He desires more out of life and thinks that Loretta may be the answer. He hopes that Loretta could turn his luck around."

But a small-town hustler, Michael, shows up and threatens Dave's cozy relationship with Loretta. Dave becomes anxious that Michael might possibly take Loretta away (to Japan to work as an exotic dancer) or that she may haplessly get involved in some ugly business. "Dave is ready to fight for the woman he loves and for the life he hopes to achieve with her," says Barnett.

However, Dave is not much of a hero. "He's a pushover; if something is suggested to him he'll go for it," says Barnett. Sophie, the Motel owner's daughter, whispers to Dave that Loretta will be sold into "white slavery" by Michael and that Dave must stop him. Dave panics, kidnaps Michael, threatens his life and forces him into the trunk of his car. Loretta manages to calm him down and Michael is released. Ultimately Dave agrees to perform in a porno film directed and produced by Michael only because Loretta needs the money. The porno production doesn't go as planned and Dave is humiliated once more, but not before turning in a side-splittingly funny performance.

"Everything is funny about Dave," says Barnett, "especially when he loses control and thinks his relationship with Loretta is threatened... But I also think that Dave is at the moral centre of the film. He's the nice guy caught up in extraordinary circumstances. He's just struggling for a sense of goodness and love and a nice house with a picket fence. He's everyman; he's the guy in the street who gets little carried away with things."

**Henry – Played by Peter Keleghan**

*Henry lost his job and tries in vain to find gainful employment but he can't stomach humiliating job interviews. His badgering wife, Lily, tries to take control, but sends their lives and marriage spinning further downhill.*

Henry finds himself in a nightmare that is all too familiar to many. Middle aged, married, with kids and house mortgage to support, Henry is out of a job and into

the crisis of his life. Too young to retire and too experienced for entry positions, Henry is resentful that he has to “beg like a dog” at humiliating job interviews. To make things worse, he had had an extramarital affair and his wife found out about it. Now Lily is determined to make sure Henry doesn’t mess up again and accompanies him to Niagara Falls where he has a job interview.

Although they had been used to staying at fancier hotels, they check in at the dingy Niagara Motel because they can’t afford anything better. After a fight with Lily, Henry goes to be interviewed for a job that he says “I could have done blindfolded when I was 20.” After sitting for an hour in the waiting room with other candidates, he is dismissed because someone else was hired. Totally dejected, he goes to a shipping yard asking for work but is again rudely sent away. Then Henry snaps and hits the guy with a garbage can lid. The man beats him up severely.

As if his life wasn’t bad enough, it gets worse. Henry watches Lily go off with the hooker who works next door at the Motel. Later he sees them drinking with two Johns at a bar. “Henry assumes that his wife is turning tricks to get the money that she desperately wants and he so desperately needs,” says Keleghan.

“At this point Henry realizes that he’s hit absolute bottom and nearly throws himself into the Niagara River,” he says.

“So he’s been beaten up, has almost committed suicide, has seen his wife prostituting herself and as he is running away, Lily finds him and chases him down. They make up and are sitting on a bench together when a seagull squawks overhead and falls dead right in front them. That is dark humour that sums up Henry.”

### **R.J. Played by Kristen Holden-Reid**

R.J. used to be a troubled kid who managed to kick his drug habit while in prison. But while he served time, his wife Denise had trouble supporting herself and their baby daughter. When Denise turned to prostitution, social services moved in, took the baby and placed the baby in foster care.

“What happens then is a rollercoaster ride,” says Holden-Reid. R.J. and Denise come back to Niagara Falls after a court order to stay away and clean up their lives. They have to meet with a social worker to start the process of getting their baby back. But they’ve come a few months early and the social worker is not happy with Denise’s progress. Losing hope, Denise goes on a rampage and R.J. must try to hold things together. But Denise keeps falling apart as R.J. tries to keep her from totally wrecking their lives.

“R.J. is a kid who is growing up very quickly,” says Holden-Reid. “While in jail he realized that to be part of society he had to do certain things. He is working

towards becoming a stable and productive person. He doesn't have it all figured out but he is committed to trying. He wants Denise with him and hopes to bring her along too. But then their situation goes from bad to worse, they don't get their baby and they're back trying to figure out if they're going to survive and how.

"I see them as two real human beings genuinely trying to get their lives together. They have a connection between them that we can all identify with."

## **The Supporting Characters**

### **Sophie – Played by Catherine Fitch**

*Sophie, the daughter of Niagara Motel's owner, tries to shelter Loretta from Dave and Michael whom she considers unworthy of the young waitress.*

An immigrant from Serbia, along with her father Boris, Sophie works hard in the motel and the restaurant. She becomes worried about Loretta after Michael propositions Loretta to become an exotic dancer. Sensing that Loretta is pregnant and seeing also that she's too naïve, Sophie interferes in Loretta's life by setting Dave against Michael. Events come to a head when Dave kidnaps Michael and threatens his life.

"Having lived with a brutal and dominating father, Sophie wants to save innocent Loretta from a similar fate. She is so smart and sharp that she's able to totally manipulate Dave. She sets him up against Michael in order to heat up the rivalry between them and get them out of Loretta's life," says Fitch.

When Boris dies suddenly, Sophie is left with some money, the motel and the restaurant. She invites Loretta to stay with her and to have her baby there in peace.

"Sophie hopes that Loretta will become her new family after Boris dies," says Fitch.

### **Helen Mackie – Played by Janet-Laine Green**

*Severe and judgmental, Helen, a social worker, refuses to let R.J. and Denise see their baby in foster care because she considers Denise an unfit mother.*

When R.J. and Denise arrive in her office a few months earlier than expected, Helen is not happy. She will not bend the rules and will not allow them to visit their baby who's in foster care.

Helen decides to make an unannounced "site visit" to the Niagara Motel where the couple is staying. Drunken Phillie lets her into the room where Denise is soundly sleeping. Helen snoops around looking for drugs or other incriminating

evidence. Denise is awakened and becomes defensive then aggressive when Helen suggests that Denise is not ready to have her baby back. Denise attacks Helen, they wrestle, the TV drops and smashes Helen on the head, knocking her out.

Thinking that Helen is dead, Denise wraps her in a shower curtain and drags her to the back of the motel where she buries her with Phillie's help. Helen awakes, claws herself out of the grave and stumbles away. R.J. runs after her, has her shower in their room then drives her to hospital.

**Gilles** – Played by **Normand Daneau**

*Gilles is in love with Loretta and is furious that she doesn't need him or want him.*

Gilles is the father of Loretta's unborn baby. He operates a snack truck in Montreal and when he's not busy selling sandwiches, he is on his cell phone calling Loretta in Niagara Falls. Gilles is angry that Loretta has picked up and left and demands that she come back home. When she refuses, he drives to Niagara Motel's restaurant where she works. He walks into the middle of a fight between Dave and Michael, who are also after Loretta.

"Gilles is a control freak who is always telling Loretta what to do," says Daneau. "He is furious that she doesn't need him and doesn't want him. Even so he shouts at everyone that 'Lorrie's mine!' when he leaves."

**Boris** – Played by **Damir Andrei**

*Boris, the owner of Niagara Motel, is always mad at his employees for not working hard enough and talking too much. He thinks that if he screams at them, they'll work more.*

Boris and his daughter Sophie are immigrants to Canada from Serbia. He is enraged that he has to push everyone to do what he wants them to do.

"Boris is a monster but he has such gusto you can't help but like him," says Andrei. "He is gloomy, pessimistic and a yeller. He expects the worst and creates the worst."

When Loretta is besieged by three suitors at the restaurant, Boris rushes in screaming, brandishing a rake. Everyone cowers as Boris chokes on his own curses, suffers a heart attack and dies on a bar stool in the restaurant.

**CREDITS  
CAST AND CREW**

Title: Niagara Motel

Format: Feature Film; 35 mm; 1:1.85 ratio; Dolby SR-D;  
90 minutes

Production Companies; Indian Grove Productions, Muse Entertainment  
Enterprises, Buffalo Gal Pictures, Niagara Production  
Limited (Co-production Company)

In association with: Telefilm Canada and Aquarius Films

Directed by: Gary Yates

Story by: George F. Walker based on his Suburban Motel plays

Screenplay by: George F. Walker & Dani Romain

Executive Producers: Jacqueline Quella  
Tom Parkhouse

Producers: Terence S. Potter  
Phyllis Laing

Produced by: Michael Prupas

Produced by: Bernard Zukerman

Director of Photography: Ian Wilson

Production Designer: Deanne Rohde

Edited by: Simon Cozens

Music by: Guy Fletcher

Casting – Canada: Marsha Chesley  
Lucie Robitaille  
Jim Heber

Casting – UK: Ros and John Hubbard

Costume Designer: Linda Haysman

## Starring:

Craig Ferguson (Phillie Phillips)  
Anna Friel (Denise)  
Caroline Dhavernas (Loretta)  
Peter Keleghan (Henry)  
Kris Holden-Ried (R.J.)  
Tom Barnett (Dave)  
Catherine Fitch (Sophie)  
Janet-Laine Green (Helen Mackie)  
Krista Bridges (Sandy)  
Normand Daneau (Gilles)  
Damir Andrei (Boris)  
Pierre Collin (Claude Gagnon)  
Daniele Lorain (Lucille Gagnon)

With Kevin Pollak (Michael) and  
Wendy Crewson (Lily)

## CAST BIOGRAPHIES

### Craig Ferguson "Phillie"

Born in Glasgow, Scotland, Craig Ferguson dropped out of high school at age 16 after a furious row with his English teacher on the precise meaning of "Existentialism". For the next few years he drifted around the UK playing drums for some of the worst punk bands in the history of music.

Between bands he worked as a bartender in a pub in Glasgow that was frequented by Michael Boyd, then the artistic director of The Tron Theatre in Glasgow. Boyd persuaded Ferguson that being an actor offered better pay and more chances to meet women, and he auditioned Ferguson at The Tron. By the late 1980's, Ferguson had written and starred in a play, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and was given the lead role in *The Gamblers* by Nikolai Gogol.

Ferguson then tried his hand at stand up comedy and, by the mid 1990's, had established himself as one of the U.K.'s leading comedians with his own TV show *The Ferguson Theory* on the BBC. His stand up show *Love, Sex, Death and the Weather* was the second biggest show at the 1994 Edinburgh Festival surpassed only by Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple* in which, coincidentally, Ferguson played Oscar Madison.

In 1995, Ferguson arrived in America to star with Betty White and Marie Osmond in the short-lived ABC sitcom *Maybe This Time*. He then went onto *The Drew Carey Show* (1996-2003) in which he played Drew's boss, Nigel Wick.

While sitting in his trailer on that show, Ferguson wrote the feature films *The Big Tease* (2000) and *Saving Grace* (2000) in which he also starred and served as a producer. He also starred in *Born Romantic* (2000), *Life without Dick* (2001), *The Soul Keeper* (2003) and in a vampire movie that he doesn't want to talk about.

In 2003 he made his directorial debut with *I'll Be There* in which he also starred and wrote. The film won the Audience Awards for Best Film at Aspen, Dallas and Valencia film festivals and Ferguson won best new director at the Napa Valley Film Festival.

Most recently he acted in *Lemony Snicket's a Series of Unfortunate Events* (2004) and the TV pilot *Hot Mom*. Ferguson is also the host of *The Late Late Show* on CBS.

**Anna Friel**  
 “Denise”

Anna Friel has been acting since the age of 13. “I liked school and I was a really good scholar. I loved drama and my parents, who are both teachers, signed me up for a workshop. I went three times a week and three hours a night to learn improvisation. I discovered that I could learn acting as a craft, that I’d never be bored and would always continue learning,” says Friel.

While still in her teens she became a well known celebrity in the U.K. because of her role as an abused girl in the soap series *Brookside* for which she received a National Television Award for Best Actress. She went on to star in a number of feature films including *Landgirls*, *Madcows*, *Rogue Trader*, *A Midsummer’s Night Dream*, *Sunset Strip*, *Watermelon*, *An Everlasting Piece*, *Me Without You*, *Timeline* and *War Bride* for which Friel received a Genie Award nomination in 2002 as Best Actress. Most recently she starred in the TV movie *Perfect Strangers* and in the TV series *The Jury*.

Friel’s stage work has also earned her great accolade. She was a hit on Broadway in “Closer” for which she won a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Featured Actress in 1999 and on the West End in “Lulu,” for which Friel received the Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding Lead Actress in 2002.

**Kevin Pollak**  
 “Michael”

Kevin Pollak has captured the attention of audiences worldwide with his dramatic and comedic roles. He has appeared in over 50 films and television projects and has established himself as one of the first stand-up comedians with a successful dramatic film career.

Pollak recently released his first CD, “A Little off the Top,” where he goes back home to San Francisco to talk about his journey through show business.

Pollak’s most recent role was in *Hostage*, next to Bruce Willis. He played the lead in *Seven Times Lucky*, which won two awards at L.A.’s Method Film Festival. Previous to that he played a 75-year-old man in *The Whole Ten Yards*.

Pollak started performing stand-up comedy at the age of ten and became a touring professional stand-up at 20. In 1988 he landed his first film role in George Lucas’ *Willow*, directed by Ron Howard and in 1990, he appeared in Barry Levinson’s *Avalon*. In 1992 he appeared in *A Few Good Men*. This was followed by *Grumpy Old Men* and *Grumpier Old Men*. In 1995, he appeared in the award-winning *The Usual Suspects* and in Martin Scorsese’s *Casino*. He also had major roles in *End of Days* and *Deterrence*, both made in 1999. In 2002 he had roles in *The Wedding Planner*, *3000 Miles to Graceland*, *Dr. Doolittle 2*, and *Stolen Summer*. Pollak’s other film credits include *Blizzard*, *The Santa Clause 2*, *Steal This Movie*, *She’s All That*, *That Thing You Do*, *Abbie*, *Indian Summer*, *House Arrest*, *Miami Rhapsody*, *Chameleon* and *The Prince of Mulberry Street*.

Pollak has starred in several television projects including *The Underworld*, *Work with Me*, *From the Earth to the Moon*, *The Drew Carey Show* as well as numerous guest starring roles. Recently, he hosted Bravo's *Celebrity Poker Showdown*. He has also starred in two of his own HBO stand-up comedy specials, the latest being *Kevin Pollak, Stop With the Kicking*, directed by David Steinberg.

**Wendy Crewson**  
"Lily"

A native of Hamilton, Ontario, Crewson received a BA from Queen's University and did post-graduate studies in London at the Webber Douglass Academy of Dramatic Arts and the American Repertory Theatre.

Crewson has extensive feature film credits; among them *A Home at the End of the World* (2004), *The Clearing* (2004), *Santa Clause 2* (2002), *Suddenly Naked* (2001), *Between Strangers* (2002) and *Perfect Pie* (2002). Although she is most recognizable from her role as the First Lady opposite Harrison Ford in *Air Force One* (1997), she also drew attention for her performances in *The Last Brickmaker in America* (2001), *Bicentennial Man* (1999), *What Lies Beneath* (2000), *The Santa Clause* (1994), *Corrina, Corrina* (1994) and *The Doctor* (1991).

Crewson's television credits include the series *24*, *Jack*, *Twelve Mile Road* and *The Beast*. For her starring role in *The Many Trials of One Jane Doe*, Crewson won Canada's Gemini Award for Best Actress in 2003. She won another Gemini Best Actress Award for her role in *At The End of the Day: The Sue Rodriguez Story*, about a woman who struggles to die with dignity. She was nominated for a Best Actress Gemini for her role in *Criminal Instinct: The Joanna Kilbourne Mysteries*. She won an ACTRA Best Actress Award for her role on the series *Home Fires* and a Gemini for her guest-starring role on *Due South*. Crewson was honoured with the 2002 Gemini Humanitarian Award for her work with Lou Gehrig's disease.

**Caroline Dhavernas**  
"Loretta"

Caroline Dhavernas made her television debut at the age of 12 in the daily soap *Marilyn*. After that she had leading roles in many Quebec TV series, including *Zap*, *Jasmine*, *Urgence I and II* (1996), *Lobby* (1997) and *Le Pollock* (1999). She became a celebrity after her roles in *Tag I and II* (2000).

Dhavernas had numerous roles in feature and TV films including *Comme un voleur*, *L'île de sable* (1999), *The Baroness and the Pig* (2002), *Heart; The Marilyn Bell Story* (1999), *Edge of Madness* (2002), *Out Cold* (2001), *Nez Rouge* (2003) and *The Tulse Luper Suitcases: The Moab Story* (2003). She will be seen in the upcoming *These Girls*.

Dhavernas made a big impression in the U.S. when she played the lead in the Fox network series *Wonderfalls* (2004). Before *Wonderfalls*, Caroline Dhavernas also appeared in the American series *Law and Order* (2002).

Dhavernas was nominated for two Gémeaux Awards (Quebec's television awards), one for Best Interpretation in a Youth Series for *Zap III* and the second for Best Supporting Role in *Tag*.

**Peter Keleghan**  
"Henry"

Born and raised in Montreal, Peter Keleghan studied acting at Concordia University. He also has a diploma from The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art in England and a degree from York University in Toronto.

Keleghan was a member of the cast of *Second City* and *The Stratford Music and Shaw Festivals*. Keleghan joined up with Steve Smith and co-wrote and starred in the Gemini Award winning series, *The Comedy Mill*. For the past 13 years he has been performing in the TV series *The Red Green Show*.

While he lived in Los Angeles, Keleghan starred in three pilots for NBC and ABC and guest starred in *Seinfeld*, *Murphy Brown*, *Cheers* and *General Hospital*.

In Canada, he's had recurring roles in the comedy series *The Newsroom* and *Made in Canada*. Between all these roles, he has managed to find time to do guest spots on *Puppets Who Kill* and *Slings and Arrows*.

Keleghan is also a busy voice over artist and has provided voices on the superhero cartoon *Harold Rosenbaum Chartered Accountant-Extreme*, *Jacob Two Two* and *Mischief City*.

Keleghan is a 12-time Gemini Award nominee and a four-time Gemini Award winner in the category of Best Performance in a Comedy Program or Series for his roles in *The Newsroom* and *Made in Canada*. He was recently on the cover of MacLean's Magazine and was called "...the funniest man in Canadian television..." by The Toronto Star (January 2003). He was voted one of the "Top Ten Funniest People in Canada" by Star TV.

**Kristen Holden-Ried**  
"R.J."

Born in Pickering, Ontario, Kris Holden-Ried was studying at Montreal's Concordia University School of Business when he went to his first audition eleven years ago and landed the leading role in *Young Ivanhoe*. He had the looks and skills. It helped that he was a champion medallist in riding and fencing. Holden-Ried is a former member of the Canadian National Pentathlon Team and has a silver medal from both the Pan American and Pan Pacific Pentathlon Championships.

Holden-Ried has trained with Uta Hagen's Master Class Scene Study, with Janine Manatis as well as at the Green Room Actor's Workshop and the National Film Acting School.

Holden-Ried has built himself a respected and growing reputation as a character actor. He's had juicy roles in *Touch of Pink*, *Alice Blue*, *Icebound*, *The Many Trials of One Jane Doe*, *Hemingway Vs Callaghan*, *Street Time*, *Killing Spring*, *K-19 The Widowmaker*, *Chasing Cain I: Vows*, *The Jimmi Hendrix Story*, *Forget Me Never* and *The Crossing*.

### **Tom Barnett**

"Dave"

Tom Barnett trained as an actor at the University of Toronto and Circle in the Square Theatre School in New York City. Since graduating he has worked extensively in film, television and theatre. He has played leading roles in films such as *Rats and Rabbits*, based on George F. Walker's "Beyond Mozambique," which took him to the Paris Film Festival for its premier, and *Mrs. Ashboro's Cat*, which garnered him a Gemini Award nomination for Best Actor.

Other notable productions include: Disney's *Ice Princess*, as Michael Reagan in *The Reagans*, *Riding the Bus with my Sister*, *Redemption* and *Harlan County War*.

On television Barnett played the recurring role of Joe Pretak on *This Is Wonderland*. Numerous TV guest appearances include: *Queer As Folk*, *The Eleventh Hour*, *Kevin Hill*, *Missing* and *Blue Murder*. On stage Tom has performed in leading roles from coast to coast in Canada, starring in plays such as "Hamlet," "Angels in America," "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," and "The Drawer Boy."

### **Catherine Fitch**

"Sophie"

Catherine Fitch started her career with the highly acclaimed Canadian film *South of Wawa*. Since then she has appeared in many feature film and television projects such as *Butterbox Babies*, for which she received a Gemini Award for Best Supporting Actress, *The Arrow*, *Bless the Child*, *Knockaround Guys*, *Profoundly Normal*, *The Newsroom*, *Puppets Who Kill* and *This is Wonderland*, for which she was nominated for a Gemini Award for Best Actress in a Guest Role. She will be seen in the upcoming *The Prizewinner of Defiance Ohio*. Fitch is also a theatrical actress and has had numerous roles in such plays as "Drinking Alone," "Communicating Doors," "Problem Child," "Oleanna," "Freaks," and "Dancing at Lughnasa."

**Normand Daneau**  
"Gilles"

A native of Quebec City, Normand Daneau studied acting at the Conservatoire d'Art Dramatique de Québec. In addition to acting in features and television, Daneau also works in theatre as an actor and as artistic director. He is the co-founder and co-artistic director of Théâtre des moutons noirs (Black Sheep Theatre) in Quebec City.

Daneau is well known in the province of Quebec for his role in the television series *La Vie, La Vie* and *Grande Ourse*, for which he received a Gémeaux Award nomination as Best Actor. Some of Daneau's feature film roles were in *Cosmos*, *L'Angle Mort d'une Hirondelle*, 1996 and *Le Confessionnal*.

In theatre he had roles in "La Nature Meme du Continent," "Les Frères Karamazov," and "Antigone," among others.

**Damir Andrei**  
"Boris"

Damir Andrei was already entertaining family members at the age of four "when I had my first glass of wine and made everyone laugh," he says. He started acting in junior college and then got into Canada's prestigious National Theatre School. By the 1980's he was acting regularly in television series. His early roles were in *The Twilight Zone*, *E.N.G.*, *Road to Avonlea* and *Robocop*. More recent roles have been in the TV movies *Ford: The Man and the Machine*, *The Third Twin*, *Bad as I Wanna Be: The Dennis Rodman Story*, *Total Recall 2070*, and *The Miracle Worker*. He's had roles in feature films as well, including, *A Different Loyalty*, *Rollerball*, *The Caveman's Valentine*, *Soft Deceit*, *M. Butterfly*, *F/X2 I* and *Defy Gravity*.

**Janet-Laine Green**  
"Helen Mackie"

Janet-Laine Green's feature film credits include *The Shower*, for which she received a Genie Award nomination for Best Actress in 1993, *Cowboys Don't Cry*, for which she also received a Genie Award nomination for Best Supporting Actress in 1989, *The Limit*, *Striking Poses*, *Vita Cane*, *Primo Baby* and *The Believers*.

Green works frequently in television. Some of her credits include *Traders*, for which she received a Genie nomination for Best Actress in a Guest Role in 2000, *The Beachcombers*, for which she received two Best Actress Genie Award nominations, *Seeing Things*, *Sex Traffic*, *Dead Lawyers*, *This is Wonderland*, *Blue Murder*, *Mutant X*, *The Day Reagan Was Shot*, *Thin Air*, *Tag: The Jonathan Womback Story* and *Haven*, among many others. Green also works in live

theatre having had roles in "Pillow Talk," "The Vagina Monologues," "Medea," and "Menopositives/The Musical."

**Danièle Lorain**  
"Lucille Gagnon"

THEATRE

*Les Belles-Soeurs, Les Sunshine Boys, Le Vent et la tempête, Un fil à la patte, Picasso au Lapin Agile, Apatride, Un village de fous, Demain matin, Montréal m'attend, Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Soudain l'été dernier, Les Nonnes II ... la suite, Dindon, En pièces détachées, Tailleur pour dames, Les Palmes de M. Schultz.*

TELEVISION

*Virginie, Le Petit Monde de Laura Cadieux, Le Printemps c'est tentant, L'Été c'est péché, Fortier III et IV, Le Plateau, Le Coeur découvert, Radio, L'Obsession de la minceur, Olivier Guimond, Moi et l'autre, Avec un grand A - L'étrangleuse, La Petite Aurore, Alys Robi... mon idole, Les Fridolinades, L'Amour avec un grand A, Denise ..Aujourd'hui.*

CINEMA

*Savage Messiah, C't'à ton tour Laura Cadieux... la suite, C't'à ton tour, Laura Cadieux.*

**Pierre Collin**  
"Claude Gagnon"

THEATRE

*Le Péché Original, Les Précieuses Ridicules, L'échange, Les Gars, L'avare, Les Fourberies de Scapin, Hotel des Horizons, La Langue a Langue, L'auberge des Horizons, Vieux ne Courent pas les Rues, Le menteur, Faux Départ, Rêve, Les Oranges sont Vertes, Oedipe Roi, Combat de Nègre et de Chiens, Picasso au Lapin Agile, Trois Dans le Dos Deux Dans la Tête, Lulu, Variations sur le Canard, Les Maîtres Anciens.*

TELEVISION

*René-Lévesque, Une Histoire de Famille, Le Négociateur, Les Bougon, Rumeur, Ce Soir on Joue, Ceci N'est Pas un Bye Bye, 450 Chemin du Golf, Le Bleu du Ciel, Cauchemar D'amour, Hotel des Horizons, Freddy, La Vie, La Vie, Histoires de Filles, Caserne 24, Virginie, Réseaux I Et li, La Courte Échelle, Papparazzi, Maîtres Anciens, Radio-Enfer, Omerta, À Nous Eux, Ste-Carmen de La Main.*

CINEMA

*Aurore, Jeanne et François, Le Survenant, Saints-Martyrs-des-Damnés, Ma Vie en Cinémascope, Dans une Galaxie Près de Chez-Vous, La Grande Séduction,*

*Le Secret des Grands Cours D'eau, Comment ma Mère Accoucha, Karmina li, Post Mortem, L'enfant des Appalaches, Lili-Rose, Jusqu' au Coeur, L'absence, La Femme de Pierre, Les Tisserands du Pouvoir.*

Pierre Collin won the Jutra Award in 2004 for Best Supporting Actor in the feature *La Grande Séduction (The Seduction of Dr. Lewis)*.

**Krista Bridges**  
"Sandy"

**FEATURE FILMS**

*Land of The Dead, Lake, Aurora Borealis, NARC, DNA, Tribulation Force, Saint Monica, Left Behind, Blind, Altar Piece, Melanie Darrow, Alberta, Brain Candy, Love Is Not Forever, Bloodknot, Presumed Innocent, The Shower (1992 Genie Nomination for Best Supporting Actress).*

**TELEVISION**

*Naked Josh, Blue Murder IV, Mutant X, Relic Hunter, Blue Murder, Leap Years, Doc, Strong Medicine, Power Play, Spoken Art, Forever Knight, Hardy Boys, FX, Kung Fu, Boogie's Diner, Treacherous Beauties, Side Effects, Robocop, Family Passions, Catwalk, Hidden Room, Top Cops, Conspiracy of Silence.*

## PRODUCTION BIOGRAPHIES

### Gary Yates

Director

Gary Yates was born and raised in Montreal.

Yates' first short film, *Made for TV*, which he wrote, directed and produced, was in Official Competition of the Montreal World Film Festival, the Karlovy Vary Film Festival and the Berlin International Film Festival. His second short film, *Without Rockets*, was nominated for a Genie Award and made the official selection of the Rotterdam International Film Festival. Yates' third short film, *Harlan and Fiona*, won a Golden Sheaf Award and was in the official selection of the Toronto International Film Festival. His next short film, *The Big Pickle*, won a Blizzard Award and also made the official selection of the Toronto International Film Festival.

His feature film *Seven Times Lucky*, a noir/grifter/romance starring Kevin Pollak (*The Usual Suspects*) and Liane Balaban (*New Waterford Girl*) premiered to rousing ovations and critical acclaim at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival and won Best Picture and Best Screenplay at the Method Fest Los Angeles.

### Simon Cozens

Editor

"I've always been interested in film as a kid," says Cozens. "I became obsessive in going to the Cinema when I was 10 on a weekly basis. In secondary school a number of my teachers encouraged me to pursue film as a career." Cozens studied film at the University of Westminster and began working on crews at the bottom, as a runner. He soon realized he didn't want to be on set but behind the scenes.

Even though his editing career is reasonably short, having cut only four features and about 10 shorts on his own, he is proud of his achievements. He explains: "I worked as an assistant on *Saving Private Ryan* that won an Oscar for Best Editing. I was an assistant sound editor on *Twelve Monkeys* which was nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Sound Editing."

Cozens was editor of *Spirit Trap* (2004), *Some Things That Stay* (2004), *How to Make Friends* (2004), *The Car* (2004), *Fishy* (2003), *Fate & Fortune* (2002), *Last Train* (2001), *Ghosthunter* (2000), *Vanessa* (1999) and *Straight to the Heart* (1995). He was visual effects editor of *Atomik Circus - Le retour de James Bataille* and assistant sound editor of *Twelve Monkeys* (1995).

Cozens was first assistant editor on *My House in Umbria*, *The Gathering Storm*, *About a Boy*, *Spy Game*, *The Man Who Cried*, *The World Is Not Enough*, *Onegin*, *Jinnah*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Downtime*, *The Fifth Element*, *101 Dalmatians*, and was assistant editor on *Mission: Impossible*, *Mary Reilly*, *Frankenstein*, *The Browning Version*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and second assistant editor on *The Remains of the Day* and *Peter's Friends*.

**Ian Wilson**  
Director of Photography

Getting fired as the stills photographer on a film set in England was Ian Wilson's greatest luck because he enrolled in London Film School and became a cinematographer instead. "In those days, in the 1960's, young people were given jobs way above their station. I did my first black and white feature film when I was 24. I was never an assistant you see. In the 1960's you always went straight to the top," Wilson says.

Since then, he has worked with the U.K.'s most distinguished directors and largest production companies. Wilson considers his greatest achievement Derek Jarman's *Edward II* (1991). He explains: "We made the sets out of light. This was very liberating because it forced us to eliminate the text. It was a tremendous challenge to light the film in an original and surprising way."

Wilson is best known for his work in *The Crying Game* (1992) for which he was the director of photography and camera operator. His other main credits are: *Emma* (1996), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1996), the TV mini-series *The Flame Trees of Thika* (1981), *A Christmas Carol* (1999), *Swing* (1999), *Savior* (1998), *The Island on Bird Street* (1997), *Doomsday Gun* (1994), *Backbeat* (1994), *The Secret Rapture* (1993), *Dakota Road* (1992), *The Big Man* (1990), *Erik the Viking* (1989), *Checking Out* (1989), *Dream Demon* (1988), *Wish You Were Here* (1987), *Privates on Parade* (1982), the TV series *Quatermass* (1979) and *Danger UXB* (1979), the features *The Butterfly Ball* (1976), *Queen Kong* (1976), *Children of Rage* (1975), *Kronos* (1974), *Three for All* (1974), *Gawain and the Green Knight* (1973), *The House in Nightmare Park* (1973), *Music!* (1971) and *Fright* (1971).

**Deanne Rohde**  
Production Designer

Before *Niagara Motel*, Deanne Rohde was production designer of the feature *Seven Times Lucky* (2004), the TV movies *Defending Our Kids: The Julie Posey Story* (2003), *Scared Silent* (2002), *We Were the Mulvaneys* (2002), the feature *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary* (2002), the TV film *Three Days* (2001), and the feature *Black Ice* (1992).

Rohde was art director of *The Crooked E: the Unshredded Truth about Enron* (2003), *Framed* (2002), *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary* (2002), *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down* (1996) and *Trial at Fortitude Bay* (1994). She was assistant art director for the TV series *The Shields Stories* (2004) and set director for *Inside the Osmonds* (2001). She was set decorator of the TV movies *Escape from Mars* (1999), *Roswell: The Aliens Attack* (1999), *Dream House* (1998), *A Marriage of Convenience* (1998), *The Arrow* (1997), the TV series *My Life as a Dog* (1996), the TV film *The Diviners* (1993) and *Heads* (1993).

**Guy Fletcher**  
Music Composer

Guy Fletcher was born in 1960 in Maidstone, Kent. His parents had their own group 'The Cameos', and soon he was taking an interest in music, singing songs at 4 years old in the Fletcher garage studio. It was the Beatles who eventually put the seal on his future when, in 1967, he heard "Strawberry Fields". It was the start of his life-long fascination with studio work and production. After two years of studio engineering, his keyboard talents came to the fore and he joined Bryan Ferry's Roxy Music in 1981 for their first great outing, the Avalon Tour.

Meeting Mark Knopfler in 1983 kept his growing skills as a keyboard player firmly in the spotlight. For a young man whose roots were not based in the blues of the Northern Maestro, Fletcher found the transition to this slightly different area of music no trouble at all. Blues and Country may have been a little out of his remit, but as he says "I've always felt at home with the material, - I tend to lean towards a more folky, roots feel." Since 1983, Fletcher has been involved in all Knopfler's work, both in Dire Straits, the solo album Golden Heart and numerous film projects.

Other collaborations have proved equally successful. In addition to Roxy Music, Fletcher has worked with Tina Turner, Aztec Camera and many others. Notably, through his connection with Knopfler, he has also worked with the legendary Chet Atkins, Willie De Ville and Randy Newman and Jimmy Nail.

Fletcher has been a member of Dire Straits for 15 years and the Notting Hillbillies since their conception in 1990, performing live and working in the studio.

Fletcher was sole music composer of *Spirit Trap*, *Sergeant Pepper* and *Tooth*. He collaborated with Knopfler on *Cal*, *Comfort and Joy*, *Princess Bride*, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, *Metroland* and *Wag the Dog*. He collaborated with Rupert Gregson-Williams on *Urban Ghost Story* and *Crime Spree*. His many TV credits include *The Big Hill*, *Tristan da Cunha*, *Gold Prospecting in Guyana*, *Theatre School*, *Mummy Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and *At Home with the Braithwaites*.

## **Bernard Zukerman**

Producer

After graduating law school, Bernard Zukerman spent ten years producing and directing documentaries which won a number of international awards. When he turned his attention to drama, his first film, *And Then You Die* (1986), won five Gemini Awards. His next film *Skate* (1987) won the Gemini for Best Canadian TV Movie as did his third film, *The Squamish Five* (1988),

These successes were followed by *Love and Hate: The Story of Colin and Joann Thatcher* (1990) which also won five Gemini Awards. His mini-series, *Conspiracy of Silence*, was a critical success. *Dieppe* followed in 1994 as did *Million Dollar Babies. Net Worth*, a TV movie and *The Sleep Room*, a mini-series, (1998) both won Gemini Awards. Zukerman then produced the mini-series *Revenge of the Land*, the TV movie *Heart: The Marilyn Bell Story* (2001) followed by *Chasing Cain I: Vows*. In the next two years, Zukerman produced the TV movies, *The Investigation*, *The Many Trials of One Jane Doe*, *Deadly Friends* and *Chasing Cain II: Face*. He also produced the feature film *Savage Messiah*, which, under its French name *Moïse: L’Affaire Roch Thériault* enjoyed box office success in Quebec. Zukerman is also the co-creator and executive producer of the TV series *This is Wonderland* which begins its third season of broadcast on CBC in the fall of 2005. Zukerman is the president of Indian Grove Productions.

## **Michael Prupas**

Producer

Michael Prupas, President and Director of Muse Entertainment Enterprises, is a 27-year veteran of the Canadian and international film and television industries. He practiced entertainment law for 20 years, including 15 years as a senior partner at the law firm Heenan Blaikie. Prupas was the head of the firm’s entertainment law practice, which is the largest in Canada.

With his extensive experience in international production financing as well as legal and business affairs, Prupas launched Muse Entertainment Enterprises in June 1998, an independent production company that produces features films, TV movies and TV series. Many of Muse’s projects are international co-productions. In 2000 Prupas set up Muse Distribution International, which represents Muse Entertainment and other independent Canadian producers at major markets, festivals and conferences and brings Canadian programs to audiences worldwide.

Most recently, Prupas executive produced the TV movies *Plain Truth*, *Ice Bound*, starring Susan Sarandon and *The Clinic*. He executive produced the TV series *This is Wonderland (Season 1 & 2)*, *Twice in a Lifetime (Season 1 & 2)*, *Largo Winch (Season 2)*, *Doc (Season 1)* and *Tales From the Neverending Story*. He executive produced a collection of Sherlock Holmes TV movies

including *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Sign of Four*, *The Royal Scandal* and *The Case of the Whitechapel Vampire*, starring Matt Frewer and Kenneth Welsh. In addition, Prupas was executive producer of many movies for television, including *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, *The Stork Derby*, *The Investigation*, *The Many Trials of One Jane Doe*, *Chasing Cain II: Face, Deadly Friends* and *Silent Night*. He also executive produced three feature films; *The Guilty*, *Tracker*, and *Savage Messiah*.

**George F. Walker**  
Writer

George F. Walker is one of Canada's most prolific and widely produced playwrights. He has received nine Chalmers Awards, five Dora Awards, and two Governor General's Awards. Productions of his work have met with critical success in hundreds of productions worldwide. Many of his plays have been translated into German, French, Hebrew, Turkish, Polish, Portuguese, Hungarian, Cantonese and Czech.

In 1997, "Suburban Motel," six plays located in the same motel room - premiered in Canada under Walker's direction at Factory Theatre in Toronto and in New York at Rattlestick Productions. Selected plays from the series have also been produced in the U.S., U.K. and Germany. *Niagara Motel* is based on three of these plays: "Featuring Loretta," "The End of Civilization," and "Problem Child."

Walker's latest play "Heaven," opened to rave reviews in 2000 at the Canadian Stage Company in Toronto and has also been produced in the U.S. and Germany.

Most of Walker's plays have been published including "Heaven," "Suburban Motel," "Shared Anxiety," "Nothing Sacred," "Criminals in Love" and "Better Living."

In addition to his playwriting, Walker has written extensively for television and radio. He was creative consultant to CBS's *Due South* and to Ken Finkleman's *Newsroom* for CBC. He co-created, co-wrote and co-produced 26 episodes of the TV series *This is Wonderland* with his writing partner Dani Romain. He is now writing episodes for the third season of the series that airs on CBC.

**Dani Romain**  
Writer

Dani Romain was born in South Africa and immigrated to Toronto in 1986. She graduated from the University of Toronto's University College Drama Program with an Honours BA in English and Drama in 1997, and then attended the International Academy of Design's Digital Film and Television program.

In 1997, Romain met George F. Walker while volunteering at the Factory Theatre and she soon found herself working as Associate Director on Walker's

“Suburban Motel,” a cycle of six plays located in the same motel room. The strength of their partnership continued to evolve over the staging of 14 productions, ending with *Heaven* in 2000, by which point Romain was co-directing with Walker.

After “Heaven” opened at the Canadian Stage Company, Dani adapted the play into a feature film screenplay, a move that led the Walker/Romain writing team into a new medium. Together they co-wrote the screenplay of *Niagara Motel*, based on three of the plays from “Suburban Motel.”

Romain co-created, co-wrote and co-produced 26 episodes of the CBC television series *This Is Wonderland* with Walker and is working on Season Three.

### **Phyllis Laing** Producer

Phyllis Laing is the president of Buffalo Gal Pictures, established in 1994. Laing’s credits include the feature *The Saddest Music in the World*, which she co-produced with Rhombus Media, the feature *Seven Times Lucky*, which she executive produced, the feature *Tamara*, for which she was line producer, and the TV series *2030CE I and II*, which she co-produced with Minds Eye Pictures, .

Her other credits include the TV movies *Society’s Child* and *Children of My Heart*, the features *Yellowknife*, *One Last Dance*, *The Law of Enclosures* and *desire*. She co-produced the documentary *The Genius of Lenny Breau*, which was nominated for Best Feature at the 2000 Hot Docs Canadian Programme Competition and Best Arts Documentary at the 1999 Banff TV Festival. It won *Best Documentary* at the 2001 Blizzard Awards, *Best Performing Arts Program/Series or Arts Documentary Program/Series* at the 1999 Gemini Awards and *Silver Screen Award: 2<sup>nd</sup> Place* at the 1999 US International Film & Video Festival. Her *Epiphany Rules*, a half-hour TV drama, screened at several festivals. She co-produced the documentary *Gabrielle Roy*, which was the winner of *Telefilm Canada Award: Best Canadian Work* at the 1999 Montreal International Film Festival on Arts, *Best Documentary* and *Best Overall Sound* at the 1998 Prix Gémeaux, and *Best Documentary: History & Biography Program* at the 1998 Banff TV Festival. It was nominated for *Best History/Biography Documentary Program* at the 1999 Gemini Awards.

Her other credits include the documentaries *Personal Alarm* and *Wanda Koop: In Her Eyes*, the TV movie *My Mother’s Ghost*, the series *Baby & Me*, and the docu-drama series *Meeting the Crisis* and the feature *Hell Bent*.

Laing received the Women’s Entrepreneur Award from the Women Business Owners of Manitoba in 1994 and again in 2002. She sits on the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund (CIFVF) board and recently completed three years as Chair on the Manitoba Motion Picture Industries Association’s Board of Directors.

**Terence S. Potter**  
Producer

Terence Potter has specialised in raising financing and producing British feature films for several years. He has extensive experience of both international co-productions and domestic productions.

Potter is a chartered accountant and chartered tax adviser and is Chief Executive of Sefton Potter, a tax consultancy practice. He was previously a partner in charge of the tax department of a "Big 5" accountancy firm and Chairman of the South Wales branch of the Chartered Institute of Taxation.

He is co-producer of *Romanzo criminale (Crime Novel)* (2005), *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti (Once You're Born You Can No Longer Hide)* (2004), executive producer of *Bob the Butler* (2005), *The Keeper* (2004), *Goose!* (2004), *Hollywood Flies* (2004), *È già ieri (It's Already Yesterday)* (2004), producer of *Toolbox Murders* (2003) and executive producer of *Baltic Storm* (2003), *Citizen Verdict* (2003) and *Shoreditch* (2003).

**Jacqueline Quella**  
Executive Producer

Jacqueline Quella graduated from Goldsmiths College, London University with a BA Hons degree in Drama/German and went on to gain a post-graduate Diploma in Performance at the Arts Educational Schools. Working out of Los Angeles and London, she has over 15 years experience of working in several media related areas such as advertising, multimedia, film, television and theatre production. She is co-producer of *Romanzo criminale (Crime Novel)* (2005), *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti (Once You're Born You Can No Longer Hide)* (2004), executive producer of *Bob the Butler* (2005), *The Keeper* (2004), *Goose!* (2004), *Hollywood Flies* (2004), *È già ieri (It's Already Yesterday)* (2004), producer of *Toolbox Murders* (2003) and executive producer of *Baltic Storm* (2003) and *Shoreditch* (2003).

**Tom Parkhouse**  
Executive Producer

Tom Parkhouse is a chartered accountant with many years experience of finance, administration and corporate governance within the field of film and television production. Initial involvement was as a partner in public practice specialising in the media industry and involved detailed knowledge of deal structuring, taxation matters and production accounting and reporting.

In 1992 Parkhouse joined one of the UK's leading independent animation production companies as director and executive producer. In 2000 he set up a consultancy business specialising in television and film production and financing. In 2003 he joined Visionview as head of finance and international co-productions.

His credits in animation series and movies are as follows: *The Dreamstone*, *Bimble's Bucket*, *Molly's Gang*, *The Snowqueen*, *The Snowqueen's Revenge*, *The Ugly Duckling*, *Jack and The Beanstalk*, *The Wind In The Willows Collection*, *Santa's Last Christmas*, *Twins*, *Merlin the Magical Puppy* and *Little Red Tractor*.

His credits include a number of documentaries and dramas including *E Love (Season 1 & 2)*, *Pilot Season*, *Basil Brush*, *Ultimates*, *Mayday*, *Greatest Ever*, *Mary Higgins Clark Mysteries*, *The Incredible Mrs. Ritchie* and *Beyond The Sea*, starring Kevin Spacey.

## NIAGARA FALLS FACTS AND FIGURES

Niagara Falls, which is on the border between Canada and the United States, is the second largest falls in the world next to Victoria Falls in southern Africa.

Niagara Falls is formed by the Niagara River as it plunges over a cliff of dolostone and shale. The water rushing over the cliff comes from four of the five Great Lakes; Michigan, Huron, Superior and Erie. One fifth of all the fresh water in the world lies in these four huge bodies of water. Their entire outflow empties into the Niagara River and eventually cascades over the Falls. At the bottom of the Falls, the water travels 15 miles over many gorges until it reaches the fifth Great Lake - Ontario. From there it flows into the mighty St. Lawrence River which empties into the Atlantic Ocean.

The Canadian Niagara Falls is shaped like a horseshoe and is called the Horseshoe Falls. It is 55 meters (180 ft.) high and 750 meters (2,500 ft.) wide. The massive volume of water that flows over the Horseshoe Falls causes the water to be green in colour. The American Falls, also called the Bridal Veils Falls, is 52 meters (170 ft.) high and 330 meters (1,100 ft.) across. The depth of the water below the Falls is 55 meters (180 ft.) - as deep as the Niagara Gorge walls are high.

Niagara Falls was formed 12,000 years ago following the end of the last ice age and resulting glacial retreat. Originally it was located 11 km (7 miles) downstream from its current location. Niagara Falls erodes 1.5 meters (4 ft.) per year! Measurements have been taken since the 1790's and detailed records have been kept since that time.

Originally, over 2 trillion liters of water per hour, or more than 5 billion gallons, flowed over the edge of Niagara Falls. Put another way, 35 million gallons of water per minute roars over the edge of the Canadian Falls. Half of this volume is now diverted for hydro-electric power by the U.S. and Canada. The Niagara Falls Region is the largest producer of hydro-electric power in the entire world.

The tremendous volume of water never stops flowing, nor does it decrease in volume. The falling water and mist create ice formations along the banks of the Falls and river. This often results in mounds of ice as thick as 50 feet. If the winter is cold and long, the ice will completely stretch across the river and form an "ice bridge". This ice bridge can extend for several miles down river until it reaches the area known as the lower rapids.

## NIAGARA FALLS TOURISM AND LORE

Niagara Falls, Canada, receives over 15 million visitors a year. It is also well known as the honeymoon capital of the world.

Tourists flock to Niagara Falls' many attractions; among them the "Maid of the Mist" boat cruise, the Skylon Tower, the "Journey Behind The Falls", the Niagara Casinos, Marineland, historic Fort Erie, Fort Niagara and Fort George and many public parks and gardens on the Niagara Parkway.

There is a historical and lasting lore and lure about Niagara Falls, enough to make it seem like an ideal place for strange, tragic and wonderful things to happen. It has the ideal combination of mythic draw and touristy tawdriness. It's been a place where people have worshipped the power of nature and literally and metaphorically gone over the edge in canoes, barrels, rafts, inner tubes and presumably in the privacy of their own disturbed minds. If you get too close to the Falls, you will of course be swept away. Niagara Falls is like life in that way. If you get too close to the edge of what's bearable, you can lose everything. The choice you make is what you want it to be.

## NIAGARA MOTEL

### Director's Statement by Gary Yates

The challenge for any director making an ensemble film is to make sure the pieces fit the whole. *Niagara Motel* is a criss-crossing story of desperate people at various crisis points in their lives, set at a rundown motel in the tourist Mecca of Niagara Falls. In rehearsal with Craig Ferguson (Phillie), I discovered that he and I were drawn to the project for the same reason: *Niagara Motel* appealed to us both as a sort of Haunted House of failed relationships, populated with strange and beautifully desperate characters.

Niagara Falls' carnival-esque atmosphere was the perfect setting for this desperate funhouse. Typically in film, water symbolizes life and rebirth, but in this picture I wanted exactly the opposite; I wanted sinister water, an emotional undercurrent threatening to suck our characters down as they struggle to stay afloat. (Although, I should add, the film is a comedy. Exploring the humor in desperation can be good fun, as long as we're able to laugh at adultery, prostitution and suicide. And why not?) Desperation leads to madness; and when relationships become war, no one wins. These may be odd themes for comedy, but credit that to George F. Walker, our illustrious author. His "Suburban Motel" plays are the basis for his screenplay.

The town of Niagara Falls inspired the design of the picture (though most of the film was shot a thousand miles away). Just off the "main drag" at Niagara Falls is an older area of run-down motels and restaurants, away from the action; the strip that time forgot. That area became the basis for our set design. The dilapidated, touristy storefronts were an ironic counterpoint to the town's natural beauty. This became a fun visual cue for the emotional lives of our characters. Guy Fletcher's (Dire Straights) carnival-inspired score completed the mad world.

The dark carnival is the anchor that holds together the design, costumes, music and lighting. Comedy is often shot with bright, high-key light, but in *Niagara Motel* I needed a moodier look. Director of photography Ian Wilson was inspired by the idea of the haunted house/carnival, and brought an eerie light to the proceedings that, ironically, heightened the comedy.

In the end I hope viewers enjoy their stay, laugh, cry, and find a reflection of themselves in *Niagara Motel's* odd guests and smoky windows. Enjoy the carnival; just don't go in the water.

