

**THE LAST NEW YEAR**

**PRESS KIT**

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***The Last New Year***

January, 2009

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# The Last New Year

## THUMBNAIL SYNOPSIS

A young man's mysterious disappearance tests the frayed relationships among his nine closest friends. Reunited for their annual night of fun and debauchery, the group must unravel the secrets behind his absence to save the tradition and their friendships from disaster.

## FILM SYNOPSIS

*The Last New Year* is the story of the “Fools and Bastards Club,” a diverse group of twenty-somethings who share one thing in common – each other. In high school, ten friends made a pact that every New Year's Eve they would reunite to celebrate. After eight years what had started as a simple house party developed into a sacred tradition, and, although the friends had grown apart, the annual event always brought them back together.

But this New Year's Eve things are different. One of the group's core members, Rich, has mysteriously disappeared leaving his girlfriend, Penny, his best friend, William and the rest of the group clueless as to what happened, where he is, or if he is even still alive. Most assume he's dead and, despite the shadow of their loss and the mystery that surrounds his disappearance, the group valiantly attempts to keep the party going. For many, the stress is too much to bear and old friendships, once unquestionable, are put to the test. As the friends begin spiraling into anger and blame, it soon becomes clear that this may be the club's last official meeting.

At the center of the drama are Penny and William and a secret love affair that could easily tear “The Fools and Bastards” apart for good. When they learn their secret may be linked to their friend's disappearance, they must decide what is more important: keeping the truth to themselves or keeping the group together.

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## CHARACTER THUMBNAILS of “THE FOOLS AND BASTARDS”

**WILLIAM (PHILIP GRAEME):** William, 26, is a steadfast member of the group who hosts the New Year’s party each year. Since Rich, his best friend and roommate, disappeared seven months ago, William has been more concerned with keeping face than with facing the truth.

**PENELOPE (CASEY AUSTIN):** Penny, 24, is the youngest of the group of friends. She appears fragile but is surprisingly brave, willing to risk everything for what she wants. She tries to maintain a sweet smile despite underlying stress and guilt. Former long-term partner with Rich, Penny is trying to escape the past through her recent engagement to Eric.

**DAVID (JAMES MURRAY):** David, 26, is quick witted and direct. The group’s full-time “fool and bastard,” he is unpredictable and crass, especially when mixed with alcohol.

**ADAM (ANDREW HACHEY):** Adam, 25, is a struggling artist. He is a professional observer whom, one might think, is standoffish or private, but his friends know him to be trusting, deep, and supportive.

**KATHERINE (KATE HEWLETT):** Katherine, 26, is a model elementary school teacher and the mother-hen of the group. Warm, energetic and caring, she is all heart and works tirelessly to maintain peace and a sense of cohesion.

**KEN (MIKE MCPHADEN):** Ken, 27, is sweet and happy-go-lucky. He follows Katherine’s lead as her devoted partner.

**SEBASTIAN (AARON WEBBER):** Sebastian, 17, is new to the group. He is a young anarchist full of righteous ideals who is not afraid to say things as he sees them. Rich was his idol.

**LEAH (MARGARET EVANS):** Leah, 26, has a weakness for sleeping around and is trying to change her ways. She feels trapped by the group’s perception of her. Leah was close to Rich.

**COURTNAY (MAYKO NGYEN):** Courtnay, 26, is a free spirit who has an optimistic naiveté and believes Rich’s disappearance is one of his pranks.

**ERIC (KRIS HOLDEN-REID):** Eric, 29, is Penny’s fiancé. An outsider of the group, he is ignorant of the group’s history and dynamics.

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## CORPORATE PROFILE of THE NIGHTINGALE COMPANY

**The Nightingale Company** is a Canadian film, television and interactive content Production Company launched by company president **Debbie Nightingale** in 2000. It is a busy boutique-style firm that produces everything from dramas to documentaries, feature films to online adventures.

**The Nightingale Company** has finished production on the second season of **The Line**, a series for **The Movie Network** and **Movie Central** from the writing team of **George F. Walker** and **Dani Romain** (***This is Wonderland***). The series is set to debut in March of 2009.

In May 2006, **The Nightingale Company** entered a co-venture agreement with **beActive** in Portugal, creators of the wildly successful ***Sofia's Diary*** series, to create sophisticated multiplatform properties. Their first co-venture to be distributed by i-Rights is the teen thriller series ***Do You Believe Me*** – a blend of online video series and alternate reality game.

Projects in development include **Bodies and Soul**, a darkly comic detective series from writer/creator **Peter Mohan**; **Living in Your Car**, a **Walker/Romain** comedy series; **A Christmas Tale**, a family feature starring **Olympia Dukakis** and **Ed Asner**; **My Neighbours Are Aliens**, a high energy, action-comedy cartoon; **Brian Paisley in Hell**, a black comedy for anyone who's never been to hell but has wondered what it's like; and **EcoKids**, an children's animated comedy with a strong existing multiplatform audience.

Recent credits include: ***Get Outta Town***, a fast paced teen global adventures series; ***ZIXX: Level One, Two & Three***, a sci-fi tween series for YTV, co-produced with **Savi Media & Thunderbird Films**; ***Chicks with Sticks***, a made-for-pay feature produced with **Earth to Sky Pictures** for **TMN, Movie Central, A-Channel** and **Super Ecran**; ***Lipstick & Dynamite***, a feature documentary about female wrestlers in the 40s and 50s which premiered at **HOT DOCS!** and the **Tribeca Film Festival**; ***Mob Princess***, a MOW for the **W Network** in partnership with **Brightlight Pictures**; and ***Bailey's Billions***, a family feature co-produced with **Devine Entertainment**.

**The Nightingale Company** is constantly developing innovative new approaches to quality creative content, with a special commitment to digital media and interactive online storytelling.

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## CREW BIOGRAPHIES

### **GARFIELD LINDSAY MILLER, DIRECTOR/CO-WRITER**

Garfield Lindsay Miller is an award winning filmmaker who has worked as a fiction and non-fiction producer, director and writer for almost a decade. In 2005, Garfield co-wrote and produced the documentary, *The Fires That Burn*, which was nominated for a Gemini and received both the Silver Chris and the Wilber Awards. The following year Garfield co-wrote *A Stone's Throw*, a dramatic feature film distributed by Mongrel Media which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and received the award for the Best Atlantic Feature at the AIFF. Recently, Garfield was selected as one of the top 10 promising Canadian film talents by the "SpringBoard" jury of filmmakers, reporters, and other industry personnel. His feature film directorial debut, *The Last New Year*, was selected as the Canadian Gala film for the Victoria Film Festival, January 2009, and will be airing nationally on Super Channel in the spring.

### **ALYSON RICHARDS, PRODUCER**

Alyson Richards is a Toronto-based producer with recent credits including Associate Producer on *The Line*, a one hour dramatic series for **The Movie Network** and **Movie Central** from the writing team of **George F. Walker** and **Dani Romain**, Line Producer on the feature documentary *Fierce Light: Where Spirit Meets Action*, from executive producer Mark Achbar (*The Corporation*) and director Velcrow Ripper (*Scared Sacred*) and Production Mentor for the globally televised *MTV International 48 Fest* in which she mentored one of eight teams of youth delegates from around the world during the XVI<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference. Alyson has also produced numerous award-winning short films including *Skinheads* (Special Merit Award, Euroshorts International Festival of Short Film) and *Dogasaur* (Best Children's Film, Mexico International Film Festival) and *Babysitting Andy* (Audience Award, Inside Out Film Festival) She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Film Theory and is an alumnus of the Canadian Film Centre and The National Screen Institute.

### **DEBBIE NIGHTINGALE, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Debbie is the Nightingale behind the Nightingale Company. Well versed in the film and television industry, Debbie has been actively involved in production and other aspects of the industry since 1979. She has produced feature films, television series, documentaries and kids series as well as been involved in numerous events in the industry over the last number of years.

Producing credits include: *The Line*, a series for **The Movie Network** and **Movie Central** from the writing team of **George F. Walker** and **Dani Romain**; *Do You Believe Me*, a blend of online video series and alternate reality game; *Get Outta Town*, a fast paced teen global adventures series; *ZIXX: Level One, Two & Three*, a sci-fi tween series for YTV, co-produced with **Savi Media & Thunderbird Films**; *Chicks with Sticks*, a made-for-pay feature produced with **Earth to Sky Pictures** for **TMN**, **Movie Central**, **A-Channel** and **Super Ecran**; *Lipstick & Dynamite*, a feature documentary about female wrestlers in the 40s and 50s which premiered at **HOT DOCS!** and the **Tribeca Film Festival**; *Mob Princess*, a MOW for the **W Network** in partnership with **Brightlight Pictures**; and *Bailey's Billions*, a family feature co-produced with **Devine Entertainment**.

### **DEV SINGH, PICTURE EDITOR**

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Dev Singh is a Toronto based Picture Editor who has cut several shorts for Bravo! Television, music videos and the Multi media opera *The Passion of Winnie*. Prior to editing, Dev worked in Visual Effects on films *Ice Harvest* (starring Billy Bob Thorton and John Cusack), *Four Brothers* (Mark Wahlberg), *Assault on Precinct 13* (Ethan Hawke, Laurence Fishburne) and *Resident Evil – Apocalypse*. He holds a BFA – Film Studies from Ryerson as well as a BSC Biochemistry from Queen’s University. While not holed up in an edit suite Dev travels to faraway places like India and Southeast Asia. *The Last New Year* is his feature film debut as picture editor.

## **PASHA PATRIKI, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

Mr. Patriki’s expansive body of work includes three dramatic feature films and six feature documentaries. He’s also framed up more than 40 shorts and numerous music videos and commercial spec spots. Films composed in Pasha’s lens have screened internationally and won awards in the United States and Canada. He is a former winner of the NY Independent Short Film Festival award for Best Photography. After moving to Toronto in 1996, Pasha studied at York University in the Film & Video Department. Mr. Patriki was born and raised in Moscow, where he studied dramatic acting at the Modern Arts Institute.

## **CASEY AUSTIN, CO-WRITER/(PENNY)**

Casey is a performer and writer based in Victoria, Canada. After completing her undergraduate degree at the University of Victoria, Casey traveled to Los Angeles where she landed roles in a number of film projects including, *The Tailor* (Alveraz Ricardez / Lucent Films). Casey then enrolled at the Atlantic Acting School in New York to study theatre. Returning to Canada, Casey began writing and in addition to *The Last New Year*, has written a short film entitled *Get Off Dog*. Casey continues to act both on stage; *Much Ado About Nothing* (Victoria Shakespeare Society), *The First Last Time* (Theatre Bombus), and screen; *Tumbling After* (Bryan Skinner / Versus Media), *Yumi In Love* (Terry Miles / CinemaNovel).

## **NICK BLASKO**

Based on Vancouver Island, Nick divides his time between recording artist management (Tegan and Sara, Buck 65, Vince Vaccaro, Flash Lightnin’) and concert promotion (Atomique Productions Ltd.) Nick and his team also produce the annual Rifflandia Music Festival in Victoria BC.

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## CAST BIOGRAPHIES

### **PHILIP GRAEME (WILLIAM)**

Philip Graeme is an actor originally from England. He attended McGill University in Montreal before pursuing his MFA in acting at the American Repertory / Moscow Art Theatre Institute at Harvard University.

His recent performance as Hamlet in Why Not Theatre's production, *The Prince Hamlet*, was named one of the top performances of 2007 by The National Post. Recent film and television performances include *The Last New Year*, *White Knuckles*, *Murdoch Mysteries* and *Wild Card*. He recently played Macduff in the Brampton Flower Festival's production of Macbeth as well as reprising his role of Peter in *Humans Anonymous* (2006 Best of the Fringe) Off-Broadway with The Bridge Company. *Humans* will be re-mounted as part of the Next Stage Festival in January 2009 in Toronto. He recently completed a development deal with the CBC for the relationship drama, *Brunswick Ave*, for which he is co-creator/writer.

### **CASEY AUSTIN (PENELOPE)**

Casey is a performer and writer based in Victoria, Canada. After completing her undergraduate degree at the University of Victoria, Casey traveled to Los Angeles where she landed roles in a number of film projects including, *The Tailor* (Alveraz Ricardez / Lucent Films). Casey then enrolled at the Atlantic Acting School in New York to study theatre. Returning to Canada, Casey began writing and in addition to *The Last New Year*, has written a short film entitled *Get Off Dog*. Casey continues to act both on stage; *Much Ado About Nothing* (Victoria Shakespeare Society), *The First Last Time* (Theatre Bombus), and screen; *Tumbling After* (Bryan Skinner / Versus Media), *Yumi In Love* (Terry Miles / CinemaNovel).

### **JAMES MURRAY (DAVID)**

James Murray is a graduate of The Neighborhood Playhouse in NYC. His other film credits include *The Ache* (Wondrous Light Prods.), *Synapse* (The Unseen Movement/Official Selection of the LA Shorts Fest 2007) & *Surfacing* (Sheraton College/Official Selection of the Inside Out Gay & Lesbian Film Festival 2005). He's also worked on the docu-drama series, *Mayday* (Discovery Canada). James is an associate artist of 'Praxis Theatre', an independent company which will be presenting a staged adaptation of the Albert Camus novel, *The Stranger* in January 09.

### **ANDREW HATCHEY (ADAM)**

Andrew Hachey is a performer and director from Toronto whose work has appeared on stage and screen across Canada and beyond. Film credits include *Runaway* (The CW), *Silver Road* (Broken Frame Films), and *Warriors of Terra* (Peace Arch Films).

Selected theatre credits include Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (Quantum Theatre, Pittsburgh, Festival de Otono, Madrid, Spain), Benjamin in *The Graduate* (The Grand Theatre), *Last Days of Graceland* (Theatre Passe Muraille), *The Golden Thug* (Buddies in Bad Times), and Ted Hughes' *Tales From Ovid* (Centaur Theatre, Montreal). He is a founding member of the performance/theatre collective 404 Strand based in Pittsburgh, PA where he will be returning to create their new show *The Museum of Desire*, based on the short story

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by John Berger. He is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada in Montreal.

## KATE HEWLETT (KATHERINE)

Kate is an actor-writer currently residing in Toronto. Theatre acting credits include: *Humans Anonymous* (New York), *Noble Parasites* (Theatre Passe Muraille), *Don't Wake Me* (UnSpun Theatre) and *Unity 1918* (GCTC). Film and TV credits include: *Stargate:Atlantis*, *A Dog's Breakfast*, *Psych*, *11 Cameras*, *Kevin Hill*, *Four Minutes* and *Dark Water*. Kate is a graduate of the National Theatre School, the co-founder of 6AM Tango Productions and an Associate Artist of UnSpun Theatre. She was also a member of the 2007 Tarragon Playwrights' Unit. Writing credits include: *The Swearing Jar*, *Humans Anonymous*, *Malus Domestica*, *She Said Lenny* and *Use My Babies Well*.

## MIKE MCPHADEN (KEN)

Mike McPhaden is an award winning actor, playwright, and a grad of the CFC's Prime Time Television Writers Program. On screen, he's been seen on *The Border*, *Air Farce*, *Blue Murder*, *Relic Hunter*, and the features *Tkaronto*, *Traitor*, and *Toronto Stories*. Mike won two Dora Awards for his playwriting debut, *Poochwater*, a nomination for his sci-fi double-bill *Noble Parasites*, and is one of four writers of the hit play *The Gladstone Variations*. For television, Mike is a writer and story editor on marbledmedia's *Taste Buds* and an occasional guest blogger at [www.jillgolick.com](http://www.jillgolick.com).

## MAYKO NGUYEN (COURTNAY)

Although best known for her characters of Goth Girl in *Rent a Goalie*, and Mayko Tran in *ReGenesis* (for which she received a Gemini Award nomination) Mayko Nguyen's credits also extend to television shows such as *Tilt*, and *11 Cameras*. She can be seen in Canadian pilots such as *The Listeners* and the upcoming series, *The Session*, along with appearances on the hit series, *Mysterious Ways* and *Zoe Lurie: Wild Card*. Feature credits include the Emmy-nominated *Why I Wore Lipstick to My Mastectomy*, ABC's *Princess* and *Relative Chaos*. Most recently, Mayko portrayed Courtney in the film *The Last New Year* scheduled for release early in 2009.

## MARGARET EVANS (LEAH)

Margaret Evans is a Toronto based actor and Theatre producer. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of King's College in Halifax, Margaret graduated from the Actors Studio Drama School in New York with an M.F.A. in Acting. Her theatre credits include *Much Ado About Nothing* (Cry Havoc) *Jimmy the Cocksucker* (Expanded Arts), *Crossing Delancey* (Encore) *The Moon Bath Girl* (Summerworks), *Trying* (Globus) and *DYAD* (Toronto Fringe).

Margaret has produced for the Summerworks festival, the Toronto International Fringe Festival, Nightwood Theatre and the Andrea Nann Dreamwalker Dance Company, among others. She is currently the General manager for Praxis Theatre and is producing their upcoming production of *Stranger* in January 2009. Screen credits include many short films as well as *Spynet* and *This is Wonderland* (CBC Television). *The Last New Year* (FokosFilms/Nightingale) is Margaret's first feature film role.

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## **KRIS HOLDEN-RIED (ERIC)**

Aside from his role in *The Last New Year*, Kris Holden-Ried's Feature Film credits selectively include *Emotional Arithmetic*, starring Susan Sarandon and Gabriel Byrne, *Never Forget*, a mystery thriller starring alongside Lou Diamond-Phillips; as well as many television productions most recently including the movie *Girl's Best Friend*, with Janeane Garofalo, *Gossip* an MOW with Kelli Williams, and recurring roles in such TV series as *M.V.P.*, *The Tudors* in which he played "Sir William Compton, and *Degrassi: The Next Generation*.

Holden-Ried trained as an actor with Uta Hagen's Master Class Scene Study, as well as the Green Room Actor's Workshop and the National Film Acting School, and has gone on to amass an impressive resumé of work on the big and small screens. After a series of supporting roles in such titles as *The Defenders* for Showtime, *Forget Me Never* for CBS and *Going To Kansas City*, a romantic thriller for the big screen, Holden-Ried gained significant prominence playing bassist "Noel Redding" in *Hendrix*, Showtime's biopic on the life and music of Jimi Hendrix. His many credits since then include the features *Gossip*, with Kate Hudson, *Public Domain*, *K-19: The Widow Maker*, *Alice Blue*, *A Touch of Pink*, *Niagara Motel* and *A Stone's Throw*. He appeared on television in Showtime's gritty crime drama *Street Time*, and the movies *Icebound*, starring Susan Sarandon, Shaftesbury's *Hemingway vs Callaghan* and *A Killing Spring*, *The Many Trials Of One Jane Doe*, and as "Wayne Gretzky" in the TV movie *Waking Up Wally: The Walter Gretzky Story*.

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## DIRECTOR'S VISION

At its heart, *The Last New Year* is a story about friendship, its ability to enrich our lives as well as the personal sacrifices it requires. The unity of a tight knit group of friends - the best of friends - is jeopardized through the challenges of growing up and growing apart, and weakened by secrets, envy, betrayal and loss. The gathering of eight long-time friends (and two outsiders) is a subculture where the balance between the needs of the individual and those of the collective continually come into conflict. Ultimately, for the group to remain intact, each member must release something of his or her own ego and individuality. The question becomes, "Will each person make the necessary sacrifice?"

Because this is a story about friendship, it is also a story about relationships. Relationships of all kinds exist within the film: familial, platonic, monogamous, sexually impassioned, forbidden, etc... and it is through these relationships that the story takes root and the drama and conflict unfold. As a director, diving into these relationships and the interpersonal conflicts that arise between friends was my primary focus.

In writing the script I was greatly influenced by Lawrence Kasdan's *The Big Chill*, John Cassavetes' *Faces*, and Thomas Vinterberg's *The Celebration (Festen)*, three works which center around "everyday people" lost in meaningless lives and/or dealing with troubled pasts.

The success of all these films rested on strong performances, the use of humor to counter the intense subject matter, and a traditional (linear) story structure. Likewise, I see the success of *The Last New Year* riding primarily on the strong performances of an ensemble cast and the script that we, collectively, have brought to life.

Other films that provided inspiration include *The Anniversary Party*, Lars Von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark*, Woody Allen's *Interiors* and *Husbands and Wives*, and the recent ultra low budget success, *Once*.

### Style:

Because *The Last New Year* is very much a character and actor driven film, the vast majority of my resources were focused on drawing out and enhancing the performances of my actors.

In all the above-mentioned films (save *The Big Chill*), the directors diverted from a traditional Hollywood naturalism, and instead utilized a more informal, cinéma vérité or "realistic" style. Four of the films were shot on video, and *Faces* probably would have been had the technology existed forty years ago. In almost every case, directors and actors state that the small production sizes - with intimate sets and simple set ups - lead to better performances and a more "personal" feel.

It is this personal, intimate feeling that I have worked to create with *The Last New Year*. A key to achieving this atmosphere was creating an environment in which the actors felt comfortable and safe enough to try things out and take risks, and having a production flexible enough to follow and record the performances no matter where they went (both physically and emotionally).

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Both *Faces* and *The Celebration* show us how we can use a handheld camera in ways that are at once visually interesting AND true to the thematic hyper-realism. The use of long-lenses (to heighten the handheld camera's kinetic energy and reduce depth of field), high contrast, a grainy (or "gainy") texture, extreme angles, tight framing, and rapid cutting all go a long way to enhance compelling performances, and are all techniques I used throughout *The Last New Year*.

Sound has also been tailored to enable as much flexibility as possible. Wireless mics were used on numerous tracks. This allowed audio layering in post and created a realistic "sound-scape" similar to what one might experience at a social event – where interjections and snippets of background conversation add humor and/or depth to the drama. Robert Altman films often utilize this technique to great effect.

Of course, it is important to ensure that stylistic decisions did not overshadow the performances they are meant to enhance and have taken care not to overstep that line. All stylistic decisions were made with the scene and actors' emotional "truth" in mind and I believe we were able to achieve a happy marriage of powerful performance and compelling cinematic style.

Needless to say, I am extremely excited about having brought this compelling film to life and have enjoyed the collaboration that moved this story off the page and onto the screen.

Garfield Lindsay Miller  
Director/Co-Writer, *The Last New Year*

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## CREW & CAST INTERVIEWS:

### **GARFIELD LINDSAY MILLER, DIRECTOR/CO-WRITER**

INTERVIEWER: Can you talk about the closeness of the group of your cast and crew?

**GARFIELD:** *The Last New Year* is a film about friends and relationships. How we created the intimacy of a group of characters who know each other well, who love each other and challenge each other (and do it over a short two week shoot) was by bringing together a group of actors, really talented people, who are already friends. I knew a lot of the actors beforehand, and all these friendships on set made it easier to collaborate and create a genuine sense of intimacy, of closeness, which I think plays out on the screen.

INTERVIEWER: Where did the inspiration and idea for *The Last New Year* come from?

**GARFIELD:** “For thematic inspiration I drew upon my experience with my old friends from high school and college. We have an annual party called Julefrokost, which is a traditional Danish Christmas dinner. None of us are actually Danish, but it’s this thing we do every year. And we come together and we get all dressed up in crazy costumes and we play games and drink schnapps, very much like the characters do in the film. And it’s an opportunity to have a shared experience with a bunch of close friends. It’s evolved into a kind of chosen family event with it’s own traditions and rituals. It’s really a chosen family and a tradition that we’ve come up with. So I thought this would be a fertile setting for a story about relationships that we could play into.

“For inspiration, one of filmmakers I looked to was John Cassavetes. I would often show his work to the cast and crew. I would also show them interviews where Cassavetes talks about how it’s important to be engaged with the art, to make art for its own sake, and I think as a result, everyone who worked on it really cared about the film... about what we were all creating.

“I also spent a lot of time looking at some of the Danish filmmakers, Susan Beir, Thomas Winterberg, Lars von Trier... Their work has had a very strong impact on me over the years.”

INTERVIEWER: How did having Bruce MacDonald and Gail Harvey as mentors impact the film?

**GARFIELD:** “I was fortunate to have both Gail and Bruce supporting me through the process. I would go to them with questions - sometimes technical, sometimes creative, sometimes procedural – and inevitably they’d come back with just the right nugget of info to help me move forward. Gail highlighted preparation and she showed me the work that she does prior to a production – the schematics, the shot lists, the script notes. This inspired me to do my homework, to be proactive, and, as a result I went into the shoot extremely well prepared. Bruce, on the other hand, is an instinctual filmmaker and emphasized the importance of trusting my gut, even if that meant making an unpopular decision or going against the grain. Those difficult decisions are ultimately the ones that personalize the film, make it unique and make it mine. And so, together, Gail and Bruce complemented each other perfectly – kind of like the left-brain and right-brain coming together - they were an excellent mentor combo.”

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INTERVIEWER: Now that you're done, what are you most pleased with about the film?

**GARFIELD:** "In terms of the finished film, I think the big ensemble scenes are extremely real and moving. There's the big dinner scene that happens about a third of the way through. There's the climactic group argument scene towards the end, and then there are a number of relationships that exist within that are very real and very true. So I think that those relationships and those scenes are, for me, really the most powerful.

"On the business side, I'm excited the film already has a national broadcaster in Canada. I think that is a great thing. It's very rare for a first time director. And kudos to Super Channel for really taking an interest and investing in young talent... but yes, it's great that we are going to get the film out there across the country, and so I'm very excited about that."

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything you'd do differently?

**GARFIELD:** "Yeah, there's lots of stuff I'd do differently but I think that's a part of learning. It's my first feature as a director and everyday you gain confidence in your ability. I think that would probably be the one thing that I will take away most over anything else, is just the confidence I've gained in the process. And the next time I'll have that confidence going in off the top and know that I can and should trust my instincts as they're challenged. So I think that's probably the biggest thing – I'd go in with more confidence."

## **ALYSON RICHARDS, PRODUCER**

INTERVIEWER: What first attracted you to *The Last New Year*?

**ALYSON:** I was initially impressed with the script but I got really engaged and excited when I went to the first cast read through. Seeing the cast bring the characters and the story to life was amazing. I was especially blown away by what James Murray brought to the character of David.

INTERVIEWER: What was it like working with director, Garfield Lindsay Miller?

**ALYSON:** Garfield has a very strong vision but he is also a very collaborative filmmaker, which is amazing. He will always listen to input from the team around him but will ultimately make the decision he deems best for his vision.

## **DEBBIE NIGHTINGALE, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

INTERVIEWER: How did you first get involved with *The Last New Year*?

**DEBBIE:** Alyson Richards had been working with us for about a year when she brought this project to us. It was developed and written by Garfield Casey Austin whom she knew well. I read the script and it had a real charm about it. Alyson's idea was that the Nightingale Company produce it with Garfield and after some discussion with her and Garfield, we agreed to take it on.

INTERVIEWER: What first attracted you to the project?

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**DEBBIE:** It reminded me *The Big Chill*, which was a personal favourite of mine. I also liked the fact that Garfield was making his first foray as a feature film director - he's an intelligent, thoughtful and energetic man who was committed to getting his film made - and that is always attractive for a producer.

**CASEY AUSTIN, CO-WRITER/(PENNY)**

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me about your character?

**CASEY:** Penny is a somewhat fragile individual. She's gone through a lot of emotional strain/trauma over the last year but she loves her friends. She has a lot of pain inside of her, but she's also really happy to be at the party. She wasn't planning on coming and is not mentally prepared to be there. Penny's a really great character. She knows whole truth in the story which is interesting because she's fighting with whether or not she will reveal it. So it's a fun character to play because you get that inner struggle a lot.

INTERVIEWER: What was your favorite part of the shoot?

**CASEY:** The dinner scene. I had been looking forward to filming it since forever, so when we actually all sat down it was hard for me not to cry I was so excited. And it was so beautiful, the set design, the table was really gorgeous and everybody just had a really good time and we basically spent 10 hours sitting around this table. At the end I got everyone to hold hands and I got Garfield to sit in with us. So that's the scene, the dining scene, I'll never forget it.

INTERVIEWER: What's it like working with Garfield as a director?

**CASEY:** He's incredible. His vision comes through. He knows what he wants and gives excellent direction. Just watching the monitors is so exciting, the framing, just the visual of what he's seeing. I saw it in my mind in a way when writing it, but it's even better.

**PHILIP GRAEME (WILLIAM)**

**PHILIP:** William is the host of the evening, of the re-occurring New Years evenings. He used to live with Penny and Rich who are two of the other characters. William has been in love with Penny for a very long time and has never really confessed this or talked about this. So where we start this story William is not expecting to see her. He's looking forward to escaping, he's selling the loft and getting out and leaving it all behind and moving on and then, Penny shows up and that sort of changes the rest of the evening for him.

INTERVIEWER: What's it been like working with two handheld cameras?

**PHILIP:** It's fun. It keeps everybody loose while they're working with each other. The camera is floating around and between everybody and you just sort of have to keep playing because you suddenly turn around and have a camera right next to you and you didn't notice it there before. It's a very different way of shooting, it's very, very tight... During pre-production, Garfield would show us lots of different films, *Faces*, *The Celebration* [*Festen*], *Open Hearts*... So the style of those films was certainly subconsciously in the back of my head while we're doing it. And working like that creates a "life-like" or verité quality. There's not much opportunity in a professional situation to

# The Last New Year

do that style of work, so it was a great experience.

## **JAMES MURRAY (DAVID)**

**JAMES:** David is kind of the rebellious one of the bunch. He's skeptical about this ongoing tradition of all the friends meeting together. Basically, the whole cast, they're friends since they were in high school and they just know each other a little too well, they're tired of each other. David's the one with the most swear words, yeah, he's kind of the obnoxious type, I guess.

**INTERVIEWER:** So do you notice any parallels in the character that you play to your own life?

**JAMES:** [Laughs] He's kind of a character that hasn't really grown up yet, he's sort of immature, uncomfortable in his own skin. Kind of like how I was, I had my wild-man days where I'd go out and party and make an ass of myself and not think twice about it.

## **MARGARET EVANS (LEAH)**

**MARGARET:** I am playing the character of Leah. Leah had a very interesting year. I think she's at a bit of a crossroads in her late twenties life, and she's trying to turn over a new leaf in terms of how she lives her life.

**INTERVIEWER:** When you first got the script, what did you think about it? Were you attracted to the project right away?

**MARGARET:** Yeah, I loved the idea of doing an ensemble piece, and we're really lucky to have a cast here put together that's just incredible, and we all get along really well. A lot of the members of the cast are actors whom I know socially but have never worked with before, which is really exciting. And I think that was evident in the script. You have ten really interesting characters that come off the page and lots of really tender moments, dramatic moments, some funny, really light moments, and it has a little bit of everything for everyone. It's really important that you can get along with everyone. I think it's nice to have that familiarity in terms of – sometimes you can look over at someone, make eye contact because something is frustrating you or because something is funny to you, and there's that unspoken sort of communication, acknowledgement, that's really... it's hard to find. It's hard to find in friendship and it's hard to find certainly in working colleagues, so it's nice to have that. We've shared a lot of laughs. We've laughed *a lot*. Even, I find in some of the scenes that I've shot that are more challenging, there's a sort of implied sense of support and encouragement and a solid foundation to come from when you need to do something that maybe is difficult or challenging, which is really lucky to have.

**INTERVIEWER:** What's with the maid costume?

**MARGARET:** The maid costume is... I tried to consciously – and the first week especially – I tried to not actually cover up that much in between takes. I had to get used to the fact that somehow Leah is okay with having shots dedicated [laugh] entirely to her cleavage. Which is new for me, so that's been an important part of the process.

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## **ANDREW HACHEY (ADAM)**

**ANDREW:** I play Adam, who is a visual artist in this group. In this group of friends, he seems pretty quiet I think when you first get to know him. Doesn't say much, but what he tries to say is thought out. In terms of the story, I think he's very much an observer of a lot of the things that go on in the story, and tries to make himself not so much a part of it as sort of encouraging other people to take part.

**INTERVIEWER:** How has it been working with a large ensemble in one location?

**ANDREW:** That's one of the interesting thing is that on most shoots you have your own space, you know, there's a trailer or *something*, there's a space you get to go to. But here, there's one location, there's not a lot of space, and not a lot of oxygen, so it's been kind of like a big sleepover in some cases and some nights. It can get trying as any kind of shoot does, but this has been special in that there's nowhere to go really to escape these people. [laughs] Which is great sometimes, because I think with a project like this – that requires such an ensemble feel and demands a closeness with everybody, it's sort of been ideal in a way, to force us to negotiate with each other in ways you don't usually have to or get to in most projects.

**INTERVIEWER:** What's the crew like and what's Garfield like on set?

**ANDREW:** The crew has been amazing. They've brought their sense of humor to this, which has helped out a lot. It's been as low stress as possible, which I really appreciate. They've been fantastic, very accommodating. They've sort of become part of the ensemble with us by nature of there being no space, and we're all very much in this together. And Garfield has been great at negotiating that with us. He's open to our ideas, and he ask for what he wants. So that's great for him, it's great on him. I think the success of the film will be whether or not we as a group – the ten actors and Garfield – whether or not we've been able to create this sense of long-standing friendship that reads to the audience. I think if we can do that, then that's most of the work done for us.

## **KATE HEWLETT (KATHERINE)**

**KATE:** I'm playing Katherine who is kind of the bossy one in the group and she really wants the group of friends to stay together. We've lost this one member of the group cause he disappeared last year and Katherine really wants everything to go normally and efficiently like it did every other year so she sort of pushes people around a lot. She likes to make lists and signs and give people stickers and duties and that kind of thing.

**INTERVIEWER:** What did you think of Katherine the character?

**KATE:** I love the character. Well, it's fun to play. I don't know if I want to be friends with her (laughs). But, she's kind of like me as a Grade 6 girl. Bossy and overbearing, but fun, it's fun to play... She's like the mother hen.

**INTERVIEWER :** What's it been like working with Garfield?

**KATE:** Garfield's great. I can't believe this is his first feature cause he's amazing. I really trust him and he knows what he's doing and he has a very clear idea of what he wants the shots to look like but he also talks to the actors really well. Sometimes you get people that are, you know, they've been D.O.Ps in the past and so they're focused more on the

# The Last New Year

way that it looks instead of the acting and Garfield has both things going on so it's really cool. And he's got a sense of humour, he gets the giggles, so I don't get in trouble when I get the giggles."

## **AARON WEBBER (SEBASTIAN)**

**AARON:** I play Sebastian, a 17 year old kid, who comes to this party on New Years Eve to hang out with a bunch of twenty-somethings. He's sort of the outcast of the group to some extent. What's actually interesting about Sebastian is that throughout the film people actually compare him to Rich, the friend who is missing at the party. And so, as you watch the film and see my character, you discover who Rich is, what Rich is all about.

## **KRIS HOLDEN-RIED (ERIC)**

**KRIS:** Eric is Penny's fiancé, but she hasn't told her friends, only a couple of them know about it. He comes in sort of mid-way through the film at the party, uninvited, but to come and see Penny with good intentions and walks into a maelstrom of relationships and emotions and stuff like that.

**INTERVIEWER:** How do you find working in one house with a large ensemble cast?

**KRIS:** It's really good actually. I mean, it's really hot and it's really smelly but it's a good ensemble feeling. You can't get away from each other so it's like camp. It's kind of like one of those reality T.V shows, "the loft" or something like that, when you're just stuck with a bunch of people that you don't know and you 'can't get away' [laughs].

## **MAYKO NGUYEN (COURTNAY)**

**MAYKO:** I play Courtney, she's sort of the happy, care-free, happy-go-lucky one of the group, I think everyone else sort of has their stuff going on. Courtney is here tonight at this party to have a really, really good time, at least initially. It's funny, I went into this with all these pre-conceived notions of how I wanted to play Courtney and what her character was going to be like and who she was, and it's interesting because over the course of the shoot, she has evolved in ways I didn't really expect her to. So, I don't know what Courtney's deal is by the end of the film, cause we haven't gotten there yet, but basically, she's very light and easygoing and just wants to have a good time.

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## PRODUCTION NOTES

The Cast and Crew of *The Last New Year* describe how the film moved from an idea to a cinematic reality.

### THE IDEA

**GARFIELD LINDSAY MILLER, DIRECTOR/CO-WRITER:** “The idea for the *The Last New Year* (TLNY) came in part from my real life situation. I have a group of friends who have a tradition of meeting every year - not on New Year's as in the film - but for an event around Christmas. We put on costumes, play and celebrate much as do the characters in TLNY. In discussing the idea for the film with some of the my actor friends who eventually appeared in the film, the idea of the "empty chair" came up - one of the friends mysteriously going missing since the previous gathering. That's where we started, and the script evolved from there - as a drama about the effects and stresses of this person's mysterious absence on the relationships between the friends.

Further elements were added and embellished when Casey Austin came on board as co-writer - for example, the secret love affair between two of the pivotal characters, and how that may have contributed to their friend's disappearance.

### THE WRITING

**CASEY AUSTIN, CO-WRITER/(PENNY):** “Garfield and I met over 5-years ago through friends in Victoria and I had just decided to move to L.A for acting. So I went and lived there for 2 and a half years and came back and ran into Garfield and he was like, “So what are you up to?” and I said, “I was just down in LA acting...” and he said, “Oh, I make films.” So we totally didn't know that about each other... Shortly thereafter I read for him and Camelia [Frieberg] for *A Stone's Throw*. Lisa Ray ended up getting the part, but I guess Garfield liked my work because he then contacted me and asked me to work on *The Last New Year*. His concept was this New Years Eve party and it's all old friends and he asked me if I was interested, but more than just acting in it, which was lovely to get that phone call, but also developing the character Penny. I was very excited and started writing, and started writing other characters that would influence my character. Again, I guess he liked my work because from there we just kept writing together.”

**GARFIELD:** “Casey lives in Victoria and I was in Toronto and we would just start writing drafts. I would write something and send it to her and she would write something and send it back to me and we would go back and forth like that. I actually worked that way with Camelia Frieberg on *A Stone's Throw* and it worked very well because you keep each-other moving forward and you're always thinking, “I know she's waiting for the next draft, so I have to get it done” as opposed to when you're working alone or working with someone that is next to you, you can more easily put it off or let it slide. But for some reason, from a distance there is this sense of obligation of getting it done, so we both, I think, really pushed each other to move forward with the drafts. We wrote a lot and spent a lot of time on developing the different threads that exist within the story. Working with Casey was a really collaborative and enjoyable process. Sometimes we'd have disagreements and that was good because we'd be forced to articulate what exactly it was we were trying to get across in this particular moment or scene, and by being forced to do that you can't be lazy, and it made the script better. Ultimately, I passed the script to Alyson Richards, a friend who had recently taken a job at The Nightingale Company and she really liked it and so she passed it on to Debbie

# The Last New Year

Nightingale. When they decided to come on board we were very pleased Obviously we'd done a lot of work to get to that point, but their being involved is what ultimately made it possible.”

**CASEY:** “Working with Garfield as a writer was a delight. He is a genuine, true, happy spirited, creative person. A “yes” – he says yes to everything, I mean not to everything, we definitely had our arguments where we'd get stuck, but usually over small issues. Yeah, Garfield's very creative and he's got a vision of what he wants. And similarly, I do, so it was interesting because we seemed to really hit on the same vision in almost all respects. Collaborating is awesome, it's fun to be able to call up and just talk, brainstorm... we would spend hours on the phone and discuss small moments, and it was exhilarating.”

## THE DEVELOPMENT

**ALYSON RICHARDS, PRODUCER:** “Garfield and I are friends so he sent me the script that he and co-writer Casey Austin had written for feedback. I was impressed with the draft written and gave him some notes. I continued to be involved as the script progressed and a few months later he asked me if I would be interested in producing the film. I was very excited about the prospect and brought the project to Debbie Nightingale who read the script, met Garfield, and jumped on board.

“Through development and preproduction, the film benefited immensely from people putting faith in the project and our creative team. Our mentors, Bruce McDonald and Gail Harvey, provided creative feedback early on. Executive Producer Debbie Nightingale offered unwavering support to the project. Super Channel's Justin Rebelo committed early on to the film. The crew worked long days for peanuts and the cast committed themselves wholeheartedly.”

## THE CASTING

**PHILIP GRAEME (WILLIAM):** “The idea of working with a group of friends who are all actors, writers, people involved with the industry – came from a series of conversations Garfield and I had about what kind of work we wanted to be doing. We knew we were going to tell a story about the subtleties of relationships, and so we thought it would be good to bring people together that we knew to help bring that intimacy onto the screen.. I would say that *The Last New Year* is something wonderful, because this work is very hard to do, it's very hard to get this kind of personal work made. It's been a wonderful opportunity.”

**ANDREW HATCHEY (ADAM):** “We – Philip and Garfield and I – were talking about just the frustration of not being able to find projects that we really care about and not being able to work with people that we know and like. Garfield, I think, got the idea to start writing something with us in mind, and luckily he continued to write and continued – he didn't give up on the idea.

**KATE HEWLETT (KATHERINE):** “Actually, I used to live in the loft we filmed in and that's how I met Garfield. I write a lot of my own work and he writes a lot of his own work and we chatted a lot, and then he wrote this film and I guess he had me in mind for Katherine.”

**JAMES MURRAY (DAVID):** “Philip Graeme's a friend of mine and he introduced me to Garfield. One day he said, “A friend is making a movie so I'll see if I can get you

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involved.” I went to a reading Garfield was holding and the part he asked me to read for was David. A couple of weeks later he called me up and said, “Well I really liked your read..” and he kept going on-and-on about liking this or that, and then he stopped and then he goes, “So, do you want the part?” And I’m like, “Yeah, I do! Of course, I’ll take it in a second.”

**KRIS HOLDEN-RIED (ERIC):** “I got onboard because I worked with Garfield about a year and a half ago on another feature called *A Stones Throw* that he also co-wrote. Garfield’s been a friend since then and so I got to know him through that process. Working on this, watching him do his ‘directorial debut’ has been really enjoyable. He’s really on top of it, he’s in charge, he’s fighting the good fight.”

**AARON WEBBER (SEBASTIAN):** “I first met Garfield on *Stone’s Throw* and that was shot back in Nova Scotia where I’m from. Garfield was the co-writer of that script along with the woman who directed it, Camelia Frieberg. When he was still in the early writing stages on *The Last New Year*, Garfield called me up and asked me if I wanted to participate. I flew in from Halifax about a month prior to shooting to start working on this script. We did some pre-production, some workshops, rehearsals and that sort of stuff. It was great.”

**MIKE MCPHADEN (KEN):** “Garfield and Casey spent a lot of time working on the script. A few times along the way they had some actors get together to read it out loud. I helped out. The role of Ken was still not cast. Garfield’s a friend, but at the time he wasn’t familiar with my work as an actor; he mostly knew me as a writer. He just figured I was a nice guy who would probably show up on time and sober, and read for this read-through. I guess I did a pretty good job because he asked me to audition and I ended up getting the part.”

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## *THE LAST NEW YEAR CREDITS*

PENNY	CASEY AUSTIN
LEA	MARGARET EVANS
WILLIAM	PHILIP GRAEME
ADAM	ANDREW HACHEY
KATHERINE	KATE HEWLETT
KEN	MIKE MCPHADEN
DAVID	JAMES MURRAY
COURTNAY	MAYKO NGUYEN
SEBASTIAN	AARON WEBBER
With DANIEL KASH	AS THE DETECTIVE
And KRIS HOLDEN-RIED	AS ERIC

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Directed by  
GARFIELD LINDSAY MILLER

---

Written by  
GARFIELD LINDSAY MILLER  
&  
CASEY AUSTIN

---

Produced by  
ALYSON RICHARDS

---

Executive Producers  
DEBBIE NIGHTINGALE  
&  
GARFIELD LINDSAY MILLER

---

Line Producer  
RECHNA VARMA

Associate Producer  
RYAN EDGAR

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# The Last New Year

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PASHA PATRIKI

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edited by  
DEV SINGH

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production designer  
CHRIS GOTZAMANIS

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music supervisor  
NICK BLASKO

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First Assistant Director	MARK MACDONALD
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Second Assistant Director	DAVID SPARKS
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Additional Cinematography	JOHN AINSLIE
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Camera Operator	JOHN AINSLIE
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Gaffer	ERIC MORRISON
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1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant Camera	KAR WAI NG
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Costume Designer	SOPHIA MORTGAGE
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Wardrobe Stylist/Buyer	KATHERINE DUFFIN
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Key Hair/Makeup Artist	LAUREN CAVANAUGH
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Hair/Makeup Artist	MAGGIE QUIOC
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Second Assistant Director	LAURA GARCIA
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Additional Sound Recordists	AUBYN FREYBE-SMITH SHAWN KIRKBY
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Sound Trainees	MATT A. MCKENZIE JAMES HOCKLEY
Daily Gaffer	ROBERT NEAPETUNG

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Property Master	LINDSAY AGNEW
Assistant Property Master	ALICIA REMIGIO
Drawings	MATT TAYLOR

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Assistant Production Coordinator	NAOMI WARD
Producer's Assistant	KRIS MAJOR
Director's Assistant	JUSTINE BURTON
Key Production Assistant	CHRIS NIESING
Production Assistant	KRISTA SHEEN

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Business Affairs	STÉPHANIE CHAPELLE STEPHEN PANICCIA
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Book Keeper	FARAH MALIK

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GARY MUELLER

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&  
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Story Editor  
MIKE THORN

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Extra Special Thanks  
AVREL FISHER

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## *Another Noon*

As Performed By: Jon & Roy  
Courtesy Of: Blue Heron Music  
© Runaway Music Canada

## *I'll Bring the Sun*

As Performed By: Jason Collett  
Courtesy Of: Arts&Crafts Productions  
Inc.  
© Arts&Crafts Music Inc.

## *Call to Arms*

As Performed By: The Black Angels  
Courtesy Of: Light in the Attic  
© Death Songs Publishing Co

## *Dead Letter and the infinite Yes*

As Performed By: Wintersleep  
Courtesy Of: EMI Music Canada  
© Silly Old Songs Productions/D Bones  
Music/Gosh Yes Music/Jud Haynes  
Entertainment Productions

## *Weathervanes (In The Way)*

As Performed By: Jets Overhead  
Courtesy Of: Microgroove  
Entertainment  
© Microgroove/Warner Chappell

## *Never Meant Any Harm*

As Performed By: The Golden Dogs  
Courtesy Of: True North Records  
© Mummy Dust Music

## *The Con*

As Performed By: Tegan and Sara  
Courtesy Of: Superclose Music Inc.  
© Naked In A Snowsuit Publishing

## *Doves*

As Performed By: The Black Angels  
Courtesy Of: Light in the Attic  
© Death Songs Publishing Co

## *Shine a Light*

As Performed By: The Constantines  
Courtesy Of: The Constantines  
© The Constantines/Arts&Crafts Music

## *Old & Early Numbers*

As Performed By: The Cape May  
Courtesy Of: Flemish Eye  
© The Cape May

## *Never/Ever*

As Performed By: The Black Angels  
Courtesy Of: Light in the Attic  
© Death Songs Publishing Co

## *Shadow Knows*

As Performed By: Jets Overhead  
Courtesy Of: Microgroove  
Entertainment  
© Microgroove/Warner Chappell

## *You Are Ten Years Ago*

As Performed By: Tegan and Sara  
Courtesy Of: Superclose Music Inc.  
© Naked In A Snowsuit Publishing

## *All My Friends*

As Performed By: Land of Talk  
Courtesy Of: Maple Core Ltd.  
© Elizabeth Powel

## *Daddy*

As Performed By: Scandalnavia  
Courtesy Of: Scandalnavia  
© Scandalnavia

## *Dog Song 2*

As Performed By: Be Good Tanyas  
Courtesy Of: Nettwerk Productions  
© Nettwerk Songs Publishing

## *Weighty Ghost*

As Performed By: Wintersleep  
Courtesy Of: EMI Music Canada  
© Silly Old Songs Productions/D Bones  
Music/Gosh Yes Music/Jud Haynes  
Entertainment Productions