

FIREHOUSE DOG

Rex, Hollywood's top-grossing canine, is known for his extreme athletic abilities and diva-like demeanor. His perks package, rivaling that of any A-list celebrity, includes Kobe beef, a poodle harem, and a diamond collar.

Rex's luck – and Hollywood high life – runs out while shooting a commercial; an aerial stunt goes awry, leading Rex's handlers to presume he's dead. But Rex is merely lost – alone, filthy and unrecognizable in an unfamiliar city. Chased by animal control, he takes refuge in grubby abandoned lofts, a far cry from his former luxurious lifestyle.

Shane Fahey (Josh Hutcherson), a bright but rebellious 12-year-old, has exasperated his father Connor (Bruce Greenwood) for the umpteenth time. A single parent and captain of the rundown inner city fire station known as Dogpatch, Connor is charged with inspiring the sad-sack company: veteran and firehouse cook Joe Musto (Bill Nunn), the super-fit and strong-willed mother hen Pepita "Pep" Clemente (Mayte Garcia), the exhausted family-man Lionel Bradford (Scotch Ellis Loring), and the calendar-worthy rookie Terence Kahn (Teddy Sears). The team is still coping with the recent loss of their former captain, Connor's brother. Shane is also troubled by his uncle's death, and he's been acting out by ditching school.

As Connor reprimands Shane for his unruly behavior, Dogpatch gets a call to put out a blaze tearing through the lofts where Rex has been hiding. Trapped on the loft's burning roof, Rex makes a death-defying leap and is rescued by Connor. Once they are safe on the ground, Shane is tasked with finding the mutt's owner.

The pompous, fastidious Rex and the troubled, messy Shane immediately clash. Unaware of Rex's true identity, Shane becomes his reluctant new master. But his attitude changes when he discovers Rex's spectacular skills, which the firefighters put to use during rescue calls.

Inspired by the dog's talent and courage, Dogpatch makes Rex its mascot. It's just the boost the company needs – and what Shane and Connor need to help bring them together. But Rex's fame has drawn the attention of his Hollywood handlers who want him back – while father and son face a deadly challenge from an unexpected source.

FIREHOUSE DOG originated with an idea – a “dog movie” mandate – from screenwriter Claire-Dee Lim, who approached two former UCLA classmates, the writing-producing team of Mike Werb and Michael Colleary about turning the idea into a film. For Werb and Colleary, in addition to providing the chance to make a fun, family picture, Lim's idea allowed the two filmmakers to explore the reality versus the fantasy of dogs that perform in films. “Having worked with dogs on a previous project, we were struck by the irony of their portrayals in many Hollywood pictures,” says Werb. “Dogs that perform in filmed entertainment are nothing like their on-screen characters so beloved by audiences.” Adds Colleary: “With so many rules surrounding these actor-dogs, they seemed more like workers than the dogs we grew up with. Actor-dogs can't be touched or even looked at by anyone other than their trainers.”

Werb approached his friend and colleague Todd Holland about directing what became FIREHOUSE DOG. “In taking on FIREHOUSE DOG,

I was motivated by a love of dogs and great respect for relationships with dogs,” Holland continues. “My own dog Rosebud taught me so much about life and love.”

Werb and Colleary made their title character, Rex, more than just a character that supports the human story – or who serves only to make trouble and act cute. “We wanted to make a movie where the dog had as strong a personality as any human in the film,” says Werb. “This was a challenge, given that Rex cannot speak. But Rex is definitely a personality; he’s a fusion of every horrible superstar and their perk package with a little operatic diva thrown in for good measure.”

The filmmakers were also determined to incorporate an adult perspective. “I thought it would be fun for adults watching the film to be able to pull back the curtain on Hollywood’s canine stars,” Colleary states. “The film definitely has a satiric perspective about contemporary Hollywood and how people lose perspective when a star is involved.” Adds screenwriter Claire-Dee Lim, “FIREHOUSE DOG is a film for everyone. It is a full on action comedy with a lot of heart.”

The search for the canine star to play Rex was challenging. Prospective candidates had to be agile, athletic and small enough to fit inside a drum, yet large enough to intimidate the story’s villain. It couldn’t be a celebrity dog (such as Benji or Lassie), and it had to walk a fine line between realism and a bigger-than-life quality. “It’s quite simple: We have to believe that Rex is the smartest, most athletic dog on the face of the earth, yet be recognizable as a real dog,” says Colleary.

As they began the canine casting process, the filmmakers consulted dog breeding guides, which helped them exclude breeds that wouldn’t work for the film. Then, Holland explains, the production team “interviewed” dogs and dog trainers, ultimately bringing aboard a quartet of Irish terriers to portray Rex. under the watchful eye of trainer Ursula Brauner

(from Boone's Animals for Hollywood, which provides animals and trainers for movies). "Casting Rex was a unique experience even though I've done a lot of work with dogs," says Brauner. "FIREHOUSE DOG uses every single trick you can imagine to get Rex's 'performance.' We had four trainers on location and four dogs – named Stryder, Frodo, Arwen and Rohan – who played Rex, or served as stunt doubles and stand-in dogs.

"We got these dogs specifically for this movie," Brauner continues. "This is their first 'acting' experience so we had to teach them everything from scratch." Because Rex doesn't speak, he has to convey emotions through physical expression and behavior – and with a little help from computer generated imagery.

The stunning red headed Irish terriers who play Rex won the hearts of cast and crew of FIREHOUSE DOG. Many bonded with the animals, even though Irish terriers are a spirited breed. "Working with dogs on movies like this requires creating a bond and a trust with the dogs and getting them used to the absolute madness of filmmaking," explains Brauner. "It's work for the dogs because they are exposed to so many different environments on the set, such as fire, ringing bells, and lights and cameras. As we build trust with the dogs, they come to understand that if they stay connected to us, they will be able to ignore everything else."

Casting the young man to play Shane was much easier than finding the canine lead. Regency Enterprises had just finished shooting "Little Manhattan" starring Josh Hutcherson, and executives at the studio suggested the filmmakers have a look at his performance. Five minutes into the screening, Claire-Dee Lim exclaimed, "Look, it's Shane!"

Todd Holland spent the day with Josh and his mother Michelle on the Vancouver set of "R.V.," where Josh was working alongside Robin Williams. "I felt confident that Josh was Shane after our meeting, and during shooting, he surpassed my already high expectations," says Holland. "I've

worked with a lot of famous kids, and Josh is at the top of the heap. He's smart, hard working and brings a great energy to the set."

The fact that Josh loves dogs and has one of his own was invaluable to his working opposite the "Rexes." "Josh had a big job in terms of working with the animals," says Brauner. "He had to get acclimated to four different dogs and that takes a lot of patience and confidence even for an adult."

"Working with the dogs was fun but also a big challenge," adds Josh Hutcherson. "In one scene where I'm crying, and the dog has to come in and hit his mark and the trainer is saying, 'Sit, sit, sit', and I have to weave my lines between the trainer working with the dog, it's tough. It is hard for me to get in touch with my emotions when there is such a lot going on around me. But the dog trainers and the dogs in this movie are amazing and so well trained."

Veteran actor Bruce Greenwood portrays Shane's father, Connor. "I can't imagine anyone else in that role," says Holland. "Bruce and Josh look alike and developed an immediate father-son chemistry that is palpable on screen." "I liked the story right away," says Greenwood. "It is a really sweet tale about a bunch of misfits who get it together to overcome odds that seem insurmountable at the beginning, and they are helped by the inspirational friendship of this young man and his dog."

Like Hutcherson, Greenwood summoned extra patience to work with the dogs. "I accepted early on that the process was not about me and that I was just a cog in the engine of a much bigger machine," he smiles.

Holland says the rest of the ensemble came together in a "lovely balance" – with Mayte Garcia as the firehouse's mother hen, Bill Nunn as the oldtimer, Scotch Ellis Loring as the committed family man, and Teddy Sears as the eager-to-please newcomer. Dash Mihok and Bree Turner, who portray Rex's master and producer, respectively, were a selfless duo in their elaborate scenes with the dogs, which required of them, says Holland, "the

patience of saints.” In addition, the director was “selfishly quite pleased with the timing of the demise of Steven Culp’s character on ‘Desperate Housewives’ because it freed up his schedule and gave us the perfect Zach,” a local politician who is Connor’s close friend and a former Dogpatch firefighter.

After 16 weeks of dog training and pre-production, FIREHOUSE DOG began principal photography in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Holland embraced the chance to reunite with such previous collaborators as production designer Tamara Deverell, cinematographer Victor Hammer, co-producer Michael J. Maschio, and costume designer Judith Gellman. Together, they faced the daunting tasks presented by three simple words: Dog. Boy. Fire.

A child actor has a shorter work day than adults, the dogs required a lot of rehearsal time with the trainer, and the scenes requiring pyrotechnics required much planning and preparation to ensure accuracy and safety.

“No one could have predicted everything we’d have to deal with on this picture because there were so many variables,” explains Todd Holland. “This is the ‘little dog movie’ where the only thing small is the dog!”

Seeing first-hand how much skill and effort (and a few secret tricks) goes in to training animals was a fascinating experience for Holland. “I’m used to pushing and getting a lot in the time I have, but dogs just can’t be pushed, and no one worked harder on this movie than the dog trainers,” says the director. “Ursula and her team cared so much and I have infinite respect for what they do.” Holland soon came to terms with the situation, surrendering, as he says, to the “almighty dog.”

ABOUT THE CAST

In his short career, 13-year-old **JOSH HUTCHERSON** (Shane Fahey) has worked with many of Hollywood’s finest actors and directors. Hutcherson stars in “Bridge To Terabithia,” which filmed in New Zealand.

Based on Katherine Paterson's novel and directed by Gabor Csupo, the film tells the powerful story of a boy (Hutcherson) whose life is changed forever when he befriends the class outsider. Hutcherson was seen in April 2006 in "RV," co-starring as Robin Williams' son for director Barry Sonnenfeld.

In 2005, Hutcherson starred in the critically acclaimed Fox/New Regency film "Little Manhattan." Directed by Mark Levin and Jennifer Flackett, the film co-stars Bradley Whitford and Cynthia Nixon. Hutcherson also starred opposite Tim Robbins in the Jon Favreau-directed adventure film "Zathura," in which Josh plays a young man who plays a mysterious game and gets swept away on an improbable and perilous adventure into outer space.

His film credits include "Kicking and Screaming" in which he co-stars with Will Ferrell and Robert Duvall. Hutcherson also voiced a lead character in the English-language release of Hayao Miyazaki's anime "Howl's Moving Castle."

In 2004, the young actor shared duties with Tom Hanks as the character of Hero Boy in Warner Brothers' hit "The Polar Express," a groundbreaking film using motion performance capture for its characters.

Hutcherson's television credits include the TNT telepic "Wilder Days," with Peter Falk, the Animal Planet feature "Miracle Dogs" and guest appearances on NBC's "ER," Lifetime's "The Division" and ABC's "Line of Fire."

Josh's hobbies include cars, bowling, soccer and competing in triathlons. He likes to play his guitar and is trying his hand at writing songs. Hutcherson resides with his mom, dad, and his younger brother Connor, in Kentucky.

BRUCE GREENWOOD (Connor Fahey) earned rave reviews for his portrayal of John F. Kennedy in the Cuban missile crisis drama "Thirteen

Days.” His more recent film credits include “Capote,” “I Robot,” “Being Julia” and “Racing Stripes.”

Until “Thirteen Days,” Greenwood was best known as the husband-victim-villain in “Double Jeopardy” with Tommy Lee Jones and Ashley Judd. But his greatest acclaim had come from his work in independent film: as the grieving father in Atom Egoyan’s searing “The Sweet Hereafter,” for which he received a Canadian Oscar® nomination as Best Actor, and for his star turn in Egoyan’s earlier “Exotica.”

In demand by studios and independent filmmakers, he continues to work for both. In the past few years he has appeared in the features “Below,” “Republic of Love,” “Ararat” (his third film with Egoyan), “Swept Away,” “The Core” and “Hollywood Homicide.”

Greenwood’s big break came in the mid-’80s when, as Dr. Seth Griffin in the acclaimed television series “St. Elsewhere,” he established himself as a leading man. During the next ten years he worked constantly, starring in television movies and series including the short-lived, deeply revered “Nowhere Man” (1995-96).

DASH MIHOK (Trey Falcon) has been in a variety of independent and big-budget movies, the most recent of which include “Kiss, Kiss, Bang, Bang,” “Hollywoodland,” “The Day After Tomorrow,” “Connie and Carla” and “Mojave.”

Much of the New York native’s early work was lensed in his hometown. Mihok had guest spots on the NYC-filmed dramas “New York Undercover,” “NYPD Blues” and “Law & Order.” He made his starring film debut in the 1994 racially-themed independent feature “Black Is White” before receiving strong reviews for his role as a mentally-unbalanced young man in the CBS TV-movie thriller “Murderous Intent.” An appearance in Barry Levinson’s hard-hitting “Sleepers” followed. Mihok first gained real notice with his featured role in Baz Luhrmann’s modern take on “William

Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet." He also appeared in "The Perfect Storm" and "The Thin Red Line."

STEVEN CULP's (Zachary Hayden) most recent role as Rex Van De Kamp on the hit series "Desperate Housewives" earned him a SAG Award™ for outstanding performance by an ensemble in a comedy series. The show also received a Golden Globe® for best television series -- musical or comedy, a People's Choice Award, and it was selected as a 2004 AFI TV Program of the Year.

In 2000 Culp won critical acclaim for his performance as Robert F. Kennedy in the film "Thirteen Days" alongside Bruce Greenwood. The film is set during the two-week Cuban missile crisis in October of 1962. Other films include "The Emperor's Club," "Spartan," "Nurse Betty," "James and the Giant Peach," "Fearless," and "Dead Again." His most recent movie, the independent feature "The Sisters," is an adaptation of Anton Chekhov's drama "Three Sisters."

BILL NUNN (Joe Musto) is best known from his portrayal of Robby Robertson in "Spider-Man" and "Spider-Man 2." He made his feature debut in fellow Morehouse College graduate Spike Lee's "School Daze," and also appeared in Lee's "Do the Right Thing," "Mo' Better Blues" and "He Got Game."

Nunn played Harrison Ford's physical therapist in "Regarding Henry" and Whoopi Goldberg's protector in "Sister Act." Additional film credits include "Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead," "The Legend of 1900," "The Hungry Bachelor's Club," "Kiss the Girls," "The Last Seduction," "New Jack City," "Mad City," "Extreme Measures," "The People I Know," "Runaway Jury," "White Lie," "Candyman: Farewell to the Flesh," "Always Outnumbered" and "Money Train."

Nunn turned in fine performances as Tim Roth's adoptive father in "La Leggenda del pianista sull'oceano," Giuseppe Tornatore's first English-language feature. He had featured roles in "People I Know," with Al Pacino, and in the prison thriller "Lockdown."

Nunn has found time to do numerous television pilots and three series. He was in the CBS series "Traps" with George C. Scott, sitcom "Local Heroes" for NBC and the critically acclaimed "The Job" with Denis Leary on ABC. He has appeared on episodes of "Chicago Hope," "Touched By an Angel," "New York Undercover" and "Millennium" among others. His extensive stage work includes his performance in the Tony® Award winning, Broadway production of "A Raisin in the Sun" as well as roles in "Fences," "A Soldier's Play," "Lesson From Aloes," "MacBeth," "Blues for an Alabama Sky," and "Everybody's Ruby."

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

TODD HOLLAND (Director) has helmed nearly 250 episodes of critically acclaimed television, two feature films, received three Emmy® Awards, five CableAce Awards, seven Emmy nominations, a DGA award, six DGA nominations and two of TV Guide's "100 Greatest Television Episodes of All Time."

Holland was executive producer and director of the runaway hit series, "Malcolm in the Middle," which became one of America's most lauded and popular shows.

Todd co-created, directed and executive-produced the wickedly offbeat dramedy "Wonderfalls." Holland first displayed his flair for dramatic suspense in HBO's critically acclaimed "Vietnam War Stories" (1998). He followed that with several episodes of "Twin Peaks" and a CableAce Award for his episode of "Tales From the Crypt," in which actor Jon Lovitz went to murderous lengths to obtain a role. In 2002 Holland directed and executive produced the pilot "The Time Tunnel," a remake of the classic 1966 Irwin

Allen series. It was preceded by "Freakylinks," the third of Holland's pilots to be picked up in three years, following "Malcolm" and "D.C.," a one-hour WB drama executive-produced by "Law & Order's" Dick Wolf.

Holland honed his comedic skills as a key creative force behind HBO's "The Larry Sanders Show," one of the most honored series of the last decade. Holland directed 52 episodes during the show's six seasons, picking up an Emmy Award, five CableAce Awards, four Emmy nominations and four DGA nominations along the way.

Holland's ability to gracefully traverse genres and photographic styles is evident in his early work, a panoply of venerated and beloved television programming that includes "Felicity," "Tracy Takes On," "Friends," "Twin Peaks," "Max Headroom" and "My So-Called Life."

In addition to his impressive television credits, Holland also has directed two feature films: the 1998 comedy "Krippendorf's Tribe," starring Richard Dreyfus, Jenna Elfman and Lily Tomlin, as well as the 1989 release, "The Wizard," starring Beau Bridges, Christian Slater and Fred Savage.

MICHAEL COLLEARY (Screenwriter, Producer) attended UCLA film school where he earned several awards for excellence in screenwriting. After graduating, he teamed up with fellow alumnus Mike Werb to pen "Face/Off," which *The New York Times* named one of the best 1000 movies ever made.

Recent credits include "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" starring Angelina Jolie, and the WB series "Tarzan." Their active projects include a film-adaptation of the best-selling arena-fighting video game "Tekken," "The Divide" for John Woo, and "Prophets of the Ghost Ants" for A Band Apart.

Los Angeles native **MIKE WERB** (Screenwriter, Producer) attended Stanford where he majored in one thing after another. Turning to writing, he

entered the UCLA Master's Program in Screenwriting. He has since worked for every major studio.

Werb's big break was writing the screenplay for the hit Jim Carrey comedy "The Mask," but he is also proud of the direct-to-video sequel "Darkman 3: Die, Darkman, Die!" and his giant rats-attack-a-college-campus epic "Gnaw: Food Of The Gods, Part 2," as well as his 'Romancing the Stone'-with-teenagers epic called "The Secret of the Ice Cave." Werb and Michael Colleary wrote and co-produced the Oscar-nominated thriller "Face/Off" starring John Travolta and Nicolas Cage. Dubbed "the strangest story ever to get a green light at a Hollywood studio" by the *Wall Street Journal*, "Face/Off" won the best screenplay statuette at the 24th annual Saturn Awards.

Recent credits include "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" starring Angelina Jolie, and the WB series "Tarzan." Their active projects include a film-adaptation of the best-selling arena-fighting video game "Tekken," "The Divide" for John Woo, and "Prophets of the Ghost Ants" for A Band Apart. Werb is also writing the futuristic drama "Tomorrow/Today."

CLAIRE-DEE LIM (Screenwriter) received her B.A. in Philosophy from the University of California at Berkeley, and then earned a Masters of Fine Arts in Motion Picture/Television Production from UCLA. Upon graduating, she worked in San Francisco as an industrial multimedia producer and director, and wrote and directed her own independent films. Most notably: "Pictures of Her," a 25-minute narrative video, featured in the New American Makers Exhibition in San Francisco and "Emeryville," a documentary based on two Bay Area artists, and featured at numerous art exhibitions in San Francisco, New York and Seattle. It also won honors at the San Mateo Film/Video Festival.

Lim then returned to Los Angeles to pursue a screenwriting career. FIREHOUSE DOG marks her first sale. Lim has adapted *The New York*

Times bestselling author Michael Prescott's book *Stealing Faces* for the screen.

VICTOR HAMMER (Director of Photography) is responsible for the cinematography on the feature films "Welcome To Mooseport," "Down Periscope," "Heavy Weights," "Billy Madison," "Major League II," "8 Seconds," "The Program," "Surf Ninjas," "House of Cards," "Falling from Grace," "Going Under" and "Lean on Me."

For television, the veteran cinematographer's credits include the new hit "My Name Is Earl," as well as the series "Veronica Mars," "Wonderfalls," "Girls Club," "Andy Richter Controls the Universe", "FreakyLinks," "D.C.," "Malcolm in the Middle", "Maximum Bob," "Players" and "Feds." His TV movie credits are "Till Dad Do Us Part," "Ball & Chain" and "Kilroy."

TAMARA DEVERELL's (Production Designer) previous feature film credits are "Blizzard," "Bollywood/Hollywood" and "Masala." Her television movie credits include "Suburban Madness," "Coast To Coast," "Eloise at Christmastime," "Eloise at the Plaza," "Sounder," "Dead Aviators," "Caracara," "Mind Games," "Shadow Zone: My Teacher Ate My Homework," "Lulu," "Eclipse," "The Burning Season" and the mini-series "Feast of all Saints."

Her series work includes "Wonderfalls," "Kevin Hill" and "Degrassi: The Next Generation." Deverell was art director on the feature films "Death to Smoochy," "X-Men," "eXistenZ," "54," "Mimic," "Crash," "Canadian Bacon," and the television series "Liberty Street."

SCOTT JAMES WALLACE (Film Editor) has edited several popular and acclaimed television series including "Wonderfalls," "The X Files," "Freaky Links," "The Pretender," "Just Legal," "North Shore," "She

Spies" and "Wild Card." Wallace also edited the TV movies "The Inside," "Aidan" and "The X-Files: The Truth." FIREHOUSE DOG marks his first feature film.

MICHAEL J. MASCHIO (Co-Producer) served as producer on Todd Holland's critically acclaimed series "Wonderfalls" as well as the other series "Kevin Hill," "Twice In a Lifetime," "Spenser: For Hire" and "Scarecrow and Mrs. King." Maschio's credits as producer on movies for television include "Nigel's Fingerprint," "The Pretender: Island of the Haunted," "Jenifer," "The Pretender," "Range of Motion," "When Andrew Came Home," "Spenser: A Savage Place," "Spenser: The Judas Goat," "Spenser: Pale Kings and Princes," "Spenser: Ceremony" as well as "Ladies On Sweet Street" and "Charlie." Maschio was production manager on "The Pretender: Island of the Haunted," "When Andrew Came Home," "Impulse," "Amerika" and the series "The A-Team."

JEFF CARDONI (Music) has worked as a composer on the television series "CSI: Miami" and "Pimp My Ride," among others. His feature credits include "Same Me," "American Pie 5: The Naked Mile," "Shut Up and Sing," and "Just Friends."

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