

NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE

PRESS KIT



NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE is co-directed by veteran animators and story artists Ricardo Curtis (*The Incredibles*, *Monsters, Inc.*) and Rodrigo Perez-Castro (*The Book of Life*, *Ferdinand*) whose combined list of credits, in various roles, include hits such as the *Ice Age* movies, *Angry Birds* and *Rio* through animation pre-production studio House of Cool (*Paw Patrol*, *The Peanuts Movie*, *Despicable Me*). The story is inspired by a concept from genre master, Clive Barker, and is based on a script by Steven Hoban and James Kee.

The film is produced by Steven Hoban and Mark Smith of Academy Award-winning Canadian production company Copperheart Entertainment (*Ryan*, *Splice*, *The Peripheral*), and co-produced by Charades Productions, Umedia and IDL Films in association with House of Cool, Apollo Films, and Mac Guff.

The production was made at major international animation studios Mac Guff (*Despicable Me*) and L'Atelier Animation (*Leap!*, *Fireheart*).

NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE features an outstanding international cast including David Harbour (*Stranger Things*, *Black Widow*), Paul Sun-Hyung Lee (*The Mandalorian*), Scott Thompson (*The Kids in the Hall*) and introducing Gabbi Kosmidis.

The film is distributed by Elevation in Canada and Apollo Films in France.

Anton and Charades are selling international with CAA and Joe Della Rosa selling the US. **NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE** is a Canada (Ontario/Quebec)-France-Belgium co-production produced with the participation of Telefilm Canada - Canal+ - Ciné+ - La Région de Bruxelles-Capitale - Ontario Creates - Screen.Brussels and with the support of the Centre National du Cinéma et de L'Image Animée.

SYNOPSIS

When a meteor crashes into Colepepper Zoo, a virus that transforms the animals into slobbering zombie-like mutants is unleashed. Gracie, a young quirky wolf, teams up with a gruff mountain lion named Dan to find a way back to her pack. As the zoo is overrun, they must come up with a plan to get all the animals back to normal. Together with the help of a motley crew of survivors - Xavier, the movie-obsessed lemur, Frida the fiery capybara, Ash the sarcastic, fabulous ostrich and Felix the treacherous monkey - they embark on a perilous mission to rescue the zoo and defeat Bunny Zero, the deranged mutant-king determined to spread the virus beyond the zoo walls. Welcome to... THE ZOOPOCALYPSE!



Original Title :	Night of the Zoopocalypse
Directors :	Rodrigo Perez-Castro and Ricardo Curtis
Writers :	James Kee and Steven Hoban
Countries of production :	Canada / France / Belgium
Original language :	English
Runtime :	1 hour 31 minutes 18 seconds
Image format - ratio :	1.85
Video format :	16/9
Resolution :	Theatrical 2K / Video HD (1920x1080)
Audio mix available :	Atmos / 7.1 / 5.1 / 2.0

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PRODUCTION NOTES

Genesis

Los Angeles, 2005, Academy Awards. *Ryan*, an animated short film produced by Copperheart Entertainment's Steve Hoban and Mark Smith, wins the Oscar for Best Animated Short. Hoban confidently states that now we will be able get Copperheart's first animated feature off the ground, surely. Life had other plans as Copperheart began making a lot of live action films all primarily in the genre space, films like *Ginger Snaps*, *Splice*, *In the Tall Grass*, but Hoban never let go of that confident dream that one day he would make an animated feature, with their Toronto neighbours, no less.

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Canada has a rich and long-standing legacy in the world of animation. The legendary animation house, The House of Cool, founded in 2004 by childhood friends, Ricardo Curtis and finance expert Wes Lui, has a solid position in that landscape. Over the last two decades, this Toronto-based shop has partnered with the biggest entertainment companies such as Dreamworks, Netflix, Disney, 20th Century Fox, Paramount, Universal and Apple on projects such as the Oscar-nominated *Ferdinand*, *The Book of Life*, *Rio* (1&2), *Ice Age* (2,3,4 & 5), *Despicable Me*, and high-end series such as *What If*, *Troll Hunters*, *He Man and the Masters of the Universe*. Because they have always excelled at service work for the US studios, it is a bit surprising that they had never made their own movie – until ***NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE***.

Copperheart Entertainment producer, Steven Hoban, has had a long-standing relationship with House of Cool: "Our companies were next door neighbors at one point, and we watched as they became the preeminent pre-production animation studio in the whole world with the ability to pick and choose from the biggest, best animated feature films and television series being made. Nobody's better than them."

NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE began with a concept which author and filmmaker legend, Clive Barker, had for a graphic novel about a zombie virus spreading in a zoo. That graphic novel was never made, but Clive allowed Copperheart producer, Steve Hoban, and writer James Kee to take the kernel of the idea and transform it into a family film told from the point-of-view of the animals dealing with a "zombie-like" virus. It had to be zombie-like because no animated animals could be harmed in the making of the movie.

The Nerd Section of Script Development (for Zombie Enthusiast Eyes Only)

Every committed zombie fan knows that the undead come with rules. Hoban and Kee refined the nature of how the zoo animals mutated into zombie-like creatures, understanding that they

couldn't become 'undead' because you can't have a family film where dead creatures stay dead.

Ensuring that the animals could all eventually be changed back to normal, they came up with a novel kind of creature: mutants or as they were affectionately called, "gumbeasts", creatures seemingly made of a gummy or rubbery kind of substance. This allowed them to have holes in their hides and for their limbs drop off, like classic zombies, but it also meant the body parts could be stuck back on. From there, with Kee, Hoban decided some of the zoo animals would be the survivors, the ones trying to get away from this zombie-like outbreak. And like all family films, it ends on a positive note, so <spoiler alert>, the survivors not only save themselves, but they figure out how to return all the zoo animals back to their normal, fully intact state, except for Gramma Abigale's tail (but that turns out to be a good thing).

Back to the Regular Production Notes

Once a solid draft of the script was ready, Hoban and his producing partner, Mark Smith, knew **NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE** needed a Canadian director. "We want to build up the ability to do theatrical animated movies here at home. House of Cool was created with such a focus on the creative that it, I think it would've been hard to start it anywhere else which is why we started our search with Ricardo Curtis - who had never directed an animated feature film at that point, even though he's been in demand and offered many animated feature films over the years from the studios - and ended with Ricardo," said Hoban. House of Cool would also design the film and do the storyboards.

"Zombie animals in a zoo," recalled Ricardo Curtis. "That's all it took. It was just so clear. I love zombie movies. I love animated films which usually have a lot of animals together. When you put them together with this idea of animals in a zoo trapped together in a zombie thriller, I thought that was amazing. I immediately had visions of what this could be. But I also knew that I was probably not the zombie/monster movie aficionado, but I did know who the guy who was: Rodrigo Perez-Castro."

Rodrigo Perez-Castro and Ricardo Curtis have known each other for years, having worked together at The House of Cool. "Ricardo gave me the premise of a zombie apocalypse in a zoo which was a perfect combination of the things I love the most: creepy, weird horror and animals. Put that together and I thought, I gotta make this movie," said co-director Rodrigo Perez-Castro. "And it was a rare chance because you don't really get to make films like this in the family space for animated movies. What attracted me to this project was the opportunity to do something very unique and different. I like giving people something they've never seen before."

"What separates **NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE** from other films," said Executive Producer Wes Lui, "is that it is not a single character-driven story like *Nightmare Before Christmas* or *Box Trolls*. This one has a cast of characters who are very different in their personalities and what

they are going through in their individual lives. They are scared of each other, they don't want to work with each other, but they are forced to work with each other. Through those characters, we are really leaning into that genre space the scariness of what zombies can be but doing it in a way that *Gremlins* or *Ghostbusters* does - giving it comic relief."

Packaging the Film

Curtis and Rodrigo and Copperheart's head of development, Brian Morey, along with their producers, continued developing the script and once it was nearly production ready, Copperheart began looking for the studio that would do the animation. **NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE** was structured as a Canada/France coproduction so the French producing partners at Charades suggested Mac Guff. "At Copperheart, we had previously had a great experience working with Mac Guff on the VFX for a live-action movie," explained Hoban, "and House of Cool had also worked with them on *Despicable Me*. Phillippe Sonrier and his team at Mac Guff immediately responded to the script and our team and they boarded the project both as animation studio and as a producing partner. Between their two facilities in Paris and Brussels, Mac Guff built almost all the characters and animated the main bulk of the movie. A portion of the film was also animated by Krow VFX in St. Catharines, Ontario; this included the fateful asteroid bringing the virus to the zoo. The final studio piece of our tricky production structure ended up being L'Atelier Animation in Montreal. L'Atelier did all of the lighting and special effects in the film. Lighting is, of course, important in any film but was particularly so in **NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE** because of the bold look our directors were going for. The combination of all of these studios, that worked together in order to create each frame of the movie, turned out to be magic. They all gave the movie more than we could have ever hoped for and the film is a true testament to their talent and commitment to making something special."

Pulling together and manage all these resources from France, Belgium and two provinces in Canada required a cohesive producing effort. In addition to Copperheart and House of Cool in Ontario and IDL Films in Quebec, Charades handled France and helped bring in the Belgian producing partners, Umedia. On the distribution side, being a coproduction that included Canada and France, it was essential to have distribution support from both countries. The combination of the artistry and commerciality of the project attracted top distribution companies, Elevation Pictures in Canada and Apollo Films in France. The film could not have been made without the support and belief from these distributors and from Anton in the UK that came on board as co-sales agent for international in partnership with Charades.

NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE sets itself apart from the family animation pack by carving out a fresh genre of family-friendly horror, augmented by the limitless possibilities offered by animation. Tapping into Hoban's love of animation, something that dates back to his childhood, and combining that with his abiding affection for horror and making it a family film felt like a natural fit. "Horror is a little bit strong for **NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE**, but it fits

with *Ghostbusters* and *Gremlins* which are the movies that inspired this project. Better to think of our film as *Madagascar* meets *The Walking Dead*."

"Animation is a medium, not a genre," said Curtis. "And as a medium, you can do whatever you want with it: make action films, make stories for preschool, or make stories for teenage girls, it doesn't really matter. This is a family film with elements from the type of films that we love in the live action world, and the end result is something new, something that no one's ever seen before."

"The beauty about animation is that there's no limit," added Perez-Castro. "Whatever you imagine in your head can actually be manifested. In this film, we moved the needle a little bit in a direction that's a little offbeat, a little different, a little unusual."

Gateway Horror aka Family-Friendly Horror

Ask any kid who has experienced the loops, rolls, twists, and corkscrew drops of a roller coaster, adrenaline is as good a rush as sugar, except there's more to brag about afterwards. Introducing kids to the joy of scary movies is something that must be handled with care – and if done right, it can be a gateway to a film genre that can become an entire lifestyle.

Perez-Castro summed it up nicely, "There's nothing better than being in a movie theater or in your living room with your family or a bunch of friends, watching scary movies, screaming all at the same time. It's a communal experience that's been the human experience since the bonfires."

In a more contemporary context, people, of any age, don't go on a rollercoaster alone. Nor do they go into a haunted house at an amusement park without at least one parent or with friends.

The trick to family-friendly frights rests in the pacing of the plot, allowing younger film-going audiences to be a little scared without going so far as to trip over and keep it fun. It is a film for the whole family after all.

Perez-Castro wanted to make *NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE* an experience: "I remember being a kid and watching movies like *Ghostbusters* and *Gremlins* and feeling that there was something a little taboo about it, like I'm not supposed to see this. There's almost something aspirational about horror for kids. It's almost like a milestone in your life when you get to actually sit through one of these movies and really survive it."

For Curtis, watching early scary movies felt like forbidden territory. "We knew we shouldn't have been there because maybe this is a little too scary for us, but it isn't because this isn't for babies. This is for grown kids like us. So that's the type of film we wanted to make."

Perez-Castro added, "When you watch those movies as a kid, they stay with you forever. You tend to revisit them. Watching *Alien* now is not the same as when I watched it the first time. It's interesting how your relationship with a movie can evolve through time, but I don't think happens with all movies. Definitely happens with good movies, but with horror movies in particular, yes, that relationship stays with you and evolves."

In making ***NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE***, Curtis hopes kids will have the kind of experience "where they'll remember the laughter, but also the thrill of getting spooked, not unlike getting into a rollercoaster ride and thinking, why am I doing this? I don't want to do it. And then you do it and you love it, and then you can't wait to do it again."

The idea of a family movie has a double meaning: a storyline the whole family can enjoy and also an experience that can/should/ought to be enjoyed with your family. "The movies that touch the most are the ones parents take their kids to, knowing their kids are identifying with one of the characters, learning something from it, and then at home they can talk about it. That was the genesis of this movie. When the world goes through this craziness of the zombies, the zoo animals are forced to work together, they are forced to use each other's differences to be able to protect each other. There's a parental storyline in there that becomes a teachable moment for kids about how to survive in the world," Lui explained.

It's a Multi-Species Ensemble Piece

On the very first night in *Night of the Living Dead*, a disparate group of people who ordinarily would never get along in the real world took refuge in a house. Why can't we do that with animals? posited Perez-Castro.

"Our animal species were carefully chosen to create not only a narrative contrast, but a visual one as well." he continued. "Different ranking in the social hierarchy, predatory and prey or they just have nothing in common – just a band of survivors huddled together in the zoo's gift shop."

The easiest way to make a family film is to create a family dynamic. That is what the characters of Gracie, the young wolf, Dan, the mountain lion, Felix, the proboscis monkey, Ash, the ostrich, Frida, the capybara, Xavier, the lemur, and Poot, the young pygmy hippopotamus, ultimately became.

"Perfection is the enemy of entertainment. We were willing to work with actors who were not perfect, who were not the perfect sculpture of what an animated character should be, they are not just putting on voices, they were bringing themselves, and who they were turned out to be really interesting. Maybe that doesn't work in the real world, but within this film, it was fantastic. We have these characters who are fascinating to watch. They are all flawed and a little neurotic and very relatable," said Curtis.

"We made this movie at this point in the history of the world where we're very divided as people, ideologically divided in our bubbles," he said. "In our movie, we wanted to represent this divide through these animals who literally live in their own enclosures where they don't get out, they don't know about the other and in one night, they're forced together to work together to save themselves from the apocalypse."

And this is exactly where the power of animation comes into play. Going back again to films like *Night of the Living Dead*, stereotypes are used to describe characters very quickly because it would take too long to construct full personalities of an ensemble. The House of Cool strategy was to take the differences in personalities and exacerbate them with animation. "Animation as a medium is very good at caricature, boiling down human traits to their essence, creating full characters quickly using design, voice and motion that's difficult to do in live action," explained Curtis.

Gracie (the Wolf)

"When we began to design the wolf character of Gracie, we didn't want to have her be pretty and perfect so we built in an awkwardness in her design, the tooth that isn't set right, the hair that's a little messy and a nice serving of quirkiness that would make her feel like a real teenager. When we were looking for the voice to match that visual, Gabbi Kosmidis brought that strangeness that Gracie needed, something a little off. She was perfect in her imperfection," recalled Perez-Castro.



"Gracie lives in the zoo with her pack," Kosmidis observed about her character, "but she doesn't feel like she fits in. She wants bigger, more adventurous things to happen. She's a dreamer, and sure enough! she gets the adventure she always wanted. Of the many creatures that she spends that crazy night with, there's Dan, the mountain lion who's very intimidating (even in real life in the recording booth) at first. There's tension between them most likely because he can eat her at any moment (not in real life), but they become buddies, they become a team (and yes, also in real life). Gracie is scared of things, but still pushes herself to get through whatever that fear is which is, to me, what bravery is. Since playing the role, any time I find myself in a difficult, confrontational situation, I take a deep breath and summon Gracie."

Dan (the Mountain Lion)

Dan is a mountain lion of very few words. David Harbour, the actor who voices him, is not that different. "He's a loner (Dan, not Harbour)," said Curtis." But being the only animal brought into the zoo from the wild, while all the other animals were going a bit crazy, Dan is the only one who knows how to stay alive. With David, he doesn't have to say much, and you get it right away. He brought strength, and depth. There's also a certain tenderness that goes along with the gruff. This character needed that, too. At the end of the day (*or long night, as it happened*), Dan needed to have empathy because Gracie needed a partner who could help her survive, which is why we see Dan's as the biggest of all character arcs here."



David Harbour enjoys playing gruff, shut down creatures with hearts of gold underneath. "Dan's a mysterious, dangerous loner who's very committed to that lifestyle, to his rugged individualism. Being an alpha male, he's confused by animals like Poot who aren't alpha and are just adorable little creatures. Then he meets Gracie, a young wolf who is a pack animal, and together they go on an adventure where there's some slime light blue purple thing that's creating all this chaos in the zoo."

Suffice it to say, Dan, while excelling as an apex predator, is not at the top of his class, intellectually. But he's smart enough to learn that sometimes, you can't do things alone and he develops into Gracie's bodyguard, bringing her a sense of protection.

"I wish I could tell you that I was the Marlon Brando of animal voice acting and that I had this sophisticated, intense method process around creating the different characters," he opined. With a turtle, a hawk and a bear under his acting belt, he's just happy take a character, "scrape away that outer layer of pain, and get to the core of who that person is." And this story fits the bill. "It's definitely wacky and it's got a lot of heart."

Felix (the proboscis monkey)

Before we discuss Felix, the character who puts the 'monkey' in monkey wrench, the guy everyone loves to hate, it's imperative to discuss the actor who portrays him: Paul Sun-Hyung Lee. If the name is not familiar, then *Kim's Convenience* might be. Lee has spent years playing the nice guy, the kind guy, the helpful guy. And then he landed the role of Felix, the jerk.

"Certainly, I've known enough Felixes in my life," said Lee. "This is the first time I've played the guy who's just out for himself, the villain who's the obstacle in the way of all the protagonists. Like all true villains, he doesn't see himself as the bad guy - he's the hero in his mind and everybody else is just in the way. It's lovely to play the character who's so completely delusional."



The plain truth (which rarely shows up in press notes) is that at first, both Perez-Castro and Curtis were skeptical about casting Lee. "In all his other roles, Paul brings so much warmth that you want him to be your best friend. But he came in, auditioned, and we thought, "You're such a jerk! That's awesome!" During his performance, Paul's mannerisms and facial expressions were so fantastic, the animators totally stole all of them. So, when you see Felix on screen, you are actually seeing Paul."

Wait - *not exactly*. The mannerisms are Lee's, but the hunched, potbellied, beady-eyed proboscis monkey is the perfect visual interpretation of Felix's annoying character. He gestures with his hands as if he was far more educated and evolved than the rest of the team, but his hunched over caveman-like silhouette reveals he is really not as "civilized" as he wishes he was. On this particular night, his life has been ...*d i s r u p t e d*. No one is listening to him. If they just would, all these problems could have been avoided. In the end, he does rise to the challenge. From Felix's perspective, the entire movie is about him. Everybody else is hoping he'll be eaten by zombies, *please*.

On the other hand, Paul Sun-Hyung Lee is much better looking.

Ash (the Ostrich)

Hidden amongst the zoo animals are biographical notes about the filmmakers, and Rodrigo Perez-Castro made a confession: "Ash the ostrich is the character I most identify with. He's sarcastic and has built a wall of cynicism around himself, but he really, really cares for everybody else. I put a lot of myself into him."

Who is this Ash who is partially Perez-Castro in disguise? He is a very tall ostrich who towers above the rest of the team. And yet, tall as he might be, he's also full of insecurities. The way he flaps his relatively small 'useless' wings on such a large body helps communicate how anxious and easily frustrated he can be. The best defense is a good offence and Ash takes that

approach seriously. His dismissive attitude covered his belief that he doesn't feel like he is really a part of the group, even though is very much a key player. He goes from not wanting to be part of the group to saving the day.



The *Kids in the Hall* veteran, Scott Thompson, played Ash with oversized-avian gleefulness. "This is a hysterical ostrich with a cutting tongue. A little bitchy, funny, quite witty. Yeah, I liked him. This is my first ostrich but not the first time I buried my head in the sand."

No stranger to playing less-than-conventional characters, Thomson has his process: "You can't be too big. I am encouraged to indulge my tendency to go large. But, when you are in the sound booth, you still have to embody the character, and I'm very much about the way they walk, the way they hold themselves, so even when I am just doing a voice, I still physicalize. It's important to me. I know when I was doing *Kids in the Hall*, once you have the walk and the voice, you're there. I don't do impersonations or accents by themselves. I need a character attached. I need to be imbedded in a character to get there."

Xavier (the Lemur)

It must be a bit disconcerting to watch a human in a sound booth and see the character, especially if the character is a lemur. But that is what happened. Then again, animation filmmakers have a somewhat different view of the world.



"Pierre Simpson was cast to play Xavier, the film-loving lemur (and also Bill, the dung beetle). We recorded him in the sound booth, and we filmed him and then basically animated everything he said, every way that he moved, even his eyes. He was such a perfectionist, but at the same time, super creative.," said Perez-Castro. "With Xavier we needed a character who was over-the-top comedic because even though this is a life-and-death situation, he's in a

different world. His world. He loves movies and everything he experiences, even when mutants are attacking, can be referenced to a movie. Pierre brought that passion to his performance.”

“Xavier is so much fun,” said Simpson. “He’s a lemur who’s a little bit off the wall (*think ping-pong off the wall*), so intense, so dramatic, he’s so French and so fabulous. He loves all the movies that he’s able to watch at the vet clinic at the zoo. Thrillers, horror flicks, romantic comedies, musicals. **THAT’S HIS JAM.** He’d fake injuries just so he could hang out in the clinic. His life is a gigantic movie. And then suddenly, the movie horror became real.”

Frida (the Capybara)

The smallest creature in **NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE** is Frida, the capybara. But do not be fooled by her size. “This little rodent is a Central American firecracker, very strong, a little grumpy and won’t take no for an answer. Without question, she’s the first one to jump into a fight. Heather Loreto brought a larger-than-life performance to such a miniscule character,” said Perez-Castro.

From this description, you’d expect to see an actor who takes up her space unflinchingly. That’s not exactly the case with Loreto, who suffered from a seemingly perpetual case of the giggles. Rarely does an actor so completely embody a character that even when they are out of character, you are still talking to the character.



In researching her role as a capybara, Heather tried to visit them at the High Park Zoo on Toronto, but they had escaped. Yes, capybaras were on the loose. At the same time, Instagram and Tik Tok algorithms figured out that Loreto was meant to see capybaras and kept putting them in her way.

“Frida is the love of my life. She’s sassy, she’s feisty, so charming and unintentionally hilarious. She has a strong personality but wins everyone’s hearts and she’s bi-lingual! Honestly, when I first saw the images of Frida (which had been designed and fully drawn before casting the role), I freaked out because I looked at her and saw myself. Even the nostrils I thought, Oh my God, that’s me! Her character arc involves realizing leadership abilities that she never knew she had as she helped the group survive. It’s an honour to play such a multidimensional character.”

“Working with Ricardo and Rodrigo was such a privilege,” Loreto continued. They have so much experience and such love for what they were doing. They had such patience, encouraging me to do improv, letting me experiment, so generous with their comments that it made me feel confident when sometimes I’d wonder “What am I doing here?” They and the whole team made me feel like I belonged.”

The Mutant-Zombies AKA Gumbleasts

Let us not forget what drew these filmmakers to the story in the first place - mutant animals. “It’s time for kids to have some new monsters to love, and we have them here,” confessed Perez-Castro. “If there’s a monster movie, I’m always going to side with the monsters, the underdog creature, the weird one, the strange one. So right away, I saw visions of what these creatures could be.”

Great idea, but a bit tricky as this being a family film, rotting flesh was out of the question.



“Ricardo and I wanted to play with body horror conventions inspired by zombie films and classic monster films from our childhood like *The Thing*. That meant mutants had to drop limbs.” explained Perez-Castro. “So we thought it would be lots of fun if they had the ability to exchange body parts with each other to transform themselves. To achieve this, we got very cartoony and stylized with our character designs. We knew the cartoonier we went, the more we could get away with “horror body”-inspired comedy. Our main character designer, Hadi Tabasi, came up with some hilarious initial designs of very comedic rubber-hose cartoon- looking animals full of holes. On the page they looked great, but we knew they’d look strange and potentially unappealing with realistic fur. This triggered the idea of gummies and gummies allowed us to drop body parts without any kind of gore. It also allowed us to make them uniquely colorful and just all around awesome. We called them ‘gumbleasts.’”

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

RODRIGO PEREZ-CASTRO (Co-Director) is a Mexican-Canadian Annie Award-nominated animation filmmaker with decades of experience in the industry. Rodrigo worked as a Story Artist, in both Canada and the U.S. on numerous projects for studios like Disney, Bluesky, Fox Animation, Paramount Animation, and Dreamworks TV. Rodrigo's credits as a story artist include- The Book of Life, Ice Age: Collision Course, Ferdinand, and Rio 2. For his work on Rio 2 he was nominated for an Annie Award in the category of "Outstanding Achievement for Storyboarding in Animated Feature Film". He has also served as the Head of Story for Ice Age: The Great Eggscapade and the How to Train your Dragon TV series, as well as a story consultant for the original Angry Birds film. For over 5 years Rodrigo served as the Head of the story department at House of Cool inc. In this role, he supervised and trained new artists, a personally gratifying experience as he helped mold some of the industry's most influential new talent. Rodrigo then went on to direct Koati, a Mexican independent hand-drawn animated film released in 2021 voiced and executive produced by Sofia Vergara with music by Grammy award-winner star Marc Anthony. Rodrigo most recently served for 4 years as the VP of Creative at House of Cool providing creative leadership at the studio helping shapes numerous projects for many clients including Apple TV and Netflix Animation. The film is slated to be released in late 2024 early 2025. Rodrigo is currently developing his own animated film properties with a unique personal storytelling touch.

RICARDO CURTIS (Co-Director) is one of the animation industry's most successful professionals and has played a pivotal role in the production of over 20 successful feature films. Jamaican born and Toronto native, Curtis relocated to Los Angeles after graduating from Sheridan College's Classical Animation Program. Working with Pixar, DreamWorks Animation Studios, Fox and Warner Bros, he contributed to a number of projects as a story artist (The Incredibles, Monsters Inc.), Head of Story (Book of Life, Horton Hears A Who), Supervising Animator (Osmosis Jones) and was an animator on The Iron Giant. Curtis returned to Canada in 2004 to launch House of Cool with Wesley Lui which was acquired by WildBrain in 2023. As Co-Founder and Creative Director, his keen eye for talent and artistry have cultivated long-term relationships with Dreamworks, Netflix, Disney, 20th Century Fox, Paramount, Universal and Apple. Curtis has developed and sold properties to Disney, Bravo!, DHX and Teletoon, earning accolades at MIPCOM for his work. He has produced, written and directed short films, pilots, television series, specials, a novel and commercials. Curtis is a member of Sheridan College's professional board, as well as a member of the

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Ricardo is slated to begin directing the film *Amoeba* beginning in 2025.

STEVE HOBAN (Writer/Producer) is founder of the Toronto-based film and television production company Copperheart Entertainment. He has produced 18 feature films, several animated shorts, including the 2005 Oscar-winning, *Ryan*, directed by Chris Landreth; the world's first Imax 3D animated movie, *CyberWorld*; and two live-action television series which include the William Gibson science fiction epic, *The Peripheral*, produced with Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy for Amazon. Steve's most recent produced films include, *Code 8 Part II*, starring Stephen Amell and Robbie Amell; the IFC Midnight arthouse thriller *Come True*; and the adaptation of the Stephen King and Joe Hill novella, *In the Tall Grass*, written and directed by Vincenzo Natali and starring Patrick Wilson and Laysla De Oliveira. In addition to being one of Canada's most successful film producers, Steve co-produced and co-wrote the 2000 Imax animated film, *CyberWorld*, that was a cutting-edge technical and artistic feat involving the work of 10 animation studios from around the world and featured characters from The Simpsons television series. Steve also produced and directed two segments of the William Shatner-starring fantastical anthology feature *A Christmas Horror Story* and produced and directed an episode of Netflix series, *Darknet*. Upcoming films include writing and producing a feature animation adaptation of André Alexis' brilliant award-winning novel, *Fifteen Dogs*, to be directed by Chris Landreth. Some of the live-action films Steve has produced include *Wolves* starring Jason Momoa, written and directed by David Hayter; *Haunter* starring Abigail Breslin and *Splice* starring Adrien Brody and Sarah Polley, both directed by Vincenzo Natali; and the cult hit *Ginger Snaps* trilogy.

MARK SMITH (Producer) was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec. He began working as production coordinator for the IMAX Sandde™ Animation Studio in Montreal. The studio collaborated in the creation of the unique IMAX 3D feature, *Cyberworld*. It was on this film that Mark first met Steve Hoban, who recruited him as Head of Production at Copperheart Entertainment in Toronto. Mark has been involved in and produced several feature film projects. His producing credits include the Academy Award-winning animated short *Ryan* directed by Chris Landreth; the found footage thriller *388 Arletta Ave*; *Haunter*, the Vincenzo Natali directed reverse ghost story feature starring Abigail Breslin; The David Hayter action thriller *WOLVES*; the Christmas themed horror anthology feature *A Christmas Horror Story*; The IFC Midnight thriller *Come True*, directed by Anthony Scott Burns; The Stephen King/Joe Hill adaptation by director Vincenzo Natali, *In the Tall Grass*, which was produced for NETFLIX; And most recently, the sci-fi action feature *Code 8 Part 2*, a sequel to the popular original, directed by Jeff Chan for NETFLIX.

WES LUI (Producer) As Co-General, Wes Lui spearheads House of Cool's innovative entertainment strategies, creative partnerships and financial investing. He oversees all service productions including *Maya and the Threes* (Netflix), *Next Gen* (Netflix), the award-winning

Guillermo del Toro series, *Trollhunters* (DreamWorks / Netflix), and *The Book of Life* (20th Century Fox).

Prior to co-founding House of Cool, Lui held investment positions in the top financial institutions in Canada (TD Canada Trust, Bank of Montreal and CIBC Wood Gundy). Wes graduated from Wilfred Laurier University, where he received a BA in Economics. Wes is a strong advocate for Canadian high-end animated features and series production and development. He is on the Board of Directors for the Computer Animation Studios of Ontario (CASO), which is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit industry association committed to the growth and international competitiveness in Ontario's animation and VFX industry. Wes is honoured to also have been past President and Co-Chair of CASO. Most Recently in 2020, Wes was nominated and honoured to sit on the Board of Directors of FilmOntario, an industry consortium representing over 35,000 individuals working in the screen-based industry in Ontario. In 2023, Wes led the sale of House of Cool to publicly traded, Wildbrain. The combined forces of both organizations will look to entertain families across the world.

KEVIN ADAMS (Art Director) was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario. Kevin spent his first ten years out of school at Disney feature animation working on classic films like *Fantasia 2000*, *The Emperor's New Groove* and *Hercules*. After Disney, Kevin became the creative director for Arc animation (Formerly Starz) in Toronto, where he was art director and cinematographer on the Tim Burton film *9* and sequence director on *Gnomeo and Juliet*. Kevin would go on to art direct, production design and Storyboard for studios like Dreamwork, Blizzard, ReelFX, Paramount and Square Enix before shifting his attention towards writing and directing. Kevin has written and directed various shorts like Nickelodeon's TMNT short *We Strike Hard*, the live action short *Gear* and episodes of the Youtube hit, *Masha and the Bear* (with more than 400 million views on his episodes alone). In 2008 Kevin wrote and directed the feature animated film *Next Gen* that was purchased and shown by Netflix. Most recently Kevin was episodic director on Sony's *Young Love Series* and is current executive producer and showrunner on a yet to be announced animated series on Netflix.

ABOUT THE CAST

GABBI KOSMIDIS (Gracie) is a Toronto based Film/TV and Voice actor breaking out in the industry. You may have seen her on screen in the acclaimed *Fellow Travelers* or heard her voice in video games: *Immortals Fenyx Rising*, it's sequel: *Immortals Fenyx Rising: The Lost Gods*, and recently in *Assassin's Creed: Mirage*. You may have also heard her in the lead role of *Unicorn Academy* as the Competitive Unicorn rider Isabel Armstrong in *Unicorn Academy*.

DAVID HARBOUR (Dan) is an Emmy and Tony Award nominated actor who has had a successful career in film, television, and theater for over two decades. He is currently in production on the fifth and final season of Netflix's Emmy and Golden Globe nominated *Stranger Things*. His portrayal of chief of police, Jim Hopper, has earned him two Emmy nominations, two SAG nominations, a Golden Globe nomination, and a Critics' Choice Award

in 2018. The show has won the Emmy Award for Outstanding Casting and the SAG Award for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble. He recently wrapped production on Marvel's *Thunderbolts*, where he will reprise his role as the Red Guardian alongside Sebastian Stan, Anthony Mackie, and Florence Pugh. The film is set to be released on May 5, 2025. Harbour most recently starred in Sony's *GRAN TURISMO*, a film adaptation of the beloved racing simulation video game series, alongside Orlando Bloom. The film, directed by Neill Blomkamp, released on August 11, 2023. Also in 2023, Harbour starred in Netflix's *We Have a Ghost* alongside Anthony Mackie and Jennifer Coolidge. In 2022, Harbour starred in Universal Pictures' *Violent Night*, directed by Tommy Wirkola. In 2021, Harbour starred in Marvel's *Black Widow* and Steven Soderbergh's *No Sudden Move*. Harbour's additional film credits include *Hellboy*, DC's *Suicide Squad*, Warner Bros.' critically-acclaimed *Black Mass*, Sam Mendes's award-winning *Revolutionary Road*, *The Equalizer* with Denzel Washington, Universal Pictures' *A Walk Among the Tombstones* with Liam Neeson, *Sleepless* with Jamie Foxx and *Human Affairs* with Kerry Condon. Harbour's television credits include HBO's Emmy-nominated *The Newsroom*, *State of Affairs*, and *Q-Force*.

In 2005, Harbour was nominated for a Tony nomination for his performance in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" In 2022, he appeared on the London Stage in Theresa Rebeck's "Mad House" opposite Bill Pullman. Harbour's additional theater credits include "The Merchant of Venice," "Fifth of July," "The Coast of Utopia," and "The Invention of Love." Additionally, Harbour is passionate about supporting charities. He teamed up with Brooks Running for their Back On My Feet charity program, a program designed to get homeless people running as a first step toward getting housing and other resources. He currently lives with his family in New York.

PAUL SUN-HYUNG LEE (Felix) A versatile actor, writer, comedian and television host, Paul Sun-Hyung Lee is currently making waves with his moving portrayal of General Iroh in the Netflix hit series *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. Paul also appears as fan favourite Captain Carson Teva on the Disney Plus series: *The Mandalorian*, *The Book of Boba Fett* and *Ahsoka*; and is widely considered by many as the "connective tissue of the Filoniverse". But perhaps Paul is best known for his starring role as family patriarch Mr. Kim ("Appa") in the award-winning and hugely popular television series on CBC and Netflix *Kim's Convenience*, which ran for five groundbreaking seasons and has garnered fans and critical acclaim from across the globe. Up next Paul will star as the newest inspector at Station House #4, Albert Choi in the 18th season of CBC Television's *Murdoch Mysteries*, and reprise his role of Iroh in seasons two and three of *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. A self-professed geek and cosplayer, Paul has built his own replica of a proton pack and several other movie specific and screen accurate props. He is also an avid collector of all things nerdy including toys, physical media and action figures. As well, Paul has his own YouTube channel: *Bitterasiandude Inc.* where he unboxes and reviews toy collectibles and discusses the current state of pop culture and nerddom. Paul is also the recipient of several honours: The Canadian Award of Distinction, The Governor General Performing Arts Award, four Canadian Screen Awards for Best Comedic Actor, The Toronto Theatre Critic's Award for best actor, The University College Alumni of Distinction Award, The Top 25 Canadian Immigrant Award, VIBE's 2023 Power 60: Inspiring Asian-Canadians of Influence and was featured on the cover of ZOOMER Magazine's 2023 Summer edition.

SCOTT THOMPSON (Ash) is well known to fans as a member of *Kids in The Hall*, 'Brian' on *The Larry Sanders Show* and 'Jimmy' on the hit cult-following series *Hannibal*. A new reboot of *Kids In The Hall* premiered in May of 2022 on Amazon. Scott is currently in the new Arnold Schwarzenegger action/comedy series *FUBAR* playing the witty 'Dr. Pfeffer' for Netflix which premiered in May 2023 and renewed for a second season. He also recurs on the CBC hit series *Sort Of* and Crave's *Shoresy*, a spinoff of the popular *Letterkenny* series. He has appeared in feature films *Brain Candy*, *Ron Ronnie Run*, *The Pacifier* and *Mickey Blue Eyes* and such television series as *Reno 911!*, *Tim and Eric Awesome Show*, *Man Seeking Woman* and *American Gods*. He recently starred in the yet to be released independent feature *Young Werther* with Allison Pill, Douglas Booth and Iris Apatow.

PIERRE SIMPSON (XAVIER) is a Toronto-based bilingual performer working in voice, stage, film and TV. Notable credits include voice work on *Red Ketchup* (adult swim, Télétoon la nuit), *Let's Go Luna* (PBS, TVO kids), *Hyper Scape* (Ubisoft) and the French dubbed versions of *Riley Rocket*, *Glowbies* and *Cutie Pugs* (TFO, CBC-Radio-Canada), TV roles in *Three Pines* (Amazon), *Paris-Paris* (UnisTV), *Transplant*, *Hannibal* (NBC), *Murdoch Mysteries* (CBC) and *Le Rêve de Champlain* (TFO), films *Rosie* (Gail Maurice), *mother!* (Darren Aronofsky) and *Let the Daylight into the Swamp* (Jeffrey St. Jules) and stage appearances in *La cantatrice chauve*, *Le Dîner de cons* (Théâtre français de Toronto), *When It Rains* (2b theatre) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Canadian Stage). Pierre has been nominated for three Prix Gémeaux for his work on *Makinium*, *Improtéine Expose* and *Mehdi & Val*.

HEATHER LORETO (Frida) is a trilingual multidisciplinary storyteller from Montreal with roots in Guatemala, Spain, and Italy. She has rigorously studied performing arts and showcased her expressive talents in various roles. Outside of her professional pursuits, Heather is an avid gamer, culinary enthusiast, and enjoys learning new languages, presently through mimicking characters from Korean dramas. Her fascination with mycology is a testament to her diverse interests and creative spirit.