

# Falling Angels

A film by  
Scott Smith

Based on the novel by  
Barbara Gowdy

**With**  
Miranda Richardson  
Callum Keith Rennie  
Katherine Isabelle

**RT: 101 minutes**

## Short Synopsis

It is 1969 and seventeen year old Lou Field and her sisters are ready for change. Tired of enduring kiddie games to humour a Dad desperate for the occasional shred of family normalcy, the Field house is a place where their Mom's semi-catatonic state is the result of a tragic event years before they were born. But as the autumn unfolds, life is about to take a turn. This is the year that Lou and her sisters are torn between the lure of the world outside and the claustrophobic world of the Field house that can no longer contain the girls' restless adolescence.

A story of a calamitous family trying to function, **Falling Angels** is a story populated by beautiful youthful rebels and ill-equipped parents coping with the draw of a world in turmoil beyond the boundaries of home and a manicured lawn.

## Long Synopsis

Treading the fine line between adolescence and adulthood, the Field sisters have all but declared war on their domineering father. Though Jim Field (**Genie and Gemini winner Callum Keith Rennie**) runs the family house like a military camp, it's the three teenaged daughters who really run the show and baby-sit their fragile mother Mary, (**Two-time Oscar® nominee Miranda Richardson**) as she quietly sits on the couch and quells her anxiety with whiskey.

It's 1969 and beneath suburbia's veneer of manicured lawns and rows of bungalows, the world faces explosive social change. Feisty and stubborn Lou (**Katherine Isabelle – *Insomnia, Ginger Snaps***) recalls a traumatizing nuclear test run in the family bomb shelter years earlier where she and her sister uncover what they believe to be the truth behind a long-standing family secret, which has dramatically affected their lives.

Lou misdirects her anger toward her tyrannical father and escapes with her rebel American boyfriend (**Kett Turton**); chic and naïve Sandy (**Kristin Adams**) perfects her feminine ways and seeks the affection of an older man with plenty of surprises to offer (**Mark McKinney – *Kids in the Hall, Saturday Night Live***) while Norma (newcomer **Monté Gagné**), hampered by her own emerging sexuality tries to keep the peace and seeks her own refuge by putting the finishing touches on the rec room. The girls' quest for independence is compounded by their love for their fragile bird of a mother and their simmering mistrust of their father, while all are oblivious to the real effect of the family secret and to the signs of Mary's deterioration. Still, the Field sisters manage their experiments in living outside the home with some surprising results.

A delicate balancing act of humour and tragedy, **Falling Angels** is a richly woven character-study of family dynamic and missed opportunity. **Falling Angels** turns most tellingly on the lynch pin of Lou Field's teen-aged rage and her confused demand for justice.

## Conception of the Film

**Falling Angels** is directed by award-winning director **Scott Smith** (*Rollercoaster*) and written by Esta Spalding (*The Eleventh Hour*), **Falling Angels** is adapted from the critically acclaimed novel by Barbara Gowdy. The film is produced by Robin Cass of Triptych Media and is executive produced by Kevin DeWalt of Minds Eye Entertainment and Alain de la Mata of Wild Bunch Sales International.

**Falling Angels** was first optioned by Triptych Media in 1996 before finally making it to screen some seven years later. Producer Robin Cass describes the impetus behind the project: “ I’d actually first read the novel in 1991, but the rights were tied up. In 1995, I had the opportunity to meet Barbara Gowdy and I raised the subject of **Falling Angels**. I learned then that the rights might be available in future. Over the next year or so I pursued them and finally landed them. Ironically, both Barbara and myself grew up in Don Mills, where the book is really set and I think that was the lynch pin for it all. I just remember reading it the first time. I laughed and cried and was completely taken by the book’s truth. It made an indelible impression and it just screamed ‘movie’ to me.”

“It was always my intention to try to find in the book which spans some 10 years in the Fields’ lives, a funny, emotionally complex narrative spine and even though the book is packed with amazing material, we used the middle two sections of it as our foundation. Finding the eventual director for the project was a real search and Scott Smith clearly responded to the book’s qualities much as I had. I was really impressed with his work on *Rollercoaster* and his generosity with the actors, so I knew he’d be great with this story. Once he was on board, it was time to find the writer. I’d read many, many samples and talked to a number of writers before we met Esta Spalding. Though she hadn’t written a screenplay before, about 10 minutes into our first meeting I think I knew she too was on the same page. So we all leapt in and Esta began to write. She spent a couple of years on the script and passed it back and forth with Scott and I for comment. We had a very collaborative dialogue through it all and made some fantastic discoveries as we proceeded.”

“Casting was a huge undertaking on the movie. Fortunately for us, Miranda Richardson responded quickly to the material and indicated her interest. Finding Callum Keith Rennie for Jim was the next firm step, though all the while we were casting in Toronto, Vancouver and Regina for the girls. We had open calls and all in all we probably saw about 1200 girls. But the characters were so specific it ended up that there were really very few perfect actresses for the sisters. But we think we found the young women that Barbara Gowdy created.”

## On Working With Barbara Gowdy

The transition from book to screen is a road with very particular challenges. However, in the case of **Falling Angels**, the novelist and the producer knew from the beginning that collaborating would only make the movie better. Working on the project, Barbara Gowdy knew exactly what she wanted out of the process:

“Right from beginning what was important to me was that the tone and intent of the movie remain faithful to the book. A number of people before Esta and Scott had tried and failed to adapt this novel. Oddly, the ones who were most faithful to the book delivered the less successful screenplays. I knew Esta would have to tear the book apart and make something new and to allow for a more cinematic tension. What I felt I brought to the process by reading scripts was the question ‘were these still my characters?’ That is what I was looking for; to make sure I could hear the voices of my time and my place. The collaborative process is new to me, and this was a terrific experience. I learned things that I will definitely take to future creative endeavours.”

Producer Robin Cass recalls the nervousness of awaiting Barbara’s response to the production draft: “Barb had read so many drafts from so many writers over the years that giving her the one we were going to shoot was a big day for us. But when she called she said she couldn’t discern what was from the book and what was our invention, which I think was her way of saying we’d done a good job of preserving the essence. That was a relief. Having earned Barbara’s endorsement means a great deal to all of us.”

## The Cast

### **Miranda Richardson as Mary Field**

Twice nominated for an Oscar® for her performances in *Tom and Viv* and Louis Malle's *Damage*, two-time Golden Globe winner **Miranda Richardson** has countless credits on stage, television and screen. Born and raised in Great Britain, Miranda studied drama at the prestigious Bristol Old Vic Theatre School she first appeared on the London stage in 1981. After appearing on many British television series, she began her career in film.

After earning a Golden Globe and a New York Film Critic's Circle Award for her performance in *Enchanted April*, she appeared as a cold-blooded IRA terrorist in Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game*. Soon after she starred in Louis Malle's *Damage* and the T.S. Eliot biopic *Tom and Viv*, both of which earned her Oscar nominations. After starring in Robert Altman's *Kansas City*, Larry McMurtry's *The Evening Star*, Robert Duvall's *The Apostle*, Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow*, Miranda starred in *Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang*, *Blackadder Back and Forth*, portrayed the evil Queen Elspeth in the television movie *Snow White* and lent her voice to the animated hit film *Chicken Run*.

After co-starring in David Cronenberg's latest feature, *Spider* and appearing alongside Meryl Streep and Nicole Kidman in the Pulitzer Prize winning adaptation of *The Hours*, Miranda has reunited with director Neil Jordan for his much anticipated upcoming feature *The Actors*, with Michael Caine.

## Callum Keith Rennie as Jim Field

Gemini and Genie award winning actor Callum Keith Rennie is one of Canada's best known and critically acclaimed actors.

Born in England, Callum moved to Edmonton, Alberta when he was a young child where he met and befriended Bruce McCullough (*Kids in the Hall*), who introduced him to punk music in the late 70's.

An opportunity to pursue acting arrived when some friends who had a radio show at University of Alberta campus radio station CJSR offered him a chance to do voice work. He was hooked immediately and that job eventually led to a year of producing and writing and he soon appeared in David Mamet's ***American Buffalo***.

After enrolling in the Bruhanski Theatre Studio in Vancouver, Callum soon earned his first Genie Award nomination for his role as the nerdy, bespectacled boyfriend in Mina Shum's ***Double Happiness***.

After a number of guest TV performances, Callum earned the lead as a reformed drug addict in John L'Ecuyer's ***Curtis' Charm***. Soon after, he starred in the 'mockumentary' ***Hard Core Logo*** and earned widespread critical acclaim as the charismatic Billy Tallent. After appearing for a year on the hit TV series ***Due South*** as Detective Stanley Kowalski, he appeared alongside old friend Bruce McCulloch on the offbeat, yet critically acclaimed, TV series ***Twitch City*** and had a recurring role on the Gemini award winning series ***DaVinci's Inquest***.

Callum has worked with some of the industry's most talented directors. Most recently, he appeared in David Cronenberg's ***eXistenZ***, Don McKellar's ***Last Night***; Lynne Stopkewich's ***Suspicious River***, Bruce MacDonald's ***Picture Claire***, Christopher Nolan's ***Memento***, and Keith Berman's festival hit ***Flower and Garnet***.

## Katharine Isabelle as Lou

After a string of successes that include co-starring with Al Pacino and Robin Williams in Christopher Nolan's feature film *Insomnia*, and playing the title role in the Genie-nominated *Turning Paige*, Katharine Isabelle was drawn to *Falling Angels* because of her connection to the acerbic Lou.

*"She's the angry, upset teenager who doesn't tell anyone why she's angry and she has other evil little ways of showing it,"* says Isabelle. *"Anyone who's been a teenager can relate to being angry for no reason and not knowing why, so you blame other people and take it out on them."*

Isabelle loved the story's grit, which she thinks is relevant to many people.

*"It was so like what a lot of people have gone through, but nobody ever talks about that hidden part of their family lives,"* she says. *"Everyone thinks their deep dark secrets are worse than they really are, and you blow it up in your head to be a lot worse than it is."*

Isabelle also starred in the hit independent thriller *Ginger Snaps* with Mimi Rogers, *Disturbing Behaviour* with Katie Holmes and Nick Stahl and *The Secret Life of Zoey* with Mia Farrow. She appeared in the features *Bones*, with Snoop Dogg, *Snow Day*, with Chevy Chase, *Josie and the Pussycats*, and *Due East*, with Cybill Shepherd and Kate Capshaw. With an impressive list of feature film credits to her name, Isabelle has also amassed extensive television credits, including numerous appearances on *DaVinci's Inquest*, and most recently on *The Chris Isaak Show* and *John Doe*. She also starred in *Voyage of Terror* with Martin Sheen, *Titanic*, with Catherine Zeta Jones.

Like her fellow cast members, Isabelle says she is much like her character.

*"We were all really who we played,"* she says. *"Not in the chubby lesbian and the angry psycho way, but in the real ways, like Kristin is shy, cute and girlie sweet, Monte is loving, caring, understanding, motherly, and I'm the sarcastic bitch."*

Nonetheless, Isabelle's friendship with her co-stars was a happier one than Lou's relationship with her sisters.

*"I love my girls, I miss them, I have dreams about them where I'll walk in somewhere and they'll be doing something mischievous and they'll run off giggling,"* says Isabelle. *"We used to hang out in the halls laughing and trying to sing harmony, till people would pay us to shut up. We made, like, 67 cents."*



## Kristin Adams as Sandy Field

After earning a solid list of credits in film, television and theatre, Kristin Adams makes her feature film debut in **Falling Angels**, playing the sweet, yet complex Sandy.

*"She was endearing and sweet, but I felt she was more than just a one dimensional character. There was a lot to her and even her family didn't know some sides of her," says Adams. "There's something about her that's very innocent and fragile, and I think that's a lot like me sometimes. She just wants to be loved and that's hard for her to find. She gets out into the real world and she's used and I can sympathize with that and I think a lot of girls can. It's kind of painful to experience that, and I think that's a good thing to work through as an actress"*

**The subtle twists and turns of the story captured Adams, and she credits director Scott Smith with allowing the cast to explore the complexities of the family.**

*"He's really patient and he really has a vision and you can tell he wants the best film to be on the screen, and everyone could feel that. We put a lot of feeling and passion into the work because of him, and we were able to reach down and become that family," she says. "And the story could apply to anyone's family – there was darkness, but also a lot of hope."*

Adams has appeared in the television series **Soul Food, Jonovision, Street Time** and the television movies **Blackout, Mercy of a Stranger** and **Dear America**. On stage, she has starred in *Anne of Green Gables, Grease* and *Bye Bye Birdie*.

Despite all that time in front of a camera, she was excited about working with two-time Golden Globe winner Miranda Richardson.

*"I really liked the rest of the cast, especially the two girls playing my sisters," Adams says. "And Miranda was great, though I was nervous to meet her because she has quite a reputation for being a such an amazing actor. But in real life she is very funny and down to earth. I really learned from her – in some scenes she doesn't say very much, but there's something else about her that's very magnetic and that comes across."*

## Monté Gagné as Norma Field

With an impressive background on the stage, Saskatoon native Monté Gagné makes her feature film debut in **Falling Angels** playing a character that she says is not just a typical girl.

*“Norma is waiting to see who she’ll become, without trying to fit into any mold or be what’s expected by her family and the society she lives in,”* says Gagné. *“She’s in the process of getting in touch with her anger and frustration and when she chooses to express it. She doesn’t always say what’s on her mind, but is aware of the people around her, and caring in a subtle way that doesn’t demand to be noticed.”*

As different as Norma is from her two sisters, Gagné says they are all bound together, and that bond extended to her off set relationship with her co-stars.

*“Us hanging out as sisters was wonderful, and everyone brought something very special and perfect for their part, both on camera and off,”* she says.

Calling the whole experience “amazing”, Gagné credits director Scott Smith for allowing the sisters to develop into the realistic, memorable characters they became.

*“I loved the freedom Scott gave us. He knew what he wanted but he wasn’t so rigid that we weren’t allowed creativity in the process,”* Gagné says. *“So the film really maintained the feel of each character from the novel. It didn’t detract from it, it became its own thing while staying true to it.”*

After growing up in Saskatoon, Gagné attended Sheridan College’s musical theatre program in Toronto. At Sheridan, Monté studied dance, voice and drama and earned the college’s Acting Performance Award.

After moving to Vancouver, she performed in the Vancouver Fringe, Headlines Theatre and portrayed Dull Gret and Angie in *Top Girls* at Theatre in the Raw, for which she earned the Best Actress Award at the Vancouver Zone Festival.

Having returned to Saskatchewan, Monté has recently performed at Persephone Theatre and the Off Broadway Dinner Theatre in Saskatoon; the Souris Valley Theatre in Estevan and the Station Arts Centre in Rosthern.

## Kett Turton as Tom

When Kett Turton arrived in Saskatchewan to film **Falling Angels**, he was a stranger in a strange land, and he took advantage of that displacement to connect with his character.

*“Being in Regina for a while before the movie started was actually good research for me,” says Turton. “Tom is a foreigner trying to find his feet in new surroundings, and for me, coming from Vancouver to a small town like that, and not really having anyone I could talk to, and not knowing anyone, gave me a feel for that. It’s all about trying to feel your way and learning to be comfortable with your surroundings, and to relate to people in the town.”*

Turton stepped into the role further by watching documentaries about the 1960’s and reading books and poetry, which wasn’t much of a stretch for the fan of beat poets Ginsberg and Kerouac.

*“I think Tom and I are incredibly similar,” he says. “Tom is an actor, because he’s forced to develop a new identity in these new surroundings, from bits and pieces of his old identity. And I’ve become like him, because you come away from every character you play with a new piece of the puzzle, and through the character you end up focusing on parts of yourself that you normally wouldn’t get to.”*

After starring in the award-winning feature **Rollercoaster**, for which he received a Leo Award nomination, Turton jumped at the chance to work with director Scott Smith again. Born in Portland, Oregon and raised in Vancouver, where he started acting in local theatre at the age of 4, Turton also starred in the independent feature **Gypsy 83**, and the television movies **Homeroom**, **Secret Cutting**, **Deadlocked** with David Caruso and Charles Dutton, and **Our Guys: Outrage at Glen Ridge** starring Ally Sheedy and Eric Stoltz. He is a familiar face on television, with guest starring roles on series’ including **Millennium**, **The X-Files**, **Dark Angel** and **Smallville**. Turton also landed a lead role in the WB series **Dead Last**.

## Mark McKinney as Reg/Ron Shelman

After starring on two of the most groundbreaking television sketch comedy series to date, Emmy Award nominee Mark McKinney has earned a legion of fans from his tenure on both ***Kids in the Hall*** and ***Saturday Night Live***.

But it was the chance to play the complex twin characters of Reg and Ron that drew him to ***Falling Angels***.

*"It was a good rich character and I really was glad for the opportunity to play him, and to figure out the puzzle of how to differentiate the twins," McKinney says. "It straddled the serious and the funny, because at the end there's the hook that Reg has the twin. So it's sleazy and maybe a little bit funny, but also sad and serious."*

Despite Reg's disreputable nature, McKinney and director Scott Smith found ways to make his love scenes with the teenage Sandy as relaxed as possible.

*"It was a closed set for that first love scene, so I brought a bottle of champagne and Scott stripped down to his underwear," says McKinney. "Then everybody relaxed. The whole film was, without a doubt, really easy. You never noticed the sweat you usually see in these things, due to Robin and Scott – they were very relaxed about everything."*

With an extensive list of credits in film, television and stage, Mark has showcased his comedic talents in the feature films ***The Out of Towners***, with Steve Martin and Goldie Hawn, ***Kids in the Hall: Brain Candy***, and two films based on Saturday Night Live characters - ***Superstar***, in which he co-starred with Molly Shannon and Will Ferrell, and ***The Ladies Man***, with Tim Meadows. He won a Best Supporting Actor Genie for ***Dogpark*** and starred in ***New Waterford Girl***, with Mary Walsh and Nicholas Campbell. A winner of six Gemini awards and multiple Emmy nominations for writing, McKinney's television credits also include ***Made In Canada*** (CBC), ***Twitch City*** (CBC) and ***Dice*** (BBC miniseries).

He recently staged the critically acclaimed play *Fully Committed*, which ran to rave reviews at the Winter Garden Theatre in Toronto.

## Ingrid Nilson as Stella

Ingrid Nilson's feature film debut was a perfect fit for the Regina actress, who says fate led to her stepping into the role of Stella.

*"I myself didn't choose for me to become the character, but I guess I had the right energy or the right look for it, and there was a part of me that really suited Stella" says Nilson. "I thought Stella was someone I'd like to be. She was always a very cool person and someone I'd want to be. I liked how playful she was, and even though she was smart underneath, how she could be the ditz and she could be sexy if she wanted to be. She was gorgeous and she was a star."*

Nilson's credits include several lead and supporting roles in the Gemini Award winning children's series **Incredible Story Studio**, **Subterranean Passage**, and **Mentors**. With extensive vocal and piano training, she has a strong background in musical theatre, including starring roles in the Regina Lyric Light Opera's production of *Cole*, and Regina Summer Stage's *Anything Goes*. Other appearances include *How the West Was Sung*, *The Boyfriend*, and *Pirates of Penzance*. An accomplished ballet, jazz and tap dancer, she was also part of the Alberta Ballet's *Nutcracker*.

Nilson calls her initial foray into features an amazing experience.

*"A whole new world opened up to me," she says. "There were a lot of firsts for me, and I loved all the other girls. They were so nice and so wonderful and I learned so much from all of them, not only as an actor, but as a person. The Field sisters were people you could spend a lot of time with and soak up all the things you could learn from them."*

## Scott Smith – Director

After reading the book, Smith immediately thought the **Falling Angels** should be film. A couple of years later when he heard that producer Robin Cass was looking for a director, Smith tracked him down and went after the project.

*“The first time I read the book, I immediately fell for it. I was laughing and cringing at the same time, turning pages one after the other, terrified about what was going to happen next. Barbara’s detail in the dynamics of this apocalyptic family were so extraordinary and yet so familiar. I was very moved. I had to make this movie.”*

For Smith, it was the patterns in the family that formed the basis of the film.

*“We talk about this sort of behaviour as ‘dysfunctional’, but in actual fact, it’s entirely functional. Each member of the family has chosen their role according to some unspoken pact. It’s complicit. It’s reactionary. It’s the tension that they live in, and so they have to go elsewhere to get the expressions of love they really need.”*

Smith also looked forward to working with writer Esta Spalding on the adaptation.

*“The greatest challenge was to maintain the tone of the book, which was so successful in telling a dark story with such wit. We tried to keep the tension between the humour and the drama constant, so that both were always present. Even the music of two generations, itself in reaction to the previous generation, fights for space. The story is so informed by the physics of reactionism, all these characters, two generations, two sexes, pushing and pulling against each other. So, the movie is full of these little tugs of war, which I think contribute to the larger tugs of war in the movie.”*

Based in Vancouver, Smith wrote, produced and directed the award-winning feature film **Rollercoaster**. A graduate of Simon Fraser University and past resident of the Canadian Film Centre, Smith’s feature film debut starring Brendan Fletcher has screened at over 40 international festivals. **Rollercoaster** was awarded Best Narrative Feature at the South By Southwest Festival in Austin and Most Popular Canadian Film at the Vancouver International Film Festival.

## Esta Spalding – Writer

For Esta Spalding, the key to a successful adaptation of Barbara Gowdy's novel was the characters.

*"A month after I found out I was doing the adaptation, I ran into Barbara at a party in Toronto and she pulled me aside and said she didn't care if what happens in the book doesn't happen in the movie, as long as the characters are true," says Spalding. "The characters being true was the horizon line I was always walking towards. The best affirmation that I'd done it right was when Barbara read it, and said this was the way she would have written it."*

Spalding is a versatile writer whose abilities range from fiction to poetry and screenwriting. No stranger to film, for the last three years she has written for the top-rated series ***Da Vinci's Inquest***, for which she has been nominated for a Gemini Award and won a WGC Top Ten Award. She has also contributed scripts to ***The Zack Files*** and most recently CTV's new drama series, ***The Eleventh Hour***. When she heard ***Falling Angels*** was to be made into a movie, she immediately re-read the book, a personal favourite of hers.

*"When I first read the book I loved it and when I went back to it again, it seemed so incredibly cinematic and so perfect for film," she says.*

The next two years were filled with creative brainstorming with producer Robin Cass and director Scott Smith.

*"From very beginning it was a dialogue," Spalding says. "It always felt like this extraordinary conversation – Scott and I would go off to Hornby Island or Bowen Island and meet for a few days and talk and talk and talk, and then I'd go off and write for a few weeks. Over the course of two years it was a very long, fantastic conversation.*

*"This isn't necessarily the script that would have come out of me alone. It expresses a connection that each of the three of us had to that book – we taught each other to read it in different ways."*

Spalding recently published the critically acclaimed novel *Mere* that she co-wrote with her mother Linda Spalding and is the author of three books of poetry: *Carrying Place*, *Anchoress* and *Lost August*. Esta is a contributing editor to *Brick: A Literary Journal*, and co-editor of the *Brick Anthology Lost Classics*.

## Greg Middleton – Director of Photography

Director of Photography Gregory Middleton gives **Falling Angels** a true 1960's feel, with a look that transcends the decades between that era and today. The look was achieved through a combination of art direction and lighting, as well as camera filters and lab technique.

*"It was all inspired by photos from the '60s, catalogues, magazines, things that had a slightly faded look," he says. "We looked at that and tried to imitate it. The jumping off point was the concept that there was nowhere to hide for the three daughters – no dark shadows to escape to."*

Because the plot is so strong and the characters so compelling, Middleton created a very natural look with nothing overcomplicated that would draw attention to itself and away from the story.

An award winning cinematographer whose films have appeared at the Cannes and Toronto International Film Festivals, Middleton is no stranger to critically acclaimed movies. He received his first of three Genie Award nominations for Lynne Stopkewich's **Kissed**, an adaptation of another Barbara Gowdy story.

Like much of Gowdy's work, Middleton says **Falling Angels** is a combination of dark humour and drama, which presented its greatest challenge with the pivotal rooftop scene.

*"We shot at dusk instead of at night to see more of the neighbourhood and the sky, but that meant we had to shoot over several days," he says. "There was the potential for bad weather, and we had to get everything to match over the various days, but we ended up with a beautiful look that aids in telling the story that it's a beginning of a new day when she falls off the roof."*

Middleton was also Genie-nominated for his work on **The Five Senses**, a Director's Fortnight selection at Cannes, and Raul Sanchez Inglis's **The Falling**. Other credits include Eduardo Ponti's **Between Strangers**, with Sophia Loren and Mira Sorvino, **After the Storm**, with Benjamin Bratt and Armand Assante, and **Mr. Rice's Secret**, starring David Bowie. Middleton also did the aerial photography on Atom Egoyan's Oscar-nominated **The Sweet Hereafter**.



## Rob Gray – Production Designer

Rather than creating an art-directed version of the 1960's, production designer Rob Gray set out to capture the real essence of the era for **Falling Angels**, which he discovered through researching newspapers and documentary footage.

*“Contrary to film references, it wasn't the Haight-Ashbury, Yorkville experience,” says Gray, with the benefit of his 16 years as an art director and production designer. “The times were really a throwback to the '50's and the post war ideals which had enabled the facade of the suburbs to grow. These were much more conservative times than is generally perceived, but at the same time they were very volatile.”*

Gray wanted to control the space so the Field family would feel imprisoned in their environment. While the backyard bomb shelter was an obvious way to do this, he created the same feeling of confinement in the house by using doorways and frames to create divisions of space, and structuring the colours to the rooms, such as the worn-out golds and almonds of the living room.

*“At the same time, the kitchen was a little more vibrant with blue patterned paper,” he says. “This gave some relief to the girls, a place to hide from the reminder of their almost non-existent, worn-out mother.”*

Gray production designed **Hollywood North**, with Matthew Modine and Jennifer Tilly, Bruce MacDonald's **Picture Claire**, with Juliette Lewis and Mickey Rourke and the recent adaptation of the David Adams Richards novel **The Bay of Love and Sorrows**. His television credits include the Showtime movie **Face Down**, with Joe Mantegna, and the series **Traders** and **Catwalk**.

With more than a thousand commercials to his credit, Gray is able to pursue his love of independent film production through his company, Wildfield Productions. He has directed six short films, including **Possibilities**, which screened internationally and continues to tour with the Toronto International Film Festival Film Circuit. His performance films, **Salmo del Viento**, and **Arenal** are cinematic explorations of the modern dance form and have been shown at dance festivals all over the world.

## Brenda Shenher – Costume Designer

Costume designer Brenda Shenher created a parade of the fashions of 1969, dressing the characters to reflect their diverse personalities.

The retro look of **Falling Angels** has a range of influences from Britain's mods and rockers to *The Sound of Music's* Bavarian styles, with the youngest Field daughter, Sandy, most exemplifying the trends of the day.

*“Sandy was a seamstress and could make the styles, and she was the one interested in looking good, so the strongest look was revealed through her,”* says Shenher. *“We kept her palette close to her mom’s - fashionable, but like sugar and Barbie.”*

Like Sandy, Miranda Richardson's Mary wore soft pinks and blues that reflected her childlike personality, while husband Jim was kept in brown and gray suits.

The key for worker bee Norma's look was utilitarian, like the character.

*“She’s plain, very malleable, soft and squishy around the edges, so the colours were insignificant, fading into background, which is how she lived her life,”* says Shenher.

As the most aggressive Field, the harder-edged Lou followed the convention of the day, but in a more androgynous or masculine way.

Because he was an outsider from the U.S., Tom's look is ahead of the community he arrives in, and, with touches like his headband and ankh, he captures that moment in time that straddles the line between hippies and the Beach Boys, a tucked-in, put together look, just before it melted down into torn denims, long hair, and tie dye.

Shenher lives in rural Saskatchewan, near where she grew up learning to sew in the 4H club. Her credits include the feature ***The Wisher***, the television movies ***Betrayed***, directed by Anne Wheeler, and ***Family Blessings***, and the Gemini award winning children's series ***Incredible Story Studio***. She was personal costumer for Jane Seymour and worked on features and series including Disney's ***The Thirteenth Warrior***, starring Antonio Banderas, and ***Call of the Wild***.

## Ken Whiteley- Composer

Ken Whiteley is one of Canada's most respected roots musicians. Drawing on his incredibly rich background in blues, gospel and folk styles, this six time Juno award nominee has played at virtually every major folk festival in Canada and performed and recorded with such legends as Pete Seeger, John Hammond Jr., Tom Paxton, Blind John Davis, Stan Rogers and Guy Davis.

After reading the novel and the script, Ken thought that the film might need different kinds of music to support the script's storyline. To successfully capture the conflicting personalities and emotional events of the script, he included post-WW2 swing music of the late 1940s and early 1950s for Jim and Mary and incorporated an assortment of late 1960's Canadian pop hits for the girls.

*"It was clear to me after reading the script that there would need to be two streams of music – one to capture Mary and Jim's relationship and another for the three girls," says Ken. "Because Jim controls the home – the swing music and the TV are predominant and outside the home, the pop music reveals freedom for the Field sisters."*

Instead of trying to score to complement the dark emotional entanglements on screen, Ken used a different technique to highlight the film's black humour.

*"Music has such a strong emotional content so a lot of times I would compose against what was in the picture," he says. "So, when Jim shoots himself in the foot, the music is lighthearted and happy. By juxtaposing the music and the image the event becomes funny, yet in a dark way."*

Ken is a busy musician who is always involved in a number of projects. He is an active record producer, having worked on more than eighty albums. His productions have resulted in 11 Gold or Platinum albums, 18 Juno nominations, two Juno winners and two Grammy nominations, with total sales in excess of six million copies. He has written the music for a number of films and television programs.

Ken's performing career began as a teenager in the 1960's with the Original Sloth Band. With the Sloths, Ken performed all over North America and appeared on Saturday Night Live with Leon Redbone. More recently, his collaborations with brother Chris (the Whiteley Brothers) and old friends Mose Scarlett and Jackie Washington (Scarlett, Washington & Whiteley) have resulted in a wonderful collection of recordings, garnering high praise, successful tours and several awards.

## Robin Cass – Producer, Triptych Media

**Falling Angels** is a seven-year labour of love for producer Robin Cass, one of the founding partners of Toronto-based Triptych Media.

Since its inception in 1994 and beginning with the feature film **Zero Patience**, the partners of Triptych Media have developed a reputation for producing high-quality, award-winning drama. Cass hopes **Falling Angels** will be a strong addition to the company's roster.

*"Although the movie is absolutely true to the essence of the book but it's very different in how we have told the story," says Cass. "If we played our cards right, the audience will recognize classic family elements that have to do with the nature of tension in families and the kind of love-hate relationship we sometimes have with our siblings and our parents."*

Cass believes **Falling Angels** appeal will transcend generations.

*"No matter who they are, I think the audience will respond to the three girls' struggle to define themselves on their own terms, different from their parents. And they'll recognize that ultimately, of course, we are all cut from the same cloth as our parents," says Cass. "There are some things about family that are inescapable."*

*"The movie is ideal for the boomer generation who were there in the 60's, because it's the story of a girl who was a beautiful young rebel living in an age of extreme turmoil, with anti-war slogans, peace and love, the birth of the feminist movement. All of that is underneath and behind and around our story," says Cass. "And with the paranoia in our world after 9/11, ironically here's a story we're bringing to the screen that has that at its core – a father driven by the same kind of fear, so he builds a bomb shelter as an attempt to keep his family safe. So there's a contemporary resonance that will strike a chord with our younger audience as well."*

In 1996, Robin produced **Lilies**, which won the Genie for Best Film of the Year. After winning Best Canadian Film and Most Popular Film at the Toronto International Film Festival, Triptych's **The Hanging Garden** played to rave reviews and packed houses, and won four Genie Awards including Best First Feature and Best Screenplay. Recently completed is the adaptation of Governor General and Giller Prize winning novel by David Adams Richards, **The Bay of Love and Sorrows** and Deepa Mehta's anticipated adaptation of Pulitzer Prize winner Carol Shields' **The Republic of Love**.

## **Kevin DeWalt – Executive Producer, Minds Eye Entertainment**

Kevin DeWalt is C.E.O and Chairman of Minds Eye Entertainment, Western Canada's largest independent film and television production company. Kevin was pleased to see how well Saskatchewan was reflected in the film.

*“The film didn't require any of the typical 'prairie' scenes and instead it took advantage of Saskatchewan's beautiful, understated, airy light and this combined with the muted tones in the film, reflect the characters inability to communicate with each other and drive home some of the helplessness of the family. “*

Kevin's entrepreneurial achievements classify him as one of Canada's most dynamic producers. Winner of the prestigious Canadian Film and Television Producers Association's Chetwynd Award for Entrepreneurial Excellence and Ernst and Young's Entrepreneur of the Year Award in the media category, he has produced over 40 film and television projects and has spearheaded the development of regional production company into an internationally-recognized, vertically-integrated organization which includes subsidiaries in new media, distribution, and post-production.

As both a producer and executive producer, he has been instrumental in establishing the Western film and television industry with exceptional, exportable projects that have been sold to over 100 territories around the world. In addition to his producing role on *Falling Angels*, Kevin recently executive produced the 22 episode legal drama series ***Just Cause*** for PAX and W Network, the television movie ***Betrayed***, directed by Anne Wheeler for CBC TV, season two of the action adventure teen series ***2030CE*** for YTV; a 13 one-hour episode children's series ***MythQuest***, broadcasting on PBS in the U.S. and CBC in Canada; the feature film ***The Unsaid***, a psychological thriller starring Andy Garcia and Teri Polo; 26 episodes of the travel adventure series ***My Global Adventure*** for Life Network; and he recently completed production on 65 episodes of the award winning children's series ***Incredible Story Studio*** which broadcasts in 450 million homes around the world.

Recognized for his commitment to the industry, Kevin is a board member and committee chairman of the National Training Program of the Canadian Film and Television Production Association (CFTPA) and is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Screen Institute. He is currently Vice-President, North America, of the International Quorum of Film and Video Producers Association.

## **Alain de la Mata – Co-Producer, Wild Bunch Sales International**

Alain de la Mata is head of acquisitions for, and co-founder of the Paris based sales company Wild Bunch. He is also Managing Director of the UK based distributor/production company blueLight.

As executive producer, Alain's credits include Todd Louiso's **Love Liza**, starring Philip Seymour Hoffman and Kathy Bates and Fruit Chan's **Durian Durian**.

He is co-producer of Peter Sollett's **Long Way Home**, selected for Un Certain Regard for Cannes 2002 and **New Life** by Philippe Grandrieux.

Originally a photographer, in addition to his work for Wild Bunch and blueLight, Alain is Managing Director of three successful independent dance, rock and metal record labels.

## **Falling Angels Funders & Investors**

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