

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

*“For the people who used to be ten years old,
And the people who are going to be ten years old.”*
—Hayao Miyazaki

Miyazaki’s “Spirited Away,” a Walt Disney Studios presentation of a Studio Ghibli film, is the latest cinematic triumph from Japan’s most renowned filmmaker, Hayao Miyazaki. Adding to his impressive body of work, which includes such remarkable animated features as “Princess Mononoke” and “My Neighbor Totoro,” this exciting new film is a wondrous fantasy about a ten-year-old girl named Chihiro, who is whisked away to a spirit world and must learn to overcome her fears and face unique challenges in order to save her parents and herself. The most successful film ever to play in Japan, “Spirited Away” became the first animated feature in fifty years to win the coveted Golden Bear Award at the 2002 Berlin Film Festival. This newly crafted English language version of the film, guided by executive producer John Lasseter (Pixar’s executive vice president, creative and Academy Award®-winning director of “Toy Story,” “A Bug’s Life” and “Toy Story 2”), veteran Disney director Kirk Wise (“Beauty and the Beast,” “The Hunchback of Notre Dame”) and producer Don Ernst

("Fantasia/2000"), enables English-speaking audiences all over the world to experience this animated adventure in an entirely new way.

Lasseter comments, "'Spirited Away' is, to me, a real classic Disney film. Because like all classic Disney films, it has humor, heart, and tremendous character growth. A bit scary at times, a little bit strange, and wonderful – it sucks you in at the beginning and you forget about everything until the movie is over. It is a real privilege to be involved with one of Miyazaki's films and to help bring it to a whole new group of moviegoers. 'Spirited Away' is a magnificent film and deserves to be seen by everyone who loves good storytelling and great characters. I became the film's number one fan and strongly encouraged my friends at Disney to release it. I think American audiences are really going to love this film. They're going to see images and visuals that they've never seen before in their lives.

"We're incredibly busy at Pixar, but when I was asked to help with this I said 'yes' without any hesitation because I wanted to see this film come to America," he adds. "And I wanted it to happen in a way that would be really respectful of the masterpiece Miyazaki created. He is one of the greatest filmmakers of our time and he has been a tremendous inspiration to our generation of animators. At Pixar, when we have a problem we can't seem to solve, we often look at one of Miyazaki's films in our screening room. 'Toy Story' owes a huge debt of gratitude to him."

Wise observes, "'Spirited Away' is truly an amazing film. Like all of Miyazaki's movies, it has such a wonderful magical quality to it and is so beautifully staged. I like to think of him as the David Lean of animation. Working on the English language version was like getting a chance to study at the feet of a master because I got to watch it over and over and over again. I think all of his works are fantastic, but this one stands the best chance of crossing over into the American market because it's rooted in the same kind of storytelling traditions as Alice in Wonderland and The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. Both of those classic tales involve little girls who take a journey to this kind of parallel fantasy world, populated by all these amazing creatures and characters, and learn a valuable

life lesson along the way when they finally come full circle back to their own world.”

Pam Coats, executive vice president, creative affairs, for Walt Disney Feature Animation adds, “All of us at Disney fell in love with ‘Spirited Away’ and felt it was important to bring it to audiences over here. It’s a beautiful movie. Miyazaki is truly a visual storyteller and this film is fascinating to watch. He is never afraid to tackle difficult issues and yet he confronts them without preaching to his audience. Ultimately, this film has characters that you remember and take home in your heart. It teaches strong values and has a lot to offer moviegoers of all ages.”

Adding to the fun and excitement of the English language version of “Spirited Away” is an impressive vocal cast that includes Daveigh Chase (who voices Lilo in Disney’s animated hit “Lilo & Stitch”), Suzanne Pleshette, Jason Marsden, Susan Egan, David Ogden Stiers, Lauren Holly, Michael Chiklis, John Ratzenberger and Tara Strong. Cindy Davis Hewitt & Donald H. Hewitt wrote the English language adaptation.

“Spirited Away” is the eighth feature film from director/writer Miyazaki. Rejoining him on this latest project is veteran animation producer Toshio Suzuki, who co-founded Studio Ghibli with Miyazaki in 1985 and has served as producer on three of his previous films. Another longtime collaborator, composer Joe Hisaishi, lends his impressive musical talents to the film. He has worked on all of Miyazaki’s Studio Ghibli features.

Studio Ghibli was founded after the success of Miyazaki’s 1984 film, “Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind” (released in the U.S. as “Warriors of the Wind”). Tokuma Shoten Publishing founded the studio with animators Miyazaki and Isao Takahata (“Grave of the Fireflies”). Ghibli is an Italian word, coined during World War II, meaning “hot desert wind.” The term was also used for the name of Italy’s scouting planes in North Africa. Miyazaki, a vintage aircraft buff, decided to adopt the word for his new studio, hoping to be a “hot wind into the world of Japanese animation.” Studio Ghibli focuses all its attention on producing theatrical feature films of the highest quality. Its success has been

remarkable: virtually all of its twelve animated features have been critical and commercial successes worldwide and rank among Japan's all-time box office champs. Many have become classics of anime.

Commenting on "Spirited Away," Miyazaki says, "Up to now, we have made one film for very young children, 'My Neighbor Totoro.' We made another film in which a boy sets out on a journey to find a lost city, 'Laputa: Castle in the Sky.' And we made a film in which a teenage girl learns to be herself, 'Kiki's Delivery Service.' However, we have not made a film for girls around the age of ten.

"I do not like weak female characters," adds the director. "I think, in a sense, that things have become boring with so many strong males being held up to us as heroes. In reality, the males have lost the battle! It's the females who are really tough these days.

"Our story is one in which the natural strengths of the character are revealed by the situations she encounters. I wanted to show that people actually have these things in them that can be called on when they find themselves in extraordinary circumstances. That is how I wish my young friends to be, and I think that this is also how they themselves hope to be."

Production of a Hayao Miyazaki film is generally begun when work on the script has only just started. He explains, "I don't have the story finished and ready when we start work on a film. The story develops when I start drawing storyboards. The production starts very soon thereafter while the storyboards are still developing. We never know where the story will go but we just keep working on the film as it develops."

John Lasseter notes: "What's interesting about the way Miyazaki works, which is different than the way we at Pixar or the animators at Disney work, is that we always record our dialogue before we create the animation. Miyazaki works the other way around. He always animates first and then fits the dialogue to the performance."

Disney began its association with Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli in 1996 when Disney executive Michael O. Johnson (then president of Buena Vista

Home Entertainment Worldwide) negotiated a deal to bring nine of Studio Ghibli's films to audiences worldwide. In 1998, Buena Vista released the heartwarming coming-of-age family comedy, "Kiki's Delivery Service." Miramax Films, a division of the Walt Disney Studios, released Miyazaki's epic "Princess Mononoke" in 1999. Disney's Home Entertainment division plans to release several of the director's earlier titles on video and DVD in the near future.

Johnson notes, "Disney has had a great working relationship with Miyazaki and his associates at Studio Ghibli over the past six years and we consider it an honor to be bringing these exceptional works of art and entertainment to movie fans all over the world. Miyazaki's films have universal appeal and 'Spirited Away' is sure to find a receptive audience in theaters everywhere."

In addition to winning the Berlin Film Festival's top honors, "Spirited Away" was voted Best Asian Film at the 2002 Hong Kong Film Awards and recently won the Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature at this year's San Francisco Film Festival. It remains the highest grossing film in Japanese box office history with a total of 29.3 billion yen (\$234 million) to date. This figure surpasses the two previous record holders – "Titanic" at 26 billion yen (\$208 million) and Miyazaki's "Princess Mononoke" at 19.3 billion yen (\$154 million).

THE STORY:

According to Miyazaki, "In my grandparents' time, it was believed that gods and spirits existed everywhere...in trees, rivers, insects, wells, anything. My generation does not believe in this, but I like the idea that we should treasure everything because gods and spirits might exist there, and because there is a kind of life to everything. In fact, in Japanese, there is an expression – 'yaoyorozu no kami' – which means 'eight million gods.' However, as far as I know, nobody has actually seen any of these gods and spirits. So I had to make up their faces and shapes. Some of them are based on beliefs, traditions,

legends, and other materials. For example, it is generally believed that a river god is a snake or a dragon.”

Set in rural Japan, “Spirited Away” opens with ten-year-old Chihiro and her parents on their way to a new home in the suburbs. Having taken a wrong turn, the family arrives at what they believe to be an abandoned amusement park. Chihiro’s parents are soon tempted by a buffet of irresistible food, which nearly consumes them as they consume it. They are quickly transformed into large squealing pigs.

When Chihiro searches for help, she finds a friend in Haku, a mysterious boy with magical powers. He introduces her to the spirits that inhabit the amusement park at night. Chihiro must go to work for Yubaba, a fierce old woman with a huge head and short body, who runs a hot springs resort for all manner of fantastic creatures and gods. Her experiences with these spirits, monsters and beings from ancient legends, lead to a series of extraordinary and entertaining adventures beyond her wildest imagination.

Miyazaki’s films are always built around strong characters, and “Spirited Away” contains some of the most strikingly original creatures ever seen. At the core of the tale is Chihiro, the ten-year-old heroine. She begins as a rather sulky, spoiled child with a tendency to panic when things go wrong, but she develops the ability to remain calm when others are not. She never gives up once she has set her goals. Haku is her mysterious friend and ally with a dark side – he turns into a dragon and serves as apprentice to the sorceress Yubaba.

Yubaba is the greedy, short-tempered boss of the hot springs. Her unusual appearance, and her ability to change into a bird to spy on others, enables her to control all who dare to stand in her way.

“At the beginning of the production, I explained to my staff that the Yuya (the bathhouse) is Studio Ghibli,” says Miyazaki. “When a new employee comes to the studio for the first time, even though it’s a small place, it’s not easy to figure out where to go. If that person were to happen to wander up to the third floor, he or she would encounter our very frightening producer (Toshio Suzuki) yelling and shouting all the time, just like Yubaba! Many of the staff also

commented that I resemble Yubaba. I admit that my head is big, but even so I cannot agree with that comparison. I am just a simple craftsman working on making a film, just like the character Kamaji in 'Spirited Away.' Only I don't have six hands."

Chihiro meets and befriends a variety of beings in the spirit world, including Lin, the tough human bathhouse girl who teaches her the rules of survival; Kamaji, the wise, spidery old man who tends the bathhouse furnace; the Frog Men who work the resort; and Boh, Yubaba's giant-sized baby boy. Even more fantastic are Kaonashi (or "No-Face"), the mysterious semi-transparent figure who poses danger to anyone who approaches him; an army of animated soot-balls who carry large lumps of coal to feed the bathhouse furnace; and the "Stink-God," a lumpish creature who emerges from a coating of foul-smelling sludge as an ancient and powerful River God.

Miyazaki explains, "I had been creating the leading roles in my films the way I thought they should be to please myself. But this time, I wanted to have the leading role be a more typical girl, so that a ten-year-old could actually recognize herself in that role. It would be really important that the leading role not be someone extraordinary, but more like an everyday real person. This kind of character is more difficult to create.

"The film is set in a hot springs bathhouse frequented by various Japanese gods and spirits," Miyazaki continues. "I have some strange impressions of Japanese bathhouses dating from my youth. I always wanted to stage a film in such a strange place and I thought a bathhouse for gods would be even more fun. I suppose the gods of Japan go to a hot springs bath and resort to rest their bodies for a couple of days just as we do. They want to stay there for a while longer, but they leave reluctantly when the weekend is over. I suppose the gods in this day and age must be really busy. Thinking this way is how I decide how the backgrounds and structures should look."

John Lasseter observes, "One of the things that I really admire about Hayao Miyazaki is that he makes movies for a reason. He met this young girl, the daughter of a friend, and he was surprised at how apathetic she was about

everything. He noticed that this was a problem in Japan with young girls. They just didn't care; they were bored. So, he said, I want to make a movie for them.

"He set out to tell the story of a young girl who is moving to a new town," Lasseter adds. "She starts out being bored but is swept away into this world and has to learn responsibility. She has to learn hard work and to care about things in order to get her parents back. And through this you see tremendous growth in her character. It's heartwarming and so special. I think this film is probably the most special film he has made. It takes the tremendous scope of 'Princess Mononoke' and mixes in the humor and heart of 'My Neighbor Totoro.'"

CREATING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE VERSION:

Heading the effort to bring "Spirited Away" to English-speaking moviegoers were several of today's top animation filmmakers – executive producer John Lasseter, director Kirk Wise and producer Don Ernst. Together this trio was responsible for crafting an English language script that would be faithful to the Miyazaki original, and casting an ensemble of vocal talents that would retain the flavor and entertainment of the Japanese version.

Lasseter explains, "When Disney decided to bring 'Spirited Away' to America, they got the absolute best people to help with the English language version. Don Ernst, the producer of 'Fantasia/2000,' did a great job of bringing the fantastic team together. I worked closely with my good friend and colleague, Kirk Wise, who was in charge of directing the English voice cast and supervising the writers to get the words to fit with the mouth movements that were animated. Kirk directed them in such a beautiful way and the result is perfectly natural.

"We all had the same goal: to protect Miyazaki's vision and bring it, in its complete intact form, to the American audiences," adds Lasseter. "We're really proud of the results. We didn't cut it; we didn't change anything about it. We just

translated the script from Japanese to English, made sure that it was all in a language we could understand, and cast the right actors.”

Disney Feature Animation creative affairs executive Pam Coats adds, “When you watch a subtitled movie, you’re really focused on following the dialogue. With this English language version, the audience is able to listen to the dialogue and not have to focus on the bottom of the screen. And with a Miyazaki film, it’s important to see everything because he does visual things that fill up the screen. John, Kirk and their entire team lent their expertise to creating a version of the film that protected the intent of Miyazaki’s story and translated it in a way that English-speaking audiences could fully appreciate.”

Kirk Wise, a veteran Disney filmmaker who directed (with partner Gary Trousdale) “Beauty and the Beast,” “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” and “Atlantis: The Lost Empire,” recalls, “Casting is half your battle. If you cast right, everything falls into place. I think the casting choices really made the process easy and we ended up with a great ensemble of actors.

“We compiled lots of lists of actors and ended up casting the film the same way we would a traditional animated film shot in the States,” adds Wise. “Usually we would take a tape of the actors we were interested in and play it with footage of the character. You have to be able to hear and see if the marriage of voice and picture is going to work. It’s a very instinctual thing and when you work in animation long enough, you start to develop a feel for it. Don (Ernst) and I did the same thing when we worked together on the Disney live-action feature ‘Homeward Bound.’ We’d show footage of the cat and listen to a track of Sally Field from ‘Soapdish.’ That really clued us in as to whether this voice would be a match for what you saw on-screen.

“Daveigh Chase was so wonderful as Lilo in ‘Lilo & Stitch’ that she kind of shot to the top of the list for Chihiro,” he observes. “We played her tracks against the picture and it just fit. She seemed the right age and she had a real handle on the character. Daveigh is a terrific actress and she was able to match the mouth movements quickly. She took to it like a duck to water.

“Suzanne Pleshette had this wonderful throaty quality and a great sense of humor. She brought a great theatricality to the twin roles of Yubaba, the greedy sorceress, and her infinitely more compassionate sorceress sister, Zeniba. Susan Egan, who had voiced the character of Meg in ‘Hercules,’ provided a very natural and relaxed voice for Lin, the tough bathhouse girl who teaches Chihiro the rules for survival. Her voice worked so well with the image of that character and she was great fun to work with.

“David Ogden Stiers (whose Disney credits include five animated features with roles ranging from Cogsworth the clock in “Beauty and the Beast” to the evil genius Jumba in “Lilo & Stitch”) is my good luck charm. I would use him in anything that I do and he was great as Kamaji, the wise and businesslike tender of the furnace. John Ratzenberger, who voices the Assistant Manager of the bathhouse, was a special request from John Lasseter. He’s John’s good luck charm and has done roles in all of the Pixar feature films (as Hamm the Piggy bank in the “Toy Story” films, P.T. Flea in “A Bug’s Life,” and the lonesome Yeti in “Monsters, Inc.”).”

Working on a very tight schedule, Wise collaborated with the husband-and-wife writing team Cindy and Donald Hewitt to get the dialogue just right. The writers would usually be present at the recording sessions to work “on the fly” to massage the dialogue with the mouth movements. The actors would record their dialogue in the traditional ADR method: they would watch the scene, listen for a series of beeps in their headphones and then say their lines. Wise would let the actors hear the original Japanese track to get a sense of the character’s emotional level in the original production. This allowed them to stay true to the spirit of the Miyazaki direction.

Wise recalls, “The hardest part of the process was the technical part, things like having to shave syllables and little rewrites along the way to make sure we matched the original lip synch. Coming from an animation background, I’m really sensitive to this. If we did our job right, the audience will forget within a few minutes that they’re watching a dubbed film that was originally in Japanese. You completely get wrapped up in the story and the beautiful visuals take over.”

IN HIS OWN WORDS: MIYAZAKI ON "SPIRITED AWAY"

I would say that this film is an adventure story even though there is no brandishing of weapons or battles involving supernatural powers. However, this story is not a showdown between right and wrong. It is a story in which the heroine will be thrown into a place where the good and bad dwell together, and there, she will experience the world. She will learn about friendship and devotion, and will survive by making full use of her brain. She sees herself through the crisis, avoids danger and gets herself back to the ordinary world somehow. She manages not because she has destroyed the 'evil,' but because she has acquired the ability to survive.

The main theme of 'Spirited Away' is to describe, in the form of a fantasy, some of the things in this world which have become vague, and the indistinct world which tends toward erosion and ruin.

In everyday life, where we are surrounded, protected and kept out of danger's way, it is difficult to feel that we are working to survive in this world. Children can only enlarge their fragile egos. Chihiro's skinny legs and her sulky face are their symbols. However, once the reality becomes clear and once she encounters a crisis, she will surely be aware of the life she actually possesses and of a capacity for flexibility and patience, and for decisive judgment and action.

Most people just panic and collapse while shouting 'it can't be true.' Those people will be erased or eaten up in the situation in which Chihiro finds herself. The fact that she is strong enough not to be eaten up is what makes her a heroine. She is not a heroine because she is beautiful or possesses a unique mind. This is the key characteristic of this work and therefore it is a good story for young girls.

Words are power. In the world Chihiro has wandered into, words have great importance and immutability. At 'Yuya' where Yubaba rules, if Chihiro were

to say, 'I don't want to do this' or 'I want to go home,' she would be eliminated by the sorceress. She would be made to wander about with nowhere to go, until she vanishes or is made into a hen to lay eggs until she is eaten. On the contrary, if Chihiro says 'I will work here,' even a sorceress can't ignore her. In these days, words are thought to be light and unimportant like bubbles, and no more than the reflection of a vacuous reality. It is still true that words can be powerful. The fact is, however, that powerless words are proliferating unnecessarily.

To take a name away from a person is an attempt to keep them under perfect control. Sen (Chihiro's name in the strange bathhouse world) shuddered when she realized that she was beginning to forget her own name. And besides, every time she goes to see her parents at the pigpen, she becomes used to seeing her parents as pigs. In the world where Yubaba rules, people must always live among dangers which might swallow them up.

In a dangerous world, Chihiro begins to come alive. The sulky and languid character will come to have a stunning and attractive facial expression by the end of the film. The nature of the world hasn't been changed in the least. I am arguing in this film that words are our will, ourselves and our power.

This is also the reason why I created a fantasy set in Japan. Though it is a fairy tale, I didn't want to make it like a Western type of story which allows many possibilities for escape, and is likely to be taken as a cliché. However, I would prefer to say that it is rather a direct descendent of 'Suzume no Oyado' ('The Sparrows' Inn' – a trap in which sparrows lure people by food and pleasant surroundings), or 'Nezumi no Goten' ('The Mouse's Castle'), which appear in Japanese folk tales.

I created a world where Yubaba lives in pseudo-Western style to make it seem as if it is something that has been seen somewhere else, and to make it uncertain whether it is a dream or reality. Also, Japanese traditional design is a rich source for the imagination. We are often not aware of the richness and the uniqueness of our cultural heritage – from stories, traditions, rites, designs, and tales of the gods. Surrounded by high technology and its flimsy devices, children

are more and more losing their roots. We must inform them of the richness of our traditions.

I think the world of film can have a striking influence by fulfilling the traditional functions, as a piece of a vividly colored mosaic, to a story which can be applied today. That means, at the same time, we can gain a new understanding of what it means to be residents of this island colony.

In this borderless age, a man who doesn't have a place to put down his roots will be looked down upon. A place is the past and also a history. A man without a history, or a people that forgot its past will have no choice but to disappear like a shimmer of light, or to lay eggs endlessly as a hen until consumed.

The aim of this film is to provide moviegoers, and especially young girls, something through which they can encounter what it is they truly want.

ANIME: HAYAO MIYAZAKI AND STUDIO GHIBLI

Anime has become the term for Japanese animation and has emerged as a separate and popular film genre in recent years. Although Japanese animation can be dated back to 1917, most of that country's animation prior to the 1950s (excluding wartime propaganda cartoons) consisted of personal short films made by individual animators.

Japan's first professional postwar animation studio was Toei Animation Co., whose first feature was released in October 1958. Toei's early theatrical features follow the Disney approach of adapting classic fairy tales and legends, but they worked from Asian sources rather than European literature. One of the most popular was imported into America in 1961 as "Alakazam the Great." The latter was based on a comic strip adaptation of the ancient Chinese Monkey King legend, drawn by Osamu Tezuka, Japan's most prolific cartoonist during the 1950s. Tezuka had created dozens of comic strips and books, including the authorized Japanese adaptations of Walt Disney's "Pinocchio" and "Bambi." His

best-known creation was “Astro Boy,” which was later syndicated to American television.

When Toei licensed Tezuka’s “Alakazam” comic strip for animation, Tezuka got the idea of starting his own production of animation for TV. “Astro Boy” debuted on New Year’s Day 1963 and was an immediate success. Three other animation studios opened by the end of that year. Hayao Miyazaki’s early TV work included cartoon series adaptations of the literary favorites, Heidi and Anne of Green Gables.

Born in 1941, Miyazaki acknowledges Tezuka as one of his earliest influences. Even as a young artist, he always wanted to develop his own stories and style rather than imitate others. Upon graduating from college in 1963, Miyazaki joined the staff of Toei Animation and was assigned to the new TV cartoon production unit.

As an inbetweenner at Toei, Miyazaki met and became close friends with fellow animator Isao Takahata. By the late 1960s, they had both gained enough experience and seniority that Takahata was made director of the Studio’s 1968 feature, “The Little Norse Prince,” with Miyazaki named as Scene Designer and key animator. They were given considerable freedom to emphasize strong characterizations and character interaction and the result was Toei’s most popular and critically acclaimed movie at that time.

Following the success of “The Little Norse Prince,” Miyazaki sought more creative control over his projects. This ironically meant an initial step backward as he and Takahata left Toei to work at smaller studios that specialized in TV animation. Miyazaki also started his first story as a comic book creator.

The feature “The Castle of Cagliostro” (1979) first brought the director to the public’s attention. Miyazaki breathed new life into Lupin III, a character created by manga artist Monkey Punch in 1967. Lupin is a master thief, the direct descendent of Arsene Lupin, the hero of a series of French mystery novels by Maurice Leblanc. His off-the-wall escapades spoof the adventures of James Bond and similar heroes. Miyazaki was given carte blanche to write the story, redesign the characters and direct. He personally sketched the storyboards and

many of the key animation drawings. The film was a smash success in Japan and at numerous international festivals.

In 1979, Tokuma Publishing Co., Ltd., one of Japan's largest publishing companies, agreed to publish one of Miyazaki's science fiction stories, "Nausicaa of the Valley of the Winds," as a manga (comic book serialized novel). The first installments, personally written and drawn by Miyazaki, drew such a positive response that Tokuma quickly became interested in financing a feature based on the material. Miyazaki worked with a small animation staff to produce the film, drawing the storyboards and much of the key animation himself.

"Nausicaa," released in March 1984 became Japan's most successful animated feature to that time, attracting almost a million viewers. It convinced Tokuma Publishing to finance the establishment of a new animation studio to be managed by Miyazaki and his friend/colleague Isao Takahata. The new studio, which opened in 1985, was named Studio Ghibli. The first production under that banner was 1986's "Laputa: Castle in the Sky."

Since 1985, Studio Ghibli has produced an average of one feature per year, usually alternating between those created by Miyazaki and those by Takahata. In the late 1980s, the two began grooming a brilliant protégé and assistant on all their films, Yoshifumi Kondo, to become a third partner. Kondo directed Ghibli's 1995 release, "Whisper of the Heart." When Kondo died tragically in January 1998 at the age of 47, Miyazaki put off his announced plans for early retirement to resume the creative leadership of the studio.

Miyazaki's theatrical features created at Studio Ghibli include "Laputa: Castle in the Sky" (1986), "My Neighbor Totoro" (1988), "Kiki's Delivery Service" (1989), "Porco Rosso" (1992), "Princess Mononoke" (1997) and "Spirited Away" (2001). His creative influence can be seen throughout the studio's other productions.

Disney began its association with Studio Ghibli in 1998 when Buena Vista Home Entertainment released Miyazaki's "Kiki's Delivery Service" on video. That title entered the Top Ten on Billboard's sales chart and sold over a million copies. In 1999, Miramax Films offered a theatrical release of an English language

version of “Princess Mononoke.” The film received critical acclaim and was released on home video the following year. Buena Vista Home Entertainment is planning to make other Miyazaki titles available for home viewing in the very near future.

THE FILMMAKERS:

HAYAO MIYAZAKI (Director/Writer), one of the modern masters of Japanese cinema, has created some of the most admired and influential animated films of recent decades. He made his feature film directing debut in 1979 with “Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro” and has gone on to direct such impressive films as “Laputa: Castle in the Sky” (1986), “My Neighbor Totoro” (1988), “Kiki’s Delivery Service” (1989), “Porco Rosso” (1992), “Princess Mononoke” (1997) and “Spirited Away” (2001). The latter became the most successful film ever released in Japan.

Born in Tokyo in 1941, Miyazaki graduated from the prestigious Gakushuin University in 1963 with a degree in political science and economics. As a university student, he became deeply interested in children’s literature and read a wide variety of books written for children all over the world. Miyazaki became interested in animation after seeing Taiji Yabushita’s “White Snake Enchantress” (1959) and Lev Atamanov’s “The Snow Queen” (1957). Combining superb draftsmanship with his academic credentials, Miyazaki joined Toei Animation Company and launched his filmmaking career, beginning as an inbetweener on the feature “Watchdog Bow Wow” (1963).

Miyazaki worked his way up through the studio ranks doing animation, storyboards and designs for numerous TV series and feature films, often in collaboration with his friend and mentor, Isao Takahata. He provided key animation for episodes of the television program “Secret Little Akko” (1969-1970), directed “Lupin III” (1971-1972), and created the concept and wrote the screenplay for “Panda! Go Panda!” in 1972. He went on to direct episodes of

several other series, including “Conan, The Boy in Future” (1978), “Lupin III: Albatross: Wings of Death” (1980), “Lupin III: Aloha, Lupin!” (1980), “Sherlock Hound” (1984).

“Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind” (1984), a feature based on his popular manga series, established Miyazaki as one of the most talented directors in the burgeoning Japanese animation industry. In 1985, Miyazaki and Takahata founded Studio Ghibli in conjunction with Tokuma Shoten Publishing Ltd.

“Laputa: Castle in the Sky” (1986) began his unbroken string of hits, culminating in the record-breaking “Spirited Away” (2001).

TOSHIO SUZUKI (Producer) was born in 1948 in Nagoya, Japan, and graduated from Keio University’s Literature department in 1972. After graduating he joined Tokuma Shoten Publishing Company and began working at their weekly magazine “Asahi Geino.” In 1978 he helped found the monthly animation magazine “Animage,” starting as an associate editor and later becoming Editor-In-Chief. In the mid-1980s Suzuki became increasingly involved in the productions of Miyazaki and Takahata, and in 1985 helped co-found Studio Ghibli.

Throughout the last half of the 1980s Suzuki continued working in publishing while simultaneously helping produce features for Studio Ghibli, including “Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind” (1984), “Laputa: Castle in the Sky” (1986), “Grave of the Fireflies” (1988), “My Neighbor Totoro” (1988) and “Kiki’s Delivery Service” (1989). Suzuki went to work full-time for Studio Ghibli in 1989.

He produced “Only Yesterday” (1991), “Porco Rosso” (1992), “Pompoko” (1994), “Whisper of the Heart” (1995), “Princess Mononoke” (1997) and “My Neighbors The Yamadas” (1999). He was also producer of Disney’s “Recess: School’s Out” (2001) and co-executive producer of “Ritual” (2000). In 1997 he co-wrote “Shin Sarariiman Senka” for director Yuzo Asahara.

JOE HISAISHI (Composer) was born in Nagano, Japan in 1950 and studied composition at the Kunitachi College of Music, where he began

composing contemporary music. His first film score for Hayao Miyazaki was for 1984's "Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind," for which he garnered wide acclaim.

Hisaishi's scores for movies directed by Miyazaki include "Laputa: Castle in the Sky" (1986), "My Neighbor Totoro" (1988), "Kiki's Delivery Service" (1989), "Porco Rosso" (1992) and "Princess Mononoke" (1997). He has also contributed haunting original scores to many of the films of maverick director "Beat" Takeshi Kitano, including "A Scene at Sea" (1992), "Sonatine" (1993), "Fireworks" (1997), "Kikujiro" (1999), and "Brother" (2000).

The veteran composer has won the award for Best Music at the Japan Academy Awards ceremonies in 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1999. Hisaishi is an active concert pianist, has released numerous CDs of his own work, and is credited as a producer of the 1998 Nagano Special Winter Olympics. His directorial debut, "Quartet," was released in Japan in 2001.

CREATIVE SUPERVISORS – ENGLISH LANGUAGE VERSION:

KIRK WISE (Director) has directed three Disney animated features alongside partner Gary Trousdale: Oscar[®]-nominated "Beauty and the Beast" (1991), "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" (1996), and "Atlantis: The Lost Empire" (2001). His extensive background in story development and animation prepared him well for this latest challenge, while his previous acting experiences allowed him to work closely with the voice talents in bringing their characters to life.

Born in San Francisco, Wise grew up in and around the Bay area, principally in Palo Alto. He earned his first paycheck for drawing at the age of seven when his mother submitted his rendering of a garbage truck and sanitation worker to the San Francisco Chronicle's "Junior Art Champion" contest. His submission not only impressed the judges at the paper, who declared his entry a winner, but also won praise from the Sanitation Department, who sent him a letter of commendation and a check for the free advertising. Wise recalls

thinking, “Wow, there’s something to this,” and knew from then on the career path he wanted to take.

In fifth grade, Wise took a Community Center course in animation and made his own primitive Super-8 films using cutouts and clay figures. This hobby of making films continued throughout junior high and high school. When his dad told him about CalArts and their special programs in animation, he immediately checked it out and applied for admission. He was accepted and spent the next four years learning his craft. As a student, he earned a living drawing caricatures (“the ones with the big heads and tiny bodies”) at Universal Studios and Magic Mountain. In his senior year at the college, he was hired by Disney to do freelance animation for the “Sport Goofy in Soccermania” television special.

Following graduation, Wise contributed animation and storyboarding to “The Brave Little Toaster” and “Family Dog,” an animated segment for Steven Spielberg’s “Amazing Stories” anthology series. Back at Disney, he animated on “The Great Mouse Detective” and “Oliver & Company” before discovering that his real interests were in the area of story and character development. He went on to work as a story man on “Oilspot and Lipstick,” “Mickey at the Oscars,” “The Prince and the Pauper,” “The Rescuers Down Under” and “Cranium Command.” For the latter, he co-directed the four-minute animated pre-show (with Gary Trousdale) and provided the voice of the “Hypothalamus” character.

After completing “Beauty and the Beast,” Wise served as executive producer for Disney’s live-action comedy-adventure “Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey,” for which he supervised the writing and recording of the animals’ dialogue and was involved in casting the voice talents. He went on to direct (with Gary Trousdale) two additional animated features for Disney: “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” and “Atlantis: The Lost Empire.”

DONALD W. ERNST (Producer) has been involved in production at Disney for over twelve years, most recently producing Disney’s first animated

feature for IMAX[®], “Fantasia/2000.” Among his other distinguished credits, he served as co-producer of the 1992 Disney animated blockbuster “Aladdin.”

A native of Los Angeles, Ernst began his industry career over thirty-five years ago as an editor with an animated commercial company called Telemat. Five years later, in 1961, he joined Columbia Television and began doing sound effects and music editing for such popular programs as “The Donna Reed Show” and “Father Knows Best.” Ernst became a full-fledged editor and worked for two years in that capacity on “Gilligan’s Island” and served another three-year hitch on “Gunsmoke.”

Ernst’s editing career lasted for over three decades and earned him a total of ten Emmy Award nominations and two Emmy statuettes. The Television Academy awarded him their highest honor for his work on the telefilm “Raid on Entebbe” and for an outstanding episode of “Hill Street Blues.”

Segueing from television into feature production, Ernst joined animation producer/director Ralph Bakshi in 1975, and spent the next seven years editing animated features. Among his credits as editor during this period are the motion pictures “The Lord of the Rings,” “Wizards” and “Hey, Good Lookin’.” He also produced an unsold animated pilot for Bakshi called “Hanging Out.” Following this, Ernst returned to editing television shows and went on to receive his two Emmy Awards while working for such major studios as Fox, MGM and Warner Hollywood.

In 1987, Ernst once again moved back into the world of animation as editor of “The Brave Little Toaster.” This led to his joining the Disney studio’s feature animation division in 1989. He went on to edit two featurettes for The Disney-MGM Studios’ Magic of Disney Animation Tour in Florida – “Back to Never Land” and “Michael and Mickey” – and the first Roger Rabbit short, “Tummy Trouble.” This was followed by a stint as producer on two additional projects, “Mickey’s Audition” (for Walt Disney World) and the second Roger Rabbit short, “Roller Coaster Rabbit.” Ernst also served as executive producer for the 1993 Disney live-action feature “Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey.”

JOHN LASSETER (Executive Producer) made motion picture history in 1995 as the director of the first feature-length computer animated film, “Toy Story” (for which he received a special achievement Academy Award[®]) and has gone on to additional acclaim as the director of “A Bug’s Life” (1998) and “Toy Story 2” (1999), and as executive producer of “Monsters, Inc.” (2001). An award-winning director and animator, Lasseter continues to serve as Executive Vice President of Creative for Pixar. He has written and directed a number of short films and television commercials at Pixar, including “Luxo Jr.” (a 1986 Oscar[®] nominee), “Red’s Dream” (1987), “Tin Toy,” which won the 1989 Academy Award[®] for Best Animated Short Film, and “Knickknack” (1989). Among his other big screen credits, Lasseter also designed and animated the stained glass knight in the 1985 Steven Spielberg production “Young Sherlock Holmes.”

Lasseter was born in Hollywood and grew up in Whittier, California. His mother was an art teacher and as early as his freshman year in high school he fell in love with cartoons and the art of animation. While still in high school, he wrote to The Walt Disney Studios about his passion and he began studying art and learning how to draw human and animal figures. At that time, Disney was setting up an animation program at CalArts, an innovative center for studying art, design and photography, and Lasseter became the second student to be accepted into their start-up program. He spent four years at CalArts and both of the animated films he made during that time (“Lady and the Lamp” and “Nitemare”) won Student Academy Awards[®].

During his summer breaks, Lasseter apprenticed at Disney, which led to a full-time position at the Studio’s feature animation department upon his graduation in 1979. During his five-year stint at Disney, he contributed to such films as “The Fox and the Hound” and “Mickey’s Christmas Carol.” Inspired by Disney’s ambitious and innovative film “Tron,” which used computer animation to create its special effects, Lasseter teamed up with fellow animator Glen Keane to create their own experiment. Their thirty-second test, based on Maurice

Sendak's book Where the Wild Things Are, showed how traditional hand-drawn animation could be successfully combined with computerized camera movements and environments.

In 1983, at the invitation of Pixar founder Ed Catmull, Lasseter visited the computer graphics unit of Lucasfilm and was instantly intrigued. Seeing the enormous potential that computer graphics technology had for transforming the craft of animation, he left Disney in 1984 and came to Lucasfilm for what was to be only a one-month stay. One month turned into six and Lasseter soon became an integral and catalytic force at Pixar. Working closely with Pixar's Bill Reeves, Lasseter came up with the idea of bringing believable characterizations to a pair of desk lamps, which became the genesis of "Luxo Jr."

Lasseter is the recipient of an honorary degree from the American Film Institute. He is currently in pre-production on his next project, a car-related feature which he will direct for Pixar.

Lasseter and his wife, Nancy, have five boys ranging in age from four to twenty-one. They live in Northern California.

THE VOICE TALENTS:

DAVEIGH CHASE (Chihiro) lends her personality and voice to the ten-year-old girl who accidentally stumbles into a strange world and becomes the heroine of "Spirited Away." Chase notes, "I loved that Chihiro's personality is like a regular girl my own age, and she shows real emotions that girls show everyday—it was great to be able to add all of that in her voice. Chihiro starts out a little sulky, because she doesn't want to move with her parents to a new town, and when she finds herself lost in a Spirit World, she has to learn how to survive using her own strengths. She learns about herself I think."

On doing a movie that she heard originally in Japanese, Chase adds, "It was different from my previous voice-over roles, because since Chihiro is already animated, I had to match the speed of my voice to the character's lips....And still

sound real. It was a bit tough at times, to fit in all the words and keep it real, but, I did it, and it was definitely fun to do! I love voice acting!! I liked getting a chance to work with director Kirk Wise too, he directed one of my favorite ever Disney movies (Beauty and the Beast)!!”

Chase loves voice acting, and loves seeing the finished project. Chase notes, “This film is beautiful to look at! I love Japanese anime, and I really want to go and explore Japan. ‘Spirited Away’ is an adventure movie, and if you follow it closely there are lessons to be learned, and it’s not just for kids, adults will get into it too!”

Chase recently earned rave notices and a place in the hearts of millions with her vocal performance as the quirky-but-loveable little girl who became guardian to the galaxy’s most dangerous alien in Disney’s smash animated hit “Lilo & Stitch.” Among her other duties for Disney Studios, Chase will provide voices for Disney’s newest animated television series “Fillmore!” which debuts on ABC this fall. She is also currently recording the voice of Lilo for the new animated television series, tentatively titled “The Adventures of Lilo & Stitch.”

Among the actress’ other major credits, she appears as Samara in “Ring,” a remake of the highly rated Japanese horror flick, directed by Gore Verbinski for DreamWorks. Other film credits include “Donnie Darko” directed by Richard Kelly, Miramax’s “Carolina,” WaldoWest’s “Silence,” 20th Century Fox’ “The Rats,” and the Joe Dante directed “R.L. Stine’s Haunted Lighthouse,” in which she played a young ghost named Annabel. “I felt I could fly” she states in regard to being rigged up in a harness and hoisted 40 feet in the air; “That was my favorite part.”

Chase’s numerous television credits include a series regular role in the upcoming fall FOX comedy “Oliver Beene” (DreamWorks/20th Century Fox TV). Chase plays Oliver’s quirky bespectacled friend Joyce. Other guest appearances include “Family Law,” “Touched By An Angel,” “ER,” and “The Practice;” as well as the 1937 period piece “The Lot.”

In addition to her acting talents, Chase is also a passionate singer. At the “2002 American Veteran Awards,” she was honored to be invited to sing the

National Anthem, as well as God Bless America—in which she was joined on-stage by Randy Travis and Michael Bolton. For director Steven Spielberg’s film “A.I.” (DreamWorks), Chase had the opportunity to work in the Warner Bros. Studio with renowned composer John Williams. She was delighted to sing lead with a band, on the main stage, as an opening act for Reba McEntire at the Oregon Jamboree ’99.

Daveigh Chase is charismatic and down-to-earth, she loves the entertainment industry but has a wide variety of outside interests as well; and she loves to spend time with family and friends.

SUZANNE PLESHETTE (Yubaba, Zeniba) gives voices to the evil twin sorceresses in “Spirited Away.” Though twin sisters, these two spellbinders have polar opposite personalities, the short-tempered Yubaba exuding greed and sadism while the more refined Zeniba radiates compassion and good taste. These powerful sorceresses vie for control over the hot springs bathhouse at the center of the strange world in “Spirited Away.”

Pleshette notes, “It was great fun getting to play twins in this film. The interesting thing is that I made some choices before I’d heard the Japanese track, and it turns out that they were the opposite choice of the Japanese actress. She made one sister lighter and the other heavier, and somehow in my mind I decided that they were the reverse.”

Pleshette is delighted to be giving voice to another animated villain (she had previously voiced the evil Zira in “The Lion King II: Simba’s Pride”). The actress notes, “She’s hysterical! The wonderful wart right here, and the hair that never moves, and the silly little clothes. In terms of playing the villain, it seems with my voice that’s all Disney does with me. It’s a good healthy voice. I don’t baby it. Judging from this and ‘Lion King II,’ I don’t think I’m the kind of voice they usually call in for the ingenue.”

Pleshette doesn’t consider this acting job to be less engaging than a non-animated performance. “Acting is acting,” she observes. “I still have to give a full performance, I have to really know who I am and what’s happening emotionally

at the time. The difference is, here I have to time it. The hard thing is hearing Japanese in my ear, and having to lip-synch English words to the mouth that was synched to the Japanese words. Talk about schizophrenic! Playing two people in another language and coordinating all of that. But that's the challenge, and that's what's fun."

The New-York born actress began her career on Broadway in such plays as "Compulsion," "The Cold Wind and the Warm," "The Miracle Worker," and "Special Occasions." She made her film debut in Jerry Lewis' "The Geisha Boy" and went on to star in Alfred Hitchcock's classic shocker "The Birds." Some of her thirty-odd feature roles have included "Nevada Smith," "A Distant Trumpet," "Rome Adventure," "Support Your Local Gunfighter," "Mr. Buddwing," "If It's Tuesday, This Must Be Belgium," "Oh God! Book II," and Disney productions including "The Ugly Dachshund," "The Shaggy D.A.," and "The Adventures of Bullwhip Griffin." Most recently for Disney, Pleshette played Zira, evil maternal leader of the Outlander tribe in "The Lion King II: Simba's Pride."

Pleshette has earned four Emmy nominations and Golden Globe acknowledgement for her roles. A performer who takes on comedic roles as effortlessly as dramatic, she often ends up competing against herself in more than one TV award category at once due to the enormity and variety of her output. While starring as Emily on "The Bob Newhart Show" for six years, for example, she meanwhile played roles in "Bridges to Cross," "Nightingales," "The Boys Are Back," "Suzanne Pleshette Is Maggie Briggs" and "The Single Guy." Among her many TV roles, Pleshette played the ruthless real-life title character of "Leona Helmsley: The Queen of Mean" (1990).

JASON MARSDEN (Haku) is best known to Disney fans for playing Max, son of Goofy, in "A Goofy Movie" (later reprising his role in "An Extremely Goofy Movie" and "House of Mouse"). As cast member on "Spirited Away" he plays Haku, the mysterious shape-shifting youth whom Chihiro is not sure will be her friend or foe in her new world.

“We don’t really know what side Haku is on,” Marsden notes. “He’s sort of helping her but you don’t know what his motives are. Is he being genuine or just trying to earn points with his boss?”

Marsden had to make Haku both younger and older than his own voice. “He’s fourteen so I had to young him up a little, and yet not make him as energetic as most fourteen-year-olds. It’s like he has a very old soul, he rules with quiet authority. He’s very monotone, very down, very stern.”

Doing “Spirited Away” in ADR (Automatic Dialogue Replacement) mode was more challenging than doing a simple dialogue recording, Marsden says. “Here I’m pretty much married to the rhythm of the actor who originally recorded the part. I have to fit their mouth flaps. It’s trying, because you want the performance to come out good, but you want to sync it up, because kids are smart. I used to watch cartoons and if it was a little off I’d pick up on that.”

Marsden’s animated voices have included Tino Tonitini in Disney’s “The Weekenders” (2000), Kovu in “The Lion King II: Simba’s Pride” (1998), Richie in The WB’s “Static Shock” (2002), and Snapper Carr in “Justice League” (2000).

For live action TV, Marsden has starred in such series as “The Munsters Today,” “Eerie Indiana,” “Almost Home” and “Step by Step.” Jason has also recurred on “Boy Meets World,” “Full House,” “Blossom,” and guest starred on Disney Channel’s “Even Stevens,” “Ally McBeal,” “Deep Space Nine” and “Tales From the Crypt.”

In feature films, Marsden played the fifteen-year-old version of Billy Crystal’s comedian character Buddy Young, Jr. in the 1992 comedy “Mr. Saturday Night.” He also played First Mate to Jeff Bridges’ Captain in Ridley Scott’s “White Squall” (1996).

Expect to see Jason this fall, playing young Burt Ward in the CBS bio-pic Movie of the Week “Back to the Batcave: The True Adventures of Adam West and Burt Ward.” Between acting assignments, Marsden writes, directs (DGA), and secretly plots the takeover of Hollywood.

SUSAN EGAN (Lin) plays the tough-minded older girl of the bathhouse, who teaches Chihiro the rules for survival in the harsh new world she finds herself in. Quick-witted and acerbic, Lin can be soft-spoken and deferential one moment, tough and no-nonsense the next.

“This is the first time I’ve been the voice of a character for a feature that’s already been animated,” Egan says. “But I have to say I really enjoyed it. I love the boundaries and the parameters, having to start here and end here and get all these things in the middle. And the animation is beautiful. When I was doing ‘Hercules’ there was no finished film to look at, only some sketches of my character. With this project I was inspired by the final animation, which is just gorgeous.”

Egan isn’t worried about being able to bring her own interpretation to a character that was previously voiced by another actor. “Even though the movie’s been a huge success in Japan with a different woman playing Lin, there’s a lot of room for different choices in the characterization. It’s not just a matter of translating the movie, it’s also translating the culture so Americans can relate to this Japanese sensibility. My Lin is definitely more down and dirty, more streetwise, with lots of humor and sarcasm.

Egan adds, “The themes in this movie are actually similar to those of Disney animated films. There’s a young hero and heroine, a hardship is presented to them, they struggle through, grow up, become courageous. Chihiro is very much like Belle. All these stories come from the mythologies of our cultures. ‘Beauty and the Beast’ is a fairy tale that traveled all through Europe before it came to the United States. Here we’ve got another spirit world, but it’s very foreign to us. I think it’s incredibly refreshing to have our Grimms’ Fairy Tales and Hans Christian Andersen, and then see this and have the same lessons told in such a completely different way.”

Egan provided the voice of Megara in Disney’s “Hercules” (1997), lending her exquisite singing voice and acting talent to the Classical-era Barbara Stanwyck-esque beauty determined to push Hercules’ buttons. Egan also gave a singing voice to the tough and bluesy Angel in Disney’s “Lady and the Tramp

II.” In addition, she has led such films as Fine Line Feature’s “Man of the Century” (1998), the shorts “The Disappearing Girl Trick” (2001) and “Falling In Love” (2002), and the Disney Channel’s latest original, “Gotta Kick It Up” (2002).

Egan won critical acclaim on Broadway as Sally Bowles in “Cabaret,” in “Triumph of Love” and “State Fair,” and most notably as the original Belle in Disney’s “Beauty and the Beast,” garnering Tony and Drama Desk nominations for Best Actress. She has also starred alongside Carol Burnett in “Putting It Together” at the Taper, Tommy Tune in the national tour of “Bye, Bye Birdie,” and reprised her role as Belle for the Los Angeles premiere of “Beauty and the Beast.” In the last three years, Egan has performed in concert with dozens of symphony orchestras across the country including two engagements at the Hollywood Bowl.

On television, Egan just completed two seasons as Mary Campbell on the WB’s “Nikki,” and has appeared on “NYPD Blue,” “Arliiss,” “Party of Five,” “Drew Carey,” “Almost Perfect,” “Partners,” “All My Children,” “Loving,” and “Great Performances: Rodgers and Hart.”

Egan’s debut solo CD of Broadway hits “Susan Egan, So Far…” on JAY records was released in March of 2002 to high critical praise. She can also be heard on over thirty recordings of original cast albums, Broadway collections, and film soundtracks.

Egan was just named Artistic Director of the Orange County High School of the Arts in Santa Ana, California, where she was once a student.

DAVID OGDEN STIERS (Kamaji) is a Disney animation favorite, having delighted audiences with his voices for Cogsworth the Clock in “Beauty and the Beast” (1991), the greedy Governor Ratcliffe in “Pocahontas” (1995), the Archdeacon in “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” (1996), Mr. Harcourt in “Atlantis: The Lost Empire” (2001), and Jumba in “Lilo and Stitch” (2002). In “Spirited Away” Stiers gives voice to Kamaji, the wise old man who tends the furnace at the heart of the sprawling bathhouse.

The versatile actor is well known to the public for his six-year stint on the hit television show "M*A*S*H," in which he portrayed Major Charles Emerson Winchester III. The role earned him two Emmy Award nominations. He subsequently received a third nomination for his work in the NBC miniseries "The First Olympics: Athens 1896."

Born in Peoria, Illinois, Stiers began his acting career with the California Shakespeare Festival and, later, the Actors' Workshop in San Francisco. Following this, he went to New York to study acting at the Juilliard School and with the first graduating class became a charter member of John Houseman's Acting Company. With the latter, he toured in such shows as "The Beggar's Opera," "The Three Sisters," "Measure for Measure" and "The Lower Depths." On Broadway, Stiers appeared in "Ulysses in Night Town" with Zero Mostel, and starred in the hit musical "The Magic Show."

Stiers' feature film debut came in 1970, playing an announcer in George Lucas' "THX 1138." His other credits include "Oh God!," "Magic," "The Man with One Red Shoe," "Better Off Dead," "Another Woman," "The Accidental Tourist," "Doc Hollywood," "Steal Big, Steal Little," "Bad Company," "Mighty Aphrodite," "Jungle2Jungle" and "Everyone Says I Love You." His television work includes such distinguished programs as "North and South," "The Innocents Abroad," "The Day The Bubble Burst," "Mrs. Delafield Wants to Marry," "Anatomy of an Illness," "The Final Days," "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and voiceover roles for Disney's "Teacher's Pet" and "House of Mouse." Stiers recently starred opposite Jim Carrey in "The Majestic" and in Woody Allen's "The Curse of the Jade Scorpion."

In addition to his acting talents, Stiers has conducted symphony orchestras across the country including ensembles in Portland, Maine, San Francisco, San Diego, Honolulu, Los Angeles and Chicago. Stiers is associate conductor of the Yaquina Orchestra, and the Ernest Bloch Music Festival in Newport, Oregon.

LAUREN HOLLY (Chihiro's Mother) plays the mother of Chihiro. Not the comforting type, Chihiro's Mother is a believer in traditional Japanese parenting methods, upholding strict discipline and not coddling or sheltering her little girl.

Holly has built an impressive resume of credits in studio and independent features and critically-acclaimed TV series, most recently assaying the lead in two soon-to-be-released independent features: "Colored Eggs," a drama featuring Alan Arkin and Glenn Headly, and "Pavement," a thriller also starring Robert Patrick.

Born in Bristol, Pennsylvania, the daughter of two college professors, Holly grew up in the upstate town of Geneva. Her childhood was split between experiences of growing up in a rural town and the erudite sophistication of her parents' academic careers. Holly credits her love for acting to her great-grandmother who bred a family tradition of "treading the boards" on the musical theatre stages of Liverpool and London.

Holly spent time traveling in Europe and lived for a year in London, where she studied languages and flute at the famed Sarah Siddons School. At Sarah Lawrence College in New York, Holly majored in literature and economics and had intended to become a lawyer, until the Elite Modeling Agency discovered her as a college freshman. By her sophomore year, her talent landed her a theatrical agent and a series of commercials. During her last year of school, Holly appeared in the Francis Coppola-produced "Seven Minutes in Heaven," and after graduation starred in Michael Mann's "Band of the Hand."

Holly's breakthrough film performance came in the role of Mary Swanson in New Line Cinema's box-office smash "Dumb and Dumber," with Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels. Holly captured the heart of movie-goers as the woman who drove Jim Carrey to follow her cross-country in order to pledge his love.

Holly has been featured in two series from producer David E. Kelly, "Picket Fences" and "Chicago Hope," in which she played plastic surgeon Jeremy Hanlon. Her film credits include Oliver Stone's "Any Given Sunday," Sydney Pollack's "Sabrina," "Turbulence," the indie ensemble "Beautiful Girls," "Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story," "A Smile Like Yours," "The Adventures of Ford

Fairlane,” “Down Periscope,” “Entropy,” and “The Last Producer,” starring and directed by Burt Reynolds. Most recently Holly was seen in the TNT movie “King of Texas,” an adaptation of Shakespeare’s “King Lear,” playing opposite Marcia Gay Harden and Patrick Stewart; Paramount Pictures’ “What Women Want” opposite Mel Gibson and Helen Hunt; and the miniseries “Jackie, Ethel, Joan: Women of Camelot.”

Holly also lists the credits of writer and producer on her diverse resume. She and her father recently started a production company, Hollycould Productions, which is developing several projects.

MICHAEL CHIKLIS (Chihiro’s father) made his return to series television this past season with a starring role on FX’s first original drama series “The Shield,” a critically-acclaimed police drama which will return for a second season in 2003. The role has garnered Chiklis an Emmy nomination, as well as the Television Critics Association Award for Best Drama Actor. In “The Shield” Chiklis stars as Detective Vic Mackey, a rogue cop and leader of the precinct strike force who operates under his own set of rules in his efforts to clean up the streets. For “Spirited Away,” he lends his voice to the character of Chihiro’s father, a get-ahead type businessman and chauvinist pig who finds himself unexpectedly turned into an actual pig.

A natural performer, Chiklis began entertaining his family with celebrity imitations when he was just five years old. As a kid Chiklis appeared in regional theater productions and earned his Equity card when he was just thirteen. He later attended Boston University School of Performing Arts where he received his B.F.A.

Just days after graduation, Chiklis auditioned for the role of John Belushi in the controversial film “Wired,” a role that he would eventually land three years later.

In 1991 Chiklis landed the title role on “The Commish” which aired on ABC from 1991-1996. Chiklis portrayed Tony Scali, the tough but fair-minded police commissioner who was beloved by his fellow officers. The role was based on an

actual New York state police commissioner and originally called for an older man, but Chiklis won the producers over and made the role his own.

Chiklis has also guest starred on such popular series as “Miami Vice,” “L.A. Law,” “Murphy Brown,” and “Seinfeld.” His additional television credits include a role as Chris Woods, the stay-at-home father on the NBC comedy “Daddio,” as well as a starring role as Curly in the ABC movie “The Three Stooges”, executive produced by Mel Gibson.

Chiklis’ theatre roles have included the off-Broadway productions “Return to Sender,” “Tracks,” and “Ersatz Life.” He has also starred on Broadway in the one-man show “Defending the Caveman.” His film credits include “The Tax Man” with Joe Pantoliano, “Do Not Disturb” opposite William Hurt and Jennifer Tilly, “Last Request,” and “Body and Soul.”

The versatile actor lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Michelle, and his daughters Autumn, eight, and Odessa, two.

JOHN RATZENBERGER (Assistant Manager) is the only actor to voice a role in all four Pixar features, and has brought wit and charm to such memorable characters as Hamm the piggy bank in the two “Toy Story” films, the somewhat charred flea-circus ringmaster P.T. Flea in “A Bug’s Life,” and the cuddly charades-loving Yeti in “Monsters, Inc.” His role in “Spirited Away” is the latest in a series of otherworldly characters for Ratzenberger, all of whom deal with their often bizarre surroundings with great aplomb.

Following a hugely successful stint in the role of Cliff Clavin, mailman extraordinaire and trivia king on the hit television show “Cheers,” Ratzenberger has moved on to producing, directing and writing. His company, Fiddlers Bay Productions, is currently producing a series based on the incredible life of the legendary FBI undercover agent Willie Reagan.

Born in Bridgeport and raised in Black Rock, Connecticut, Ratzenberger attended Sacred Heart University where he was an English major, studied karate and was an archery instructor. In his spare time, he joined the drama club where

he made his stage debut in “Summer and Smoke.” He followed up that part with subsequent leading roles in “West Side Story” and “Waiting for Godot.”

Ratzenberger left school after four years, taking a job on an oyster boat until one day he discovered a group of his former college chums waiting at the dock. His pals had tracked him down to replace the lead actor in their production of Murray Schisgal’s comedy “Luv” at the Stowe Playhouse. He stayed on with the playhouse and performed in various one-man shows until the theater burned down (John was out of town at the time). He then took a job as a blacksmith and carpenter in North Wolcott, Vermont. After almost two years there, he took a trip to England for a three-week visit and remained there for ten years.

In London he formed an improvisational theatre group, Sal’s Meat Market, for which he co-wrote, directed and acted, portraying as many as 15 characters per show. After attracting the attention of the British Arts Council, he and a partner were given a grant to tour clubs and theaters throughout Europe.

The actor signed for his first motion picture role in 1974 in “The Ritz,” starring Rita Moreno. He has since appeared in over twenty films including “A Bridge Too Far,” “Yanks,” “Superman,” “Superman II,” “Ragtime,” “The Empire Strikes Back,” “Outland” and “Gandhi.”

On his return to the U.S. in 1981, Ratzenberger became more involved in television series and telefilms such as “Hill Street Blues,” “Code Red,” the NBC television movie “Wedding Bell Blues,” and of course “Cheers.” He has directed various films and TV series including “Sister Sister,” “Madman of the People” and “Evening Shade.”

Ratzenberger is Chairman of Childrenwithdiabetes.com, a nexus for the exchange of information regarding Juvenile Diabetes whose fundraising efforts have secured over \$100 million for disease research. An avid environmentalist, he created Eco-Pak Industries, a manufacturer of environmentally safe packaging materials that are sold worldwide.

He lives in the Los Angeles area with his wife and two children. Ratzenberger is currently a board member of Pepperdine University and on Wednesday nights he plays drums for the Sons of the Desert bagpipe band.

TARA STRONG (The Baby Boh) lends voice to Yubaba's giant baby Boh, who transforms into a mouse and accompanies Chihiro in the strange otherworld she finds herself in. A selfish child who doesn't know his own strength, he loses all his girth, becoming a tiny mouse who helps Chihiro on her quest to save her parents.

Strong began her acting career in Toronto, Canada, when at the age of twelve she performed at the Toronto Yiddish Theater. A novice to the language, she learned her songs phonetically (this proved rather humorous when fans came backstage to give her praise in Yiddish). Strong continued to work in regional theaters until the age of thirteen when she landed a leading role opposite Mr. T. in the production of "T.N.T."

Strong worked on several TV and film projects in Toronto, including the lead role in a sitcom. When she moved to Los Angeles in 1994, Strong immediately booked the lead in National Lampoon's "Senior Trip." This performance was followed by another significant stunt in animation where she was cast as Spot on Disney's "101 Dalmatians." Strong then found more TV/film opportunities in "Sabrina Goes to Rome" and "Sabrina Down Under." In addition, Strong has also appeared in the series "Touched By An Angel," "Third Rock From The Sun" and "Party of Five."

Strong's natural gift for making people laugh through unusual voices became most apparent when she starred as the title character in the animated series "Hello Kitty." This role inaugurated her lifetime career as a performer in over fifty different animated series. Strong currently performs on several critically-acclaimed TV series, including Nickelodeon's "Rugrats" as Baby Dil, Cartoon Network's "The Powerpuff Girls" as Bubbles, Nickelodeon's "The Fairly Odd Parents" as Timmy, Warner Brothers "Batman" as Batgirl, Disney's "Lloyd In Space" as a two-headed monster named Cindy, and Disney's "Proud Family" as Bebe, Cecce and Puff. She has contributed voices to multiple roles on "Kids Room 402," "Family Guy" and "King of the Hill."

In addition to Strong's success on television, her animated features include Warner Bros. "Scooby Doo on Zombie Island," Disney's "The Little Mermaid II" (playing Melody, her dream job) and the upcoming "Tom & Jerry" from Warner Bros.

In addition to maintaining her personal web site, www.tarastrong.com, she and her husband Craig have created www.voicestarz.com to help aspiring voice actors learn about animation voice-overs.

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