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Remember the Titans (2000)

Production Notes

The following was provided to Yahoo! Movies by Walt Disney Pictures:

In Virginia, high school football is king. It is a way of life, an institution revered and venerated, each game celebrated more lavishly than Christmas, each playoff distinguished more grandly than any national holiday. And with such recognition, comes powerful emotions.

In 1971 high school football was everything to the people of Alexandria. But when the local school board was forced to integrate an all black school with an all white school, the very foundation of football's great tradition was put to the test. In what was a potentially volatile situation with far reaching consequences, Herman Boone (DENZEL WASHINGTON) was brought up from South Carolina and hired as head coach of the T.C. Williams High Titans over Bill Yoast (WILL PATTON), a coach with several years seniority and a steadfast following.

Hiring Boone as coach of The Titans was a very precarious situation. However, as he and Yoast learned to work together, they found they had much more than football in common. Both were men of integrity and honor, with a strong work ethic. Although from vastly different backgrounds, these two coaches not only molded a group of angry, unfocused boys into a dynamic, winning team, but helped to guide them into becoming responsible, caring young men. Their determination to work together and win was a triumph of the spirit and brought together a town torn by prejudice and intolerance; their love of the game initiated a lifelong friendship.

Although history might not remember the names of such heroes as Herman Boone and Bill Yoast, it is because of them that Virginia will always "Remember the Titans."

Walt Disney Pictures presents, in association with Jerry Bruckheimer Films, an inspirational motion picture, "Remember the Titans" a Technical Black Production starring Denzel Washington and Will Patton, directed by Boaz Yakin and produced by Jerry Bruckheimer and Chad Oman. The film is written by Gregory Allen Howard. Executive producers are Mike Stenson and Michael Flynn, and distributed by Buena Vista Pictures Distribution.

Jerry Bruckheimer's Technical Black label makes its debut appearance with "Remember the Titans." "This film speaks to the type of stories we hope to develop; smaller films, cutting edge stories that explore issues not generally seen in mainstream filmmaking," says Bruckheimer. "I love all kinds of movies and too often the industry tends to pigeonhole filmmakers. Technical Black is a way to enlarge our scope. It's another way of trying to bring the best entertainment to the screen.

Remember the Titans is a testament of our commitment to that end."

Producer Jerry Bruckheimer was immediately interested in "Remember the Titans" after he first read the script. "Chad Oman brought the story to my attention," Bruckheimer recalls. "He was very enthusiastic, and I responded right away. It's an emotional story and the fact that it's true made it even more important to tell."

Academy Award®-winner Denzel Washington was equally intrigued. He read the script early during the development process and indicated that he would be very interested if the filmmakers ever received a green light. "I just thought it was a fascinating story," the actor says. "The emotional core of the story is with the kids. I was also impressed with Coach Boone as a man, a coach and a father."

Writer Gregory Allen Howard lived for several years in Los Angeles before moving back home to Virginia where he felt the creative environment was more fulfilling. During his first year back, living just outside the D.C. beltway, he noticed the city of Alexandria was uncommonly well integrated. "It's socially integrated in a way I'd never seen," he says. "Movie theatres, restaurants, neighborhoods. I couldn't understand why. Why here and almost nowhere else? I started asking around and I kept hearing about this high school football team. I think it was my barber who first told me about the Titans and these two coaches. I couldn't imagine that a high school team could so effect an entire town. Some say they saved the city."

Howard was immediately captivated by the inspirational story. After convincing Herman Boone he was not part of a practical joke being played on him by fellow teachers at T.C. Williams, Howard began his research in earnest. He spent months-interviewing Boone and Bill Yoast as well as former players, their parents and school personnel. He then spent three years peddling his story to no avail. At first he tried to entice different companies with a treatment and when that failed, Howard decided to sit down and write the script, hoping it would be an easier sell. "When I went in for my first meeting with Jerry and Chad, I was a little embarrassed," he says. "It seemed that every studio in Hollywood had turned me down, why would Jerry Bruckheimer be interested, but he was!"

"The fact that this is a true story really sold me," Bruckheimer affirms. "It's about people learning to get along. We live in this world together, and as it gets more crowded we'd better learn to communicate. It's the key. It's what Boone and Yoast did and what they taught these kids."

"This is not cliché or manipulative," he says. "It's reality. And we're better off looking at the truth of where we are and learn to move forward. The Titans proved it's possible and the effects of their experience are still visible in Alexandria 30 years later."

Director Boaz Yakin found the emotional heart of the movie within the context of sport. "It's a special film about a time when sports actually meant something other than big bucks, glamour and the latest fashion," he says. "It's about a bunch of kids who played football in a more innocent time where what they did actually affected people and changed their lives. As corny as that may sound, it's true. Today people in Alexandria still recognize one of the team captains, Julius Campbell, and what he did for their city. There's something special about that."

Bruckheimer tapped Yakin as his director after seeing his independent film "Fresh." "Boaz was someone we've been pursuing for a number of years," he says. "He's not just a terrific director, he's also a wonderful writer. I think he was the perfect choice to work with this cast. Many of these kids hadn't been in front of the camera before, and Boaz allowed them an enormous amount of latitude. He worked with them on their characterizations and got some superlative performances out of relative newcomers."

"I never really wanted to direct something I hadn't written," admits Yakin. "But being able to work with a bigger budget on a bigger canvas was a great experience for me as a director. Not having the same relationship to the material enabled me to look at the script at little more objectively and utilize my pure directorial skills in a way I hadn't before; I was able to explore the visual side of filmmaking more fully. It was an important learning experience."

The early 70s were tumultuous years in America. Much of the nation was polarized by differences. It was a time of issues, from hot pants, Peter Max art and Glam-rockers like David Bowie to more serious topics like Viet Nam, Kent State and the continuation of the civil rights movement. And in every community in the country, bussing was a much-debated topic. For Alexandria, it was a reality.

When Herman Boone first moved to Alexandria he believed he would be teaching in a newly integrated school system where his job as assistant coach in Triple A football was a step forward in his career after being passed up for promotion after several winning seasons in North Carolina. He had no idea he was soon to be named head coach. He had no idea he was about to change the lives of everyone at T.C. Williams High and in Alexandria.

When the school board named him head coach over Bill Yoast, an established and beloved figure in the community, no one was as surprised as Herman. But he knew he had an enormous job ahead of him. Not so much in the guise of producing adept players because combining the high schools had already given him access to some of the best players in the city, but because he had to find a way to get these young men to play together and function as a team.

"Respect," says Herman Boone. "I always demanded it of myself. I was taught to respect another man's beliefs, his culture, his space. Whatever I might think of him, I must treat him with respect." This mantra became Herman's golden rule and he expected no less of his players.

"That was the genius of Herman," says screenwriter Howard. "For 200 years in America we have tried to do this - let's love each other - thing to solve our racial problems. Herman told his kids that they didn't have to love one another or even like each other, but they did have to respect each other."

All around the locker room are reminders of what it means to be a team, to succeed. Phrases like "Play like a champion," "Reflection is the better part of a champion," "Leave your fear behind" and "Ability involves responsibility" adorn the walls.

Boone's style was rough and tumble. "I'm a screamer, I'm a hugger, I'm a kick-you-in-the-butt type of guy," the real coach says. "Whatever Vince Lombardi was like - you can triple that. I can't stand - mediocre, - on the field or in the classroom. You've got to give it all you have."

"Herman would be the first to tell you, he's a dictator," laughs Denzel Washington. "Fundamentally, he and Coach Yoast were teachers looking to bring out the best in their kids. But their styles were a bit different. Coach Boone was a taskmaster."

"Our character of Boone is certainly based on the real man," affirms Yakin. "He was strongly involved in the civil rights movement and has always been incredibly strong willed. He came in like a bull in a china shop. He broke down everyone's defenses and was able to accomplish what someone more political wouldn't have been able to. He presents a character who refuses to act the way other people expect and that's his power."

Washington easily slipped into his role. "Most of my life I have coached kids," he says. "I grew up in the Boys Club and was a counselor there for many years. I started coaching from the time my son was five and continue to this day.

"This role was fun," Washington continues. "I liked spending time with Herman and watching how he operates. I knew from the time I hit the field, I had to take charge. I made a point not to get too close to the players, to keep it a coach/student relationship even though some of the guys were a little older than high school age. Even if I didn't know exactly what I was doing, I wanted to appear as if I was in charge and they seemed to respond to that. I enjoyed getting the troops together and getting them energized."

While Boone would rant and rave, Bill Yoast was and is a subtle man. Early in his life, Yoast had designs on becoming a preacher, but instead decided to focus on kids and teaching.

"Yoast is one of the more charming, southern patrician sports figures you're likely to meet," says Yakin. "He's this gentle, loving human being who creates an atmosphere of warmth. Working with Herman made for a strong good cop, bad cop situation."

The filmmakers selected Will Patton to portray Bill Yoast. "When you meet the real man, you see their similarities," says Bruckheimer of the actor and his subject.

"There's a quiet strength that both of them have. And there's something about Will, which allows him to transcend an audience's expectations; he has the ability to become anybody, to take on a vastly different persona for any given role. He's like a chameleon. In this piece he's playing someone with a great deal of conviction, but someone who has been passed over for a post he's wanted all his life."

"Yoast considers coaching the best job in the world," says Patton. "And right when

he's about to get an even better job, it suddenly all falls apart. In the script, Yoast keeps silent but by being present and just going along, he's part of the prejudice. Something needs to happen in this town and oddly enough football becomes a metaphor for what's happening within society.

"It happened everywhere," the actor says. "Not just in the south. And when integration came, you had people from both sides saying 'This is not natural. We want to stay here, you want to stay there.' But it had to happen or we wouldn't have gotten anywhere. That's what interested me about this story."

Days before Patton was to begin filming, he was hard at work on another Bruckheimer movie, "Gone in 60 Seconds," which gave him barely a day for rehearsal with Washington before stepping in front of the cameras. However short a period of time the actors were allotted, the chemistry between them is palpable.

"It probably made the dynamic more interesting," says Patton. "We were really getting to know each other on film."

Despite his misgivings, Yoast takes the demotion to assistant coach and stays on at the school. He feels a responsibility to the students as well as to his daughter, Sheryl who is devastated at the prospect of her father not holding the title of head coach.

"The hardest thing I had to do was explain to my eight-year-old daughter why I wasn't the head coach," says Bill Yoast. "The coaches from the other schools that were merging went on to do other things, so we all thought I was a shoe in. And when the school board told me I wasn't getting the job, I was hurt and disappointed. I never felt bad toward Herman; he was always nice to me. He turned the defense over to me. But it was hard to tell Sheryl why I wasn't the head coach anymore. She was very angry. She wrote letters to the school board, the superintendent and the athletic director. She was always with me because she was so young at the time. She had a hard time accepting it."

One of the reasons Yoast committed to the film was his desire to see his daughter, who died in 1996 of heart failure at the age of 34, portrayed on screen. "I wanted her kids to see her," he says. And even though the portrayal takes liberties with her character, he knows the poignant moments were handled with love and care.

Although the real Coach Yoast is the proud father of four daughters, Howard wrote his character with only one precocious offspring. Played by nine-year-old Hayden Panettiere, Sheryl is guileless. Once she overcomes her disappointment, she throws herself into the process of building a winning team. The Titans are as much her domain as her father's and Boone's.

Panettiere became the darling of the set although she knew little to nothing about football and depended on her fellow cast members for support. "I didn't know what the point of football was," she admits. "My mom and I started to watch games and got some books, and the guys on the team would give me ad lib's to say for different scenes. I'd always have to go over to somebody and say, 'Show us what a veer is. Show us what a 44 stack 50 monster is. I had no idea. They taught me about football.'"

The first step in becoming a cohesive team was football camp. From the moment the kids step on the waiting buses, they voluntarily segregate, blacks on one bus, whites on the other. Coach Boone will have none of it and begins the hard fought process of integrating his players. He goes toe to toe with each and every one of them, never letting up in his quest to bring respect to the forefront of their consciousness.

"Football camp is run like boot camp, right from the start," says Washington. "He took this group of kids and deprogrammed them and gave them a purpose. He made them understand that we're all human beings."

"The fact that the camp was in Gettysburg felt very relevant," adds Patton. "This was a key moment for Yoast. He sees that Boone is behaving with honor and dignity, but he doesn't necessarily agree with how Boone does things. He's not exactly pleased at the prospect of awakening these kids in the middle of the night to run several miles, it seems completely insane, but suddenly, there amongst the graves, listening to Boone's beautiful speech, it begins to dawn on him what Boone is trying to do."

"It was definitely a feat on Herman's part to get the boys to play together and to get them to feel like they were part of the same team," says Yakin. "He taught them to get along, that's where they made their steps."

Yoast agrees. "I could have handled the football," he says. "But what Herman did with those boys, nobody else could have done."

Like their characters, the actors also attended football camp to brush up on the basics of the game. "Camp helped because it had everything to do with the acting and nothing to do with it," says Wood Harris who plays Julius Campbell. "It broke down barriers. It was military conditioning - weight lifting, running, hitting. Some cats had never touched a football. They had to learn to hit and run and catch, but not everyone is athletic. Some of us who were, hadn't played football with pads and a helmet. Suddenly you realize you can't breathe with all that stuff on. And then it rains, and you think, I have to play now? It's not like tennis," he laughs.

"We bonded there," Harris continues. "If one person screwed up or did something wrong, 20 people were punished for it. If one person walked when we were supposed to run during our water break, all of us had to do up/downs where you literally drop to the ground and get up as quick as you can, over and over again, as many times as you're instructed. Nobody wanted to do that. Everybody was tired and we all endured it the best we could. We helped each other get through it."

Harris and his counterpart Ryan Hurst who plays defensive linebacker and team captain Gerry Bertier connected in a deeper way as well. The two became fast friends and like many actors in the group spent much of their time together off the set.

"The first day I met Wood, he astounded me," says Hurst. "I told him, 'Dude, you're me, but you're black! If I had some soul, I'd be you,' " he laughs. "We've become the closest of friends."

Hurst describes his character as being a leader among men. "He's a leader throughout the story, but the leadership changes," he explains. "At first Gerry feels an obligation to his white friends, he tries to protect them. Then as the school integrates, he realizes that he was defending other people's fears. He starts taking advantage of the opportunities for friendship the black players offer and unconsciously becomes an example to the rest of the school and the community. When he realizes what's happening, he takes on that responsibility."

Yoast was particularly close to Bertier. When Gerry heard that Yoast was effectively being replaced, he put together a petition to try and keep his coach around. At one point he even refused to be part of the team. But soon after football camp, when Bertier ran into some trouble at school he was surprised to find an unlikely guardian angel by his side, his new teammate Julius "Big Ju" Campbell, the lead defensive end. A black player. It was a moment Bertier never forgot. Over the course of the season, the two bonded and became role models for the rest of the student body.

"Bertier and Campbell were two of the best players," says Howard. "They were like brothers. Julius' father came to think of Gerry as a son."

Many in Alexandria credit the two young men for being the catalyst that would heal a community. Once the integration began, it was unstoppable. The stands, which used to naturally segregate with white families on one side and black on the other, suddenly became a hodgepodge of color. Folks who never gave Coach Boone's family the time of day would stop by and pay their respects. The Titans were a team and so were their fans.

Many of the characters in the film are based on real players, but some are amalgamations of several people. "We had to use composites for obvious reasons," notes Howard. "There were 80 some guys on the team and the coaches never cut anyone. But the essence of who these guys were as human beings is on the page and on the screen."

"We've stuck to the truth of who the coaches were," further explains Yakin. "But we had to take license with the boys because we had to compress all those players into seven or eight leads. We used real names, but some of the characters and their

interaction are essentially made up. There's no way we were going to get each person exactly the way they were at that time. We tried to use what happened to inspire the creation of these characters and tell the story through a number of key roles. I hope we captured the spirit of the real team."

"When you make a film based on a true story, it's important to stay true to the people who lived it," says Bruckheimer. "We want the emotion of the moment to be authentic, but we are creating a dramatization. Changes are never made without a great deal of forethought and care; it's a formidable task."

Some of the other real characters include Lewis Lastik, Jerry Harris (Rev), Ronnie Bass (Sunshine), Petey Jones and Darryl Stanton (Blue). Ray Budds, Alan Bosley as well as Bertier's girlfriend, Emma Hoyt, are fictional personalities.

Casting these characters proved a challenge for the filmmakers. "It's difficult to find actors who are young enough and still have the acting ability necessary for these roles," says Yakin. "We also had to take size into consideration. These guys are football players and had to be big and at least somewhat athletic. Donald Faison who plays Petey, for example, he took a couple of big hits on the field."

"We were looking for honesty," says Bruckheimer. "Actors who could portray characters, but who could also bring themselves to the part, not simply be acting. I think it's easier for kids to do that. They're less inhibited than most adults."

"We were also looking to put together an ensemble," the producer notes. "Obviously we were looking for good actors, but some who hadn't been given a chance yet. I like finding new faces, and this film gave me the opportunity to discover a few more up and comers. Boaz looked at a lot of young hopefuls and settled on this group. I think we'll see them around for a long time."

"Lewie and Rev represent the ability to see past everything," says Yakin. "It's because of their comfort with each other that a sort of domino effect starts to happen and the rest of the boys are able to fall in."

Craig Kirkwood plays Jerry Harris, nicknamed the Reverend or Rev. As the team's quarterback, Rev not only reads the opponents' game and makes instant decisions for his team, he also acts as the conscience of the group.

Kirkwood had played basketball in high school, but he'd never spent time on the football field. "I played street ball as a kid," he says. "But I'd never played anything like this. I was convinced someone had a contract out on all of us during football camp. They really tried to kill us," he jokes.

"I loved the fact that Boaz allowed us to improvise and use the tools we've been given," he says. "And working with Denzel was a rare opportunity. How often do you get the chance to work with a childhood hero?"

Rev's new friend, lineman Lewie Lastik is someone who has grown up with people from all races. He has no problem fitting in with anyone and provides some of the comic relief as the drama unfolds.

"Lewie's from the poor section of town," notes actor Ethan Suplee. "He doesn't really fit in with anybody, so it's actually easier for him to be with everybody, black or white. And he starts off by mocking Coach Boone and his demand for authority, which probably wins everyone over."

"He's really not a good football player," Suplee says of his character. "He just likes to knock people down and have a good time."

Ronnie Bass was another transplant new to Alexandria. As a kid who grew up in a military family, Ronnie came to the team a little late in the game when he transferred to T.C. Williams. A longhaired surfer from California, the black players immediately dubbed him Sunshine.

Kip Pardue plays the handsome quarterback with a killer arm. One of the only actors to have played competitive football, Pardue was a wide receiver at his high school in Atlanta as well as during his college years at Yale University.

"My character is a good football player who's being shopped around," explains Pardue. "He's being recruited to play on the best team in the area, which seems like it might be another school at the beginning of the story. But interestingly enough, he and his father make the decision for him to go to T.C. Williams because of the fact that they are integrating.

"Sunshine is this hippie who doesn't fit in," he continues. "He's different than anything southern people have ever seen, but he's a traditional quarterback who's used to throwing the ball. Unfortunately that doesn't fit into Boone's offense very well."

Donald Faison portrays running back Petey Jones. One of the stars of the hit film "Clueless," Faison drew crowds of fans stopping by between classes at every school location the show utilized. Soon every member of the cast attracted admirers.

"Petey is the sensitive guy in the group," says Faison. "He's also the clown and Boone picks on him. Yoast sees that Petey is emotional and wants to play well and fit in, he helps him to find his strengths. I think Yoast can identify with this kid. "

Defensive lineman Darryl Blue Stanton is played by Earl C. Poitier. "Blue is a jokester," says Poitier. "In every tense situation he's the one who smoothes things over. I like this character because he's just like me. He's not an angry person, he just wants to keep the situation calm."

Like his character, Poitier played defensive tackle in high school and was experienced in dealing with coaches like Herman Boone. "I know what it is to play defensive tackle," he says. "You have to plug up the holes. You stop the run and stop the run again. You go after the quarterback and kill anyone who tries to come past the line of scrimmage. If you miss the block, you run a mile. If you drop the ball, you run a mile. Coach Boone pushes you to the extreme."

Alan Bosley is influenced by his father's prejudice even when he realizes that he wants to be part of the Titans and truly likes his teammates while Ray Budds is the most virulent segregationist.

"Alan's been raised by an incredibly pushy, racist father," says actor Ryan Gosling about defensive back Alan Bosley. "I think if it were left up to him, he would never have played football. He wouldn't really care if someone were black or white. He also has to come to terms with the fact that he's this skinny kid who can't play the game as well as the other kids. But his father pushes him to the end."

"If there's a bad guy in the movie, it's me," says Burgess Jenkins who portrays tight end Ray Budds. "He's a senior, it's his last year on the team and he feels confused and betrayed because he doesn't like the mixing of blacks and whites. When everyone comes together it makes life at school difficult for him, especially when his best friend Bertier and Big Ju become friends. He's the first to voice his disenchantment."

Like Alan and Ray, Bertier's girlfriend Emma Hoyt is not so sure about the idea of integration. She is baffled by Gerry Bertier's newfound friendship with Julius Campbell. Emma is played by newcomer Kate Bosworth. "I don't know that Emma is really a racist," says Bosworth. "She's just naïve and frightened of the whole idea. She's nervous about this new way of life but she does undergo a change, which is why I liked the character so much. I think she symbolizes society evolving."

Each of the characters represents a different point of view. Whether fictional or based on a real person, whether black or white, young or old, their attitudes and reactions exemplify those of many people confronted with change.

"We've lived through a lot since 1971," says Bruckheimer. "I think people have changed. It's my sincerest hope that all of us can embrace our differences and learn from one another. It's an idealistic philosophy, but looking at Boone and Yoast, you see how different they are and yet how much they respect one another. I can't find a better example of who we could be if we only tried."

"There's a Latin expression," says Howard. "Modus Vivendi a method of living a way to get along in life, and respect should be the cornerstone of that. It could solve a lot of problems."

Production began October 3, 1999 in Atlanta, Georgia. Although the producers were warmly received by the city of Alexandria and invited to return to the actual location of the story, the company was bound by budgetary and time constraints. Instead they elected to select a southern city that not only afforded them the proper locations, but also a pool of talent to round out the cast and crew.

"One of the reasons we did not film in Virginia was that we needed to be near an established film community," says executive producer Michael Flynn. "Atlanta is a major commercial center as well as being a production center. There was an acting pool from which to draw and the city's school system was incredibly helpful."

Budgetary concerns actually assisted the filmmakers in creating one of the more fun sequences in the film. "We needed to show how the city changes over time," explains Yakin. "But that would have been prohibitively expensive to do in terms of first unit coverage. I had an idea to shoot something on 16mm as if it's 8mm home movies the boys are taking but we didn't have time for it in our schedule. I asked Ryan Hurst who plays Bertier if he would do it. All of the boys got involved. Ryan did a great job and at the end of the day, it's one of the more delightful scenes in the film. You really are watching their home movies."

Director of photography Philippe Rousselot supervised the cinematography on the film. Like Yakin, he knew little to nothing about football. "I have a fan's basic knowledge," the director says. "When they go that way, it's a touchdown, you have four attempts to make ten yards, stuff like that. But Philippe had never watched a football game in his entire life. I think everyone was a little afraid of us being in charge," he laughs.

"Working with Philippe was the best experience I've ever had," Yakin continues. "He's a marvelous D.P., he not only understands the camera and working with light but he enables you to tell the story the way that you want to tell it. We would get 30-35 set ups a day on a very tight schedule. We would never have been able to do that without Philippe. We also tried to integrate the football into the fabric of the film in a natural way rather than shooting like we were *Wide World of Sports*."

Because Yakin and Rousselot were not savvy in the sport, the football sequences were designed and coordinated by former USFL player Mike Fisher. The filmmakers sent Fisher to Atlanta two months before production began to breakdown the script and create plays for each plot point.

"The script had great football sequences outlined, but we needed to be more specific about it," says Flynn. "Rarely do you follow the score and what's happening moment to moment. The football is there to support and illustrate character issues so we had to create plays for each one of these incidents. Mike spoke with Herman and Bill a couple of times and then came up with 50-60 plays and made these books with each play diagrammed. We'd go over them with Boaz and explain the details and what the play was. Mike really determined what would happen with the football."

When the real coaches visited the actor's football camp, Herman became so enthralled that he threatened to go back to coaching. He even had his hand in running some of the practice sessions and gave the actors some extras pointers during production.

One of the most difficult aspects of the football was finding extras to round out the Titan team and to act as their opponents. "We were shooting right in the middle of football season," explains Fisher. "Frankly, it was difficult to find the right mix of guys. We had to do several radio promotions to find players and many of them were older than high school age, but we needed the experience."

Finding extras was always a challenge for the filmmakers. Because school was in session and almost half the scenes in the film necessitated a crowded hallway, locker room, stadium, or outdoor mob scene, the filmmakers were constantly on the lookout for available kids.

"This was an extras nightmare," says Yakin only half-joking. "Every day I was thankful

to get through directing so many people, and then I'd realize the next day was the riot outside the school with 300 extras. Half way through the film I was praying to shoot two people in a small room talking!"

The extras also helped to establish the 1970s period of the film. "There are three areas that change with time," declares executive producer Flynn. "Hair, clothes and cars. These change when other things stay the same. We had to broom out parking meters and certain outdoor signs that have crept in over time, but we were vigilant about that stuff."

Bruckheimer and Yakin credit production designer Deborah Evans with not only setting the period design, but also giving the sets life and color. "From the very beginning our approach was to give the film a classic feel," says Yakin. "It's easy to get into 70s kitsch but we tried to make it timeless while still being true to the period. We wanted the story to draw the viewer in so that it could be a story that was happening now."

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