

joesomebody

Everybody wants to be somebody and Joe Scheffer (TIM ALLEN) is no exception. But Joe feels like he's a nobody. A talented video specialist at a Minneapolis pharmaceutical company, he regularly has been passed over for a long-promised promotion. And Joe is faring no better in his personal life, as he still pines for ex-wife Callie (KELLY LYNCH).

Things for Joe go from "ordinary" to worse when he endures the cruelest cut of all – the loss of his cherished and hard earned personal parking space – at the hands of the office bully Mark McKinney (PATRICK WARBURTON), who humiliates Joe in front of his precocious daughter Natalie (HAYDEN PANETTIERE).

The incident spurs Joe to embark on a quest for redemption ... or at the very least a rematch with Mark. The first step: martial arts instruction from Chuck Scarett (JIM BELUSHI), a washed up "B" action star who ultimately gives Joe much more than karate lessons.

Next: a makeover that includes a new hairstyle and wardrobe. Joe's plans reap unexpected dividends: As news spreads of the rematch, Joe makes an unexpected ascent up the corporate ladder. He finds this newfound promotion, popularity and corporate perks intoxicating (a bonus is Callie's awakening interest in Joe), but daughter Natalie makes it clear she liked her dad the way he was, not this new and improved version.

Also unimpressed with Joe's transformation is plucky "wellness coordinator" Meg Harper (JULIE BOWEN), to whom Joe has been making tentative romantic overtures. As the showdown with the once-feared colleague nears, Joe is determined to show Meg, Natalie – everybody – that this one-time nobody is now a somebody to be reckoned with.

JOE SOMEBODY is directed by John Pasquin ("The Santa Clause"), written by John Scott Shepherd, produced by Arnold Kopelson, Anne Kopelson, Matthew Gross, Ken Atchity and Brian Reilly and executive produced by Arnon Milchan, Chi-Li Wong and William W. Wilson, III.

Joining Tim Allen, Julie Bowen, Kelly Lynch, Hayden Panettiere in the principal

cast is Greg Germann (“Ally McBeal”) as Jeremy, a swarmy, zipped-up, buttoned-down member of the white-collar corps.

The production team includes director of photography Daryn Okada (“Dr. Dolittle 2”); production designer Jackson De Govia (“The Score,” “Bowfinger”); editor David Finfer (“Simon Birch,” “Romy and Michele’s High School Reunion”) and composer George S. Clinton (“Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery,” “Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me”).

Prior to joining the ranks of noted Hollywood screenwriters, JOE SOMEBODY scribe John Scott Shepherd toiled in advertising as a video and film producer. His experiences inspired him to write about those who work, often anonymously and without benefit of fame or television cameras, in corporate America. “It occurred to me,” Shepherd recalls, “that we all expect to be special, if not famous.”

Building upon this premise, Shepherd created a story of a corporate Everyman whom life seems to have passed by. The screenplay’s universal themes, brought out with warmth, humor and emotion, caught the attention of Kopelson Entertainment executive Matthew Gross, who discovered the script while working on a television pilot with Shepherd. “I read the screenplay from a laptop computer in a hotel room,” Gross relates, “and knew immediately I had to make this film. I was touched by its themes of the story, including acceptance, heroism, second chances, pride, and at its core, love.”

Gross’ passion for the script was contagious, spreading to his bosses, Arnold and Anne Kopelson. The Kopelsons, hailed for their intelligent thrillers and action movies like “Platoon,” “The Fugitive,” “Seven,” and “Don’t Say A Word,” threw their full support behind Gross’ commitment to JOE SOMEBODY.

“Arnold, Anne and I appreciated the script’s notion that everybody wants to be somebody, and that these needs follow us from childhood to marriage and into the workplace,” Gross relates. “John Scott Shepherd created richly developed characters, which by the end of the movie, have all transitioned into surprising places.”

The surprises center around Joe Scheffer’s journey, told through Shepherd’s deft balance of comedy and drama, and through meticulous attention to touching and funny foibles of humanity. His story pushes Joe to a strong emotional reality.

“Comedy often comes out of how we cope with time and tragedy,” notes Shepherd.

“Finding the funny moments as characters rebuild is more real for me than just injected moments of comedy. Humor comes out of character. Hopefully the audiences will identify and say, ‘I’ve been through that,’ and laugh at the same time.”

JOE SOMEBODY’s interweaving of comedy and drama drew the attention of Tim Allen, whose career stretches from stand-up to the beloved television series “Home Improvement” to the motion picture comedy hits “The Santa Clause” and “Galaxy Quest.” Allen had been seeking something more than a broad comedy, and realized that JOE SOMEBODY had the elements to stretch his comedic and dramatic talents. “The story has a lot of heart to it, and an emotion that I really love,” Allen notes. “It’s like a good, full meal, with wonderful character arcs and a reality that is universal.

“The film’s about more than second chances,” he continues. “It deals also with third, fourth and fifth chances; it’s about being awake, looking at everything new again, being proactive and moving forward.”

According to producer Brian Reilly, Tim Allen’s partner, JOE SOMEBODY is the perfect fit for the actor. “When Tim is in a story, he will always bring out the comedy,” says Reilly. “That is a given. With JOE SOMEBODY, I saw the opportunity to make a film that would resonate both dramatically and comedically. As a bonus, some of the most surprising and memorable bits of comedy were improvised by Tim on the set.”

John Scott Shepherd agrees that JOE SOMEBODY and Tim Allen make a formidable pairing. “To America, Tim Allen is Joe Somebody,” says Shepherd. “He’s an accessible guy whose imperfections are relatable to most people. I watched him in ‘Galaxy Quest’ and saw the soul he revealed during the brief opportunities he was given. This is an opportunity for Tim to explore more of that.”

“Audiences are going to be surprised after seeing Tim Allen in this movie,” adds producer Matthew Gross. “He’s not only a romantic lead, he expresses incredible empathy for this character. Tim is a gifted comedian whose persona embodies the average guy whom everybody wants to root for. There’s something about him in all of us.”

After Allen came aboard JOE SOMEBODY, he, the producers and studio executives began the search for a director. Having collaborated with director John

Pasquin on episodes of “Home Improvement” and on “The Santa Clause” and “Jungle2Jungle,” Allen and producer Brian Reilly knew that the noted filmmaker could capture JOE SOMEBODY’s heart and emotion, as well as its humor. Reilly was so determined to involve Pasquin, he went to the director’s house armed with the script. “I’d made two films with Tim and John,” says Reilly, “and wanted nothing more than to do it again. The JOE SOMEBODY script had the potential to be a truly memorable movie, and I wanted the best. So I went to Pasquin.”

After reading the script and discussing it at length with Allen, Reilly and studio brass, Pasquin agreed to take the helm. “I thought the film would be a great challenge for Tim and for me to define the right tone that would accept both comedy and drama,” he explains. Like Allen, Pasquin appreciated the character arcs and complexities. “JOE SOMEBODY is a coming-of-age story,” Pasquin continues. “Over the course of the movie, people gain dimension and become more and more rounded. Every character has a journey.”

The journey of Joe Scheffer – his epiphany – affects the people around him. Most of the characters in Joe’s world are in transition and facing the consequences of the paths they have chosen. The filmmakers populated JOE SOMEBODY with a diverse cast chosen for their individuality.

Julie Bowen portrays a human resources manager – or as she terms it, “wellness coordinator” – Meg Harper. The filmmakers conducted a major search to find someone fresh, strong and soulful who was able to stand up to Tim Allen’s energy and inventiveness. They found exactly that with Julie Bowen, whose comedy and drama skills are seen weekly in the popular television series “Ed.”

Bowen enjoyed working opposite Allen, as well as exploring some of Meg’s more subtle traits. “Meg isn’t exactly whom she appears to be,” says Bowen. “She’s trying to fit in somewhere she doesn’t really belong and finds a kindred spirit in Joe. Neither one of them really can find their place within the big, shiny corporate structure.”

Kelly Lynch takes on the role of another woman in Joe’s life: ex-wife Callie, for whom Joe still carries a torch. Minnesota native Lynch recognized her character immediately. “I play a woman who’s still a girl,” she explains. “Callie believes that if everyone’s not looking at her, she’s probably not in the room and doesn’t exist. She’s a

teenager, unable to mother her daughter, but by the end, my character has developed maturity without losing her humor.”

Screenwriter John Scott Shepherd’s twelve-year-old daughter inspired the role of Joe’s offspring, Natalie. “Natalie, like my own kid, could easily be the caretaker of a family,” says Shepherd. “Natalie is articulate, bright and almost the adult to her parents who are not dealing with their life as well as she would like. Natalie often reminds her father of what’s really important.”

The role called for a young girl who was smart, tough and vulnerable. “Although my daughter is the physical opposite of Hayden, she, like the character Natalie, is twelve going on eighteen. Sometimes it’s easy to forget she’s a kid,” laughs Shepherd.

Hayden Panettiere, who co-starred in “Remember The Titans,” and her mom flew to Minneapolis from New York to read for the part. “Hayden was a wonderful find for us,” says Pasquin. “We needed an ‘old soul’ in a young body to represent the conscience of the movie. After her audition, we all knew we had found our Natalie.”

As filming progressed, the filmmakers were delighted that the chemistry between the actors was working on all cylinders – especially with Jim Belushi and Tim Allen. Belushi takes on the role of Chuck Scarett, a B-movie star turned martial arts teacher. Armed with an edgy sense of humor, as well as some powerful martial moves, Scarett proves to be one of Belushi’s most memorable roles.

Belushi, who has experience both in action films and martial arts, easily connected to the character. “I modeled Chuck after a lot of teachers who helped me through my career,” Belushi states. “Karate and teaching both share a sense of honor, and helping people is often a spiritual experience. Chuck has accepted himself for who he is, where he is, and he likes it. I think we all strive for that sense of peace and balance. He brings that to the film and, in his way, shares it with Joe. Chuck teaches Joe, both spiritually and dramatically, to pick his battles, and in the end Joe learns the only one really worth fighting for is emotional connection.” The result is an unconventional and funny friendship that yields surprising results.

Chuck’s on-screen sparring with Joe led to an off-screen bonding between the actors. “Tim’s a brilliant comic actor who really focuses in the moment, always looking for a way to make the scene better,” Belushi says. “The scenes I like the most are when

Tim and I are mixing it up in the physical action. That brought us into the moment and was where we bonded.”

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Despite the intimacy of JOE SOMEBODY’s story and characters, the production was firmly placed inside corporate America. Shot in fifty-four days on more than thirty-one locations, cast and crew divided time equally between the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Filmmakers took advantage of the large corporate infrastructure of Minneapolis, birthplace to many highly successful corporations, including fourteen Fortune 500 companies, to establish the center of Joe’s world.

“Minneapolis is a major player in this film, which can be seen in the cast, the background players and the locations,” says producer Matthew Gross. “It was written for the city.” John Scott Shepherd spent many years, often working in the Twin Cities, writing/producing/directing commercials, documentaries and corporate videos. He became familiar with the area and knows the inside workings of this milieu.

Joe’s workplace was set at Waterford Towers in suburban Plymouth, Minnesota. The production temporarily erected a huge sign at the entrance to the campus emblazoned with “Starke Worldwide Pharmaceutical.” Production designer Jackson De Govia transformed the entire fourth floor of the looming New Age office building into a drop ceiling corporate environment, which serves as a community to its employees.

“Most people today live the majority of their lives at work,” says De Govia. “Corporations now offer an entire community of services and amenities within the workplace which are basically provided to keep the workers happy and satisfied and working for less money. So, Starke, basically became a second home to its employees.”

The locations in JOE SOMEBODY inform the story, providing a veracity and subtext to each scene. The filmmakers took full advantage of the many layers of the Twin Cities, from the historic theater district on the banks of the Mississippi River to Nicollet Mall, a twelve-block-long shopping area located in the retail center of Minneapolis, which graciously closed down an entire block for a day of filming.

The Minneapolis locations help define Joe’s world, as does the film’s carefully planned costume design. Costume designer Lou Eyrich faced some of the film’s greatest

stylistic challenges, in creating a wardrobe to reflect the internal journey of almost every principal.

Tim Allen was a generous collaborator in choosing the wardrobe to mirror each portion of Joe's transformation. "Tim gave us some clear guidelines, in terms of the color and look," says Eyrich. "The Joe we meet early in the film we called the 'invisible Joe,' whom we clad in earth tones, khakis, and cream colored shirts. The more he becomes noticed by his colleagues, the more color creeps in to his wardrobe. As his rise to corporate fame continues, he slicks back his hair, and begins wearing black trench coats, dark suits and flashy silver ties."

Joe's sartorial transformations serve as a comic counterpoint to his ultimate realization that major changes in life come from within. Tim Allen uses boxing lingo to sum up his character's journey. "Joe's been on his heels and on the ropes for a while," the actor explains. "Once he leans forward – moves forward – he sees what's possible in life."

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