

CATCH THAT KID

They are specialists in their fields: a rock climber, a computer genius, a mechanical whiz.

Their task: To rob one of the world's most impenetrable banks.

Their plan: Foolproof.

Their methods: Ingenious

And they're only twelve years old.

Meet Maddy, Gus, and Austin: Three kids on a mission...without permission.

CATCH THAT KID is an adventure film filled with action and fun, about a 12-year old girl who, with the help of two friends, robs the state-of-the-art bank, in order to acquire the cash needed for a costly operation to save her ailing father. During the heist, the kids overcome high-tech security systems, guard dogs, and a nasty security chief to get to a bank vault suspended 100-feet above ground.

With all its high-tech action and adventure, CATCH THAT KID is grounded in some realistic situations and challenges. "If you look at other films, they'll utilize really fantastic, adventurous, almost James Bondian gadgets and toys, and although that temptation was there initially, we felt very strongly that it just wasn't right for this movie," says director Bart Freundlich. "Of course kids couldn't break into a high security bank, but many of the things they pull off, from the stunts to the climbing and the go-cart racing are fun and very real, like things that kids could really do."

"We think it's cool that three kids are putting one over on adults," says screenwriter Michael Brandt. "Kids driving go-carts and trying to help out the main girl's dad...What kid wouldn't love to have an adventure like this?"

Producer Andrew Lazar feels audiences will really go for a ride. "In the end, CATCH THAT KID is about wish fulfillment," he says. "People like to go to movies and be taken away and pretend like they're somebody that they're not. In this movie, kids get to see themselves, rather than George Clooney and Brad Pitt, as the guys who

can rob a bank. You're watching kids do it; kids who are smart enough to outsmart grownups."

CATCH THAT KID stars Kristen Stewart, along with newcomers Max Thieriot and Corbin Bleu as her young accomplices. The film also stars Jennifer Beals, Sam Robards, John Carroll Lynch and James Le Gros.

The film is directed by Bart Freundlich, from a screenplay by Michael Brandt & Derek Haas, based on the film "Klatretøsen," written by Nicolaj Arcel, Hans Fabian Wullenweber and Erlend Loe. CATCH THAT KID is produced by Andrew Lazar and executive produced by Damien Saccani, James Dodson, and Mikkell Bondesen.

During Christmas of 2001, Mikkell Bondesen, the Danish-born, Los Angeles-based executive producer of CATCH THAT KID, was on vacation with his wife in his native Copenhagen when he saw a poster for a Danish film, "Klatretøsen," a heist adventure featuring three pre-teens. "I was so intrigued by the images on the poster that I called the film's producer to get an early screening," Bondesen recalls. After a showing, Bondesen wasted no time securing the American remake rights.

Indeed, Bondesen's belief in the film's commercial and critical appeal was validated upon its release in Denmark in early 2002, when "Klatretøsen" became one of the country's most successful and beloved films. It won the prestigious Glass Bear Special Mention Award at the 2002 Berlin International Film Festival.

Bondesen brought the film to Damien Saccani, an executive with producer Andrew Lazar's Mad Chance Productions, who shared Bondesen's enthusiasm for the project. "'Klatretøsen' is an incredibly entertaining sweet family movie with a lot of action and a little bit of an edge," says Saccani. "It also had a little bit of bite and a lot of heart."

Andrew Lazar realized that the elements that made the film such a hit in Denmark – action, adventure, heart and edge – would translate well to an American production of the story. After Twentieth Century Fox obtained the rights to produce the movie that would become CATCH THAT KID, screenwriting partners Michael Brandt & Derek Haas, who had just penned "2 Fast 2 Furious," were brought in to complete a shooting

script. Bart Freundlich, who directed the acclaimed independent dramas “The Myth of Fingerprints” and “World Traveler,” then came aboard to direct.

Faithful to the basic storyline of the original film, *CATCH THAT KID* focuses on 12-year-old Maddy (Kristen Stewart), whose father (Sam Robards), an ex-mountain climber and now the owner of a go-cart track, becomes incapacitated with a spine injury and needs costly surgery. To secure money for an operation for her critically ill father, Maddy lures her two male friends – computer whiz Austin (Corbin Bleu) and mechanically-minded Gus (Max Thieriot) – to rob an impregnable safe designed by her mother (Jennifer Beals). With Maddy as mastermind, the three young friends use their formidable skills to fulfill their impossible mission.

Bart Freundlich was attracted to the emotional center of the story. “At its heart *CATCH THAT KID* is about what kids will do for their parents – that they’ll do anything to be close to them and save them,” he says. “It’s a kind of morality tale, because they do this thing that’s clearly illegal, but they do it for all the right reasons. They take exactly what they need and no more. We were very careful about telling that part of the story.”

“Maddy is kind of like a Robin Hood, stealing from a rich bank for the benefit of her dad,” says producer Andrew Lazar. “The way that kids’ minds work, they don’t think of the ramifications,” adds co-screenwriter Michael Brandt. “They just think that if they get the money and get Maddy’s father the operation, everything’s going to be fine. They don’t care about the money itself; they only want to save Maddy’s father.”

“And along the way, they have to face attack dogs, a security guard who’s half out of his mind, a wall they have to climb to get up to the safe, and everything that could possibly go wrong,” adds co-screenwriter Derek Haas. “And to throw one final wrench into it, they have to take their two year old brother along for the ride.”

Oddly enough, Freundlich’s “indie sensibility” was an asset to *CATCH THAT KID*, a big studio film with plenty of action and scale. “Having done two dramatic films, Bart was able to bring more out of the characters and their relationships,” says Saccani.

In classic heist adventures, it takes highly-trained specialists to pull off the task at hand. But in *CATCH THAT KID*, the perpetrators aren’t even old enough to drive. “Our young heroes use all of the things that people trust and love about kids to dupe grownups into giving them information they need,” says Freundlich. “They divide up the

jobs and do everything from going on-line to buy climbing equipment to ‘borrowing’ a model of the bank from an architect’s office and ingratiating themselves with the right contacts at the bank.”

Kristen Stewart, who starred as Jodie Foster’s daughter in “Panic Room,” plays Maddy Phillips, also known as “Climber Girl,” the mastermind of the heist. The athletic Stewart, who enjoys many sports, especially surfing, used her physical skills in scenes that had her climbing a water tower and spearheading the complicated bank heist.

“Kristen is a talented actor who could handle the physical challenges of the role,” says Andrew Lazar. “You have to buy that she’s a ‘climber girl,’ and that she’s tough and very intelligent. Part of the fun is also that she gets to play the two boys off against one another.”

“Maddy has to manage both of her friends as well as her baby brother Max,” says Freundlich. “Since her character is only 12 years old, she is just beginning to realize her power as a woman over these guys who are both in love with her. She realizes that they’ll do anything for her. So she uses that power and tells them both exactly what they want to hear. And there’s a lot of comedy because of that.”

Newcomer Max Thieriot plays Gus, a go-cart mechanic who works for his nasty older brother’s racing team at a popular go-cart track. A whiz with mechanics, the young “go-cart Mozart” is responsible for securing the bank’s architectural plans and rigging the go-carts for the gang’s daring getaway.

CATCH THAT KID’s rapid-fire action drew Thieriot to the project. “It just sounded like a really cool thing to do,” says the young actor, himself an amateur go-cart racer in his hometown racing circuit. “Especially with all the action: robbing banks, the security dogs, all the running. I like speed, so it’s all good.”

Gus has a close friendship with Austin, who is also a rival in his affection for Maddy. Corbin Bleu plays Austin, a budding filmmaker and computer genius whose job is to hack into the bank’s mainframe computer to control the security cameras, and to somehow tame the vicious Rottweilers that patrol the bank.

“Austin is pretty close to me,” Bleu says. “He’s kind of a bookworm and a really computer-savvy kind of guy. He also loves his camera. Using his computer genius and

knowledge of cameras, he's the one who must take control of the bank's security cameras to help Maddy and Gus make it through."

Jennifer Beals plays Maddy's mother, Molly Phillips, the creator of the high security bank vault her daughter is determined to crack. Molly is a workaholic who doesn't get to spend much time with Maddy. Molly's life undergoes further upheaval when her husband succumbs to a spinal ailment, leaving her to care for her kids and to try to find the money to pay for his operation. "Jennifer carries a lot of the emotion of the story," says Damien Saccani.

Veteran character actor Sam Robards plays Sam Phillips, Maddy's father, who runs the go-cart center frequented by his daughter and her friends. "Tom was a mountain climber who had an accident, and now, about ten years later, he suffers from severe nerve damage and is bedridden in a hospital, unable to move," says Robards. "He needs an operation, but doesn't have the money for it, so his daughter Maddy decides that she and her friends are going to rob a bank and then – I know this hard to believe – hijinks ensue."

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The former Bank of America building on Spring Street in downtown Los Angeles became the fictional Harderbach Financial Bank, which houses a foolproof bank vault that hovers 100 feet above the surface of the safe room. The monolithic building, a cornerstone of L.A.'s old Financial District, has polished marble walls and floors, ornate vaulted ceilings, and its original brass teller cages.

"We knew that the bank had to be visually impressive," says production designer Tom Meyer. "We didn't want this to be your typical bank branch; this had to be as ornate and impressive as Grand Central Station. So we scouted the biggest lobby we could find, with shafts of light streaming through. In this environment, Maddy would feel as small as a kid could feel in an adult environment and just be overwhelmed. I wanted to get that unreal proportion, with grand hallways with large arches and bustling activity."

Freundlich worked with director of photography Julio Macat to give the bank heist scenes a polished, saturated and modern look. “For the heist scenes we wanted to convey the look of a big slick movie – high tech all the way, with luster,” says Macat.

Upon completion of two weeks of location filming, the production moved to an industrial business complex in Santa Clarita, California, north of Los Angeles. The filmmakers converted two large warehouses into soundstages that housed the film’s interior sets, such as bank offices, safe room, security room and the hospital where Tom Phillips awaits surgery.

Outside the stages, Meyer and his team transformed a large, vacant parking lot into the Phillips Karting Center, a go-cart track that serves as the kids’ hang-out and inspiration for the bank heist.

After scouting several go-cart tracks in Southern California, the filmmakers decided to build their own. Six thousand hours of work, a thousand bales of hay, a couple thousand tires, and lots of paint, flags, and containers later, the filmmakers had their track.

“We started with a black asphalt parking lot and then figured out a way to help accentuate the action, go-cart speeds and dynamics,” says Meyer. “We wanted the go-cart scenes to feel like a video game where you’re actually inside the car and get a sense of tremendous speed.”

For the heist getaway scenes, Meyer designed go-carts that were slick, stealthy and quiet. “We cut out holes in the bottom where we put in neon lights so the go-carts seem to float as they race down the street,” he says. “We also put a huge rear jack fin on the back of Gus’s nitro-injected go-cart to accommodate some of the stunts and a new engine and muffler configuration.”

Stunt coordinator Gary Paul and his team trained the actors for the go-cart sequences. Though the actors performed some of the driving sequences, Paul brought in an experienced team of professional go-cart racers for the faster, more dangerous sequences.

Three elaborate camera rigs were used for the go-cart racing scenes: motorcycle side cars, a go-cart mounted with a special camera to reduce vibration, and a four-wheel quad-runner.

For the film's climax, second unit director Mic Rogers, along with Gary Paul's stunt drivers, choreographed a complex and action-packed chase sequence through the streets of downtown Los Angeles. The scene, which was filmed over several nights, incorporated about 20 stunt professionals, including the actor's stunt doubles, a dozen stunt drivers and a helicopter pilot.

In the CATCH THAT KID, Santa Clarita production facility, on a hill right above the go-track, is a large water tower where Maddy practices her climbing skills. For Kristen Stewart, the climbing and other physical rigors that came with the role were a fun challenge. Prior to filming, she spent two weeks training with Lisa Coleman, a co-founder and instructor at Yo! Basecamp, a Northern California rock climbing facility. Discovered by stunt coordinator Gary Paul, the 90-pound professional rock climber also doubled for Stewart for some of the more dangerous climbing sequences.

"Lisa's not a stunt person, she's an actual climber," Stewart says. "It was really cool because she took me down to a rock studio to help me with the climbing scenes and to make them look more realistic. Trust me, it's a lot harder than you think. You have to have major strength."

Maddy's years of climbing experience come in handy when she attempts to scale the walls of a high-tech bank safe room to reach a vault suspended high in the air above. Meyer's safe room set in Santa Clarita was actually 40 feet tall but through the use of CGI set extensions, it will appear 120 feet tall, with the vault hovering 100 feet above ground.

Meyer's biggest challenge was creating the bank's complex safe room and vault. He wanted to incorporate elements from the old world and blend them into the new. "As you're proceeding through the old bank you start to see elements that get a little more futuristic, become a little more out of the ordinary, and a little more unbelievable," he says. "The ultimate challenge is to get through the entire building, past all the security monitors, through the mazes, the locked doors and the corridors that finally lead you to the safe. And just when you think it can't get any bigger, it gets bigger. Just when you think it can't get any scarier and complicated, it does."

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