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PICTURES**



EL CORTEZ

COME TO A PLACE WHERE SECRETS LIE

Preliminary Press Information

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Press Contact:

Barbara Alexander—NY
Bander Group
Public Relations
2 Stuyvesant Oval #10C
New York, NY 10009
(tel) 212-253-7440
Bander@nyc.rr.com

David Roberson—LA
Roberson Public Relations, Inc.
8899 Beverly Blvd., Suite 616
West Hollywood, CA 90048
(tel) 310-860-9150
(fax) 310-860-9233
(cell) 310-925-8786
david@robersonpr.com

212 26th ST. #161 SANTA MONICA, CA 90402 TEL (310) 260-2333 FAX (310) 260-2337
FOR ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT, GO TO WWW.ELCORTEZTHEMOVIE.COM

EL CORTEZ

Cast

Manny.....LOU DIAMOND PHILLIPS
Popcorn.....BRUCE WEITZ
Jack.....GLENN PLUMMER
Theda.....TRACY MIDDENDORF
Arnie.....JAMES MCDANIEL
Russo.....PETER ONORATI
Prison Doctor.....SHELLEY MALIL
Prison Guard.....DAVID JOHANN
Cecile.....ROBIN ADAIR
Waitress.....KATHLEEN LAGUE
Intruder.....JOSEPH GRIFFIN
Day Clerk.....DEBORAH CRESSWELL
Roy Morrison.....EDOARDO BALLERINI

Crew

Director & Producer.....STEPHEN PURVIS
Writer.....CHRIS HADDOCK
Producer.....DENNIS BISHOP
Executive Producer.....J.B. ROBERTS
STEPHEN HUNTER FLICK
Line Producer.....KAREN LIN
Cinematographer.....ROBERT F. SMITH
Editor.....BOB ALLEN
Casting Directors.....MARA CASEY
JAMI RUDOFKY
Production Designer.....MEGHAN C. ROGERS
Art Director.....ASH YEGAHAGI
Costume Designer.....LAURA FLETT
Production Companies.....BRAZOS PICTURES
THREE-FOUR PRODUCTIONS LLC

EL CORTEZ

Synopsis

EL CORTEZ is the story of an autistic man who attempts to start a new life after his incarceration.

After five years in a prison for the criminally insane, Manny (Lou Diamond Phillips) returns to Reno. He moves into a motel and takes a job as a clerk at the Hotel El Cortez. He is befriended by Popcorn (Bruce Weitz), a crippled prospector who seeks his help to persuade Russo (Peter Onorati), a wealthy gambler, to invest in Popcorn's gold mine. But Manny cannot escape his past. He is hounded by Arnie (James McDaniel), the vengeful cop who arrested him. Arnie leans on Manny to keep tabs on Jack (Glenn Plummer), a dealer who is staying at the hotel. In the meantime Jack's girlfriend, Theda (Tracy Middendorf), learns about the gold mine and starts putting the moves on Manny. Soon Manny is caught in a labyrinth that leads to a murderous triple cross.

About the Production

EL CORTEZ is Stephen Purvis's second feature film as a director. The movie was filmed from an original screenplay by the award-winning television writer Chris Haddock (*Da Vinci's Inquest, The Handler*). This is Haddock's first feature film.

As a long-time fan of *film noir*, when Purvis first read Chris's script (a.k.a. *Three for the Devil*) in 1999, he immediately fell in love with this gem of twisted "Reno noir," and set out to bring it to the silver screen. In his quest for financing, Purvis courted a variety of sources from the Texas government, to real estate speculators, to the William Morris Independents, to Canadian entities. It proved to be a long quest.

Finally, to help realize his goal, he filmed a seventeen-minute condensed version of *Three for the Devil* as the short film *Gold Fever*. Through screenings of this award-winning short, he was able to raise the money via a combination of foreign pre-sales and private investors. Then in 2004, he met Lou Diamond Phillips who knew Chris Haddock's work through his CBS series *The Handler*.

Lou Diamond Phillips loved the script, and immediately committed to play Manny. As a spokesperson for ACT (Autism Care & Treatment Today! www.act-today.org), Phillips related to the character's eccentricities. A production date was set, and immediately other actors lined up to work with Phillips on the twenty-day shoot.

The recurring refrain from the actors was how much they liked the script, and how different it was from typical Hollywood fare. The members of the ensemble cast all brought their best work to the roles. Their commitment is evident on the screen. The crew said they had never seen any actors work as hard as on this shoot.

One of the biggest logistical challenges facing the filmmakers was finding the hotel that is central to the movie. Haddock's script was set in the fictional Madison Hotel in Reno. In the screenplay, the characters interact in a way that requires certain logistics. The elevator and the stairs had to open onto the lobby in close proximity to the front desk, and all with very specific sight lines to the street. With the help of the Reno film commission, Purvis scouted the historic Hotel El Cortez, knowing that this was the perfect

set for his movie. He quickly gained the confidence of the hotel's manager, Verne Corrigan.

Since Reno's Hotel El Cortez is a functioning hotel with long-time residents, it was impossible to film in the rooms. Purvis's filmmaking partner and veteran producer, Dennis Bishop, worked closely with Corrigan to allow the filmmakers access to the lobby, carefully planning their shoot to create minimal disruption to the hotel's residents. The Academy Award nominated designer Michael Corenblith came aboard to design sets based on the Hotel El Cortez's distinctive Spanish-Deco architecture. Meghan Rogers served as the production designer, overseeing set construction in a vacant industrial space in Los Angeles.

The gold mine sequence provided another challenge. Real gold mines are dangerous places located well off the beaten path. After visiting several mines around the Reno area, it was decided to create one closer to home. The mine in the movie was filmed within sight of the Hollywood sign at Bronson caves in the Hollywood Hills.

On the final day of shooting, the filmmakers had a serendipitous encounter with some real gold miners. The scenes on the road to the gold mine were filmed on the final day of production along the Angeles Crest highway. During a break in filming, the director and the actors encountered some genuine prospectors who still work their claims in the mines within the Angeles National Forest. The miners' tales of searching for gold in the mountains eerily mirrored the details of the script.

El Cortez was shot on 35 mm Kodak vision stock over twenty days in Los Angeles and Reno for under a million dollars. The filmmakers used two 35mm Movie cams for principal photography with Cooke prime lenses. Robert Smith was the Director of Photography. He and Purvis were the primary camera operators. Together they worked to create an atmospheric *noir* visual style that is reminiscent of films like *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Touch of Evil*, *Double Indemnity*, *The Killing*, and *T-Men*. Bob Allen edited the film on a Final Cut Pro system using a dual G-4 and a dual G-5. Dan Muscarella at Fotokem was the timer who helped achieve the richly saturated Technicolor look the filmmakers wanted.

Since the characters in the movie are living the blues every day, Purvis's long-time collaborators Jo Ellen and George Doering composed and performed an original blues

score. The Doerings also wrote and performed “Liars and Freaks” and “She was the Devil” in the soundtrack. The rap tribute to George W. Bush “Gangsta President” in the end credits was written and performed by Joe Bear. Mark Messick designed the movie soundtrack. Ezra Dweck and Jon Vogl mixed the soundtrack on a Pro-tools Pro-logic board.

The *El Cortez* trailer and electronic press kit can be viewed at www.elcortezthemovie.com.

About the Cast

Lou Diamond Phillips (Manny DeSilva)

Lou Diamond Phillips's versatility has allowed him to perform in theatre, television and film, and to direct, write, and produce feature films. Phillips first came to the public's attention when he starred as Ritchie Valens in *La Bamba*, and solidified his reputation in *Stand and Deliver*, for which he won the Independent Spirit Award for Best Supporting Actor and received a Golden Globe nomination. He starred on Broadway in *The Kind and I*, a role which brought him a Tony nomination for best actor in a musical.

Notable film performances include the action-comedy *The Big Hit* and *Brokedown Palace*. He also co-starred in Ed Zwick's critically acclaimed military drama, *Courage Under Fire*. He received strong reviews and the Blockbuster Award for Best Supporting Actor for his portrayal of Monfriez, the headstrong and determined army gunner desperate to protect his honor. He starred in the USA television movie *Murder at Presidio*. Other credits include the Hallmark tele-film *The Trail to Hope Rose* and the TBS movie *Red Water*. Phillips starred in the independent feature *Stark Raving Mad* and Revolution Studios' *Hollywood Homicide*, and in films such as *Young Guns I and II*, *The First Power*, and *Shadow of the Wolf*.

Bruce Weitz (Popcorn)

Bruce Weitz has appeared on Broadway playing both Biff and Happy in *Death Of A Salesman*, Brisby in *The Basic Training Of Pavlo Hummel*, Summers in *Thieves* and Norman in *Norman, Is That You?*. Off-Broadway, he was seen in *Frankie and Johnny in the Claire de Lune* and the revival of *Light Up the Sky* at the Roundabout Theatre. He spent four years at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., and two years each at the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis and The Actors' Theatre of Louisville.

Weitz has appeared in twenty feature films including *Deep Impact*, *Half Past Dead*, *Route 66*, *Fools' Gold*, *Memorial Day*, *Velocity Trap*, *Coyote Summer*, *Windrunner*, *Liar's Club* and *Rainbow Drive*. In television, he was a series' regular on *Hill Street Blues*, *The Byrds of Paradise*, *Anything But Love* and *Mama's Boy*. He has

had recurring roles on *ER*, *Judging Amy*, *The Guardian* and *Sisters*. He has also guest starred in more than 70 TV shows and starred in many TV movies.

Weitz has been nominated for eight Emmys. He has received one nomination each for the ABC mini-series *Baby M* and the NBC series *Midnight Caller*. He was nominated for the Emmy six times and won once for his portrayal of Mick Belker in *Hill Street Blues*.

Glenn Plummer (Jack Clay)

On a foundation of talent, unbridled dedication, and a passionate mindset, Glenn Plummer has enjoyed a successful acting career spanning almost two decades. He has starred in such feature films as *Saw II*, *Menace II Society*, *Showgirls*, *The Salton Sea*, and the compelling drama *South Central* in the breakout role of “O.G.” Bobby Johnson.

It was largely this very moving role that helped solidify Plummer as a staple in the African-American film community. Experiencing much crossover success, he used his abilities to cover a wide range of personas, and delved into television. He appeared in television movies and mini-series such as ABC’s *The Women of Brewster Place*, TNT’s *Heat Wave* about the L.A.’s Watt’s riots of 1965, and TNT’s *Reversible Errors*. He received praise and accolades from critics alike for his performances in Showtime’s *Ruby’s Bucket of Blood*, as well as his thought-provoking exhibition in HBO’s *The Corner*.

Before returning to the big screen, Plummer had a recurring role as Timmy Rawlins in the inaugural season of the Emmy/Golden Globe award-winning television show *ER*. In 2005, Plummer wrote, directed, and starred in the feature *The Giddeh*.

Tracy Middendorf (Theda)

A gifted actress who has shined on both stage and screen, Tracy Middendorf will next appear in the feature film *One Part Sugar* opposite Dylan Walsh and Danny Devito.

Born in Florida and raised in Jasper, Georgia, Middendorf went on to study theater at the State University of New York at Purchase. After a stint performing in *Ah, Wilderness* at the Lincoln Center Theater in New York, she moved to Los Angeles. Since then she has had recurring roles in several television dramas, including *24*, *The*

Practice, and opposite Christian Slater in *Alias*. Her other guest-star roles include appearances in *Six Feet Under* and *The Guardian*.

Middendorf has also worked extensively in the Los Angeles theater. She won the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle award for Best Lead Performance and the Ovation award for Best Actress for her turn in Tennessee Williams's *Summer and Smoke*, and for Best Actress for her role in Arthur Miller's *After the Fall*.

She lives in Los Angeles with her husband Franz and their two children Calvin and Oscar.

James McDaniel (Arnie)

In 1984, James McDaniel made his debut into the world of entertainment in *All My Children*. He has built his career from there, being showcased in the television series *Love Monkey*, *Las Vegas*, *Life As We Know It*, *Taken*, and *N.Y.P.D. Blue* in which he was nominated for an Emmy. He also won the Emmy for the acclaimed Showtime movie *Edge of America*. He acted in the film *Malcolm X* and various movies such as *Sunshine State*, *Strictly Business*, and *Alice*.

His breakout dramatic role came off-Broadway playing the lead in the Lincoln Center stage production of *Six Degrees of Separation*. He has also appeared in the Charles Fuller play *A Soldier's Story* at the off-Broadway Second Stage Theatre.

McDaniel went to the University of Pennsylvania, where he was a fraternity brother in Sigma Phi Epsilon. He lives with his wife in New York and is currently filming *Bunker Hill* and *War Eagle*.

Peter Onorati (Carlo Russo)

In 1986, Peter Onorati left behind his M.B.A. and eleven and a half years as a marketing executive to pursue a career in acting. After a brief period in improvisational and stand-up comedy as one half of the World's Only Hassidic Siamese Twins in *The Kippermans*, he made his TV debut as Lou Carello in the long-running CBS sitcom *Kate and Allie*.

In 1989 on his arrival in Hollywood, he was immediately cast in leading roles in critically acclaimed dramas including *N.Y.P.D. Blue*, *Civil Wars*, *Under Suspicion*,

Murder One and *Cop Rock*. He has successfully created leading roles as both good guys and bad guys for TV movies on ABC, CBS, USA, Showtime and HBO. He has made over 40 feature films including *Good Fellas*, *Postcards from the Edge*, *Firebirds*, *Camp Nowhere*, and *Rocket Man*, and special events such as *Tales from the Crypt*, *Outer Limits*, and the HBO world premiere movies *Shelter*, *Disappearing Acts* and *Dancing in September*. He recently returned to the stage in the premiere of *Sex, Sex, Sex, Sex, Sex & Sex* written by Tony-award-winning author George Furth, and *The Ice Man Cometh* at the Falcon Theatre. He has also created numerous cartoon-series characters in *Teen Titans* and *Batman Beyond*, and was the voice of Warhawk in *The Justice League*.

Onorati lives in Sherman Oaks, California, with his wife, the writer and producer Jeanette Collins and three sons, Sebastiano, Francesco and Gian Carlo.

About the Crew

Stephen Purvis, Director and Producer

Stephen Purvis, a native Texan, is an accomplished filmmaker. His greatest asset is the meticulous preparation that he brings to each picture. He enjoys the collaborative process, and his great respect for actors allows them to do their best work.

Purvis began his producing and directing career with two award-winning documentary series, *Combat At Sea* (Arts & Entertainment Channel) and *Adventures Of The Old West* (Disney Channel). This prepared him to write, produce, and direct his first feature film, *Deep In The Heart (Of Texas)* (3DD Releasing).

Purvis produced *Fugitive Hunter* for Lionsgate Films, and wrote, produced and directed the short film *Gold Fever* (Platinum Award – Best Short, 2006 Houston WorldFest). Since *El Cortez*, Purvis has started work on two projects: *Dead Money* from an original screenplay by Lou Diamond Phillips, and *Gringos* based on the novel by Charles Portis (*True Grit*). Clips from his films can be viewed at www.brazospix.com.

Dennis Bishop, Producer

Dennis has served in various producer capacities on several films, including the Academy Award winning *The Trip to Bountiful* and MGM/Showtime's *Inherit the Wind*. He was executive producer of films including Disney's *Houseguest* and Paramount's *The Evening Star*. As a production executive, he oversaw Universal Pictures' *The Fast and the Furious*. While VP of production at HBO Pictures, he oversaw a slate of award-winning films including *And the Band Played On* and *Barbarians at the Gate*. Between them, these films garnered an Academy Award, eighteen Emmys and nine Golden Globes. As an independent producer, he made *World Without Waves*.

Bishop is active in the movement to stem the tide of runaway production, serving on committees at the DGA, PGA and ECO*USA. He was recently appointed to the Runaway Advisory Committee of the California Film Commission. He has spoken at numerous conferences, seminars, film festivals and universities over the years, including

the Sundance Institute Producers Conference and June Labs, The Actors Studio-New York, IFP/West's Filmmaker's Forum and the SXSW Film Conference.

Chris Haddock, Writer

Chris Haddock is the creator, writer, and executive producer of *Da Vinci's Inquest*, *The Handler*, *Da Vinci's City Hall*, *Intelligence*, and *The Life*. In 2001, Haddock was honored with the triple crown of Canadian television, winning Gemini Awards for Best Dramatic Series, Best Writing and Best Direction for *Da Vinci's Inquest*. To date, Haddock has received over two dozen Gemini nominations and has won six times for Best Writing.

He wrote and produced *Intelligence*, a two-hour pilot for CBC, who ordered for a thirteen-episode series. He also executive produced and co-wrote *The Life* for CTV, and for CBS the series *The Handler*. Other writing credits include numerous pilots and feature scripts for Warner Bros, Fox, ABC and Showtime.

Crew

Director & Producer.....STEPHEN PURVIS

Producer.....DENNIS BISHOP

Executive Producer.....J.B. ROBERTS
STEPHEN HUNTER FLICK

Writer.....CHRIS HADDOCK

Cinematographer.....ROBERT F. SMITH

Editor.....BOB ALLEN

Music Composed by.....JO ELLEN & GEORGE DOERING

Production Designer.....MEGHAN C. ROGERS

Casting Directors.....MARA CASEY
JAMI RUDOFSKY

Associate Producer.....BRUCE WEITZ
GLENN PLUMMER
TRACY MIDDENDORF
JAMES MCDANIEL
PETER ONORATI

Stunt Coordinator.....DAN SPEAKER

Line Producer.....KAREN LIN

First Assistant Director.....ALISA FREDRIX

Second Assistant Director.....MICHAEL ZAFRA

Production Coordinator.....PENNY MUCK

Sets Designed by.....MICHAEL CORENBLITH

Gaffer.....JAS. SHELTON

Camera Operators.....ROBERT F. SMITH
STEPHEN PURVIS
JAS. SHELTON

First Assistant Camera—A.....JENNIFER ANN HENRY
PHILIP J. JAFFE

First Assistant Camera—B.....ROB BAIRD
CARLOS DAVARONS

Second Assistant Camera—A.....DENISSE KINDL

Second Assistant Camera—B.....STEVE BRIANTE

Camera Loader.....AARON SCHUH

Sound Mixers.....LEE ALEXANDER
ROGER STEVENSON

Boom Operators.....JAY COLEY
DUANE HLAVKA

Script Supervisors..... BRUCE RESNIK
JUDY RACHEL

Location Scout.....SUZANNE LUTZ

Propmaster.....LINDSAY HUFF

Set Dressers.....REED KOWIT
ISSAC WATTS

Art Director.....ASH YEGAHAGI

Art Production Assistant.....FRANCISCO WALTERS

Set Construction Supervisor.....MIKE BARRY

Make-up Department Head.....RICHARD REDLEFSEN

Hair/Make-up.....THEDA NOELLE SOMERS

Costume Designer.....LAURA FLETT

Wardrobe Assistant.....HEATHER CARLSON

Medic.....NIKI WEEKS

Sound Editors.....ZEKE RICHARDSON
STEWART NELSON
DONALD FLICK
ED CALLAHAN

ADR Recordist.....MATTHEW C. BEVILLE

Sound Assistant Editors.....MARGIT PFEIFFER
TODD SMITH

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