

***The Fisher King* Production Notes**

The Fisher King is a dramatic comedy that concerns one man's attempt to redeem himself from a life of fatal cynicism through his unlikely alliance with a visionary street person.

Robin Williams portrays Parry, a former professor of medieval history, who lives in a remarkable world of his own creation in order to insulate himself from a tragedy in his past. He now sees a singular New York and has the charismatic ability to permit others to see the world as he does - full of turrets and castles, terrifying Red Knights and damsels in distress.

Jeff Bridges portrays Jack Lucas, a man who has always managed to look down at life from the top. He is the menace of Manhattan's airwaves, the city's No. 1 shock DJ, but his off-handed arrogance triggers an incident which derails him from the fast track and sends him on a precipitous decline through the looking glass into a whole other world he had never imagined. Penniless and without prospects, Jack finds himself plucked from disaster by the most improbable of saviors... Parry.

It is the beginning of an amazing friendship. Parry needs love. Jack needs hope. And the key to their redemption lies in the quest to win the heart of Parry's imperfect perfect vision of a woman.

Shy and inhibited by notions of chivalry, Parry dares not approach Lydia until Jack takes it upon himself to bring the two together. By helping Parry win the heart of the lonely woman he secretly loves, Jack hopes to redeem himself and erase the blight from his own soul. Jack's self-serving deed, however, leads to a more profound result, in which the bruised cynic and his pure-hearted friend both discover the nature of true love.

Portraying the girl of Parry's waking dreams, his perfect maiden - a vision unique to him - is Amanda Plummer.

Mercedes Ruehl is Anne Napolitano, the worldly video store owner who provides solace to Jack after his fall from grace.

Directed by Terry Gilliam, *The Fisher King* stars Robin Williams and Jeff Bridges in a TriStar Pictures presentation of a Hill/Obst Production written by Richard LaGravenese. Also starring in the Terry Gilliam Film are Amanda Plummer and Mercedes Ruehl. The producers are Debra Hill and Lynda Obst.

Several years ago Richard LaGravenese sat down to write his first solo screenplay, one that would incorporate elements of the mythology that he is so passionately interested in. The best he hoped for was that *The Fisher King* which he acknowledged as 'offbeat', might be made as a small independent feature film. Instead, the script attracted the attention of producers Debra Hill and Lynda Obst.

When she first received the screenplay, Obst says, "I had to go on an errand and I couldn't stop reading the script. I was driving in the car with the script on my lap. I thought, this is

unbelievable. It was a Sunday, but I had to find the agent because the possibility that this script would be made without us was unacceptable."

The producers wanted Terry Gilliam to direct the film and began their campaign to secure the services of the innovative director.

Gilliam confesses to an ulterior reason for being drawn to *The Fisher King*.

"I made the film to discover whether or not I was a film director. This may seem an odd statement from someone in middle age with several film credits to his name, but it's true. All my other films had initiated with me, had sprung from ideas of mine that had insisted they be made into films. I saw myself as a filmmaker, not a film director. The directing bit was just one of the jobs along the way to getting an idea from brain to script to budget to film to final cut to cinema audience to, finally, out of my hair."

But when *The Fisher King* arrived on his doorstep, Gilliam found himself tempted to direct it.

"The ideas were totally familiar to me. Here was a writer who saw the world through very similar eyes to mine. On top of that it was brilliantly written. It was funny, sad, surprising. It had wonderful characters, it was emotionally powerful and it had a Holy Grail in it... and I've had some experience with films with Holy Grails," says the co-director of the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

Making *The Fisher King* was an interesting experiment for Gilliam, he says, because of his previous penchant for making films dependent on special effects.

I think for a lot of people, my reputation is one of making big, spectacular special effects films... visually complex films where the characters were secondary to the world in which they existed. *The Fisher King* is just the opposite of that. That's one of the reasons I wanted to do it - to show that I can actually work with just four people and out of that create a good film."

LaGravenese's role in the production didn't end when he sold the script. Throughout preproduction, rehearsals and filming, he worked with Gilliam and the cast, collaborating on the making of the film in a way that is rare for screenwriters.

"It was terrific having LaGravenese aboard," Bridges says, "because he was the guy who thought up the whole story, and to ask his opinion was very valuable. It was a very close company, and we all helped and used each other in a most positive way."

"*The Fisher King*," Gilliam says, is "about the search for the Holy Grail in New York City in the second half of the 20th century." It could also be described as "about a guy trying to get a friend a date so he can feel less guilty. It's about redemption, and what's good about the whole thing is you can't describe it simply."