



# BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD



Directed by Benh Zeitlin  
Screenplay by Lucy Alibar and Benh Zeitlin  
Based on the stage play *Juicy and Delicious* written by Lucy Alibar



U.S. Dramatic Competition

**Press & Industry Screening**

Saturday, January 21, noon, Holiday Village, Cinema 1, Park City

**Sundance Film Festival 2012 Screenings:**

Friday, January 20, 12:15 p.m., Eccles Theatre, Park City  
Saturday, January 21, 9:30 p.m., Redstone Cinema 8, Park City  
Sunday, January 22, 3:30 p.m., Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center, SLC  
Monday, January 23, 3:00 p.m., Screening Room, Sundance Resort  
Tuesday, January 24, 8:30 p.m., MARC, Park City  
Thursday, January 26, noon, Egyptian Theatre, Park City

**The following talent will be available for interviews:**

Benh Zeitlin, Quvenzhané Wallis, Dwight Henry

**Director:** Benh Zeitlin  
**Screenwriters:** Lucy Alibar, Benh Zeitlin  
**Cast:** Quvenzhané Wallis, Dwight Henry  
**Producers:** Michael Gottwald, Dan Janvey, Josh Penn  
**Executive Producers:** Philipp Engelhorn, Paul Mezey, Michael Raisler  
**Running Time:** 92 minutes  
**Rating:** Not Yet Rated  
**Location:** Filmed in English on location in the USA  
**Shot on:** Super 16mm and RED Exhibited on HDCam  
**Aspect Ratio:** 1:1.85 AUDIO EXHIBIT FORMAT

**Synopsis:** In a forgotten but defiant bayou community cut off from the world by a sprawling levee, six year-old Hushpuppy exists on the brink of orphanhood. Her mother long gone, and her father Wink a wildman on a perpetual spree, Hushpuppy is left to her own devices on an isolated compound filled with semi-feral animals. She perceives the natural world to be a fragile web of living, breathing, squirting things, in which the entire universe depends on everything fitting together just right. So when a hundred year storm raises the waters around her town, her daddy is suddenly stricken with illness, and fierce pre-historic creatures awakened from their frozen graves to come charging across the planet, Hushpuppy sees the natural order of everything she holds dear collapsing around her. Desperate to repair the structure of her world in order to save her ailing father and sinking home, this tiny hero must learn to survive an unstoppable catastrophe of epic proportions.

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## Logline

Waters gonna rise up, wild animals gonna re-run from the grave, and everything south of the levee is goin' under, in this tale of a six year-old named Hushpuppy, who lives with her daddy at the edge of the world.

## Synopsis

In a forgotten but defiant bayou community cut off from the rest of the world by a sprawling levee, six year-old Hushpuppy exists on the brink of orphanhood. Her mother long gone, and her beloved father Wink a wildman on a perpetual spree, Hushpuppy is left to her own devices on an isolated compound filled with semi-feral animals. She perceives the natural world to be a fragile web of living, breathing, squirting things, in which the entire universe depends on everything fitting together just right. So when a hundred year storm raises the waters around her town, her daddy is suddenly stricken with illness, and fierce pre-historic creatures awaken from their frozen graves to come charging across the planet, Hushpuppy sees the natural order of everything she holds dear collapsing around her. Desperate to repair the structure of her world in order to save her ailing father and sinking home, this tiny hero must learn to survive an unstoppable catastrophe of epic proportions.

## Long Synopsis

In a forgotten but defiant bayou community cut off from the rest of the world by a sprawling levee, six year-old Hushpuppy exists on the brink of orphanhood. Her mother long gone, and her beloved father Wink is a wildman on a perpetual spree. When her father is home, he lives under a different roof: him in a rusted out shack, and her in a trailer propped on two oil drums. More often than not, Hushpuppy is left to her own devices on their isolated compound filled with semi-wild animals. She perceives the natural world to be a fragile web of living, breathing, squirting things, in which the entire universe depends on everything fitting together just right.

Life in the Bathtub is one defined by resilience and celebration. But at the local elementary school(boat), Hushpuppy's no-nonsense teacher Miss Bathsheba educates her ragtag students about natural selection, global warming, and the huge ecological shifts that have pitted their little village on the front line for extinction. Learn to live with one another, and adapt! she instructs. "Y'all better learn how to survive now..."

Reality crashes down on Hushpuppy's little world when her father comes down with a mysterious illness, and nature begins to spiral out of control. A massive storm brews, the ice caps melt, and her dad shakes on the ground at her feet after a mere punch. Hushpuppy becomes convinced that the science attacking her environment and her father's insides are inextricably linked. It's end times in her delicate habitat.

*Half a world away, an unforeseen result of these sudden global shifts: fierce prehistoric beasts thaw out of the ice, righting themselves on firm ground after centuries immobile...*

As the waters rise around the bayou shrimping town, all the practical people run for higher ground, but Wink and his brigade of drunken sweethearts insist on staying put. He and Hushpuppy are forced to hole up together in Wink's un-sturdy shack and ride through the hurricane, with Wink firing a shotgun into the sky, defying the forces of nature. When morning breaks, the two find a Bathtub destroyed, empty, and almost totally submerged.

Wink and Hushpuppy collect the other holdouts, and as is custom, greet their disposition with celebration instead of remorse: they throw a party with all the shrimp, crab, and beer that's left. Miss Bathsheba kills the mood by reminding Wink that the excess of salt water in the Bathtub has likely killed all the flora and fauna that usually provides them with their sustenance; they could be

consuming the last the bayou has to offer. Wink takes a swig of beer and shrugs her off. “I got it under control.” But his attempts to teach Hushpuppy to survive on her own in this changed environment fall short; a lesson on how to fish with bare hands leaves her in pain.

The next morning, Hushpuppy is awoken by Wink and company sneaking out with a giant garfish filled with explosives -- the crackpot plan being to blow up the levee keeping all the water in and drain out their homeland. Miss Bathsheba, the only one who understands the science of why this is a very bad idea, stops Wink, but not Hushpuppy, from executing the kamikaze scheme. The results are disastrous: the drained Bathtub resembles a mushy, scorched earth—a land formerly bursting with plants and animals is now dead. Though Wink refuses to accept it, Hushpuppy can tell that the fabric of nature has unraveled around her – that the unending harvest of the bayou is over.

*The fearsome beasts now cut looming shadows against the horizon and charge their way across continents – snarling, growling, knife sharp horns glimmering as they head south...*

Soon afterwards, the government suddenly reminded of their existence, the Bathtub is subjected to a mandatory evacuation, and men with bullhorns and strange accents whisk away Hushpuppy, Wink, and the other residents of the Bathtub. They are taken to a sterile, gloomy refugee camp hospital, where everyone looks as bleak as “fish in a fish tank without water,” according to Hushpuppy. In the care of the state, she is immediately dressed up in unnatural feeling “acceptable” clothes with the other unruly Bathtub kids. Confronted with his diagnosis from the doctors, Wink tries to give Hushpuppy away. Hushpuppy refuses, furious, and Wink must finally tell her the truth: he’s dying. At last, it hits Hushpuppy that her father isn’t the maniac superman she thinks he is. Out of his natural environment, he begins to cough up blood, and asks for his friends to take him to the only place he knows as home.

Unable to watch wink on his deathbed, Hushpuppy flees across the water toward a light in the distance she believes to be her mother. A mysterious boatman plucks her out of the sea and takes her to his favorite nightclub, the Elysian Fields Floating Catfish Shack “GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS.” As Hushpuppy wanders this ethereal paradise, out of the kitchen steps a woman, who stares at her with eyes that look like hers. “Let me show you a magic trick,” she tells Hushpuppy, who’s in awe. Whipping up some killer grits n’ gator and dishing out no-nonsense advice, she gives Hushpuppy a moment of love she’s been looking for her whole life. But as they dance together, Hushpuppy realizes she has a duty to return to her father and The Bathtub before it’s too late for both of them.

*The creatures suddenly appear on the parched crest before the dried up bayou, a tiny girl in their crosshairs. They charge up behind her, when suddenly she swirls around to face them with eyes as fearless as theirs. They share a moment of primal understanding, and the beasts kneel before her. She goes along her way...*

Back in the Bathtub, Hushpuppy shares a last supper of fried gator with Wink in his broken shack. Having reconciled with her father and accepted nature’s chosen path, she returns to her friends and family, a hardened warrior, and they parade into the Southern Wild as water laps at their feet.

## **Artistic Statement**

Someone's ability to bake doughnuts or laugh loud is just as good a reason to make them a dolly grip as their ability to push a dolly. I want to fill my life and my films with wild, brave, good-hearted people. Whatever amount of chaos and disaster that leads to doesn't matter, because you're going

through it with the people you love, and in the end, no matter what, the movies come out wild, brave, and good-hearted; and that's more important to me than smooth dolly moves.

This concept extended to every part of the process making *Beasts of the Southern Wild*. My approach to making movies about is crafting an energy, a feeling, and a way of life that the people that make movies with me can live. It's about inventing a reality and populating it with the best people I know. Most gloriously, in our casting process – where we chose Dwight Henry, from the bakery across the street, and Quvenzhané Wallis, from Honduras Elementary School to take charge of our heroes, Wink and Hushpuppy. Neither of them had any previous experience acting, but when you look in their eyes, you see fearless warriors, and you know they can do anything. Even though you then have to re-write the script from scratch and change everything about your approach, it doesn't matter, because those elements were superficial in the face of accurately capturing the fierce spirit that the film needed to articulate. That principle was applied to every decision. Are we going to create an interior water set? Or are we going to sea? Do we dress an accessible location to look like an island at the edge of the world, or do we go to the edge of the world? Do we dress an 11 year-old to look like she's six? Or do we cast a six year-old? We tested the strength of the story and family that made it against every element that would try to break it.

I got hooked on South Louisiana because this mentality is everywhere. I showed up for a two month visit six years ago and I'm not going anywhere. It's the home of the most tenacious people in America – an endangered species. And that fierceness was how I came to this story. With the hurricanes, the oil spills, the land decaying out from under our feet, there's a sense or inevitability that one day it's all going to get wiped off the map. I wanted to make a movie exploring how we should respond to such a death sentence. Not critiquing the politicians who have caused it, or calling to arms for environmental responsibility, or raising awareness of suffering, or any of that. The real question to me, is how do you find the strength to stand by and watch the place that made you die, while maintaining the hope and the joy and the celebratory spirit that defined it? I found the answers in the ferocious people I cast in the film, and I found an incredible articulation of that story in my dear little friend Lucy Alibar's play *Juicy and Delicious* – an apocalyptic comedy about a little boy losing his father at the end of the world. From the two of us, and with the spirit of Quvenzhané Wallis, came Hushpuppy. She's a little beast who, in order to survive, has to find the strength of South Louisiana at the age of six. I put all the wisdom and courage I've got into her. She's the person I want to be.

## **Notes on the Production**

### **BACKGROUND**

This production didn't face obstacles; it faced impossibilities. So too do the people of the Bathtub, and the real communities that inspired them, persist against all odds—nature, the government, and lack of resources. The characters in BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD and the people behind its

inception don't take on challenges as obstructions; challenge is the whole premise. To do, to make, to live—despite everything.

An unholy mix of artists, animators, constructionists, editors, musicians, and storytellers, Court 13 makes movies about unlikely communities, as an unlikely community. And what better place than New Orleans and its attendant bayous, a region that has forged centuries of culture and tradition out of living in a downright improbable environment? Where else do you throw a party to celebrate a storm? Where you have a flamboyant parade when someone dies? Where timeless music makes you stomp your feet on sinking ground? Ever since they made a boat out of junk and sailed it on Lake Pontchartrain for the short film “Glory at Sea,” Court 13 has collaborated with the people and places of South Louisiana to create huge stories out of small parts, stories that transcend reality but are built of real people living in un-real circumstances.

However, the endeavor of the making of BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD was not a solo errand but entirely a partnership between the defiant energy of Court 13 and the determined vision of Cinereach. After acquainting themselves with the filmmakers following “Glory at Sea,” Cinereach made sure that the creative fantasies of Benh Zeitlin's next project would actually come true. In accordance with their mission to support “vital stories, artfully told,” Cinereach put the filmmakers first, bonded with Court 13 in the philosophy of taking cinematic challenges as opportunities instead of obstacles. They did nothing short of let Zeitlin and his brigade practice what they had seemed to preach on their epic short two years earlier. And presiding as minister over this union was Journeyman Pictures' Paul Mezey, consistently blessing the production with his Jedi-like wisdom and guidance.

Just as southern Louisiana isn't so much a place as a way of life, so too are Court 13 and Cinereach about much more than just a “different” approach to independent filmmaking. With BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD, these nebulous ideas were finally put into practice on a large scale. It is Court 13's first feature film.

## ORIGINS

Friends since they were teenagers, Benh Zeitlin had always contemplated adapting one of Lucy Alibar's plays into a short film. Alibar wrote pieces that played like delicious concoctions of food, magic, and love, Southern style. Upon seeing a performance of “Juicy and Delicious” in 2008, Zeitlin decided that the scope and spirit of the world Alibar had created, not to mention the particular story, merited transformation into a full-length feature film—what would be his first. Alibar created characters endowed with a specific kind of sweetness, and subjected to a kind of love so tough it might be called cruelty, if you weren't laughing so hard. This dissonance in the relationships between characters is something Alibar and Zeitlin would hold on to as they made the transition to a screenplay. However, while to behold the performance of Alibar's play was to witness something surreal and magical where rules did not apply, Zeitlin approached the story and its telling with realism as a starting point. It was the same realism that informed the style of his 2008 short “Glory at Sea”—but just as what those very true-to-life characters eventually encountered aboard their barely seaworthy junk raft was undeniably fantastical, so too would be what Hushpuppy experienced as her world crumbled around her. At its heart, both play and film would be built on the foundation of a central, all-important quality for their tiny hero: emotional bravery, and the specific kind of courage it takes to say goodbye to someone you love.

Alibar and Zeitlin transplanted this theme to the subsiding landscape of southern Louisiana—a place that prioritizes unadulterated joy and debauched appetites even as its towns fill with water and its bayou shores sink away in front of them. The film's scope widened to portray the loss of place as well as person, the demise of Wink now finding a parallel in the demise of his home. A made-up bayou village on the southern edge of the country, the Bathtub wasn't quite based on any specific town, but

rather a concentration of all the cultural elements of southern Louisiana in one place. In other words, the Bathtub contained everything good that stood to be taken away by the epic natural shifts going on around it. The question for the character of Hushpuppy became: what responsibility and duty do you have to your home and yourself to be there for someone or something as it slips away in front of you?

Eighty miles southwest of New Orleans and a world away, holed up in a marina literally where the road ends and the Gulf begins, Zeitlin and Alibar hammered out the script. The five bayous that extend south of Houma like fingers into the ocean, the communities of people there (shrimpers, crabbers, oilmen), and the way of life were certainly fertile ground for their imagination, but from the outset the world of the Bathtub was going to be a step away from reality. This isn't to say the writing process didn't occasionally overlap with some premature location scouting: after Benh found an abandoned school bus and rusty oil drum in the back of Claude Bourg's property, lo and behold, Hushpuppy had a home. But Zeitlin was always conscious that tying the film's setting to any particular place or issue would diminish the impact of the story, and that removing any literal frame of reference would open it up to a wider, richer viewing experience. He and Alibar had spun a huge tale in an alternate universe – a universe that probably merited the resources of a \$100 million blockbuster to build. How this giant world, and its destruction, could be tailored to a small budget posed one of many seemingly impossible challenges.

Fortunately, the film had been accepted to the Sundance Institute's Directors, Screenwriters and Producers Lab, which prioritizes helping filmmakers navigate exactly these kinds of problems. The Screenwriters' Lab was fundamental in the aforementioned transition that Alibar and Zeitlin took their story through, while the Directors' Lab gave Zeitlin the chance to give these new ideas creative ground to grow in. Finally, the Producers' Lab endowed the project with guidance on how to compact the world of the Zeitlin's film into an executable plan. The final blessing was given in the form of the Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award for Zeitlin, and the stakes were set. These filmmakers had high ambitions for their film, and there were even higher expectations that they meet them.

## **THE CASTING PROCESS**

Grand as the scope of the film had become, the audience would be firmly planted in this world through the perspective of a singular, curious beast of a creature named Hushpuppy. The film's success depended entirely on finding someone to fill this character's tiny, but simultaneously massive shoes. And that was the first impossibility encountered—what child could conceivably carry this huge film on her diminutive shoulders?

The search began in early 2009 in New Orleans, in an abandoned classroom set up as an office and audition space, where so many talented kids were found that Court 13 began an after school program to teach them acting and filmmaking. Sessions with girls ages six to nine played out more like interviews and game-playing than it did a traditional movie audition. After four months without a Hushpuppy, the operation expanded beyond the city and into the bayou communities where Zeitlin and Alibar were writing the script, and also where the film would eventually be shot. Ultimately stretching into eight parishes, Court 13's volunteer casting army made it common practice to canvas around a given town, work with local superintendents to pass out flyers in public schools, and hold auditions in area churches and libraries. Four months turned into a year as they combed through every bowling alley, after school program, congregation, and classroom they could find; in some areas they even went door to door.

Four thousand kids later, the hard work paid off and they would have themselves a Hushpuppy—and she was right in the film's backyard of Houma, Louisiana, amongst the bayous and the barges that form the backdrop of the movie. And she wasn't between the ages of six to nine; she was five when

she first auditioned. Clearly endowed with a striking imagination, Quvenzhané Wallis was a micro force of nature with unparalleled focus and emotional intelligence. The full flair of her personality could not be confined by the words “action” and “cut” either; she was a hurricane of humor and natural charisma that charmed you no matter who you were.

The next mission was to find the character of Hushpuppy’s father, Wink. The audition process for adults was similar to that for kids: mostly an interview about their personal story, then given a scene with circumstances around which to improvise as a character no different than themselves. Only in the last stages of the process, when they were nearly cast, did potential actors carry a script. Again, the concentration was on folks local to New Orleans or the bayou areas, who had never acted before but were intrigued by a flyer in a barbershop or an announcement on local radio.

In reviewing the tapes brought into him by Court 13’s volunteer audition squad, Zeitlin kept coming back to one man with a one-of-a-kind smile. Mr. Dwight Henry was a familiar figure, running the delicious bakery across the street from the abandoned school building where the team held auditions. He barely acted at all on his original audition tape, instead spinning incredible stories from post-Katrina New Orleans, and his resilience in pursuing baking. Six months later, desperate to secure him for a callback, the team found him nearly impossible to lock in. They realized they were calling in the afternoon; he worked from midnight to noon—baker hours—and slept afterwards. Once he did come in, he demonstrated a potent emotional vulnerability and commanding screen presence. Zeitlin and the team had always thought that the role might merit a trained professional – but never ones to take the easy way out, they went with Mr. Henry. Rehearsals and sessions with Zeitlin would take place in the bakery, from 2 to 5 in the morning, as he baked. The choice would ultimately weave Mr. Henry’s spirit into the fabric of the film in such a way that it’s hard to imagine Wink in any other way. He made the role his own.

The rest of the adult cast was rounded out by locals from New Orleans and the area where the corps of the film’s operation were starting to build their infrastructure, and complemented by some of the key players from “Glory at Sea.” The Bathtub had its residents.

## **THE AUROCHS**

With the cast falling into place and nearly all of them learning how to act on film for the first time, another set of performers had to be wrangled and another challenge surmounted. One of the main elements of Alibar and Zeitlin’s script that defined it as a larger-than-your-usual-independent film were the mythical, fierce, doomsday creatures known as Aurochs. The conceit of the mythology of the film was that these pre-historic animals had frozen in glaciers long ago, only to thaw and be resurrected by the massive climate shifts we see taking place in the Bathtub. How do you create a parade of monsters that herald the impending apocalypse, on a less than monstrous budget? As Zeitlin’s crew gathered in the bayou, a second unit based in New Orleans had this question to answer.

The scene played out in an abandoned firehouse in the Marigny that was provided by a fellow Sundance Institute alum and renowned regional filmmaker—the godfather of the independent film scene in New Orleans. It was like a laboratory, with giant water tanks, laser-cut miniature towns, and animal pens in the backyard. This was because the first step was to gather the Aurochs’ living, breathing surrogates, a handful of wild animals, to be trained to perform for the camera. The second step was to deck these creatures in tailor made head-dresses, specially designed to endow the wide-eyed creatures with fearsome horns and shaggy hair. The story of the Aurochs would play out against the backdrops of miniature ice age sets that had to be meticulously constructed. Certain greenscreen shots even called for a conveyor belt surface for the mangy mammals to trot along, an apparatus operated by a crew member on an exercise bike. Problem solved.

## PRODUCTION

In January 2010, the Court planted its flag in its new bayou headquarters – 517 Highway 55, in Montegut, Louisiana, formerly known as Claude Bourg's Cajun Country Stop & pumping station. A diamond in the mud, this property suited the film's needs perfectly: the former convenience shop became the office, the 18 wheeler garage housed the art department, the shrimp cleaning facilities was be the prop area, and as it turns out, one third of the movie would end up being shot in Claude's backyard. Another third, no further than 15 minutes away from it.

After taking a moment to recover from the Saints' miraculous Super Bowl win in February, the corps of the Court traded in sleeping bags and space heaters on the floor of Claude's convenience store for bunk beds in the fishing camps behind it. Likeminded members of the larger crew began to wash ashore on the bayou across the highway, to begin pre-production work. The brigade was a peculiar hybrid of Louisiana locals, independent film world professionals, and friends of friends just up for an adventure; what they shared was a dedication to the particularly immersive experience that telling this story required. By the end of pre-production, there were more than 80 crew members—half of them in the Art Department alone—and all scattered in housing along the bayous. Nights were spent picking apart crawfish on a huge spread of newspaper, and washing them down around the campfire in Claude's backyard. Lucy even staged a reading of her original play in the mechanics' garage; it was just one of many installments of "Family Fun Night." With each new recruit, there were more animals gathered, more boats and vehicles secured, more elaborate sets constructed, more costumes tailored... A generous truckload of grip equipment provided by a grant from friends Rooftop Films and Eastern Effects made life easier for the G & E department. All the while, the art department's crown jewel, a giant schoolboat-cum-warship, sat in the bayou by the gas station office, bewildering every local that passed.

Principal photography began on April 20<sup>th</sup>, a date better known in Louisiana for what also happened that day: the disastrous BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, just a hundred miles southeast of the film's bayou home. The production forged ahead, shooting 40 days in and near the waterways of Montegut, Houma, Bourg, and Pointe-Aux-Chenes, as well as Mandeville and Slidell taking it up to the North Shore; then it was seven days back in New Orleans for second unit and special effects photography with the Aurochs. In the bayou, every day posed a new titanic struggle against the elements: days were long, the air was thick, the boats would break, the eight year-olds were cranky, Wink threw out his voice, the food was dehabilitatingly delicious; you name a problem, they had it and then some. The Court 13 mantra of making do out of what's around you proved key. The team went through about 15 different iterations of the shoot schedule. There were explosions, an encounter with the FBI, various vehicles that went up in flames when they weren't supposed to, various vehicles that *didn't* go up in flames when they *were* supposed to, truculent neighbors armed with shotguns, a giant oil corporation that kicked the production out of a key location to clean up the mess they had made offshore... And the thing keeping the whole ship afloat was the perseverance and spirit of a tiny six year-old. She passed the trying test of the film shoot with flying colors, and then asked for more.

## POST PRODUCTION

Zeitlin and his editor had a mountain of footage to get through. An enormous assembly cut put out every single scene and storyline that Zeitlin had intended to follow, and for months upon months the task was whittling the footage down into a film that told the story most effectively. As one of the two composers, and not one to go uninvolved in any other step of post-production either, Zeitlin had his work cut out for him. When the deadline for Sundance loomed in September of 2010, the decision was made that in order to allow Benh to carefully take his film through each process, post-production would need another year.

The lions' share of that year was in fact spent on just getting to picture lock, and a definitive discovery: the movie was at its heart about Hushpuppy and her father. Fortunately another miracle had occurred in the securing of the San Francisco Film Society's Kenneth Rainin Foundation post-production grant, which had led to the film enlisting top talent Bay Area visual effects artists to finally bring the Aurochs footage into coexistence with the rest of the film. Later, with some serious believers at the Film Society, the film won the grant again in the second year of its post-production, through which it was able to partner with Bay Area behemoth Skywalker Labs for sound work. For a small film from Louisiana attempting to portray something cinematically much larger than its tiny parts, this was a gift from heaven.

Finally, Zeitlin sat down with his collaborator to write the score, as each of these phases began to spin concurrently in late 2011. The duo had written the score to "Glory at Sea," which had found warm reception beyond the film, everywhere from Obama for America campaign videos in 2008 to a Google Chrome commercial. The key this time would be to articulate musically both Hushpuppy's imagination and emotional state as the world fell apart around her. They would enlist a legendary regional band from Louisiana for the Bathtub sound, but the question at hand would be: when Hushpuppy opened the peculiar music box of her world for the audience, what was the melody that would come out?

They found an answer, and eventually the Bathtub had an epic, sprawling soundscape, visual magic to bring in the beastly harbingers of its doom, and the tune of its own hero becoming a warrior. The last adjustments were made at the final sound mix in Marin County; the film ended in the Bay that had begun in the bayou.

## **About the Cast / Cast Bios**

**QUVENZHANÉ WALLIS (Hushpuppy)** was born on August 28, 2003, in Houma, Louisiana. She attends Honduras Elementary School and is in the 3rd grade. She is the daughter of Venjie Sr. and Qulyndreia Wallis. Qunyquekya, Venjie Jr., and Vejon are her siblings. Her favorite pastimes are reading, singing, dancing, acting, and playing her iPod and Nintendo DS. Her favorite TV stars/singers are China McClain, Selena Gomez, and Miley Cyrus, and her favorite food is stir fry Alfredo Chicken. Her favorite sports are basketball, volleyball, dance and cheerleading.

**DWIGHT HENRY (Wink)** has lived in New Orleans most of his life. He is the son of Dr. Victor Arthur Henry, and his mother is Etna Henry. He has five children: Dwight Jr., Darius, Cameron, Dwayne, and D'juan. He's a self-made businessman; for the past 15 years, he's been the owner of Henry's Bakery & Deli, and he is the current owner of the Buttermilk Drop Bakery & Cafe, located at 1781 N. Dorgenois Street, in New Orleans, Louisiana. His passions are cooking, baking, and sports.

And now, acting.

## About the Filmmakers / Crew bios

**BEHN ZEITLIN (Director/Co-Writer/Composer)** is a filmmaker, composer, animator, and founding member of Court 13. His award-winning shorts include EGG, ORIGINS OF ELECTRICITY, I GET WET, and GLORY AT SEA. Behn's first feature BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance 2012 and was selected for Un Certain Regard at Cannes. He lives in New Orleans, Louisiana, with a pack of wild animals.

**LUCY ALIBAR (Co-Writer)** is a playwright and storyteller from the Florida panhandle. Her plays include *Juicy and Delicious* (Collective Unconscious/The TANK), *A Friend of Dorothy* (Best Play Finalist, Montreal Fringe), *Lightning/Picnic*, *Mommy Says I'm Pretty on the Insides*, and *Christmas and Jubilee Behold the Meteor Shower*. Her work has been produced and developed at the Sundance Institute, Joe's Pub, Williamstown Theatre Festival, HERE Arts Center, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Dixon Place, New Georges, Edinburgh Fringe, the Avignon Festival, and the Cherry Lane Theatre. Lucy is a member of EST/Youngblood, Jose Rivera's Writing Group, and founder of the New Georges Writer/Director Lab. She is a Sundance Screenwriting Fellow, two-time finalist for the Heideman Award at Actor's Theatre of Louisville, and winner of Young Playwrights, Inc.

A principal member of Court 13, **MICHAEL GOTTWALD (Producer)** was Executive Producer of Benh Zeitlin's GLORY AT SEA in 2007. He was a Field Organizer for Obama for America during the primaries in 2008, and was Ohio New Media Director in the general election. He also produced New Orleans bounce artist Big Freedia's music video "Y'all Get Back Now," and wrote and directed a short for Seattle's Bilocal in 2010. He produced documentary filmmakers the Ross Brothers' second feature, TCHOUPITOUHAS, and third feature, UNTITLED BORDERTOWN FILM (currently in post-production), on which he was also Spanish language production coordinator during photography in Eagle Pass, Texas. Currently he's producing Michael Tully's upcoming feature, PING PONG SUMMER.

**DAN JANVEY (Producer)** is an independent producer. His credits include BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD, which won the US Dramatic Grand Jury Prize at Sundance, and is an official selection of Cannes. He also produced TCHOUPITOUHAS, by the Ross Brothers, which premiered at SXSW, and won the HBO Emerging Artists Award at Hot Docs. Dan is a founding member of the Louisiana based Court 13 collective. He has participated in the Sundance Creative Producing Initiative as a Mark Silverman Fellow, and has won the Indian Paintbrush Producer's Award. Dan also worked as a Field Organizer in the 2008 Obama Campaign in North Carolina.

**JOSH PENN (Producer)** is a New Orleans based film producer with Court 13. His first feature film BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance 2012 and was officially selected for Cannes. Josh was also given the Sundance Producers Award for his work on the film. The film will be released nationwide by Fox Searchlight in 2012. Over the past few years Josh has been selected to take part in both Sundance's 2009 Creative Producing Initiative and Cannes 2011 Producers Workshop. He previously produced the short film, GLORY AT SEA, which won 15 film festival awards including SXSW and The Woodstock Film Festival. In addition to films, Josh has also produced a number of music videos including MGMT's Time to Pretend and Electric Feel. He is currently producing two documentaries in post: the Ross Brothers' TCHOUPITOUHAS (Premiered at SXSW 2012) and Sara Dosa's ROOTS AND WEBS (to premiere in 2013), as well as developing two fiction films; Ray Tintori's UNTITLED ADVENTURE SERIAL and Mark Elijah Rosenberg's AD INEXPLORATA. Outside of film, Josh's work includes acting as The Michigan New Media Director for Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential campaign and Senior Program Manager for the launch of Obama's 2012 re-election campaign.

**PHILIPP ENGELHORN (Executive Producer)** founded Cinereach in 2006. A not-for-profit production company and film foundation, the organization seeks to support and produce vital stories, artfully told. As Cinereach's Executive Director, Philipp guides the organization's everyday programmatic activities. In addition to developing and producing fiction and non-fiction films such as **BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD**, Cinereach has supported over 100 projects from around the world with over \$5m in grants. Philipp additionally serves as CEO of Cinereach Films, a private film financing and investment firm. The company's first film, David Riker's **THE GIRL**, was produced by Paul Mezey, stars Abbie Cornish and premiered at the 2012 Tribeca Film Festival. He is a member of the Board of Directors of Synergos, a non-profit dedicated to eliminating global poverty and social injustice by changing the systems that keep people in poverty. He also serves on the Founders Board of the Patrons of the Pinakothek in Munich and the board of Cinema Conservancy. Originally from Germany, Philipp graduated from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in 2006.

**PAUL MEZEY (Executive Producer)** is a New York based independent producer and founder of Journeyman Pictures. Mr. Mezey has produced a number of critically acclaimed and award winning films including **MARIA FULL OF GRACE**, which received a 2005 Academy Award Nomination for Best Actress in a Leading Role and **HALF NELSON** starring Ryan Gosling, which received a 2007 Academy Award Nomination for Best Actor in a Leading Role. His recent projects include: David Riker's **THE GIRL** starring Abbie Cornish (premiered at the 2012 Tribeca Film Festival), Benh Zeitlin's **BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD** (winner Grand Jury Prize at the 2012 Sundance Film Festival), Tom Gilroy's **THE COLD LANDS** and Joshua Marston's **THE FORGIVENESS OF BLOOD**. In addition to executive producing Mike Cahill's **ANOTHER EARTH**, other films produced by Mr. Mezey include: Ryan Fleck & Anna Boden's baseball odyssey **SUGAR**; Sophie Barthes' feature debut **COLD SOULS** starring Paul Giamatti, Emily Watson, and David Strathairn; Azazel Jacobs' **MOMMA'S MAN**; Jim McKay's **ANGEL RODRIGUEZ, EVERYDAY PEOPLE** and **OUR SONG**; Tom Gilroy's **SPRING FORWARD** starring Ned Beatty and Liev Schreiber; David Riker's **THE CITY (LA CIUDAD)**; Mandy Stein's Mississippi Blues documentary **YOU SEE ME LAUGHIN'**; and **THE BALLAD OF RAMBLIN' JACK** directed by Aiyana Elliott (winner of the Artistic Achievement Award for documentary film at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival).

**MICHAEL RAISLER (Executive Producer)** co-founded Cinereach with Philipp Engelhorn in 2006 and serves as its Creative Director. He works closely with Philipp in defining the programmatic and philosophical foundation of the organization, in particular by shaping Cinereach's artistic direction across its continuum of programs. In addition to **BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD**, other Cinereach productions include: Joshua Marston's **THE FORGIVENESS OF BLOOD**, Tom Gilroy's **THE COLD LANDS**, Michael Plunkett's **CHARGE**, and Matt Wolf's **TEENAGE**. Cinereach has granted over \$5m across more than 100 fiction and non-fiction films, including: **CIRCUMSTANCE**, **PARIAH**, **THE WORLD BEFORE HER**, **PLANET OF SNAIL**, **GIRL MODEL** and **CODE OF THE WEST**. Cinereach supported films have played at film festivals around the world, including: Abu Dhabi, Berlin, Cannes, Hot Docs, IDFA, the London Film Festival, Sheffield, Sundance, SXSW, and Toronto. Originally from Wisconsin, Michael graduated from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in 2006.

**MATTHEW PARKER (Co-Producer)** was born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee where his love of film began with his weekly Sunday trip to the movies with his Dad. He co-produced **BACHELORETTE**, which was an official selection at the Sundance 2012 Film Festival, and was selected in 2012 to attend the Producer's Lab at the IFFR. He was a producer on **MA GEORGE**, which is currently in post-production, **RESTLESS CITY**, **HIGHER GROUND**, and **THE LAST KEEPERS**. He was a co-producer on **PETER AND VANDY** and **BEWARE OF THE GONZO** (Tribeca '10). He was also an associate producer of **LOGGERHEADS** and producer on **FIND LOVE, JUST LIKE THE SUN, FLOW** and **FAMILIAR STRANGERS**.

Matt was also partnered with producer Gill Holland in **sonaBLAST! Records** (Mark Geary, Kelley

McRae, *The Old Ceremony*), which saw its first two releases, Mark Geary's 'Ghosts' and '3 1/3 Grand Street,' go Gold in Ireland.

**BEN RICHARDSON (Director of Photography)** is an award-winning cinematographer, currently based in New York City. He won Best Animation at Slamdance 2010 for *SEED*, which he co-directed and shot. He was also director of photography on *THE HUNTER AND THE SWAN DISCUSS THEIR MEETING*, a Sundance 2011 official selection. Originally from the UK, Ben lived for five years in Prague, where he met director Benh Zeitlin, with whom he subsequently worked as cinematographer on the multi-award-winning *GLORY AT SEA*. They continued their collaboration on *BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD*, winner of the 2012 Sundance Grand Jury Prize, for which Ben also won the Excellence in Cinematography Award.

**ALEX DIGERLANDO (Production Designer)** earned his BFA in Cinema Studies at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Since graduating in 1999, he worked his way up in various capacities within the Art Departments of a long list of movies. To name a few: Spike Lee's *BAMBOOZLED*, Woody Allen's *HOLLYWOOD ENDINGS* and *ANYTHING ELSE*, Todd Haynes's *FAR FROM HEAVEN*, Steven Spielberg's *CATCH ME IF YOU CAN*, Jim Jarmusch's *BROKEN FLOWERS*, Julie Taymor's *ACROSS THE UNIVERSE* and *THE TEMPEST*, Charlie Kaufman's *SYNECHDOCHE, NEW YORK*, Wes Anderson's *THE DARJEELING LIMITED*, Roger Michell's *MORNING GLORY*, and Jodie Foster's *THE BEAVER*. His first film as Production Designer was the Jet Pack caper *PRETTY BIRD* for actor-turned-director Paul Schneider; followed by John Hindman's *THE ANSWER MAN*, which was shot entirely in Philadelphia. Both films were selected for the dramatic competition at the Sundance Film Festival. More recent projects include Todd Solondz's Arrested development dramedy *DARK HORSE* (an official selection of both the Venice Film Festival and TIFF); the MTV sitcom "I Just Want My Pants Back" for Executive Producer Doug Liman; and Zal Batmanglij & Brit Marling's eco-espionage thriller *THE EAST*.

**AFFONSO GONÇALVES (Editor)** has edited over thirty films, including three Sundance Film Festival winners: *BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD*, *WINTER'S BONE* and *FORTY SHADES OF BLUE*. Most recently he has worked with Todd Haynes on the acclaimed HBO mini-series *MILDRED PIERCE*. Other feature editing credits include Ira Sachs's *KEEP THE LIGHTS ON*, Kip Williams' *THE DOOR IN THE FLOOR*, Tanya Hamilton's *NIGHT CATCHES US*, and Ramin Bahrani's *AT ANY PRICE*. He's currently working on Larry Clark's upcoming *MARFA GIRL*.

**CROCKETT DOOB (Editor)** is an editor, writer, camera operator, and a long time collaborator with Court 13 and Benh Zeitlin. He has volunteered for Rehabilitation For the Arts. Working at various prisons in New York State, Doob directed dance videos and a short film, entitled *A LASTING IMPRESSION*, about Hepatitis C and prison tattoos, which was written and performed by the inmates. Doob has worked on various films for HBO Documentaries, including *THE ALZHEIMER'S PROJECT* and *EL ESPIRITU DE LA SALSA*. He also worked in the editorial department on Funkmaster Flex's show, "Cars Wars II".

**DAN ROMER (Composer)** is an acclaimed engineer, producer, mixer and composer. His artist credits include Jenny Owen Youngs, April Smith, Ingrid Michaelson, Lelia Broussard, Ian Axel, He Is We, Cara Salimando and Jukebox The Ghost. He has scored two award winning short films to date and *BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD* is his first full-length feature film project.

**STEPHANI LEWIS (Costume Designer)** graduated from the University of New Mexico with a degree in Design for Performance, with an emphasis on Costume Design. Over the last 8 years she has worked in the design field in film and television as well as both professional and educational. Other design credits include costume designer on *STINGRAY SAM*, *THE HISTORY OF FUTURE FOLK*, and *SEE GIRL RUN*. Assistant Costume Design credits include *THE PLACE BEYOND THE PINES*, *BLUE VALENTINE*, *COLD SOULS*, *SUGAR*, *CARRIES* and more.

## Company bios

### CINEREACH

Cinereach is a not-for-profit film production company and foundation that champions vital stories, artfully told. Created and led by young philanthropists, entrepreneurs and filmmakers, Cinereach empowers fiction and nonfiction filmmakers from all over the world through Grants & Awards, The Reach Film Fellowship, an internal Productions department, and through partnerships with the Sundance Institute and other organizations. Since 2006, Cinereach has disbursed close to \$5 million in grant funds to more than 100 projects at the intersection of engaging storytelling, visual artistry and vital subject matter.

### COURT 13

Court 13 is a grassroots, independent filmmaking army – a collective of madcap artists and animators of junk that seek to tell huge stories out of small parts. Tales spring from groups of real people on the margins, and adaptation to screen demands that we live the extremes of the story, not just tell about them. Court 13 values “do it yourself” not as a matter of financial circumstance but as a spiritual requirement; each film poses huge, painstaking challenges that defy the gods, nature, and just plain common sense. But hopefully from the wreckage comes treasure – a movie for the masses, borne of love and pain, that makes you feel like a kid again. We make films about communities, as a community. We listen to Sam Cooke, our captain is Jimmy Lee Moore, and we beast on Sriracha sauce by the gallon. And New Orleans is our home.

### JOURNEYMAN PICTURES

Journeyman Pictures is a New York-based independent production company whose principals include Paul Mezey and Andrew Goldman. Journeyman has produced a number of critically acclaimed and award-winning films including *Maria Full of Grace* which received a 2005 Academy Award Nomination for Best Actress in a Leading Role and *Half Nelson* starring Ryan Gosling which received a 2007 Academy Award Nomination for Best Actor in a Leading Role. Journeyman's recent project *The Forgiveness of Blood* directed by Joshua Marston won the Silver Bear for Best Screenplay at the 2011 Berlin Film Festival and will be released early this year. Upcoming Journeyman projects include David Riker's *The Girl* starring Abbie Cornish and Will Patton and Tom Gilroy's *The Cold Lands*. Other films produced by Journeyman include: *Another Earth*, *Sugar*, *Cold Souls*, *Momma's Man*, *Angel*, *Everyday People*, *Our Song*, *The City (La Ciudad)*, *You See Me Laughin'*, *The Ballad of Ramblin' Jack*, and *Spring Forward*.

### CREW

Directed by BENH ZEITLIN

Screenplay by	LUCY ALIBAR & BENH ZEITLIN
Based on a stage play by	LUCY ALIBAR
Produced by	DAN JANVEY & JOSH PENN
Executive Producers	PHILIPP ENGELHORN MICHAEL RAISLER
Executive Producer	PAUL MEZEY
Producer	MICHAEL GOTTWALD
Co-Producers	MATTHEW PARKER CHRIS CARROLL
Director of Photography	BEN RICHARDSON
Production Designer	ALEX DIGERLANDO
Edited by	CROCKETT DOOB AFFONSO GONÇALVES
Music by	DAN ROMER & BENH ZEITLIN
Costume Designer	STEPHANI LEWIS
Featuring the art of	ELIZA ZEITLIN
Aurochs and Special Effects Unit Director	RAY TINTORI
Aurochs and Special Effects Unit Producer	LUCAS JOAQUIN
Associate Producers	CASEY COLEMAN ANNIE EVELYN NATHAN HARRISON JOHN WILLIAMS
Chief Boat Captain	MIKE ARCENEUX
2nd 2nd Assistant Director	JONAS CARPIGNANO
Casting Consultant	CINDY TOLAN

## CAST

(In order of appearance)

Hushpuppy	QUVENZHANÉ WALLIS
Wink	DWIGHT HENRY
Jean Battiste	LEVY EASTERLY
Walrus	LOWELL LANDES
Little Jo	PAMELA HARPER
Miss Bathsheebea	GINA MONTANA
LZA	AMBER HENRY
Joy Strong	JONSHEL ALEXANDER
Sticks	NICHOLAS CLARK
Peter T	HENRY D. COLEMAN
T-Lou	KALIANA BROWER
Dr. Maloney	PHILIP LAWRENCE
Open Arms Babysitter	HANNAH HOLBY
Sgt. Major	JIMMY LEE MOORE
Cabaret Singer	MARILYN BARBARIN
MC	BIG CHIEF ALFRED DOUCETTE
The Cook	JOVAN HATHAWAY
Baby Hushpuppy	KENDRA HARRIS