



MARS NEEDS MOMS

ADVANCE

TAKE OUT THE TRASH, EAT YOUR BROCCOLI—WHO NEEDS MOMS, ANYWAY?

Nine-year-old Milo (Seth Green) finds out just how much he needs his mom (Joan Cusack) when she's nabbed by Martians who plan to steal her mom-ness for their own young. Produced by the team behind "Monster House" and "The Polar Express," "Mars Needs Moms" showcases Milo's quest to save his mom—a wild adventure in Disney Digital 3D™ and IMAX® 3D that involves stowing away on a spaceship, navigating an elaborate, multi-level planet and taking on the alien nation and their Supervisor (Mindy Sterling). With the help of a tech-savvy, gadget-happy, '80s-speaking underground earthman named Gribble (Dan Fogler) and a rebel Martian girl called Ki (Elisabeth Harnois), Milo just might find his way back to his mom—in more ways than one.

Directed by Simon Wells ("The Time Machine," "The Prince of Egypt"), the film also stars Kevin Cahoon as Wingnut and Tom Everett Scott as Dad. The screenplay is by Wells and Wendy Wells based on the book by Berkeley Breathed. The film is produced by Robert Zemeckis, Jack Rapke, Steve Starkey and Steven Boyd. Additional members of the creative team are production designer Doug Chiang ("Disney's A Christmas Carol," "The Polar Express"), editor Wayne Wahrman ("I Am Legend," "Charlie's Angels"), director of photography Robert Presley ("The Polar Express," "Beowulf") and composer John Powell ("How To Train Your Dragon," "Shrek," "The Bourne Identity").

"Mars Needs Moms" is rated PG by the MPAA. A fun, rollercoaster 3D adventure comedy set on Mars, the film hits theaters on March 11, 2011.

IT ALL STARTED WITH A 4-YEAR-OLD, A MOM AND A DISAGREEMENT **Pulitzer-Prize Winning Cartoonist Berkeley Breathed Finds Inspiration at Home**

Famed cartoonist Berkeley Breathed was moved to write the book that inspired the film after an eventful dinner at home. "One night my son Milo threw his broccoli into the air and stormed from the table—a scene depicted with more civility in the movie," says Breathed. "Upon leaving, he said something about his mother too vile to repeat here—which would only result in expensive therapy later if he ever remembered. From out of nowhere came my next line: 'You might think differently about your mom if she were kidnapped by Martians.' I spun on my heels and wrote the book that night. The rest is Disney history."

ImageMovers Digital and the Disney team embraced the project, tapping Simon Wells to direct and co-write the script with wife Wendy Wells. The film follows in the footsteps of ImageMovers Digital's roster of well-received family fare, "The Polar Express" and "Monster

House,” bringing the story to the big screen via performance capture. The technique digitally captures the performances of the actors with computerized cameras in a full 360 degrees, allowing filmmakers to transport audiences to Mars—and back—creating elaborate out-of-this-world settings and characters while capitalizing on the expert performances of the cast.

“This film has an amazing center to it which is the mother’s love for the child and the child’s realization about that love,” says Wells. “And that really spoke to me. It spoke to my wife and writing partner, Wendy. And we built the whole thing around that central moment, which was the whole reason why Berkeley wrote the original book in the first place.”

Filmmakers decided to expand the reach of the book when it hit the big screen. “We wanted to age the characters up slightly,” says Wells. “And we realized we were going to spend much longer on Mars. So you travel around an alien world, meet new beings and see the different aspects of that world. You’re shot at and chased and you discover things. You get to experience environments that you would never in your normal lives get to see. You get to travel on a huge heroic journey in pursuit of the noblest cause of all, which is to save your mum because you love her.”

DIVERSE CAST BRINGS EARTHLINGS AND ALIENS TO THE BIG SCREEN

Who’s Who in “Mars Needs Moms”

MILO is nine. He has comic books to read, zombie movies to watch and bed-jumping to do. He doesn’t have time to eat his vegetables and do chores, no matter what his mom says. Mom is sick of nagging and Milo’s sick of Mom. But when he suggests that he’d be better off without her, things get a little hairy. His efforts to apologize are interrupted when Martians—yes Martians—arrive, steal his mom, return to their spaceship and rocket to Mars—with a nine-year-old stowaway who’s determined to rescue the mother he’d wished away just moments before. To Milo, the whole thing would be downright hilarious if he weren’t headed to another planet.

Filmmakers felt Seth Green (TV’s “Family Guy,” “Austin Powers” trilogy) was perfect for the role. “His performance is incredible,” says producer Jack Rapke. “His close-ups as a little boy—the wonderment and the innocence of the world and his capturing the gamut of emotions that Milo is required to play as a character throughout the movie was not easy. It required an actor with great range and an actor with great sensitivity. Seth has been amazing.”

Says Green, “Playing a nine year-old is really challenging in a lot of ways. As you mature, you naturally evolve as a person and there are affectations that you acquire that you don’t even realize—you project the image that you want people to see. Kids, on the other hand, have no filters. They just don’t care. And that was the fun thing about playing Milo. It was really liberating.”

“Seth Green has a great, expressive face,” says production designer Doug Chiang. “He was just so fun to play with and turning him into a nine-year-old kid was just pure joy. Basically we started with the adult Seth—we didn’t even look at his childhood photos—we just tried to do a little interpretation of what he might look like as a nine-year-old. We came up with that look and then we tried to exaggerate it a little bit, emphasizing Seth’s great features, his acting features—his eyes, his mouth, his forehead—in essence, creating a 3D caricature of Seth.”

MOM loves Milo more than anything, she just wishes he’d do as he’s told—like eating his vegetables... and NOT feeding them to the cat (who in turn yaks all over her floor). She

only wants what's best for Milo—and let's face it—broccoli is very good for growing boys. Her good intentions and loving ways may not please Milo, but they certainly impress the Martian scouts who are looking for a good mom.

Joan Cusack ("Toy Story 2," "Toy Story 3," "My Sister's Keeper") was called on to play Mom—and brought her own intuition to the tale. "I loved what Wendy and Simon wrote," she says, "and I thought it was a great story. I love the idea that if you're a parent, it's not about being a friend. It's not about being your child's friend. It's much more than that. It's more selfless than that. And because of that, you have to do the hard things and say the hard things that are important for your child to develop the right way. This really shows her to be a universal Mom that cares."

Once on set, says director Simon Wells, Cusack continued to delve deeply into her character's soul. "She would ask very smart questions about what her character should be thinking and feeling. We would have long discussions about it and she would take it all in and build it into her character. And yet, when in the moment, she was absolutely fresh. There were things that she did that caught me off guard and were completely wonderful."

GRIBBLE is a 30-something who has been on Mars since his own mom was "needed" by Martians many years prior. When Milo reaches the planet and is taken prisoner, Gribble rescues him, guiding him through a series of secret chutes to the elaborate lair on Mars' lower level that Gribble calls home. Tricked out with various electronic and spy devices, Gribble's digs allow him to tap into the planet's communication systems and spy on what is going on in the hub of all activity, the Citadel. Gribble—who still uses the '80s lingo from his childhood—is understandably bummed when he realizes that Milo, his first human friend in ages, plans to save his mom and return to Earth. But Gribble agrees to help Milo—even if deep down, he'd love it if Milo could hang out with him forever.

Tony Award®-winner Dan Fogler ("Kung Fu Panda," Broadway's "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee") captured the diversity of the character, much to the filmmakers' delight. "Along with a hilarious range of physical and dialogue inventions," says director Simon Wells, "Dan brought an amazing emotional depth to the character. We had written what we had hoped was a fairly touching revelation scene, in which Gribble tells Milo the truth about his arrival on Mars. What Dan did with that scene was utterly astounding. He made it deeply, sincerely heartbreaking. It was one of those occasions when the scene finishes and the crew on set spontaneously applauds. Dan plays Gribble as the classic clown with a broken heart, who covers for his inner devastation with boisterous activity and noise. Dan gave us Gribble."

"I wanted to be a part of this movie because the concept was so cool," says Fogler. "I'd never done performance capture, but it reminds me of high-tech theatre and I come from a theatre background."

THE SUPERVISOR is the much-feared, heartless Martian leader. She is behind the planet's dismal belief system that promotes cold, strict conduct and prohibits warmth and love, virtually forcing the need to steal Earth's moms and extract their mom-ness to help nurture their young. She is the leader of Mars' special security forces, the Siss Guards.

Filmmakers turned to Mindy Sterling (TV's "Desperate Housewives," "iCarly") for the role. Sterling, who is known for her role as the evil Frau Farbissina in the "Austin Powers" movies, approached the chilling character with her signature sense of humor. "I loved the script, I loved the story," says Sterling, "I loved the relationship between Gribble and Milo, and my boy plays Milo. I worked with Seth on all the 'Austin Powers' films and I also played his

mother on 'My Name is Earl.' I absolutely adore that guy. He is such a professional and he's so playful and he's so funny and he just has great work ethic."

"We all know Mindy Sterling can play the villainess," says director Simon Wells. "What you may not know about her is her talents as an improvisational actress. She could teach classes in emoting through gibberish—I watched her deliver a ten-minute lecture in intense, terrifyingly focused Martian."

"We came up with our own alien language," says Sterling. "We just played with different vocals—though there are some phrases that have specific meanings throughout the film. During the recording sessions, Simon would give us emotions or direction like, 'you're being attacked' or 'you're worried.' We would just try to act them out and come up with different sounds and different qualities."

"Her scenes were played exclusively in Martian," says Wells. "There was never a moment when you did not know exactly what she meant. Her sneering, evil satisfaction, her steely control and her explosive fury were painted with such clarity that Mindy completely transcended the need for specific dialogue."

KI is a young Martian who learned to speak English by watching a '70s sitcom. She spends her time painting elaborate graffiti on the walls of Mars. But she does so in secret. She's forced to hide her artistic side on a planet that is devoid of color and emotion. The Martians are strictly forbidden from expressing any individuality—but Ki thinks for herself—particularly when she decides to help Milo.

Elisabeth Harnois (TV's "Miami Medical," "One Tree Hill"), cast to portray the creative Ki, was intrigued by both the story and the filmmaking. "It's a really fun, smart family film," she says. "I've always been a fan of new technologies," she says. "I went to film school myself, so I'm always looking into those sorts of things."

"And I'm a big goof ball," she adds. "At the audition I was a goof ball and while working on the project. This role has allowed me to flex my goof ball muscles like I never have."

WINGNUT is the leader of the Hairy Tribe Guys, who embody the lost love of Mars. They live in the underground trash caverns, discarded by the misguided civilized society above. Wingnut was Gribble's buddy before Milo arrived on Mars and Gribble thinks he's a little crazy and not too smart. But Wingnut just might understand far more about what is happening on Mars than anyone thinks.

Kevin Cahoon (Madonna's "W.E") was cast to play Wingnut. "We held open casting auditions for the role and met a bunch of terrifically talented and very funny actors," says director Simon Wells. "Then Kevin Cahoon came in and blew us away. He totally nailed the inspired lunacy coupled with honest charm that we were looking for in the character."

DAD is a dedicated family man—even if he is completely unaware of the interplanetary adventure Mom and Milo take together. He does notice that his often cantankerous son seems somehow different when Milo mysteriously volunteers to take out the trash. "Did something happen to Milo this weekend?"

Tom Everett Scott (TV's "Batman: The Brave and the Bold," "Law & Order") portrays Dad.

Producer Robert Zemeckis credits the cast for infusing so much humor into the film. "The situations are funny and the scenes are funny—the whole absurd reality of the movie just lends itself to fantastic humor. But our cast in this movie is probably one of the best

improv casts that has been put together in recent years. They can take a scene and add to it in a wonderful way.”

Zemeckis says audiences have a lot to love about “Mars Needs Moms.” “They have a lot to look forward to—fun, adventure, comedy, laughs, great performances, spectacular 3D—just an unbelievably wonderful digital movie.”

“Mars Needs Moms” lands in U.S. theaters on March 11, 2011. The family comedy will be shown in Disney Digital 3D™ and IMAX 3D®.