

Synopsis

When big-city speculators cheat him out of his Virginia farm, old time gentleman farmer Nat Banks leaves his family and makes a new home in a cave on the creek, inspiring a community-wide rebellion as he eventually fights his way back home. Nat won't go down without a fight!

CRAZY LIKE A FOX is the story of a man who can't take "You're evicted" for an answer. The pride of possession from so many generations on the same soil simply makes it impossible for him to move. Rather than a rental house in town, he moves into a cave by the creek that runs through the back of his former property instead.

He spends the summer there in a kind of Robinson Crusoe splendor in the wilds of Virginia, until the cold rains of November make the folly of his situation overwhelming. But when new owners leave Greenwood empty to spend the winter in Palm Springs, Nat and his family just move back in, to reclaim their family home until the spring thaw brings about a final confrontation between the dubious forces of progress and the old guard of Virginia.

CRAZY LIKE A FOX stars Emmy Award nominee and Royal Shakespeare Company veteran Roger Rees and two-time Academy Award nominee Mary McDonnell as Nat's wife Amy. It was written and directed by Richard Squires, an actor, director and playwright with La Mama Amsterdam, the Players Theatre of New England, and Brecht West theatres.

The film was shot over the course of 33 days in Virginia's famously beautiful horse country. It is scheduled for theatrical release in the spring of 2006.

Q+A with Writer/Director Richard Squires

What was the source of inspiration for the screenplay?

I've lived in Virginia for fifty years, and therefore know firsthand both its beauty and its history; important not only to this country but really to the world, since it was here that all the founding documents of modern democracy were written: the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution; and the Supreme Court decisions that established judicial review of the law. Always a rural state, Virginia changed very little until the recent expansion of Washington and the eastern megalopolis, which has overwhelmed its land and curious, courtly culture with the dubious forces of progress. The wonderful eccentrics who make up the Old Virginians--my daughter was taught kindergarten by Robert E. Lee's great-granddaughter, one of her classmates is a direct descendant of Thomas Jefferson and another lives in James Monroe's old home--provide a direct link to the first days of this country, which were the last days of monarchic rule in the world. Many of them remain on their family farms after many generations over hundreds of years--a kind of lost English colony--and it seems to me that what they stand for has

come to be so different from the country that they founded, that it makes sense to show the two forces together before the new one completely devours the old.

What was the casting process like?

The lead role calls for a gentleman actor with comic ability, a part that would have been fairly easy to cast in this country 50 years ago, but is somewhat difficult now, due, I think, to the paucity of parts for gentlemen. Rudy Vallee, Cary Grant, Henry Fonda: where would you find them these days? So I looked instead to English actors like Albert Finney and John Hurt, both for their level of personal cultivation and for the cultural milieu in which they work. Since English films are seamlessly interwoven with the literary, historic, and dramatic world of English culture in a way that American films have never approached, its actors can not only play gentlemen; they really are gentlemen themselves, with a great commitment to culture.

From that point it didn't take long to find Roger Rees, whose comic genius and natural naiveté remind me of great historic actors like Harold Lloyd. I honestly believe that no one could have better realized this part than Roger did, and it remains one of my greatest thrills in the production that I knew this the minute I first saw him.

We cast Mary McDonnell's part after Roger's, and with the benefit of his consultation. Her combination of earthiness and refinement seemed right for the part to me, and Roger was enthusiastic about his ability to suggest a deep, long term bond with her. She was cast at the last minute, two days after 9/11, and I saw her for the first time when she arrived to work on the third day of shooting. Mary more than anyone else had something to lose by an association with a first-time director and production company. She told me that she took the part because she was impressed by the values in the script. Mary was the luckiest thing that happened to us in the production: I'll never forget her generosity and patience with me as a first-time director, and her friendliness and absence of pretension were an important gift to the whole production.

What were the logistical hurdles during production?

Broadly speaking, the movie was marked by continual crisis and chaos in the production office, and a kind of euphoric enthusiasm on the set. I found this unnerving at first, but after my D.P. Gary Grieg explained that this pattern was quite normal I learned to block it out.

All of the creek scenes, most of the nature scenes and one of the barn scenes were shot at Francis Mill, a farm I own in Middleburg, Virginia. The house, grounds, and the rest of the barn scenes were shot at a nearby, locally famous farm called Welbourne, whose owner was an old friend that supplied the model for the movie's hero Nat Banks. Together these two comprised the settings for about eighty percent of the movie: the rest of the scenes were shot at local farms, stores, courthouses and restaurants. I felt from the beginning that having control of the locations would give us a key logistical advantage to help balance out our relative inexperience.

The start date was pushed from 10 September to 1 October, due to casting and production problems as well as the effects of 9/11. We had a six-week schedule, with a five-day week and a twelve hour day, for thirty days total. We had perfect weather the entire time and never had to work on Saturday.

Although no independent films of our scope had ever been shot in the Washington area, many Hollywood blockbusters had, which meant that experienced character actors and seasoned crew members could be found in the area. Producer Bill Warrell and I both thought it was important to select the D.P. from the local area, and this turned out to be the most important strategic decision that we made. I wanted someone who had the time and inclination to work closely with me in scouting locations and drawing up the diagrams we used in lieu of storyboards. Of the three possible candidates, only Gary Grieg had never done a feature as D.P., but he was locally famous, honestly wanted the job and was an accomplished director himself. It would be hard to overstate Gary's many contributions to the film. He had his pick of the best crew in Washington, which our producer Patricia Foulkrod pronounced the best she'd ever seen. Only the costume designer, Donna Zakowska, came from outside our area. I worked closely with production designer Kin Remington to spec the wall colors and treatments and the floor and

exterior distress work on Welbourne. Virtually all the furnishings in the movie were found on site. The creek-side camp and cave were Kin's alone, with the help of her hippie carpenter crew.

I think the film came together when it did because it really had to: Welbourne was scheduled for renovation and it was our last chance to get it in such poor condition, with its beautiful patina of age in the finishes and its huge porches on the verge of falling in.

The house is practically a character in the film...

I'd always understood that films are so complex to make that it was prudent to make your first one about something you knew very well. I've rented an old sharecropper's cottage at Welbourne for 25 years, and its owner, Nat Morison—a famous country character—is a friend of mine. Goose Creek runs through the back of the property, where I've spent many hours swimming and canoeing over the years. The birth of the story came from wondering what a character like Nat would do if he ever lost a place like Welbourne, which plays such a huge role in his life, as well as a fairly significant role in the life of his country. Many of the details in the film are true: George Washington really was a friend of Benjamin Dulaney, the builder of Welbourne, and really did ride Dulaney's horse throughout the Revolution. The Yankees really did burn the barns in 1862, but spared the house. When the war was over and all the local plantations fell into ruin, Colonel Dulaney, who'd ridden in J.E.B. Stuart's cavalry, sailed to England, married an heiress, and brought her back to fix the place up together.

Both Thomas Wolfe and F. Scott Fitzgerald were friends of the Morison-Dulaney family, both were frequent house-guests, and both wrote stories about Welbourne. Fitzgerald's story, "Her Last Case", was published in the Saturday Evening Post and republished in his final collection of stories. Wolfe spent three weeks at Welbourne on orders from his editor, Max Perkins, to work on a book manuscript that he promptly locked in a trunk on arrival. He wrote a still unpublished story about Welbourne instead, and later wrote to family member Elizabeth Lemmon, "Your America is not not my America and for that reason I have always loved it even more—there is an enormous age and sadness in Virginia—a grand kind of death..."

Houses like Welbourne, which have remained in the same family hands for hundreds of years, through many significant men and events, have an obvious life to them that cannot be found in history books or in the unfortunate family-houses-turned-into-institutions that seem to be everywhere these days.

Since this is a film about an old southern family and a former plantation, how did you deal with the issue of slavery in this film?

The legacy of slavery raises legitimate issues in any film dealing with the South, and it can be painful for both whites and blacks to see blacks portrayed in subordinate roles in such stories. Often the solution, as in *Cold Mountain*, set in North Carolina in the Civil War, or *Rambling Rose*, set in Georgia during the Depression, is to avoid the issue by casting only whites in the film, pretending in effect that blacks don't even exist in the South. This approach seemed not only dishonest to me, but obviously prejudicial in the sense that employment opportunities are therefore denied to actors because of their race.

I added the voice-over after our first screenings to demonstrate the surprising parallel between our story and *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov, (himself a descendant of Russian slaves) in which an impoverished aristocratic Russian family is rescued by a descendant of one of its own former slaves. Slavery, like smallpox, was a worldwide phenomenon that knew no national boundaries in its day. Although it is virtually exterminated now, like smallpox some of its scars remain.

I hope that the clear legal and moral equality of all the characters in our film, and the close personal relationships between races that is often so characteristic of the South—which is indeed one of the great lessons in racial healing that it has to offer the nation—will all contribute to the goals of true and honest integration in this country.

This your feature film directorial debut – any surprises?

As a writer, it was surprising how many people were willing to read and critique the script once it was scheduled to film.

I was surprised when the IRS froze our funding a week before production, and when the union, ignoring the contract we'd just negotiated with their local, came down from New York to demand another \$40,000, a week after filming began. Then the Teamsters called to ask for the job of driving the big trucks. We explained that we had essentially a two location shoot and only needed to move the big trucks three or four times in the next six weeks. But the Teamsters explained to us that moving the trucks wasn't really the problem. The real problem was that certain people that the Teamsters knew about were apparently thinking about vandalizing the trucks. So we needed them not just to drive the trucks but also to keep an eye out for these crooks. So we hired two Teamsters who spent the entire six weeks eating chips at the Kraft table, at a cost of \$12,000. It seemed to come straight from the theme of our film: Virginians really aren't accustomed to such blatant thievery.

But this was really small potatoes, compared to the encouragement and generosity of so many people in the independent film world, many of whom I came to know through my co-producer Kimba Hills. Most of all Patricia Foulkrod, who flew in on a big silver bird from Los Angeles, organized the natives as she found them, and single-handedly willed the movie into being.

As a director I was astonished, as all first-time directors must be, by the hundreds of people it takes to make a film, not to mention the incredible amount of work. As a novice I relied on two old adages: "Casting is eighty percent of directing", and "Well-written scenes play themselves". It seemed to me that together that just might add up to one hundred percent, and in fact, during production, this was often strangely the case. Conversely, badly written scenes proved virtually unsavable on the set.

I was very surprised by the way the experience transformed the inner compass of my life, which I think is comparable in some ways to mountaineering expeditions.

I was taken aback post-production. I'd assumed that the editor alone did the editing, for example, and I really had no idea, after all the crowds of production dispersed, how to put a film together. For a while it seemed I was learning a new profession every week. Certainly the second luckiest hire of the movie was our editor Sheri Bylander, whose generosity and unflinching enthusiasm for the project got me through the confusing, lonely, and expensive valley of post-production.

Composing the music for the film had always been the reward that I'd reserved for myself for making it. But when the time came to begin I was so wrapped up in production issues that composing the music on my own was out of the question. By great good luck I found local composer David Kane on my first or second try, and we worked out the score together. I'm very happy with the sound of the score but it remains one of my few regrets that I wasn't free to put more of my own time into it. The lion's share of the credit for it goes to David.

Finally, I remain surprised that directing—-independent directing at least—is considered a young man's game. It's sometimes plausibly compared to professions like expedition leader, field general, orchestral conductor, or supervising architect: none of whom would ordinarily get a chance until they were at least forty, an age when multimillion dollar budgets, sensitive artists, Teamsters, deadlines, rain, and loneliness don't tend to seem so daunting as they might to a younger person.

What do you want the audience to get from the film?

The film is a study of one particular member of those lost-in-time Virginians, whose simplicity, naiveté, genteel poverty and love of learning seem so out of place, indeed irrelevant, to the contemporary world. I hope they get a sense of both the humor and the pathos in his situation, and, through him, see that not only nature but the natural order of life are under assault right now. But all of the above is background, really, to the story of a gentle person with curious ways, who would rather live in a cave on the creek than ever give in to defeat. I hope the audience finds him to be an unforgettable character.

About the Cast...

ROGER REES (Nat Banks)

Roger Rees is an Associate Artist with The Royal Shakespeare Company. Along with playing the title role in *Hamlet* and many other plays, he is renowned for playing the eponymous hero in *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, for which he won an Oliver Award in England and a Tony award for Best Actor on Broadway in 1981.

His feature film debut came in 1983 with a role in Bob Fosse's "Star 80". He has since appeared in films including Mel Brooks' "Robin Hood Men In Tights" (1993), "Next Stop Wonderland" (1998), "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (1999), "Blackmail" (2000), "Frida" (2002), "The Emperor's Club" (2002), "The Scorpion King" (2002) and "Going Under" (2003). On American TV he can be seen in "Cheers," "Liberty," "The Crossing," "OZ," "Law and Order" and as the British Ambassador Sir John Marbury a recurring role on "West Wing."

In the West End Rees starred opposite Jane Lapotaire in *Double Double* a play he co-authored with Eric Elice; and Rees also created the roles of Henry in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, and Kerner in Stoppard's *Hapgood* a part he later played in Los Angeles. On the New York Stage he has played leading roles in *The Misanthrope* for the Classic Stage Company; *The Uneasy Chair*, and *The End of the Day* at Playwrights Horizons; *The Rehearsal* and *Uncle Vanya* for the Roundabout Theatre; also Cocteau's *Les Parents Terribles* - on Broadway named *Indiscretions* - with Eileen Atkins and Kathleen Turner; and, most recently he played the lead 'Alfie Byrne' in the Terence McNally, Lyn Ahrens, Stephen Flaherty musical, *A Man of No Importance* at the Lincoln Center.

MARY MCDONNELL (Amy Banks)

Mary McDonnell is a native New Yorker. She got her start in the theatre, and has performed on and off Broadway in such plays as *Summer and Smoke*, *Buried Child*, *Heidi Chronicles*, and *Still Life*, for which she won an Obie.

McDonnell's early film career included an appearance in "Garbo Talks" (1984), and feature roles in John Sayles' "Matewan" (1987) and the action film "Tiger Warsaw" (1988). She

received an Oscar nomination for her performance opposite Kevin Costner in "Dances With Wolves" (1990). She then co-starred with Kevin Kline in "Grand Canyon" (1991) and with Robert Redford in "Sneakers" (1992). McDonnell's first starring role was in John Sayles' "Passion Fish" (1992), for which she earned another Oscar nomination. She has also appeared in such feature films as "Independence Day" (1997), "Mumford" (1999), and "Donnie Darko" (2001). She has been a television series regular on "Chestnut Hill" and "High Society", and has appeared in such popular shows such as "ER," for which she won an Emmy. Her most current project is "Battle Star Gallactica," for SCIFI.

About the Filmmakers...

RICHARD SQUIRES (Writer/Director/Executive Producer/Co-Composer)

Richard Squires was educated at Columbia University, and studied philosophy at St. John's College Annapolis. He has worked as an actor, director, playwright, and technician for La Mama Amsterdam, The Bread and Puppet Theatre, American Place Theatre, The Players Theatre of England, Brecht West Theatre, and others.

He was also the co-creator of Soft Gallery, an environmental performance theatre; the founding director of the Museum of Temporary Art; and a founding board member of District Curators. He is currently a board member of the W.B. Yeats Drama Foundation and the Piedmont Environmental Council. His essays, interviews, and reviews on history and theatre have been published in the Washington Post's Outlook, The Manchester Guardian Weekly, The Atlanta Constitution, Performance Magazine, Gnosis, Alternatives Theatrales, and others. He has been a fellow of both the National Endowment and Meet the Composer.

Squires' first play *Feathertop* was produced by the Brecht West Theatre in 1970. His second play, *The Judge*, was presented at the Protetch-Rivkin Gallery in 1973, along with his first musical work, *The Second Play*. In the 1980's he studied composition at Juilliard and held a scholar's desk at the Library of Congress while completing the *Albion Cycle*, for which a concert reading was performed at the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C. in 1995. His credits in composition include music for *The Second Play*, *The Fall of Albion*, and *CRAZY LIKE A FOX*.

CRAZY LIKE A FOX is his film directorial debut.

PATRICIA FOULKROD (Producer)

Patricia Foulkrod has worked in television and film production since 1974. She started in New York producing political commercials for major electoral campaigns and commercials for such clients as Merrill Lynch, Mercedes Benz, and Air France. She worked for two years running a company that made corporate and documentary films, before moving to Los Angeles in 1984 to produce "The Living Seas", a 70mm EPCOT film for Disney. She also produced an hour documentary for PBS called "They're Doing My Time," which resulted in a CBS movie of the week starring Angelia Bassett, for which she was the executive producer.

In the late 1980's Foulkrod began line producing feature films, and has now produced eleven films. These credits include "American Rhapsody," starring Nastassja Kinski and Tony Goldwyn, "Claudine's Return," starring Christina Applegate, and "The Linguini Incident," starring David Bowie and Rosanna Arquette. She also co-produced the six-hour documentary series for Ted Turner "The Native Americans," for which she was nominated for an Emmy in 1994. Her anti-war documentary, "The Ground Truth", premiered at Sundance 2006, where it was acquired by Focus Films.

BILL WARRELL (Producer)

Bill Warrell is a graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and earned an M.A. in Producing for Film and Video at the American University. He is the founder of District Curators Inc. (DCI Productions). For 25 years DCI Productions has been one of the country's most adventurous presenters and producers of the performing and media arts. Its presentations

include premiere works by David Byrne, Laurie Anderson, Phillip Glass and Spaulding Grey; and its productions include the jazz opera *Long Tongues* by Julius Hemphill. Warrell has also produced radio specials for National Public Radio, and WBGO FM in Newark, N.J. and WPFM in Washington D.C.

He has produced and directed the documentary "Still Singing After All These Years" for the Girl Scouts of America, and two episodes in a series of television documentaries entitled "Performance Portraits".

GARY GRIEG (Director of Photography)

Gary Grieg is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, he was awarded the Virginia Museum Fellowship for painting, and has exhibited internationally. He is one of the founders of Engine Pictures.

His commercial cinematography credits include "The Trials of Henry Kissinger," "The Panama Canal," and numerous projects for National Geographic, PBS, Columbia Pictures Television, Sony Music and HBO. He wrote and directed the short film "That Grip" (Sundance 1991), and has completed, as cinematographer, two independent feature films. He recently completed principal photography for "Blood Dawn of the Maya" a National Geographic Special, and is currently shooting projects in the Ser Mey Tibetan Monastery in Bylakuppe, India, and the Yaminowi Indian villages of the Peruvian Amazon.

KINNERETH ELLENTUCK REMINGTON (Production Designer)

Kinnereth Remington has had 20 years experience as a Production Designer and Art Director for feature films, television, and commercials. Some of those credits include "Time of the Titans" (TV pilot), "The Critical Eye" (TV series), "Water for Tea" (HDTV film), and Mary Chapin Carpenter's "Just Let Me Into Your Heart" (music video). She graduated with honors from the School of Visual Arts, NYC, and now lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

DONNA ZAKOWSKA (Costume Designer)

Donna Zakowska studied dance and painting at Columbia University and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, and is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama. She has designed for theatre, circus, film, opera, music and puppet theatre, including nine seasons for the Big Apple Circus and a concert tour for Mick Jagger. Her theatre work has included projects with Fernando Arrabal, Eve Ensler, Richard Foreman, John Kelly, Harry Kondoleon, William H. Macy, Tom O'Horgan, Roman Paska, Carey Perloff, Steve Reich and Julie Taymor.

Her designs have been seen at theatres throughout the world, including the Hebbel Theater (Berlin), the Barbizon and Royal Festival Hall (London), Bobigny, Châtelet and the Théâtre du Rond-Point (Paris), Teatro Argentina (Rome), BAM, Lincoln Center and the Public Theater (New York).

After beginning her film work with Woody Allen, John Turturro ("Mac") and David Salle ("Search and Destroy"), her movies have included "Harriet the Spy," "The Pallbearer," "Polish Wedding," "Forces of Nature," "Illuminata," "One True Thing," "Invisible Circus," "Original Sin," and "Kate and Leopold."

SHERI BYLANDER (Editor)

Sheri Bylander lives and works in New York City. Along with the award-winning documentary "Rising Low," Bylander edited the feature films "Si Laraby," and the Cannes hit, "Fast Food Fast Women". Her assistant editor credits include Woody Allen's "Sweet and Lowdown" and "Small Time Crooks," and Sidney Lumet's "100 Center Street," and HBO's "Sex in

the City.” She was also an Associate Producer of the feature-length documentary and Cable Ace Award winner, “Wonderland.”

DAVID KANE (Composer)

David Kane composed the score for CRAZY LIKE A FOX with writer/director Richard Squires. Over the years he has played with such jazz greats as Dizzy Gillespie, The Duke Ellington Orchestra, Nancy Wilson and Woody Shaw. He has also played with the Baltimore Symphony, the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, and the National Symphony Orchestra.

Since 1988, Kane has written scores for TV series such as National Geographic’s “Explorer” and “Taboo”. He has also written for National Audubon specials, Discovery Channel, History Channel, and the Learning Channel. In 1992, he was commissioned to write a piece for the National Symphony Chamber Orchestra entitled Rhythm Changes.