

June 28, 2006

New Line Cinema Greenlights *The Golden Compass* for a September 4 Start Date: 12-year-old British schoolgirl to play Lyra in adaptation of the first of Phillip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy.

Film set for November 16, 2007 release date

LONDON (June 28, 2006) – New Line Cinema has officially greenlit production on *The Golden Compass*, the highly anticipated adaptation of the first of author Philip Pullman's bestselling *His Dark Materials* trilogy, it was announced today by New Line's Co-Chairmen and Co-CEOs Bob Shaye and Michael Lynne. Production on the \$150 million-budgeted film is scheduled to begin September 4 in the UK, with Oscar-nominated writer/director Chris Weitz (*About a Boy*, *Antz*) at the helm.

"*The Golden Compass* is the most ambitious film that New Line has undertaken since *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and we have assembled a remarkable creative team, headed by Chris Weitz, to bring it to fruition," comment New Line's Shaye and Lynne.

Newcomer Dakota Blue Richards has been cast in the lead role of Lyra Belacqua. Richards landed the role after filmmakers conducted an extensive casting search throughout England, during which they saw more than 10,000 young girls. Open calls were held in Oxford, Cambridge, Exeter, and Kendal, before Richards was chosen from the Cambridge call for an audition and subsequent screen test.

"Dakota made what should have been an extremely difficult decision quite easy," says writer/director Weitz. "We wanted a completely new face for Lyra, but I was surprised that any young girl, especially one without training, could light up the screen as Dakota does."

Pullman adds, "I'm delighted with the casting of Dakota Blue Richards as Lyra. As soon as I saw Dakota's screen test, I realized that the search was over. Dakota has just the combination of qualities that make up the complicated character of this girl, and I very much look forward to seeing the film take shape, with Dakota's Lyra at the heart of it."

Helping to bring *The Golden Compass* to the big screen will be an all-star production team that includes Oscar-winning production designer Dennis Gassner (*Road To Perdition*, *Big Fish*), Oscar-nominated costume designer Ruth Myers (*L.A. Confidential*, *Emma*), and Oscar-nominated visual effects supervisor Mike Fink (*X-Men*, *X2*, *Road To Perdition*).

The Golden Compass is being produced by Deborah Forte of Scholastic Entertainment and Weitz's Depth of Field production company. Paul Weitz (an Oscar nominee for *About a Boy*) and Andrew Miano will serve as executive producers on the film. Bill Carraro will also serve as a producer on the film.

Based on the bestselling and award-winning Pullman novels, the *His Dark Materials* trilogy is comprised of *The Golden Compass*, *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass*. It revolves around a young girl who travels to the far north to save her best friend. Along the way, she encounters shape-shifting creatures, witches, and a variety of otherworldly characters in parallel universes.

About New Line Cinema Corporation:

Founded almost 40 years ago, New Line Cinema is the most successful independent film company in the world. Its mission is to produce innovative, popular and profitable entertainment in the best creative environment. In addition to the production, marketing and distribution of theatrical motion pictures, the fully-integrated studio has divisions devoted to home entertainment, television, music, theater, merchandising and an international unit. In 2005, New Line partnered with HBO to form Picturehouse, a new theatrical distribution company to release independent films. A pioneer in franchise filmmaking, New Line's Oscar-winning *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy is one of the most successful film franchises in history. New Line is a division of Time Warner, Inc. (TWX).

About Scholastic Media:

Scholastic Media is a leading producer of quality, family-oriented feature films, television programming, videos, and web sites and is a major developer and marketer of children's brands worldwide. A division of Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education and media company, Scholastic Media produces the award-winning, top-rated animated series *Clifford The Big Red Dog*® (PBS KIDS®); the Emmy-award winning spin-off to this hit series, *Clifford's Puppy Days*(tm) (PBS KIDS); the Emmy-award winning series *I SPY* (HBO Family) and *The Magic School Bus*®(TLC), starring Lily Tomlin; the award-winning *Dear America*® series; and the popular kids' adventure series *Animorphs*® and *Goosebumps*®. In October 2004, Scholastic Media's new series, *Maya & Miguel*(tm) debuted on PBS KIDS GO!. Scholastic Media's critically acclaimed feature films include *Clifford's Really Big Movie*, *The Baby-sitters Club*, *The Indian in the Cupboard*, and *The Mighty*.