

# THE CELESTINE PROPHECY

## MOVIE PRODUCTION NOTES

Matthew Settle, Thomas Kretschmann, Sarah Wayne Callies, Annabeth Gish, Hector Elizondo, Joaquim de Almeida and Jurgen Prochnow head an international ensemble cast in this spiritual adventure based on James Redfield's worldwide best-selling novel, The Celestine Prophecy. Directed by Armand Mastroianni from a screenplay by James Redfield and Barnet Bain, *The Celestine Prophecy - The Movie* is produced by Barnet Bain, Terry Collis, James Redfield and Beverly J. Camhe. Shot entirely on location in St. Augustine and Ocala, Florida, and Costa Rica, the film is a production of Celestine Films, LLC and Barnet Bain Films.

Using an approach that is part adventure tale, part parable, and imbued with intriguing and exhilarating music, the film tells the story of John Woodson (Mathew Settle), whose life is at a crossroads. He is about to experience a dramatic and profound metamorphosis. Through a mysterious set of coincidences, he finds himself on an adventure to Peru in search of ancient scrolls, known as the Celestine Prophecy. Resistant at first, skeptical and unsure, John finds that with every step he takes, each person he encounters leads him to a new understanding. It is only in this letting go to a higher consciousness that he uncovers life's true purpose and his own destiny.

"On one level, it's an adventure tale where you really enjoy the treasure hunt for the last of the scrolls. On another level, it's a story of discovering a new level of spiritual awareness, a new way of engaging in life where you notice the way mysterious coincidences and guiding hunches lead us forward in life," said Redfield.

Originally created and self-published by Redfield and later picked up by Warner Books, The Celestine Prophecy sold over 14 million copies and became an unprecedented publishing phenomenon that continues today.

Redfield has continued to write books aimed at making spiritual truth accessible at a personal level and continuing to reveal powerful insights concerning ideas about man's destiny and purpose. Among these are the bestsellers, The Tenth Insight and The Secret of Shambhala. Some of his other publications include The Celestine Vision: Living the New Spiritual Awareness and The Celestine Prophecy: An Experiential Guide.

Matthew Settle (*The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer*, *U-571*) stars as John Woodson. He is guided by Wil, played by Thomas Kretschmann (*Head in the Clouds*, *The Pianist*, *U-571*), and meets novice Prophecy student Marjorie, portrayed by newcomer Sarah Wayne Callies (*Tarzan*) in her motion picture debut. The graceful Julia is played by Annabeth Gish, whose film credits include *Double Jeopardy*, *Wyatt Earp*, *Nixon*, *Beautiful Girls*, *Desert Bloom* and *Mystic Pizza*.

Emmy Award winner Hector Elizondo (*Princess Diaries I and II*, *Tortilla Soup*, *Pretty Woman*) will be seen in the role of the spiritually conflicted Cardinal Sebastian. Joaquim de Almeida (*Clear and Present Danger*, *Behind Enemy Lines*, *"24"*) appears as Father Sanchez, once Sebastian's protégé and now a church philosopher devoted to the Prophecy. Jurgen Prochnow (*The Replacement Killers*, *Dune*, *Das Boot*) plays Robert Jensen, an international conspirator whose mission is to destroy the scrolls and prevent the revelation of the ninth prophecy.

Rounding out the cast are Castulo Guerra (*The Alamo*) playing Father Jose, Obba Babatundé (*The Manchurian Candidate*, *John Q*) as the compassionate Miguel met at

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Vicente, John Aylward (“ER,” *Down With Love*) as Professor Dobson and Robyn Cohen (*The Life Aquatic*) playing Charlene, John’s friend who initiated the idea of his going on this adventure.

More than a decade since its original publication, millions of readers continue to experience the novel’s positive impact on their lives. The author has been unwaveringly dedicated to honoring them. Over the years and with several other opportunities to bring the book to the screen, he held tight to the notion of producing the movie himself and seeing it realized with a particular vision and at the right time.

“I felt I owed it to the fans to stay involved and make sure that the movie reflected the truths in the book,” said Redfield. “It’s in the service of that that I tried to stay attached to the project and not give it away. It was important to make sure it was done with integrity.”

The key was to come up with a script that would elucidate the spiritual layers of the novel and offer moviegoers a kind of thriller along the way. James Redfield teamed with Barnet Bain, producer of the Academy Award-winning *What Dreams May Come* and screenwriter of the film, *Jesus*, to write the screenplay.

“On one level, it’s an adventure tale where you really enjoy the treasure hunt for the last of the scrolls. At another level, it’s a reflection of the characters understanding a kind of new meaning, a new way of engaging in life where you notice the coincidences and try to stay full of an inspiration that comes from connecting with the divine in the world and the divine behind the world,” said Redfield.

“These experiences are common to every religion and are the real juice behind pursuing a kind of spiritual opening in one’s life,” said Redfield. “It’s really the good life when one starts to get in touch with it. It’s happening everywhere, within every religion and every church. What’s fun is that the movie will just heighten our curiosity about it and our experience of it.”

“As soon as we got the screenplay finished, everything started to fall into place,” said Redfield. “It really felt like being swept by a current. It was as though some gear changed in the world. Like the book before it and like the experience of meaningful coincidences and meeting the right people at the right time, the movie began to develop and reflect that as well.”

The term, “synchronicity,” was coined by psychologist and philosopher Carl Jung. It defines the experience of meaningful coincidence, something that occurred with increasing frequency as cast and crew came together to make this film.

Principal photography began in the spring of 2004 in the historic city of St. Augustine, Florida, the oldest city in the United States founded in the mid 1500s. Stately Spanish Moorish architecture mirrored the story’s centuries-old church and government buildings of Lima. Filmmakers were granted access to places never before filmed in and around the city. A private estate in St. Augustine and Washington Oaks Gardens State Park provided exteriors of Vicente with lush vegetation, rose gardens and huge live oak trees covered in Spanish moss.

“We couldn’t have found a better spot to shoot the scenes of Vicente that people will recognize from the book. I think it’s very close to the way they were described,” said Redfield. “Washington Oaks has some of the largest oaks and dense forest that I’ve ever seen. Some of the trees where we’re doing key scenes are over 500 years old. It will be fun for the readers to see what the book talks about and sense the majesty and energy

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one can feel around a forest that ancient. It's been a joy to see that part of the book come alive."

Filming continued in Ocala, Florida where the company inhabited miles of an enormous rock quarry as a massive set featuring a rainforest in a box canyon where a waterfall descended a 150' sheer granite rock face to pool into a pristine lake. The perfect setting for the Celestine Ruins, the quarry would also serve as locations for a prison, military convoys and explosive scenes of insurgent violence with peasants stripped of their meager belongings scurrying for cover as the bus in which they traveled was blown high into the sky.

"The first location we scouted was the 'ruins' site," recalled Salle Redfield. "It had been raining and it was very muddy and cold. The road was so bumpy you couldn't even drive on it and we had to hike down and back up. We knew when we left the area that we had touched on a magical place, a place that we could turn into the magic that we really wanted and needed for the film."

A demolition crew came in to blow out one side of a cliff and provide access for trucks along a primitive road built for the production. By the time filming began in that location, the area had been transformed and the weather was hot and dry.

Deep into the quarry at the side of the lake, Academy Award-nominated production designer Jim Schoppe and his construction crew erected the sacred site of an adobe church first seen in a prologue set in 1622. There a small group of devotees gathers to learn about the Prophecy as the scrolls are read. Without warning, they are attacked by a murdering band of conquistadors who race through the area destroying everyone and everything in their path. John Woodson's adventure begins at this other time and place where we first see the faces of those who will come together again in present day still seeking the illusive ninth insight.

Production had arrived synchronistically when there was a worldwide resurgence of interest in spirituality. Its renaissance was recognized by banner headlines in national and international news journals and endless discussions on radio and television, and marked by the arrival of a number of bestselling spiritual and religious books and the unprecedented success of Mel Gibson's *The Passion*. Shortly before the first day of production, The Celestine Prophecy was listed as #18 in USA Today's 100 top-selling books of the last decade. Signs pointed to the notion that this was a movie whose time had come.

Armand Mastroianni, a veteran of several features and highly prestigious television projects, was entrusted to direct the film. "When I met James Redfield, I realized that this wasn't a regular movie, it was a parable. This was something that had a very specific philosophy and message," said Mastroianni. "The more I became involved with it, the more I took that journey with James."

"It was interesting because we did preproduction for a year," said Redfield. "Then all of a sudden this army showed up with huge trucks full of lights and generators. I've been on sets before, but there was something special about seeing this army come in and then the actors come in in character to start the film. I got very nostalgic about the characters in the book coming alive and hearing lines that I'd written suddenly come to life. At certain points, I just had to stand back and really enjoy the process."

In actualizing the story from book to screen, Mastroianni worked with director of photography Michael Givens to make visual choices that would differentiate the film from others and allow light to create a sense of transition that would keep the story flowing

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almost as one passage. Seeing the characters as embodying the insights and the story as a metaphor for life, he positioned his cameras as a kind of unobserved observer and worked with visual effects artists to enhance the natural beauty around them and heighten the experience of literally “seeing” energy.

“By no means is this speaking of any kind of new religion. It’s about discovering these insights and thoughts as our lead character does,” said Mastroianni. “He learns about male-female relationships, about controlling, about energy and synchronicity, all of things that are imparted to him through the other characters. It’s a very interesting philosophy that embraces our common day to day living and the things that we don’t see that are right around us, the natural beauty, the environment, the person that we live with. All these things we take for granted. This gives us a different perspective.”

An international cast of veteran actors, up-and-coming stars and newcomers was assembled to tell this universal story. In addition to the obvious talents of the ensemble, there was another criteria considered during casting.

“We wanted to find actors who were authentically on their own journey searching for meaning, connection and understanding,” said Bain. “We wanted them to have a spirit about them that was confident about that search and conveyed this energy as if one was just about to find out this great truth.”

“Matthew came with this incredible energy and an eagerness to explore the character,” he continued. “I love actors who want to challenge the material because it gets you to think about it apart from what might be on the page. It’s appropriate for the lead character to be that way because he represents everyman.”

“I had gone through a period in my life where I was faithless and thought I had all the answers,” Settle revealed. “About a year ago, I experienced a restoration of faith. What I’m going through in my personal life is very similar to what John Woodson is going through.”

Thomas Kretschmann as Wil acts as a mentor to Settle’s Woodson. The actors, who worked together before on the film, *U-571*, recognized a reflection of their own relationship in the characters they portrayed.

“Matthew’s very much like John and I try to be very much like Wil. We both grew up a little since *U-571*,” said Kretschmann. “It’s fun to watch him because he has this non-stop energy. He wears me out sometimes, but he has this beautiful heart and he fights so much for his part. For him, playing this part and discovering these things is a journey as a human being. This relates to me as well.”

Redfield sensed the intuitive way the critically acclaimed German actor worked. “I don’t believe in an overload of information on screen or in your character,” said Kretschmann. “When I look at James, he’s kind of like a cowboy version of a Buddha, a cowboy Buddha. He’s a role model for Wil, at least for me.”

Synchronicity came into play when Annabeth Gish joined the cast. A day before she would learn that she was due on set, the actress was on a plane back to Los Angeles from shooting a role on “CSI Miami.” Unaware that producers were trying to reach her, she wrote in her daybook “something magical is about to happen.” Someone mentioned the town of St. Augustine. Then the passenger she was sitting next to talked about being in love with woman named Julia. When the plane landed, she turned her cell phone back on to find several urgent messages about needing her to fly right back to Florida to begin shooting the role of Julia in the movie version of The Celestine Prophecy.

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"I'm honored to be playing Julia because she embodies what the insights say and are. I think she's the love piece, a kind of Mother Earth figure," said Gish. "I think Julia is a cornerstone of the movie and its message in that she's devoted her adult life to transcribing the Aramaic scrolls and to embodying the insights, learning what they are and practicing them. The insights are such a beautiful code of honor, a code of living. Julia's very peaceful and perceptive, very intuitive. She's very serene in nature and in her relationships with other people. I wish I could be more like her."

Sarah Wayne Callies and Matthew Settle were charged with illustrating the push-pull of control issues in male-female relationships through their characters of Marjorie and John. It's one that Settle enjoyed with a feistiness he felt in both Sarah and himself.

"All the actors know the feeling," said Redfield. "They're hitting all the Celestine beats."

Portuguese actor Joaquim de Almeida played the role of Father Sanchez, a progressive thinker who embraces the meaning and message of the Prophecy and helps John Woodson see the light. Better known in the U.S. for the villains he's played, this was the sixth priest the actor has portrayed in an illustrious career starring with some of the world's greatest talents and shooting all over the world in Spanish, English, French, Italian and Portuguese. De Almeida was pleased when James Redfield told him that several years ago he'd had a premonition that the actor would one day appear in the film.

Before De Almeida's Father Sanchez became involved in the study of the Prophecy, he was schooled in the traditions of the Catholic Church under the tutelage of Hector Elizondo's Cardinal Sebastian. "There's always a great paradox," said Elizondo of his character. "Bad guys don't think they're bad guys. He doesn't think of himself as a bad guy. This man of the cloth is not a villain. He has his own point of view; he has a position. He thinks he's serving God. What happens is that there is a confluence of circumstances in which he has an opportunity to doubt. For me, it's about whether or not he takes that opportunity."

German actor Jurgen Prochnow enjoyed playing the dark character of Robert Jensen, a man he saw as a "great enigma," an undercover agent working for an unidentified power threatened by the possibility of losing its supremacy should the ninth insight be revealed.

Readers will meet new characters in the movie version of The Celestine Prophecy and witness another time in history 400 years ago when the insights were initially revealed and characters we see today first met in another lifetime long ago. The youngest member of the cast is Rachel Erickson, a talented young girl who makes her screen debut in an important role as one of the movie's new characters. We see her time and time again in John's visions, meet her then and now

"We removed some characters from the book and added some that I think will delight the readers. I felt like the way we departed from the book was in the best interest of the medium and the message of the movie," said Redfield. "One of the characters we added was a little girl. She's nine years old and an orphan, but she has knowledge equal to and actually beyond the people who are studying the Prophecy. That knowledge is innate with her. In other words, she found it independently because one of the realities of the story is that this knowledge is available to anyone. It's a natural kind of expansion of our awareness of how the spiritual operates in the world. She not only has this knowledge, she helps the others figure out how to find the ninth insight."

*"All you have to do is open up a little bit and do a few things. Stay positive when events happen to you and find the silver lining. Give love and energy rather than take it or try to*

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*manipulate other people out of theirs. Know that there's an inspiring level of awareness that can be attained when you realize you're on a path of destiny. It's all about finding a certain calling that you came here to this life to accomplish. It's that simple. It's a choice one has to make. It's our natural inclination."*

--- James Redfield

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