

Disney Branded Television



May 4, 2022

ACCLAIMED NOVEL 'OUT OF MY MIND' TO BE ADAPTED INTO A MOVIE BY BIG BEACH, PARTICIPANT AND DISNEY BRANDED TELEVISION FOR DISNEY+

-- Amber Sealey to Direct, Phoebe-Rae Taylor Cast in Starring Role --



Courtesy of Phoebe-Rae Taylor / Amber Sealey Courtesy of Michelle R. Jackson

The best-selling and award-winning novel "Out of My Mind," by esteemed writer and professional educator Sharon M. Draper, will be adapted into a humor- and heart-filled movie by Big Beach, Participant, EveryWhere Studios LLC and Disney Branded Television for Disney+; it was announced today by Ayo Davis, president, Disney Branded Television.

Academy Award® nominee Peter Saraf ("A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," "The Farewell," "Little Miss Sunshine") will produce along with Dan Angel ("Rescued By Ruby," "Door To Door," "Goosebumps") and Participant ("Wonder"), a company that has produced more than 100 feature and documentary films that collectively have earned 85 Academy Award nominations. Executive producers are Big Beach's Michael B. Clark and Alex Turteltaub, Participant's founder Jeff Skoll and Robert Kessel, along with Tom Mazza, David Calver Jones and Brian Gott.

Amber Sealey ("No Man of God," "How Does It Start") will direct from an adapted screenplay written by Daniel Stiepleman (Humanitas Prize winner for "On the Basis of Sex"). The production team includes multiple people from the cerebral palsy and AAC (augmentative and alternative communication device) community, who have been involved from the earliest stages of development.

After a worldwide search, actress Phoebe-Rae Taylor will star in this heartwarming story introducing the multitalented 12-year-old Melody Brooks, a girl with cerebral palsy. Melody has a quick wit and a sharp mind, but due to her being non-verbal and using a wheelchair, she is not given the same academic opportunities as her classmates. Though she has fierce advocates in her parents, Melody yearns to be seen and heard by the world around her. When a young educator notices her student's untapped potential, she encourages Melody to participate in mainstream education, where greater challenges and greater successes await.

Davis said, "There's a sense of exhilaration here as we embark with this very well-regarded creative team in adapting Sharon Draper's candid, beautiful and powerful book that tells a universally relatable story about both following your dreams and having an impact in this world. It's also a wonderful opportunity for us to center the lived experiences of people with disabilities."

"I'm thrilled to tell this sophisticated, coming-of-age story that is unlike any we've seen before and to have such wonderful collaborators in Peter Saraf, Participant, Big Beach, Daniel Stiepleman and Disney," said Sealey. "In Phoebe-Rae Taylor, we have found an amazing actress, and I can't wait for the world to meet her. My hope is that 'Out of My Mind' will be an important part of disability awareness and inclusion and will expand the conversation surrounding diversity and disability."

"'Out of My Mind' advances Participant's mission of reaching audiences with incredible stories that celebrate difference and challenge preconceived notions about ability," said Robert Kessel, executive vice president of Narrative Film at Participant. "We are thrilled to work with Disney and the outstanding creative team to bring this story to life."

Saraf said, "Bringing a story that has been beloved by millions who've read the book to the screen is such an incredible opportunity. We get to make something that hasn't been seen before — a coming of age story about a sixth grader who is non-verbal and uses a wheelchair and who will be played by a wonderful actress with cerebral palsy."

Amber Sealey is an award-winning filmmaker whose 2021 feature "No Man Of God," starring Elijah Wood and Luke Kirby, was released theatrically to rave reviews. Her features include "No Light and No Land Anywhere" (winner: Special Jury Award at the LA Film Festival, Indie Vision Breakthrough Award at Twin Cities Film Festival), and "How To Cheat" (winner: Best Performance at LA Film Festival, Best Narrative at BendFilm). Her short film "How Does It Start" world premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and won Best Narrative Short at the Sarasota Film Festival, among other awards. Sealey is a fellow of the AFI Directing Workshop for Women, and a participant of Ryan Murphy's Half Initiative, the NBCUniversal Directors Initiative, the WeForShe DirectHer program and Film Independent's Directing Lab and their Fast Track program. Sealey was recently announced as director of "Nod If You Understand," a feature exploring the infamous D.B. Cooper airplane hijacking, with McFarland Entertainment producing. Sealey is represented by Paradigm, MGMT Entertainment and Ramo Law.

Sharon M. Draper is a New York Times bestselling author and a recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award, the Coretta Scott King Award (five times) and the Charlotte Huck Award. "Out of My Mind" received an NAACP Image Award nomination, a Parents' Choice Award Silver Medal, Teacher's Choice designation by The International Literacy Association (ILA) and Notable Children's Book in Language Arts designation by the

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The sequel, "Out of My Heart," is currently on the New York Times bestseller list.

The deal was negotiated by Jeannine Tang, general counsel, and Stefanie Holmes, vice president of Business and Legal Affairs for Participant; Jackie Eckhouse of Sloss Eckhouse Dasti Haynes LawCo LLP on behalf of Big Beach; and Mila Livitz, senior vice president, and Ray Caldito, assistant chief counsel, on behalf of Disney.

About Participant

Founded by Chairman Jeff Skoll and under the leadership of CEO David Linde, Participant (www.participant.com) combines the power of a good story well told with real world impact and awareness around today's most vital issues. Through its worldwide network of traditional and digital distribution, aligned with partnerships with key non-profit and NGO organizations, Participant speaks directly to the rise of today's "conscious consumer," representing the well over 2 billion consumers compelled to make meaningful content a priority focus.

As an industry content leader, Participant annually produces up to six narrative feature films, six documentary films, three episodic television series, and more than 20 hours of digital short form programming. Participant's more than 100 films have collectively earned 85 Academy Award® nominations and 21 wins, including Best Picture for *Spotlight* and *Green Book*; Best Documentary Feature for *An Inconvenient Truth*, *CITIZENFOUR*, *The Cove* and *American Factory*; and Best Foreign Language Film for *Roma* and *A Fantastic Woman*. Participant also has earned 44 EMMY® Award nominations and 11 wins, including two wins for the groundbreaking *When They See Us*. Follow Participant on Twitter ([@Participant](https://twitter.com/Participant)) and on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

About Big Beach

Big Beach is the independent studio behind more than 25 of the most recognizable indie films, television and theater productions over the last 15 years. Founded in 2004, Big Beach has produced many acclaimed projects including the Academy Award-winning *LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE* and the Academy Award-nominated *LOVING* directed by Jeff Nichols and Starring Ruth Negga. Recently, Big Beach dominated the awards conversation with their two films, *A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD* directed by Marielle Heller and starring Tom Hanks and the A24 Sundance Film Festival breakout *THE FAREWELL*, directed by Lulu Wang and starring Awkwafina. As a TV studio Big Beach is behind the critically acclaimed series *VIDA*, which ran for three seasons on Starz, as well as the *SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS* starring Elisabeth Olsen, which was among the first scripted series to launch on Facebook Watch. Most recently, Big Beach produced Ry Russo Young's Docu-series *NUCLEAR FAMILY*, which premiered on HBO in late 2021.

About Disney Branded Television

Disney Branded Television is a provider of original content — scripted and unscripted, live-action and animated — for Disney+, Disney Channel, Disney XD and Disney Junior, with a primary focus on imaginative, aspirational stories geared towards kids, tweens, teens and families. Among Disney Branded Television's upcoming premieres are the original movie "Sneakerella," "Zombies 3," "National Treasure," "American Born Chinese," "The Crossover," "Percy Jackson and the Olympians," "The Spiderwick Chronicles," "SATURDAYS," "The Santa Clause," and the feature documentary "Mickey: Story of a Mouse."

About Disney+

Disney+ is the dedicated streaming home for movies and shows from Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars, and National Geographic, along with The Simpsons and much more. In select international markets, it also includes the new general entertainment content brand, Star. The flagship direct-to-consumer streaming service from The Walt Disney Company, Disney+ is part of the Disney Media & Entertainment Distribution segment. The service offers commercial-free streaming alongside an ever-growing collection of exclusive originals, including feature-length films, documentaries, live-action and animated series, and short-form content. With unprecedented access to Disney's long history of incredible film and television entertainment, Disney+ is also the exclusive streaming home for the newest releases from The Walt Disney Studios. Disney+ is available as a standalone streaming service or as part of The Disney Bundle that gives subscribers access to Disney+, Hulu, and ESPN+. For more, visit disneyplus.com, or find the Disney+ app on most mobile and connected TV devices.

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