

## **KUBO & THE 2 STRINGS (2016)**

- Released August 19th, 2016
- 1 hour 41 minutes
- \$60,000,000 budget
- Travis Knight directed
- Rated PG for thematic elements, scary images, action and peril
- Distributed by Focus Features, Laika Entertainment
- Produced by Travis Knight, Arianne Sutner

## **QUICK THOUGHTS:**

- Phil
- Marisa
- Stephanie

## **DEVELOPMENT**

- Laika Entertainment- *Coraline*, *ParaNorman*, and *The Boxtrolls*
- Originally conceived by character designer Shannon Tindle, Knight took a personal interest in the film, and after working in animation for more than 20 years, he decided it was time to direct.
- More than 600 people worked on Kubo
- Laika spent \$63 million in Oregon making "Kubo," according to the Governor's Office of Film & Television. It received incentives totaling \$5.2 million over the course of the production.
- Magical shamisen, or three-stringed Japanese folk instrument similar an American banjo
- "This film expresses the respect and admiration all the artists at LAIKA feel for Japan and its culture." Knight says that he hopes to pay homage to the "beautiful, breathtaking, almost otherworldly" nature of Japan
- Influence of Hayao Miyazaki and Akira Kurosawa

## **WRITING** (Marc Haimes, Chris Butler)

- Haimes- *Transformers*, *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*.
- Haimes- "the goal was to spark imaginative, boundless thinking in young viewers"
- Butler- *Corpse Bride*, *Coraline*, *The Boxtrolls* and *The Tigger Movie*

## **STORY/CAST**

- Too much like a quest/video game like (similar to Coraline)
- Too CGI?
- Idea of memories being the strongest (atheist belief?)
- Magical realism
- The villains
- The action
- The resolution
- Actual Japanese tradition

- The two strings being more powerful than the helmet, armor and sword

### **CHARLIZE THERON** (Monkey)

- Her first day she got to voice act with Art and she was really excited
- Known for *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Prometheus*, *Monster*, *Hancock*
- First language is Afrikaans, English is spoken as her second language
- Became a fashion model at age 14

### **MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY** (Beetle)

- “I hadn’t made a film my kids could watch and decided it was about time I did!”
- McConaughey’s first animated film
- “I’d been looking for a voice acting role for years. When this came along — it’s a quality production, Laika’s quality, the story’s good — I was in”
- Known for *Interstellar*, *Wolf of Wall Street*, *Dallas Buyers Club*, *Mud*

### **ART PARKINSON** (Kubo)

- *Game of Thrones*, *San Andreas*, *Love*, *Rosie*, *Dracula Untold*, *The Anomaly*, *Dark Touch*
- “Whenever I did the audition they sent the script over and it had a little illustration so I knew what Kubo looked like... they did send us over little care packages and things like that with like books of illustrations of the set and little props that they could send over and stuff.”
- Thick Irish accent
- Sent Audio file for audition when Art was 11. Creators were listening to actor’s voice that could cover the entire emotional range of the Kubo.
- Once Art was officially cast, Art’s voiced dropped (puberty) and Knight was concerned and asked Art to do his voice pitch higher like when he first heard his audition.

### **RALPH FIENNES** (Moon King)

- Raiden the Moon King, Kubo's grandfather, the father of the Sisters and Sariatu, and the main antagonist of the story
- Known for *Harry Potter*, *Grand Budapest Hotel*, *Schindler’s List*, *Skyfall*

### **GEORGE TAKEI** (Hosato)

- A villager who's a father figure to his daughter and teaches her their Japanese culture and traditions
- One of the most known Asian actors
- Known for *Mulan*, *Star Trek*, *General Hospital*

### **ROONEY MARA**

- The Sisters, Kubo's evil aunts and two of the Moon King's daughters
- Known for *Social Network*, *Her*, *Girl with the Dragon Tatto*

### **CARY-HIROYUKI TAGAWA**

- A villager and Kubo's biggest fan
- Known for *Planet of the Apes*, *Mortal Combat*

### **EASTER EGGS/ SYMBOLS/COMPARISONS/ TRIVIA**

- “When we finally finished [Boat] shot, a year and a half later, the visual effects department built a piñata of Kubo’s boat and they proceeded to beat the hell out of it,” Knight laughed. “They smashed it with savage glee. And instead of filling it with candy, they filled it with those little booze bottles you get on flights.”
- Made the *Guinness Book of World Records*- largest animated puppet ever used on a set: Giant skeleton in the Hall of Bones of the film. 17 feet tall and its arms stretch out to 24 feet, and it was designed to be this huge so Kubo could be in the picture with it during filming
- Universal Studios Hollywood, kicked off with a carnival-style pre-party, complete with cookie decorating, cotton candy, snow cones, and mini donuts.

### **DIRECTING** (Travis Knight)

- CEO and president of Laika Entertainment
- Directorial Debut
- *Kubo* is inspired by Knight’s mythical childhood heroes and the “otherworldly” trip to Japan he took with his father as an 8-year-old kid

### **PRODUCTION/CINEMATOGRAPHY** (Frank Passingham)

- Laika didn’t have any sprawling soundstages to work with; they had a bunch of “gussy-upped table tops in a crummy warehouse outside of Portland.”
- A mixture of computer animation and stop motion with a high-tech assist from 3-D printers that generate thousands of facial expressions for Laika's puppets.
- Complicated fight sequence at sea that took 18 months to animate.
- Boat comprised of 250,000 leaves, each applied by hand — was one of the most difficult shots to put together.
- Tiny origami squares from durable Tyvek homewrap after regular paper disintegrated.

### **EDITING/VFX** (Steve Emerson- VFX Supervisor)

- **SKELETON:** A giant, 16-foot, 400-pound, on a rotating base: “We were initially going to build a small, manageable skeleton,” said camera and motion control engineer Steve Switaj. The team concluded they would need to build an entire oversized puppet.
  - The puppet was built on a hexapod robot
  - Its nine-foot arms needed support, and were effectively puppeteered by a motor-driven system. It all took six months to build.
  - Was built on a greenscreen stage, where it could interact with the other, much smaller puppets during the shoot.
  - The floor and lower part of the room was built as a practical set. The top was a CG extension

- THE GARDEN OF EYES: Metal mesh that covers the entire inside, in the center were lights emitting electricity.
  - Encoding system: mimics the movement of a bowling ball.
- ORIGAMI BOAT: Built of thousands of leaves using laser cutters.
- STORMY SEAS: Copper wires that would roll in wave-like motions covered with shower covers. Used rippled glass as a water stand-in

### **SOUND/MUSIC** (Dario Marianelli)

- Academy Award-nominee
- *V for Vendetta*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Brothers Grimm*. Worked with LAIKA on *The Boxtrolls* soundtrack
  1. The Impossible Waves
  2. Kubo Goes to Town
  3. Story Time
  4. Ancestors
  5. Meet the Sisters!
  6. Origami Birds
  7. The Giant Skeleton
  8. The Leafy Galleon
  9. Above and Below
  10. The Galleon Restored
  11. Monkey's Story
  12. Hanzo's Fortress
  13. United-Divided
  14. Showdown with Grandfather
  15. Rebirth
  16. While My Guitar Gently Weeps – Regina Spektor

### **PROMOTION**

- To celebrate, the studio is gave away one of the greatest prize packages CinemaBlend has ever hosted. As part of one beautiful package, Laika flew one lucky family of 4 to Los Angeles. While there, said family went to Universal Studios, stay in a hotel for two nights and tour "From Coraline to Kubo: A Magical LAIKA Experience"
- The film screened at the Melbourne International Film Festival on August 13, 2016

### **BOX OFFICE**

- Domestic Summary (As of August 23rd): \$12,608,372
  - Worldwide: \$13,565,490
  - Opening Weekend: \$12,608,372  
(#4 rank, 3,260 theaters, \$3,868 average)
- Widest Release: 3,260 theaters
- The opening for the stop motion/vfx hybrid was the weakest ever for the Laika brand. The previous low had been *Paranorman*, which debuted in 2012 with \$14.1 million.

## RECEPTION

- IMDB: 8.4
- Cinemascore: A
- RT: 96% Tatometer, 91% Audience
- The action is gorgeously fluid, the idiosyncratic 3-D visual conceits are startling, and the story and its metaphors resolve in unexpected and moving ways. - New York Times
- "Kubo" offers another ominous mission for a lucky young misfit, this one a dark, yet thrilling adventure quest that stands as the crowning achievement in Laika's already impressive oeuvre.- Variety
- Christy Lemire of RogerEbert.com awarded the film 3.5 stars out of 4, saying that "one of the most impressive elements of "Kubo and the Two Strings"—besides its dazzling stop-motion animation, its powerful performances and its transporting score—is the amount of credit it gives its audience, particularly its younger viewers."
- IGN employee, Samantha Ladwig, gave the film 7.5/10, stating that the film is "Dark, twisted, and occasionally scary, but also with humor, love, and inspiration."
- CONTROVERSY: The watchdog *Media Action Network for Asian Americans (MANAA)* criticized Laika for using mainly white actors to voice Japanese characters in its major roles. MANAA had earlier criticized several other Hollywood films including *The Last Airbender* and *The Martian* for casting non-Asian actors in Asian roles

## SEQUEL/LEGACY

- Opened up the world for a sequel

## FINAL THOUGHTS

### REFERENCES:

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