

THE POST (2017)

- Released on December 22nd, 2017
- 1 Hour 56 minutes
- \$50,000,000 (estimated)
- Directed by Steven Spielberg
- Written by Liz Hannah, Josh Singer
- Amblin Entertainment, DreamWorks, Participant Media
- Rated PG-13 for language and brief war violence

QUICK THOUGHTS

- Marisa Serafini
- Phil Svitek
- Demetri Panos

DEVELOPMENT

- It took about nine months for Steven Spielberg to make *The Post*, from the moment he read the first draft of the script in the early months of 2017 to the first advance screenings in November.
- “A lot of my movies take a long time to develop. I buy books, I develop scripts, years go by, I make other movies instead. It percolates, it comes back into my life, you know I finally get around to making them,” he said at a recent press conference. “And this one, my entire I guess span of 49 years professionally directing, I never had a film come together this quickly.”- Spielberg
- Spielberg was particularly interested in telling Kay’s story, as it was unusual for a woman to be in such a position of power at the time.
- *The Post* was named Best Film by the National Board of Review
- Streep, Hanks, and Spielberg — a trio with seven Oscars combined — signed on in February 2017.
- March 2017, Spielberg’s producing partner, Kristie Macosko Krieger, contacted Singer seeking a rewrite 10 weeks before the start of production.

WRITING (Liz Hannah, Josh Singer)

- First-time screenwriter Liz Hannah. Producer **Amy Pascal** handed 31-year-old screenwriter **Liz Hannah’s** spec script for *The Post* a mere nine months ago.
- Liz Hannah was listening to a film podcast insist that attempting a spec-to-statuettes Cinderella story was a losing bet. “But I’m the one in a million,” admits Hannah, now 32.
- Her boyfriend, TV writer Brian Millikin, suggested she spend the summer writing about the woman who had fixated her for years: *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham, who braved the Nixon administration’s legal
- “I’m not a 55-year-old woman in 1971,” says Hannah, lightly stating the obvious. “But I know what it’s like to be a woman. I know what it’s like to want the truth out there. And I care about morality and ethics.”
- Hannah finished her first draft on the Friday of Labour Day weekend in 2016. Her manager leaked the script, a buying frenzy began, and at midnight, former Sony Pictures chairman Amy Pascal won the auction and rang Hannah to say hello.

- The script ranked No. 2 on the 2016 Blacklist, which lists the best still-unproduced scripts of the year
- The Post is co-screenwriter Josh Singer's third film exploring the importance of journalism in uncovering political scandal following *The Fifth Estate* (2013) which surrounds Julian Assange's Wikileaks organization and *Spotlight* (2015) which follows the Boston Globe's investigation into Catholic child sex abuse allegations

STORY/TOPICS

- Parallels to today
- Strength of a woman
- Bradlee's goals
 - Journalism?
 - Sources?
- Time-period
- Themes
- Individual roles of smaller characters for bigger purpose

CAST:

MERYL STREEP (Kay Graham)

- “The first thing that attracted me to *The Post* was Katharine Graham, it was her story, was her evolution as a real person of real potential power that did not really have the facility to exercise that power. She hadn't quite found her centre of gravity, she hadn't been able to find how to use her own voice.”- Spielberg
- “I only spent about six or eight weeks,” Streeep said of her time shooting the briskly paced film. She prepared for the role by reading Katharine Graham's autobiography.
- “It's about the working atmosphere. It's so important right now, how men and women can deal with each other, especially if the woman is a superior. You see in the scene where she [and Bradlee] have breakfast, she treats him like *he* is the boss—and that's usually how that works. There is an accommodation to the ego of the men.”- Streeep
- Never having previously collaborated with director Steven Spielberg in a director/actor capacity, Meryl Streeep was flabbergasted to learn that Spielberg never rehearses with his actors. Co-star Tom Hanks was well aware of this idiosyncrasy but decided, in gleeful anticipation of a 'diva' reaction, not to tell Streeep. Despite her initial shock, Meryl and Steven got along extremely well during the shoot with Spielberg being so impressed with her character transformation, he had difficulty restraining himself from constantly complimenting her every take on set
- The line "Glad I never have to go through this again" was ad-libbed by Meryl Streeep

TOM HANKS (Ben Bradlee)

- Hanks also met [real] Kay Graham at the Allen & Company Sun Valley Conference, on the very day she died. “We had lunch with a number of other people. She said so long; she drove off on her golf cart; and she passed away within the next 12 hours.”

BOB ODENKIRK (Ben Bagdikian)

- Robert John Odenkirk was born in Berwyn, Illinois, to Barbara (Baier) and Walter Odenkirk, who worked in printing. His ancestry includes German and Irish. He grew up in Naperville, IL, the second of seven children. He worked as a DJ for WIDB, his college

radio station at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Three credits shy of graduation, he moved to Chicago. He began work there in local improv workshops. He also did open-mic stand-up comedy for several years. In Chicago, he became friends with Robert Smigel, who would later help him become a writer for Saturday Night Live (1975).

- In 1987, Bob was hired as a writer for Saturday Night Live (1975) and in 1989 he went on to win an Emmy for his writing work. He worked on the show from season 13 to 20 (1987-1995). However, he had trouble getting his work on the air, so he began work as a writer for Get a Life (1990) starring Chris Elliott. The show was quickly canceled, but he was soon hired as writer for The Dennis Miller Show (1992). On that show he made his acting debut and was noticed by Ben Stiller, who later hired him as a writer and actor for The Ben Stiller Show (1992). The show only lasted for 13 episodes, but Bob won another Emmy for his writing.
- After The Ben Stiller Show (1992) was canceled, Bob made recurring appearances (1993-1998) on The Larry Sanders Show (1992) as Stevie Grant, Larry's hyperactive agent. He also wrote for Late Night with Conan O'Brien (1993) during 1993-94. During this time Bob hooked up with fellow The Ben Stiller Show (1992) writer David Cross, also a stand-up comedian. They started doing sketch-comedy shows together in Los Angeles. In 1995, they got their own show on HBO (Mr. Show with Bob and David (1995)). The show lasted for four seasons and 30 episodes.
- After Mr. Show with Bob and David (1995) ended, Bob wrote Run Ronnie Run (2002) and directed three feature films (Melvin Goes to Dinner (2003), Let's Go to Prison (2006) and The Brothers Solomon (2007)). After 1998, he has also made many guest appearances on TV shows like Just Shoot Me! (1997), 3rd Rock from the Sun (1996), Curb Your Enthusiasm (2000), Ed (2000), Everybody Loves Raymond (1996), Less Than Perfect(2002), Arrested Development (2003), How I Met Your Mother (2005) and Weeds (2005). In 2009, he appeared on many episodes of Breaking Bad (2008) as Saul Goodman, a shyster lawyer. He is also in Son of Morning (2011) and Operation: Endgame (2010)

BRADLEY WHITFORD (Arthur Parsons)

- Bradley Whitford's credits in film, television and theater include work with some of the most noted writers, directors and playwrights in the arts, and constitute a career worthy of a Juilliard-trained actor -- which he is. But stardom is something else altogether, and it remained elusive, at least until 1999 and his appearance on NBC's acclaimed political drama, The West Wing (1999).
- Bradley Whitford was born in Madison, Wisconsin, to Genevieve Smith Whitford, a poet and writer, and George Van Norman Whitford. He studied theater and English literature at Wesleyan University and earned a master's degree in theater from the prestigious Juilliard Theater Center. Whitford's first professional performance was in the off-Broadway production of "Curse of the Starving Class," with Kathy Bates. He also starred in the Broadway production of "The West Wing" creator Aaron Sorkin's "A Few Good Men." His additional theater credits include "Three Days of Rain" at the Manhattan Theatre Club, "Measure for Measure" at the Lincoln Center, and the title role in "Coriolanus" at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C.
- Some of Whitford's most memorable performances include roles in such films as The Muse(1999) with Albert Brooks and Bicentennial Man (1999) with Robin Williams. He has also appeared in Scent of a Woman (1992), A Perfect World (1993), Philadelphia (1993), The Client (1994), My Life (1993), Red Corner (1997), Presumed Innocent

(1990), and My Fellow Americans (1996). He also had a prominent supporting part in the horror thriller Get Out (2017), as a suspicious suburban father

MATTHEW RHYS (Daniel Ellsberg)

- In his memoir, the real Daniel Ellsberg claimed that walking out of RAND with the Pentagon Papers (and returning them) over the course of months was a calculated risk, since he had never had his bag checked by security, but he did not know for sure if it was not policy to do so

SYMBOLISM/TRIVIA/EASTER EGGS

- In all of the scenes depicting President Nixon on the phone in the Oval Office, Nixon's actual voice is heard from White House tapes
- In scenes involving the Pentagon Papers, the actual Daniel Ellsberg's original documents were used as genuine props, including the pages that were scattered over the floor of Benjamin C. Bradlee (Tom Hanks)' home
- The Post is dedicated to Nora Ephron, once married to Carl Bernstein who with Bob Woodward uncovered the Watergate scandal in 1972 as reporters for The Washington Post
- Although this goes unexplained in the movie, when Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo needed to photocopy the pilfered papers, the place they found to do it was an advertising agency founded by Russo's then-girlfriend, Lynda Harris Sinay. For allowing the photocopying to happen at her business, Sinay was pursued by prosecutors, but was designated an unindicted co-conspirator and was never actually prosecuted. She later married businessman Stewart Resnick and together they built a highly lucrative business empire that includes such brands as Fiji Water, POM Wonderful pomegranate products, and Teleflora Florists. The Resnicks are also past owners of the Franklin Mint
- Early in this movie, a Washington Post reporter, Judith Martin (played by Jessie Mueller), is banned by the White House from covering Tricia Nixon's wedding because Nixon was incensed that Martin had crashed the earlier wedding of his other daughter, Julie. Although this goes unmentioned in the movie, Martin later became better known as the nationally syndicated etiquette columnist "Miss Manners." In her capacity as an arbiter of societal politeness, Miss Manners now often advises against crashing parties uninvited

DIRECTING (Steven Spielberg)

- Was actually in the middle of post-production on next year's special-effects-heavy *Ready Player One* when he ducked away to quickly shoot *The Post*
 - A method he had previously used during the concurrent productions of Jurassic Park and Schindler's List
- Steven Spielberg considers this to be his first political thriller. He classifies his earlier Bridge of Spies (2015) as an espionage thriller

PRODUCTION (Janusz Kaminski)

- Production designer Rick Carter commissioned builds of the first floors of Graham and Bradlee's respective homes
- The film began principal photography in New York on May 30, 2017
- On June 6, 2017, it was announced that the project, retitled *The Papers*
- This is Steven Spielberg's first film since War of the Worlds (2005) to be filmed in 1.85:1 and his first film to use said ratio through the Super 35 format

EDITING/VFX (Sarah Broshar, Michael Kahn)

- Steven Spielberg wanted to have his film released as quickly as possible given the parallels between its theme and the burgeoning political 'fake news' climate in the U.S. According to Meryl Streep, the physical shoot started in May (2017) and finished at the end of July (2017) and Spielberg had it cut two weeks later, an unprecedented feat. The gestation from script to final cut lasted a modest 9 months
- It marks as the very first time Spielberg's regular editor Michael Kahn edits his film along with another editor, in this case Sarah Broshar, who has credits as associated editor in the previous Spielberg films. This is also the second Spielberg film to be edited by two people; the first film was Spielberg's theatrical debut, The Sugarland Express (1974), which was edited by Edward M. Abrams and Verna Fields

SOUND/MUSIC (John Williams)

- When Steven first approached me about [*The Post*], we talked about Kay Graham and Ben Bradlee and what opportunities the film might present for me. When I've thought about it, I've never been in a newsroom – you know, with the clattering of a thousand typewriters in those days... Now no one's using them, it's all silent. But it must have been quite a noisy environment, really – everyone running back and forth. So I thought, "Well, how are you gonna get any music in a newsroom?"
- John Williams composed the *Post* score; it is his 28th collaboration with Spielberg. The score uses a combination of both orchestral and sparse, light electronic elements throughout. Williams was originally attached to write the music for Spielberg's Ready Player One, but due to both films having similar post-production schedules, Williams chose to work on *The Post*, while Alan Silvestri composed *Ready Player One*
- Recording began on October 30, 2017, at Sony's Barbra Streisand Scoring Stage in Los Angeles
- The soundtrack was released digitally by Sony Classical Records on December 22, 2017 and in physical form on January 12, 2018

PROMOTION

- *The Post* premiered at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. on December 14, 2017
- It began a limited theatrical release in the United States on December 22, 2017, and a wide release on January 12, 2018
- The film is distributed internationally through Amblin Partners' distribution agreements with Universal Pictures, Reliance Entertainment, and Entertainment One Films
- The film was released by Reliance in India
- Tom Hanks has expressed disinterest in appearing at a potential White House screening for Donald Trump
- The first official image from *The Post* was released on October 31, 2017
- The trailer for *The Post* premiered exclusively on *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert, on November 7, 2017, and the film's poster, designed by BLT Communications, was released the next day
- The first TV spot, titled "Uncover the Truth", was released on November 21, 2017

BOX OFFICE

- As of February 9, 2018, *The Post* has grossed \$68.8 million in the United States and Canada, and \$37.7 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$106.5 million, against a production budget of \$50 million
- During *The Post*'s limited opening weekend, December 22 to 24, it grossed \$526,011 (and a total of \$762,057 over the four-day Christmas weekend) from nine theaters
 - The following weekend, the film grossed \$561,080 for a per-theater average of \$62,342, one of the highest of 2017
- The film had its wide release alongside the openings of *The Commuter*, *Paddington 2* and *Proud Mary*, and was projected to gross around \$20 million from 2,819 theaters over the weekend
- It made \$5.9 million on its first day and \$18.6 million over the weekend (and a four-day MLK weekend total of \$23.4 million), finishing second at the box office behind holdover *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*
- 66% of its opening weekend audience was over the age of 35
- It dropped 37% the following weekend to \$12.2 million, finishing 4th behind *Jumanji* and newcomers *12 Strong* and *Den of Thieves*
- It dropped to 5th in its third week of wide release, grossing \$8.9 million

RECEPTION

- RT: 88% based on 301 reviews
- The site's critical consensus reads, "*The Post*'s period setting belies its bitingly timely themes, brought compellingly to life by director Steven Spielberg and an outstanding ensemble cast."
- Audiences polled by [CinemaScore](#) gave the film an average grade of "A"
- [Alonso Duralde](#) of *TheWrap* praised the acting and Spielberg's direction, though noted the script as being too on-the-nose at times, saying, "*The Post* passes the trickiest tests of a historical drama: It makes us understand that decisions that have been validated by the lens of history were difficult ones to make in the moment, and it generates suspense over how all the pieces fell into place to make those decisions come to fruition."
- The film downplays the role that journalists from *The New York Times* had in the leak of the *Pentagon Papers*, and exaggerates *The Washington Post*'s involvement. In an interview with the *Columbia Journalism Review*, former *New York Times* associates [James Greenfield](#), who coordinated the *Pentagon Papers* project as the *Times*' foreign editor, [James Goodale](#), the *Times*' general counsel at the time of the *Papers*, and [Max Frankel](#), the *Times*' Washington bureau chief when the *Papers* were published, each criticized the film's more minor portrayal of the paper
 - On *PBS NewsHour*, Goodale further said, "Although a producer has artistic license, I think it should be limited in a situation such as this, so that the public comes away with an understanding of what the true facts are in this case . . . And I think that if you're doing a movie now, when [President Donald] Trump is picking on the press for 'fake news,' you want to be authentic. You don't want to be in any way fake."
 - The Pulitzer Prize for journalism in 1972 was awarded only to The New York Times for its publication of the Pentagon Papers

SEQUEL/LEGACY

- This film ends almost exactly where *All the President's Men* (1976) begins. The final shot in *The Post* (2017) is of the night watchman discovering the Watergate burglars. The

opening shot in All the President's Men (1976) is almost the exact same shot of the watchman discovering the burglars, making unwittingly The Post (2017) a "prequel" to All the President's Men (1976)

- It was chosen by the National Board of Review as the best film of 2017, and was named as one of the top 10 films of the year by Time and the American Film Institute. At the 75th Golden Globe Awards, the film received six nominations: Best Motion Picture - Drama, Best Director, Best Actress - Drama for Streep, Best Actor - Drama for Hanks, Best Screenplay and Best Original Score