

ISLE OF DOGS (2018)

- Released: Limited Release 3/23/18, Wide Release 4/13/18
- 1 Hour 41 Minutes
- Budget: No Data Found
- Directed by: Wes Anderson
- Rated: PG-13

QUICK THOUGHTS

- Marisa Serafini
- Phil Svitek
- Demetri Panos

DEVELOPMENT

- On December 23, 2016, Fox Searchlight Pictures acquired worldwide distribution rights to the film, with plans for a 2018 release
- stop-motion animated comedy film
- In October 2015, Anderson, who had previously directed the animated film *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, announced he would be returning to animation with "a film about dogs" with Edward Norton, Bryan Cranston and Bob Balaban starring
- Anderson said that the film was strongly influenced by the films of Akira Kurosawa, as well as the stop-motion animated holiday specials made by Rankin/Bass Productions

WRITING (Story by: Wes Anderson, Roman Coppola, Jason Schwartzman, Kunichi Nomura)

- Anderson disclosed that his story was heavily influenced by Japanese screenwriter and director Akira Kurosawa
- Anderson calls writing partner Roman Coppola his "Swiss Army knife", he often relies on Coppola to keep him on track
- Roman is a successful commercial director and screenwriter, and an executive producer and director on Amazon's "Mozart in the Jungle,"
- Schwartzman is an actor, screenwriter and musician best known for his frequent collaborations with Wes Anderson, such as *Rushmore*, *The Darjeeling Limited*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *Moonrise Kingdom* and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*
- Coppola and Anderson had long wanted to craft a story about a pack of abandoned dogs on a garbage dump and came up with this script from scratch together. "We had to invent an imaginary city and an imaginary government and several imaginary diseases, and we had a lot of fun concocting and shaping and sculpting it together." -Anderson
- The script took off when they merged the dog story that could have taken place anywhere with a fantasy version of Japan set 20 years in the future
- It's only the second movie that Schwartzman has helped write
- Writers Schwartzman and Coppola are cousins

STORY

- In a dystopian near-future Japan, a dog flu virus spreads throughout the canine population.
- The authoritarian new mayor of Megasaki City, Kobayashi, signs a decree banishing all dogs to Trash Island, despite a scientist named Professor Watanabe insisting he is close to finding a cure.
- The first dog to be banished is Spots, who belonged to Atari Kobayashi, the orphaned nephew and ward of the mayor.
- Six months later, Atari runs away from home, steals a plane and flies to Trash Island to find Spots.
- After a crash-landing, he is rescued by five dogs: Rex, King, Duke, Boss, and Chief. They decide to help Atari locate Spots, although Chief, a former stray, is reluctant to fraternize with humans.
- Initially believing he died months ago after his cage failed to open upon arrival, the dogs soon learn there was a mixup and Spots may be alive elsewhere on the island.

- After a skirmish with a rescue team sent by Kobayashi to retrieve Atari, and at the insistence of a female purebreed named Nutmeg, Chief has a change of heart and decides to accompany Atari and company on their search. They seek advice from sage dogs Jupiter and Oracle, who inform them of a rumored cannibal tribe of dogs on an isolated part of the island.
- Meanwhile, Professor Watanabe finds a cure, but is poisoned by Mayor Kobayashi so the dogs can remain on the island.
- Foreign exchange student Tracy Walker suspects a conspiracy and begins to investigate. She confronts assistant scientist Yoko Ono, a former cohort of Watanabe, who confirms Tracy's suspicions and gives her the last remaining dose of the cure.
- During the journey, Atari and Chief are separated from the others. Atari bathes Chief, noticing that he is of Spots' breed, implying he is his brother. He reveals he was once a house pet, forced to flee after regretfully attacking his master out of fear.
- They rejoin the group and locate the isolated tribe, finding themselves ambushed by Kobayashi's men once again.
- Spots arrives with a small army of dogs, who help fend off the assailants. Through flashbacks, he reveals that he was rescued upon arrival by the tribe and later became their leader.
- Spots also confirms that Chief is his brother and asks to transfer his protection duties for Atari to Chief, and both agree.
- An owl arrives, revealing that Kobayashi plans to exterminate all dogs on Trash Island upon his imminent re-election.
- Atari and the dog tribe decide to return to Megasaki City to attempt to prevent this. At Kobayashi's election ceremony, he prepares to give the order, but Tracy presents her evidence of his corruption and the cure's existence. Atari and the dogs also arrive and confirm the cure works.
- Kobayashi has a change of heart, but his right-hand man Major Domo insists upon seeing the extermination through. A fight ensues in which the button is pressed, but the poison backfires on the captors instead, thanks to a friend of Tracy's, allowing them to escape.
- During the fight, Atari and Spots are gravely injured. Atari's only remaining kidney fails, but Kobayashi, admitting his mistakes, donates his own to save the boy.
- By election law, mayorship of the city falls to Atari and he decrees that dogs be allowed to reintegrate into society.
- Tracy and Atari become a couple, and Chief reunites with Nutmeg and takes up the role of bodyguard for Atari.
- Presumed dead, Spots recovers from his injuries and secretly raises his children under the Kobayashi Manor.

TOPICS/THEMES

- "It's a surprisingly sentimental message for the constitutionally wry Anderson: to get off the island, we're going to need love"
- Dark political allegory
- Jeff Goldblum has been particularly vocal about the themes he sees in the movie, including "the animal issue, the anti-bigotry, the anti-fear mongering issue, the pro-student uprising issue."

CAST

Bryan Cranston as Chief

Koyu Rankin as Atari Kobayashi

Edward Norton as Rex

Bob Balaban as King

Bill Murray as Boss

Jeff Goldblum as Duke

Kunichi Nomura as Mayor Kobayashi

Akira Takayama as Major Domo

F. Murray Abraham as Jupiter

Yoko Ono as Assistant Scientist Yoko Ono

Tilda Swinton as Oracle

Ken Watanabe as Head Surgeon

Mari Natsuki as Auntie

Fisher Stevens as Scrap

Nijiro Murakami as Editor Hiroshi

Liev Schreiber as Spots

Greta Gerwig as Tracy Walker
Frances McDormand as Interpreter Nelson
Akira Ito as Professor Watanabe
Scarlett Johansson as Nutmeg
Harvey Keitel as Gondo

Courtney B. Vance as the narrator
Yojiro Noda as News Anchor
Frank Wood as Simul-Translate Machine
Roman Coppola as Igor
Anjelica Huston as Mute Poodle

ACTORS

BRYAN CRANSTON (Chief)

- This is Bryan Cranston's first stop-motion movie
- He has worked on Robot Chicken (2001) and SuperMansion (2015)
- On the fringes of their group
- a never-tamed stray who scorns the servitude of domestication
- virile but emotionally closed-off

EDWARD NORTON (Rex)

- comfort-craving

BILL MURRAY (Boss)

- Wes Anderson's eighth collaboration with Bill Murray
- ex-baseball mascot
- THE SILENT WOLF IN FANTASTIC MR FOX IS BASED ON BILL MURRAY

JEFF GOLDBLUM (Duke)

- Jeff Goldblum recorded his lines over the phone in California. Because of scheduling conflicts he couldn't go to England to record his lines with the rest of the cast.
- gossip-loving

KUNICHI NOMURA (Kobayashi)

- voiced by co-writer Nomura
- dog-hating mayor that exiles the entire species to a toxic dump site known as Trash Island
- Toshiro Mifune's legendary scowl was the inspiration for the face of the villainous mayor
- "The suit for Mayor Kobayashi had to look like a really 1950s Italian gangster scene. It took several months to get the right tailoring, and the right look, until he was happy with it." Angela Kiely

BOB BALABAN (King)

- Former dog-food spokes-hound

KOYU RANKIN (Atari)

- Koyu Rankin
- 12-year-old orphan, mayor's ward

LIEV SCHREIBER (Spots)

- The first pet to go—"dog zero" in the snout fever pandemic—is Spots
- fiercely loyal guardian of Atari
- is rumored to have linked up with a pack of feral cannibalistic dogs at the far end of the island.

GRETA GERWIG (Tracy)

- a reporter for her middle school newspaper, tries to find out the truth about Mayor Kobayashi's corruption

- “there’s more than a touch of cringe in the fact that a white American kid has to swoop in to report the truth”
- EVERY GRETA GERWIG PUPPET HAD 321 HAND-PAINTED FRECKLES, three different specific colours

KEN WATANABE

- Scientist sympathetic to the dogs’ plight rushes to create a serum

SCARLETT JOHANSSON (Nutmeg)

- a former show dog who’s an unapproachable loner
- Love-interest of Chief

DIRECTING (Wes Anderson)

- Anderson's ninth feature film and second stop-motion film, first was The Fantastic Mr. Fox
- Also known for Grand Budapest Hotel
- known for his distinctive cinematic style
- The flick has also spurred a long-running conspiracy theory that Anderson actually hates dogs, exacerbated by the fact that he doesn't have one.
- granting himself the freedom to create an entire visual world from scratch seems to give Anderson access to something that’s often absent from his obsessively rendered human tableaux.
- represents a further step into new territory for Wes Anderson.
- The director's ability to design fictional worlds and combine them with fantastical scenarios and misfit characters is unparalleled and highlights the intrigue surrounding this film
- “Wes has a significantly different directing style from other directors... We knew the degree of absolute precision and control over what we were doing was going to be very, very high.” -Tristan Oliver

PRODUCTION (Wes Anderson, Scott Rudin, Steven Rales, Jeremy Dawson)

- Production began in October 2016 at the 3 Mills Studios in East London
- A US-German co-production
- produced by Indian Paintbrush and Anderson's own production company, American Empirical Pictures.
- Cinematography by Tristan Oliver
 - "Parts of it are bright white paper. Parts of it are rusted cars. Parts of it are black TV screens," said director of photography Tristan Oliver. All the different pieces of trash are organized, in typical Anderson style, like different types of pieces in an erector set.
 - “An awful lot of the performances actually came from Wes, who would film himself acting out the dogs. He’s quite strict about copying the nuances of his own facial expressions.”
- the team made 150 scale models of skyscrapers to create a picturesque cityscape that Anderson only used for two shots, according to producer Jeremy Dawson.
- required 2,200 puppets and 250 hand-crafted miniature sets
- the island—stacked high with Wall-E–style cubes of compressed junk
- consists of 130,000 still photographs created by a team of 670
- “in 18 months, we normally shoot a 90-minute movie. In one week, we might turn out three minutes. The next week, half a second.” - Oliver
- Instead of 24 discrete poses per second, we’re taking 12. It gives more crispness and crunch.

EDITING/VFX (Ralph Foster, Edward Bursch)

- Foster edited Anderson’s other stop motion film, Fantastic Mr. Fox
- Ralph Foster also worked on Black Mirror, ParaNorman, John Carter
- Contains two separate voice-over narrators, multiple flashbacks
- their world unfolds like a crazy quilt of visual and aural pleasures

- attention to detail and remarkable visual effects make Isle of Dogs an undeniable mechanical phenomenon.
- Wes wants everything to be done for real, in camera, with as little digital effects as possible

TRIVIA/EASTER EGGS

- This is the longest stop-motion film of all time, beating out Coraline (2009) by two minutes.
- The hair of the dogs is made out of Alpaca wool.
- At the end of the movie Anjelica Huston, who is a long time collaborator with Wes Anderson, is credited as the "Mute Poodle".
- The five main dogs, Chief, Rex, King, Duke and Boss, all have names that mean some kind of "leader".
- The sushi sequence was specifically based on one of Wes's favourite sushi chefs from Paris. He had his hands photographed, and we sculpted his hands to look exactly the same. six months, from start to finish, researching it and developing it.
- Jason Schwartzman has starred in five of Anderson's movies (plus one short)

SOUND/MUSIC (Alexandre Desplat)

- Desplat is an Oscar-winning composer
- Narrated by Courtney B. Vance
- The trailer has music by '50's band named Sauter-Finegan, song is "Midnight Sleigh Ride," can be heard on Youtube
- The song in the first trailer is "I Won't Hurt You" by The West Coast Pop Art Experimental Band
- Score from "Drunken Angel" and "Seven Samurai" can be heard in the film.
- A taiko-drum-based score by Alexandre Desplat (with major contributions from taiko drummer and composer Kaoru Watanabe)
- The spoken Japanese goes unsubtitled and only is occasionally translated by an official interpreter
- The dogs' language is rendered as English
- "The music of Isle of Dogs also manages to send audiences to a whole other world, capturing a distinctive Japanese style with the heavy drums, ominous flutes and vintage trumpets"
- Also featured on the soundtrack are the Toho Symphony Orchestra, David Mansfield, the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra and the West Coast Pop Experimental Band
- Listen here: <https://open.spotify.com/album/2sRgBoyJw5DaxNjQHZZwiP>

PROMOTION

- The film opened the 68th Berlin International Film Festival, where Anderson was awarded the Silver Bear for Best Director.
- Distributed by Fox Searchlight Pictures
- Writer and Director Wes Anderson hosted a competition for someone to be a member of the voice cast for this film. The only requirement was that you donated ten dollars or more to the Film Foundation, a non-profit founded by Martin Scorsese, which specializes in the preservation and restoration of film around the world.
- There are "cast interview" videos available online, instead of the actor, they are featured as their K9 character
- Isle of Dogs Trailer Published on Sep 21, 2017
- a new clip from the film Isle of Dogs has been released 2/7/18

BOX OFFICE

- It was given a limited release in the United States on March 23, 2018
- Wide release set for April 13, 2018
- In its first weekend of limited release the film made \$1.57 million from 27 theaters (an average of \$58,148 per venue), which is the highest screen average of the year thus far
- As of April 1, 2018, Isle of Dogs has grossed \$5.9 million in the United States and Canada, and \$2.3 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$8.2 million

- This is the second PG-13 animated film to be released in 2018

RECEPTION

- RT: 93% Tatometer: 8.1/10
 - "The beautifully stop-motion animated Isle of Dogs finds Wes Anderson at his detail-oriented best while telling one of the director's most winsomely charming stories."
- IMDB:
- Cinemascore:
- some, however, accused it of cultural appropriation.
 - one of its characters aligns with the trope of the "white savior"
- Received critical acclaim, with critics especially praising its animation, story and deadpan humor
- Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "A" on an A+ to F scale.
- Richard Roeper of the Chicago Sun-Times gave the film 3.5 out of 4 stars, praising it for taking risks, and saying: "It's smart and different and sometimes deliberately odd and really funny — rarely in a laugh-out-loud way, more in a smile-and-nod-I-get-the-joke kind of way."
- Exclaim! gave the film a 7 out of 10, saying it "has all the hallmarks of another Wes Anderson classic."
- one of the native Japanese speakers found it to "be a respectful portrayal of Japanese culture" while another thought it would do well in Japan because "it's based on Japanese fables and a Japanese point of view, and Japanese problems. And [they] love dogs."
- This movie can be disappointingly retrograde, especially when it comes to female characters, an area that's never been Anderson's strong suit -DANA STEVENS, Slate magazine
- Isle of Dogs draws from the samurai-movie tradition but the Kurosawa subgenre it most resembles is the gritty noir-influenced thrillers he made with Toshiro Mifune. -DANA STEVENS, Slate magazine
- When high-profile directors like Anderson voice their appreciation for the art of animation, and as more feature-length animation for grown-ups actually finds its way to the spotlight, hopefully critics will learn to praise where praise is due, and audiences will discover the animated film's wonderfully rich palette of possibilities. -Tunde Vollenbroek, cartoon brew

SEQUEL/LEGACY