

## CHRISTOPHER ROBIN (2018)

- August 3rd, 2018
- 1 hr 44 minutes
- \$75 (estimated)
- Directed by Marc Forster
- Written by Alex Ross Perry (screenplay by), Tom McCarthy (screenplay by)
- Production company: Walt Disney, 2DUX
- Rated PG for action and rude humor

## QUICK THOUGHTS

- Marisa Serafini
- Phil Svitek
- Demetri Panos

## DEVELOPMENT

- Not to confused with Goodbye Christopher Robin (2017) that recounts the inception of Winnie the Pooh and the Hundred Acre Wood. This film is an entirely fictional story
- Disney licensed the rights to the bear in 1961, leading to TV shows and four feature films: "The Tigger Movie," "Piglet's Big Movie," "Pooh's Heffalump Movie," and "Winnie the Pooh."
- April 2, 2015, Walt Disney Pictures announced that a live-action adaptation based on the characters from the *Winnie the Pooh*
- The film is to release in 2018, the 30th anniversary of The New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh (1988), the 35th anniversary of both Welcome to Pooh Corner (1983) and Winnie the Pooh and a Day for Eeyore (1983), the 50th anniversary of Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day (1968), and the 15th anniversary of Piglet's Big Movie (2003).
- Following his work on Disney's live-action adaptation of *The Jungle Book*, former Disney production exec Brigham Taylor produces the film, along with Kristin Burr

## WRITING (Alex Ross Perry, Tom McCarthy)

- Alex Ross Perry is a writer and actor, known for Listen Up Philip (2014), Impolex (2009) and The Color Wheel (2011)
- Tom McCarthy is an American film director, screenwriter, and actor. He is best known for direct and write The Station Agent (2003), The Visitor (2007), Win Win (2011), and Spotlight (2015), for which he won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay, and was nominated for Best Director
- McCarthy co-wrote the film Up (2009) with Bob Peterson and Pete Docter, for which they received an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay. He also served as a director and executive producer for the Netflix television series 13 Reasons Why (2017)
- The story is somewhat reminiscent of the film Hook (1991). In both cases, the young hero of a magical world leaves for the real world where he gets married and has children, only to become obsessed with work and to forget his childhood. A character from that magical world comes to the real world, brings the hero back to the magical world, and reminds them how to be young and happy. Both films are set partially in London and are based on popular British children's books which were adapted into animated films by Walt Disney

- Alex Ross Perry was hired to write the script and Brigham Taylor hired to produce the film, about an adult Christopher Robin returning to the Hundred Acre Wood to spend time with Pooh and the gang
- Allison Schroeder was recruited to do additional work on the script
  - Allison Schroeder is known for her work on Hidden Figures (2016), Pineapple Express(2008) and Side Effects (2013)
- Perry was attempting to get the rights to the character for a stop-motion animation project in 2014 when his agent asked if he would be interested in chatting with a producer who was seeking writers on a Winnie the Pooh movie. Perry — who says he loved the show *Welcome to Pooh Corner* as a child — jumped at the chance.
- “In terms of the tone, relentless pace of storytelling and visual information that you can’t aspire to unless you’re in this league, which I’m not, we looked at *Fantastic Mr. Fox* quite a bit.” -Perry
- “You don’t have to invent the lesson that the character learned; you just have to know that whatever that lesson is, it’s only to reinforce a positive sense of love, growth, togetherness, family, friendship and stability.” -Perry
- “I do feel like if this is the only thing like this I ever do, it’s a perfect one-and-done. I certainly could do no better in terms of prolificness or excitement or importance of reintroducing Winnie the Pooh to audiences in a brand-new way for the first time in a generation.” -Perry
- McCarthy, who won a best original screenplay Oscar with Josh Singer for “Spotlight.”

## STORY/TOPICS

- Adulthood
- Saddest parts of movie:  
<http://www.vulture.com/2018/08/what-is-the-saddest-part-of-christopher-robin.html>
- Taoism
- Family/friendship
- Play
- Childhood innocence
- Ending solution
  - At the end of the film, Christopher Robin saves the company by suggesting the idea of giving employees paid vacation in order to encourage them to buy more luggage. The first American businessman to give his employees both Saturday AND Sunday off of work was Henry Ford, and he only did it so that they would drive more
- During the end credits, a scene of Winslow employees on vacation at the beach is shown, accompanied by Richard Sherman, songwriter of various immortal Disney songs, including the classic Winnie the Pooh theme, playing the piano singing a song titled "Busy Doing Nothing"

## CAST:

### EWAN MCGREGOR (Christopher Robin)

- McGregor signed on as Christopher Robin in April 2017
- “Ewan and I made a film called *Stay* in 2004 together and we’ve been friends and wanted to work again ever since. I was looking for something and when I found this, I

thought, 'This is the right piece,' because he's comedically and dramatically so gifted."  
-Forster

- "Not only can he do drama and comedy as we have seen him do in so many versatile roles, but he also embodies this youthfulness." - Forster
- "I must have been read all the stories," McGregor told *THR*. "I've read them all to my kids.
- McGregor said he didn't find it difficult to tap into a sense of childlike imagination and playfulness. "I have that in my head. I'm like that myself," the actor explained.
- "Ewan just acted to air, and he did an extraordinary job. It's very hard to act to air and make believe that you're connecting with something. Normally you have an actor or some eyes or some object to connect with. But he had to deal with make-believe."  
-Forster

#### **HAYLEY ATWELL** (Evelyn Robin)

- Gemma Arterton was considered to play Christopher Robin's wife Evelyn. However she later decided to not take on the role.
- "I did a movie with Emma Thompson called *Stranger than Fiction*, and Emma and Hayley are very good friends. Emma and I were talking, and she said, "You should check out Hayley." I knew her from *Agent Carter*, obviously, but this woman and her comedic abilities." - Forster

#### **MARK GATISS** (Giles Winslow)

- "It wasn't [difficult], it was a blast!" - Gatiss

#### **ORTON O'BRIEN** (Young Christopher Robin)

- Young Christopher Robin's outfit is based on the one he wore in the original Ernest Shepard illustrations

#### **JIM CUMMINGS** (Winnie The Pooh/ Tigger)

- Jim Cummings has played Winnie the Pooh and Tigger in Disney features since 1988 and 1989 (full time since 1999) respectively.
- Jim Cummings is the only voice actor from the animated films to reprise his role, making this the first time in a live-action adaptation of a Disney animated feature film to do so.
- Dustin Hoffman, Chris O'Dowd, Alan Tudyk, and Martin Short were all considered for the voice of Tigger.
- Tigger sees his reflection and confuses it for another tigger, just as he did in *Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day* (1968).
- Chris O'Dowd was originally announced as the voice of Tigger, but later stepped down from the role after audiences in test screenings reacted negatively towards how he voiced the character and was replaced by Cummings.
- Cummings' versatile voice has lent itself to nearly 400 characters over the course of his career in productions such as *Aladdin*, *The Lion King*, *Antz*, *Shrek* and more.

#### **BRAD GARRETT** (Eeyore)

- Brad Garrett 's 15th voice role in a Disney movie
- Garrett's voice has appeared in several animated works including *Finding Nemo*, *Ratatouille*, *Tangled*, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows* and more.

**NICK MOHAMMED** (Piglet)

- Prior to voicing Piglet, the British actor appeared in *The Martian*, *Absolutely Famous: The Movie*, *Bridget Jones's Baby* and more.

**PETER CAPALDI** (Rabbit)

- Won an Academy Award for his short film *Franz Kafka's It's a Wonderful Life*.

**TOBY JONES** (Owl)

- Jones has since appeared in such blockbuster films as *Captain America: The First Avenger*, *Captain America: Winter Soldier*, *The Hunger Games* and more.

**DIRECTING:** (Marc Forster)

- Marc Forster is a German-born filmmaker and screenwriter. He is best known for directing the films *Monster's Ball* (2001), *Finding Neverland* (2004), *Stay* (2005), *Stranger than Fiction* (2006), *The Kite Runner* (2007), *Quantum of Solace* (2008), and *World War Z* (2013)
- His breakthrough film was *Monster's Ball* (2001), in which he directed Halle Berry in her Academy Award-winning performance, the film also starred Billy Bob Thornton, Heath Ledger, and Peter Boyle. His next film, *Finding Neverland* (2004), was based on the life of author J.M. Barrie. The film was nominated for five Golden Globe Awards and seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Actor for Johnny Depp
- Forster also directed the twenty-second James Bond film, *Quantum of Solace*. In 2013 he directed the film adaptation of the novel *World War Z*, starring Brad Pitt
- November 18, 2016, it was reported that the studio had hired Marc Forster to direct the film
- "My daughter sees movies that are only for kids, and I was a little bit complaining about it. We were on a plane together and she's watching a Winnie-the-Pooh cartoon, and she said, 'Why don't you make a movie for me and for you? Because I can't watch any of your movies anyway.' This is a six-year-old," Forster, deadpan, tells SYFY WIRE. "Then I said, 'Okay, why don't we make this movie,' pointing at Pooh on [her screen]. And she says to me, 'Yeah, why don't you make that?' Three years later, she was on the set with me."

**TRIVIA/EASTER EGGS**

- GLADIATOR REFERENCE: "I did that purely as a joke. My DP first said to me, 'What are you doing? That's not original.' I said, 'No, it's hilarious!' (laughs) Pooh as the gladiator touching the flowers." -Forster
- Winnie the Pooh's third live action appearance after [Welcome to Pooh Corner](#) (1983) (as people in costumes) and [The Book of Pooh](#) (2001) (as puppets)
- The opening segment, in which the animals bid Christopher Robin farewell and he promises not to forget Pooh, is loosely adapted from the very last Pooh story written by [A.A. Milne](#)
- This is the first Winnie the Pooh film to be rated PG by the MPAA, rather than G like the previous and fully animated films in the franchise had been
- Eeyore reads a poem at the "fairwell" party. It is an abridged version of the poem Eeyore recited in the last Pooh story

- Two lines, often erroneously attributed to A.A. Milne on the internet, are in the dialogue for this movie. "People say nothing is impossible, but I do nothing every day" and "What day is this? It's today."

#### **PRODUCTION/CINEMATOGRAPHY** (Matthias Koenigswieser)

- Principal photography on the film began in early August 2017, in the United Kingdom, and concluded on November 4, 2017
- Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends in this film are a combination of their Disney animated versions (where they were walking talking animals), and A.A. Milne's Pooh children's stories (where they were stuffed animals)
- "We shot down in Ashdown Forest. Where we built our Pooh Bridge is almost on the same river that is connected to the A.A. Milne estate."
- "We shot part of that there in 65 millimeter, all these wide shots." -Forster
- "The weather always was right when we shot, the actors were always on time and prepared. Everything was just so easy. The studio loved the movie. There were no hiccups. And then some other movies are a big struggle. This one wasn't." - Forster
- "The clouds were there when we needed them, and the sun was there when we needed it. On the log where Christopher and Pooh meet, we had the perfect cloud situation. We woke up in the morning and it was cloudy, but when we had shot on the log, the sun was setting and it was a sunset that I had never seen before. You could wait weeks for a sunset like that. I was very blessed. I bought into the magic of Pooh, that day. It went so smooth." -Forster
- "There's a painter called Lowry I really like, who painted London during that time period, which was a reference for me. In the city of London during that time, there was lots of fog. And they used coal, so it wasn't as clean. I tried to have almost no green in the city – just the little park where they meet, which is sort of reminiscent of the Hundred Acre Wood. But then when he leaves the city going out to the country where it becomes more sunny and he re-enters the Hundred Acre Wood, which is, again, foggy, until he comes out of the Heffalump pit. From then on, the sun is shining again." -Forster
- Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends in this film are a combination of their Disney animated versions (where they were walking talking animals), and A.A. Milne's Pooh children's stories (where they were stuffed animals).
- Much of the filming of the Hundred Acre Wood scenes took place at Ashdown Forest, which was the original inspiration for the setting, as well as Windsor Great Park.
- The opening animation segment is based on the drawings done by E. H. Shepard for the original Pooh books.
- "I brought these kids from drama school and I literally cast them according to character. We basically rehearsed with them and it helped [Ewan] because we blocked the scene with the animals, and then took them out, but then he still had the voice to have some emotional grounding. And I tried to put them all actually into the movie to give them one little scene. For instance, the Eeyore character, when they're on the train and Christopher starts playing the game, the guy sitting across that gives him the weird look is Eeyore." - Forster

#### **EDITING/VFX** (Matt Chesse- Editor, Michael Eames- Animation Supervisor )

- "We had Jennifer Williams, our costume designer, knit the red sweater for Pooh, which was very hard. That was actually the hardest part, more than the facial expressions. To translate that digitally, just putting a sweater on Pooh because the sweater's quite tight

and when he moves, it sticks. We had a whole sweater team, and it drove me crazy.” - Forster

- We recorded it in the live version of Pooh, and then we had to transform that into digital. It was very tricky to get the facial expressions so that they were not too much and not too cartoony.
- “With Pooh, there's always this quietness and so how he moves, you watch almost every pore. So, we built the stuffy and then photographed it, real, and they created it digitally. Then we had them both in different lighting environments, always circling the real one and the fake one. It took a long time, but once we got it right, it just clicked. The key thing for me was how to make sure the stuffed animals really feel like they were hugged and played with — that Christopher Robin played with his animals, so they're used and have this vintage look.”
- “We'd basically do a reference pass with the bear, take the bear out, and then do another reference pass just with the camera which isn't the same pass because they're all different. It's very hard for the animators to insert the bear and to re-do the shot in post. That's pretty challenging to do.” - Forster
- “Tigger was easier because Tigger moves around a lot. Eeyore was also very tricky because the chin, the mouth, the ears, and the fur... is it too much, too little? Piglet and Tigger were interestingly enough the easiest, and Kanga and Roo were also tricky. Then with Owl and Rabbit, in the A.A. Milne literature, they're real animals, not stuffed animals.” -Forster

#### **SOUND/MUSIC** (Jon Brion, Geoff Zanelli)

- Before his untimely death, composer Jóhann Jóhannsson was set to score this film.
- Jóhann Jóhannsson was hired to score the film, shortly before his death on February 9, 2018. The film is dedicated to his memory.
- This is the first Winnie the Pooh film to have its music score composed by two composers instead of just one; all the previous Winnie the Pooh films had their music scores composed by only one composer.
- “I only wanted one song, really, because [Richard] is almost 90. I didn't even know if he still wanted to write songs for movies, but he said, "No, I'll write you something." And suddenly he wrote me three songs. I was in London going back from set, and I remember very vividly that my phone rang, and I picked it up and it was Richard. He said, "Marc, I wrote the songs for you." And then he puts me on speakerphone and he sits on his piano at home and starts playing live, singing at me. It was so emotional and so beautiful, and it just made me cry. The first song is the one I really needed, the one when Christopher Robin leaves.” -Forster
- “For the other two other songs, I thought at the end I should shoot them all at the beach, which wasn't in the script. I suddenly thought it would be funny to put a piano there and have Richard Sherman play the song so when he says, "Oh, things are gonna change and I think it's for the better," we drift over to the animals. That was all improvised last minute. I suddenly said, "Let's put the chairs out there, let's put the animals in, let's see... maybe it works.” -Forster

#### **PROMOTION**

- The first teaser poster of the film was released on March 5, 2018
- First teaser trailer was unveiled March 6, 2018

- May 24, 2018, it was announced that the full trailer would premiere the following day during McGregor's appearance on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*.

## BOX OFFICE

- (As of August 8th, 2018)
- Domestic: \$34,994,155
- Foreign: \$5,132,136
- Worldwide: \$40,126,291
- Opening Weekend:\$24,585,139
  - (#2 rank, 3,602 theaters, \$6,825 average)
- CHINA BANNED:
  - The release of *Christopher Robin* (2018) in China was denied. The reason is the banning of images and the name Winnie the Pooh on social media in China. Bloggers have tied images of Chinese president Xi Jinping to Winnie the Pooh in humorous mashups.
  - Pooh first gained notoriety in China in 2013, when bloggers began likening president Xi Jinping to the honey-loving bear using images shared on social media site Weibo.
  - *Christopher Robin* is the second Disney film, after *A Wrinkle in Time*, to be rejected by China this year.

## RECEPTION

- Rotten Tomatoes: 70% Tatometer, 90% Audience
  - The site's critical consensus reads, "*Christopher Robin* may not equal A. A. Milne's stories – or their animated Disney adaptations – but it should prove sweet enough for audiences seeking a little childhood magic."
- Cinemascore: A
- IMDb: 8.0/10
- Ben Kenigsberg of the *New York Times* reviewed the film this way: "Once *Christopher Robin* softens its insufferable, needlessly cynical conception of the title character, it offers more or less what a Pooh reboot should: a lot of nostalgia, a bit of humor and tactile computer animation."
- David Sims of *The Atlantic* wrote, "It's an odd, melancholic experience that at times recalls Terrence Malick as it does A. A. Milne, but there will certainly be some viewers in its exact wheelhouse."
- Michael Phillips of the *Chicago Tribune* gave the film 3 out of 4 stars and said, "Pooh's wisdom and kindness cannot be denied. The same impulses worked for the two *Paddington* movies, God knows. *Christopher Robin* isn't quite in their league, but it's affecting nonetheless."
- Conversely, Alonso Duralde of *TheWrap* called the film "slow and charmless" and wrote, "What we're left with is a *Hook*-style mid-life crisis movie aimed at kids, designed to shame parents who spend too much time at the office and not enough with their families."
- Sarah Melton from *Exclaim!* gave the film a rating of 5/10, calling it a "sickly sweet tale" with a predictable ending.
- Helen O'Hara of *Empire* magazine gave the film a 2 out of 5 stars and said "Everyone's trying hard, but they can't quite live up to the particularly gentle, warm tone of Pooh

himself. Unlike the bear of very little brain, this is a film pulled in different directions with entirely too many thoughts in its head"