

THE MEG (2018)

- August 10th, 2018
- 1 hr 53 mins
- \$130,000,000 (estimated)
- Directed by Jon Turteltaub
- Written by Dean Georgaris, Jon Hoeber
- Production company: Apelles Entertainment, Di Bonaventura Pictures, Flagship Entertainment Group
- Rated PG-13 for action/peril, bloody images and some language

QUICK THOUGHTS

- Marisa Serafini
- Phil Svitek
- Demetri Panos

DEVELOPMENT

- *Meg: A Novel of Deep Terror* is a science-fiction horror novel by Steve Alten, and was first published in July 1997. The novel, along with its sequels, follows the underwater adventures of a Navy deep-sea diver named Jonas Taylor. *MEG: Primal Waters*, *MEG: Hell's Aquarium*, *MEG: Origins*, *MEG: Night Stalkers*, *MEG: Generations*, *MEG: Purgatory* (announced at the end of *MEG: Generations*)
- In 1996, Hollywood Pictures, a division of Disney, had optioned the rights to Alten's book
- *Meg* had been the subject of a million-dollar movie-rights deal before the book was even published.
- According to Alten, however, the early attempts at a *Meg* movie veered far away from his original novel. "They went through some subpar screenplays," says the 58-year-old author. "I had virtually no input." (One particularly out-there script equipped the creature with wings). Eventually, the movie stalled, in part because Disney couldn't make the movie fast enough to beat out 1999's *Deep Blue Sea*.
- The rights reverted later back to Alten, who in 2002 launched an online petition, asking fans to express their interest in getting *Meg* made. "That was the only option I had," says Alten. "I mean, there was no interest from Hollywood. I needed to really get the project out there again." The petition earned more than 65,000 signatures
- Had been mired in development hell since 1997. At one point, reports surfaced that the film was slated for a 2008 release date and was to be made by New Line Cinema, which had recently bought the rights from Alten.
- Names that were attached to the project included Jan de Bont and Guillermo Del Toro.
- July 2007, New Line cancelled the production. Steve Alten
- June 16, 2015, Eli Roth was announced to direct the film adaptation. He left the project due to creative differences.
- After the movie rights *again* reverted back to Alten, he put his faith in Belle Avery, a producer
- On March 3, 2016, ComingSoon.net reported that director Jon Turteltaub has since been in talks to helm the movie adaptation.
- Producer Belle Avery worked on getting "The Meg" made for a decade, finally securing Chinese financing after making two dozen trips to China.
- The film was initially due to be released on March 2, 2018, but the release date was ultimately pushed back to August 10, 2018.

- The appeal of *Meg*, says Nick Nunziata, comes down to a two-word concept: *Jurassic Shark*.
- Film's backers teamed with the Chinese film company Gravity Pictures, making the movie just the latest in a growing line of such co-productions as studios look to tap into the growing might of the Asian market.

WRITING (Dean Georganis, Jon Hoeber)

- "When New Line reverted the rights, I wrote the next script with producer Belle Avery," the author confessed. "That is where the final movie script sprang from." - Alten
- "Dean wrote a draft and then Erich and I were hired on," says Jon Hoeber. "Then, after a bunch of talking back and forth, Dean was looped back in, and we thought maybe we should talk things over together and maybe even work together. Dean, Erich and I did drafts together as a cohesive unit."
- "When I first read the original material [the book *Meg* by Steve Alten]," says Georganis, "I wasn't worried about comparisons to *Jaws*. I was more thinking about *Jurassic Park* and being wary of that franchise and being respectful to play in a different space. Yes, it's a shark that happens to be huge but really what we're talking about is a prehistoric monster that happens to be discovered in the ocean. The three of us have always talked about James Cameron movies like *The Abyss* and Steven Spielberg movies, so I think it was as much about trying to get all of the thrills and humor that you want in a movie that, at its core, is something that's both really scary and really absurd."
- "Always think about how to ground your characters individually," says Jon Hoeber, "because then it's a great anchor for you to bring multiple points of view that are going to generate a fresh feeling into whatever traditional scenes are going to be there."
- "The scripts totally different," Statham said of "The Meg" theatrical version, noting "a lot" changed from the idea he was first pitched. "Sometimes you just go, 'How did it happen? How did it go from this to this to this to that?'...It was radically different. I guess in some ways your imagination and your own perception of what it's going to be is its worst enemy."

STORY/TOPICS

- Comparison to other shark movies
 - Homages to *Jaws* or rip-off?
- Did movie benefit from PG-13?
- Did marketing promise something different?
- Hiding the shark for so long
- Misdirection of love story
- Family film
- Comparison of Jason to *The Rock* (in film)
- Moments of tension
- Moments of action
- Villain

CAST:

- CASTED actors like Li and Winston Chao who are well known to Chinese audiences
- "We were there for a *really* long time, almost five months to film, where we were all out there. We were really lucky because we were all there for a long time, and so far away

from all our loved ones, but we were so lucky that we all really did gel and it was just a really good experience.” -McNamee

JASON STATHAM (Jonas Taylor)

- April 14, 2016, reported that action star Jason Statham would be taking the lead role of Jonas Taylor
- "As for Jason Statham – I LOVE THE CHOICE! Geez, the guy went shark diving to prepare for the role – you think I go shark diving before I write a MEG book?" Alten pointed out. "He's a man of action, just like Jonas, and he's clever. And Jason is INTO THE ROLE! We're blessed to have him as JT." - Alten
- "We took a trip down to Fiji, and we went diving with some bull sharks. They hand feed them, and it's a spectacular thing to see. These things are three meters in length, huge big things — when you're in the ocean, and you're like six, eight, 12 inches away from these things, it's quite an ordeal. There were 20 or 30 of these things and they were hand-feeding [them] big tuna heads. We got very very close and it was a spectacular moment." -Statham
- "He is such a warm and friendly guy. I was a little scared to meet him, because I thought he would be just like he is in his movies. But during rehearsals he was so sweet, and he kept saying there was no way he could ever do any of this in Chinese. I told him that I would need to rehearse more than usual, since I'm not a native English-speaker and I was worried about making him impatient. But he was so sweet and supportive." - Li
- "For a guy who's completely male, he is also sensitive, has a great sense of humor, and really smart about detail. He's anything but a brute. We just laughed a lot when we first met. I think he was happy to know that I wanted this character to have a sense of humor. His thing was to make sure the integrity of the character was so strong that you never doubted his resolve." - Turteltaub

BING BING LI (Suyin)

- "The first time they contacted me about *Meg* was in 2015, and I actually just said no without even thinking much. Because it's a shark movie, I knew there would be a lot of shooting in water, and I didn't want to do that...So I said no, I didn't want to spend so much time in the tank or in the cold ocean. But then they kept contacting me and later asked me to reconsider." - Li
- "I'm not a native English speaker and I need to spend a lot of time with an English script to feel prepared. So I was really strict and hard on myself. I spent every moment practicing, every day. Everyone else was sort of on vacation, playing golf and going to parties. But I was in my room practicing."
- "She's a great actress. We had great chemistry. We have a sort of frosty kind of relationship, but it warms up a little bit. We have some great scenes together, and we were in and out of the water a lot. It's a tough shoot, you know. It's not like working on a movie set. You're in and out of wetsuits. Sometimes your patience gets a little bit thin and the water's cold. But she was great to work with and a real sweetheart." - Statham
- The watch that Suyin (Bingbing Li) wears is a Rolex Deepsea D-Blue dial divers watch that retails for over \$20,000.
 - Carl F. Bucherer partnered with The Meg production, showcasing its Patravi ScubaTec on Bingbing, who has been an ambassador for the Swiss brand since 2016. The 44.6mm chronometer in stainless steel and 18-karat rose gold watch is seen on Li's wrist in every scene in which she appears. The \$9,800 timepiece

is water-resistant to 500 meters, so it's a solid choice for her character, Suyin, an oceanographer.

RAINN WILSON (Morris)

- "‘The Meg’ is ‘Jaws’ on steroids,"
- MORRIS DEATH:
 - "I hope that [my death] is up there among the greatest shark deaths of all time," Wilson says. "If you don't get eaten in a shark movie, there's a possibility you're in the sequel. But if you do get eaten, well, what a way to go."
 - In the original cut of the film, the shark had bitten off the entire bottom half of Morris in the first nibble before going in for big bite No. 2 – the upper half.
 - "The camera had craned up to show that it's only Morris' head, shoulders and arms left. It's just the top third of Rainn Wilson," Turteltaub says. "And it was freaking awesome."
- "I'm not scared of being eaten by a shark because it would be an amazing way to go," Wilson says. "I'm 52 right now. I'm ready to meet my maker. I've had a good run, especially if it (involves) being eaten by a shark."

CLIFF CURTIS (Mac)

- Cliff Curtis was born in Rotorua, New Zealand, on July 27, 1968.
- He is of New Zealand Maori descent (with Ngati Hauiti and Te Arawa tribal affiliations). He enrolled at the New Zealand Drama School, and then the Teatro Dmitri Scoula in Switzerland.
- After returning to New Zealand from Europe, he was cast in The Piano (1993). Subsequent roles in New Zealand include the camp melodrama Desperate Remedies (1993), the grueling urban drama Once Were Warriors (1994), and the lighthearted comedy Jubilee (2000).
- In Hollywood, Curtis has played a range of different roles and ethnicities in films. He plays a Colombian in Blow (2001), an Arab in Three Kings (1999) and The Insider (1999), a Latino in Training Day (2001) and Runaway Jury (2003), and a drug dealer of ambiguous ethnicity in Bringing Out the Dead (1999). However, he is probably best known for his role as Paikea's father Porourangi, in Whale Rider (2002)

WINSTON CHAO (Zhang)

- Winston Chao was born on June 9, 1960 in Taiwan as Wen-hsuan Chao. He is an actor, known for 1911 (2011), Road to Dawn (2007) and The Wedding Banquet (1993)

SHUYA SOPHIA CAI (Meiying)

- 10-year-old Aucklander, Sophia Cai - film debut
- Sophia Cai (also known as ShuYa Cai) was born April 22, 2008, in Shanghai to her Chinese mother and British father. Sophia began her career at the age of two after being cast in a national TV commercial and has subsequently compiled an impressive resume that includes modeling, TV commercials and roles in TV and film. Sophia is best known for her role as NiNi in the Chinese feature movie "Somewhere only we know" (2015)
- Sophia is fluent in both English and Mandarin and resides in New Zealand

RUBY ROSE (Jaxx)

- In December 2016 she told Yahoo she'd nearly drowned while filming a water scene with co-star Rainn Wilson.
- Rose's character was supposed to be drowning. But Wilson and the crew couldn't tell the difference between Rose's acting and her really struggling to stay afloat.
- "[The director] John [Turteltaub] thought I was acting, and I was acting for a little bit, but then I really needed them to throw me something to get out of the water.
- "My clothing, including a layer of thermals to help with the cold, made it really difficult to swim... everyone loved how it looked and thought I was doing a great job, they didn't realise my shoes had filled up with water and were making me sink to the bottom of the tank we were shooting in."
- Rose replied, "[I]t taught me how to dive off a stagnant wooden board.. not a moving boat from a slippery rail into ice cold water... lol."

PAGE KENNEDY (DJ)

- "Page says films like his -- and other popcorn flicks like 'Mission: Impossible,' 'Fate of the Furious,' etc. -- deserve to be recognized for their badassery ... plain and simple. He says these types of movies have just as much value as traditional Oscar noms ... and could even add a much-needed shot of life into an award show that's gathering dust in the ratings." - Kennedy
- Actor, a rapper and — some would argue — comedian.

JESSICA MCNAMEE (Lori- Ex-wife)

- McNamee appears to have broken her ankle during filming.
- "I think that the older I get, the more scared I get of sharks. It's not even necessarily sharks themselves, I mean, if I was underwater, I would sort of swim with sharks any day. But I'm afraid of what's beneath the surface, when you can't see it, like I'm scared more of the anticipation of something coming up. If I could see the shark, I think I would be less scared at the end of it." -McNamee
- "I was actually the first cast member out there, so I jumped in, literally jumped in the pool with the stunt people about three weeks before we started filming. It was really great! First we were doing squad training and then we had to do the high dive as well, we had to jump overboard, obviously, like you see in the movie. Funnily enough, I was the one who had the most amount of training and was definitely the most cocky, and then ended up spraining my ankle as I did that stunt."
- "We also got to do some deep water training and we were doing deep-sea diving and sitting at the bottom of a ten-metre pool and holding our breath for minutes at a time."

MASI OKA (Toshi)

- Masayori "Masi" Oka is a Japanese American actor, producer and digital effects artist. He became widely known for his role on NBC's Heroes as Hiro Nakamura and in CBS' Hawaii Five-0 as Doctor Max Bergman. Oka was born in Tokyo, Japan, to Setsuko Oka. His parents divorced when he was one month old; he was raised in a single parent family and has never met his father. He was six years old when his mother and he moved to Los Angeles from Japan. At age eight, he appeared on the CBS-TV game show Child's Play. In 1987, a twelve-year-old Oka was featured on the cover of Time titled "Those Asian-American Whiz Kids". Though he was not featured in the article itself, he was acquainted with the photographer who conducted the shoot. His IQ has been reported at over 180

DIRECTING: (Jon Turteltaub)

- Jon Turteltaub was born on August 8, 1963 in New York City, New York, USA as Jonathan Charles Turteltaub. He is a producer and director, known for National Treasure (2004), National Treasure: Book of Secrets (2007) and Phenomenon (1996). He has been married to Amy Eldon since July 6, 2006. They have three children
- “My agent sent me the script and said, ‘Read this. Go make it. It’s terrific,’ ” Turteltaub recalled one recent morning. “I said, ‘Yeah, but it’s just a big shark movie.’ He said, ‘Yeah, *exactly*.’” -Turteltaub
- “I came in to the party pretty late. So by the time it got to me all the exhausting, frustrating, miserable development work and all the rejection and false hope had happened already.”
- “You’d be surprised how quickly you can cross that line to R, depending on the amount of blood, so the big thing for me is not to change tone,” Turteltaub said. “If you suddenly go from a regular action movie to ‘The Exorcist,’ you’ve got a problem.”
- “Boy, it was a narrow target to hit,” he said. “Frankly, I don’t know that everybody working on the movie had that tone in their head, but I did. I always felt that if we simply made an awesome giant-shark movie, audiences would say, ‘There’s no need to go see that.’”
- “Before we started, I said, ‘Great literature usually has something like a giant shark representing in an allegorical way some part of the human psyche that needs to be battled. Can we please just make a shark movie in which the shark is just a big ... shark?’ ” He laughed. “Everybody gave me a big thumbs-up and said, ‘Please!’ ”

TRIVIA

- The name of the Yorkie in this movie is Pippin. The lab in *Jaws* was named Pippin.
- Author Steve Alten's daughter appears as an extra in the film.

PRODUCTION/CINEMATOGRAPHY (Tom Stern)

- Tom Stern was born on December 16, 1946 in Palo Alto, California, USA as Thomas Evans Stern. He is known for his work on Changeling (2008), Mystic River (2003) and Flags of our Fathers (2006). He was previously married to Françoise Combadière
- MEG: Described in Alten's book as a "70-foot, 70,000-pound prehistoric cousin of the Great White Shark."
- Most of [filming] was down in Auckland.” -Statham
- Hauraki Gulf, Auckland, New Zealand
- Filming dates: 13 October 2016 - 11 January 2017
- New Zealand’s easily accessible and diverse locations, and opposite seasons to the Northern Hemisphere make it an ideal location for international productions.
- The New Zealand Film Commission, Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development, Warner Bros. Pictures and Gravity Pictures entered into a partnership on *The Meg*, as a part of the New Zealand Screen Production Grants' 5% uplift.
- *The Meg* partnership provides major economic benefits and a significant boost to the country’s thriving screen industry, including employment, export income, and Kumeu Film Studios, the new permanent film studio in West Auckland.
- “It went ridiculously well,” he told me, “considering how badly it should have gone. We learned a lot from the other movies that have shot on water, particularly shark movies. I knew all the *Jaws* nightmares. So we tried to avoid all of that.” -Turteltaub

- The toughest days he revealed, involved “really big scenes” featuring thousands of extras at the mercy of the Meg. Just making sure everyone gets out takes about an hour. It can be really tricky.” Turteltaub added, before noting with a chuckle “That’s why God invented big budgets.”
- “I had a very nice phone call with a marine paleontologist where, when he was done laughing at the idea, he gave me some very helpful notes,” the director said dryly, adding that he’s hoping the film’s scientific extrapolations pass muster with the experts.” -Turteltaub
- From a creative standpoint, the beach resorts of Hainan — known as “the Hawaii of China” — seemed tailor-made for the film.
- “I went online to look up Chinese beaches and you see images of thousands of people in inner tubes smushed together,” said Turteltaub. “You look at that and think, ‘God, that looks delicious if you’re a shark.’ We started with about 5,000 extras, but I don’t know how many made it to Day 2.”

EDITING/VFX (Steven Kemper, Kelly Matsumoto)

- Steven Kemper is known for Mission Impossible 2, Face/Off, Timecop, The Punisher
- Kelly Matsumoto is known for Furious Five, Fast & Furious 6, Star Trek Beyond, GI Joe: Rise of the Cobra
- While Turteltaub wanted to make a big summer movie, the director told *Bloody Disgusting* that the decision to tone down the movie’s violence came out of the studio’s wish to release “The Meg” with a PG-13 rating. The filmmaker said he lined up “horrifying, disgusting, and bloody deaths” but they had to all be cut.
- “We shot or even did a lot of visual effects for [gory scenes],” Turteltaub said, “But we just realized there’s no way we’re keeping this PG-13 if we show this. It’s too fun a movie to not let people who don’t like blood and people who are under, say, 14 years old into the theater. I was very hesitant to cut out a lot of blood and gore. I wouldn’t have if I thought it was wrecking the story but it wasn’t.
- “They combined CGI with models, and we have to sort of act and move around in the water. So, it’s a really clever sort of thing in how they put things together.” - Statham
- In the book the megalodons are pure white, almost luminescent, from living in an environment with virtually no light. This coloring was too difficult to render in CGI and still look realistic so instead the megalodons were colored like great whites.

SOUND/MUSIC (Harry Gregson-Williams)

- Harry Gregson-Williams is a composer. He was the composer on all four installments of the blockbuster Shrek franchise; garnered a BAFTA nomination for the score for the first Shrek; and received Golden Globe and Grammy Award nominations for his score to Andrew Adamson’s The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe. He has also just completed work on Adamson’s Mr Pip starring Hugh Laurie. His other recent scores include Blackhat for Michael Mann, Monkey Kingdom for Disney Nature and Miss You Already for director Catherine Hardwicke, The Equalizer starring Denzel Washington, Total Recall starring Colin Farrell and Kate Beckinsale, music for Ridley Scott’s Prometheus, the animated film from Aardman, Arthur Christmas, and the action thriller Cowboys & Aliens directed by Jon Favreau as well as the unique documentary Life in a Day.
- His long list of film credits also includes the critically acclaimed The Town, marking his second collaboration with director Ben Affleck. Gregson-Williams first worked with

Affleck as the composer on *Gone Baby Gone*. He has worked multiple times with other directors including Joel Schumacher on the films *Twelve*, *The Number 23*, *Veronica Guerin* and *Phone Booth*; and Tony Scott on *Unstoppable*, *The Taking of Pelham 1 2 3*, *Déjà Vu*, *Domino*, *Man on Fire*, *Spy Game* and *Enemy of the State*. Gregson-Williams' prolific output has also seen him scoring Mike Newell's *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*; X-Men Origins: *Wolverine*; Adamson's *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian and Mr Pip*; Ridley Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven*; Beeban Kidron's *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*; Aardman's animated smash *Chicken Run*; *Return to Sender* and Smilla's *Sense of Snow*, both for director Bille August; Antoine Fuqua's *The Replacement Killers*; and the first computer generated animation from Dreamworks, *Antz*

- Gregson-Williams has scored three of the five games in the highly successful *Metal Gear Solid* franchise for Konami and recently scored *Call of Duty* for Activision which became the top selling video game of 2014 and which earned him various music gaming awards.
- Born in England to a musical family, Gregson-Williams earned a music scholarship to St. John's College, Cambridge at the age of 7 and subsequently gained a coveted spot at London's Guildhall School of Music & Drama from which he recently received an Honorary Fellowship. Gregson-Williams then turned his attention to teaching, initially in schools in England but later in Alexandria, Egypt. He started his film career as assistant to composer Richard Harvey and later as orchestrator and arranger for Stanley Myers, and then went on to compose his first scores for director Nicolas Roeg. His subsequent collaboration and friendship with composer Hans Zimmer resulted in Gregson-Williams providing music for such films as *The Rock*, *Armageddon* and *The Prince of Egypt* and helped launch his career in Hollywood. He has also been a regular and valued mentor at the Sundance Composers Lab working directly with talented emerging composers from all over the world. Gregson-Williams has four children & has lived and worked in Los Angeles since 1995
- Just before the Meg attacks Suyin in the plastic shark cage, you can hear a fast paced version of the cello theme music from *Jaws*.

PROMOTION

- Statham and Li swept into the Shanghai International Film Festival to do some early promotion in the world's second-largest movie market.

BOX OFFICE

- As of August 15, 2018, *The Meg* has grossed \$59.4 million in the United States and Canada, and \$154 million in other territories, for a total worldwide gross of \$213.4 million
- With a production budget between \$130–178 million, and another \$140 million spent on advertisement, the film will need to gross around \$400 million to break-even
- In the United States and Canada, *The Meg* was released alongside *Slender Man* and *BlacKkKlansman*, and was originally projected to gross \$20–22 million from 4,118 theaters in its opening weekend
- The film made \$4 million from Thursday night previews, leading analysts to predict it would outperform its low-\$20 million projections. After making \$16.5 million on its first day, weekend estimates were raised to \$40 million
- It went on to debut to \$45.4 million, topping the box office and marking the best solo opening of Statham's career, as well as Turteltaub

- In other territories, the film debuted to \$101.5 million from 96 countries, for a worldwide opening of \$146.9 million. In China, a co-producer of the the film, it grossed \$50.3 million from 12,650 screens. Other top openings were Mexico (\$6.2 million), Russia (\$5 million), the United Kingdom (\$4.4 million), Spain (\$2.4 million) and the Philippines (\$2 million)

RECEPTION

- On the review aggregation website [Rotten Tomatoes](#), *The Meg* has an approval rating of 48% based on 193 reviews, with an average rating of 5.5/10.
- The site's critical consensus reads, "*The Meg* sets audiences up for a good old-fashioned B-movie creature feature, but lacks the genre thrills—or the cheesy bite—to make it worth diving in."
- On [Metacritic](#), the film has a weighted average score of 46 out of 100, based on 46 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews."
- [CinemaScore](#) gave the film an average grade of "B+"
- [Owen Gleiberman](#) of [Variety](#) gave the film a mixed review, calling it "neither good enough or bad enough," and writing, "*The Meg*, a rote sci-fi horror adventure film that features a shark the size of a blue whale, comes on like it wants to be the mother of all deep-sea attack movies. But it's really just the mother of all generically pandering, totally unsurprising *Jaws* ripoffs."
- In a more positive review, Alex Hudson from [Exclaim!](#) said the film succeeded nicely on modest terms; "As pulpy action films go, this is the best blockbuster about prehistoric monsters you'll see this summer. Sorry, *Jurassic World*."
- Scott Mendelson of [Forbes](#) was impressed by the film's special effects and called it "a polished B movie that delivers the goods,"
- [IGN](#)'s William Bibbiani praised the performances of the cast, particularly Statham.
- Writing for [The Hollywood Reporter](#), Simon Abrams said the film was "refreshingly unpretentious" and "a breath of fresh air" compared to the [Sharknado](#) series

SEQUELS