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SPOTLIGHT

Hook



Hook takes the Peter Pan tale in a direction few could have imagined it before Steven Spielberg's adaptation appeared in 1991. Robin Williams stars as middle-aged real-estate speculator Peter Banning, a man who can't remember his birth parents because he was placed with an adoptive family by Wendy Darling (Maggie Smith), whose granddaughter, Moira (Caroline Goodall), he later marries. On a return visit to the Darling residence in London, Banning's children are kidnapped from the nursery where Wendy claims she and her brothers conjured the stories from which J.M. Barrie created his Peter Pan tales. That's when Banning learns the stories are true and that he is Peter Pan, but grew up so that he could marry Moira. He's then carried by Tinker Bell (Julia Roberts) back to Neverland to meet Captain **Hook** (Dustin Hoffman), whose ransom demand is a fight to the finish. But Peter's been out of circulation for quite a while and can't even remember how to fly, let alone vanquish **Hook**, so the Lost Boys, (there are now a lot of them) get him back into shape and he's finally ready to save his kids and return to his former life, albeit as less of a stuffed shirt.

Hook was big on budget, scale and top marquee names. Even its extras were big: David Crosby, Jimmy Buffet and Glenn Close show up as pirates, Carrie Fisher and George Lucas appear in additional cameos and Phil Collins pops up

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as a police inspector. Due to its size and the number of cast members, costumes, etc., the production was hard to manage. It ran 40 days over its 76 day shooting schedule and was rife with personality conflicts. Julia Roberts was said to be emotionally overwrought during filming and reportedly became known as "Tinker Hell". Dustin Hoffman was a perfectionist and had his own writer on hand, and the Lost Boys, seemingly endless numbers of them, were an ever changing lineup of amateur actors.

Hook was apparently not a happy time for Spielberg, either, who commented on the experience in *Steven Spielberg: A Biography* by Joseph McBride, stating, "For some reason this movie was such a dinosaur coming out of the gate. It dragged me along behind it...Every day I came on the set I thought, 'Is this flying out of control?'"

The story of Peter Pan is an important one to Spielberg and film critics have spent much time charting its development through his career. Pan is a figure with whom Spielberg has readily aligned himself, as noted in a *Time* interview from 1985: "I have always felt like Peter Pan...It has been very hard for me to grow up...I'm a victim of the Peter Pan Syndrome."

It was the filmmaker's favorite tale as a child and when he was 11, he had his first taste of directing it, that time as a school production. In the early 80s Spielberg developed a live-action version of *Peter Pan* for Disney and later for Paramount and considered casting Michael Jackson in the title role. He had already discovered that Hoffman would make his ideal **Hook**. The project was abandoned with the birth of Spielberg's first child, Max, in 1985. In McBride's biography he recalls, "*Peter Pan* came at a time when I had my first child and I didn't want to go to London...I wanted to be home as a dad, not a surrogate dad."

The decision is one that the theme of **Hook** wholeheartedly endorses. Much has been made about Spielberg's parents' divorce, its effect on him and his own struggle to keep marriage and family intact while managing a superstar career. The collision between responsibility and eternal boyhood that has defined Spielberg's personal and creative life is key to understanding the director's attraction to **Hook**, so much so, that Spielberg asked John Bradshaw, the popular psychologist who sent everyone looking for his or her inner child, for advice on the script and had him on set, even casting his daughter in the film. Not surprisingly, those portions of the film that involve Peter Banning and his family are considered the most genuine and affecting aspects of **Hook**.

Apparently Michael Jackson, also notably obsessed with Peter Pan, was disappointed that he wasn't able to play the role on screen and not just on his Neverland Ranch. *Vanity Fair* reported in a 2000 article that he tried to put a lethal voodoo curse on Spielberg as a result of not winning the

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lead role.

Largely considered one of Spielberg's least successful films, **Hook** nonetheless did well at the box office. Made for a budget of \$70 million, it grossed \$119 million on U.S. screens. It was nominated for five Oscars®, including those for Art Direction, Costumes, Visual Effects, Makeup and Music. For fans of John Williams, the score for **Hook** is considered one of his best.

Producer: Frank Marshall, Kathleen Kennedy and Gerald R. Molen

Director: Steven Spielberg

Screenplay: Jim V. Hart and Malia Scotch Marmo, J.M.

Barrie (books and play), Jim V. Hart and Nick Castle (screen story)

Cinematography: Dean Cundey

Art Direction: Andrew Precht and Thomas E. Sanders

Music: John Williams

Film Editing: Michael Kahn

Cast: Dustin Hoffman (Captain Hook), Robin Williams (Peter Banning), Julia Roberts (Tinkerbell), Bob Hoskins (Smee), Maggie Smith (Granny Wendy), Caroline Goodall (Moirra Banning), Charlie Korsmo (Jack 'Jackie' Banning), Amber Scott (Maggie Banning).

C-142m. Letterboxed. Closed Captioning.

by Emily Soares



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