



YOUNGER CAST MAKES PETER PAN AS FANTASTIC AS NEVERLAND

"Peter Pan," a dazzling retelling of the J.M. Barrie tale, offers accomplished acting, splendid visuals, and in the role of the boy who won't grow up ... an actual boy.

The casting of 14-year-old-Jeremy Sumpter, instead of the women and grown men who usually play Pan, lends the story a new poignancy -- it turns out there are drawbacks to never growing up, like the prospect of having to part with the lovely storyteller Wendy. Sumpter captures the classic Pan mix of sweetness and stubbornness, but also something else -- a cockiness appropriate for a kid who goes toe to toe with Capt. Hook.

The new "Pan," directed and co-written for the screen by P.J. Hogan, opens in an idealized Edwardian London where the art of storytelling still holds children rapt -- a nice image in this era of video- game instant gratification. Wendy, played with intelligence and intense curiosity by 13-year-old Rachel Hurd-Wood, is so good at spinning tales that she draws Pan all the way from Neverland. When Peter tells Wendy about the Lost Boys back home, she flies away with him, as any sensible dreamer would.

The flight to Neverland unleashes the visual wonders of Donald McAlpine's ("Moulin Rouge") vibrant cinematography and some stunning digital effects. Vivid pink and red sunsets give way to planets resembling giant jawbreakers and finally to the magical forests of Pan's home. The storybook production design fits the enchantment of the tale, and the technical details are mastered as well. Even the flying looks real.

The Wendy-Pan friendship faces some immediate obstacles, not the least of which is a tiny ball of jealousy named Tinker Bell. Ludivine Sagnier, the young seductress from "Swimming Pool," is wordless but lively as Tink, looking ready to burst at the sight of a rival for Pan's affections. Far nastier is the hook-handed pirate determined to best his young rival.

Jason Isaacs makes his Hook a diabolical dandy, yet he never hams it up. His villain is charming and crafty -- or at least charming and crafty enough to fool a young girl. A sequence where Hook kidnaps Wendy brims with merriment and danger. Excited at the prospect of becoming a pirate, the girl talks details with the boss: "I could not be expected to pillage."

Director Hogan's affinity for young actors shows in natural, assured performances down to the last Lost Boy. Harry Newell and Freddie Popplewell are particularly good as Wendy's tag-along brothers, bookish lads delighted and terrified to be thrust into a real adventure.

Some of the film's images are truly eerie, even for adults, like the reptilian mermaids trying to pull Peter and Wendy into a murky lake. Creepier still is Hook's homicidal obsession with Pan. Seeing a grown man go after a boy is unsettling, even if we know the clever boy has the advantage.

This Peter and Wendy actually have some chemistry -- a new development for a "Peter Pan" movie. It can be a little weird, especially in shots where Sumpter and Hurd-Wood look like the kids from "The Blue Lagoon," but it also raises the stakes for Pan and highlights the bittersweet nature of the story. Young Peter is still as innocent and headstrong as ever, but this time he really knows what he's missing.



Text

1. Who are the actors playing the main roles?
2. Who is the director of the movie?
3. What is different about the actors in this version compared to the other adaptations?
4. What can you say about the visual effects in the movie?
5. What is the main obstacle between Peter Pan and Wendy?
 - Why?
6. How does the actor play Captain Hook?
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