

# The Tiger's Apprentice (film)

***The Tiger's Apprentice*** is a 2024 American animated fantasy film based on the 2003 novel *The Tiger's Apprentice* by Laurence Yep. Produced by Paramount Animation and Jane Startz Productions, it is directed by Raman Hui and co-directed by Paul Watling and Yong Duk Jhun (in their directorial debuts) from a screenplay by David Magee and Christopher Yost. The film stars the voices of Brandon Soo Hoo, Henry Golding, Lucy Liu, Sandra Oh, and Michelle Yeoh.

Cartoon Network originally opted to produce a live-action/CG hybrid television film adaptation of the novel in the late 2000s, but it never came to fruition. Paramount later acquired the rights for an animated film in March 2019, with Carlos Baena attached as director. Mikros Animation provided animation. Much of the voice cast was revealed between 2020 and 2022, following Golding's casting in July 2020. Hui later replaced Baena as director in January 2022. Steve Jablonsky composed the score.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

Originally planned for theatrical release by Paramount Pictures, *The Tiger's Apprentice* was released on Paramount+ on February 2, 2024 after being delayed several times due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The film received mixed reviews from critics.

## Plot

In 2009 in Hong Kong, Mrs. Lee and her baby grandson Tom were chased by yaoguai. Mrs. Lee can fend them off with the help of the Zodiac Warriors, a group of shapeshifters rooted in the Chinese zodiac, before confronting Loo, a sorceress controlling the yaoguai.

Fifteen years later, Tom, now living with his grandmother in San Francisco, faces a bully at school, partially for the Chinese appearance of his house, when he inadvertently unleashes a magical force. After school, Tom removes some charms from his home, which unbeknownst to him were protecting against the evil spirits. Soon after, Mr. Hu, the tiger of the Warriors. visits after sensing that the charms have been dispatched. During the fight, Mrs. Lee throws the stone to Tom, making him the guardian right at that moment, before activating all the protective charms together, which results in a blast intended to kill her and Loo, but the latter survives.

### The Tiger's Apprentice



Promotional release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	<u>Raman Hui</u>
<b>Screenplay by</b>	<u>David Magee</u> <u>Christopher Yost</u>
<b>Based on</b>	<i><u>The Tiger's Apprentice</u></i> by <u>Laurence Yep</u>
<b>Produced by</b>	<u>Jane Startz</u> <u>Sandra Rabins</u> <u>Bob Persichetti</u>
<b>Starring</b>	<u>Brandon Soo Hoo</u> <u>Henry Golding</u> <u>Lucy Liu</u> <u>Sandra Oh</u> <u>Michelle Yeoh</u>
<b>Edited by</b>	<u>Wayne Wahrman</u>
<b>Music by</b>	<u>Steve Jablonsky</u>
<b>Production companies</b>	<u>Paramount Animation</u> <u>Jane Startz</u>

Hu brings Tom to a safe place where he comes to know about the Zodiac Warriors and how they swore to protect the guardian. Later that night, Tom has a dream where he sees a bright Phoenix being covered in darkness, and a woman tells her that now he walks two worlds: the world of mortals and the world of magic. Soon the whole group of Zodiac Warriors are reunited at the Temple of Twelve. However, some of the Zodiac Warriors don't show up, which leads to an uneasy situation. In the meantime, Tom goes to confront Loo, who's revealed to be the mother of Räv, the new student at Tom's school. The Zodiac Warriors arrive, learning that the missing members were captured by Loo, and another few become trapped as well. Tom, Räv, and the remaining members eventually escape.

Tom focuses on his training. To gain complete power as a guardian, he must be able to see the Phoenix inside the stone, which Tom's lineage can see. Mistral, the dragon, tells Tom one night that during the fight between Mrs. Lee and Loo, Hu died protecting him. Later, after thrashing Loo in the battle, Mrs. Lee gives a part of her soul to save Hu. Later, Tom sees his grandmother but is revealed to be Loo, who steals the Phoenix Stone from him.

After Tom informs the Warriors, Hu reveals that Loo will use the stone on the eve of the Lunar New Year when the sun sets. On that day, Tom and the Warriors find Loo and a large battle ensues. Hu is briefly captured, but is freed along with the other Warriors. However, Loo activates the Phoenix stone to suck all the souls out of the mortals. Just then, Tom finally sees the Phoenix inside the stone. Tom removes the darkness torturing the Phoenix, reversing the effects and defeating Loo.

However, Tom dies with his soul is about to leave. Hu, with the help of the other Zodiac Warriors, performs Nu Kua, which leads him to the Ocean of Tears. There, Hu pleads to the Empress to give away a part of his soul to save Tom, which is accepted. Later, Hu offers his shop as Tom's new home. In the mid-credit scene, Tom, as a result of containing part of Hu's soul, is able to transform into a tiger.

## Voice cast

- [Brandon Soo Hoo](#) as Tom Lee, the new guardian in training<sup>[4]</sup>
  - [Lydie Loots](#) as Baby Tom
- [Henry Golding](#) as Mr. Hu, Tom's mentor and the Tiger guardian<sup>[4][2]</sup>
- [Lucy Liu](#) as Nu Kua / Cynthia, Nu Kua's the empress of the spirit world. Cynthia is a frog who owns a dumpling shop and is guardian of the temple of the 12<sup>[4]</sup>
- [Sandra Oh](#) as Mistral, the Dragon guardian<sup>[4][5]</sup>
- [Michelle Yeoh](#) as Loo, an evil sorceress<sup>[4]</sup>
- [Bowen Yang](#) as Sidney, the Rat guardian<sup>[4]</sup>
- [Leah Lewis](#) as Räv, Loo's foster daughter and Tom's love interest <sup>[4][6]</sup>
- [Kheng Hua Tan](#) as Mrs. Lee, Tom's grandmother<sup>[4]</sup>
- [Sherry Cola](#) as Naomi, the Monkey guardian<sup>[4]</sup>
- [Deborah S. Craig](#) as Pig <sup>[4]</sup>

	Productions <a href="#">New Republic Pictures</a> (uncredited)
<b>Distributed by</b>	<a href="#">Paramount+</a>
<b>Release dates</b>	January 27, 2024 ( <a href="#">Los Angeles</a> )  February 2, 2024 (United States)
<b>Running time</b>	84 minutes <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English

- [Jo Koy](#) as Rooster <sup>[4]</sup>
- [Greta Lee](#) as Rabbit <sup>[4]</sup>
- [Diana Lee Inosanto](#) as Horse <sup>[4]</sup>
- [Patrick Gallagher](#) as Dog <sup>[4]</sup>
- [Poppy Liu](#) as Snake <sup>[4]</sup>
- [Josh Zuckerman](#) as Rudy
- [Ryan Christopher Lee](#) as Liam
- [Raman Hui](#) as Radio Announcer

## Production

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### Development

In October 2008, [Cartoon Network](#) announced a television film adaptation of [Laurence Yep](#)'s 2003 novel, *The Tiger's Apprentice*, set to premiere on the network in 2010. Produced by [Cartoon Network Studios](#), the film would have been a live-action/CG hybrid, with [David Magee](#) penning the screenplay and Jane Startz executive producing.<sup>[7]</sup> The project never came to fruition.

In March 2019, [Paramount Pictures](#) announced an animated adaptation of the novel set to be theatrically released in February 2022.<sup>[8]</sup> In June 2019, [Paramount Animation](#) announced that [Carlos Baena](#) would direct the film, with Magee and Harry Cripps writing the screenplay, Startz producing, and [Raman Hui](#) and Kane Lee executive producing.<sup>[9]</sup> In July 2020, the film was delayed until February 2023 due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#).<sup>[10]</sup> In January 2022, it was revealed that Hui would instead direct the film, with Paul Watling and [Yong Duk Jhun](#) co-directing and [Bob Persichetti](#) producing.<sup>[11]</sup> Baena would still remain in an executive producer role.<sup>[4]</sup> [New Republic Pictures](#) co-financed the film, but is not credited.<sup>[12]</sup>

### Casting

In July 2020, [Henry Golding](#) was cast in the film as Mr. Hu.<sup>[13]</sup> In September 2020, [Sandra Oh](#) was cast in the film as Mistral, with [Michelle Yeoh](#), [Brandon Soo Hoo](#), [Bowen Yang](#), [Sherry Cola](#), and [Kheng Hua Tan](#) also added to the cast in unspecified roles.<sup>[5]</sup> In November 2020, [Leah Lewis](#) was cast in the film as Räv.<sup>[6]</sup> In July 2022, it emerged that [Lucy Liu](#) had been added to the cast in a starring role.<sup>[14]</sup> In December 2023, along with the trailer, it was revealed that [Deborah S. Craig](#), [Jo Koy](#), [Greta Lee](#), [Diana Lee Inosanto](#), [Patrick Gallagher](#), and [Poppy Lui](#) had joined the cast.<sup>[4]</sup>

### Animation

Animation was provided by [Mikros Animation](#) in Paris.<sup>[15]</sup> The film had a team of 80 animators and had a 4-year production. Animators from Spain, England, Belgium and Canada did remote work.<sup>[16]</sup>

### Post-production

Post-production was finished in mid-2023.<sup>[16]</sup> On the day the film was released, two crew members who worked on the film revealed on [Letterboxd](#) that the film went through a turbulent production. The first user, identified as didiwa, cited harassment and rewrites occurring until 2023, along with some of the production crew doing multiple jobs and working several pay grades above actual roles, with no vacation allowed

while others flew across Europe with paid expenses.<sup>[17]</sup> Devon Manney, the second user, worked as an apprentice story artist from June to December 2019, and was laid off with the rest of the story team a few days before Christmas of that year, saying that Paramount "wanted to make a *Spider-Verse* knock off".<sup>[18][19]</sup>

## Music

In December 2023, it was announced that Steve Jablonsky would compose the film's score.<sup>[4]</sup> Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" was covered by Zhu and released on January 26, 2024.<sup>[20]</sup> Japanese girl group Atarashii Gakko! released the song "Hello" from the movie's soundtrack as a single on February 9, 2024.

## Release

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*The Tiger's Apprentice* had its world premiere in Los Angeles on January 27, 2024, and was released by Paramount+ on February 2, 2024.<sup>[4]</sup> It was given a theatrical release in Australia on April 4.

The film was originally scheduled for theatrical release by Paramount Pictures on February 11, 2022, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>[21]</sup> it was delayed until February 10, 2023 and later December 20, 2023.<sup>[22][23]</sup> It was then further delayed to January 19, 2024.<sup>[14]</sup> However, in September 2023, the film was removed from Paramount's theatrical release schedule and was moved to a streaming release on Paramount+ on an unspecified 2024 date instead.<sup>[24]</sup> In December 2023, along with the teaser trailer, the film's final release date was revealed.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Reception

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On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 53% of 36 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5.4/10.<sup>[25]</sup> Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 60 out of 100, based on 6 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.

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## External links

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- *The Tiger's Apprentice* (<https://www.paramountplus.com/movies/video/pb5DuJTrSJgS1iY3onwjI0V2yiV7obri/>) on Paramount+
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