

Kung Fu Panda 4

Kung Fu Panda 4 is a 2024 American animated martial arts comedy film produced by DreamWorks Animation and distributed by Universal Pictures. It is the fourth installment in the Kung Fu Panda franchise and the sequel to Kung Fu Panda 3 (2016). The film was directed by Mike Mitchell, co-directed by Stephanie Ma Stine, written by Darren Lemke and the writing team of Jonathan Aibel and Glenn Berger, and produced by Rebecca Huntley. It features Jack Black, Ian McShane, Dustin Hoffman, James Hong, and Bryan Cranston reprising their roles from the previous films, with Awkwafina, Ke Huy Quan, Ronny Chieng, Lori Tan Chinn, and Viola Davis joining the cast as new characters. In the film, Po (Black), who must find and train his successor as the new Dragon Warrior, teams up with fox bandit Zhen (Awkwafina) to defeat evil sorceress The Chameleon (Davis), before she steals the kung-fu abilities of all masters in China.

Directors Jennifer Yuh Nelson and Alessandro Carloni were asked about the possibility of a fourth Kung Fu Panda film before the release of the third film in January 2016, with Nelson later saying in August 2018 that she was open to a fourth installment. DreamWorks officially announced the fourth film in August 2022, with Mitchell, Ma Stine, and Huntley attached as director, co-director, and producer, respectively, by April 2023. Most of the main voice cast, along with the return of Aibel and Berger as writers and co-producers, was announced in December 2023, following Awkwafina's casting in May of that year. Composer Hans Zimmer, who had scored for the previous three installments, the first two with John Powell and the third alone, returned as composer alongside frequent collaborator Steve Mazzaro. Some additional production assets were borrowed from Jellyfish Pictures.

Kung Fu Panda 4 premiered at the AMC 14 Theater at The Grove in Los Angeles on March 3, 2024, and was theatrically released in the United States on March 8. The film received generally positive reviews from critics and has grossed over \$537 million worldwide, making it the third highest-grossing film of 2024.

Plot

In the Valley of Peace, Po helps Li Shan and Mr. Ping open their new restaurant. Master Shifu then tells Po that he must advance and become a spiritual leader, which means Po can no longer be

Kung Fu Panda 4	
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Theatrical release poster	
Directed by	<div>Mike Mitchell</div>
Written by	<div>Jonathan Aibel^[1]</div>
	<div>Glenn Berger^[1]</div>
	<div>Darren Lemke^[1]</div>
Produced by	<div>Rebecca Huntley</div>
Starring	<div>Jack Black</div>
	<div>Awkwafina</div>
	<div>Bryan Cranston</div>
	<div>James Hong</div>
	<div>Ian McShane</div>
	<div>Ke Huy Quan</div>
	<div>Dustin Hoffman</div>
	<div>Viola Davis</div>
Cinematography	<div>Joshua Gunther</div>
Edited by	<div>Christopher Knights</div>

the Dragon Warrior and must find a suitable successor to take his place. Po struggles to choose the right candidate as he does not want to lose his status as the Dragon Warrior, and he stumbles upon a fox bandit named Zhen trying to steal ancient weapons from the Jade Palace. Po is able to outsmart Zhen and send her to prison, but a group of mine workers tell him that Tai Lung has returned and destroyed an entire quarry. Zhen reveals that Tai Lung's return was masqueraded by a sorceress known as The Chameleon, who can shape-shift into any animal she wants as well as copying various kung fu techniques simply by touching them.

With Zhen's assistance, Po heads to Juniper City to take down The Chameleon, little knowing that his worried fathers are following them. After encountering a shifty tavern and fighting off the inhabitants, they soon arrive at Juniper City. They are almost arrested and escape to the Den of Thieves, where they receive aid from the den's leader Han, who is also a close friend of Zhen. From there, Po and Zhen head to The Chameleon's lair until Po is captured. It is then revealed that Zhen has been acting as a double agent for The Chameleon; her task was to acquire Po's Staff of Wisdom, which has the power to access the Spirit Realm. Po almost manages to escape, but The Chameleon, taking the form of Zhen, fools him and throws him off a cliff. He nearly falls to his death, but is rescued by his fathers, who convince him that sometimes change can be good.

Using the staff, The Chameleon summons every deceased kung fu master and steals their techniques, including Lord Shen, General Kai, and the real Tai Lung. After escaping for good, Zhen reunites with Po, but he refuses to back down from facing The Chameleon, so she, Ping and Li head back to the Den of Thieves to convince them to help them save Po. As they battle The Chameleon's army of Komodo dragons, Po attempts to reason with The Chameleon to no avail, although she does give the staff back to him as she no longer needs it. They battle, but when Zhen intervenes, The Chameleon turns into a Chimera of several kung fu masters. After the battle, she then shifts into a copycat of Po, fights him, and soon traps him in a cage. Putting his trust in Zhen, Po gives her the Staff of Wisdom, with which she bests The Chameleon. Po, who was only pretending to be trapped, defeats The Chameleon using the staff and returns all of the stolen kung fu to their owners, who show respect to Po and return to the Spirit Realm, with Tai Lung taking The Chameleon with him.

While returning to the Valley of Peace, Po chooses Zhen as his successor, much to Shifu's annoyance. Confident with his choice, Po and the Furious Five help train Zhen to become the next Dragon Warrior.

Music by	<u>Hans Zimmer</u>
	<u>Steve Mazzaro</u>
Production company	<u>DreamWorks Animation</u>
Distributed by	<u>Universal Pictures</u>
Release dates	March 3, 2024 (<u>The Grove</u>)
	March 8, 2024 (United States)
Running time	93 minutes ^[2]
Country	United States ^[3]
Language	English
Budget	\$85 million ^[4]
Box office	\$537.4 million ^{[5][6]}

Voice cast

- Jack Black as Po, a giant panda who is set to become a spiritual leader after renouncing his title as the Dragon Warrior.^[7]
 - Black also voices The Chameleon's form of Po.
- Awkwafina as Zhen, a corsac fox who is a wanted thief and accompanies Po on his journey.^[7]

- Awkwafina also voices The Chameleon's form of Zhen.
- Viola Davis as The Chameleon, a nefarious shape-shifting chameleon sorceress that can copy others' kung fu by absorbing their abilities and Zhen's boss.^[7]
- Dustin Hoffman as Master Shifu, a wise red panda and Po's master.^[7]
- James Hong as Mr. Ping, a Chinese goose and Po's adoptive father.^[7]
- Bryan Cranston as Li Shan, Po's biological father.^[7]
- Ian McShane as Tai Lung, a snow leopard who was Shifu's adopted son and former disciple until he became evil. Po vanquished him to the Spirit Realm in the first film and General Kai captured him off-screen during the third film, but The Chameleon brings him back from the Spirit Realm. In this film, Tai Lung is the secondary antagonist after being the main antagonist of the 2008 film.^[7]
 - McShane also voices The Chameleon's form of Tai Lung.
- Ke Huy Quan as Han, a Sunda pangolin who is the leader of a den of thieves.^[7]
- Lori Tan Chinn as Granny Boar, an elderly female boar who can take out her tusks and use them as weapons.^[8]
- Ronny Chieng as Captain Fish, a green arowana that lives in a pelican's mouth, who is his seemingly adoptive mother.
- Harry Shum Jr. as Scott, a fire-breathing crocodile who was sent to the Spirit Realm by Po.

The Furious Five make a brief non-speaking appearance in the end credits with the exception of Seth Rogen providing screams for Mantis. Lord Shen and General Kai also have non-speaking appearances when The Chameleon is summoning villains from the Spirit Realm. YouTuber Jimmy "MrBeast" Donaldson has a cameo as Panda Pig, a pig painted black-and-white who is one of the candidates for the next Dragon Warrior.^[9]

Production

Development

On December 3, 2010, then-DreamWorks Animation CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg said that there was a possibility the series could have three more sequels after *Kung Fu Panda 3*, bringing it to a six-film series.^[10] On January 13, 2016, Collider asked the filmmakers of *Kung Fu Panda 3* about the possibility of a fourth film. Co-director Jennifer Yuh Nelson stated, "It's one at a time. We want to make this a perfect jewel, and then we'll see what happens after that". Co-director Alessandro Carloni said, "With the sequels, we don't want to try to have them feel open-ended. We want it to feel like a completed journey, and we feel this movie does. And then, if a fantastic story presents itself, great".^[11] On August 2, 2018, when asked about the possibility of *Kung Fu Panda 4*, Nelson replied that she always saw the series as a trilogy, but was open for a fourth installment as long as the franchise focused on Po.^[12]

In August 2022, DreamWorks Animation confirmed that *Kung Fu Panda 4* was in production.^[13] At CinemaCon in April 2023, more details for the film were revealed, such as the premise as described by Jack Black.^[14] It was also announced that Mike Mitchell was set to direct the film, with Stephanie Ma Stine co-directing and Rebecca Huntley producing.^[15] Mitchell was a creative consultant on the first film and an

executive producer on the third film. The film was originally planned to be a live-action/animated hybrid, according to Ma Stine. Characters such as The Chameleon (known as The Collector) and Zhen would have been humans. This will all be eventually scrapped. ^[16]

Writing

By December 2023, it was reported that Jonathan Aibel and Glenn Berger returned to write the screenplay.^[17] In February 2024, Darren Lemke was revealed to have co-written the screenplay.^[1] Mitchell described *Kung Fu Panda 4* as a love letter to the first film.^{[8][18]} Despite its connections to previous entries in the series, he wanted the story to stand on its own.^[18] When producing the third film, Mitchell felt that Po's character development from the first film was wrapping up due to finally becoming the Dragon Warrior, so he wondered what if another sequel took "all that" away, leading the filmmakers to find some "really great heavy themes" that they felt are important for the modern world.^[19] Additionally, Mitchell wanted to evolve Po's character, introduce new characters, and expand the franchise's world,^[20] feeling that the film took so long to be produced because the filmmakers wanted a perfect story that could evolve Po by making him learn something to advance to the next level.^[19] He described Po as having a black-and-white view of the world and wanted to pair him with a more morally grey character, Zhen. Mitchell also wanted a character who Po can be frustrated by, like how Shifu gets frustrated by him.^[8]

For The Chameleon, Mitchell sought to make her a more-brain-than-brawn kind of villain.^[8] He went on to say that she is the smartest and most supernatural foe Po has faced.^{[21][18]} He described The Chameleon as a mirror to Po in that both characters were underestimated by society for their bodies, but went on to gain high status. He said, "So Po has become the greatest hero, and now she's the greatest villain".^[18] Mitchell felt that one of the things the *Kung Fu Panda* franchise stands out for, aside from Black's Po, are its villains, so he made sure that The Chameleon could be as formidable as Tai Lung, Lord Shen and General Kai, hence his reasoning to specifically bring the former back into this sequel's story.^[19]

Casting

In May 2023, it was reported that Awkwafina had joined the voice cast of the film.^[22] In December 2023, it was announced that Ke Huy Quan and Viola Davis would join the cast, with the latter playing the villain of the film, The Chameleon.^{[23][24]} Lori Tan Chinn and Ronny Chieng were also announced as new cast members,^[8] with Ian McShane, Bryan Cranston, James Hong, and Dustin Hoffman reprising their roles from the previous films.^{[7][25]} Mitchell stated that he is a fan of McShane's work and that it was a "blast" to be able to work with him; had McShane refused to reprise his role as Tai Lung, there was no alternate plan for the film's story, as filmmakers had "locked in" for Tai Lung's return.^[19]

In December 2023, Mitchell stated that Masters Tigress, Monkey, Crane, Mantis, and Viper—known collectively as the Furious Five—would make an appearance in the film and that they are "off on their own individual missions", with producer Rebecca Huntley confirming that there would be "a glimpse of the Furious Five".^{[8][21]} In a March 2024 Discord Q&A session in a fan server, co-director Stephanie Ma Stine noted that the Furious Five were not originally going to appear despite protests from writers, artists, and animators. Ma Stine explained that it was due to the costs of the original actors, especially Angelina Jolie as Tigress. However, the marketing department told the filmmakers to include them in a cameo appearance.^[26]

Animation and design

Mitchell stated that the film's fight scenes reflect advances in both technology and kung fu,^[8] and took more influence from anime than previous films in the series.^[18] Stunt performers from Marvel films joined production to give the animators moves to study and use in the choreography.^[8] The Chameleon was DreamWorks' most complex character to animate, with a total of 8,130 controls.^[27] While most of the animation for the film was provided by DreamWorks Animation Glendale, Jellyfish Pictures—who previously worked with DreamWorks on *How to Train Your Dragon: Homecoming*, *Spirit Untamed*, *The Boss Baby: Family Business*, and *The Bad Guys*—handled the additional asset production services using proprietary software like Premo and Moonray.

Kung Fu Panda 4 and *The Wild Robot* will be the last two films to be made entirely in-house at DreamWorks Animation, as Cartoon Brew reported on October 6, 2023, that the studio would be moving away from producing films in-house in their Glendale campus to rely more heavily on outside studios after 2024.^[28]

Music

In December 2023, Hans Zimmer and Steve Mazzaro, the former of whom also composed for the first three films, were announced to compose the film's score.^[29] A cover of Britney Spears' "...Baby One More Time" by Tenacious D is featured in the end credits. The album was released on March 8, 2024, simultaneously with the movie's release, by Back Lot Music.

Marketing

Po returned to the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in November 2023 as promotion for the film.^[30] The trailer for the film, featuring The White Stripes' "Seven Nation Army", along with a poster, was released on December 13, 2023. The trailer was viewed over 142 million times in the first 24 hours across all social media, becoming the most-viewed trailer for a Universal animated film, surpassing *The Super Mario Bros. Movie*, *Minions: The Rise of Gru*, *Sing 2* and *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish*.^[31]

Release

Theatrical

Kung Fu Panda 4 premiered at the AMC 14 Theater at The Grove in Los Angeles on March 3, 2024, and was released in the United States on March 8,^{[32][13]} with showtimes a day prior.^[33] The film was shown at the Columbia University School of the Arts on March 1, 2024.^[34]

Home media

Kung Fu Panda 4 was released on digital download on April 9, 2024, by Universal Pictures Home Entertainment. A short film titled *Dueling Dumplings* was released alongside it.^{[35][36]}

As part of Universal's deal with [Netflix](#), the film will stream on [Peacock](#) for the first four months of the pay-TV window, before moving to [Netflix](#) for the next ten, and returning to [Peacock](#) for the remaining four.^{[37][38]}

Reception

Box office

As of May 21, 2024, *Kung Fu Panda 4* has grossed \$192.9 million in the United States and Canada and \$344.6 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$537.4 million.^{[6][5]}

In the United States and Canada, *Kung Fu Panda 4* was released alongside *Imaginary* and *Cabrini*, and was projected to gross \$45–50 million from 3,900 theaters in its opening weekend.^{[4][39]} The film made \$19.4 million on its first day, including \$3.8 million from Thursday night previews.^{[40][41]} It went on to debut to \$58 million, topping the box office and becoming the highest opening weekend for a DreamWorks Animation film since *Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted* in 2012.^{[42][43]} The film made \$30.1 million in its second weekend (a drop of 48%), remaining in first.^[44] It made \$16.5 million in its third weekend, finishing in third behind newcomer *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire* and *Dune: Part Two*.^[45]

Critical response

Most of the reviews *Kung Fu Panda 4* received were positive.^[46] On the review aggregator website [Rotten Tomatoes](#), 73% of 153 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 6.1/10. The website's consensus reads: "*Kung Fu Panda 4* offers enough eye-catching entertainment to sustain the franchise's young fans, although it's starting to feel like this series is running out of steam."^[47] [Metacritic](#), which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 54 out of 100, based on 33 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[48] Audiences polled by [CinemaScore](#) gave the film an average grade of "A−" on an A+ to F scale (the same as the [first film](#)), while those polled by [PostTrak](#) gave it an 80% overall positive score, with 59% saying they would recommend it.^[41]

Frank Scheck of *The Hollywood Reporter* wrote, "With its new settings and characters, including Oscar winner Ke Huy Quan as a pangolin leader of a den of thieves and Ronnie Chieng as a fish that lives in a pelican's mouth, *Kung Fu Panda 4* clearly aims to refresh the franchise. But it's really more of the same, which is not such a bad thing when you consider that the series has grossed some \$1.8 billion so far (and that's not including the spin-off projects, including various television series and video games). Its appeal still lies largely in Black's hilarious vocal performance which has lost none of its charm."^[49] Wilson Chapman of [IndieWire](#) gave the film a B- and wrote, "Black can, at this point, play this role in his sleep, but he still gives it his all in his fourth go around, and his pitch perfect comic timing and lovable earnestness makes the journey an easy one to take."^[50] For *The New York Times*, Claire Shaffer complimented the film's art direction and Black and Awkwafina's chemistry; overall, she felt it "is an enjoyable *Kung Fu Panda* movie, even if it's missing some of the pizzazz of the earlier ones."^[51] Mentioning the relatively lower budget of this installment, a review in *Le Devoir* found that it allowed the film to focus more efficiently on 'the essence of the art of cartoon (but by computer all the same), its Disneyesque characters, and the settings, still rich in depth and color, of the Valley of Peace, this fantastic reproduction of Ancient China.'^[52]

Owen Gleiberman of *Variety* unfavorably compared the film to its predecessors, writing, "Even after 16 years of Po, you want to hear Jack Black's voice charged with that youthful cockeyed exuberance, rather than the older-and-wiser aura he exudes here. You also wish the movie had better jokes. Mitchell, co-directing with Stephanie Stine, doesn't stage the action bouts with the surreal freedom that animation makes possible. Po goes through the motions, but I'm sorry, the kick is gone."^[53] Similarly, *The Boston Globe*'s Odie Henderson expressed disappointment with the film's villain and action sequences, concluding "I enjoyed the first three adventures of the Dragon Warrior, but the best thing he can do now is to give this series a much needed skadoosh, sending it to rest in the cinematic spirit realm."^[54] Christy Lemire, in her review for *RogerEbert.com*, wrote *Kung Fu Panda 4* "struggles to justify its existence. It lacks both the delicate artistry and warm wit of its predecessors. The subtle sense of spirituality is long gone; in its place are frantic action sequences."^[55] In a mixed review for the *Los Angeles Times*, Katie Walsh stated that "Though visually dazzling, 'Kung Fu Panda 4' shows a flabby franchise in need of punch".^[56] Mark Kermode gave the film a negative review.^[57]

Future

On December 3, 2010, then-DreamWorks Animation CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg officially confirmed that the series could see two more sequels after *Kung Fu Panda 4*, bringing it to a six-film series.^[10] Mitchell and Huntley were asked on December 14, 2023, if Katzenberg's original plan would still be carried out, to which Mitchell said that *Kung Fu Panda 4* may launch a new trilogy if no one gets tired of seeing Jack Black as Po, while Huntley affirmed that the filmmakers behind *Kung Fu Panda 4* focused on making it the franchise's "greatest" film and that whether sequels will be made is something to discuss later.^[58]

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External links

- [Official website](https://www.dreamworks.com/movies/kung-fu-panda-4) (<https://www.dreamworks.com/movies/kung-fu-panda-4>) 
 - *Kung Fu Panda 4* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt21692408/>) at [IMDb](#)
 - *Kung Fu Panda 4* (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/kung_fu_panda_4) at [Rotten Tomatoes](#)
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