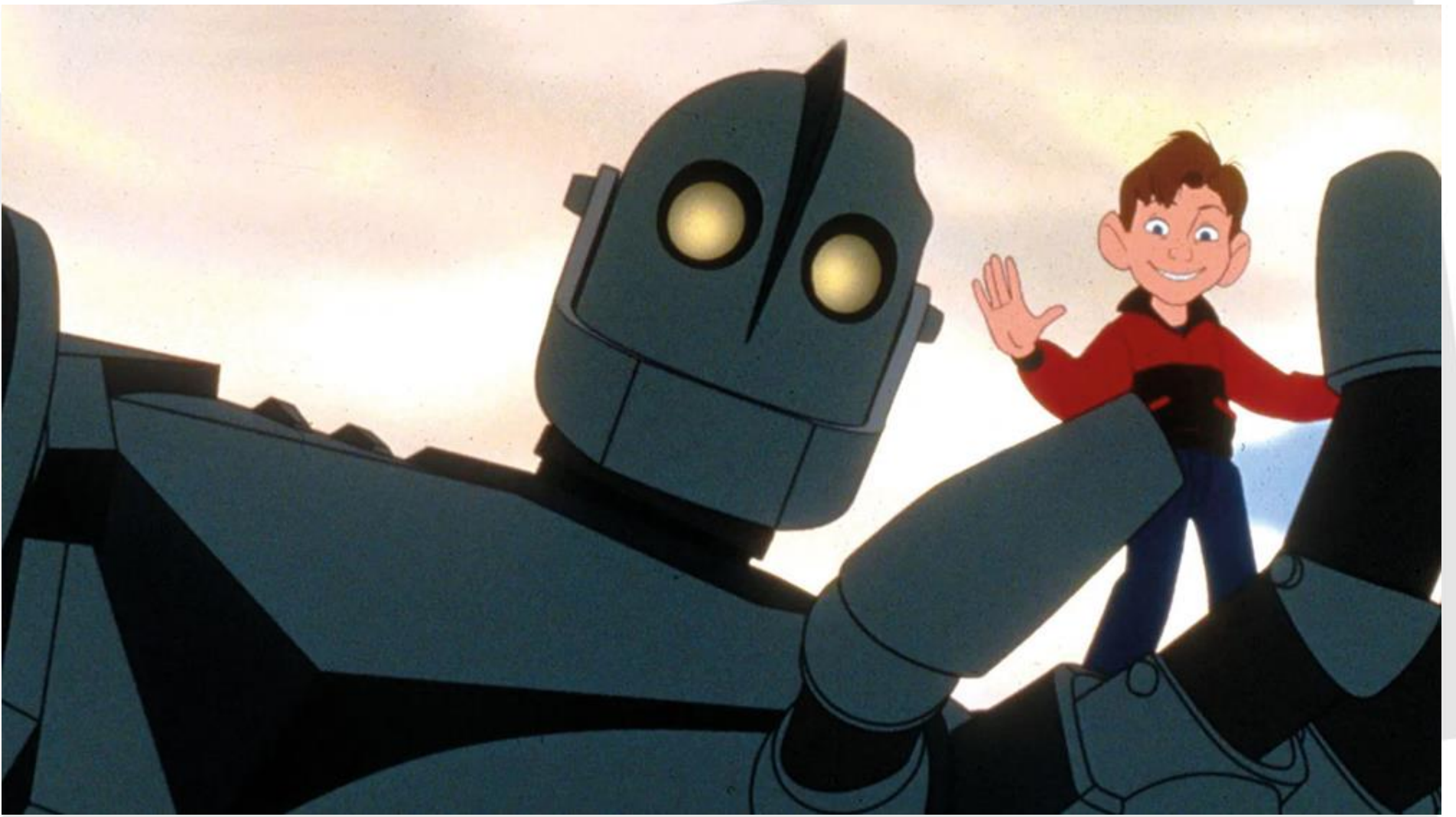


# BFI FAMILIES

FAMILY FRIENDLY FILM SCREENINGS,  
ACTIVITIES AND WORKSHOPS



## THE IRON GIANT

### What's it about?

Hogarth Hughes is an intelligent nine-year-old who befriends a 50-foot alien robot, which recently landed in the United States and is being hunted by government agents who believe that it means them harm. Working together, Hogarth and the robot must outsmart their pursuers. Recognised as an animated classic, Brad Bird's (*Ratatouille*, *The Incredibles*) film is a celebration of friendship that raises profound questions about war and the environment.

## Making 'The Iron Giant'

In the written text, under either name, the iron man/giant comes from the sea to England, and the story is not set in any particular year; but in this film version the iron man/giant seems to be from another galaxy, and the story is located firmly in the USA of October 1957, when the Russians launched the first-ever satellite – the Sputnik – into outer space.

Before working on this adaptation and relocation, director/co-writer Brad Bird made his name in animation through his involvement in various successful TV series, including *King of the Hill* and *The Simpsons*. Asked why he wanted to switch to a very different type of subject and take on the 30-month challenge of animating for the cinema, he replies: 'I think any material is right for animation if you approach it in the right way. The medium has certain strengths and weaknesses; if you play to its strengths, any story can be told. I think animation's strength is caricature, and that if you have an element to your story that lends itself to caricature, then you're pretty much home free.'

In relation to the specific appeal of *The Iron Giant*, Bird goes on: 'I suppose what attracted me to this project was the response you get to the mythology of a big metal man and a little, kind of helpless, human. These can both be presented as caricatures. But then our adaptation of the story turns things around by presenting the iron man as the child, while the 'helpless' human is the one that acts like a powerful adult. So, even though they are visually presented one way, in actuality they are something a little different.'

The presentation of this big-little relationship, though it is the key to the story, was the most difficult aspect of the production because, partly for reasons of economy, the boy and the giant were animated by different methods. While the giant was drawn by computers, Hogarth (the boy) was brought to life by artists drawing him by hand. 'Our challenge at the beginning of the project', Bird explains, 'was to make it seem to audiences that the giant and the boy were operating in the same world as each other. We worked very hard to create that impression; in order for the film to reach audiences, it was essential to get it right. What we had to try to do was understand what makes hand-drawn animation look hand-drawn, and get the computers to come closer to that, rather than make the hand-drawn stuff look more computerised.'

In line with his work on *The Simpsons*, Bird wanted *The Iron Giant* to appeal to adults and children equally. 'I like fast-paced things as much as anybody', he says, 'but I think there is – for want of a better phrase – an "MTV-isation" of movies. I think it's a sickening attitude that basically assumes that we all have the attention span of gnats, and are deaf as well. I don't think that's true of children any more than it is of anybody else. I would say that this film is fine for kids of six and up even though it is a little sophisticated and has no lowbrow humour.' Actor-singer Harry Connick Jr, who provides one of the adult voices in the film, agrees with Bird, saying: 'At last I'm in a film I can show my kids with pride.'

Terry Staples

THE IRON GIANT

Director: Brad Bird  
Production Company: Warner Bros  
Executive Producer: Pete Townshend  
Producers: Allison Abbate, Des McAnuff  
Screenplay: Tim McCanlies  
Screenplay: Andy Brent Forrester \*  
Screen Story: Brad Bird  
Based on the book The Iron Man by: Ted Hughes  
Camera Supervisor: Mark Dinicola  
Head of Animation: Tony Fucile  
Supervising Animators: Richard Bazley, Bob Davies, Stephan Franck, Tony Fucile, Gregory S.E. Manwaring, Steven Markowski, Mike Nguyen, Wendy Perdue, Christopher Sauvé, Dean Wellins  
Visual Development/Character Designs: Tony Fucile, Ray Aragon, Victor J. Haboush, Lou Romano, Laura L. Corsiglia, Dominique R. Louis, Teddy Newton  
Editor: Darren T. Holmes

Production Designer: Mark Whiting  
Iron Giant Designers: Joe Johnston, Mark Whiting, Hiroki Itokazu, Teddy T. Yang, Steven Markowski, Michael Bay  
Art Director: Alan Bodner  
Music/Music Conductor: Michael Kamen  
Music Editor: Christopher Brooks  
Sound Design: Randy Thom

Voice cast

Jennifer Aniston (Annie Hughes)  
Harry Connick Jr (Dean McCoppin)  
Vin Diesel (The Iron Giant)  
James Gammon (Foreman Marv Loach/Floyd Turbeaux)  
Cloris Leachman (Mrs Tensedge)  
Christopher McDonald (Kent Mansley)  
John Mahoney (General Rogard)  
Eli Marienthal (Hogarth Hughes)  
M. Emmet Walsh (Earl Stutz)

USA 1999/2015©  
88 mins

\* Uncredited

BFI FAMILIES

The Mitchells vs the Machines  
Sat 25 Feb 12:30  
Funday Preview: The Magician’s Elephant  
Sun 26 Feb 11:15  
Funday Workshop: The Magician’s Elephant  
Sun 26 Feb 10:00  
Whodunnit? Murder Mystery Filmmaking Workshop  
13-16 Feb 10:30-16:30  
Mini Filmmakers  
Every Sat from 25 Feb – 1 March 10:30-12:30  
Young Filmmakers  
Every Sat from 25 Feb – 1 March 14:00-16:30  
Virtual Young Filmmakers Club  
Every Sat from 25 Feb – 1 March 10:30-12:30 online

BFI RIVERFRONT

Make a day of it and have lunch at our restaurant, Riverfront. Kids menu available.