

= The Muppets ' Wizard of Oz =

The Muppets ' Wizard of Oz is a 2005 American @-@ Canadian television film directed by Kirk Thatcher and starring Ashanti and The Muppets with supporting roles done by Jeffrey Tambor , Quentin Tarantino , David Alan Grier , and Queen Latifah . The film was produced by Bill Barretta and written by Debra Frank , Steve L. Hayes , Tom Martin , and Adam F. Goldberg based on a story by Frank and Hayes .

A modernized adaptation of L. Frank Baum 's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz , the story follows young Dorothy Gale , who works in her Aunt Em 's diner , but dreams of becoming a singer somewhere beyond her small Kansas town . Swept up by a tornado , in her trailer home with pet prawn Toto , she lands in Oz and embarks on a journey to meet the Wizard who can help make her dreams come true .

The film co @-@ produced by The Muppets Studio , Touchstone Television , and Fox Television Studios , in association with The Jim Henson Company . Right after Disney bought the rights to The Muppets in 2004 , pre @-@ production on The Muppets ' Wizard of Oz took place throughout February 2004 , and filming occurred during September 2004 . ABC made several changes to the film after the initial script was written , ultimately deciding to adapt plot elements from Baum 's original novel rather than the 1939 MGM film , The Wizard of Oz . As with the preceding Muppet films , The Muppets ' Wizard of Oz became a musical , and included five new songs written and composed by Michael Giacchino . The production marked the feature film debut of Eric Jacobson as the performer of Sam Eagle , a character originally performed by Frank Oz .

The Muppets ' Wizard of Oz premiered on April 27 , 2005 at the Tribeca Film Festival . The film 's television premiere was broadcast on ABC on May 20 , 2005 , as the final ABC Movie of the Week . Overall , the film ended up receiving negative reviews from critics . Most critics agreed that the film was too mature for young audiences , and that the cameo scenes and popular culture references were unnecessary .

= = Plot = =

Dorothy Gale (Ashanti) is an orphaned teenage girl living in a trailer park in Kansas . Her Aunt Em (Queen Latifah) and Uncle Henry (David Alan Grier) own a diner , to which Dorothy works for room and board . Her dream of becoming a singer is slim , but when waiting on some truckers Dorothy overhears that the Muppets are conducting a cross @-@ country show called " Star Hunt " and are looking for a backup singer . Aunt Em disapproves , but with Uncle Henry 's best wishes , she goes to the audition . However , the Muppets are about to end the audition , and Dorothy only manages to give them a demo CD that she created beforehand . In returning home , the civil defense sirens sound as a tornado is headed for Dorothy 's trailer park . When Aunt Em and Uncle Henry run into the county storm shelter for safety , Dorothy hurries back to her family 's mobile home to get Toto , her pet prawn . She does not make it out in time , and the two are swept by the tornado across the vast fields of Kansas . When Dorothy climbs out of the wreckage , she finds that Toto (Pepé the King Prawn) can talk and that she is no longer in Kansas .

Dorothy and Toto discover that they are in Munchkinland , a small town part of the vast Land of Oz . After discussing her situation with the town 's people , the Munchkins (played by Rizzo the Rat and the other rats) , she learns that the land 's ruler the Wizard , has the power to grant her wish of becoming a famous singer . She meets the Good Witch of the North (Miss Piggy) , and receives a pair of magic silver slippers from the Wicked Witch of the East (Miss Piggy) , the Witch of the North 's sister who was killed when Dorothy 's trailer fell on her . Soon after , she embarks on a journey with Toto on the yellow brick road to meet the Wizard of Oz , who lives in the Emerald City , the capital of Oz . On her journey , she meets three creatures : a Scarecrow (Kermit) , a Tin Thing (Gonzo) , and a Cowardly Lion (Fozzie) . They are also seeking the Wizard of Oz to give them a brain , heart , and courage , respectively . The group meets various obstacles involving a deep gorge where the Kalidah Critics (Statler and Waldorf) are heckling them and a Poppy Field Club run by Clifford which nearly puts them to sleep . After arriving at the Emerald City and meeting the

Wizard , Dorothy and her friends are sent to retrieve the Wicked Witch of the West 's magic eye , a tool she uses to see anything she desires in the Land of Oz .

The group assumes that completing this task will result in the granting of their wishes . The Wicked Witch of the West (Miss Piggy) sees them coming and consults with her pet Foo @-@ Foo and her henchman Johnny Fiama . When the Wicked Witch of the West plans to have either her pack of 40 great man @-@ eating wolves , a flock of 40 crows of despair , a swarm of angry black bees , a group of vicious squirrels , or a group of bloodthirsty cockatoos to do away with them , Johnny tells her that the animals that work for her are unavailable due to various reasons . This forces her to resort to using her Magic Biker Cap to call Sal Minella and the other Flying Monkeys (played by Sweetums , Crazy Harry , Black Dog , Calico , Old Tom , Spotted Dick , and Aretha from Fraggle Rock) to deal with them . The Witch and the Flying Monkeys capture Dorothy and Lion while Scarecrow and Tin Thing are dismantled by the Flying Monkeys .

After being threatened to be killed by her , Toto calls the Munchkins , who set Dorothy free and hold up the witch . During the final battle , it cuts away to a scene where Quentin Tarantino is with Kermit , discussing ideas for how Dorothy can defeat the Wicked Witch of the West . Tarantino 's ideas are deemed too expensive and too violent for a Muppet movie , so they agree for Dorothy to do a powerful kick on the witch . Cutting back to the action , Dorothy kicks the witch into her own " bottled water bath " which contains tap water (to which she is severely allergic) . Angel Marie admitted that he filled the water bottles with tap water to restock them . This action causes the Wicked Witch of the West to melt as Johnny averts Foo @-@ Foo 's eyes . With the Wicked Witch of the West dead , Dorothy finds the magic eye unharmed and floating in the tub and grabs it .

Dorothy gains control of the Flying Monkeys by giving back the group 's Magic Biker Cap to Sal Minella . She has Scarecrow and Tin Thing rebuilt by the Flying Monkeys . Then she and her friends travel back to the Emerald City to have their wishes granted . When they all storm into the Wizard 's room , they discover it is merely a Hollywood effects stage and that the Wizard (Jeffrey Tambor) is just an ordinary man , pretending . He asked for the witch 's eye so that she could not see him for who he really was . Even so , he still proceeds to grant their wishes . Dorothy finally becomes a singer in the Land of Oz , but she realizes that all she ever really wanted was to go back home and be with her family . After traveling back to Munchkinland , she meets Glinda the Good Witch of the South (Miss Piggy) , who tells her that if she clicks her heels together three times , she will be able to go anywhere she desires , contrary to how the Good Witch of the North said to get to the Emerald City . She does so , saying " take me home to Aunt Em " .

She is then spun by the slippers ' charm into Kansas , and , much to her surprise , she finds out that Kermit was looking for her , saying that she had the best voice they heard on the whole search , and that she has been chosen to go on the Star Hunt . Dorothy , having been reunited with her aunt and uncle , and feeling that she is not ready to leave Kansas to become a real star , rejects , but Aunt Em says that she wants her to go with the Muppets on their Star Hunt , much to her even bigger surprise . She then sings " Good Life " on television with them as the film ends .

= = Cast = =

Ashanti as Dorothy Gale : A Kansas teen dreaming of leaving her home and becoming a singer .

Queen Latifah as Aunt Em : Dorothy 's aunt and co @-@ owner of the family diner in Kansas .

David Alan Grier as Uncle Henry : Dorothy 's uncle and co @-@ owner of the family diner .

Jeffrey Tambor as The Wizard of Oz : The legendary Wizard of Oz . This is Tambor 's second appearance in a Muppet film , the first being Muppets from Space .

Quentin Tarantino as Himself (Extended version) : In a short appearance with Kermit the Frog , Tarantino discusses ideas on how to stop the Wicked Witch of the West . Despite the fact that his role is small his name is still mentioned in the movie trailer and listed on the cover of both the Video and DVD .

Kelly Osbourne as Dorothy Gale (post @-@ makeover) (Extended version) : Appears in a brief cameo as Dorothy when she first comes out of the Magic Makeover Machine in Emerald City .

= = = Muppet performers = = =

Steve Whitmire as :

Kermit the Frog as Himself / Scarecrow : A scarecrow in search of a brain . Scarecrow is constantly mocked by the crows in Oz , as he is defenseless and cannot do anything to stop them . Prior to Dorothy 's journey , Kermit organizes a talent scout for a star for a new show . After Dorothy 's return , he hires her .

Beaker : He appears as an Emerald City Technician . Beaker also appears at the end in the Muppets ' show .

Rizzo the Rat as Mayor of Munchkinland / Himself . He occasionally aids Dorothy when she is in danger . Prior to Dorothy 's journey , Rizzo is seen assisting Bean Bunny in loading equipment into the Muppets ' bus . He returns for the Muppets ' show at the end of the film .

Statler as Kalidah Critic # 1 . He heckles Dorothy and her friends as they try to cross a log .

Dave Goelz as :

The Great Gonzo as the Tin Thing / Himself : A robot in search of a heart . Originally human , the Tin Thing was turned into a robot by the Wicked Witch of the West who was angry at him for asking to leave her palace and marry his fiancée , Camilla the Chicken . He also appears at the end of the film in the Muppets ' show .

Dr. Bunsen Honeydew : He appears as an Emerald City Technician . He also appears at the end of the film in the Muppets ' show .

Waldorf as Kalidah Critic # 2 . He and the other Kalidah Critic heckles Dorothy and her friends as they try to cross a log .

Zoot : He performs backup for the songs " Naptime " , and for the " The Witch is in the House " , and appears at the end of the film in the Muppets ' new show .

Bill Barretta as :

Pepé the King Prawn as Toto : Dorothy 's pet prawn and first companion on her journey . In Kansas , Toto was a prawn that lived in a fish bowl in Dorothy 's room . Strangely , Pepé doesn 't appear in the finale with the other Muppets .

Dr. Teeth : He performs " Naptime " , and also performs in " The Witch is in the House " . He appears again at the end of the film in the Muppets ' show .

Johnny Fiama : He appears as one of the henchmen of the Wicked Witch of the West , and is supposedly her love interest .

Lew Zealand : He briefly appears in Emerald City at the red carpet event , asking Dorothy to sign his boomerang fish .

The Swedish Chef : He provides the Bran Flakes for the Wizard .

Bubba the Rat : He assists the Mayor of Munchkin Land in getting Dorothy and the Lion out of Poppyfields .

Eric Jacobson as :

Miss Piggy as Herself : She appears early on with Kermit , and tries to get rid of Dorothy . She returns at the end of the film for the Muppets ' show .

as The Wicked Witch of the West : The Wicked Witch that terrifies all that meet her .

as The Tattypoo the Good Witch of the North : The Good Witch that gives Dorothy the silver slippers .

as The Glinda the Good Witch of the South : The other Good Witch that shows Dorothy how to get home .

as The Wicked Witch of the East : The original owner of the magic slippers who was killed by Dorothy 's falling mobile home .

Fozzie Bear as The Cowardly Bear / Himself : A nervous and frightened lion stand @-@ up comic that accompanies Dorothy and the others on their journey . Fozzie shows up at the end of the film in the Muppets ' show .

Animal : He performs in the songs " Naptime " and " The Witch is in the House " .

Sam Eagle : He appears as the Guardian of the Gates . Sam doesn 't appear in the Muppets ' show at the end of the film .

Brian Henson as :

Sal Manilla as Sal , a Flying Monkey : He accompanies Johnny for much of the film .

Kevin Clash as :

Clifford : He appears as the manager of the Poppy Field Club .

Mulch : He appears briefly in Poppyfields .

Black Dog as a Flying Monkey

John Kennedy as :

Angel Marie as a Flying Monkey : A servant of the Wicked Witch of the West .

Floyd Pepper : He performs in " Naptime " and " The Witch is in the House " .

Rickey Boyd as :

Scooter : He appears as the Wizard 's Assistant .

Crazy Harry as a Flying Monkey

Tyler Bunch as :

Janice : She performs in " Naptime " and " The Witch is in the House " .

Old Tom as a Flying Monkey

Pop and Treelo

Julianne Buescher as

Wizard 's Green Lady and Chicken Forms

John Henson as

Sweetums as a Flying Monkey : He provides the keys for the Cowardly Lion 's escape from his cage .

Mike Quinn as

Spotted Dick as a Flying Monkey

Allan Trautman as

Crow : He bothers the Scarecrow .

Old Tom as a Flying Monkey

Alice Dinnean as :

Camilla the Chicken : The Tin Thing 's girlfriend . The two are reunited later on in the film .

Foo @-@ Foo : Foo @-@ Foo appears as the pet of the Wicked Witch of the West .

Additional Muppets performed by Adam Behr , Jeny Cassidy , Drew Massey , Gord Robertson , Geoff Redknap , and James Rowley .

Steve Whitmire and Dave Goelz appear as audience members at Aunt Em 's Diner during the finale .

= = Production = =

When The Walt Disney Company acquired the Muppets franchise from The Jim Henson Company in February 2004 , the Muppets were re @-@ introduced to the public by marketing products and guest appearing on television shows such as Good Morning America and America 's Funniest Home Videos . After a new film titled The Muppets ' Wizard of Oz was announced by The Jim Henson Company , Fox Television Studios , Touchstone Television , and the Muppets Holding Company signed on to help produce it .

Filming took place throughout September 2004 in Vancouver , British Columbia . Before filming , ABC announced that the production would adapt elements from the original 1900 book , rather than the 1939 film. such as the Silver Shoes instead of the Ruby slippers . On August 25 , 2004 , it was announced that Hilary Duff , Jessica Simpson , and Ashanti had auditioned for the role of Dorothy Gale , but Ashanti had won the part . When asked about how she felt about working with the Muppets , Ashanti replied , " I love children , and to me , the Muppets are just like little kids . " She also stated , " The director had to give me a few pointers and tips for acting with them , but the most important thing that I learned was to keep eye contact . " Also in August 2004 , BBC News reported that Quentin Tarantino would appear in the film .

= = Music = =

Michael Giacchino , who had previously worked on a Muppet @-@ related project which is video game Muppet Monster Adventure and would become an Academy Award @-@ winning composer , worked with Jeannie Lurie , Adam Cohen , Debra Frank , and Steve Hayes to write five original songs for the film . The five songs created were " Kansas " , " When I 'm With You " , " It 's a Good Life " , " The Witch is in the House " , and " Nap Time " . " When I 'm With You " was later nominated for a Primetime Emmy in the Outstanding Music and Lyrics category , but lost to " Mary Jane / Mary Lane " from Reefer Madness . Ashanti and the Muppet cast , mainly Bill Barretta and Eric Jacobson , contributed the vocals for each of the songs . Ted Kyrzsko produced the album , Booker T. Washington White prepared the songs for recording , and Paul Silveira and Brandon Christy mixed the film 's songs .

= = = Soundtrack = = =

The Muppets ' Wizard of Oz official soundtrack was released on May 17 , 2005 . The album was an enhanced soundtrack titled Best of Muppets featuring The Muppets ' Wizard of Oz as it was not a film @-@ specific soundtrack , but an album featuring the Muppets ' best songs from The Muppet Show as well as songs from the film .

Track listing

- " (Gotta Get Outta) Kansas " - Ashanti
- " When I 'm With You " ? Ashanti , Kermit , Gonzo , Fozzie & Pepe
- " The Witch Is in the House " ? Miss Piggy with Dr. Teeth and The Electric Mayhem
- " Calling All Munchkins " ? The Munchkin Tap @-@ Your @-@ Knuckles Choir
- " Good Life " ? Ashanti
- " Nap Time " ? Dr. Teeth and The Electric Mayhem
- " The Muppet Show Theme " ? The Muppets
- " Mah Nà Mah Nà " ? Mahna Mahna & the Two Snowths
- " Bein ' Green " ? Kermit the Frog
- " Rainbow Connection " ? Kermit & Muppets With Sesame Street Gang
- " Lady of Spain " ? Marvin Suggs & his Muppaphone
- " Halfway Down the Stairs " ? Kermit & Robin
- " What Now My Love ? " ? Miss Piggy
- " Tenderly " ? Dr. Teeth and The Electric Mayhem
- " Happy Feet " ? Kermit and the Frog Chorus

= = Release = =

The Muppets ' Wizard of Oz premiered on April 27 , 2005 at the Tribeca Film Festival . The television premiere was on May 20 , 2005 at 8 : 00pm on ABC in the US , where it was rated TV @-@ PG . It aired in Canada on CBC Television , and in the UK on December 18 , 2005 . In the US , the film 's official soundtrack was released on May 17 , 2005 . Buena Vista Home Entertainment released the DVD and VHS in both the US and in international territories . The film was released to Region 1 DVD and VHS on August 9 , 2005 . The Canadian Home Video Classification System rated the film G for all home video releases within Canadian territories . The Region 2 DVD was released on April 3 , 2006 . The film was rated U by the British Board of Film Classification , K @-@ 3 in Finland , and G in Australia . The DVD and VHS were released under the title Extended Version in the US and Anniversary Edition outside the US . The extended version contains 20 minutes of footage cut from the feature film , including the footage of the Kelly Osbourne and Quentin Tarantino cameos . The DVD and VHS included an extended interview with Quentin Tarantino , a blooper reel , and a behind @-@ the @-@ scenes look at the film guided by Pepe the Prawn . In the US , the DVD and VHS release of the film was in a 1 @.@ 33 : 1 (fullscreen) aspect ratio , whereas the international versions are in the original 1 @.@ 78 : 1 (widescreen) aspect ratio . During Macy 's annual Flower Show promotion , the store 's windows along Broadway displayed flower

arrangements illustrating six scenes from the movie , while the store sold The Muppets ' Wizard of Oz @-@ related merchandise , such as plush dolls .

= = = Critical reception = = =

7 @.@ 75 million viewers watched The Muppets ' Wizard of Oz on its television premiere night in the United States ; it ranked as the forty @-@ second most @-@ watched television program of the week . Michael Schneider of Variety wrote that it " performed solidly ... particularly with adults 18 ? 34 , teens and kids . " The film received negative reviews from critics . At Rotten Tomatoes , the movie currently holds a 38 % " rotten " rating , with an average of three out of eight critics giving the film a positive review .

For the film 's positive response , Kevin Carr stated that " When you dig down and actually find (and watch) the new Muppet material , some of the magic is still there . " MaryAnn Johanson of Flick Philosopher said that , " It 's not on a par with the Muppet movie madness of old , but it 's darn close . " According to the Bums Corner 's review the film was a " treat for all ages , and that it was a colorful , musical , humorous romp . " Keith Allen of Movie Rapture gave the film 2 @.@ 5 stars out of 3 , explaining that the film 's humor was surprisingly clever , and that the film would frequently make you laugh . Mutant Reviewers commented that although the Muppet deal with Walt Disney was " disappointing " , the film managed to be funny and witty .

For the film 's " negative " response , David Nusair of Reel Film Reviews warned that the film was " strictly for kids " Nusair stated that although Ashanti can sing , she cannot act . Joshua Tyler of Cinema Blend explained that Dorothy visiting the Wizard of Oz to become a star instead of going back home was a big mistake , and that it showed how shallow society has become . R.J. Carter of The Trades gave the film a B- , also stating that Dorothy 's wish to become a star was a selfish one . Ultimate Disney 's review found that the extended version of the film did more harm than good ; Andy Dursin of The Aisle Seat said that the original film was " dull " and that the extended version was actually an improvement . Cold Fusion Video felt that although the film was entertaining , it lacked the heart and wit of Jim Henson 's Muppet films . Bryan Pope of DVD Verdict said that the film drained the Muppets of their spirit and was slightly gratuitous . Techtite TV reviews felt that the film was done poorly on all levels , and that the film was on the higher end of TV @-@ PG .

Other reviewers felt that the film 's attempt to appeal to an older , more mature audience was ultimately a bad idea . Kerry Bennett of Parent Previews warned that it sometimes steered " dangerously off course " due to an excess of sexual content and violence . Referential humor to the marriage of Jennifer Lopez , Manolo Blahnik style silver shoes , and films such as Girls Gone Wild , The Passion of the Christ , Apocalypse Now , and Kill Bill : Volume 1 were seen as too mature . Cold Fusion Video judged the Kelly Osbourne cameo as " pointless " . Dursin contrasted the two guest appearances and found that the Tarantino cameo dragged the film down . Critics were split on the merits of ABC 's modernized adaptation to rely on plot elements from the original novel instead of the iconic 1939 film .