

= Presto ( film ) =

Presto is a 2008 American Pixar computer @-@ animated short film shown in theaters before their feature @-@ length film WALL @-@ E. The short is about a magician trying to perform a show with his uncooperative rabbit and is a gag @-@ filled homage to classic cartoons such as Tom and Jerry and Looney Tunes . Presto was directed by veteran Pixar animator Doug Sweetland , in his directorial debut .

The original idea for the short was a magician who incorporated a rabbit into his act who suffered from stage fright . This was considered to be too long and complicated , and the idea was reworked . To design the theater featured in Presto , the filmmakers visited several opera houses and theaters for set design ideas . Problems arose when trying to animate the theater 's audience of 2 @,@ 500 patrons ; this was deemed too expensive , and was solved by showing the back of the audience .

Reaction to the short was positive , and reviewers of WALL @-@ E 's home media release considered it to be an enjoyable special feature . Presto was nominated for an Annie Award and Academy Award . It was included in the Animation Show of Shows in 2008 .

= = Plot = =

Vaudeville @-@ era magician Presto DiGiotagione is famous for a hat trick wherein he pulls his rabbit Alec Azam out of his top hat . An unfed and irritated Alec is locked in a cage , unable to reach his carrot . After Presto returns from eating a meal , he begins practicing his act with Alec , revealing that his top hat is magically connected to a wizard 's hat kept backstage with Alec , so that when Presto reaches into the top hat , his hand appears out of the wizard 's hat , allowing him to grab Alec and pull him out of the top hat . He intends to feed Alec the carrot , but realizes that he is late for the show and rushes off to the stage without doing so , much to Alec 's anger . Presto tries to start the performance , but Alec becomes reluctant to cooperate until he is given the carrot . Presto then spends the rest of the show trying to catch Alec through the opening between his top hat and the wizard 's hat .

Alec cleverly turns the hat 's magic against his master in multiple humiliating ways , each of which elicits increasing applause from the audience , which believe is part of Presto 's act . Presto 's finger is stuck in a mouse trap and is hit in the face by an egg , caused by a backfired attempt to aggravate Alec . Presto responds by antagonizing Alec , turning the carrot into a flower . Angered , Alec sucks Presto 's head into a ventilation pipe offstage , which spikes Presto 's hair and turns his face red . When Presto lunges at Alec through the hats , Alec directs Presto 's hand into the podium 's drawer and closes the drawer , painfully restraining the hand while he looks through Presto 's sleeve for the carrot . Presto runs toward Alec , but instead is poked in the eye by his own hand . Presto drops his hat , and when he grabs the wizard hat , he accidentally strips his slacks down to underwear , much to Alec 's amusement . Furious , Presto tries to attack Alec , but in an act to defend himself , Alec puts an offstage ladder into the wizard hat , and Presto is hit between his legs . Presto attempts to hit Alec with it , but the plan backfires when it misses and hits a backstage door , and Presto is sent hitting his chin on the ladder . Presto antagonizes Alec again , covering the carrot with a cloth before smashing it into a pulp with a piece of the ladder . Alec then furiously retaliates by aiming the opening of the wizard 's hat towards an electrical socket which Presto 's fingers go into , shocking Presto into dancing wildly to bluegrass music .

Now at his wit 's end , Presto storms backstage to catch Alec , but he accidentally releases a weight holding down some stage props , and his foot gets caught in a rope that lifts him up to the fly space above the stage . When his foot comes loose from the rope , he falls , along with suspended scenery . Alec , remorseful that Presto will be crushed , uses the magic hat to save him , earning the audience 's wild approval for both himself and Presto . Presto gives Alec the apparently restored carrot , as well as second billing on the posters advertising the show and they are rewarded for each show they do , with roses and carrots for Presto and Alec respectively .

= = Production = =

Doug Sweetland made his directorial debut with *Presto*. Sweetland provides the dialogue @-@ free voice acting for both of the movie's characters. He pitched the film at the start of 2007 and began production late in the year, completing it in May 2008. *Presto*'s gag @-@ based format was heavily influenced by classic cartoons. Looney Tunes cartoons directed by Tex Avery were a major influence, with Alec being easily compared to Bugs Bunny. Other influences include Tom and Jerry, the Marx Brothers, and Charlie Chaplin. The character design for *Presto* was based on William Powell.

The original scenario for the short involved a magician who incorporates an autograph @-@ seeking rabbit into his act after his previous rabbit leaves him. Complications arise as the new rabbit suffers from stage fright. Sweetland compared it to the plot of *A Star Is Born*. The idea was reworked due to being too long and complicated, taking an estimated three minutes longer to tell.

To achieve the highly formal environment, the filmmakers looked at the Royal Opera House in London, the Paris Opera House and classic vaudeville theaters like the Geary in San Francisco, which the crew took a tour through for set design ideas. Animating the theater's audience of 2 @, @ 500 patrons proved an expensive proposition, even with the help of the crowd @-@ generating MASSIVE software. Early suggestions were to show cutaways of just a small portion of the audience, but the full effect was achieved by only showing the back of the audience. To save time, most of the audience models were borrowed from the previous Pixar film, *Ratatouille*. Additionally, *Presto*'s body (from the neck down) is Skinner's lawyer, and the carrot was one of the many food props from that film.

= = Reception = =

Reaction to the short film was positive. Carl Cortez of *If* called *Presto* a "winner through and through". Jake Coyle of the *Associated Press* found *Presto* to be "a delightful and cartoonish appetizer" which kept the tradition of short pre @-@ feature films alive. Darren Bevan of *Television New Zealand* thought that although *WALL @-@ E* was a "delightful tale" and "truly gorgeous", *Presto* "very nearly stole *WALL @-@ E*'s thunder". James Sanford of the *Kalamazoo Gazette* called the short a superb and hilarious curtain @-@ raiser, describing it as a Bugs Bunny Looney Tunes version of *The Prestige*. *Presto* was nominated for the 36th Annie Award for Best Animated Short Subject. The short was also nominated for the Academy Award for Animated Short Film, but lost to *La Maison en Petits Cubes*.