

= The Little Mermaid ( 1989 film ) =

The Little Mermaid is a 1989 American animated musical fantasy film produced by Walt Disney Feature Animation and released by Walt Disney Pictures . Based on the Danish fairy tale of the same name by Hans Christian Andersen , The Little Mermaid tells the story of a beautiful mermaid princess who dreams of becoming human . Written , directed , and produced by Ron Clements and John Musker , with music by Alan Menken and Howard Ashman ( who also served as a co @-@ producer ) , the film features the voices of Jodi Benson , Christopher Daniel Barnes , Pat Carroll , Samuel E. Wright , Jason Marin , Kenneth Mars , Buddy Hackett , and René Auberjonois .

The 28th Disney animated feature film , The Little Mermaid was released to theaters on November 17 , 1989 to largely positive reviews , garnering \$ 84 million at the domestic box office during its initial release , and \$ 211 million in total lifetime gross worldwide . After the success of the 1988 Disney / Amblin film Who Framed Roger Rabbit , The Little Mermaid is given credit for breathing life back into the art of Disney animated feature films after a string of critical or commercial failures produced by Disney that dated back to the early 1970s . It also marked the start of the era known as the Disney Renaissance .

A stage adaptation of the film with a book by Doug Wright and additional songs by Alan Menken and new lyricist Glenn Slater opened in Denver in July 2007 and began performances on Broadway January 10 , 2008 .

= = Plot = =

Ariel , a sixteen @-@ year @-@ old mermaid princess , is dissatisfied with underwater life and is curious about the human world . With her best friend Flounder , Ariel collects human artifacts and goes to the surface of the ocean to visit Scuttle the seagull , who offers very inaccurate knowledge of human culture . She ignores the warnings of her father King Triton , the ruler of Atlantica , and his adviser and court composer Sebastian that contact between merpeople and humans is forbidden .

One night , Ariel , Flounder , and an unwilling Sebastian travel to the ocean surface to watch a celebration for the birthday of Prince Eric on a ship . Ariel quickly becomes enamored with Eric . The birthday celebration is cut short by a violent storm which wrecks the ship and tosses Eric overboard . Ariel saves him from drowning and brings him to shore . She sings to him , but quickly leaves as soon as he regains consciousness to avoid being discovered . Fascinated by the memory of her voice , Eric vows to find who saved and sang to him , and Ariel vows to find a way to join him and his world . Noticing a change in Ariel 's behavior , Triton questions Sebastian about her behavior and learns of her love for Eric . Furious , Triton confronts Ariel in her grotto , where she and Flounder store human artifacts , and destroys the objects with his trident to her dismay . After Triton leaves , two eels named Flotsam and Jetsam convince Ariel to visit Ursula the sea witch .

Ursula makes a deal with Ariel to transform her into a human for three days in exchange for Ariel 's voice , which Ursula puts in a nautilus shell . Within these three days , Ariel must receive the " kiss of true love " from Eric . If Ariel gets Eric to kiss her , she will remain a human permanently , otherwise , she will transform back into a mermaid and belong to Ursula . Ariel agrees and is then given human legs and taken to the surface by Flounder and Sebastian . Eric finds Ariel on the beach and takes her to his castle , unaware that she is the one who had saved him earlier . Ariel spends time with Eric , and at the end of the second day , they almost kiss but are thwarted by Flotsam and Jetsam . Angered at their narrow escape , Ursula disguises herself as a beautiful young woman named Vanessa and appears onshore singing with Ariel 's voice . Eric recognizes the song and , in her disguise , Ursula casts a hypnotic enchantment on Eric to make him forget about Ariel .

The next day , Ariel finds out that Eric will be married to the disguised Ursula . Scuttle discovers that Vanessa is actually Ursula in disguise , and informs Ariel who immediately pursues the wedding barge . Sebastian informs Triton , and Scuttle disrupts the wedding with the help of various animals . In the chaos , the nautilus shell around Ursula 's neck is broken , restoring Ariel 's voice and breaking Ursula 's enchantment over Eric . Realizing that Ariel is the girl who saved his life , Eric rushes to kiss her , but the sun sets and Ariel transforms back into a mermaid . Ursula reveals

herself and kidnaps Ariel . A furious Triton confronts Ursula and demands Ariel 's release , but the deal is inviolable . At Ursula 's urging , Triton agrees to take Ariel 's place as Ursula 's prisoner , giving up his trident . Ariel is released as Triton transforms into a polyp and loses his authority over Atlantica . Ursula declares herself the new ruler , but before she can use the trident , Eric hits her with a harpoon . Ursula tries to strike down Eric , but Ariel interferes , causing Ursula to inadvertently kill Flotsam and Jetsam . Enraged , Ursula uses the trident to grow into monstrous proportions .

Ariel and Eric reunite on the surface just before Ursula grows past and towers over the two . She then gains full control of the entire ocean , creating a storm and bringing sunken ships to the surface . Just as Ursula attempts to kill Ariel , Eric steers a wrecked ship towards Ursula , impaling her with the ship 's splintered bowsprit . With Ursula destroyed , Triton and the other polyps in Ursula 's garden revert into their original forms . Realizing that Ariel truly loves Eric , Triton willingly changes her from a mermaid into a human and blesses her marriage to Eric . Ariel and Eric marry on a ship and depart .

= = Cast = =

Jodi Benson as Princess Ariel

Christopher Daniel Barnes as Prince Eric

Pat Carroll as Ursula

Jodi Benson as Vanessa ( Ursula 's human alter @-@ ego )

Samuel E. Wright as Sebastian

Jason Marin as Flounder

Kenneth Mars as King Triton

Buddy Hackett as Scuttle

Ben Wright as Grimsby

Paddi Edwards as Flotsam and Jetsam

Edie McClurg as Carlotta the maid

Kimmy Robertson and Caroline Vasicek as Ariel 's Sisters

Will Ryan as Harold the Seahorse

Frank Welker as Max the Sheepdog

René Auberjonois as Chef Louis

= = Production = =

= = = Story development = = =

The Little Mermaid was originally planned as part of one of Walt Disney 's earliest feature films , a proposed package film featuring vignettes of Hans Christian Andersen tales . Development started soon after Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs in the late 1930s , but was delayed due to various circumstances .

In 1985 , Ron Clements became interested in a film adaptation of The Little Mermaid while he was serving as a director on The Great Mouse Detective ( 1986 ) alongside John Musker . Clements discovered the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale while browsing through a bookstore . Believing the story provided an " ideal basis " for an animated feature film and keen on creating a film that took place underwater , Clements wrote and presented a two @-@ page treatment of Mermaid to Disney CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg at a " gong show " idea suggestion meeting . Katzenberg passed the project over , because at that time the studio was in development on a sequel to their live @-@ action mermaid comedy Splash ( 1984 ) and felt The Little Mermaid would be too similar a project . The next day , however , Katzenberg approved of the idea for possible development , along with Oliver & Company . While in production in the 1980s , the staff found , by chance , original story and visual development work done by Kay Nielsen for Disney 's proposed 1930s Andersen feature . Many of the changes made by the staff in the 1930s to Hans Christian Andersen 's original story

were coincidentally the same as the changes made by Disney writers in the 1980s .

That year Clements and Musker expanded the two @-@ page idea into a 20 @-@ page rough script , eliminating the role of the mermaid 's grandmother and expanding the roles of the Merman King and the sea witch . However , the film 's plans were momentarily shelved as Disney focused its attention on Who Framed Roger Rabbit and Oliver & Company as more immediate releases . In 1987 , songwriter Howard Ashman became involved with the writing and development of Mermaid after he was asked to contribute a song to Oliver & Company . He proposed changing the minor character Clarence , the English @-@ butler crab , to a Jamaican crab and shifting the music style throughout the film to reflect this . At the same time , Katzenberg , Clements , Musker , and Ashman revised the story format to make Mermaid a musical with a Broadway @-@ style story structure , with the song sequences serving as the tentpoles of the film . Ashman and composer Alan Menken , both noted for their work as the writers of the successful Off @-@ Broadway stage musical Little Shop of Horrors , teamed up to compose the entire song score . In 1988 , with Oliver out of the way , Mermaid was slated as the next major Disney release .

= = = Animation = = =

More money and resources were dedicated to Mermaid than any other Disney animated film in decades . Aside from its main animation facility in Glendale , California , Disney opened a satellite feature animation facility during the production of Mermaid in Lake Buena Vista , Florida ( near Orlando , Florida ) , within Disney @-@ MGM Studios Theme Park at Walt Disney World . Opening in 1989 , the Disney @-@ MGM facility 's first projects were to produce an entire Roger Rabbit cartoon short , Roller Coaster Rabbit , and to contribute ink and paint support to Mermaid . Another first for recent years was the filming of live actors and actresses for motion reference material for the animators , a practice used frequently for many of the Disney animated features produced under Walt Disney 's supervision . Broadway actress Jodi Benson was chosen to play Ariel , and Sherri Lynn Stoner , a former member of Los Angeles ' Groundlings improvisation comedy group , acted out Ariel 's key scenes .

Mermaid 's supervising animators included Glen Keane and Mark Henn on Ariel , Duncan Marjoribanks on Sebastian , Andreas Deja on King Triton , and Ruben Aquino on Ursula . Originally , Keane had been asked to work on Ursula , as he had established a reputation for drawing large , powerful figures , such as the bear in The Fox and the Hound ( 1981 ) and Professor Ratigan in The Great Mouse Detective ( 1986 ) . Keane , however , was assigned as one of the two lead artists on the petite Ariel and oversaw the " Part of Your World " musical number . He jokingly stated that his wife looks exactly like Ariel " without the fins . " The character 's body type and personality were based upon that of Alyssa Milano , then starring on TV 's Who 's the Boss ? and the effect of her hair underwater was based on both footage of Sally Ride when she was in space , and scenes of Stoner in a pool for guidance in animating Ariel 's swimming .

The design of the villainous Ursula was based upon drag performer Divine . An additional early inspiration before Divine was Joan Collins in her role as Alexis Carrington in the television show Dynasty , due to a suggestion from Howard Ashman , who was a fan of the series . Pat Carroll was not Clements and Musker 's first choice to voice Ursula ; the original script had been written with Bea Arthur of the Disney @-@ owned TV series The Golden Girls in mind . After Arthur turned the part down , actresses such as Nancy Marchand , Nancy Wilson , Roseanne , Charlotte Rae , and Elaine Stritch were considered for the part . Stritch was eventually cast as Ursula , but clashed with Howard Ashman 's style of music production and was replaced by Carroll . Various actors auditioned for additional roles in the film , including Jim Carrey for the role of Prince Eric , and comedians Bill Maher and Michael Richards for the role of Scuttle .

The underwater setting required the most special effects animation for a Disney animated feature since Fantasia in 1940 . Effects animation supervisor Mark Dindal estimated that over a million bubbles were drawn for this film , in addition to the use of other processes such as airbrushing , backlighting , superimposition , and some computer animation . The artistic manpower needed for Mermaid required Disney to farm out most of the underwater bubble effects animation in the film to

Pacific Rim Productions , a China @-@ based firm with production facilities in Beijing . An attempt to use Disney 's famed multiplane camera for the first time in years for quality " depth " shots failed because the machine was reputedly in dilapidated condition . The multiplane shots were instead photographed at an outside animation camera facility .

The Little Mermaid was the last Disney feature film to use the traditional hand @-@ painted cel method of animation . Disney 's next film , The Rescuers Down Under , used a digital method of coloring and combining scanned drawings developed for Disney by Pixar called CAPS ( Computer Animation Production System ) , which would eliminate the need for cels , the multiplane camera , and many of the optical effects used for the last time in Mermaid . A CAPS prototype was used experimentally on a few scenes in Mermaid , and one shot produced using CAPS ? the penultimate shot in the film , of Ariel and Eric 's wedding ship sailing away under a rainbow ? appears in the finished film . Computer @-@ generated imagery was used to create some of the wrecked ships in the final battle , a staircase behind a shot of Ariel in Eric 's castle , and the carriage Eric and Ariel are riding in when she bounces it over a ravine . These objects were animated using 3D wireframe models , which were plotted as line art to cels and painted traditionally .

= = = Music = = =

The Little Mermaid was considered by some as " the film that brought Broadway into cartoons " . Alan Menken wrote the Academy Award winning score , and collaborated with Howard Ashman on the songs . One of the film 's most prominent songs , " Part of Your World " , was nearly cut from the film when it seemingly tested poorly with an audience of school children , who became rowdy during the scene . This caused Jeffrey Katzenberg to feel that the song needed to be cut , an idea that was resisted by Musker , Clements , and Keane . Both Musker and Clements cited the similar situation of the popular song " Over the Rainbow " nearly being cut from 1939 's The Wizard of Oz when appealing to Katzenberg . Keane pushed for the song to remain until the film was in a more finalized state . During a second test screening , the scene , now colorized and further developed , tested well with a separate child audience , and the musical number was kept .

= = Release = =

The film was originally released on November 17 , 1989 , followed by a November 14 , 1997 , reissue . After the success of the 3D re @-@ release of The Lion King , Disney announced a 3D re @-@ release of The Little Mermaid scheduled for September 13 , 2013 , but this was cancelled on January 14 , 2013 , due to the under @-@ performances of other Disney 3D re @-@ releases . The 3D version was released on Blu @-@ ray instead , but it did play a limited engagement at the El Capitan Theatre from September to October 2013 . On September 20 , 2013 , The Little Mermaid began playing in select theaters where audiences could bring iPads and use an app called Second Screen Live . The film was also screened out of competition at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival .

= = = Home media = = =

In a then atypical and controversial move for a new Disney animated film , The Little Mermaid was released as part of the Walt Disney Classics line of VHS and Laserdisc home video releases in May 1990 , six months after the release of the film . Before Mermaid , only a select number of Disney 's catalog animated films had been released to home video , as the company was afraid of upsetting its profitable practice of theatrically reissuing each film every seven years . Mermaid became that year 's top @-@ selling title on home video , with over 10 million units sold ( including 7 million in its first month ) . This success led future Disney films to be released soon after the end of their theatrical runs , rather than delayed for several years .

Following Mermaid 's 1997 re @-@ release in theaters , a new VHS version was released in March 1998 as part of the Masterpiece Collection and included a bonus music video of Jodi Benson singing " Part of Your World " during the end credits , replacing " Under the Sea " as the end credit

song . The VHS sold 13 million units and ranked as the third best @-@ selling video of the year .

The Little Mermaid was released in a Limited Issue " bare @-@ bones " DVD in 1999 , with a standard video transfer . The film was re @-@ released on DVD on October 3 , 2006 , as part of the Walt Disney Platinum Editions line of classic Walt Disney animated features , including the song " Kiss the Girl " performed by Ashley Tisdale . Deleted scenes and several in @-@ depth documentaries were included , as well as an Academy Award @-@ nominated short film intended for the shelved Fantasia 2006 , The Little Match Girl . The DVD sold 1 @. @ 6 million units on its first day of release , and over 4 million units during its first week , making it the biggest animated DVD debut for October . By year 's end , the DVD had sold about 7 million units and was one of the year 's top ten selling DVDs . The Platinum Edition DVD was released as part of a " Little Mermaid Trilogy " boxed set on December 16 , 2008 . The Platinum Edition of the film , along with its sequels , went on moratorium in January 2009 . The film was re @-@ released on 3 @-@ disc Blu @-@ ray / DVD / Digital Copy Combo , a 2 @-@ disc Blu @-@ ray / DVD combo and 3D Blu @-@ ray on October 1 , 2013 , as part of the Walt Disney Diamond Editions line .

= = Reception = =

= = = Box office = = =

Early in the production of The Little Mermaid , Jeffrey Katzenberg cautioned Clements , Musker , and their staff , reminding them that since Mermaid was a " girl 's film " , it would make less money at the box office than Oliver & Company , which had been Disney 's biggest animated box office success in a decade . However , by the time the film was closer to completion , Katzenberg was convinced Mermaid would be a hit and the first animated feature to earn more than \$ 100 million and become a " blockbuster " film .

During its original 1989 theatrical release , Mermaid earned \$ 84 @, @ 355 @, @ 863 at the North American box office , falling just short of Katzenberg 's expectations but earning 64 % more than Oliver . The film was theatrically reissued on November 14 , 1997 , on the same day as Anastasia , a Don Bluth animated feature for Fox Animation Studios . The reissue brought \$ 27 @, @ 187 @, @ 616 in additional gross . The film also drew \$ 99 @. @ 8 million in box office earnings outside the United States and Canada between both releases , resulting in a total international box office figure of \$ 211 million .

= = = Critical reception = = =

The Little Mermaid received largely positive reviews from critics . Review aggregation site Rotten Tomatoes reported that the film has a 93 % " Certified Fresh " score based on 67 reviews , with an average rating of 8 @. @ 2 / 10 . The site 's consensus reads " The Little Mermaid ushered in a new golden era for Disney animation with warm and charming hand @-@ drawn characters and catchy musical sequences " . Roger Ebert , film critic for the Chicago Sun @-@ Times , was enthusiastic about the film and wrote that , " The Little Mermaid is a jolly and inventive animated fantasy ? a movie that 's so creative and so much fun it deserves comparison with the best Disney work of the past . " Ebert also commented positively on the character of Ariel , stating , " ... Ariel is a fully realized female character who thinks and acts independently , even rebelliously , instead of hanging around passively while the fates decide her destiny . " The staff of TV Guide wrote a positive review , praising the film 's return to the traditional Disney musical as well as the film 's animation . Yet they also wrote that the film is detracted by the juvenile humor and the human characters ' eyes . While still giving a positive review , they stated that the film " can 't compare to the real Disney classics ( which appealed equally to both kids and adults ) . " The staff of Variety praised the film for its cast of characters , Ursula in particular , as well as its animation , stating that the animation " proves lush and fluid , augmented by the use of shadow and light as elements like fire , sun and water illuminate the characters . " They also praised was the musical collaboration between Howard Ashman and

Alan Menken " whose songs frequently begin slowly but build in cleverness and intensity . "

Todd Gilchrist of IGN wrote a positive review of the film , stating that the film is " an almost perfect achievement . " Gilchrist also praised how the film revived interest in animation as it was released at a time when interest in animation was at a lull . Hal Hinson of The Washington Post wrote a mixed review of the film , referring to it as a " likably unspectacular adaptation of the Hans Christian Andersen classic . " Hinson went on to write that the film is average even at its highest points . He wrote that while there is nothing wrong with the film , it would be difficult for children to identify with Ariel and that the characters seemed bland . Hinson concluded his review saying that the film is " accomplished but uninspiring , The Little Mermaid has enough to please any kid . All that 's missing is the magic . " Empire gave a positive review of the film , stating that " [ The Little Mermaid is ] a charmer of a movie , boasting all the ingredients that make a Disney experience something to treasure yet free of all the politically correct , formulaic elements that have bogged down the more recent productions . "

In April 2008 ? almost 20 years after the film 's initial release in 1989 ? Yahoo ! users voted " The Little Mermaid " as No. 14 on the top 30 animated films of all time . Later , when Yahoo ! updated the list in June of the same year , the film remained on the list but dropped six slots to end at # 20 . ( Only three other traditionally animated Disney animated films - Aladdin , Beauty and the Beast , and The Lion King , respectively - scored above it in the poll even after the update . ) In 2011 , Richard Corliss of TIME Magazine named it one of " The 25 All @-@ TIME Best Animated Films " .

The Little Mermaid , Disney 's first animated fairy tale since Sleeping Beauty ( 1959 ) , is an important film in animation history for many reasons . Chief among these are its re @-@ establishment of animation as a profitable venture for The Walt Disney Company , as the company 's theme parks , television productions , and live @-@ action features had overshadowed the animated output since the 1950s . Mermaid was the second film , following Oliver & Company , produced after Disney began expanding its animated output following its successful live action / animated film Who Framed Roger Rabbit , and became Disney 's first animated major box office and critical hit since The Rescuers in 1977 . Walt Disney Feature Animation was further expanded as a result of Mermaid and increasingly successful follow @-@ ups ? Beauty and the Beast ( 1991 ) , Aladdin ( 1992 ) , and The Lion King ( 1994 ) . The staff increased from 300 members in 1988 to 2 @,@ 200 in 1999 spread across three studios in Burbank , California , Lake Buena Vista , Florida , and Montreuil , Seine @-@ Saint @-@ Denis , France .

In addition , Mermaid signaled the re @-@ establishment of the musical film format as a standard for Disney animated films . The majority of Disney 's most popular animated films from the 1930s on had been musicals , though by the 1970s and 1980s the role of music had been de @-@ emphasized in the films . 1988 's Oliver & Company had served as a test of sorts to the success of the musical format before Disney committed to the Broadway @-@ style structure of The Little Mermaid .

= = = Accolades = = =

In January 1990 , The Little Mermaid earned three Academy Award nominations , making it the first Disney animated film to earn an Academy Award nomination since The Rescuers in 1977 . The film won two of the awards , for Best Song ( " Under the Sea " ) and Best Score . The film also earned four Golden Globe nominations , including Best Picture ? Comedy or Musical , and won the awards for Best Song ( " Under the Sea " ) and Best Score .

In addition to the box office and critical success of the film itself , the Mermaid soundtrack album earned two awards at the 33rd Grammy Awards in 1991 : the Grammy Award for Best Album for Children and the Grammy Award for Best Score Soundtrack Album for a Motion Picture , Television or Other Visual Media . Bolstered by the film 's success and the soundtrack 's Oscars , Golden Globes and Grammy Awards , was certified double platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America in September 1990 for shipments of two million copies of the soundtrack album , an unheard of feat for an animated film at the time . To date , the soundtrack has been certified six times platinum .

The Little Mermaid won two Academy Awards for Best Original Score as well as Best Song for Alan Menken and Howard Ashman 's " Under the Sea " , sung by Samuel E. Wright in a memorable scene . Another song from the film , " Kiss the Girl " , was nominated but lost to " Under the Sea " . The film also won two Golden Globes for Best Original Score as well Best Original Song for " Under the Sea " . It was also nominated in two other categories , Best Motion Picture and another Best Original Song . Menken and Ashman also won a Grammy Award in 1991 for " Under the Sea . "

American Film Institute Lists

AFI 's 100 Years ... 100 Passions ? Nominated

AFI 's 100 Years ... 100 Heroes and Villains :

Ursula ? Nominated Villain

AFI 's 100 Years ... 100 Songs :

Under the Sea ? Nominated

AFI 's Greatest Movie Musicals ? Nominated

AFI 's 10 Top 10 ? Nominated Animated Film

= = = Controversy = = =

Controversy arose regarding the artwork for the cover for the Classics VHS cassette when the film was first released on video when close examination of the artwork revealed an oddly shaped structure on the castle , closely resembling a human penis . Disney and the cover designer insist it was an accident , resulting from a late night rush job to finish the cover artwork . The questionable object does not appear on the cover of the second releasing of the movie . A second allegation is that a clergyman is seen with an erection during a scene late in the film . The clergyman is a short man , dressed in Bishop 's clothing , and a small bulge is slightly noticeable in a few of the frames that are actually later shown to be the stubby @-@ legged man 's knees , but the image is small and is very difficult to distinguish . The combined incidents led an Arkansas woman to file suit against The Walt Disney Company in 1995 , though she dropped the suit two months later .

= = Live action film = =

Deadline reports that Disney are in early development for an Live action version of the film .