

= Willow (film) =

Willow is a 1988 American @-@ British high fantasy film directed by Ron Howard , produced and with a story by George Lucas , and starring Warwick Davis , Val Kilmer , Joanne Whalley , Jean Marsh , and Billy Barty . Davis plays the eponymous lead character and hero : a reluctant farmer who plays a critical role in protecting a special baby from a tyrannical queen who vows to destroy her and take over the world in a high fantasy setting .

Lucas conceived the idea for the film in 1972 , approaching Howard to direct during the post @-@ production phase of Cocoon in 1985 . Bob Dolman was brought in to write the screenplay , coming up with seven drafts before finishing in late 1986 . It was then set up at Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer and principal photography began in April 1987 , finishing the following October .

The majority of filming took place at Elstree Studios in Hertfordshire , England , as well as Wales and New Zealand . Industrial Light & Magic created the visual effects sequences , which led to a revolutionary breakthrough with digital morphing technology . The film was released in 1988 to mixed reviews from critics , but was a modest financial success , received two Academy Award nominations , and has developed a cult following amongst fantasy fans .

= = Plot = =

A prophecy states that a female child with a special birthmark will herald the downfall of the evil sorceress Queen Bavmorda . Bavmorda imprisons all pregnant women in her realm to prevent fulfilment of the prophecy . When the prophesied child is born , the mother begs the midwife to take her to safety . The midwife reluctantly accepts and leaves Nockmaar castle unnoticed . The mother is executed and the midwife is eventually found . Knowing she cannot escape , she sets the baby on a makeshift raft of grass and sends her down the river hoping for fate to run its course . The midwife is then killed by Nockmaar hounds . Bavmorda sends her daughter Sorsha and General Kael to find the baby .

The baby drifts downriver to a Nelwyn village . She comes into the care of Willow Ufgood , a kind farmer and conjurer who hopes to become a sorcerer ; his wife Kiaya and his children fall in love with the baby immediately , and Willow too soon grows to love her as one of his own . During a town festival the village is attacked by a Nockmaar hound which is quickly killed by the village warriors . The High Aldwin , the village sorcerer , learns about the baby and selects Willow , due to his devotion to the child , to accompany a party of volunteers returning the baby to the Daikini (human) people . At a crossroads , they find a human warrior named Madmartigan trapped in a crow 's cage . The rest of the party want to give the baby to Madmartigan and go home immediately , but Willow and his friend Meegosh refuse , so the others leave . After spending the night at the crossroads , and meeting an army led by Airk Thaghbaer , an old friend of Madmartigan 's , marching against Bavmorda , Willow reluctantly decides to free Madmartigan so that he can take care of the baby for them .

Later on , the baby is stolen by a group of brownies . While chasing them , Willow and Meegosh are trapped , but rescued by Cherlindrea , a Fairy Queen , who identifies the baby as Elora Danan , the future princess of Tir Asleen and Bavmorda 's bane , and assigns Willow the task of helping the baby fulfil her destiny . Willow sends Meegosh home , and two of the brownies , Franjean and Rool , are instructed to guide Willow to the sorceress Fin Raziel . The three of them later encounter Madmartigan at a tavern , where he is disguised as a woman to hide from Lug , a cuckolded husband , who then flirts with the disguised Madmartigan . Sorsha arrives and reveals his identity , and in the ensuing brawl started by the furious Lug upon realisation that Madmartigan is not a woman , Willow , Madmartigan and the brownies escape . Madmartigan guides them to a lake where Raziel lives , but departs again as they cross it .

Raziel has been transformed into a possum by Bavmorda , and Willow and his party return with her to shore . They are captured by Sorsha , who already has Madmartigan in custody , and are taken to a snowbound mountain camp of the Nockmaar army . Willow tries to restore Raziel , but turns her into a rook instead . Madmartigan is dosed with love dust by the brownies and declares his undying

love for Sorsha . The prisoners escape and reach a village at the foot of a mountain , where they again encounter Airk and the remains of his army , recently defeated by Bavmorda 's forces . Madmartigan proclaims his loyalty to the Nelwyn and promises to protect Willow and Elora .

With Sorsha as their temporary hostage , they escape to the castle of Tir Asleen , but discover that its inhabitants have all been frozen by Bavmorda and the castle is overrun by trolls . The castle is surrounded by Kael 's army . During Kael 's assault on the castle , Sorsha realizes she also loves Madmartigan and decides to join him and Willow in opposing her mother 's army . Willow accidentally turns a troll into a massive , fire @-@ breathing , two @-@ headed monster that turns the tide of the battle , and Airk arrives with his army to assist . However , Kael captures Elora and returns to Nockmaar , where he reports Sorsha 's betrayal to Bavmorda .

Airk 's army , Willow , and the others arrive at Nockmaar to lay siege , but Bavmorda turns the soldiers into pigs . Instructed by Raziel , Willow protects himself with a spell and avoids transformation . He succeeds in turning Raziel into a human again , and she restores the others to their original forms . Willow 's group tricks their way into the castle and start a battle . Airk is killed by Kael , who is in turn slain by Madmartigan after a lengthy sword duel . Sorsha leads Willow and Raziel to the ritual chamber where they interrupt Elora 's sacrifice . Bavmorda and Raziel have a magical duel , during the course of which Raziel is incapacitated . Willow uses a " disappearing pig trick " he had performed as a conjurer to fool Bavmorda into thinking that Elora was sent out of her reach . Lunging at Willow , Bavmorda accidentally triggers the ritual 's final part to send Elora 's soul to oblivion and banishes her own soul instead .

Willow is rewarded with a magic book to aid him in becoming a sorcerer , and Sorsha and Madmartigan remain in Tir Asleen to raise Elora together . Willow returns home to a hero 's welcome and is happily reunited with his family .

= = Cast = =

Warwick Davis as Willow Ufgood , a Nelwyn dwarf and aspiring sorcerer who plays a critical role in protecting infant Elora Danan from the evil queen Bavmorda .

Val Kilmer as Madmartigan , a boastful mercenary swordsman who helps Willow on his quest . In the film (further explained in the film 's novelization) it is partly revealed that he is a disgraced knight from the kingdom of Galladoorn .

Kate and Ruth Greenfield / Rebecca Bearman as Elora Danan , an infant princess that prophecy says will bring about Queen Bavmorda 's downfall .

Joanne Whalley as Sorsha , Bavmorda 's warrior daughter who falls in love with Madmartigan . In the film 's novelization , her father is revealed as the king of Tir Asleen , which becomes a further factor for Sorsha to turn against her mother .

Jean Marsh as Queen Bavmorda , the villainous ruler of Nockmaar , a powerful black sorceress and mother of Sorsha .

Patricia Hayes as Fin Raziel , the aging sorceress who is turned into a possum due to a curse by Bavmorda .

Billy Barty as The High Aldwin , the Nelwyn wizard who commissions Willow to go on his journey , realizing the potential that Willow possesses in magic .

Pat Roach as General Kael , the villainous associate to Queen Bavmorda and high commander of her army .

Gavan O 'Herlihy as Airk Thaughaer , the military commander of the destroyed kingdom of Galladoorn who shares a mixed friendship with Madmartigan .

Maria Holv e as Cherlindrea , the fairy queen who resides in the forest and updates Willow on the importance of his quest .

Kevin Pollak and Rick Overton as Rool and Franjean , a brownie duo who also serve as comic relief in Willow 's journey .

David J. Steinberg as Meegosh , Willow 's closest friend who accompanies Willow partway on his journey .

Mark Northover as Burglekutt , the leader of the Nelwyn village council who maintains a running

enmity with Willow .

Phil Fondacaro as Vohnkar , a Nelwyn warrior who also accompanies Willow partway on his journey . In the film 's novelization , Vohnkar is portrayed as far @-@ travelled and worldly .

Julie Peters as Kaiya Ufgood , Willow 's wife ; a loving mother and enthusiastic in caring for Elora .

Tony Cox as a Nelwyn warrior .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

George Lucas conceived the idea for the film (originally titled Munchkins) in 1972 . Similar in intent to Star Wars , he created " a number of well @-@ known mythological situations for a young audience " . During the production of Return of the Jedi in 1982 , Lucas approached Warwick Davis , who was portraying Wicket the Ewok , about playing Willow Ufgood . Five years passed before he was actually cast in the role . Lucas " thought it would be great to use a little person in a lead role . A lot of my movies are about a little guy against the system , and this was just a more literal interpretation of that idea . "

Lucas explained that he had to wait until the mid @-@ 1980s to make the film because visual effects technology was finally advanced enough to execute his vision . Meanwhile , actor @-@ turned @-@ director Ron Howard was looking to do a fantasy film . He was at Industrial Light & Magic during the post @-@ production phase of Cocoon , when he was first approached by Lucas to direct Willow . He had previously starred in Lucas ' American Graffiti , and Lucas felt that he and Howard shared a symbiotic relationship similar to the one he enjoyed with Steven Spielberg . Howard nominated Bob Dolman to write the screenplay based on Lucas ' story . Dolman had worked with him on a 1983 television pilot called Little Shots that had not resulted in a series , and Lucas admired Dolman 's work on the sitcom WKRP in Cincinnati .

Dolman joined Howard and Lucas at Skywalker Ranch for a series of lengthy story conferences , and wrote seven drafts of his script between the spring and fall of 1986 . Pre @-@ production began in late 1986 . Various major film studios turned down the chance to distribute and co @-@ finance it with Lucasfilm because they believed the fantasy genre was unsuccessful . This was largely due to films such as Krull , Legend , Dragonslayer , and Labyrinth . Lucas took it to Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer (MGM) , which was headed by Alan Ladd , Jr . Ladd and Lucas shared a relationship as far back as the mid @-@ 1970s , when Ladd , running 20th Century Fox , greenlighted Lucas ' idea for Star Wars . However , in 1986 , MGM was facing financial troubles , and major investment in a fantasy film was perceived as a risk . Ladd advanced half the \$ 35 million budget for it in return for theatrical and television rights , leaving Lucasfilm with home video and pay television rights to offer in exchange for the other half .

Lucas based the character of General Kael (Pat Roach) on the film critic Pauline Kael , a fact that was not lost on Kael in her printed review of the film . She referred to General Kael as an " homage a moi " . Similarly , the two @-@ headed dragon was named " Sispert " (" Eborsisk " in the novelization) after film critics Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel .

= = = Filming = = =

Principal photography began on April 2 , 1987 and ended that following October . Interior footage took place at Elstree Studios in Hertfordshire , England , while location shooting took place in Wales and New Zealand . Lucas initially visualized shooting the film similar to Return of the Jedi , with studio scenes at Elstree and locations in Northern California , but the idea eventually faded . However , some exteriors were done around Skywalker Ranch and on location at Burney Falls , near Mount Shasta . The Chinese government refused Lucas the chance for a brief location shoot . He then sent a group of photographers to South China to photograph specific scenery , which was then used for background blue screen footage . Tongariro National Park in New Zealand was

chosen to house Bavmorda 's castle .

= = = Visual effects = = =

Lucasfilm 's Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) created the visual effects sequences . The script called for Willow to restore Fin Raziel (Patricia Hayes) from a goat to her human form . Willow recites what he thinks is the appropriate spell , but turns the goat into an ostrich , a peacock , a tortoise , and finally a tiger , before returning her to normal . ILM supervisor Dennis Muren considered using stop motion animation for the scene . He also explained that another traditional and practical way in the late @-@ 1980s to execute this sequence would have been through the use of an optical dissolve with cutaways at various stages .

Muren found both stop motion and optical effects to be too technically challenging and decided that the transformation scene would be a perfect opportunity for ILM to create advances with digital morphing technology . He proposed filming each animal , and the actress doubling for Hayes , and then feeding the images into a computer program developed by Doug Smythe . The program would then create a smooth transition from one stage to another before outputting the result back onto film . Smythe began development of the necessary software in September 1987 . By March 1988 , the impressive result Muren and fellow designer David Allen achieved what would represent a breakthrough for computer @-@ generated imagery (CGI) . The head of ILM 's animation department , Wes Takahashi , supervised the film 's animation sequences .

= = Soundtrack = =

The film score was written by James Horner and performed by the London Symphony Orchestra .

" I am a musicologist , a doctor of music . Therefore I listened to , studied and analysed a lot of music . I also enjoy metaphors , the art of quoting and of cycles . The harmonic draft of the Willow score , and most particularly its spiritual side , came from such a cycle , from such mythology and music history that I was taught , and that I myself convey with my own emotions and compositions . "

Eclectic influences on the score include Leos Janacek 's " Glagolitic Mass " , Mozart 's " Requiem " , " The Nine Splendid Stags " from Béla Bartók , Edvard Grieg 's " Arabian Dance " for the theater play Peer Gynt , and compositions by Sergei Prokofiev .

" Willow 's Theme " purposefully (see Horner 's quote above) contains a reworking / alteration of part of the theme of the first movement (" Lebhaft ") of Robert Schumann 's Symphony No 3 referencing it , while " Elora Danan 's Theme " shows a reference to the Bulgarian folk song " Mir Stanke Le " (??? ????? ??) , also known as the " Harvest Song from Thrace " .

Track listing

" Elora Danan " ? 9 : 45

" Escape from the Tavern " ? 5 : 04

" Willow 's Journey Begins " ? 5 : 26

" Canyon of Mazes " ? 7 : 52

" Tir Asleen " ? 10 : 47

" Willow 's Theme " ? 3 : 54

" Bavmorda 's Spell is Cast " ? 18 : 11

" Willow the Sorcerer " ? 11 : 55

= = Reception = =

= = = Box office = = =

The film was shown and promoted at the 1988 Cannes Film Festival . It was released on May 20 , 1988 in 1 @,@ 209 theaters , earning \$ 8 @,@ 300 @,@ 169 in its opening weekend , placing

number one at the weekend box office . Lucas had hoped it would earn as much money as E.T. the Extra Terrestrial , but the film faced early competition with Crocodile Dundee II , Big and Rambo III . Making over \$ 57 million at the North American box office , it was not the blockbuster hit insiders had anticipated . It was not , however , a financial flop either , as it made a profit because of strong international , home video , and television sales .

== Critical response ==

The film was released to mixed reviews from critics . Based on 29 reviews collected by Rotten Tomatoes , 48 % of the critics gave the film a positive review with an average score of 5 @. @ 6 / 10 .

Janet Maslin from The New York Times praised Lucas ' storytelling , but was critical of Ron Howard 's direction . " Howard appears to have had his hands full in simply harnessing the special effects , " Maslin said .

Desson Thomson writing in The Washington Post , explained " Rob Reiner 's similar fairytale adventure The Princess Bride (which the cinematographer Adrian Biddle also shot) managed to evoke volumes more without razzle @-@ dazzle . It 's a sad thing to be faulting Lucas , maker of the Star Wars trilogy and Raiders of the Lost Ark , for forgetting the tricks of entertainment . " Mike Clark in USA Today wrote that " the rainstorm wrap @-@ up , in which Good edges Evil is like Led Zeppelin Meets The Wild Bunch . The film is probably too much for young children and possibly too much of the same for cynics . But any 6 ? 13 @-@ year @-@ old who sees this may be bitten by the " movie bug " for life . "

== Accolades ==

At the Academy Awards , the film was nominated for Sound Editing and Visual Effects , but lost both to Who Framed Roger Rabbit , which was similarly done by Industrial Light & Magic . It won Best Costume Design at the Saturn Awards , where it was also nominated for Warwick Davis for Best Performance by a Younger Actor (lost to Fred Savage for Vice Versa) and Jean Marsh for Best Supporting Actress (lost to Sylvia Sydney for Beetlejuice) . It also lost Best Fantasy Film and the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation to Who Framed Roger Rabbit . It was also nominated for two Golden Raspberry Awards including Worst Screenplay , which lost to Cocktail and Worst Supporting Actor for Billy Barty , who lost to Dan Aykroyd for Caddyshack II .

== Home media ==

The film was released on DVD as a " special edition " in November 2001 by 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment . The release included an audio commentary by Warwick Davis and two " making of " featurettes . In the commentary , Davis confirms that there were a number of " lost scenes " previously rumored to have been deleted from it including a battle in the valley , Willow battling a boy who transforms into a shark in a lake while retrieving Fin Raziel , and an extended sorceress duel at the climax . (Though removed from the theatrical version , the battle with the lake monster was retained for both Marvel Comics ' adaptation and Wayland Drew 's novelization of the film .) 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment released the film on Blu @-@ ray Disc on March 12 , 2013 , with an all @-@ new transfer supervised by George Lucas .

== Other media ==

== Board game ==

In 1988 , Tor Books released The Willow Game , a two to six player adventure board game based on the film designed by Greg Costikyan .

== Video games ==

Three video games based on the film were released . Mindscape published an action game in 1988 for Amiga , Atari ST , Commodore 64 , and DOS . Capcom published two different games in 1989 , a platform game for the arcades and a role @-@ playing game for the Nintendo Entertainment System .

== Novels ==

Wayland Drew adapted Lucas ' story into a film novel , providing additional background information to several major characters and various additional scenes , including an encounter with a lake monster near Razel 's island which was filmed , but ultimately not used in the movie . A segment of that scene 's filmed material can be found in the DVD 's " Making of Willow " documentary .

Lucas outlined the Chronicles of the Shadow War trilogy to follow the film and hired comic book writer / novelist Chris Claremont to adapt them into a series of books . They take place about fifteen years after the original film and feature the now teenage Elora Danan as a central character .

Shadow Moon (1995) ISBN 0 @-@ 553 @-@ 57285 @-@ 7

Shadow Dawn (1996) ISBN 0 @-@ 553 @-@ 57289 @-@ X

Shadow Star (2000) ISBN 0 @-@ 553 @-@ 57288 @-@ 1

== Sequel ==

In April 2005 , Lucas and Davis commented that a television series acting as a sequel was under consideration . In June 2008 , Davis reiterated his hopes to return for a theatrically @-@ released second installment of the film . On February 15 , 2013 Val Kilmer posted a photo via Twitter implying that it was " Right around the corner ! " . However , this coincided with a Life 's Too Short mockumentary featuring Davis and Kilmer , and is likely to have been a hoax . In March 2013 , Davis indicated an interest in seeing a sequel (perhaps as a TV series) , but gave no indication that any development was ongoing .