

# Bolt (2008 film)

***Bolt*** is a 2008 American computer animated comedy-adventure film produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios and released by Walt Disney Pictures. It is the 48th Disney animated feature film. Directed by Chris Williams and Byron Howard, the film stars the voices of John Travolta, Miley Cyrus, Malcolm McDowell, Diedrich Bader, Nick Swardson, Greg Germann, Susie Essman and Mark Walton. The film's plot centers on a white dog named Bolt who, having spent his entire life on the set of a television series, thinks that he has super powers. When he believes that his human, Penny, has been kidnapped, he sets out on a cross-country journey to "rescue" her.

*Bolt* was released in the United States on November 21, 2008. Despite a relatively marginal box-office performance, the film received a strong positive critical reception and is renowned for playing an important role in instigating what is widely referred to as the Disney Revival, as well as setting the studio in a new creative direction that would lead to other critically acclaimed features such as *Tangled* (2010) and *Frozen* (2013). *Bolt* was also Disney Animation's first feature film to be produced under the complete creative guidance of then-Pixar executive John Lasseter in his role as chief creative officer for the studio, as well as the first computer-animated feature film to implement non-photorealistic rendering.

This was one of the final film roles for James Lipton before his death on March 2, 2020, the other being *Igor*, which was released the same year.

The film was nominated for a series of awards, such as the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature, Golden Globe Award for Best Animated Feature Film and Golden Globe Award for Best Original Song.

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Theatrical release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	Chris Williams Byron Howard
<b>Produced by</b>	Clark Spencer
<b>Screenplay by</b>	Dan Fogelman Chris Williams
<b>Starring</b>	John Travolta Miley Cyrus
<b>Music by</b>	John Powell
<b>Edited by</b>	Tim Mertens
<b>Production company</b>	Walt Disney Pictures  Walt Disney Animation Studios
<b>Distributed by</b>	Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures
<b>Release date</b>	November 21, 2008
<b>Running time</b>	96 minutes
<b>Country</b>	United States

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<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$150 million <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Box office</b>	\$310 million <sup>[1]</sup>

# Plot

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A White Shepherd puppy named Bolt is adopted by an eight-year-old girl named Penny. Five years later, Bolt and Penny star in a hit television series called *Bolt*, in which Bolt uses various superpowers to protect Penny from the villain. To gain a more realistic performance, the show's producers have deceived Bolt his entire life, arranging the filming in such a way that Bolt believes everything in the show is real and that he really has superpowers, including a devastatingly powerful sonic scream-like "superbark". After a cliffhanger episode causes Bolt to believe Penny has been kidnapped, he escapes from his on-set trailer in Hollywood but knocks himself unconscious in the process and is trapped inside a box of foam peanuts which is shipped to New York City.

In New York, Bolt resumes his search for Penny and, much to his dismay and confusion, finds out the hard way that his "superpowers" are useless. He encounters Mittens, a feral cat who bullies pigeons out of their food. Bolt compels Mittens to guide him back to Penny — Mittens being convinced her captor is a lunatic — and the two start their journey westward by truck. Meanwhile, in Hollywood, Penny is distraught over Bolt's disappearance but is convinced by the studio to continue filming with a less experienced lookalike dog.

Surprised at his first feelings of hunger, Bolt is shown by Mittens how to act like a cute but needy dog, obtaining food for them both at an RV park. They are joined by Rhino, a fearless hamster and fanatical *Bolt* fan. Rhino's unwavering faith in Bolt substantiates the dog's illusions about himself, but allows Mittens to figure out Bolt is from a television show. She tries to tell Bolt this, but Bolt simply becomes frustrated. Attempting to "superbark" her repeatedly, the noise draws the attention of an Animal Control patrol and Bolt and Mittens are both captured and taken to an animal shelter.

Bolt, freed from the patrol van by Rhino, finally realizes and accepts that he is just a normal dog, but regains his confidence after Rhino (oblivious to this revelation) exhorts him to heroism. They rescue Mittens from the shelter, and as they continue west, Bolt and Mittens form a close friendship in which she teaches Bolt how to be an ordinary dog and enjoy typical dog activities. Mittens makes plans for the three of them to stay in Las Vegas, but hearing Bolt is still drawn to find Penny, she tells him Penny is only an actor, and humans never truly love their pets, and eventually betray and abandon them, as happened to her. Bolt refuses to believe her and continues on alone to Hollywood; with Rhino's encouragement his two friends follow shortly after.

Bolt reaches the studio and finds Penny embracing his lookalike, unaware that Penny still misses him and her affection for the lookalike is only a part of a rehearsal. A broken-hearted Bolt leaves, but Mittens, on a gantry in the studio, sees Penny telling her mother how much she misses Bolt. Mittens follows Bolt and explains. At the same time, the Bolt lookalike panics during the show's filming and accidentally knocks over some flaming torches, setting the sound stage on fire with Penny trapped inside. Bolt arrives and the two reunite inside the burning studio, but are unable to escape before Penny begins to suffocate from the smoke. Penny begs Bolt to go but Bolt refuses to leave her. Bolt uses his "superbark" through the building's air vent, alerting the firefighters to their location and allowing both of them to be rescued in time.

Penny and her mother quit when their overeager agent proposes they exploit the incident for publicity purposes. The show continues with a replacement "Bolt" and "Penny" and a new storyline involving alien abduction. Penny adopts Mittens and Rhino, and she and her family move to a rural home to enjoy a simpler, happy lifestyle with Bolt and her new pets.

## Cast

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- John Travolta as Bolt, a White Shepherd who lives his whole life believing he is a superhero until he finds himself in the "real world" for the first time.
- Susie Essman as Mittens, a sarcastic and feisty alley cat who reluctantly joins Bolt and Rhino on their journey.
- Mark Walton as Rhino, an adorable but ferocious hamster who is also a *Bolt* super-fan.
- Miley Cyrus as Penny, Bolt's beloved owner and his co-star on the hit TV show, *Bolt*.
  - Chloë Grace Moretz as Young Penny
- Malcolm McDowell as Dr. Calico, the evil mastermind on Bolt and Penny's TV show.
- Nick Swardson as Blake
- Diedrich Bader as Veteran Cat
- Greg Germann as The Agent, Penny's insensitive and rude agent who never listens to anyone's opinion but his.
- James Lipton as The Director
- Randy Savage as Thug
- Kari Wahlgren as Mindy
- Grey DeLisle as Penny's Mother
- J.P. Manoux as Tom
- Brian Stepanek as Martin
- Jeff Bennett as Lloyd
- John DiMaggio as Saul
- Jenny Lewis as Assistant Director

## Production

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### Development

Originally, the film was going to be titled *American Dog*, and was written and directed by Chris Sanders. Eventually, Sanders was removed from the project and replaced by Chris Williams and Byron Howard.<sup>[2]</sup> The film's previous plot told the story of a dog named Henry, a famous TV star, who one day finds himself stranded in the Nevada desert with a testy, one-eyed cat and an oversized, radioactive rabbit who are themselves searching for new homes, all the while believing he is still on television. In 2006, after becoming Chief Creative Officer at Disney Animation, John Lasseter along with other directors from Pixar and Disney attended two screenings of the film and gave Sanders notes on how to improve the story. According to Lasseter, Sanders was replaced because he resisted the changes that Lasseter and the other directors had suggested. Lasseter was quoted as saying "Chris Sanders is extremely talented, but he couldn't take it to the place it had to be."<sup>[3]</sup> After Sanders left and the original title was removed, the animation team was told to complete the filming in 18 months instead of the usual four years that is normally required to produce a computer-animated feature.<sup>[4]</sup> On June 8, 2007, Disney announced that the film, now under its current name, would be released on November 21, 2008 in Disney Digital 3-D.<sup>[5][6]</sup>

Animation

The look of the film was inspired by the paintings of Edward Hopper and the cinematography of Vilmos Zsigmond.<sup>[7]</sup> New technology in non-photorealistic rendering (NPR) was used to give it a special visual appearance, a technique later used in *Tangled* (2010). To give the film's 3D backgrounds a hand-painted look, the company artists used new patented technology designed specifically for the film.<sup>[8]</sup>

Bolt's characteristics are based on an amalgam of breeds, although the designers started with the American White Shepherd.<sup>[9]</sup> Joe Moshier, lead character designer, said, "they American White Shepherds have really long ears, a trait that I tried to caricature in order to allow the animators to emphasize Bolt's expressiveness."<sup>[9]</sup>

The design of Rhino in his plastic ball was based on executive producer John Lasseter's pet chinchilla, which was brought to an animators' retreat during the film's production.<sup>[10]</sup>

Music

The score to *Bolt* was composed by John Powell.<sup>[11]</sup> The soundtrack featured the film's score and two original songs – "I Thought I Lost You" by Bolt's stars Miley Cyrus and John Travolta (nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Original Song on 2009) as well as "Barking at the Moon" by Rilo Kiley singer Jenny Lewis.<sup>[11]</sup> The soundtrack was released on November 18, 2008.<sup>[12]</sup>

Although Motörhead has a song in the film, they do not seem to appear in either the soundtrack or the score. Motörhead's song "Dog-Face Boy" (from their *Sacrifice* album) is in a mailroom scene where a young worker is listening to it on his headphones and inadvertently wraps Bolt up in a box that gets shipped off to New York City.<sup>[13]</sup>

Track listing:

All music is composed by John Powell, except as noted.

No.	Title	Artist	Length
1.	" <u>I Thought I Lost You</u> "	<u>Miley Cyrus &amp; John Travolta</u>	3:36
2.	"Barking at the Moon"	<u>Jenny Lewis</u>	3:17
3.	"Meet Bolt"		1:49
4.	"Bolt Transforms"		1:00
5.	"Scooter Chase"		2:29
6.	"New York"		1:44
7.	"Meet Mittens"		1:25
8.	"The RV Park"		2:14
9.	"A Fast Train"		2:38
10.	"Where Were You on St. Rhino's Day?"		1:58
11.	"Sing-Along Rhino"		0:42
12.	"Saving Mittens"		1:02
13.	"House on Wheels"		3:07
14.	"Las Vegas"		2:01
15.	"A Friend in Need"		1:13

<i><b>Bolt</b></i>		
Soundtrack album by John Powell		
Released	November 18, 2008	
Genre	Score	
Length	36:59	
Label	Walt Disney	
Walt Disney Animation Studios chronology		
<i>Meet the Robinsons</i> (2007)	<i><b>Bolt</b></i> (2008)	<i>The Princess and the Frog: Original Songs and Score</i> (2009)

16. "Rescuing Penny"		3:09
17. "A Real Life Superbark"		0:46
18. "Unbelievable TV"		1:20
19. "Home at Last/Barking at the Moon (Reprise)"	Jenny Lewis	1:29
<b>Total length:</b>		<b>36:59</b>

## Release

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*Bolt* was theatrically released in the United States on November 21, 2008. Beginning in its fourth week in theaters, the film was accompanied by Pixar's *Cars Toons* short *Tokyo Mater*.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Home media

*Bolt* was released on Region A Blu-ray Disc in the United States on March 22, 2009. The BD set included standard DVD and digital copy versions of the film. Single-disc DVD and Special Edition DVD with Digital Copy versions followed in Region 1 on March 24.<sup>[15]</sup> This marked the first time a major home-video release debuted on Blu-ray Disc before DVD.<sup>[16]</sup> *Bolt* was released on both Blu-ray and DVD in the United Kingdom on June 15, 2009.<sup>[17]</sup>

A short film called *Super Rhino* is included in the DVD and Blu-ray versions of the film.<sup>[18]</sup> The DVD has sold 4,581,755 copies, generating \$81.01 million in sales as of December 31, 2009.<sup>[19]</sup>

The 3D Blu-ray version of the film was released in November 2010, in France<sup>[20]</sup> and UK.<sup>[21]</sup> A month later it was released worldwide, exclusively to select Sony TVs.<sup>[22][23]</sup> In US, it was released on November 8, 2011.<sup>[24]</sup>

## Reception

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### Critical reception

On Rotten Tomatoes the film has a rating of 89% based on 185 reviews. The website's critical consensus reads: "*Bolt* is a pleasant animated comedy that overcomes the story's familiarity with strong visuals and likable characters."<sup>[25]</sup> Another review aggregator, Metacritic, gave the film a 67/100 approval rating based on 29 reviews following under the category "generally favorable reviews".<sup>[26]</sup>

Perry Seibert of TV Guide gave the film 3 stars out of 4 and wrote the film "amuses both those who make up the film's target audience and the parents along for the ride. This winning mix of exciting action, heart-tugging sentiment, and gentle character comedy makes *Bolt* yet another solid addition to Disney's history of family-friendly fare."<sup>[27]</sup> Tasha Robinson of The A.V. Club gave the film a B+ stating that "*Bolt* is the studio's first film since *Lilo & Stitch* that feels like it's trying to recapture the old Disney instead of aggressively shedding it in favor of something slick and new. And yet it comes with a healthy cutting-edge Pixar flavor as well."<sup>[28]</sup> Kenneth Turan of The Los Angeles Times wrote that "[*Bolt*] also has an intriguing plot that is kind of the family animation version of the Jim Carrey-starring *The Truman Show*."<sup>[29]</sup>

### Box office

On its opening weekend, the film opened number 3 with \$26.2 million behind *Twilight* and *Quantum of Solace*.<sup>[30]</sup> On its second weekend, it rose to No. 2 behind *Four Christmases* with a 1.4% increase.<sup>[31]</sup> In the United States and Canada, the film grossed \$114.1 million by its closing date on February 22, 2009.<sup>[32]</sup> An additional \$195.9 million was made internationally as of January 2, 2011, for a worldwide total of \$310 million.<sup>[1][33]</sup>

## Award nominations

*Bolt* was nominated for the following awards:

- 2008 Academy Award for Best Animated Feature – lost to *WALL-E*<sup>[34]</sup>
- 2008 Annie Award for Best Animated Feature – lost to *Kung Fu Panda*<sup>[35]</sup>
- 2008 Broadcast Film Critics Association Award for Best Animated Feature – lost to *WALL-E*<sup>[36][37]</sup>
- 2008 Chicago Film Critics Association Award for Best Animated Film – lost to *WALL-E*<sup>[38]</sup>
- 2008 Golden Globe Award for Best Animated Feature Film – lost to *WALL-E*<sup>[39]</sup>
- 2008 Golden Globe Award for Best Original Song - lost to *The Wrestler*<sup>[39]</sup>
- 2008 Online Film Critics Society Award for Best Animated Film – lost to *WALL-E*<sup>[40]</sup>
- 2008 Producers Guild of America's Best Animated Motion Picture – lost to *WALL-E*<sup>[41]</sup>
- 2008 Satellite Award for Best Animated or Mixed Media Feature – lost to *WALL-E*<sup>[42]</sup>
- 2009 Kids' Choice Awards for Favorite Animated Movie – lost to *Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa*<sup>[43]</sup>
- 2009 Visual Effects Society Award for "Outstanding Animation in an Animated Feature Motion Picture" – lost to *WALL-E*<sup>[44]</sup>
- 2009 Visual Effects Society Award for "Outstanding Animated Character in an Animated Feature Motion Picture" (two nominations for "Bolt" and "Rhino") – lost to *WALL-E*<sup>[44]</sup>
- 2009 Visual Effects Society Award for "Outstanding Effects Animation in an Animated Feature" – lost to *WALL-E*<sup>[44]</sup>

## Video games

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Disney Interactive Studios produced a video game based on the film, released in November 2008 for Nintendo DS, Wii, PlayStation 2, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and PC.<sup>[45]</sup> The game focuses on Bolt's fake TV life, not the actual storyline.<sup>[46]</sup> A separate game was released for mobile phones,<sup>[47]</sup> and a third game, *RhinoBall*, was released as an application on Apple's App Store.<sup>[48]</sup>

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## External links

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- Official website (<http://movies.disney.com/bolt>)
  - *Bolt* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0397892/>) on *IMDb*
  - *Bolt* (<https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v381601>) at *AllMovie*
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  - *Bolt* (<https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/bolt>) at *Rotten Tomatoes*
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