

# Classic Disney Elements Fail to Rescue Modern Disney Sequel

Peter Pan and company are back in theaters despite the Disney "straight to video" worthy plot and animation.

By Brooks Firth  
Assistant Arts & Entertainment Editor

The story always ends the same. Peter leaps off Wendy's windowsill, yells "Goodbye Wendy!" and Wendy always believes in Peter, fairies and pixie dust.

But what do you do when you run out of fairy tales to tell, the world is full of kids who act older than their actual ages and your studio just isn't bringing people in like it used to?

If you're Disney, you create a sequel. With a plot usually reserved for a

straight-to-video release, Peter Pan, Captain Hook and Tinker Bell are back in theaters with "Return To Never Land."

Wendy, now an adult with two children of her own, has maintained her imagination. But her progenies have been robbed of their childhood by World War II. Jane, her practical eldest daughter, has no time for childish diversions, refusing to have "faith, trust and pixie dust" as part of her belief structure.

But even Jane can't ignore the flying pirate ship and the hordes of menacing seafarers pouring onto her roof - and into her window. Mistaking Jane for Wendy, Captain Hook, the most "brazen, bold and brilliant buccaneer that ever sailed the briny blue," throws his bait for Pan in a bag and sails her off to Never Land.

To hang a right at the second star you come to and by morning be in a place where you never grow old sound like pretty good Spring Break plans to me. But in this updated trip to Never Land, decades of controlled substance use could never prepare you for the kaleidoscopic journey in this sequel.

The presentation of entering Never Land has changed; it's one of the many things that has. Change can be a good thing, but the people at Disney haven't been changing just the frills throughout their past few films, they've been mon-

keying around with the formula.

A poor mixture of the old-school style of imagining and the new age of computer-generated animation further illustrates the inadequacies of the low-quality sketching and coloring that lacks both richness and believability.

Even more tragic, the subtlety and class of Disney is gone. A soundtrack not sung by the animated characters, but by Jonatha Brooke, drowns out any possible genuine moments in the film. Despite her talent outside the film, Brooke spoon-feeds patronizing lyrics to the audience, and it's nothing less than insulting. Where's Alan Menken when you need him?

The classic Peter Pan elements thankfully haven't been touched. Peter's still calling Hook a codfish and Tinker Bell still hates the new girl. The Lost Boys are as adorable as ever.

But Disney created a problem for itself the minute it came up with the plot. When Disney makes a film, it creates an entire world of the imagination. When even one character doesn't buy into it, the atmosphere is gone and the film disintegrates into an after-school special.

After rescuing Jane from Hook, the adorable Never Land crew has a problem. Uttering phrases like, "Because. That's why," and "Duty calls," Pan has a challenge on his hands with the petulant Jane. He has to make her believe before he can make her fly. And here's the rub - Jane can't go home till she learns to fly.



An ailing Tinker Bell asks audiences to once again believe in fairies in "Return To Never Land." Peter Pan and his Lost Boys hover over their fallen pixie, struck down by a little girl in need of a little faith, trust and pixie dust.

Of course, it's a Disney film: the vacuous sprite, the surly schoolgirl and the eternal boy win the day. Jane returns home and is once again sur-

rounded by the London Blitzkrieg. But this time she has her imagination and fairy tales to keep her young.

So maybe it was a good call to release this sequel in theaters after all. In times

of hardship, the world can always use a little faith, trust and pixie dust.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

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