



BFI FAMILIES

FAMILY FRIENDLY FILM SCREENINGS,
ACTIVITIES AND WORKSHOPS



LABYRINTH

What's it about?

Jim Henson's cult fantasy fairy tale features David Bowie's menacing Goblin King, who has taken young Sophie's baby brother and placed him in the centre of a fiendishly challenging maze populated by creatures of all shapes and sizes.

We present a restored digital version of *Labyrinth* projected in glorious 4K.

Labyrinth

Jim Henson (1936-1990) was interested in developing fairytales all his life, but only in the last two decades before his death had the clout to be able to follow this interest through. By devising a range of creatures and narratives which pushed back the boundaries of the possible, he made a major contribution to the creation of fairytales for the screen.

His first foray into the genre came on the back of the enormous success of two TV series: *Sesame Street*, and *The Muppet Show*. These made Kermit the Frog an established favourite with American children, so Henson decided to use him as a way of luring young viewers to watch a version of *The Frog Prince* (1971). Kermit thus came to be the narrator of fairytale which, in Henson's hands, became a story about friendship and trust, enlivened by comedy and songs.

In the 80s the Muppets transferred to the big screen, and made so much money for the studio that Henson was given the go-ahead to start work on a pet fairytale project of his own, *The Dark Crystal* (1982). In this he broke away completely from Muppets, seeking to create a comprehensive alternative universe without them. However, despite all the creative energy that had gone into it, *The Dark Crystal* did badly at the box-office. Trying to work out why, Henson decided that puppet creatures are good at being funny or nasty, but do not work as central protagonists, because an audience cannot satisfactorily identify with them.

Four years later, for *Labyrinth*, Henson brought humans (including David Bowie) into his fairytales. On the surface the film has a very contemporary tone, as illustrated by the Junk Lady and her shopping trolley, but it nonetheless contains some standard fairytale ingredients. The framework of Sarah's search harks back to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. The apparently uncaring stepmother and the ballroom sequence both invoke the Cinderella story. The poisoned fruit that Sarah succumbs to reminds viewers of the apple which nearly kills Snow White.

But there is a lot of original Henson as well. Every effort was made to ensure that all the *Labyrinth* creatures were as lifelike as possible. Their skin was tinted and textured, and had wrinkles, hair and fingerprints where appropriate. A choreographer and acting coach worked with the puppeteers, helping them to achieve convincing movements. The aim behind all this was to make it possible for audiences to accept the creatures as credible living characters.

To a large extent, the film was successful, faring much better at the box-office than *The Dark Crystal*. Nonetheless, Henson abandoned cinema features, and original stories, after *Labyrinth*. Instead, he went back to TV and created *The Storyteller*, a blend of showing and telling based on Grimm and other traditional sources.

Terry Staples

LABYRINTH

Director: Jim Henson
©: Labyrinth Enterprises
Production Companies: Jim Henson Organisation, Lucasfilm Ltd.
Executive Producer: George Lucas
Producer: Eric Rattray
Executive Supervising Producer: David Lazer
2nd Unit Director: Peter MacDonald
Assistant Directors: Ken Baker, Paul Taylor, Nikolas Korda, Simon Haveland, Nigel Gostelow, Patrick Kinney
Script Supervisor: Angela Allen
Screenplay: Terry Jones
Original Story: Denise Lee, Jim Henson
Director of Photography: Alex Thomson
Optical Effects: Optical Film Effects
Special Effects Supervisor: George Gibbs
Special Effects Consultant: Dennis Lowe
Creature Shop Creature Design/Supervisor: Brian Froud
Creature Shop Chief Animatronic Designer: Tony Dunsterville
Animator: Peter Chiang
Conceptual Design: Brian Froud
Production Designer: Elliot Scott
Costume Designers: Brian Froud, Ellis Flyte
Make-up Supervisor: Wally Schneiderman
Puppeteer Co-ordinator: Brian Henson
Music: Trevor Jones
Sound Recording: Peter Sutton

Cast

David Bowie (*Jareth, the Goblin King*)
Jennifer Connelly (*Sarah*)
Toby Froud (*Toby*)
Shelley Thompson (*stepmother*)
Christopher Malcolm (*father*)
Natalie Finland (*fairy*)
Shari Weiser (*Hoggle*)
Brian Henson (*Hoggle/voice of Hoggle*)
Ron Mueck (*Ludo/voice of Ludo*)
Rob Mills (*Ludo*)
Dave Goelz, David Barclay (*Sir Didymus*)
David Shaughnessy (*voice of Sir Didymus*)
Karen Prell (*the worm*)
Timothy Bateson (*voice of the worm*)
Frank Oz (*the wiseman*)
Michael Hordern (*voice of the wiseman*)

UK 1986©
101 mins

BFI FAMILIES

Space Jam

Sun 16 Jan 13:20

Funday Workshop: Sing 2

Sun 23 Jan 10:15

Funday Preview: Sing 2

Sun 23 Jan 11:30

Kes

Sun 30 Jan 13:00

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