



DESTINATION TIME TRAVEL: PLAYING WITH TIME IN FILM AND TV

# Time Bandits

## Time Bandits

Directed by: Terry Gilliam  
©: HandMade Film Partnership  
Presented by: HandMade Films  
Executive Producers: George Harrison, Denis O'Brien  
Produced by: Terry Gilliam  
Associate Producer: Neville C. Thompson  
Accountant: Brian Bailey  
Accounts Secretary: Geraldine Dunn  
Production Manager: Graham Ford  
Location Manager: Patrick Cassavetti  
2nd Unit Director: Julian Doyle  
1st Assistant Director: Simon Hinkly  
2nd Assistant Director: Guy Travers  
3rd Assistant Directors: Mark Cooper, Chris Thompson  
Continuity: Penny Eyles  
Casting Director: Irene Lamb  
Written by: Michael Palin, Terry Gilliam  
Director of Photography: Peter Biziou  
Camera Operator: David Garfath  
Focus Puller: Bob Stilwell  
Clapper Loader: Simon Fulford  
Grip: Freddy Fry  
Camera Equipment: Joe Dunton Cameras  
Gaffers: Roy Rodhouse, Reg Parsons  
Best Boy: Chuck Finch  
Stills: Clive Coote  
Optical Effects: Kent Houston, Paul Whitbread  
Assisted by: Tim Ollive, Dennis De Groot, Peerless Camera Company  
Matte Paintings: Ray Cagle  
Special Effects Senior Technician: John Bunker  
Special Effects Technician: Ross King  
Special Effects Consultants: Chris Verner, Andy Thompson  
Special Effects Modellers: Chris Overs, Lewis Coleman  
Trolls Made by: Ray Scott  
Wireman: Bob Harman  
Modelmaker: Val Charlton  
Models Photographed by: Julian Doyle  
Puppet Show by: John Styles  
Editor: Julian Doyle  
Assistant Editor: Rodney Glenn  
2nd Assistant Editor: Adam Unger  
Production Designer: Milly Burns  
Art Director: Norman Garwood  
Assistant Art Director: Celia Barnett  
Fortress of Ultimate Darkness by: Westbridge Studios  
Draughtsman: Steve Cooper  
Sculptors: Geoff Rivers Bland, Laurie Warburton  
Production Buyer: Karen Brookes  
Property Master: Peter Grant  
Construction Manager: Peter Verard  
Costumes Designed by: Jim Acheson  
In association with: Hazel Coté  
Assistant Costume Designer: T. Stephen Miles  
Costumiers: Richard Cattermole, Dorothy Williams  
Wardrobe Mistress: Dorothea Smylie  
Hairdressing/Make-up by: Maggie Weston, Elaine Carew  
Wigs/Beards Made by: Kenneth Lintott  
Music Score Composed/Orchestrated by: Mike Moran  
Greek Dance Music: Trevor Jones  
Additional Music: Music De Wolfe, Ready Music  
Songs/Additional Material by: George Harrison  
Percussion Sequences by: Ray Cooper  
Music Director: Harry Rabinowitz  
Music Produced by: Ray Cooper

The screening on Wednesday 25 October will be introduced by director Terry Gilliam.

Perhaps the most ferociously imaginative fantasy film Britain has ever produced, *Time Bandits* – a violent, absurdist comedy for children – was animator-turned-director Terry Gilliam's second solo film, following his 1977 debut, *Jabberwocky*. The script, by Gilliam and fellow Python Michael Palin, owed less to earlier British time travel movies, like *The Amazing Mr. Blunden* (1972) or *Timeslip* (1955), than to British fantasy literature, from Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* to Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and C.S. Lewis's Narnia stories via the comic science-fiction of Douglas Adams.

With a dreamlike atmosphere reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's Alice and Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* trilogy (the latter one of Gilliam's many unfulfilled projects), *Time Bandits* gleefully de-romanticises history. Ian Holm's Napoleon rants drunkenly that the world's greatest conquerors have all been under 5'1", while John Cleese's Robin Hood greets the peasantry with all the vacuous courtesy of a royal dignitary at a charity function. David Warner plays the wonderfully malevolent villain, a human Swiss army knife known only as Evil, while Sean Connery lends human warmth to the picaresque as a kindly King Agamemnon (the only character in the entire movie who seems to care whether the child hero lives or dies).

The humour is surreal, spiteful and very funny, while Gilliam's imagination goes berserk in the final half, set in a make-believe era known as 'the Time of Legends'. Here we find an irritable ogre stricken with lower-back pain, a gormless sea giant, and the gothic vision that is the Fortress of Ultimate Darkness. The film's £5 million budget evidently couldn't keep up with Gilliam's fevered visions, and a further two scenes had to be dropped (one involving a pair of spidery old ladies, the other a forest of monstrous hands).

The film's imagination versus rationality theme climaxes with an ingenious skirmish in which a toy-littered bedroom becomes a sprawling battleground. Here the shape-shifting Evil creatively dismantles an army of cowboys, spaceships and tanks rallied from the annals of history. Even God Himself turns up (a priceless cameo from Ralph Richardson, looking like a slightly bewildered bank manager).

Despite favourable reviews, *Time Bandits* did only mediocre business in Britain, where it was unhelpfully and misleadingly marketed as a Python film. Promoted as a children's picture in the United States, however, it became a huge success, despite US distributor *Avco-Embassy's* reservations about the audaciously cruel ending.

Alec Worley, BFI Screenonline

*Greek Dance Choreography:* Tom Jobe  
*Sound Mixer:* Garth Marshall  
*Sound Engineer:* John Richards  
*Boom Operator:* Bob Doyle  
*Dubbing Mixers:* Paul Carr, Brian Paxton  
*Music Production Sound Effects:* André Jacquemin  
*Stunts Arranged by:* Peter Brayham, Terry Yorke  
*Stunt Knight:* Brian Bowes  
Made at Lee International Studios

**Cast:**

John Cleese (*Robin Hood*)  
Sean Connery (*King Agamemnon/fireman*)  
Shelley Duvall (*Pansy*)  
Katherine Helmond (*Mrs Ogre*)  
Ian Holm (*Napoleon*)  
Michael Palin (*Vincent*)  
Ralph Richardson (*Supreme Being*)  
Peter Vaughan (*Winston, the ogre*)  
David Warner (*Evil Genius*)  
David Rappaport (*Randall*)  
Kenny Baker (*Fidgit*)  
Malcolm Dixon (*Strutter*)  
Mike Edmonds (*Og*)  
Jack Purvis (*Wally*)  
Tiny Ross (*Vermin*)  
Craig Warnock (*Kevin*)  
David Daker (*Trevor, Kevin's father*)  
Sheila Fearn (*Diane, Kevin's mother*)  
Jim Broadbent (*compère*)  
John Young (*Reginald*)  
Myrtle Devenish (*Beryl*)  
Brian Bowes (*stunt knight/hussar*)  
Leon Lissek (*1st refugee*)  
Terence Bayler (*Lucien*)  
Preston Lockwood (*Neguy*)  
Charles McKeown (*theatre manager*)  
David Leland (*puppeteer*)  
John Hughman (*The Great Rumbozo*)  
Derrick O'Connor (*robber leader*)  
Neil McCarthy (*Marion, 3rd robber*)  
Declan Mulholland (*2nd robber*)  
Peter Jonfield (*arm wrestler*)  
Derek Deadman (*Robert*)  
Jerold Wells (*Benson*)  
Roger Frost (*Cartwright*)  
Martin Carroll (*Baxi Brazilia III*)  
Marcus Powell (*Horseflesh*)  
Winston Dennis (*bull-headed warrior*)  
Del Baker (*Greek fighting warrior*)  
Juliette James (*Greek Queen Clytemnestra*)  
Ian Muir (*giant*)  
Mark Holmes (*troll father*)  
Andrew MacLachlan (*fireman*)  
Chris Grant (*voice of TV announcer*)  
Tony Jay (*voice of Supreme Being*)  
Edwin Finn (*Supreme Being's face*)  
James Acheson (*man lifting up the horn*) \*  
Terry Gilliam (*voice of fireman*) \*  
Ray Cooper (*hands of God at end*) \*

UK 1981©

116 mins

Digital

\* Uncredited

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