



## The Shape of Water

Directed by: Guillermo del Toro  
©: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation,  
TSG Entertainment Finance LLC  
A Double Dare production  
Presented by: Fox Searchlight Pictures,  
TSG Entertainment  
Production Services: Bob Industries Inc.  
Produced by: Guillermo del Toro, J. Miles Dale  
Associate Producers: Chuck Ryant,  
Daniel Kraus, John O'Grady, Knowles. T.K.  
Unit Production Manager: J. Miles Dale  
Production Manager: Dennis Chapman  
Production Co-ordinator: Marie-Claude Harnois  
Production Accountant: Wendy Gaboury  
Location Manager: Vince Nyuli  
Post-production Supervisor: Douglas Wilkinson  
1st Assistant Director: Pierre Henry  
2nd Assistant Director: Tyler Delben  
3rd Assistant Directors: Lize Van Der Bijl,  
Nicole Dipietro  
Script Supervisor: Dug Rotstein  
Casting by: Robin D. Cook  
Extras Casting: Zameret Kleinman  
Screenplay by: Guillermo del Toro, Vanessa Taylor  
Story by: Guillermo del Toro  
Director of Photography: Dan Laustsen  
2nd Unit Director of Photography: J.P. Locherer  
A Camera Operator: Gilles Corbeil  
B Camera Operator: J.P. Locherer  
Digital Imaging Technician: Gautam Pinto  
Still Photographer: Kerry Hayes  
Visual Effects Supervisor: Dennis Berardi  
Visual Effects by: Mr. X  
Special Effects Co-ordinator: Warren Appleby  
Film Editor: Sidney Wolinsky  
Associate Editor: Cam McLauchlin  
2nd Assistant Editor: Mary Juric  
Production Designer: Paul Denham Austerberry  
Art Director: Nigel Churcher  
Set Decorators: Shane Vieau, Shane Melvin  
Concept Artists: Guy David, Vincent Proce  
Property Master: Vic Rigler  
Costume Designer: Luis Morejon Sequeira  
Costume Supervisor: Suzanne Aplin  
Head Make-up: Jordan Samuel  
Key Make-up: Patricia Keighran  
Creature Suit and Various Make-up Effects Created  
by: Legacy Effects  
Head Hair: Paula Fleet  
Key Hair: Rossana Vendramini  
Main Titles: Cam McLauchlin  
Digital Intermediate Colourist: Chris Wallace  
Music by: Alexandre Desplat  
Score Performed by:  
The London Symphony Orchestra  
Score Conducted by: Alexandre Desplat  
Dance Choreographer: Roberto Campanella  
Production Sound Mixer: Glen Gauthier  
Boom Operator: Steve Switzer  
Re-recording Mixers: Christian Cooke, Brad Zoern  
Supervising Sound Editor: Nathan Robitaille  
Stunt Co-ordinator: Steve Lucescu  
Unit Publicist: Lisa Shamata  
Digital Intermediate Facility: DeLuxe Toronto  
Filmed at: Cinespace Studios  
Cast:  
Sally Hawkins (Elisa Esposito)  
Michael Shannon (Richard Strickland)  
Richard Jenkins (Giles)  
Michael Stuhlbarg (Dr Robert Hoffstetler)  
Octavia Spencer (Zelda Fuller)  
Doug Jones (amphibian man)

Guillermo del Toro

# The Shape of Water

The screening on Saturday 9 May will be introduced by Guillermo del Toro

**SPOILER WARNING** The following notes give away some of the plot.

The Hollywood rumour mill has it that Universal Pictures considered hiring Guillermo del Toro to oversee its 'Dark Universe' – the project of exploiting the studio's monstermovie IP as a Marvel-style shared universe, which now seems to be on hold after the successive false starts of *The Wolfman* (2010), *Dracula Untold* (2014) and *The Mummy* (2017).

That deal didn't come together, but del Toro – free of the oversight that might have turned that dream gig into a nightmare – has now made what amounts to a reboot of Universal's last great addition to the pantheon of famous monsters, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. In *The Shape of Water*, the amphibian humanoid played sinuously by Doug Jones (who was the similarly aquatic if more articulate Abe Sapien in del Toro's *Hellboy* movies) has been hauled in chains from 'the mud of the Amazon', just like the Gill Man in Jack Arnold's 1954 film. *The Shape of Water* also riffs on Arnold's lesser-known follow-up, *Revenge of the Creature* (1955), as well as Jack Sherwood's unusually plotted *The Creature Walks among Us* (1956), in which the savage monster becomes more sympathetic when abused by inhuman scientists following its capture. Del Toro even carries over a confusion, originating in *Revenge of the Creature*, as to whether the Gill Man is a freshwater fish or a marine animal.

With a monster whose name and face are familiar to focus groups, *Creature from the Black Lagoon* has been in remake development hell for decades. Whatever Universal might want or expect from its *Creature*, it is highly unlikely it would have greenlit the version that del Toro – working for Fox Searchlight – goes for here. Evoking Stephen Frears's underrated 1996 film of Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly*, which looked at the story of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde from the viewpoint of Dr Jekyll's maid, this tells the tale of the fish man, who might be a god or a monster, from the viewpoint of Elisa, a cleaning lady at the top-secret institute where he is being studied. (He is definitely not an 'it', we are assured in a sign language set piece that clears up longstanding questions about the *Creature's* smooth crotch.) It's typical of del Toro's witty casting that he signed up Sally Hawkins, still best known for playing a woman incapable of shutting up in Mike Leigh's *Happy-Go-Lucky* (2008), as the wistful mute Elisa. Experienced with monsters in recent *Godzilla* films and adorable non-human refugees in the *Paddington* movies, Hawkins mimes impressively, evoking Jane Wyman's Oscar lock-in performance as a mute abuse victim in *Johnny Belinda* (1948). With neck scars (obviously incipient gills) to suggest that Elisa's orphan character is a stranded mermaid, the film bluntly depicts an association between sex and water (she masturbates every morning in her bath) that resonates throughout the strange romance. The film could have been pitched as a mash-up called 'Johnny Belinda Meets the Creature'.

As in *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006), del Toro's real monster is a glowering human – an introductory quote setting up the opposition between creature and baddie is a rephrasing of Rod Serling's narration for Brian De Palma's *Phantom of the Paradise* (1974) – and Michael Shannon's sinister security agent Strickland is a seething enemy to all humane values. The fascist of *Pan's Labyrinth* suffered a wince-inducing mouth injury, paid back here when Strickland drags a wounded man across the floor by hooking a finger through a bullet hole in his cheek. This time, the villain's corruption is epitomised by the bitten-off-and reattached-but-rotting fingers he finally wrenches off and throws away. Strickland is a del Toro type, established as far back as Ron Perlman's Yankee exploiter in *Cronos* (1993), but Richard Denning and Jeff Morrow played similar characters in the

David Hewlett (*Fleming*)  
Nick Searcy (*General Hoyt*)  
Stewart Arnett (*Bernard*)  
Nigel Bennett (*Mihalkov*)  
Lauren Lee Smith (*Elaine Strickland*)  
Martin Roach (*Brewster Fuller*)  
Allegra Fulton (*Yolanda*)  
John Kapelos (*Mr Arzoumanian*)  
Morgan Kelly (*pie guy*)  
Marvin Kaye (*burly Russian*)  
Dru Viergever (*military policeman*)  
Wendy Lyon (*Sally, secretary*)  
Cody Ray Thompson (*guard*)  
Diego Fuentes (*worker*)  
Madison Ferguson (*Timmy Strickland*)  
Jayden Greig (*Timmy Strickland*)  
Karen Glave (*African American wife*)  
Danny Waugh (*African American husband*)  
Dan Lett (*Cadillac salesman*)  
Deney Forrest (*Lou*)  
Brandon McKnight (*Duane*)  
Clyde Whitham (*wet cinema patron*)  
Jonelle Gunderson (*bus passenger 1*)  
Cameron Laurie (*bus passenger 2*)  
Evgeny Akimov, Sergei Nikonov, Vanessa Oude-Reimerink, Alexey Pankratov (*Russian band*)  
Guillermo del Toro, Nathan Robitaille  
(*creature vocals*)  
USA 2017  
124 mins  
Digital

#### With thanks to

Cai Mason, Lisa Taback, Imogen Munsey and the Netflix team, Gary Ungar

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original Creature movies. Associated with the razor-finned curves of his classic car – a design as sinuous and lethal as the Creature itself – Strickland is so purely dark-hearted that he confirms *The Shape of Water* as a romantic fable.

A sign that the Creature had achieved pop-culture status was a key moment in *The Seven Year Itch* (1955) when Marilyn Monroe sympathised with the monster's yearning for swimsuited heroine Julia Adams. Here, del Toro approaches his monster through unexpected genres. Elisa lives above a movie house that screens biblical epics; her gay neighbour shares a stereotypical interest in Hollywood musicals, prompting a black-and-white fantasy in which she finds her voice. Singing 'You'll Never Know' for her shimmering partner (Jones was originally a dancer), she channels Alice Faye in *Hello Frisco, Hello* (1943) and also references *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (1974), where the desires of Ellen Burstyn's Alice are signified by exactly the same song and performance.

This is a film made by a boy who loves monsters, who has grown up to understand what they might represent to an adult woman, other outsiders (a gay man, a communist sleeper, a black woman) and an unforgiving society. When this creature violates a key movie taboo – in romcoms, nothing bad is ever going to happen to a gay man's cat – the grieving Giles (Richard Jenkins) understands that he can't blame 'a wild animal', and del Toro stresses as he always has done that the magical must also be frightening, and that love and horror are transcendent and entwined in the DNA spiral of cinema.

Kim Newman, *Sight and Sound*, March 2018

#### Guillermo del Toro on 'The Shape of Water'

*The Shape of Water captures some of the expressive magic that we expect from classic Hollywood cinema and yet it also feels like a very contemporary piece of work. Were you reaching for that classic sense of transcendence, and, if so, how did you go about it?*

If you love cinema and you truly want to make cinema, your fundamental duty is to know the history of the medium. Because if you are only interested in the films made in the last 20 years there is a huge gap in your knowledge. You have to be interested so you can dominate the language. The image is adjective and verb. The verb is the action and what happens. The adjective is how you make use of your lens, your production design, your wardrobe, your acting, and the most delicate thing – I don't want to tell you when I learnt this – is the rhythm, the flow of the film. Either you have it or you don't, or you train yourself.

If you tell me, 'You make fantastic cinema,' I'll say that I don't know *what* I do, but *this* is what I do. It has to come from your experience in the same way that the love you feel for a genre is what slowly defines you. What was very difficult about this film was that any decision made on wardrobe aesthetics or on production that works for the musical also has to work tonally for the melodrama, the comedy and the thriller. The tone of the actors, which here has to be a little higher than real life but emotionally realistic, has to work through them all too. The camera language, which is very mobile like that in a musical, has to be graduated in order to do the robbery, so that the film does not feel like a series of little squares linked to each other but like a flow. What I also recommend to young filmmakers is that you have a look at who you are and bet on getting close to what you're most scared of telling about yourself, that you speak about things that hurt and embarrass you because that is how you find your voice.

Guillermo del Toro interviewed by Nick James, *Sight and Sound*, March 2018