

The Shape of Water

2017 | 123mins

Director: Guillermo Del Toro

Starring: Sally Hawkins, Michael Shannon, Octavia Spencer

The Shape of Water follows Elisa (Sally Hawkins), a mute cleaner who works in a top-secret government research facility in early 1960s Baltimore. After discovering a mysterious amphibious creature (Doug Jones) being held captive in the facility, Elisa begins to visit him in secret, and they slowly fall in love. This fantasy romance won four Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Director, and was nominated for 13 Oscars in total.

Director Guillermo del Toro began pitching the plot for the film around 2011, but studios were perplexed by the idea and reluctant to fund it. As a result, he began to fund the development of the film himself, focusing mainly on designing the creature and overall look of the movie. He then took the project to Fox Searchlight, who offered him a budget less than half of what he had estimated, but he resolved to make the \$60m movie for \$19.5m.

Del Toro chose to set the film in the 1960s, due to its parallels with the modern day. He told Screen Daily that 'Politically, the film is now. It's identical - the Cold War, the casual racism, the casual sexism, everything is the same (...) Everything is golden if you're a WASP [white Anglo-Saxon protestant], but if you're a minority you have it very difficult'.

The Shape of Water focuses on marginalised characters, including Elisa and her janitor colleague Zelda (Octavia Spencer) and Elisa's neighbour Giles (Richard Hawkins) who has been forced into the closet due to the homophobia of the era.

Del Toro wrote the script with Sally Hawkins in mind and approached long-term collaborator Doug Jones to portray the creature. Jones has appeared in almost all of del Toro's films, including *Hellboy* (2004) and *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006).

The film has been acclaimed by critics, premiering at the 74th Venice Film Festival, it was awarded the Golden Lion, before screening at the Toronto and London film festivals. In addition to winning four Academy Awards, it won three BAFTAs and two Golden Globes.

'Del Toro has conjured a boundary-crossing hybrid that is as adventurously personal as it is universal, a swooning romantic melodrama that reshapes the mythical themes of Beauty and the Beast with deliciously bestial bite'

-The Observer



Excellent

Fair

Poor

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

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Did You Know?

- Del Toro wrote lengthy backstories for each of the major characters, some of them reportedly over 40 pages long. He offered them to the actors, saying they could choose whether to utilise or ignore them. Richard Jenkins ignored the backstory, while Michael Stuhlbarg heavily referred to his.
- Del Toro initially wanted the film to be filmed in black and white, but the production was offered more funding to film in colour.

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