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WELCOME BACK



CONTINUING THE CELEBRATION

When *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* first arrived in theaters in 1993, audiences were unsure what to make of it. Was it a Halloween movie or a Christmas movie? Was it for kids or adults? Was a musical or a horror film? The film didn't look or sound like recent Walt Disney Studios animated features, such as *The Little Mermaid* (1989). It was being released via Touchstone Pictures, a distributor that typically unleashed more mature fare. It was also an outlier alongside other contemporary popular movies: Beloved family flicks in 1993 included more conventional stories like *The Sandlot* and *The Secret Garden*. This, the story of a misfit skeleton seeking his place in a fantastical world, was less easily defined, making it more challenging to sell to audiences.

“They thought the movie was very dark and would scare little kids,” producer Denise Di Novi recalls about Disney’s decision to release the film as part of Touchstone Pictures. “It is darker than the average animated movie. It’s hard to believe now, but when we made *Batman Returns*, people thought, ‘Oh my, it’s so dark and disturbing.’ If you watch it now it’s so tame compared to the Batman movies that came after. It shows you how times have changed. But Disney thought *Nightmare* was too scary for little kids.”

Still, *Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas* earned a modest \$51 million at the box office and garnered positive reviews from critics. Roger Ebert praised the film’s innovation and uniqueness, writing, “One of the many pleasures of *Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas* is that there is not a single recognizable landscape within it. Everything looks strange and haunting. Even Santa Claus would be difficult to recognize without his red-and-white uniform.” Peter Travers added in *Rolling Stone* that the film “has the earmarks of an enduring classic. Of all the new Halloween films, only this one has the power to truly haunt our dreams.”

The feature premiered at the New York Film Festival on October 9, 1993, and then had its Hollywood premiere on October 14, 1993, at the El Capitan Theatre in Los Angeles, which was attended by several members of the cast and crew. There was also a star-studded event on Halloween for the release of the picture book *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, attended by Burton, Catherine O’Hara, and even Phil Collins, who brought along a young Lily Collins, dressed as a princess. Despite some modest promotion, including bus stop ads and a Burger King campaign, the response to the film was relatively tepid.

“It was highly regarded for its visual audacity and for the lively story,” Chris Sarandon says. “But I don’t recall there being this big groundswell, a *Star Wars* kind of response to a movie. It was muted. It didn’t blow up. But it’s certainly blown up over time.”

For the filmmakers, there was a sense of disappointment as the movie came and went. The crew had spent two years meticulously crafting the world of Halloweentown and its inhabitants, and once it disappeared from theaters there was a sense that Jack Skellington and pals had vanished from the cultural zeitgeist. While the film had built a small fan base and

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some merchandise, including a Bone Daddy tee-shirt, could be found in stores, *Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas* initially appeared to have been a fleeting creation.

“It came and went pretty quickly and didn’t do very well,” Elfman reflected around the film’s 25th anniversary. “Nobody understood what it was or how to market it. I put so much into this



project, including so much of my own personality, that it really hurt. At the time I was really depressed after it came out. I put so much into it and it was gone.”

Selick and Burton understood the initial reluctance of audiences to fill the theaters. *Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas* was an unusual movie, about unusual characters singing unusual songs. But both filmmakers were certain the artistry and the vision were there. Despite the public’s reaction, *Nightmare* had a soul that very few movies have, and there was something about it that felt more important than simple box office numbers.

“It made its money and then quietly seemed to go away,” Selick recalls. “And so it was bittersweet. We absolutely never expected it to be a huge blockbuster, like the other Disney films that came before and after. None of the films I’ve worked on have been blockbusters, but when they’re good, they last. And then they start to grow.”

“I never forgot about it because it’s one of those projects that was deep inside me,” Burton adds. “Even if it was a complete bomb I wouldn’t have forgotten about it.”

A year after the film’s release in theaters, on September 30, 1994, Touchstone Home Video released *Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas* on VHS. The DVD followed on December 2, 1997. It was during those early years that the film’s fan base began to slowly flourish. The movie was shared by families and friends in their living rooms, and many viewers adopted it as an annual tradition to watch every Halloween or every Christmas—or both. As more and more people discovered it, more and more people began watching it each year. “It got a cult following right away because Tim has a very loyal following,” Di Novi notes. “His following loved it. But it took a few years until it became a perennial Halloween movie.”



A GROWING AUDIENCE

There were a lot of factors that played into the gradual growth of the film's fan base, but for many the central reason is the film's original artistic vision. "There was a really simple thing: It is just really good," film historian Ian Nathan explains. "It's really charming and visually wonderful, so it just carries you along. And great films find their audience. That started to happen with *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. People bought it on DVD and they started to watch it repeatedly."

Burton himself isn't completely sure what's been behind the ever-expanding phenomenon of the film. Like the making of the movie, attempting to understand its success has been like trying to capture lightning in a bottle. It's a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence that has ultimately been generated by the fans themselves.



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"I think it just had enough of a core thing and they re-released it and it gained traction," Burton says. "There are certain things that historically have happened that way and it's hard to predict why, like *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. As a filmmaker, a thing to achieve is a perennial, holiday film, and that's what this has become."

In 2000, Touchstone Home Video re-released *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* as a special edition DVD with bonus features, including audio commentary from Selick, a making-of feature, and deleted scenes. By the mid-2000s, Walt Disney Pictures, recognizing the immense fan base and the opportunities to grow the property, brought the film back under their official umbrella. The studio converted *Nightmare* to Disney Digital 3D and, on October 20, 2006, re-released the film in theaters, with special presentations at the Venice Film Festival and the London Film Festival. For Burton, the 3D re-release emphasized the hallmark magic of stop-motion film.

"I love things in 3D," he explains. "It took me back to when you're on the set looking at these puppets and the tactile nature of the sets. The 3D actually brought you more into what that world was like. In this particular case, I felt like it enhanced what the artists did—you could feel the texture of the puppets and I thought it was great. I loved it. You can't say that about everything,

but for this it brought you closer to being on a set and feeling these characters. I was very happy with the outcome of that."

That stop-motion format is also part of the enduring legacy of the movie. There's a tangible, handmade quality to the film, almost as though the viewer could reach out and touch the characters and their world. It allows the story to feel even more immersive and immediate, which helps it to stand out amid the computer-generated (CGI) animation that has taken over Hollywood since its release.

"There is something to the idea that this thing actually exists," Selick says. "Its flaws are in the animation and the imperfections are like a clue that it's real. You'd never have those with CG. You inherently know this exists and it was touched by humans."

Alongside its handmade artistry, the film showcases Burton's particular style. It's unusual for an animated work in Hollywood to reflect an individual vision, rather than that of a studio itself. The convergence of the filmmaker's singular style with the careful skill of Selick and the crew's stop-motion prowess resulted in something completely stand-alone.

"Certainly people respond to hand-drawn films and digitally-created films with a lot of passion," associate producer Phil Lofaro notes. "But this is a film that is uniquely Tim Burton. And you can't look at that film and not see his hand. None of the other animated films are really like that. Even with the hand-drawn stuff from Disney nothing looks like one person's vision the way that *Nightmare* does."

"I don't want to be hyperbolic, but I think it's a masterpiece," Di Novi adds. "Who else besides Tim would interweave Halloween and Christmas like that? At the core, the emotionality of the character being so different and yearning to be accepted—which is in all of Tim's work—is always going to be meaningful to people. I think it's one of the greatest animated movies in history."



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Novels and Books

For many years, *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* was a stand-alone story. While the characters lived on in fan fiction and fan art, as well as games and merchandise, only recently has the tale of Jack Skellington and his friends continued in other forms. While Burton has been approached to make a sequel to *Nightmare*, the filmmaker has always rejected the idea—especially in a form other than traditional stop-motion. Burton is, however, open to expanding the world of Halloweentown through games or novels when it makes sense, particularly if it allows a character or aspect of the story to be illuminated from a fresh perspective.

"I resisted doing sequels because it is what it is," Burton explains. "I want the film to exist rather than go, 'Let's have Jack go to Thanksgiving world or torment the Easter Bunny more or whatever.' There's a purity to it and it goes back to the stop-motion, but the books and toys look at it in a different way. I didn't want to do a film like that because I felt it would take away from the purity of what the original is."

In 2020, Disney Manga released *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas: Zero's Journey*, written by D.J. Milky and illustrated by Kei Ishiyama, David Hutchison, Dan Conner, and Kiyoshi Arai. In the comic book, Zero goes missing from Halloweentown and is forced to find his way home via Christmastown, offering a deeper look at Jack's trusty companion. Many of the film's characters, including the Mayor, Sally, and Lock, Shock, and Barrel, returned for the comic. Another manga series, *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas: Mirror Moon*, ran for five issues from 2021 until 2022. Written by Mallory Reaves with artwork by Gabriella Chianello and Nataliya Torretta, the series centered on Sally as she took over Halloween planning for Jack. This one also featured familiar characters from the film, such as the beloved vampire brothers.

The most significant expansion of *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* arrived in 2022 with *Long Live the Pumpkin Queen*, a young adult novel by writer Shea Ernshaw. The book follows the events of *Nightmare*, shifting the perspective to Sally, who has

recently married Jack, and detailing her adventures in the newly discovered Dream Town.

"The whole story came to me all at once," Ernshaw says. "I had this notion of Sally and Jack, and wanting to see what happens with their relationship. In the movie, we get to see Jack and the Nightmare that he creates on Christmas Eve. I thought, 'Well, the juxtaposition of Nightmares is dreams.' I knew it needed to be a story about dreams, so naturally, the Sandman was going to be the villain. I also wanted to explore more of Sally's background and her origin."

Although Sally is an essential character in the film, viewers learn more about Jack than they do about the practical and persistent rag doll, who was originally crafted by screenwriter Caroline Thompson. In the novel, Sally's history and her true parents are revealed, as well as her own hopes and dreams for the future. For Ernshaw, *Long Live the Pumpkin Queen* is a way for Sally to finally be the protagonist after all these years.

"I kept coming back to who Sally was and the stories I think she would have wanted to tell," Ernshaw says. "I really tried to be true to her. That was a question I asked myself as I was writing: Is this really Sally? Is this what Sally would want? She's waited a really long time to have the story told, so I wanted to do it justice and give her the story she deserved."



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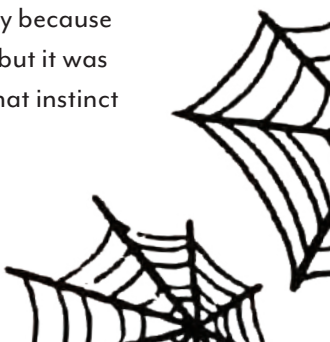
The constant re-releases, which have continued over the years in various forms, including a 4D version that incorporated additional elements like fog and snow into the viewing experience, have played into the growth of *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*. But the movie's popularity is also connected to that message of learning to belong. Although *Nightmare* was of its time when it was made, the story and its themes transcend a specific era or trend. Burton has always incorporated universal ideas into his films, but the director's fascination with an outcast finding acceptance felt especially poignant in a family-friendly, holiday film. Many film historians and critics have pointed to that universality as one of the reasons *Nightmare* has continued to captivate audiences for generations. Viewers young and old, from all backgrounds and walks of life, can connect with Jack's search for meaning and eventual understanding that everything he's ever wanted has been in front of him all along.

"The continuing popularity of this movie probably has something to do with its message," author Edwin Page wrote in *Gothic Fantasy: The Films of Tim Burton*. "It is about staying true to yourself, despite failures, despite misunderstanding. Through Jack's failure to bring seasonal goodwill the film also tells us that not

everything in life will work out the way we want it to. This is an important message, especially for children who are often force fed 'happily ever after' endings that give them a false perspective on life. *The Nightmare Before Christmas* presents something more real, though woven into a fantastical narrative."

Jack's story resonated with the filmmakers and the crew as much it resonates with fans. The emotional core of the film, along with the impressive artistry and tactile nature of the stop-motion craft, have allowed the movie to transcend generations. Against all odds, *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* has become the exact thing that inspired it in the first place—a perennial holiday favorite.

"I would always get very excited as a child to watch those holiday films that created the sense of an event to me," Burton says. "It was an event that you look forward to on television. I wanted to create something that gave me the kinds of feelings I had when I was growing up watching those classics. I was always very proud of *Nightmare* and loved it, but at the time when it came out it wasn't what it's turned into. It's been a journey to get there. It makes me happy because it took a long time for that to happen, but it was always something that I felt satisfied that instinct for me."



Continuing the Stop-Motion Tradition

Although stop-motion animation existed long before *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*, the filmmakers used innovative techniques that helped pave the way for films to come. Many of the crew went on to work on future stop-motion animated features and Burton himself has made several more, including a full-length adaptation of his 1984 live-action short *Frankenweenie*. *Nightmare's* legacy goes far beyond its world and characters, and, in fact, the film helped to open audiences' minds to the visual possibilities of cinema and storytelling.

"It felt special at the time and unique at the time because of the stop-motion," Burton reflects. "There have been more than usual stop-motion features since—*Corpse Bride*, *Frankenweenie*. I've always wanted to keep a hand in it because it's a medium that I love."

James and the Giant Peach (1996)

Following *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*, director Henry Selick went on to helm *James and the Giant Peach*, a feature adaptation of Roald Dahl's 1961 children's novel. The film, a combination of stop-motion animation and live action, was produced by Burton and Denise Di Novi. The stop-motion scenes were filmed in Skellington studio, with many of the same crew members as *Nightmare*, and Jack himself even popped up in the movie in a cameo as one of the pirates. Joe Ranft, who worked on the storyboards for *Nightmare*, suggested the idea for the movie, although it never achieved the kind of legacy *Nightmare* now has. "We had an incredible crew and the animation is beautiful," Selick says of the film. "The look is beautiful."

Tim Burton's Corpse Bride (2005)

Burton joined forces with Mike Johnson to direct *Tim Burton's Corpse Bride*, a stop-motion fantasy set in Victorian England. Like *Nightmare*, *Corpse Bride* centered on a misfit protagonist, Victor Van Dort, who falls in love with an unlikely heroine. Many of *Nightmare's* crew returned, including cinematographer Pete Kozachik, for the production, which took place in London. Elfman also teamed up with Burton again to write the score, as well as four musical numbers performed by the voice cast. The filmmaker was able to draw a direct link to his female lead from *Nightmare* while creating *Corpse Bride*, which was based on an old fable he



was introduced to, again, by Ranft. "One of the things I enjoyed in *Nightmare* was the emotional quality that the Sally character had: there was something there that I liked," Burton said. "It's nice to have emotion in animation. And also I was thinking about expanding my female characters. So thinking about *Corpse Bride* [I] was trying to do something with an emotional quality to it."

Coraline (2009)

Coraline, directed by Selick and based on Neil Gaiman's novella of the same name, marked the first feature-length film by the emerging animation studio Laika. In a similar vein to *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*, the movie centered on a protagonist who discovers a secret door into another world. Upon its release, *Coraline* became the third highest-grossing stop-motion film of all time and was nominated for the Oscar for Best Animated Feature. "We shot it in 3D and actually beat the film *Avatar* for Best 3D Film of the year by the International 3D Society," Selick remembers. "It was really a great experience. Everything we did was built on what we already learned on the previous films."

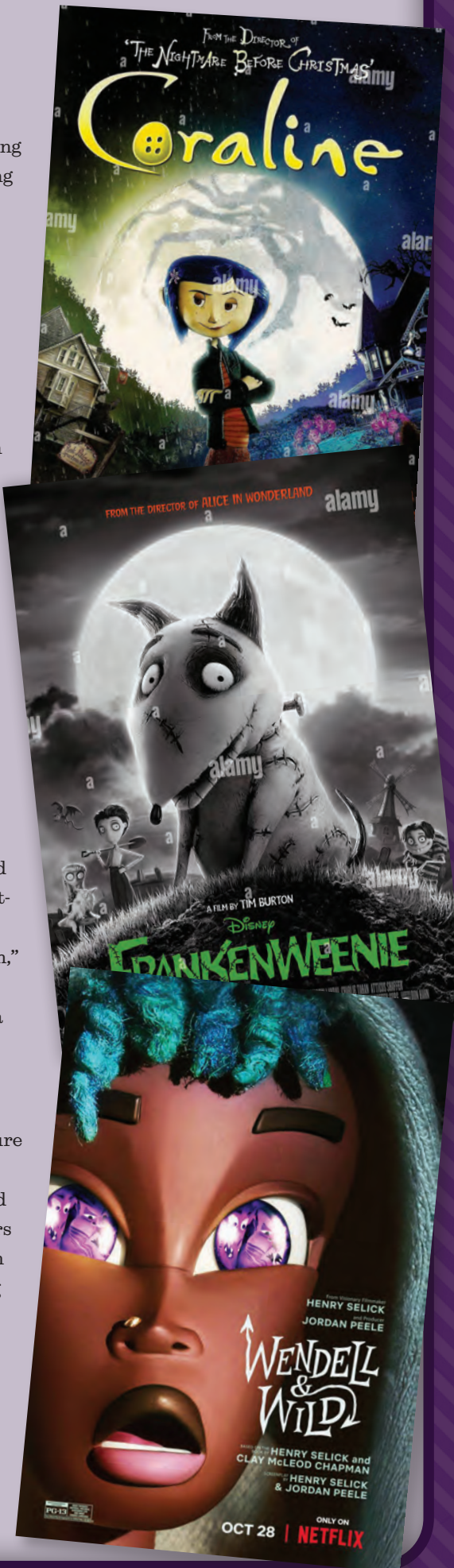
Frankenweenie (2012)

One of Burton's earliest films was the live-action short *Frankenweenie*, an homage to *Frankenstein*. In 2012, Burton revisited the story, remaking it as a 3D stop-motion animated feature for Walt Disney Pictures. The comedy-horror movie, with music by Elfman, became the first stop-motion film to be released in IMAX 3D, and was nominated for an Oscar, a Golden Globe, and a BAFTA award. The tale of a reanimated family dog has a dark-yet-emotional tone similar to *Nightmare*, as well as the same tangible quality. "It's great that you can pick up the puppets and touch them," Burton said of the film. "It's like an old movie, doing your water reflections with mirrors, doing one frame at a time. I liked the idea of going back to that, it does reenergize the spirit."

Wendell & Wild (2022)

Selick's most recent foray into stop-motion animation, Netflix feature *Wendell & Wild*, arrived in 2022. Written with Jordan Peele, the film was based on an unpublished book by Selick and Clay McLeod Chapman. Peele and Keegan-Michael Key voiced the lead characters in an original story following two demon brothers who escape from the underworld. A few of the animators from *Nightmare*, including Anthony Scott, worked on the film with Selick—yet another example of *Nightmare's* enduring legacy.

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A YEAR-ROUND HOLIDAY

The debate as to whether *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* is a Halloween movie or a Christmas movie rages on decades later. Many people embrace the film as an annual tradition around both holidays, but there's no denying its strong connection with Halloween. Growing up in Burbank, Burton was obsessed with both holidays, often decorating his Christmas tree with Halloween-inspired ornaments. To the filmmakers, there's a similar spirit that connects both events.

"Halloween was my favorite and it always seemed to be the festive season from Halloween to Christmas," Burton remembers. "So it's an extended holiday to me, so to speak, and in my house Christmas and Halloween got jumbled up. I kept Halloween going. I always enjoyed the light of Christmas, but Halloween was a bit darker, and that's where the juxtaposition of things in the film came from."

Prior to the release of *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas*, there were a few Halloween films beloved by moviegoing audiences. *Rocky Horror Picture Show* had come out in 1975 and transformed

into a cult classic, but it was largely for a mature audience. *Nightmare* offered something new for those who loved eerie things with a less terrifying feel, as did its contemporary *Hocus Pocus*, released the same year.

"I think *Nightmare* helped to restore some of Halloween's whimsical quality, especially in regards to its cinematic portrayals," explains author Lisa Morton. "Halloween is a festival that has been impacted by film before—John Carpenter's 1978 classic *Halloween* helped steer Halloween celebrations more towards adults—but *Nightmare* appealed to many fans of the holiday by emphasizing playfulness, joy, and creativity."

The popularity of the film as a holiday tradition was aided by the fact that there was nothing else like it for either Halloween or Christmas. "It's not a traditional Christmas film or holiday film," says



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Brian Volk-Weiss, director of *The Holiday Movies That Made Us*. “It can be a scary movie, depending on your age. But there are a lot of incredibly sophisticated, complicated characters and personalities. The plot itself is extremely simple, but the characters in the plot are so complicated.”

The intersection of Halloween and Christmas in Tim Burton’s *The Nightmare Before Christmas* is obvious. But since its release, the film has evolved into a classic viewing for Valentine’s Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, and more recent semi-holidays like Halfway to Halloween and Halfway to Christmas. These holidays fit in with the original story, too: Jack is the Pumpkin King of Halloweentown and involves himself in the holiday of Christmas, but numerous holiday doorways exist in the Hinterlands and the Easter Bunny has a small, but essential, role in the film. Although *Nightmare* may have initially cemented itself as a specific annual tradition, over the past decade it has also become a 365-day celebration.

This expansion has been aided by several factors, including extensive and constant merchandising and the film’s frequent presence at various fan conventions, including San Diego Comic Con, which takes place yearly in July. “Comic Con was a huge gateway for fans,” notes Elise Barkan, Director of Franchise Development and Activation at Disney Parks, Experiences and Products. “Once we saw the success at Comic Con, we showed up with *The Nightmare Before Christmas* in a whole host of ways.”

Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas has trickled into celebrations for Valentine’s Day thanks to Jack and Sally’s memorable love story. Hallmark sells *Nightmare*-themed cards for couples. Many fans host Thanksgiving dinners inspired by the world of the film, a fact that is less surprising than one might initially assume. Several writers and film critics, in fact, have argued that *Nightmare* is actually a Thanksgiving movie.

“Jack Skellington’s harrowing journey from Pumpkin King to disgraced Santa imposter



seriously lends itself to Thanksgiving’s themes of gratefulness and family,” Alison Foreman wrote for *Mashable* in 2021. “It’s a narrative genuinely suited to what this holiday is supposed to be about, even if it’s totally devoid of gourds and cranberry sauce... What makes me confident *The Nightmare Before Christmas* is a Thanksgiving movie are those themes of thankfulness. Ultimately, they’re what this animated classic is really about. It wasn’t the set dressing that helped Jack save Christmas. And all the jack-o-lanterns and boughs of holly in the world can’t overcome the soul-affirming experience of real gratitude.”

For many, it makes complete sense that *Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas* has found a year-round audience. “The film resonates with so many people, so they make it their own,” explains George McClements, Director of Concept Art and Story Development at Disney Parks, Experiences and Products. “The fact that we see the turkey door means that Jack can go to Thanksgiving Town. The fact that we see the four-leaf clover means he can go to St. Patrick’s Day Town. And obviously Jack is going to go. He’s not going to say ‘I’m done’ after he visits Christmastown. He’s not that character. So that’s why we celebrate all year.”

Perhaps the most meaningful aspect of a holiday like Thanksgiving or Christmas is the gathering of friends and family around a common table to enjoy a communal meal. Even for Halloween, with its tradition of trick-or-treating, food is a focal point—usually in the form of candy or sweets. Because these celebrations are so closely linked with cooking and dining, *Nightmare* often inspires the holiday meal itself. In fact, several cookbooks have been released for the fans of the film, encouraging home chefs to incorporate the aesthetic and themes of the movie into their holiday tables.

The Nightmare Before Dinner: Recipes to Die For: The Beetle House Cookbook, released in 2018, was compiled by Zach Neil, chef of Beetle House, a Halloween-inspired restaurant based in New York City and Los Angeles. The unauthorized cookbook includes recipes and cocktail ideas intended for fans of Tim Burton and Halloween, including dishes like Frog’s Breath and Nightshade Risotto. *The Nightmare Before Christmas: The Official Cookbook & Entertaining Guide*, released in 2021, features recipes and party-planning ideas for fans. It’s not for the faint of heart, though: Dishes include Dr. Finkelstein Bite-Sized “Brain” Puff Pies and Oogie Boogie Pasta Worms.

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IN THE PARKS

It was only a matter of time before Jack and Sally would visit the Disney Parks. On October 5, 2001, Haunted Mansion Holiday arrived at Disneyland. The annual overlay, which takes over the iconic attraction each fall from Halloween through January without impacting the original attraction's structure, was conceived in the late 1990s.

"It was very clear that this audience were huge fans of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, but perhaps there wasn't enough momentum for a stand-alone *Nightmare Before Christmas* attraction," explains Todd Martens, a Los Angeles-based journalist who has written extensively about Disneyland and the Disney Parks in general. "But there was enough momentum to redo *Haunted Mansion* for the holidays. At Disneyland this is something that happens with more regularity than at Walt Disney World, in part because Disneyland is a local's park. It was Disney recognizing that *The Nightmare Before Christmas* had become an important cult film and that its audience was gravitating toward Disneyland and the *Haunted Mansion*."

The concept also came about after the Imagineers asked themselves what sort of holiday celebration might occur in the beloved attraction. "We were walking by the *Haunted Mansion* one

day and we were like, 'Oh, what if Santa landed on that house? What might it be?'" explained Walt Disney Imagineering's Steve Davison. "And that's really how it all was born." He added, "Artistically it was a big challenge because you have two opposing forces: You have the Haunted Mansion, which has a very classic design, and then you have the *Nightmare* style."

The intention wasn't necessarily to recreate the film as a Disney Parks attraction. Instead, the Imagineers wanted to draw on beloved elements of the movie, including the Christmas countdown clock, Jack's sleigh, the vampire teddy bear, and Zero, and bring them into the *Haunted Mansion* in an organic way. The film inspired much of the design, which feels like a logical extension of Halloweentown. "The colors were all predetermined for us, because when you look at the film it's all orange, purple, black, red," noted illustrator Tim Wollweber, who created many of the visual elements in the overlay. "It was just putting that all together to make these wacky patterns and pointy skulls."

A focal point of the attraction's overlay is the spiral hill, which is covered in snow and dozens of glowing pumpkin heads. The mountain, which

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dangles with icicles, towers over guests inside the attraction. It's another example of how the Imagineers took the film and made it their own. "The concept for the snow mountain, of course, came from the film," explained Brian Sandahl, former Art Director of *Haunted Mansion Holiday*, adding, "We're not trying to recreate the movie. We're inspired by the movie, so we're taking that big piece that is very familiar to people that know the film inside and out and we stuck that in the graveyard."

Many of the film's actors, notably Chris Sarandon, Ken Page, and Catherine O'Hara, reprised their character voices for the attraction. During the first year, the experience was soundtracked with a new score from composer Gordon Goodwin, but by 2002, a new soundtrack by John Debney, based on Danny Elfman's film score, could be heard throughout the rooms. The *Haunted Mansion Holiday* was such a success that a version of the attraction premiered in Tokyo Disneyland as the *Haunted Mansion Holiday Nightmare*. The overlay was similar to that in California, with many of the same elements, including the custom gingerbread house in the Grand Hall that changes each year. Both parks offer special merchandise sold in honor of the attraction and many fans visit the immersive experience more than once over the holiday season.

As the fan base of the film has grown, so has its popularity in the parks—and vice versa.

"Millions of people a year go to Disneyland," Martens says. "If one of the signature attractions in the park has a makeover based on this Tim Burton film anybody who has not seen that film goes home and watches it. People love the *Haunted Mansion*. They want to know the story of that attraction inside and out. They want to know anything that happens to it. Putting *The Nightmare Before Christmas* in that attraction puts *The Nightmare Before Christmas* into one of the most popular rides in the resort. And over the years, it has helped to turn *The Nightmare Before Christmas* into a Disney classic that today would be regarded as important to the Disney collection of films as any of the other animated films that are represented throughout the park."

Elsewhere in the parks, guests can meet Jack and Sally throughout the year. But it's really around Halloween when *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* takes over the various theme parks. The Oogie Boogie Bash, an annual Halloween party held at Disney California Adventure Park at Disneyland, debuted in 2019 as a replacement for Mickey's Halloween Party. The nighttime event, which runs on select evenings

We Know Jack Podcast

Over the years, many of the crew members who worked on *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* have stayed in touch. The film remains a powerful touchpoint in their lives and careers all these years later. They've held reunions and crew parties, including for the 25th anniversary of the film, and some have continued to collaborate on other projects. But one of the most important documents of their continuing adoration for the movie is "We Know Jack," a podcast created in 2019 by production coordinator Kat Alioshin and set builder Todd Lookinland. Each episode focuses on one member of the *Nightmare* crew, reflecting back on what it was like to work in Skellington studio for two years.

"I can say, without hesitation, that I've never worked on a project before or since that was more exciting, more fun, or with everybody pulling in the same direction more," Lookinland says. "Everybody wanted to be there. With the podcast, we were trying to answer the questions of 'Why was this so magical?"

How do you recreate it? How come it's so hard to recreate a situation like this? There's no real answer that we've found other than we were lucky. We were just super fortunate to have been involved in this thing that just turned out to be super fun, and super magical and super exciting."

"We Know Jack" features conversations with everyone from the film's editor Stan Webb to art director Deane Taylor to several of the animators, including Angie Glocka and Mike Belzer. The interviews are extremely detailed, with each participant sharing new behind-the-scenes stories and anecdotes about how the movie came together. It's a must-listen for any fan of the film.

"It's so fun to see people's reactions to hearing stories that they feel are very special and that they haven't heard before," Alioshin says. "And you wouldn't have heard them because they're coming from people's hearts. Someone we're interviewing will say 'I hadn't told anyone this before' and, to us, that is very cool."

Caption tk



in September and October after normal park hours, is hosted by the bug-filled villain himself. Oogie Boogie is joined by numerous other villains, including the Evil Queen from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* (1989). The event features a parade, themed games, and live performances by parks characters—villain and hero alike. Fans of all ages are encouraged to dress up in costume to trick-or-treat throughout the park.

Characters from *Nightmare* also appear at Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party at Walt Disney World in Florida, and Jack as Sandy Claws often pops up during annual events at Walt Disney World's *Haunted Mansion* and Disneyland Paris's *Phantom Manor*. Other popular events at the Disney Parks throughout the year include Halfway

to Halloween, held in the spring leading up to May 4. All year, however, guests can don a pair of *Nightmare*-themed mouse ears featuring Sally's colorful patchwork design or an eerie bat with black-and-white pin stripes—perfect for evoking the holiday spirit in any month.

"*The Nightmare Before Christmas* has become the backbone of Disney's Halloween events," says Martens. "I think each year you start to see greater proliferation. If you go to Disney California Adventure any time from late September through the end of Halloween, the first thing you see when you walk into that gate is Oogie Boogie. You hear his voice echoing throughout the park. You hear his laughter. There is a huge hunger for *The Nightmare Before Christmas* among Disney theme park fans that continues to grow."