

Podtalk: Director Benh Zeitlin Finds Neverland in ‘Wendy’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on March 4, 2020 - 5:36pm

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CHICAGO – The Peter Pan mythos is as well known as any legend, ever since J.M. Barrie invented the character in 1904. Through nearly a hundred versions in virtually all media, the theme remains the same ... what happens if we never grow up. Benh Zeitlin adds his spin in “Wendy,” the follow-up to his Oscar nominated “Beasts of the Southern Wild” (2012).



The Explorer: Devin France is the Title Character in ‘Wendy’
Photo credit: Searchlight Pictures

“Wendy” focuses on the title character, portrayed with wide-eyed wonder by Devin France. She is portrayed as the modern-day daughter of a single mother, flanked by her twin brothers Douglas and James (Gage and Gavin Naquin). The austere family lives by a train depot, and the three siblings are tempted by a mysterious child rail rider named Peter (Yashua Mack) to run away. They travel to a mysterious island, where the inhabitants never grow up. The negotiations of this situation and bizarre setting is the gist of the story, with co-writer/director Zeitlin using a similar cinematic style from his previous film to fuel his retelling of the iconic Peter Pan story.

Benh Zeitlin went from unknown to Oscar worthy in 2013, with the release of “Beasts of the Southern Wild,” which he wrote and directed. He also self produced the film on a shoestring, and it went on to collect the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival, on its way to four Oscar nominations including Best Picture. He immediately pitched “Wendy” as his second feature, and co-wrote the film with his sister Eliza.



Benh Zeitlin, Co-Writer and Director of 'Wendy'
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

In Part One of a Podtalk with Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com, Benh Zeitlin talks about the background of "Wendy," and the realities of trying to make the film his way versus an industry that is opposite to his process.

In Part Two, Zeitlin relates his wild adventure in location and use of sets, plus the surreal nature of the spotlight while "Beasts" was winning awards.

"Wendy" continues its nationwide release in Chicago on March 6th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Featuring Devin France, Yashua Mack, Gage Naquin, Gavin Naquin and Ahmad Cage. Written by Benh and Eliza Zeitlin. Directed by Benh Zeitlin. Rated "PG-13"



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