

REWIND & RECLAIM

TREASURE PLANET

The Dream That Disney Spent Seventeen Years Trying Not to
Make

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Introduction: The Last Gong Show

In 1985, Disney Animation held a meeting that would become one of the more consequential afternoons in the history of the studio. CEO Michael Eisner had inherited a creative operation in disarray and was attempting to identify which projects deserved investment. He invited his directors and story artists to pitch ideas, judging each one quickly, sometimes with a single word, sometimes with a gesture. The format was theatrical and efficient and, from the perspective of the people whose work was being assessed, not a little humiliating. The studio called it the Gong Show.

Ron Clements and John Musker came prepared. They had two ideas. The first was a science fiction adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, relocated to outer space, with sailing ships crossing nebulae on solar winds. The second was a musical adaptation of a Hans Christian Andersen story about a mermaid who wanted human legs.

Eisner passed on both. *The Little Mermaid* was too similar to *Splash*, the recent Ron Howard film. *Treasure Island in Space* was too similar to something Paramount was developing, a *Star Trek* sequel that had treasure in its early drafts. The two ideas were filed away.

Clements found a workaround for *The Little Mermaid*, getting it greenlit by sending a treatment separately to Jeffrey Katzenberg. It came out in 1989, launched the Disney Renaissance, and made the studio a dominant force in the culture for the next decade. *Treasure Planet* waited. When *The Little Mermaid* wrapped, Clements and Musker pitched it again. The studio was still uninterested. They directed *Aladdin* and *Hercules* and negotiated,

when Hercules was assigned to them, a contractual guarantee: after Hercules, they would finally make their space pirate film.

Production began in 1997. The film opened on November 27, 2002. From first pitch to theatrical release was seventeen years.

The film earned \$12 million in its opening weekend, placed fourth, and lost Disney approximately \$74 million when marketing costs were included. It was the biggest financial loss in Disney Animation's history at the time.

And then, over the years that followed, something happened. The audience that had not been in theaters in 2002 found the film on DVD and on cable and on streaming, and they found in it something that the institutional machinery of Disney had spent seventeen years resisting, something genuinely strange and genuinely beautiful that deserved more than it got.

This is the story of how that film was made, why it failed, and why it refuses to be forgotten.

Chapter 1: The Source

Robert Louis Stevenson published *Treasure Island* in book form in 1883, having serialized it in a children's magazine called *Young Folks* starting in 1881 under the pseudonym Captain George North. The story had grown from a game Stevenson was playing with his twelve-year-old stepson Lloyd Osbourne, drawing and naming an imaginary island, and the novel that emerged from that game became, within years of publication, one of the defining texts of the adventure genre in English.

Treasure Island is a father-son story arranged as a pirate narrative. Jim Hawkins is a boy without a useful male figure in his

life. Long John Silver is a man of immense practical intelligence and genuine moral complexity, a pirate who is also a mentor, who genuinely likes and respects Jim and who is also perfectly willing to sacrifice him if the treasure requires it. The novel's emotional intelligence lies in Stevenson's refusal to resolve that duality: Silver escapes at the end, unreformed and unchastened, and Jim is left with a complicated feeling that the genre would normally not allow. He admires the man who tried to ruin him. He misses him.

Clements and Musker's adaptation moved the story into space but kept the duality. Jim Hawkins becomes a teenage boy in a single-parent household, his father having abandoned the family when Jim was young, the absence shaping everything about his self-destructive recklessness and his hunger for something to believe in. John Silver becomes a cyborg, half-organic and half-mechanical, a man who is literally divided between his ruthless mercenary self and the paternal warmth he discovers he has for a boy who reminds him of what he was. The treasure map becomes a holographic sphere discovered on the dying Billy Bones. The island becomes a mechanical planet constructed by a legendary pirate at the center of a supernova cloud.

The 70/30 rule that Clements and Musker developed as the aesthetic principle of the production was the key to how this adaptation would work: 70 percent of the world would look like a traditional pirate story, keeping the rigging and the galleons and the tricorne hats and the wooden decks, and 30 percent would be technological, providing the spaceships and the alien planets and the zero-gravity sequences. The ratio was the adaptation's whole argument in numerical form: the source material would be honored rather than discarded, but it would be given room to breathe in a form that animation could do that live action could not.

Chapter 2: The Development

The seventeen-year journey from the 1985 Gong Show to the 2002 release is one of the more instructive case studies in the institutional resistance that large creative organizations can develop against their own best work.

Clements and Musker pitched *Treasure Planet* again after *The Little Mermaid*'s success. Jeffrey Katzenberg, then the chief of Walt Disney Studios, was not interested. He had concerns about the science fiction framing, about the audience for an animated *Treasure Island* in space, about the fit between the property and the Disney brand as he understood it. The two directors were given other assignments.

They pitched again after *Aladdin*. Still no. After *Hercules*, they turned their contract provision into a guarantee. Roy E. Disney, Walt's nephew and the person most responsible for the animation division's creative standards, backed them against Eisner's continuing skepticism, and in 1995 production began.

The budget allocated was \$140 million, making *Treasure Planet* the most expensive traditionally animated film ever made at the time of its release. That figure reflected both the ambition of the project and the specific technical challenge at its center: the Deep Canvas technology that the studio had developed for *Tarzan*, which allowed three-dimensional computer-generated backgrounds to be lit and rendered in the style of traditional hand-drawn animation, was being extended and combined with a new virtual-set system that gave the directors camera flexibility unprecedented in traditional animation. The ship sequences, in which the camera moves freely around the solar galleon *Legacy* as it navigates nebulae and star fields, required backgrounds that

were simultaneously painted in a classical style and spatially navigable in three dimensions.

Then, eight months before the film's release, Disney shuttered the Burbank animation studio that had been producing it. The institutional home of *Treasure Planet* was dissolved before the film had reached theaters. The marketing budget that was allocated to it reflected, according to multiple accounts, a studio that had already written the film off and was not investing in its commercial success. *Lilo and Stitch*, released earlier in 2002, had opened to \$35 million. *Treasure Planet* was sent into the Thanksgiving holiday frame, locked by a promotional agreement with McDonald's, against *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, which was in its fourth week and still dominant.

The gong had been sounding, in various forms, for seventeen years.

Chapter 3: The Visual Achievement

Treasure Planet is, in purely visual terms, one of the most ambitious animated films Walt Disney Feature Animation ever produced, and the ambition is visible in every sequence. What is less frequently noted is that the ambition is organized around a coherent aesthetic argument rather than mere spectacle, and that the argument becomes clearer on each subsequent viewing.

The Deep Canvas backgrounds and the virtual-set system were the technical infrastructure, but the visual principle they served was Clements and Musker's 70/30 rule applied at the level of every individual frame. The solar galleon *Legacy* is a wooden tall ship with full rigging and canvas sails, sailing through a cloud of purple gas and pink stars. The characters wear tricorne hats and long coats made from materials that have no terrestrial equivalent. The tavern where Jim Hawkins' mother runs her inn looks like a seventeenth-century coaching house and sits under three moons. The aesthetic demands that the eye simultaneously receive two different kinds of visual information, the historical and the fantastical, and reconcile them into a single coherent world.

The character design followed the same principle. The alien crew of the *Legacy* ranges from the entirely naturalistic, Captain Amelia is a humanoid feline rendered with the precision of classical Disney character animation, to the hybrid, John Silver is hand-drawn organic tissue combined with computer-generated mechanical components, to the purely alien and comic, creatures that owe more to abstract design than to any reference in natural history. The result is a visual world of remarkable density, one that rewards close attention in a way that simpler visual environments do not.

Glen Keane, one of the most celebrated character animators in Disney's history, designed and supervised the animation of John Silver, and the challenge he faced with the character was one of the film's defining technical achievements. Silver's organic half was hand-drawn, frame by frame, in the classical tradition. His mechanical half, the cybernetic arm and eye and shoulder apparatus that replaces the limbs he lost, was computer-generated by Eric Daniels and his team. The two systems had to be composited so that the join between them was invisible, so that the cyborg's hand could hold Jim Hawkins' shoulder with the warmth of drawn animation while the mechanical systems engaged with the cold precision of digital rendering. Silver is the only character in the film designed using both techniques, and the visual argument his design makes is the film's thematic argument in miniature: the tension between the organic and the mechanical, between the emotional and the calculated, between the father and the mercenary.

Chapter 4: The Voice Cast

The casting of an animated film is the decisive creative act that either earns the physical achievement of the animation or wastes it, and *Treasure Planet's* cast was assembled with the seriousness of a prestige drama rather than the commercial instinct that would have reached for celebrity names.

Brian Murray voiced John Silver and gave the film its emotional center. Murray was a stage actor of considerable experience and modest screen profile, not a name that would attract audiences or satisfy a marketing department, and the choice to cast him over more commercially obvious alternatives was the choice that made the film's central relationship work. Murray's Silver has the texture of a man who has survived a great deal and has organized himself, across decades of survival, into a person who does not allow himself to feel what he feels. The warmth that breaks through in his scenes with Jim Hawkins is not a performance of warmth but the genuine article emerging against the character's own resistance, and Murray tracks that emergence with a precision that the film's emotional payoff entirely depends on.

Joseph Gordon-Levitt was twenty years old when he voiced Jim Hawkins. He was known at that point primarily as Tommy Solomon from the television series *3rd Rock from the Sun*, a child actor making the difficult transition to adult work, and the quality he brought to Jim was specific to that transitional position: a teenager who is furious at the world in a way he does not yet have the language to explain, whose anger is a cover for a grief he cannot access, whose recklessness is the outward form of a need for someone to tell him he is worth something. Gordon-Levitt had

the anger and the grief available in a way that a more settled performer might not have, and Jim Hawkins is one of the more psychologically specific protagonists in the Disney animated catalogue.

Emma Thompson voiced Captain Amelia with a quality of aristocratic authority that the character requires and that Thompson, who had spent years navigating the specific registers of British class performance in film and theater, could supply without effort. Amelia is the film's moral north star, the figure whose professional standards and personal loyalty provide the ethical framework that Silver's moral ambiguity is measured against, and Thompson gives her a dryness that is never unkind, a quality of having very high standards and finding, occasionally and to her evident surprise, that people meet them.

David Hyde Pierce voiced Doctor Doppler with a combination of genuine scientific enthusiasm and romantic cluelessness that provided the film's most reliable comedy, and his double act with Thompson across the film's middle section carries the warmth that the Jim-Silver relationship is too complicated to provide directly. Martin Short voiced the robot B.E.N. with an energy that divided audiences: B.E.N.'s comedy is pitched at a frequency that some found tiresome and others found essential, and Short's commitment to the bit, whatever one thought of the bit itself, was absolute.

Patrick McGoohan voiced Billy Bones in what turned out to be his final film role. The veteran actor, best known internationally for *The Prisoner*, brought to a few minutes of screen time a quality of genuine menace and terminal desperation that established the film's stakes more efficiently than a longer sequence could have.

Chapter 5: The Score and Songs

James Newton Howard composed the score for *Treasure Planet*, his second consecutive Disney animated feature collaboration, and the work he did here is, by a reasonable assessment, the more ambitious of the two, given the emotional range the film demanded.

Howard's challenge was to serve a film that operated in several emotional registers simultaneously: the adventure score of a pirate narrative, the science fiction score of a space opera, and the emotional score of a father-son story whose central relationship was built on mutual deception and genuine love. Each of these registers has its own musical conventions, and the conventions are not always compatible. The pirates-in-space setting creates a specific tonal problem: the swashbuckling brasses of the maritime adventure tradition do not naturally coexist with the sustained, open-textured orchestral writing that science fiction typically requires, and neither of them is the right vehicle for the quiet, specific intimacy of two people building a bond they both know is compromised.

Howard solved this through thematic architecture rather than stylistic compromise. The main theme, introduced in the film's opening sequence, is built around a melodic gesture that can be orchestrated as adventure or as longing depending on its harmonic context, and Howard moves it between those contexts as the film moves between its emotional registers. When Jim is surfing on solar winds in the film's early scenes, the theme is exhilarating. When he is sitting with Silver late at night on the ship's rigging, listening to the older man talk about the dreams they share, the same thematic material is reorchestrated as

something that communicates both hope and its fragility.

The songs were written and performed by John Rzeznik of the Goo Goo Dolls, whose particular register, post-grunge melodicism with a quality of sincere aspiration, was suited to Jim's emotional position in the story. "I'm Still Here (Jim's Theme)" is the film's central song and one of the more emotionally direct pieces of writing in the Disney animated catalogue of its era, a teenage boy's direct articulation of abandonment and the refusal to be defined by it. The song was produced with a rock sensibility that was genuinely unusual in Disney animation, and whether it fits the film's overall aesthetic is a question the audience has been answering differently since 2002.

Chapter 6: The Story

Treasure Planet is, underneath its space-pirate spectacle, a film about a boy learning to accept that someone can love him and still be capable of betraying him, and that accepting this does not require either trusting blindly or closing entirely.

Jim Hawkins is a boy whose father left when he was small. The film does not elaborate on this at length, but the opening montage, which traces Jim's childhood from the innocence of a small boy being read Treasure Planet by his father to the sullen wreckage of a teenager bringing home police reports, communicates everything the film needs the audience to know about the psychic damage a single abandonment can produce when it lands on the right kind of sensitive, imaginative child. Jim has learned to expect to be left. He has learned that the people who are supposed to stay do not, and he has organized his life around not needing anyone to stay.

Silver is the figure who breaks this organization apart, not by being trustworthy, he is not, but by being the first person in Jim's memory who treats him as though he might amount to something. The tutelage Silver provides over the course of the voyage, teaching Jim navigation and seamanship and the management of his own abilities, is genuine even when the motives behind it are not. Silver likes Jim. Silver's liking of Jim is real. Silver is also planning to take the treasure and has no intention of letting Jim survive to tell the tale. Both things are true simultaneously, and the film earns the emotional complexity of Silver's position by not resolving it into a simpler either/or until it absolutely has to.

The moment of resolution, when Silver has the treasure and has Jim at his mercy and chooses to save Jim's life at the cost of the treasure he has spent his life pursuing, is the film's emotional climax and the point toward which everything has been building. What makes it work, what has made it generate the specific quality of emotional response that the film's cult audience describes in terms of unexpected devastation, is that the choice is not Silver becoming a different person. It is Silver being the person he has been all along, the person who was always there underneath the mercenary, finally overriding the part of himself that had organized his entire life around not making that choice. He gives up the treasure. He lets Jim go. He says goodbye with a quality of rueful, irreversible warmth that Murray delivers as the performance of a man who is at peace with what his choice has cost him.

Jim watches Silver leave and sees, in the clouds above, an image of the man's face. He has been changed by someone who could not stay. He will carry that change forward.

This is the film's argument, quietly made and quietly felt: the people who leave us are not simply absences. They leave something behind. What they leave is ours to use.

The villain and the problem

Treasure Planet's weakest element, acknowledged by its defenders as readily as by its critics, is the film's nominal villain, Scroop, voiced with real menace by Michael Wincott. Scroop exists to provide threat in the sequences where Silver's moral complexity makes him unavailable as an antagonist, and the film never fully resolves the structural problem that its most interesting character is simultaneously its hero's mentor and its hero's primary threat. Scroop fills that gap adequately but not memorably, and the film's

plotting in its middle section shows the strain of managing a story in which the character everyone is most interested in cannot be simply villainous.

The comedy relief provided by B.E.N., the robot played by Martin Short, is a second structural issue that the film's defenders are obliged to acknowledge. B.E.N. was clearly designed for the younger end of the family audience, and his humor operates at a frequency that younger viewers may receive differently from older ones. He has his defenders, including the observation that his eventual role in the climax earns him more than the early scenes' manic energy suggests. He also has his detractors, including the observation that the tonal gap between his scenes and the Jim-Silver material is one of the film's more visible seams.

Chapter 7: The Disaster

The Thanksgiving weekend of 2002 was one of the most crowded in the history of family filmmaking, and *Treasure Planet* had been locked into it months in advance by the terms of its promotional deal with McDonald's. There was no flexibility. The film would open on November 27 and it would open against *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, which was in its fourth week and had already grossed over \$200 million domestically, and it would open in a holiday marketplace crowded with family releases competing for the same parents and children.

The marketing support the film received reflected the institutional abandonment that had begun eight months earlier when Disney shuttered the Burbank animation studio. The television advertising was minimal. The promotional tie-ins, beyond the McDonald's deal already signed, were limited. Clements and Musker, who had spent twelve years in active production on a film they had been pitching for five years before that, found themselves in the position of watching their life's work arrive in theaters with the promotional energy of a film nobody expected to succeed.

The opening weekend produced \$12 million on 3,227 screens. Fourth place. Behind *Harry Potter*, behind *Die Another Day* in its third week, behind *Eight Crazy Nights*, an animated Adam Sandler comedy. The second weekend dropped 46 percent to \$6.5 million. The domestic run produced \$38.2 million total. International added \$71.4 million, for a worldwide gross of \$109.6 million against a \$140 million production budget and additional tens of millions in marketing costs.

Disney wrote down \$47 million in its fourth-quarter earnings within days of the film's release. The final accounting, once all costs were tallied, put the loss at approximately \$74 million. It was the largest loss in Disney Animation's history, and it effectively ended the Burbank studio's existence as a going concern. The collapse of *Treasure Planet* at the box office provided the institutional justification for a decision the studio had been moving toward for years: the end of traditionally animated features as Disney's primary output.

The film that Clements and Musker had spent the better part of their professional lives making had killed, in its failure, the form of filmmaking they had spent those lives practicing.

Chapter 8: The Reclamation

The home-video release of *Treasure Planet* came in April 2003, and the trajectory of the DVD and later Blu-ray and streaming was the inverse of the theatrical trajectory in every measurable way.

The film found, away from the crowded Thanksgiving marketplace and the institutional indifference of a studio that had already given up on it, the audience that it was made for. That audience turned out to be considerably larger than the theatrical numbers had suggested, and it was an audience that did something with the film that theatrical audiences often cannot do: it returned.

Treasure Planet rewards returning. The film's visual density, the sheer quantity of detail in every background, the precision of the character animation, the coherence of the 70/30 aesthetic across every design decision, reveals itself progressively rather than all at once. A child who watches it at eight and again at twelve and again at sixteen is watching three different films, each more accessible than the last at the level of the Jim-Silver relationship, each revealing more of the visual intelligence that Clements and Musker built into the world.

The online fandom that assembled around the film in the late 2000s and early 2010s had the specific intensity of a community that had found something it felt had been taken from it too quickly, something that deserved more than it got and whose defense was therefore a kind of restoration project. Fan art circulated. Analysis accumulated. The Jim-Silver relationship, which is the film's genuine emotional achievement, was explored with a depth of engagement that the theatrical marketing had never managed to communicate was available in the film at all.

The steampunk aesthetic, which had been one of the film's most distinctive visual qualities, found its cultural moment in the years after the film's release rather than during it. Steampunk as a design sensibility had been developing in literature and subculture through the 1990s, but it was in the 2010s that it became a mainstream cultural marker, recognizable to audiences who had not encountered it before. *Treasure Planet*, which had been one of the first major studio productions to commit fully to a steampunk visual language, was retrospectively recognized as an early and thorough expression of a sensibility the culture had caught up to.

Chapter 9: What It Was

The conventional case for *Treasure Planet* is that it was a victim of bad timing and institutional abandonment, that a better-marketed film released in a less crowded window might have found its audience in theaters rather than on home video. This case is true as far as it goes.

The more interesting case is that *Treasure Planet* was also a victim of its own position in Disney Animation's history, released at the exact moment when the studio was making a structural transition that its failure helped to justify. The Disney Renaissance, the period from *The Little Mermaid* in 1989 through *Mulan* in 1998, had been built on traditionally animated films that combined classical visual craft with contemporary storytelling sensibilities. That period was ending when *Treasure Planet* was made, overtaken by the critical and commercial dominance of CGI animation from Pixar, and the studio's institutional confidence in the traditional form was already severely shaken by a string of disappointing performances.

Treasure Planet was the most expensive traditionally animated film in history because Clements and Musker believed, with the faith of practitioners rather than executives, that the form was worth the investment. They were right about the film. They were making the argument at the exact moment the argument was being definitively lost, not because CGI was better but because it was newer and more profitable and the industry had decided to go where the money was.

The film that resulted from their faith, with all its visual ambition and emotional intelligence and structural imperfection, is the fullest expression of what Disney traditional animation could

do at its peak when it was given a story ambitious enough to require everything it had. It is not a perfect film. It is the film that the form was capable of at the end of its era, and it deserved better than to be the last thing standing when the lights went down.

Chapter 10: The Enduring Voyage

Twenty-two years after its release, *Treasure Planet* sits on Letterboxd with a 3.7-out-of-5 average that has been rising steadily since the site was established, reflecting the continuous arrival of new viewers who find it without the weight of its failure and respond to it on its own terms. It has been called the most underrated Disney film by enough people, over enough years, that the designation has itself become something of a cliché, which is the specific kind of cliché that attaches to films that have been underrated for so long that the underrating has become part of their identity.

The appeal the film makes to its audience is the same appeal it was always making, regardless of box office. It is the appeal of a work of genuine craft made by people who believed in what they were doing, that took a seventeen-year passion project seriously enough to spend \$140 million trying to realize it properly, that built a world with the fidelity of people who cared more about the world than about whether the world would sell, and that put at its center a relationship between a boy who does not believe he is worth anything and a man who knows better, conducted with the specific tenderness that comes from both of them knowing the relationship cannot last.

Brian Murray delivers the final scene between Silver and Jim with the quality of a man saying goodbye to something he has given up the rest of his life to protect, and then Silver jumps into his longboat and the film ends, and Jim watches him go, and sees his face in the clouds, and carries the encounter forward into a life he now has reason to believe in.

The gong never sounded for this one. Not really. Not in the way that mattered.

Appendices: The Numbers, the Names, and the World

Appendix A: The Box Office Record

Treasure Planet's commercial history is the most damaging in purely financial terms of any film in this series, and the damage was compounded by its symbolic importance at a moment when Disney Animation's institutional future was already in question.

The opening weekend competition explains the structural problem precisely:

A traditionally animated Disney film opening behind an Adam Sandler animated musical comedy on the same weekend is perhaps the cleanest single-data-point summary of where the studio's brand power stood in November 2002.

The same year, earlier: Lilo and Stitch opened to \$35.3 million in June and grossed \$273 million worldwide. The argument that Treasure Planet failed because audiences had turned away from Disney animation is not borne out by the data from the same calendar year.

Appendix B: The Production Timeline

The seventeen-year journey from pitch to release is the film's most extraordinary production fact and deserves its own record.

The gap between the 1985 pitch and the 1995 greenlight is ten years. The gap between the greenlight and the release is seven

more. Clements and Musker spent more than a third of their professional careers in pursuit of a film that the studio consistently tried to prevent them from making.

Appendix C: The Voice Cast

The decision to cast Brian Murray as Silver rather than a major star was the casting decision that made the film work. Murray's relative obscurity meant the audience encountered Silver as Silver rather than as the actor underneath him, and his theatrical background gave him the tools to handle the emotional complexity of a role that required him to be simultaneously a villain, a mentor, a surrogate father, and a man in genuine moral conflict.

Glen Keane animated Silver's hand-drawn organic half. Eric Daniels supervised the computer-generated mechanical half. The composite is the most technically sophisticated single character in the Disney traditionally animated catalogue.

Appendix D: The Technology

Treasure Planet was the most expensive traditionally animated film in history partly because it was built on technologies that were pushing the limits of what was possible in 2002.

Deep Canvas: Developed originally for Tarzan (1999), Deep Canvas allowed three-dimensional digital environments to be rendered in a painted style that matched the visual quality of traditional backgrounds, then used as fully navigable three-dimensional spaces that the camera could move through freely. Treasure Planet extended the system substantially.

Virtual Sets: A new technique developed specifically for the film, virtual sets were three-dimensional environments built to look like two-dimensional painted backgrounds, giving the directors camera flexibility without sacrificing the hand-painted visual quality. Musker described them as sets made to look like 2D backgrounds but capable of full camera movement.

Traditional/CGI hybrid character: John Silver, with his hand-drawn organic half composited with computer-generated mechanical components, was the most complex single character produced in the traditional animation era. The composite technique required both systems to match in lighting, color, and movement at every frame.

CAPS (Computer Animation Production System): The digital ink-and-paint system developed by Pixar for Disney and used since *The Little Mermaid* handled the compositing of all elements. By 2002 this system had been through thirteen years of development and was operating at a level of sophistication that later productions would not sustain, as the studio's transition to fully computer-generated animation made further development of the traditional pipeline economically unjustifiable.

Appendix E: The End of an Era

Treasure Planet's failure did not cause the end of Disney's traditionally animated feature film output, but it accelerated and justified a transition that was already underway. The sequence of events that followed its release is part of the film's full story.

Disney released *Brother Bear* in 2003 and *Home on the Range* in 2004, both traditionally animated, both commercial disappointments. In 2004 Disney Animation was restructured

under new leadership, with John Lasseter of Pixar eventually assuming creative control of the studio following Disney's acquisition of Pixar in 2006. The first traditionally animated Disney feature after the restructuring was *The Princess and the Frog* in 2009, directed by Clements and Musker, their return to the form after the commercial collapse of *Treasure Planet*. *Winnie the Pooh* in 2011 was the last traditionally animated Disney feature produced. The studio has not made another since.

The line from *Treasure Planet*'s failure to the end of Disney's traditionally animated era is not a straight line, but it is a legible one. The film that Clements and Musker had spent seventeen years making, built at the highest level of technical achievement the form had reached, was the film whose failure most directly demonstrated to the institutional minds of the studio that traditional animation could no longer compete commercially with the new form.

The form that produced *Snow White and Bambi* and *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Little Mermaid* and *The Lion King* and, at the end, *Treasure Planet*, closed down over the decade that followed the Thanksgiving weekend of 2002.

The film has been growing in reputation ever since.

THE END