

THE DARK CRYSTAL

Introduced by Duncan Kenworthy OBE



RELEASE YEAR: 1982

RUNTIME: 93 mins

DIRECTORS: Jim Henson, Frank Oz

SCREENPLAY: David Odell

STORY: Jim Henson

PRODUCERS: Jim Henson, Gary Kurtz

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER:

Duncan Kenworthy

Welcome to the first of our BAFTA Family Heritage Screenings, beginning with a classic fantasy, *The Dark Crystal* (1982). BAFTA is delighted that the film's associate producer, Duncan Kenworthy, will be introducing the film today and revealing what went on behind the scenes of this spectacular production.

The Dark Crystal was conceived by Jim Henson, a master of puppetry and best known as the creator of *The Muppets*. Jim Henson spent much of his time working in the UK and even had a puppet workshop here in London in an old post office they called the 'Jim Henson Creature Shop'. It was here that the puppets for *The Dark Crystal* were created.

The Dark Crystal is set thousands of years ago, in a fantastical landscape where good and evil battle against one another to win control over their world. To create this amazing setting for his creature puppets Jim Henson and his team used brand new state-of-the-art special effects. The effects earned the film a BAFTA nomination for Best Special Visual Effects in 1984, but they are just one of the reasons why *The Dark Crystal* is so important in the history of film making – the other standout feature is the

pioneering puppetry techniques used to make the creatures move about in their magic land.

Working from ideas by British artist and designer Brian Froud, who sketched and painted an outline of what the characters and landscape of *The Dark Crystal* might look like, sixty animatronic experts operated the creatures to give them their life-like movements. Meanwhile, many of the creature costumes were brought to life by a group of artists including, actors, dancers, acrobats, clowns and mime artists, who worked underneath the complex costumes. Just as much attention was paid to the sets which were carefully scaled down to the size of the puppets and built off the floor to allow operators the freedom to move around beneath them. Other, more complex movements were made using radio controls and hydraulics.



There's much more to know about *The Dark Crystal* and its creators, and here at BAFTA we'll get you started with a list of...

10 Things You Might Not Know

- 1** Producer Duncan Kenworthy went on to win two BAFTAs for his work on children's TV series, *The Storyteller*.
- 2** *The Dark Crystal* was shot by multiple BAFTA winner Ossie Morris OBE who is hailed by many as one of Britain's most outstanding cinematographers.
- 3** During early test screenings for the film, the Skeksis spoke a language based on ancient Greek and Egyptian.
- 4** *The Dark Crystal* was filmed at EMI Elstree Studios near London.
- 5** In 1969 Jim Henson's puppets took part in a new ground-breaking educational show called *Sesame Street*. The puppets were so popular they quickly took over the whole show!
- 6** The new Muppet film *Muppets Most Wanted* will be released in spring 2014. Much of the film was shot here in London.
- 7** Artist Brian Froud went on to help design Jim Henson's next feature film *Labyrinth* (1986).
- 8** *The Dark Crystal* is the first ever film to have no visible human actors on screen.
- 9** Duncan Kenworthy went on to produce family favourite *Gulliver's Travels* (1996), with Jim Henson Productions. The film won a host of awards including BAFTAs for Design and Costume Design.
- 10** Jim Henson's Creature Shop was located at 1b Downshire Hill, Hampstead.



DUNCAN KENWORTHY OBE

Duncan Kenworthy has produced three of the most successful British films of all time: *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), *Notting Hill* (1999) and *Love Actually* (2003), all written by Richard Curtis and together grossing nearly \$900 million at the worldwide box office.

With a First in English at Cambridge, and a Master's from Penn, Duncan began his career on *Sesame Street* in New York. He worked closely with Jim Henson for ten years, was associate producer of *The Dark Crystal* (1982), and co-created *Fraggle Rock* (1983–1987). In 1997 he and Andrew Macdonald founded DNA (Duncan 'N' Andrew) Films, which they co-chaired for seven years. His producing credits include *The Storyteller* (1988) and *Greek Myths* (1990), both written by Anthony Minghella, the indie feature *Lawn Dogs* (1997), a critically acclaimed miniseries of *Gulliver's Travels* (1996) which drew a US primetime network audience of 56 million, and Roman drama *The Eagle* (2011), directed by Kevin Macdonald and starring Channing Tatum and Jamie Bell.

Duncan has been nominated for an Oscar and three Golden Globes; has won five BAFTAs and three Emmys; was made an OBE in 1999 for services to film; and is a Governor of the NFTS and Vice-President of BAFTA. His production company is Toledo Productions.

BAFTA HERITAGE SCREENINGS

BAFTA Heritage Screenings are a series of quarterly film screenings and on-stage interviews which celebrate British film and TV classics and the great film and TV professionals who made them.

