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## FEATURES

# Jennifer Connelly Reacts to The Rocketeer Legacy Sequel

Exclusive: The Rocketeer star Jennifer Connelly gives her first thoughts about the Disney+ legacy sequel, as well as if she'd be open to appearing in it.



By [David Crow](#) | June 1, 2022 |

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Photo: Disney

Jennifer Connelly is flying high these days on the big screen, both literally and figuratively. Starring opposite Tom Cruise in one of his signature roles, Connelly is the second lead in *Top Gun: Maverick*, a film which just shattered the Memorial Day box office record with a \$160 million haul. The film also features an astonishing flying sequence in which Cruise takes Connelly up in what appears to be a World War II-era single-engine plane.

When we sat down with the Oscar winner last month, she told us that really was her up there in the clouds with Cruise at the controls (he also wanted to do barrel rolls, but it wasn't to be). It was an extraordinary

moment for Connelly, but not her first in a movie about pilots and their daredevil ways. Indeed, for audience members of a certain age, one of their first memories of Connelly may very well be her starring role in Disney's cult classic, *The Rocketeer*.

Released in 1991 to positive reviews but low box office, *The Rocketeer* was a throwback to the type of pulp stories of the 1930s and '40s that predated the superhero genre as we know it. And it was an excuse for its filmmaking team, including director Joe Johnston and Connelly in the role of Jenny Blake, to dive into the Hollywood daydreams of yesteryear. Connelly even plays a tinseltown starlet who discovers her studio's output of glossy '30s swashbucklers hides an underworld filled with Nazi spies, gangsters, and a coveted rocket that flyboy Cliff Secord (Billy Campbell) happens to stumble onto... turning him into the Rocketeer.

Underappreciated in its time, *The Rocketeer* has grown into a generational touchstone for those who grew up with it, thanks in large part to a rousing score by James Horner and its winning cast, including Connelly channeling her inner-Olivia de Havilland. Which is perhaps why Disney is eager to revisit the property with an upcoming Disney+ legacy sequel. Announced last year to be both a “reboot” and “sequel” to the original movie, *The Return of the Rocketeer* is in development for the streaming service with *Selma* star David Oyelowo attached to produce and possibly star in the movie from a script by Edward Ricourt (*Now You See Me*). So when we sat down with Connelly to discuss *Top Gun*, we couldn’t help but bring up one of our childhood favorites and see what her thoughts were on the impending sequel.

“This is complete news to me, to be honest with you,” Connelly says with a genuine laugh. “I had a great time making that movie. It was really fun, and it was such a big scale movie. We had amazing sets, we had amazing actors. I had a great time.”

When asked if she'd be interested in possibly appearing in the legacy sequel, Connelly adds, “I think it depends. The beauty of [*Maverick*] is they had such a great story for it. Of course one doesn't want to do a sequel just for the sake of doing a sequel, but if there's an amazing story and the characters are really interesting, then that gives us a reason to revisit.”

With Oyelowo producing a story that will almost certainly center on a new Rocketeer, the sequel will be quite different from what screenwriters Danny Bilson and Paul De Meo originally had in mind. The pair of scribes, who adapted 1991's *The Rocketeer* from Dave Stevens' comic book series of the same name, originally had in mind an adaptation of another storyline from *The Rocketeer* comics: “Cliff's New York Adventure.” And as they told *Den of Geek* last year, the original plan for *The Rocketeer II* would've seen Campbell's Cliff follow Connelly's Jenny to New York City where she is pursuing acting opportunities. Cliff, meanwhile, ultimately teams up with a pulp hero who would be The Shadow in all but name.

That obviously never happened, and *The Return of the*

***Rocketeer*** will take a different direction. However, things still worked out for Connelly who went on to star in other cult classics such as ***Dark City*** (1998) and ***Requiem for a Dream*** (2000), before eventually winning an Oscar for ***A Beautiful Mind*** (2001).

***Top Gun: Maverick*** is in theaters now.

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