

West Side Story and Clifford the Big Red Dog



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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There are two films releasing this week - The highly anticipated musical *West Side Story* reboots a stalwart classic and *Clifford the Big Red Dog* deals with unconditional love starring the world's beloved hound.

West Side Story

This reimagining of the beloved musical tells the classic tale of fierce rivalries and young love in 1957 New York City. It stars Ansel Elgort (Tony), Rachel Zegler (María), Ariana DeBose (Anita), David Alvarez (Bernardo), Mike Faist (Riff), Josh Andrés Rivera (Chino), Ana Isabelle (Rosalía), Corey Stoll (Lieutenant Schrank), Brian d'Arcy James (Officer Krupke) and Rita Moreno (as Valentina, who owns the corner store in which Tony works).

Created by four undisputed geniuses, director and choreographer Jerome Robbins, composer Leonard Bernstein, lyricist Stephen Sondheim and playwright Arthur Laurents, it is more than just a classic film and a historic, seminal Broadway production. It is directed by Steven Spielberg from a screenplay adaptation by Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winner Tony Kushner.

"I believe that great stories should be told over and over again, in part to reflect different perspectives and moments in time into the work," says Spielberg of his reimagining of the beloved musical *West Side Story*. "We needed to discover our

voice so that [the new film] would be the same but distinctly different. We didn't want to fix what wasn't broken, but we did want to justify why we were telling the story again."

"The message of *West Side Story* is what is going to live forever. It is even more timely today than it was in 1957 when they mounted the production on Broadway. Even more timely than it was with the film in 1961/1962.

"What it's about is what we are living in this country today – a time of tragic division and distrust, and the waste of human life through violence, racism and xenophobia. And even though the story is a tragedy, like all great tragedies, including 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'West Side Story' suggests that hope can be born amid devastation and despair," Spielberg says.

Read more [here](#).

Clifford the Big Red Dog

When middle-schooler Emily Elizabeth (Darby Camp) meets a magical animal rescuer (John Cleese) who gifts her a little red puppy, she never anticipated waking up to find a giant ten-foot hound in her small New York City apartment in *Clifford The Big Red Dog*.

While her single mom (Sienna Guillory) is away for business, Emily and her fun but impulsive uncle Casey (Jack Whitehall) set out on an adventure that will keep you on the edge of your seat as our heroes take a bite out of the Big Apple. Based on the beloved Scholastic book character, Clifford will teach the world how to love big!

Clifford the Big Red Dog has been attracting the attention of readers and winning the affection of children and families around the world ever since the very first story featuring the character was published in 1963. Screenwriters Jay Scherick and David Ronn have now adapted it into a live-action film that will teach the world how to love big dogs.

"From the very get-go, I always saw this story as similar to E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial. You have a lead character going through issues who feels alone in the world, and this young protagonist befriends a magical creature that also feels alone. There are a lot of parallels between that movie and this movie.

"It shares the Amblin-esque quality that made that film so special. And much like Steven Spielberg's family classic, *Clifford the Big Red Dog* was written, directed and produced to appeal to audiences of all ages," director Walt Becker says.

"Clifford represents the child in all of us. He's the friend that you hope to find who's loyal and kind and will always be there for you. Kids like him because he is trying his best to figure out the world and be a good friend and solve problems but also

have some fun. He's very childlike, a little bit extra big and can provide some help if you need it," says producer Iole Lucchese, who also serves as chair of the board, executive vice president, chief strategy officer and president at the Scholastic Entertainment.

Read more [here](#).

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ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

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