

## No Need to Fear: 'Underdog' Is – Almost – Here

**Film version of '60s "Underdog" cartoon flies into theaters Aug. 3.**

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Photos courtesy of Disney Enterprises, Inc. In a summer when superhero movies run the gamut from Spiderman to The Fantastic Four, to Transformers and Harry Potter, only one has audiences cheering for the underdog...literally.

Underdog – the cartoon superhero who first graced TV screens in 1964 on NBC – is back and making his presence known on August 3, 2007, when the Disney Pictures/Spyglass Entertainment-backed remake flies into theaters.

With a slew of bad TV remakes – “Dukes of Hazzard” and “Scooby-Doo,” anyone? – this “Underdog” stays true to the classic formula: Ordinary dog attains superhero powers and saves the world.

Alex Neuberger, 14, star of the film, agrees.

“Simon Barsinister [played by “Nip/Tuck” alum Peter Dinklage] looks almost identical” to the original cartoon character, says Neuberger, who plays the role of Jack, Underdog’s owner. “And just like in the cartoon, the dog takes the pill and becomes a superhero.”

“Underdog” features an ordinary Beagle named Shoeshine Boy – voiced by Jason Lee of TV’s “My Name is Earl” – who gets involved in a mysterious lab accident headed by maniacal scientist Dr. Simon Barsinister. Shoeshine Boy discovers he’s attained unimaginable superpowers and the ability to speak. With his newfound powers, Underdog vows to protect the citizens of his beloved Capitol City and the object of his affection, a beautiful Spaniel named Polly Purebred, voiced by Amy Adams, 2006 Academy Award nominee for “Junebug.”

However, one big difference between the cartoon and film is that it was shot using both live-action footage and CGI special effects.

For the live-action shots, Disney enlisted the help of Boone Narr of Boone’s Animals for Hollywood, an animal training facility in Castaic, Calif. Narr and his crew of nine trainers prepped four dogs to play the role of Shoeshine Boy/Underdog. The main dog was Leo, a 3-year-old Beagle.

“We work long hours, six days a week, filming and training,” Narr explains. “We use multiple dogs for one character so we can switch them out as they get tired.”

Luckily for Narr, Leo and the rest of the crew, technology elevated the stunts without endangering the dogs. “We love working with CGI because it allows our animals to do things they couldn’t normally achieve, like flying and talking,” Narr says. Although some of the flying and talking was done by the real dog, most of it was CGI.

When shooting scenes that would later be edited using CGI, Neuberger found himself doing everything from “talking” to the dogs to “flying” with them.

“[In one scene] I’m up on the clouds because Underdog is holding me up,” Neuberger begins. “I had to do that in front of a green screen, so they blew wind on me. I had to act like I was flying, and I was scared. That was a lot harder than acting with the dog.”

Despite the long hours that go with working on a movie set, Narr truly enjoys his job.

“Working on a movie set is like nothing else,” he says. “Sometimes it doesn’t seem like a job.” He has plenty of fond memories, too, including when Leo decided to grab a sandwich off the craft services table while they were filming a scene.



For more info on "Underdog" check out [www.disney.com/underdog](http://www.disney.com/underdog).