



## Pinocchio has a wooden heart in Matteo Garrone's new darkly fantastical tale

By Hanna Flint

***MATTEO GARRONE stays true to the Italian origins of the classic kids' story in this darkly fantastical tale.***

*The director and screenwriter's project, 45 years in the making, is one of the weirdest and most wonderful adaptations of a children's book cinema-goers could wish upon a star for.*



It is a long way from the classic Disney animated version.

The story begins in a small Italian village, where poor woodcarver Geppetto (Roberto Benigni) is inspired to build the most beautiful puppet in the world after the arrival of a marionette theatre.

But as soon as he crafts life into Pinocchio (Federico Ielapi), the wooden lad begins causing mischief for his father and finds himself in more than a few predicaments.

From being kidnapped and facing near-death at the hands of a sneezy puppet master to being conned by a conniving fox and crafty cat (a hilarious double act from Massimo Ceccherini and Rocco Papaleo) Pinocchio is constantly faced with moral dilemmas for his wilful misbehaving.



## Magical quest

Only with the help of the patient but beautiful Fairy With Turquoise Hair (Marine Vacth) and a weary Talking Cricket (Davide Marotta) can Pinocchio succeed in this wildly magical quest to reunite with his father and become a real boy.

As he did with 2015's *Tale Of Tales*, the filmmaker has fashioned a rich and textured landscape for these otherworldly beings to reside in.

He uses novelist Carlo Collodi's original illustrations for guidance to realise some characters through make-up and prosthetics, others with a little digital enhancement or as wholly CGI creations thanks to VFX studio One Of Us.

But credit must also go to cinematographer Nicolaj Bruel and production designer Dimitri Capuani too. Ielapi's execution is brilliantly sparky and his youthful energy brightens each scene, despite the lack of movement in Pinocchio's wooden face. Benigni is on top form, bringing a sweet charm to Geppetto as well as pristine comic delivery.



With Italian dialogue, this oozes passion — and feels far more animated than Disney's 1940 cartoon classic. These characters haven't been sugar-coated at all.

Instead, Garrone has allowed them to stew in the darkest elements of the original fairytale while interweaving black comedy, farce and dry wit to keep both adults and children entertained.

The film feels a little longer than necessary, as Garrone has packed in lots of adventures — meaning the cautionary message gets repetitive. And those with



younger children might want to plop them in front of an English-dubbed version to keep their attention on the screen. But this is a beautifully eerie and authentic reimagining of the children's classic.