

KEVIN VS THE WET BANDITS

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

“Home Alone” — the story of a kid accidentally left behind by his family taking a Christmas vacation in Paris who has to defend his home from burglars — was another in a long string of comedies from John Hughes, the guy who wrote and produced “The Breakfast Club,” “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off” and “National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation.”

But this film, starring 9-year-old Macaulay Culkin, would become the biggest-selling live-action comedy at the time. “Home Alone,” was released on Nov. 16, 1990 — 35 years ago.

MAKING A LIST AND CHECKING IT TWICE

Producer and scriptwriter John Hughes was making a list of things to take on a family vacation.

“I thought, ‘Well, I’d better not forget my kids,’ ” he said. “Then I thought, ‘What if I left my 10-year-old son at home? What would he do?’ ”

He quickly expanded that stray idea into eight pages of notes and then a full screenplay. He reasoned that children are naturally afraid of robbers, so he worked that into his story as well.

Hughes, accustomed to making low-cost films, promised Warner Brothers he could bring the movie in for under \$10 million. He wanted Patrick Read Johnson to direct, but Johnson was tied up on “Spaced

Invaders.”

Hughes’ Plan B was Chris Columbus, who had left “National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation” before shooting began because of a personality conflict with Chevy Chase.

When it became clear the movie would go over budget, the studio was fast to shut down production. Hughes and Columbus had seen the crisis coming, however, and had already negotiated a deal with 20th



John Hughes



Chris Columbus and Macaulay Culkin

Century Fox to snatch up the rights and continue filming. Work resumed the very next day. “Home Alone” was shot over 83 days in the northwestern suburbs of Chicago. Interior scenes were filmed on sets built in a nearby retired high school gymnasium — the same gym where “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off” was filmed.

“Home Alone” eventually cost \$18 million to make but earned six times

what “Christmas Vacation” had made, with a budget of \$10 million less. It would be nominated for two Academy Awards: “Somewhere in my Memory” for Best Original Song and John Williams for Best Original Score.

In 1992, Hughes and Columbus would team up again for a sequel, “Home Alone 2: Lost in New York.” Hughes would write a third sequel in 1997, but featuring a different director and a new cast. That would be followed by two TV movie sequels and one that streamed on Disney+.

A grown-up Macaulay Culkin has said he considered buying the house shown in the film and turning it into a small amusement park: a “Movie Fun House.” But he later admitted: “I’m busy, man. I got kids.”

‘I’M EATING JUNK AND WATCHING RUBBISH’

Columbus auditioned about 200 boys before circling back to Culkin, who he had used in a previous Hughes film, “Uncle Buck.” Because of child labor laws, Culkin was allowed to be on set only five hours a day. Other actors were impressed with Culkin’s maturity. “Mac is not like a 9-year-old,” said Joe Pesci. “He’s an old man already.”



Robert DeNiro and Jon Lovitz each turned down the part of Harry, the lead burglar. Also considered for the part were Danny DeVito, Alan Rickman and Rowan Atkinson before Pesci got the role. Daniel Stern was hired for six weeks but, when the schedule was extended, he wasn’t offered more money. The studio finally made things right by offering him more.



Pesci made a point of staying away from Culkin when the cameras weren’t rolling, in order to better portray a mean guy. Culkin remembers: “They hung me up on a coat hook and Pesci says, ‘I’m gonna bite all your fingers off, one at a time.’ And then, during one of the rehearsals, he bit me and it broke the skin.” Culkin says he still has the scar from that.



John Candy played a small role as a kindhearted polka musician, but did it as a favor to Hughes. He was tied up on other projects and could free up only one day to work on “Home Alone.” His scenes were shot over a 23-hour period. He was paid only \$414 for his work but Columbus encouraged him to improvise all his dialogue.



Oct. 29, 1982	\$10.1m	National Lampoon's Class Reunion
July 22, 1983	\$64.8m	Mr. Mom
July 29, 1983	\$61.4m	National Lampoon's Vacation
May 4, 1984	\$23.7m	Sixteen Candles
Feb. 15, 1985	\$51.5m	The Breakfast Club
July 26, 1985	\$49.4m	National Lampoon's European Vacation
Aug. 2, 1985	\$38.5m	Weird Science
Feb. 28, 1986	\$40.5m	Pretty in Pink
June 11, 1986	\$70.7m	Ferris Bueller's Day Off
Feb. 27, 1987	\$18.6m	Some Kind of Wonderful
Nov. 25, 1987	\$49.5m	Planes, Trains and Automobiles
Feb. 5, 1988	\$16.0m	She's Having a Baby
June 17, 1988	\$43.5m	The Great Outdoors
Aug. 16, 1989	\$79.3m	Uncle Buck
Dec. 1, 1989	\$72.7m	National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation
Nov. 16, 1990		Home Alone \$477.0m
March 29, 1991	\$11.3m	Career Opportunities
July 19, 1991	\$4.6m	Dutch
Oct. 25, 1991	\$33.7m	Curly Sue
April 3, 1992	\$147.2m	Beethoven
Nov. 20, 1992		Home Alone 2: Lost in New York \$365.2m
June 25, 1993	\$117.3m	Dennis the Menace
July 1, 1994	\$16.2m	Baby's Day Out
Nov. 18, 1994	\$46.3m	Miracle on 34th Street
Nov. 27, 1996		101 Dalmatians \$320.7m
Nov. 26, 1997	\$178.0m	Flubber
Dec. 12, 1997	\$79.1m	Home Alone 3
April 6, 2001	\$16.2m	Just Visiting
Dec. 13, 2002	\$154.9m	Maid in Manhattan

JOHN HUGHES' FILMS AT THE BOX OFFICE

In the early 1980s, John Hughes graduated from advertising work and writing humor pieces for National Lampoon magazine and began a new career as a comedy screenwriter. He would practically reinvent the genre of teen comedy and would help launch the careers of stars like Culkin, Molly Ringwald, Ally Sheedy, Anthony Michael Hall, Jon Cryer and Matthew Broderick.

WORLDWIDE
BOX OFFICE
GROSSES

“Home Alone” would stand as the highest-grossing live-action comedy until it was surpassed by “The Hangover Part II” in 2011.