

Taika Waititi

Writer, director, actor

Born:	16 th August 1975
Full Name:	Taika David Cohen



Personal Life

Born in the Raukokore area of the East Coast, Taika Waititi spent his childhood between there and Wellington; his mother was a teacher and his father was a farmer and artist. Taika's father is of Māori descent, belonging to the Te-Whānau-ā-Apanui iwi. His mother has a mixed European background, including being part Jewish. He attended Victoria University of Wellington, where he gained a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and Film. Waititi married fellow film producer Chelsea Winstanley in 2011 and they have two daughters.

Career

Throughout his professional career, Taika Waititi has taken on a variety of positions. After leaving university, he performed in comedy shows and acted in a range of theatre productions, television shows and films, before venturing on to write and direct his own films.

Waititi's first big hit was the short film 'Two Cars, One Night', which was released in 2003. This won a variety of awards, both nationally and internationally, including being nominated for an Academy Award. After this success, Waititi then went on to write and direct feature-length films. The first was 'Eagle vs. Shark', followed by 'Boy' in 2010. 'Boy' was incredibly popular, going on to become the most successful New Zealand comedy. Waititi continued to act, write and direct, both in New Zealand and internationally. His next major release came in 2013, with 'What We Do in the Shadows', a comedy about a pair of vampires living in New Zealand's capital city.

In 2016, Waititi released another massive hit called 'Hunt for the Wilderpeople', which quickly overtook 'Boy' as the most popular Kiwi film. Upon its premiere at the Sundance Festival, this film got a standing ovation. Along with numerous other local and international awards, this film won Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenplay at the 2017 New Zealand Film Awards

In a significant move in his career, Waititi then progressed on to direct his first Hollywood film, 'Thor: Ragnarok'. This was part of a large film series which is based on Marvel comics. Following on from this popular film, Waititi then wrote, directed and starred in 'Jojo Rabbit', a satire based on the Second World War. This film was first shown at the 2019 Toronto Film Festival, where it won the People's Choice Award. Waititi went on to win both an Oscar and a BAFTA Film Award for Best Adapted Screenplay.

Interesting Facts:

- Taika Waititi and fellow comedian Jemaine Clement made up the duo The Humourbeasts. In 1999, they won New Zealand's top comedy award, the Billy T Award.
- At the beginning of his career, Taika also used his mother's maiden name Cohen for some of his work.
- Waititi is known for playing a character in his own films.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Waititi worked to raise money for charities by reading Roald Dahl's 'James and the Giant Peach' with other celebrity guests.
- In 2017, Taika was named New Zealander of the Year.
- Waititi's services to film were recognised in 2020 when he received a Queen's Birthday honour and was named an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit.
- He speaks Te Reo Māori, English and some German.