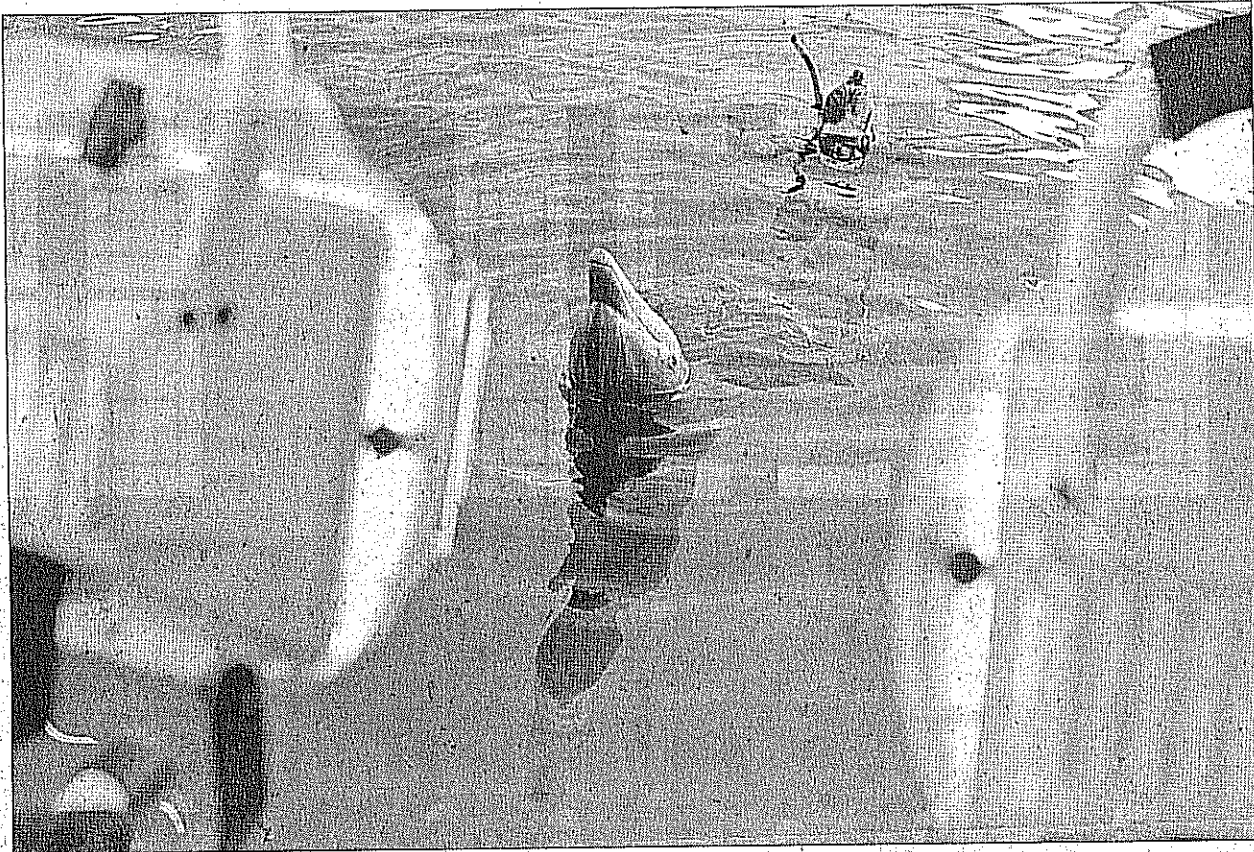


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# Hello, Hollywood!

## Let's make a film



JIM DAMASKE | Times

Spotlights shine on Winter the dolphin and Clearwater Marine Aquarium head trainer Abby Stone to get the dolphin used to filmmaking before production of *Dolphin Tale*, a movie based on Winter's life, begins Sept. 27.

### Things are moving ahead for *Dolphin Tale*, a movie about Clearwater Marine Aquarium's Winter the dolphin.

One month before his workplace becomes a movie set, Clearwater Marine Aquarium chief executive David Yates provided updates on *Dolphin Tale*, set to begin filming in Pinellas County on Sept. 27:

- Winter's rescue, rehabilitation and movie will be featured on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. A locally hired crew videotaped segments at the aquarium Thursday for the episode, expected to air in September.
- The first day's filming is planned at Clearwater's Long Center recreation complex, a swim meet scene involving the young hero Sawyer (a role still uncast), who later befriends Winter the dolphin, the aquarium's star attraction. Production until mid October will occur away from the aquarium, which will close to the public for about eight weeks starting in mid September.
- Location scouts are closing deals for a house to serve as a home for Sawyer and his mother (Ashley Judd), a facility to pose as a VA hospital where Morgan Freeman's character works, and a cove where Winter's rescue from a crab trap will be re-created.
- Production designer Michael Corinblith (*Apollo 13*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*) is constructing a 55-foot houseboat, where Harry Connick Jr.'s



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character lives, to be docked at the aquarium. Connick plays Clay, a military veteran and the aquarium's director. Yates described Clay as a "classic Florida personality" with a daughter named Hazel (as yet uncast).

Winter will play herself but not by herself. Animatronic dolphins and CGI will handle some of the more detailed emoting. Since Winter sometimes share a tank with her animatronic twin, Yates said she must "get used to seeing herself."

To that end, an actual-size rubber replica of Winter, down to the nub where her tail used to be, is regularly placed in her tank. That's in addition to a plastic gas can disguised as a movie camera, and fake microphone booms. "Everything she's going to see on the set, we're showing her in advance," Yates said.

That list of new experiences for Winter includes the actors, and it takes sev-

eral days for Winter to bond with new people. "We have to make sure she's bonded with the people she'll be in the water with," Yates said.

Winter's surrogate mother Panama will be featured in *Dolphin Tale*, in order to keep her close and calming for the star. The aquarium's other dolphins, Indy and Nicholas, will share the role of "Krista," who is treated and released into the Gulf of Mexico by the aquarium. Yates said that subplot is included "to show people what we're about here."

Yates is managing the film's licensing for such potential *Dolphin Tale* collectables as Winter plush dolls, toys, watches and bedding. "All those things you have with a typical kids' film," he said. "Done the right way, that's a lot of revenue."

First, the movie must come together. Yates cautioned that there's always something to disrupt the best-laid plans of a project like *Dolphin Tale*.

"Directors always say the three things hardest to work with are kids, water and animals," Yates said. "We've got the hat trick here."

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