

Pig is a 2021 American drama film written and directed by Michael Sarnoski (in his feature directorial debut), from a story by Vanessa Block and Sarnoski. The film stars Nicolas Cage as a truffle-hunter who lives alone in the Oregon wilderness and must return to his past in Portland in search of his beloved foraging pig after she is kidnapped. It also stars Alex Wolff and Adam Arkin.^[3]

Pig was theatrically released in the United States on July 16, 2021, by Neon. The film received critical acclaim, with praise for its screenplay and Cage's performance. It won the Independent Spirit Award for Best First Screenplay and earned Cage a second nomination for the Critics' Choice Movie Award for Best Actor. It has since been cited as among the best films of the 2020s and the 21st century.^{[4][5][6]}

Plot

Robin "Rob" Feld is a reclusive truffle-forager who was once a renowned Portland chef. Living in a cabin deep in the Oregon forests, he hunts for truffles with the help of his prized foraging pig, which he sells exclusively to Amir, a young and inexperienced supplier of luxury ingredients to high-end restaurants.

One night, Rob is attacked by unidentified assailants as they steal his pig. He contacts Amir, who helps him locate a pair of bedraggled drug-addicts suspected by another local truffle-hunter. They claim the pig was taken to Portland.

After his old friend Edgar refuses to help, Rob leads Amir to an underground fighting ring for restaurant people below the defunct Portland Hotel, saying certain names carry cachet. Rob identifies himself to the crowd, then allows himself to be beaten to a pulp by a waiter in exchange for Edgar's information.

Shocked to learn his identity, the following morning Amir reveals that his parents had such a miserable marriage the only happy time he remembers is a night when they had dinner at Rob's restaurant, before his mother died by suicide. Rob in turn asks Amir to secure reservations at Eurydice, a trendy *haute cuisine* restaurant which is owned by Amir's father. In the meantime, Rob visits the house where he used to live with his wife Lori, whose death compelled Rob to withdraw to the woods.

Pig



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Michael Sarnoski</u>
Written by	Michael Sarnoski
Story by	<u>Vanessa Block</u> Michael Sarnoski
Produced by	David Carrico Adam Paulsen <u>Nicolas Cage</u> <u>Steve Tisch</u> Vanessa Block Dimitra Tsingou Thomas Benski Ben Giladi Dori A. Rath Joseph Restaino
Starring	Nicolas Cage <u>Alex Wolff</u>

At Eurydice, Rob asks to meet with its head chef, Derek, a former prep cook at Rob's restaurant. Rob pointedly yet empathetically criticizes Derek for opening a contemporary restaurant rather than the pub he always wanted to run. Overwhelmed by the memory of his dream and the reality of his current circumstances, Derek confesses that Amir's wealthy father, Darius, was behind the theft of his pig, having learned of its existence from Amir. Rob angrily ends his partnership with Amir before going to confront Darius at his home. Darius promises him \$25,000 in exchange for the pig and threatens to kill it should Rob continue his pursuit.

Rob leaves, finding Amir waiting outside, having just left his comatose mother in a care facility, revealing she is still alive. Rob admits that he does not need his pig to hunt truffles since the trees tell him where they are; he loves her. He gives Amir a list of items and tells him to use Rob's name to obtain them.

Rob visits his former baker for a salted baguette and a few pastries he shares with Amir before they go back to Darius' house. Rob guides Amir as they prepare the same meal for Darius which Rob served to him and his wife, including a rare wine from Rob's personal collection, which Amir obtained from the woman caring for the mausoleum containing Lori's ashes.

All three men sit down to eat together, despite Darius' resistance. An emotional Darius leaves the table after just a few tastes. When Rob follows and confronts him, Darius asks why he is doing this, and Rob says he remembers every meal he ever cooked and every person he ever served. Darius tearfully confesses that the junkies he hired for the theft had mishandled the pig, resulting in her death. Rob collapses in tears, and a remorseful Amir drives him back to a diner near home. Despite Amir's foolishness, Rob says he will see him next Thursday.

Returning to his forest, Rob washes his bloody face in the lake before returning to his cabin to play a tape that Lori recorded of herself singing Bruce Springsteen's "I'm on Fire" to him for his birthday.

	<u>Adam Arkin</u>
Cinematography	Patrick Scola
Edited by	Brett W. Bachman
Music by	Alexis Grapsas <u>Philip Klein</u>
Production companies	<u>AI Film</u> <u>Endeavor</u> <u>Content</u> <u>Pulse Films</u> BlockBox Entertainment Valparaiso Pictures Saturn Films
Distributed by	<u>Neon</u>
Release date	July 16, 2021
Running time	92 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Box office	\$4 million ^[2]

Cast

- Nicolas Cage as Robin "Rob" Feld
- Brandy The Pig as The Pig
- Alex Wolff as Amir
- Adam Arkin as Darius
- Nina Belforte as Charlotte
- Gretchen Corbett as Mac
- David Knell as Chef Derek Finway
- Beth Harper as Donna/Diner Waitress
- Darius Pierce as Edgar

- Cassandra Violet as Lorelai "Lori" Feld

Production

In September 2019, it was announced [Nicolas Cage](#) and [Alex Wolff](#) had joined the cast of the film, with Michael Sarnoski directing from a screenplay he wrote.^[7]

[Principal photography](#) began September 23, 2019,^[8] in [Portland, Oregon](#), lasting 20 days.^{[9][10][11]}

Release

In March 2020, [Neon](#) acquired U.S. distribution rights to the film.^[12] *Pig* had a theatrical release in the United States on July 16, 2021, followed by screenings in the UK and Republic of Ireland on August 20, 2021.^{[13] [14]}

Reception

Box office

The film grossed \$945,000 in 552 theaters in its first opening weekend.^[15] It additionally grossed \$565,000 in its second weekend.^[16]

Critical response

On the [review aggregator](#) website [Rotten Tomatoes](#), 97% of 268 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 8.2/10. The site's critics consensus reads, "Like the animal itself, *Pig* defies the hogwash of expectations with a beautiful odyssey of loss and love anchored by Nicolas Cage's affectingly raw performance."^[17] On [Metacritic](#), the film has a weighted average score of 82 out of 100, based on 39 critics, indicating "universal acclaim".^[18]

[Richard Roeper](#) of the *[Chicago Sun-Times](#)* gave the film a score of four out of four stars, writing: "The unpredictable Cage delivers some of his best work in years."^[19] [Bilge Ebiri](#) of *[Vulture](#)* gave the film a positive review and stated, "As it proceeds, it expands its vision and compassion, even as it de-escalates the tension. It's not about the thing it's about, except that it ultimately is totally about the thing it's about."^[20] [Richard Whittaker](#) of *[The Austin Chronicle](#)* gave the film four-and-a-half out of five stars and stated, "At a time when so many people are struggling to find something of value in their lives, when people are fleeing jobs, cities, futures they thought they wanted, Cage has crafted a quiet soliloquy about grasping onto something that has meaning."^[21]

[Thelma Adams](#) of [AARP Movies for Grownups](#) gave the film four out of five stars and stated, "Playing oddly against expectations, there's no Cage Rage, no showy violence or operatic monologues, just a simple, moving story of a broken man who lost his pig but, perhaps, has found his way."^[22] [Johnny Oleksinski](#) of *[The New York Post](#)* gave the film three out of four stars, calling it "[an] undeniably odd, but surprisingly touching drama."^[23]

Karen Han of [Slate](#) gave the film a positive review and stated, "*Pig* is a small film with a few big surprises executed very well, and well worth going into as blind as possible."^[24] Mike D'Angelo of [The A.V. Club](#) gave the film a grade of "A", writing that "There are no plot twists, in the traditional sense, but each successive encounter reveals a new facet that enriches the tale."^[25] Carlos Aguilar of [TheWrap](#) gave the film a positive review, writing, "Not all the ingredients make sense together, but the product of their intermingling inside the filmmaker's narrative pot render a special concoction."^[26] Noel Murray, in his review of the film for the [Los Angeles Times](#), wrote that, "Though its plot follows the same rough outline of a *John Wick*-style shoot-em-up, *Pig* is actually a quiet and often melancholy meditation on loss, anchored by a character who wishes he could shake free of the person he used to be."^[27]

Kristy Puchko, in her review of the film for *Pajiba*, wrote: "*Pig* is not only a mesmerizing while meditative drama about love and loss. It is also a powerful reminder that Cage is one of the most talented, most captivating movie stars of our time."^[28] Cody Corral of the [Chicago Reader](#) gave the film a positive review and stated, "Even through its various webs of tragedy, relentless ambition, and destruction for capital gain—*Pig* remarkably and overwhelmingly champions care and kindness."^[29] Randy Myers of [The Mercury News](#) gave the film three-and-a-half out of four stars and stated, "It is Cage who carries *Pig* with a measured performance in which his trademark outbursts pierce the soul. He's magnificent."^[30]

Jeannette Catsoulis of [The New York Times](#) gave the film a positive review, writing that, "While *Pig* can at times feel engulfed by its own sullenness, there's a rigor to the filmmaking and a surreal beauty to Pat Scola's images that seal our investment in Robin's fate."^[31] Matt Zoller Seitz of [RogerEbert.com](#) gave the film four out of four stars, and wrote: "What a beguiling, confounding film *Pig* is. From start to finish, it never moves as you might expect it to."^[32] Michael O'Sullivan of [The Washington Post](#) also gave the film four out of four stars, writing that "*Pig*'s stock in trade is a kind of visual and narrative poetry, and Sarnoski and Block ply it with the skill and light touch of master chefs."^[33] [The Guardian](#)'s Benjamin Lee gave the film three out of five stars and stated, "It... hints at exciting things to come from Sarnoski, a gifted visual filmmaker, who has assembled a promising, if imperfect, debut."^[34]

Sheri Linden of [The Hollywood Reporter](#) gave the film a positive review, writing: "Whatever the screenplay's stumbles, Cage's contained performance embraces his character's losses and his turning away from the world without the slightest play for sympathy."^[35] Chuck Bowen of [Slant Magazine](#) gave the film three out of four stars and stated, "Nicolas Cage, in full martyr mode here, seems to get off on the perversity of, well, caging his brand of operatic hysteria."^[36] Michael Nordine of [Variety](#) gave the film a positive review, concluding that, "As a descent into the apparently high-stakes world of truffle-pig-poaching, *Pig* is unexpectedly touching; as a showcase for Cage's brilliance, it's a revelation."^[37] Lauren Milici of [Total Film](#) praised the film, writing: "Blood and weapons aside, the film is a moving meditation on grief and loss, and how sometimes the only way to move on is to return to the place that broke us in the first place."^[38]

Ethan Brehm of [SPOILER Magazine](#) named it the best film of the year.^[39]

Cage has stated that *Pig* is his favorite film that he has starred in to date, and considers it his best performance.^[40]

Gary M. Kramer, in a negative review of the film for [Salon.com](#), wrote that "*Pig* doesn't give viewers much to care about, other than perhaps the title character. Sarnoski's film is undercooked."^[41]

Retrospective lists

In July 2023, *Comic Book Resources* ranked it number 7 on its list of the "Best Indie Movies of the 2020s (So Far)," saying that "There's something simple and beautiful about slice-of-life stories, but *Pig* takes it to a new level, showcasing a way of life and field of work rarely seen."^[4] In August 2023, *Collider* ranked the film at number 12 on its list of "The 20 Best Drama Movies of the 2020s So Far," writing that the film "showed the world why Cage had become such an icon in the first place; he narrowed his focus and gave one of the most moving performances of his career as the former chef Rob."^[5]

Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<u>Austin Film Critics Association</u>	<u>January 11, 2022</u>	Top Ten Films	<i>Pig</i>	Won	^[42]
		Best Film	<i>Pig</i>	Nominated	
		Best Actor	<u>Nicolas Cage</u>	Won	
		Best Original Screenplay	<u>Vanessa Block and Michael Sarnoski</u>	Won	
		Best First Film	Michael Sarnoski	Won	
<u>Chicago Film Critics Association Awards</u>	<u>December 15, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Nicolas Cage	Nominated	^[43]
		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	Michael Sarnoski	Nominated	
		Milos Stehlik Breakthrough Filmmaker Award	Michael Sarnoski	Won	
<u>Coronado Island Film Festival</u>	—	Best Narrative Audience Award	<i>Pig</i>	Won	^[44]
<u>Critics' Choice Movie Awards</u>	<u>March 13, 2022</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Nicolas Cage	Nominated	^[45]
<u>Detroit Film Critics Society Awards</u>	<u>December 6, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Nicolas Cage	Nominated	^[46]
<u>Florida Film Critics Circle Awards</u>	<u>December 22, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Nicolas Cage	Nominated	^[47]
		Best First Feature	<i>Pig</i>	Won	
<u>Georgia Film Critics Association Awards</u>	<u>January 14, 2022</u>	Best Actor	Nicolas Cage	Won	^[48]
<u>Golden Raspberry Awards</u>	<u>March 26, 2022</u>	<u>Razzie Redeemer Award</u>	Nicolas Cage	Nominated	
<u>Gotham Independent Film Awards</u>	<u>November 29, 2021</u>	<u>Best Feature</u>	<i>Pig</i>	Nominated	^[49]
<u>Independent Spirit Awards</u>	<u>March 6, 2022</u>	<u>Best First Screenplay</u>	<u>Vanessa Block and Michael Sarnoski</u>	Won	^{[50][51][52]}
<u>National Board of Review Awards</u>	<u>December 2, 2021</u>	Best Directorial Debut	Michael Sarnoski	Won	^{[53][54]}
<u>Online Film Critics Society</u>	<u>January 24, 2022</u>	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>Pig</i>	Nominated	^[55]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Nicolas Cage	Nominated	
		Best Debut Feature	Michael Sarnoski	Nominated	

		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	Vanessa Block and Michael Sarnoski	Won	
<u>San Diego Film Critics Society</u>	<u>January 10, 2022</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Nicolas Cage	Won	[56]
		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	Michael Sarnoski	Nominated	
<u>San Francisco Bay Area Film Critics Circle</u>	<u>January 10, 2022</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Nicolas Cage	Nominated	[57]
<u>Saturn Awards</u>	<u>October 25, 2022</u>	<u>Best Thriller Film</u>	<i>Pig</i>	Nominated	[58]
<u>Seattle Film Critics Society Awards</u>	<u>January 17, 2022</u>	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>Pig</i>	Nominated	[59]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Nicolas Cage	Won	
		<u>Best Screenplay</u>	Michael Sarnoski	Nominated	
<u>St. Louis Film Critics Association</u>	<u>December 19, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Nicolas Cage	Won	[60]
		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	Michael Sarnoski and Vanessa Block	Nominated	
<u>Washington D.C. Area Film Critics Association</u>	<u>December 6, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Nicolas Cage	Nominated	[61]

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External links

- *Pig* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11003218/>) at IMDb
 - *Pig* (<https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v726193>) at AllMovie
 - *Pig* (<https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt11003218/>) at Box Office Mojo
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