

# The Hunt (2020 film)

***The Hunt*** is a 2020 American satirical action horror film<sup>[a]</sup> directed by Craig Zobel and written by Nick Cuse and Damon Lindelof. The film stars Betty Gilpin, Hilary Swank, Ike Barinholtz, and Emma Roberts. Jason Blum was a producer under his Blumhouse Productions banner, along with Lindelof.<sup>[4]</sup> Zobel and Lindelof have said that the film is intended as a satire on the profound political divide between the American left and right.<sup>[5]</sup> It is about a group of elites who kidnap working class people to hunt them.

The film was first announced in March 2018, and the cast signed on a year later. Filming took place in New Orleans. The film was originally scheduled for release on September 27, 2019. However, as a result of the Dayton and El Paso mass shootings in early August 2019, Universal Pictures decided to delay it.

*The Hunt* was released in theaters in the United States on March 13, 2020, by Universal Pictures and received mixed reviews from critics. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the closure of most theaters within a week of the film's release, which resulted in the film underperforming at the box office, grossing only \$12.4 million. Universal made *The Hunt* available digitally on March 20.

## Plot

In a group chat, Athena Stone, Ted, Richard, Miranda, Julius, Peter, Martin, Mike and Liberty discuss an upcoming hunt of "deplorables" at a manor.

Later, on Athena's private jet, a flight attendant talks to Richard but is interrupted by Randy, who staggers out from the cargo hold. Ted claims to be a doctor and subdues Randy before Athena kills him.

As the hunt begins, eleven captives consisting of Crystal, Don, Gary, "Yoga Pants", "Target", "Dead Sexy", "Staten Island", "Vanilla Nice", "Big Red", "Trucker" and "Bandana Man" wake up in a forest, with gags locked in their mouths. Crystal leaves while the rest go into a field and find a crate, which contains a pig and a cache of weapons. Yoga Pants finds the keys to their gags. A rifle is fired at them, killing Yoga Pants. Bandana Man fights back

### The Hunt



Theatrical release film poster, with the original release date crossed out.

<b>Directed by</b>	<u>Craig Zobel</u>
<b>Written by</b>	<u>Nick Cuse</u> <u>Damon Lindelof</u>
<b>Produced by</b>	<u>Jason Blum</u> <u>Damon Lindelof</u>
<b>Starring</b>	<u>Ike Barinholtz</u> <u>Betty Gilpin</u> <u>Emma Roberts</u> <u>Hilary Swank</u>
<b>Cinematography</b>	<u>Darran Tiernan</u>
<b>Edited by</b>	<u>Jane Rizzo</u>
<b>Music by</b>	<u>Nathan Barr</u>
<b>Production companies</b>	<u>Blumhouse Productions</u> <u>White Rabbit Productions</u>

but is also shot and killed. Dead Sexy falls into a spike pit and impales herself. Trucker steps onto a land mine, instantly killing him. Severely injured, Dead Sexy kills herself. Staten Island, Target, Vanilla Nice, and Big Red escape the killing field by climbing a barbed wire fence. Target is shot with an arrow and subsequently killed with a grenade. The other three find a service station, whose owners tell them they are in Arkansas. They realize their situation's similarity to the "Manorgate" conspiracy theory after discovering each were kidnapped from a different part of the country.

Big Red eats a poisoned doughnut, and the owners of the service station (Miranda and Julius), kill Staten Island with a shotgun while Vanilla Nice is suffocated with poison gas. They then clean up the station. Crystal arrives and after purchasing cigarettes, notes that they are too expensive for the region, takes the shotgun from under the counter and kills Julius and Miranda.

Inspecting the pickup truck outside and removing fake license plates, Crystal learns she is in Croatia. She also discovers a booby-trap wired to the driver's-side door and warns Gary, a conspiracy theorist podcaster. They board a train full of refugees, whom Gary believes to be crisis actors; the train is then raided by Croatian soldiers. When Gary tries to convince them of Manorgate and the refugees' perfidy, refugee "Crisis Mike" admits that he is indeed one of the hunters but the other refugees are innocent. The raid was unplanned, and he offers a head start for Gary's cooperation. Gary wrests a grenade from Mike and uses it to kill him. Crystal is taken to a refugee camp where she meets Don. Oliver, an envoy from the Croatian U.S. Embassy, arrives to extract them but during the drive Crystal becomes suspicious of his comments, kicks Oliver out of the car and runs him over.

She and Don find Gary's body in the trunk with a box marked "bribe money" and a map. Crystal tells Don the story of "the Jackrabbit and the Box Turtle", in which the Jackrabbit kills the Box Turtle after losing a race with him.<sup>[b]</sup> At Oliver's intended destination, Crystal kills Richard, Ted, Martin, Peter, Liberty, and injures their tactical consultant Sgt. Dale. Athena calls out to Don via radio, asking if he killed Crystal. Don refuses to disarm aiming his gun at Crystal, who kills him. She tortures Sgt. Dale to get Athena's location - revealing during their exchange that she previously served in Afghanistan - then kills him. In reality, Athena's group text exchange was a joke. However, it was leaked on the internet, creating furor over "Manorgate". Subsequently, the group's participants, whose careers were ruined, decide to make Manorgate a reality and abduct those responsible for spreading the conspiracy theory.

Athena had insisted that Crystal be included after seeing a social media post from Crystal that offended her. When they confront each other, Crystal claims that Athena has confused her with another woman from the same city in Mississippi, with a differently spelled middle name, Mae. The two fight and impale one another on the blades of a food processor; Athena dies, but Crystal sees a jackrabbit near the body and regains some strength. She cauterizes her wound, takes Athena's clothes and bag, and leaves on her jet, talking to the same flight attendant from the start of the film.

<b>Distributed by</b>	<u>Universal Pictures</u>
<b>Release dates</b>	March 11, 2020 (United Kingdom) March 13, 2020 (United States)
<b>Running time</b>	90 minutes <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$14 million <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Box office</b>	\$12.4 million <sup>[2][3]</sup>

## Cast

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- Betty Gilpin as Crystal May Creasey

- [Hilary Swank](#) as Athena Stone
- [Wayne Duvall](#) as Don
- [Ethan Suplee](#) as Gary
- [Emma Roberts](#) as "Yoga Pants"
- [Ike Barinholtz](#) as Moses / "Staten Island"
- [Sturgill Simpson](#) as "Vanilla Nice"
- [Kate Nowlin](#) as Molly / "Big Red"
- [Christopher Berry](#) as Boxer / "Target"
- [Justin Hartley](#) as "Trucker"
- [Sylvia Grace Crim](#) as Caroline / "Dead Sexy"
- [Walker Babington](#) as "Bandana Man"
- [Amy Madigan](#) as Miranda / "Ma"
- [Reed Birney](#) as Julius / "Pop"
- [Glenn Howerton](#) as Richard
- [Macon Blair](#) as Oliver / "Fauxnvoy"
- [Usman Ally](#) as "Crisis Mike"
- [Steve Coulter](#) as Ted the Doctor
- [Dean West](#) as Martin
- [Vince Pisani](#) as Peter
- [Teri Wyble](#) as Liberty
- [Steve Mokate](#) as Sgt. Dale
- [Jason Kirkpatrick](#) as Randy
- [J. C. MacKenzie](#) as Paul
- [Tadasay Young](#) as Nicole
- [Hannah Aline](#) as Flight Attendant
- [Jim Klock](#) as Captain O'Hara
- [Ariel Eliaz](#) as Dino
- [Alexander Babara](#) as Bojan

## Production

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### Development and casting

In March 2018, [Universal Pictures](#) acquired the rights to the film, and set [Craig Zobel](#) to direct it, from a script by Nick Cuse and [Damon Lindelof](#).<sup>[6][7]</sup> The original title of the script was initially reported as *Red State Vs. Blue State*, a reference to the red states and blue states.<sup>[4]</sup> Later, Universal issued a statement denying that the film had ever had it as its working title.<sup>[8]</sup> The elite hunters' reference to their quarry as "deplorables" is an allusion to the phrase "basket of deplorables," used by [Hillary Clinton](#) during the 2016 United States presidential election campaign to refer to half of the supporters of then-presidential candidate [Donald Trump](#).<sup>[9]</sup> An early draft of the script depicted working class conservatives as the film's heroes.<sup>[8]</sup>

In March 2019, Emma Roberts, Justin Hartley, Glenn Howerton, Ike Barinholtz, and Betty Gilpin were announced as being cast in the film.<sup>[10][11][12]</sup> In April 2019, Amy Madigan, Jim Klock, Charli Slaughter, Steve Mokate, and Dean West were added as well.<sup>[13][14]</sup> Hilary Swank's casting was announced in July.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Filming

Filming began on February 20, 2019, in New Orleans, and was completed on April 5.<sup>[16]</sup>

## Music

Nathan Barr composed the film score, replacing Heather McIntosh. Back Lot Music released the soundtrack.<sup>[17]</sup>

No.	Title	Length
1.	"Randy Is Awake"	3:20
2.	"Gagged In The Woods"	3:44
3.	"Weapon Rack"	2:33
4.	"Hail Of Fire"	2:54
5.	"Arrows and Grenades"	1:19
6.	"Constitutional Right"	2:23
7.	"Clean Up"	1:07
8.	"Not As It Seems"	3:15
9.	"Train Chase"	1:13
10.	"Jack Rabbit"	4:36
11.	"Snowball Dominates"	3:20
12.	"Manor Entrance"	2:11
13.	"Kitchen Fight"	5:04
14.	"Rabbit Released"	1:49
15.	"End Credits"	1:06
Total length:		39:54

<i><b>The Hunt (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)</b></i>	
Film score by <u>Nathan Barr</u>	
Released	September 25, 2020
Length	39:54
Label	<u>Back Lot Music</u>

## Release

*The Hunt* was theatrically released in the United States on March 13, 2020, by Universal Pictures. It was originally scheduled for release on September 27, 2019. It was, for a time, moved back to October 18, 2019, before shifting back to September 27.<sup>[18]</sup> On August 7, 2019, Universal announced that in the wake of the Dayton and El Paso mass shootings, they would be suspending the film's promotional campaign.<sup>[19]</sup> Several days later, the film was pulled from the studio's release schedule.<sup>[20][21]</sup>

In February 2020, the studio announced that the film would be released on March 13, 2020 (Friday the 13th) in the U.S., with a new trailer, partially in response to the success of the similarly controversial film *Joker*.<sup>[5][22][23]</sup> Producer Jason Blum stated in an interview that "not one frame was changed" since the delay and that it was "exactly the same movie".<sup>[24]</sup>

In mid-March 2020, movie theaters began to close because of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown measures.<sup>[25]</sup> Three days after the film's release, on March 16, 2020, Universal Pictures announced that the film would be available digitally through Premium VOD in the United States and Canada on March 20,

before the end of the usual 90-day theatrical run.<sup>[26]</sup> This was also the case for the studio's other films such as *The Invisible Man* and *Trolls World Tour*.<sup>[27][28]</sup>

The film was released in three Santikos Entertainment theater locations in San Antonio, Texas on May 1, 2020, after the chain reopened.<sup>[29]</sup>

## Reception

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### Initial reactions

*The Hollywood Reporter* wrote that there were a pair of test screenings for the film which garnered "negative reactions". The second screening was held on August 6, 2019, in Los Angeles, in which "audience members were again expressing discomfort with the politics" of it, an issue Universal had not foreseen (although other studios had initially passed on the script for that reason). In a statement to *Variety*, Universal pushed back on a report that test audiences had been uncomfortable with the film's political slant, and also countered claims that the script had originally had an explicitly political title.<sup>[30]</sup>

The film's trailer received backlash by some in the conservative media for portraying supporters of Donald Trump being hunted by liberals.<sup>[31]</sup> Trump also issued a tweet on August 9, 2019, criticizing the film industry while stating, "The movie coming out is made in order to inflame and cause chaos"; although Trump did not specify the name of the film, news outlets said it was most likely a reference to *The Hunt*.<sup>[31][32][33]</sup> Kyle Smith, writing in the *National Review*, argued that the film has a right-wing, anti-liberal tone that had been misinterpreted by conservative critics of the film's trailer.<sup>[34]</sup>

In an interview with *The Guardian*, director Craig Zobel stated he did not make the film in order to create controversy.<sup>[35]</sup>

### Box office

*The Hunt* grossed \$5.8 million in the United States and Canada, and \$6.6 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$12.4 million.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

In the United States and Canada, the film was released alongside *Bloodshot* and *I Still Believe*, and was projected to gross \$8–11 million from 3,028 theaters in its opening weekend.<sup>[36][37]</sup> The film made \$2.2 million on its first day, including \$435,000 from Thursday night previews. It went on to debut to \$5.3 million, finishing fifth. The weekend was also noteworthy for being the lowest combined grossing since October 1998, with all films totaling just \$55.3 million, in large part due to societal restrictions and regulations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>[38]</sup> With the closure of many theaters due to COVID-19, the film played almost exclusively at drive-in theaters in the following weeks; it made \$279,500 in its 11th weekend and \$217,500 in its 12th weekend.<sup>[39][40]</sup>

### Critical response

On review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes, the film holds an approval rating of 57% based on 276 reviews, with an average rating of 5.9/10. The site's critics consensus read, "*The Hunt* is successful enough as a darkly humorous action thriller, but it shoots wide of the mark when it aims for timely social satire."<sup>[41]</sup> On

Metacritic, the film has a weighted average score of 50 out of 100, based on 45 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews".<sup>[42]</sup> Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "C+" on an A+ to F scale.<sup>[43]</sup>

## Accolades

Year	Award	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
2021	<u>Critics' Choice Super Awards</u>	Best Action Movie	<i>The Hunt</i>	Nominated	[44][45]
		Best Actress in an Action Movie	Betty Gilpin	Won	
			Hilary Swank	Nominated	
		Best Villain in a Movie	Hilary Swank	Nominated	

## Literary references

The movie has been described as a "loose riff on Richard Connell's short story 'The Most Dangerous Game'".<sup>[46][47]</sup> The characters themselves allude to George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, with the main antagonist referring to the main protagonist as Snowball.<sup>[46]</sup>

## Notes

- Sources differ as to the exact genre of the film; some have classified it as a thriller<sup>[48][49][50]</sup> (specifically satirical thriller,<sup>[5][51][52][53]</sup> horror thriller,<sup>[54][55]</sup> action thriller,<sup>[56][57]</sup> and political thriller<sup>[58]</sup>), while one has called it an action comedy.<sup>[59]</sup> Others have called it a horror film<sup>[1][60][7][61][62]</sup> or horror satire.<sup>[63][64]</sup>
- A darker version of "The Tortoise and the Hare".

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## External links

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- [Official website \(<https://www.thehunt.movie/>\)](https://www.thehunt.movie/) 
  - *The Hunt* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8244784/>) at [IMDb](#)
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