

Expend4bles (also known as ***The Expendables 4***) is a 2023 American action comedy film^[4] that is the fourth installment in *The Expendables* franchise, following *The Expendables 3* (2014). The film stars an ensemble cast of largely action film stars including Jason Statham, Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson, Megan Fox, Dolph Lundgren, Tony Jaa, Iko Uwais, Randy Couture, Jacob Scipio, Levy Tran, Andy García, and Sylvester Stallone. It is directed by Scott Waugh from a screenplay by Kurt Wimmer, Tad Daggerhart, and Max Adams, based on a story by Spenser Cohen, Wimmer, and Daggerhart.

Expend4bles was released in mainland China on September 15, 2023, and in the United States a week later, by Lionsgate. The film received negative reviews from critics, who criticized the screenplay, plot, Stallone's limited screen time, direction, some of the new characters and visual effects, but praised Statham's performance and action sequences. It has grossed \$51 million worldwide against a budget of \$100 million, making it a box-office bomb. It was nominated for seven Golden Raspberry Awards, winning two, for Worst Supporting Actor and Worst Supporting Actress.

Plot

The Expendables are sent to Libya to prevent mercenary Suarto Rahmat from stealing nuclear warheads for a mysterious terrorist named Ocelot. The team is led by Barney Ross and formed by members Lee Christmas, Toll Road, and Gunner Jensen, with new members Easy Day and Galan. However, they are incapacitated when all of their vehicles are destroyed in the ensuing fight. When Rahmat shoots their plane down, the team finds what appears to be Barney's burned corpse in the wreckage, identified solely by his ring.

At Barney's memorial service, CIA operative Marsh reveals that the team will pursue Ocelot and Rahmat, but without Christmas, who jeopardized the mission trying to save Barney. He is replaced by Gina, his former lover, who also brings an operative named Lash into the team. The team travels to Asia, but is secretly tracked by Christmas, who had slipped Gina a

Expend4bles



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Scott Waugh
Screenplay by	Kurt Wimmer <div>Tad DaggerhartMax Adams</div>
Story by	Spenser Cohen <div>Kurt WimmerTad Daggerhart</div>
Based on	Characters by David Callaham
Produced by	Kevin King-Templeton <div>Les WeldonYariv LernerJason Statham</div>
Starring	Jason Statham <div>Curtis "50 Cent" JacksonMegan FoxDolph Lundgren</div>

tracking device earlier. Barney's apparent death opened a sealed file which states that there is an eyewitness that could identify Ocelot.

Ocelot plans to provoke World War III by letting the nuclear warheads explode in the Russian Far East, transporting them on a ship disguised as an American aircraft carrier. As the Expendables and Marsh board the ship, they are ambushed and taken hostage. Marsh is taken away to negotiate a prisoner-exchange for the eyewitness.

Meanwhile, Christmas travels to Thailand to recruit former Expendable Decha, who has turned towards pacifism but agrees to bring him to the ship to avenge Barney. As Christmas fights his way through the ship, Decha has a change of heart and helps him rescue the rest of the team. They launch an attack on Rahmat's forces, during which Christmas fights and kills him. However, Toll has been severely stabbed and needs immediate medical care.

During the prisoner exchange, Marsh kills the eyewitness and is revealed to be Ocelot, hoping to financially profit from igniting World War III. While the team leaves on Decha's boat to save Toll, Christmas stays behind to turn the ship around to avoid a global conflict. He confronts Marsh, who is killed by Barney, who surprises everyone by revealing that he faked his death, hoping to lure Ocelot out of hiding. They escape the nuclear explosion and celebrate with the team.

Cast

- Jason Statham as Lee Christmas: The team's knife expert and second in command.^[5] As Stallone was looking to pass the franchise's lead on to Statham, he did about 80% of all filming, oversaw post-production, and served as a producer.^[6]
- Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson as Easy Day, a new member of the Expendables and former Army Special Forces operator.^[7]
- Megan Fox as Gina, a CIA operator and member of the Expendables as well as Christmas' girlfriend.^[7]
- Dolph Lundgren as Gunner Jensen: A volatile member of the team, undone by years of combat stress.^[5] Lundgren stated that his character has been sober for several years now and is on a philosophical soul search.^[8]
- Tony Jaa as Decha Unai, a former member of the Expendables.
- Iko Uwais as Suarto Rahmat, a mercenary and the secondary antagonist working with Ocelot.^{[7][9]}
- Randy Couture as Toll Road: The team's demolitions expert.^[5]
- Jacob Scipio as Galan, a new member of the Expendables and son of former member Galgo. Originally, Antonio Banderas was slated to reprise his role as Galgo and his dialogue

Tony Jaa

Iko Uwais

Randy Couture

Jacob Scipio

Levy Tran

Andy García

Sylvester Stallone

Cinematography Tim Maurice-Jones

Edited by Michael J. Duthie

Music by Guillaume Roussel

Production companies Millennium Media
Templeton Media
Grobman Films
Media Capital Technologies

Distributed by Lionsgate

Release dates September 15, 2023 (Mainland China)
September 22, 2023 (United States)

Running time 104 minutes^[1]

Country United States

Language English

Budget \$100 million^[2]

Box office \$51.1 million^[3]

and character was rewritten into that of Galan when he turned out to be unavailable.^[10]

- Levy Tran as Lash, a CIA operator and a new member of the Expendables.
- Andy García as Marsh,^[7] a CIA officer who hires the Expendables for contract work. ^[11]
- Sylvester Stallone as Barney Ross: The leader of the Expendables. Stallone confirmed that the film would be his final appearance as Barney Ross, with Statham expecting to take over the series after his departure.^[12] Due to this, his role in the film was limited.^[6]

Additionally, Sheila Shah was cast as Mandy / Adele, alongside Eddie Hall as a bouncer.^{[5][13]}

Production

Development

After *The Expendables 3* (2014) underperformed at the box office, the future of the series was left in doubt^[14] and production stalled over several years. By November 2014, it was announced that the project is being developed with intent to retain its R-rating like the first two films.^[15] In December 2016, Sylvester Stallone announced that the fourth installment will be the final film in the series, while a scheduled tentative release date was set for 2018.^[16] By March 2017, Stallone had left the project and the franchise, due to creative differences over the script and direction for continuing the franchise.^[17] In January 2018, after vocal support from other cast members (including Arnold Schwarzenegger), Stallone announced his return to the series with a post to his social media platforms; confirming new developments on the fourth movie.^[18]

By August 2020, Vértice Cine announced their involvement as a production studio on the movie, alongside Lionsgate and Millennium Films. They also revealed that Patrick Hughes will return to the series as director.^[19] In November 2020, the president of Millennium Media, Jeffrey Greenstein, stated that the studio is continuing to work on *The Expendables 4* after various delays within the industry worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic.^[20] In August 2021, *The Hollywood Reporter* reported that Scott Waugh would be directing the film, replacing Hughes, as well as Statham serving as a producer of the film,^[5] while Stallone confirmed his involvement with the project, and that *The Expendables 4* was the same project as *The Expendables: A Christmas Story*, previously reported as a spin-off but in fact the film's working-title during development. Stallone further stated that production was set to commence in October of that year.^{[21][22]} According to Dolph Lundgren, the film had a budget of \$100 million.^[8]

Writing

In July 2018, Gregory Poirier announced his role as screenwriter.^[23] Production was tentatively scheduled to begin by April 2019, though it wasn't until July of that year that Stallone announced that he was continuing to work on the script for the project.^[24] The script was completed later that year, though negotiations with producers were ongoing.^[25] In August 2021, it was announced that Spenser Cohen wrote the most recent draft of the script with Max Adams, from a story by Cohen.^[5]

Casting

Over the years, multiple actors reported interest or claimed they were approached to star in a fourth installment. In March 2014, Pierce Brosnan stated that he had agreed with producer Avi Lerner to star in a fourth installment.^[26] By April of the same year, Sylvester Stallone revealed his first choice for the villain

was Jack Nicholson, while mentioning his interest in convincing Clint Eastwood to join the production.^{[27][28]} According to Jackie Chan, he was approached to star in the film by Stallone but was unsure about having limited screen time in an ensemble film, which is why he had turned down roles in the previous two entries.^[29] Dwayne Johnson publicly expressed interest to play a villainous character in a new installment during a 2014 Q&A^[30] and reiterated his interest to join the series in 2022.^[31] In May 2015, Hulk Hogan claimed that he was in talks with Stallone to play the film's main villain.^[14]

In June 2020, Jean-Claude Van Damme expressed interest in returning to the franchise, publicly pitching his idea of playing Claude Vilain, the brother to his villain character, Jean Vilain, from *The Expendables 2*.^[32] Despite discontent with how his character was handled in *The Expendables 3*, Arnold Schwarzenegger proclaimed he was interested in returning to the series if he liked the script.^[33] However; on May 29, 2023, Schwarzenegger confirmed that he would not be returning to the franchise, citing a general disinterest.^[34] While he was not included in the fourth movie, Kellan Lutz proclaimed interest to return in a fifth installment in an Instagram post.^[35] On the other hand, Terry Crews, who had starred in all previous films, refused to appear in any new entries after claiming he was sexually assaulted by Stallone's agent, Adam Venit, alleging he was pressured by producer Avi Lerner to drop the case if he wanted to stay in the series.^[36]

However, none of the actors mentioned above were subsequently cast, and the cast was announced to include returning stars Sylvester Stallone, Jason Statham, Randy Couture, and Dolph Lundgren, while new cast members were revealed to be Eddie Hall, Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson, Megan Fox, Tony Jaa, Andy García, Sheila Shah, Jacob Scipio and Levy Tran,^{[5][13]} with Iko Uwais playing the villain.^[9]

Filming

In August 2021, it was stated that principal photography would begin in October.^[5] Filming officially commenced on September 29, 2021.^{[37][38]} In October 2021, Stallone announced on social media that he had finished filming his scenes for the movie.^[12] The film was shot in London and Bulgaria and the Jackie Chan Stunt Team handled stunt choreography.^[39] In November 2021, production was shot in Greece, including the city of Thessaloniki.^[40] Members of the Greek Armed Forces were used as extras and alleged they were not compensated for their month-long official deployment, despite working overtime.^[41] On December 3, 2021, Tony Jaa confirmed filming had wrapped.^[42]

Post-production

The film title had been retitled *Expend4bles* by June 2023,^{[43][44][45]} a name that was widely ridiculed by commentators.^[a] When asked why they chose this title, producer Les Weldon stated that it had always been the filmmakers' desire while retaining *The Expendables*'s brand identity.^[51]

Music

On April 26, 2023, Guillaume Roussel announced that he would be composing the film's score, replacing Brian Tyler from the previous three installments.^[52]

Track listing

No.	Title	Length
1.	"The New Squad"	2:01

2.	"A Horrible Loss"	2:27
3.	"Here We Go"	1:50
4.	"Introducing Decha"	2:12
5.	"Marsh Runs the Show"	2:40
6.	"Trouble Ahead"	2:14
7.	"Bike, Explosions and Death"	3:13
8.	"Battle on the Deck"	2:12
9.	"The Final Duel"	1:41
10.	"Finding Ocelot"	1:12
11.	"Redemption"	1:57
12.	"Expend4bles Main Theme"	2:43
		Total length: 26:22

[53]

Release

Theatrical

Expend4bles was released in mainland China on September 15, 2023, and was theatrically released by Lionsgate Films on September 22, 2023.^[54] The film was originally scheduled to be released in 2022.^[55]

Home media

Expend4bles was released for digital platforms on October 13, 2023, followed by a Blu-ray, DVD, and 4K UHD release on November 21, 2023.^{[56][57]}

Marketing

In April 2022, the first standee posters for the film were unveiled at CinemaCon.^[58] The first teaser trailer footage was released exclusively to the attendees at Lionsgate's presentation at the convention.^{[59][60]} On June 6, 2023, the first poster for the film was released, with the first trailer releasing a day later.^[61] A second trailer advertising the film's R rating was released August 23, 2023.^[62]

Reception

Box office

As of November 5, 2023, *Expend4bles* has grossed \$16.7 million in the United States and Canada, and \$34.3 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$51 million.^[3]

In the United States and Canada, *Expend4bles* was initially projected to gross \$15–17 million from 3,518 theaters in its opening weekend.^[2] After making \$3.1 million on its first day (including \$750,000 from Thursday night previews), estimates were lowered, and it went on debut to \$8 million, finishing second behind holdover *The Nun II*.^[63] The film fell 69% to \$2.5 million in its second weekend, finishing in ninth place.^[64]

In China, the film opened to \$10.7 million, narrowly finishing first before a Chinese film.^[65]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 14% of 125 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 3.5/10. The website's consensus reads: "Solid work from Jason Statham and some halfway decent set pieces aren't enough to make up for *Expend4bles*' lackluster action and cheap-looking effects."^[66] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 30 out of 100, based on 33 critics, indicating "generally unfavorable" reviews.^{[67][68]} Audiences surveyed by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B−" on an A+ to F scale, the lowest of the series, while those polled at PostTrak gave it a 64% overall positive score.^[63]

Owen Gleiberman, writing for Variety, said: "This is true 21st-century trash: a movie in which the action itself is expendable."^[69] Referencing the poor CGI effects, Collider wrote that *Expend4bles* was "[o]ften resembling more of a mobile game than a movie";^[70] several reviewers compared it to *Hidden Strike*, another film by Waugh with similarly bad CGI.^{[70][71]} Simon Thompson of IGN voiced similar complaints, stating: "the special effects, [...] look either unfinished or just so bad that it's sad, [...] like they were ripped from the graphics package of a mid-to-low-budget video game from the early 2000s".^[72]

The acting, plot, dialogue, and violence were criticized by various reviewers. Thompson called the "clunky and uninspired dialogue" awful, concluding that the film was overall a "crushing disappointment that lacks any of the nostalgia, charisma, and charm that made the franchise appealing".^[72] Todd McCarthy of Deadline criticized that the movie was lazily executed, feeling that especially the final battle was an exact copy of *Meg 2*, another 2023 action film starring Statham.^[73]

Furthermore, multiple reviews criticized the overall weak cast in comparison to its predecessors, with many noting that the movie hardly retains the franchise's original selling point of featuring an all-star cast of action legends.^{[74][70][71]} A review in Paste noted that "Statham opts to accept a promotion to series lead" but added "Refashioning *The Expendables* into a Statham star vehicle only highlights the wrong kind of expendability from many of his long-time costars; why *can't* we just watch our man kick ass on his own or in various duos?"^[75]

An otherwise negative review at */Film* conceded however that the film might be the best of the franchise,^[76] while a review from Digital Spy stated while "the sense of cheesy throwback fun is restored in both the gleefully violent action and the script... It's absolutely not enough to save a movie that is two-

thirds boring, but it does at least elevate *The Expendables 4* above the irredeemable third movie. You'll be left on such an adrenaline high that you wouldn't be surprised if – like the aforementioned STI – the Expendables will be back for another round."^[71]

Accolades

Award / Film Festival	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
Golden Raspberry Awards	March 9, 2024	<u>Worst Picture</u>	Kevin King-Templeton, Les Weldon, Yariv Lerner, and <u>Jason Statham</u>	Nominated	[77]
		<u>Worst Director</u>	<u>Scott Waugh</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Worst Supporting Actor</u>	<u>Sylvester Stallone</u>	Won	
		<u>Worst Supporting Actress</u>	<u>Megan Fox</u>	Won	
		<u>Worst Screenplay</u>	<u>Kurt Wimmer</u> , <u>Tad Daggerhart</u> , <u>Max Adams</u> , and <u>Spenser Cohen</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Worst Screen Couple</u>	Any two "Merciless Mercenaries"	Nominated	
		<u>Worst Prequel, Remake, Rip-off or Sequel</u>	<i>Expend4bles</i>	Nominated	

Notes

a. Attributed to multiple sources:^{[46][47][48][49][50]}

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- Official website (<https://expendables.movie/>)
- *Expend4bles* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3291150/>) at IMDb

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