

The Strangers: Chapter 1

The Strangers: Chapter 1 is a 2024 American horror film that is the third film in *The Strangers* film series and the first installment of an intended relaunch in the form of a standalone trilogy; [a] all based on the original 2008 film. [8] It is directed by Renny Harlin, with a screenplay by Alan R. Cohen and Alan Freedland, from a story by Bryan Bertino. Madelaine Petsch and Froy Gutierrez star as a couple who come into contact with the three psychopathic masked strangers while on a road trip. Gabriel Basso and Ema Horvath also star.

Following the shutdown of Aviron Pictures, plans for future installments were diminished. Later, in August 2022, producer Roy Lee announced plans for three films to consecutively enter production beginning in September of the same year with Lionsgate producing. [9] By September, director Harlin was announced to be directing all three films in the trilogy. Production commenced in Bratislava, Slovakia from September to November 2022, with Petsch and Gutierrez announced to be leading.

The Strangers: Chapter 1 had its world premiere at Regal L.A. Live on May 8, 2024, and was theatrically released by Lionsgate Films on May 17, 2024. The film has grossed \$15 million worldwide and received largely mixed-to-negative reviews from critics, with criticism for its familiar take on its premise, use of jump scares, lack of suspense and its excessively similarities to the original film, and was deemed to be "unpleasant", "inferior" and "unnecessary" by some critics.

Chapter 2 is expected to be released later in 2024, and Chapter 3 on an unspecified date.

Plot

A man rushes through the woods but trips and is cornered by three murderers: Dollface, Pin-up Girl, and Scarecrow. The latter slaughters him with an axe.

Maya and her boyfriend Ryan drive across the country, celebrating their fifth year anniversary while Maya is looking to get a job in Portland, Oregon. Lost, they stop in a small town called Venus and eat at a local diner. The locals disturb them, which escalates further

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Theatrical release poster	
Directed by	Renny Harlin
Screenplay by	Alan R. Cohen
	Alan Freedland
Based on	The Strangers
	by <u>Bryan</u>
	Bertino
Produced by	Courtney
	Solomon
	Mark Canton
	Christopher
	Milburn
	Gary Raskin
	Alastair
	Birlingham
	Charlie
	Dombek
Starring	Madelaine
	Petsch
	Froy Gutierrez
	Gabriel Basso

when their car breaks down. The town's mechanic, Rudy, agrees to fix their car the next morning and they are forced to stay the night in an Airbnb.

A girl appears asking if Tamara is here, to which the couple responds no. Ryan goes back into town with a motorcycle to retrieve his inhaler which he left behind in the car and to grab food. Alone, Maya plays the piano and takes a shower afterwards, but is unaware of Scarecrow silently stalking her. The power shuts off and Dollface's sudden appearance horrifies her, leading her to hide. Ryan returns, comforting her and deeming it a ruse. Both eat, pausing when they notice blood dripping above from a dead chicken. Both are attacked by Scarecrow who breaks down the front door.

Both flee outside to escape with the motorcycle but it is blown up by Scarecrow. Horrified, both rush back inside, grabbing weapons for defense. Using the home's crawl space, both narrowly avoid being found as Maya accidentally strikes her hand on a nail. Once they make it to the shed, Ryan finds a shotgun and uses it to rescue Maya from another attack.

Circling around to the porch, Ryan mistakenly shoots the Airbnb's owner, believing it to be one of the strangers. They pocket his car keys and attempt to drive away with his vehicle but are rammed into by Scarecrow driving a truck. Maya runs away into the woods but Ryan is unable to move as his leg is stuck. After narrowly avoiding discovery from Dollface, Maya calls 911. The call fails due to a lack of service and, during the call, Maya comes across a corpse. Horrified, she goes deeper into the woods but is discovered

	Ema Horvath
Cinematography	José David Montero
Edited by	Michelle Harrison
Music by	Justin Burnett Òscar Senén
Production companies	Lionsgate Fifth Element Productions Stream Media Sherborne Media LipSync
Distributed by	Lionsgate
Release dates	May 8, 2024 (<u>L.A. Live</u>) May 17, 2024 (United States)
Running time	91 minutes $^{[1]}$
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$8.5 million ^[2]
Box office	\$15.1 million ^[3]

by Dollface and is knocked out. Ryan searches for Maya and holds Pin-Up Girl at gunpoint, demanding information about Maya's location. During the altercation, Scarecrow knocks him out.

Both wake up tied to chairs in the home. In their last moments, Ryan offers to marry Maya, which she accepts. Ryan is fatally stabbed and his chair is knocked over, causing him to choke on his own blood. Maya asks for the motive to which Pin-Up Girl replies, "because you're here". Maya is then stabbed and knocked over, too. Police sirens are faintly heard and the strangers drive away. Maya awakes in a hospital bed, barely surviving the night.

Maya slowly rises from the bed and doesn't notice Scarecrow lying next to her.

Cast

- Madelaine Petsch as Maya
- Froy Gutierrez as Ryan
- Rachel Shenton as Debbie
- Gabriel Basso as Gregory
- Ema Horvath as Shelly

- Richard Brake as Sheriff Rotter
- Ella Bruccoleri as Jasmine^[10]
- Matúš Lajčák as Scarecrow
- Olivia Kreutzova as Dollface
- Letizia Fabbri as Pin-Up Girl

Production

Development

In August 2022, producer Roy Lee announced plans for three films to consecutively enter production beginning in September of the same year. Renny Harlin was revealed as director for at least one of the films, though he was in negotiations to direct each of the films. The trilogy was produced by Lionsgate Films, Fifth Element Productions, and Frame Film, and will be distributed by Lionsgate.

Later in 2022, Harlin was announced as director on the three upcoming films. The first of the new trilogy was from a script written by Alan R. Cohen and Alan Freedland and story by <u>Bryan Bertino</u>. [12][14] <u>Courtney Solomon</u>, <u>Mark Canton</u>, <u>Christopher Milburn</u>, Gary Raskin, Charlie Dombeck, and Alastair Birlingham were confirmed as producers on the three films. [12] The new trilogy is a relaunch of the series with producer Canton stating that the trilogy is intended to introduce new audiences to "world of *The Strangers*". Solomon stated that when they began the project the intent was to tell a bigger story than before, but also to "expand that world". [12] The producer describes the three films as a "character study", compared to the previous two films. It was later clarified by the filmmaker and the actors, that the new trilogy of films takes place in the same universe as the original two films. [15][16]

Casting

In September 2022, <u>Madelaine Petsch</u>, <u>Froy Gutierrez</u> and <u>Gabriel Basso</u> were cast. <u>[17]</u> In October 2022, <u>Ema Horvath</u> was announced to be a part of the cast. <u>[18]</u> The following month, <u>Rachel Shenton</u> joined the cast. <u>[19]</u>

Filming

<u>Principal photography</u> on all three films took place in <u>Bratislava</u>, <u>Slovakia</u> over 52 days from September 2022 to November 2022. [17][20][21] Harlin told <u>Entertainment Weekly</u> that it was "the challenge of a lifetime, but I also really embraced it. On a Monday morning, I could be shooting the second chapter, and Monday afternoon I could be shooting the first chapter, and Tuesday morning I could be shooting the third chapter. it was incredibly demanding for the actors, for the continuity in terms of the make-up and wardrobe, and for my director of photography, because we wanted to create a visual language that develops so that the movies get bigger, more epic, as we go [on]. It just kept all of our juices pumping all the time". [22]

Release

<u>Lionsgate</u> hosted the world premiere at <u>Regal</u> <u>L.A. Live</u> on May 8, 2024. [23] It was released in theaters on May 17, 2024. [16]

Reception

Box office

In the United States and Canada, *The Strangers: Chapter 1* was released alongside <u>IF</u> and <u>Back to Black</u>, and was projected to gross \$7–9 million from 2,856 theaters in its opening weekend. After making \$5 million on its first day (including \$1.2 million from Thursday night previews), the film went on to debut to \$12 million, slightly over-performing and finishing in third behind *IF* and <u>Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes. [24]</u>

Critical response

On the <u>review aggregator</u> website <u>Rotten Tomatoes</u>, 17% of 75 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 4.1/10. The website's consensus reads: "Lacking the chilling suspense of the original *The Strangers* and proving to be just unpleasant, *Chapter 1* closes the book on itself." <u>Metacritic</u>, which uses a <u>weighted average</u>, assigned the film a score of 43 out of 100, based on 22 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews. <u>Audiences polled by CinemaScore</u> gave the film an average grade of "C" on an A+ to F scale, the same as *Prey at Night*, while those polled by PostTrak gave it a 50% overall positive score.

Mark Olsen of the *Los Angeles Times* said "The first *Strangers* movie had an air of creepy suspense, as the besieged couple often looked off into blank space, bringing an unnerving tension to what was often nothing. The new film never conjures the same feelings of rustic menace". [27] Michael Nordine of *Variety* wrote "It's also off to a promising enough start, especially as the end of *Chapter 1* makes it clear that the next two entries will be continuations of the story introduced here rather than standalone narratives" and that "Time will tell, but for now there's enough reason for devotees of the series to be cautiously optimistic — and even a little curious — about the next two chapters". [28]

Sequels

Two sequels were filmed concurrently with *Chapter 1*, with *Chapter 2* expected to be released in late 2024. [29] Harlin stated they were intended to be neither a remake nor reboot, and that the tone was going to be close to the first film. [30] Harlin said in an interview: "We, of course, shot them on top of each other and mixed up, like movies are always made. But we had to keep in mind that this is one story arc. It is one 4.5 hour movie, and the first movie is a first act. It sets up the characters and the terror and the Killers and our main character, who will survive the first movie, but then go on a journey for the next two". [29]

In an interview with <u>The Hollywood Reporter</u>, Harlin stated *Chapter 2* and *Chapter 3* will go in different directions. The sequels will cover Petsch's character over a span of four days after her encounter. [20]

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Notes

a. Following some conflicting reports indicating otherwise, [4] producer Courtney Solomon restated that the trilogy is neither a prequel nor remake, [5] while the director and actors also stated that the trilogy takes place within the same continuity as the original movies. [6][7]

External links

- Official website (https://thestrangers.movie)
- The Strangers: Chapter 1 (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt22050754/) at IMDb

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