

Malignant (2021 film)

Malignant is a 2021 American horror film directed by James Wan from a screenplay by Akela Cooper, based on a story by Wan, Ingrid Bisu, and Cooper. The film stars Annabelle Wallis as a woman who begins to have visions of people being murdered, only to realize the events are happening in real life. Maddie Hasson, George Young, Michole Briana White, and Jacqueline McKenzie also star.

Malignant was theatrically released in the United States on September 10, 2021, by Warner Bros. Pictures and was also available to stream on HBO Max. The film grossed \$34 million and received mostly positive reviews from critics. [6][7]

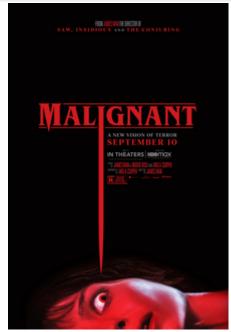
Plot

In 1993, Dr. Florence Weaver and her colleagues Victor Fields and John Gregory treat a violent, disturbed patient named Gabriel at Simion Research Hospital. Gabriel, who is able to control electricity and broadcast his thoughts via speakers, escapes captivity and kills several staff members. Weaver determines that he is a lost cause and the "cancer" must be removed.

Twenty-seven years later, Madison Mitchell, a pregnant woman living in Seattle, returns home to her abusive husband Derek. During an argument about her multiple previous miscarriages, Derek smashes Madison's head against a wall, drawing blood. After locking herself in her room, she has a nightmare of a person entering their house and killing Derek. When she wakes up, she goes downstairs and finds Derek's actual corpse before being knocked unconscious by the intruder.

Madison awakens in a hospital where her sister, Sydney, tells her that her unborn baby did not survive. After being interviewed by police detective Kekoa Shaw and his partner Regina Moss, Madison returns home. Madison reveals to Sydney that she was adopted at eight years old and has no memories of her prior life. The killer kidnaps a woman running a Seattle Underground tour and Madison continues to

Malignant



Theatrical release poster

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Directed by	James Wan
Screenplay by	Akela Cooper
Story by	James Wan
	Ingrid Bisu
	Akela Cooper
Produced by	James Wan
	Michael Clear
Starring	Annabelle Wallis
	Maddie Hasson
	George Young
	Michole Briana
	White
Cinematography	Michael Burgess
Edited by	Kirk Morri
Music by	Joseph Bishara
Production companies	New Line Cinema
	Atomic Monster
	Starlight Media Inc.
The state of the s	

bleed at the back of her head. She later has another vision in which she helplessly watches Weaver being brutally bludgeoned by the killer.

Shaw and Moss discover a photo of Madison as a child in Weaver's house and learn that Weaver specialized in reconstructive surgery. After having a vision of the killer murdering Fields, Madison and Sydney approach the police for help. The killer calls Madison, revealing himself to be Gabriel. Madison and Sydney visit their mother and learn that Gabriel was Madison's childhood imaginary friend, but may also be someone she knew before her adoption. Shaw finds a link between the doctors and Madison hidden in Weaver's records, leading him to discover the murder of Gregory.

	My Entertainment Inc.
Distributed by	Warner Bros. Pictures
Release date	September 10, 2021
Running time	111 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$40 million ^[1]
Box office	\$34.9 million ^{[2][3]}

The detectives enlist a <u>psychiatric hypnotherapist</u> to unlock Madison's memories. Madison recalls that her birth name is Emily May and that Gabriel almost led her to kill Sydney in the womb. After Sydney was born, Madison forgot about Gabriel. The kidnapped woman escapes and falls from the attic of Madison's home, revealing that Gabriel was secretly living there. Believing Madison to be the culprit behind the murders, the police arrest her and place her in a <u>holding cell</u>. The kidnapped woman, revealed to be Madison's biological mother Serena, is taken to a nearby hospital.

Sydney goes to the now-abandoned Simion Research Hospital and learns that Gabriel is Madison's <u>parasitic twin</u> brother who appeared as a half-formed child facing out of her back. Weaver surgically removed most of Gabriel's body, but when she could not destroy his brain, she sealed him inside Madison's <u>cranium</u> where he remained dormant until Derek hit her head against the wall. Once freed, Gabriel could take control of Madison's body at will to commit the murders.

After being attacked by the other inmates in the holding cell, Gabriel bursts out of Madison's skull and slaughters them along with most of the precinct's officers before going to the hospital where Serena is recovering. He is intercepted by Sydney and Shaw, but quickly immobilizes both of them. Sydney deduces that Gabriel caused Madison's miscarriages by feeding on her fetuses to gain strength. As Gabriel attempts to kill Sydney for replacing him in Madison's life, Madison wakes up and takes back control of her body. In a black mindscape, she subconsciously locks an enraged Gabriel behind bars and says she will be ready after he promises to escape one day. With his influence gone, Gabriel sinks back inside her head.

Back in the hospital, Madison lifts the bed pinning Sydney and remarks that even though they are not related by blood, she will always love her as a sister. Serena looks on happily while the electric humming that accompanied Gabriel's attacks is faintly heard.

Cast

- Annabelle Wallis as Madison Mitchell
 - Mckenna Grace as young Madison
- Maddie Hasson as Sydney Lake
- George Young as Kekoa Shaw
- Jacqueline McKenzie as Dr. Florence Weaver
- Michole Briana White as Regina Moss

- Jake Abel as Derek Mitchell
- Ingrid Bisu as CST Winnie
- Jean Louisa Kelly as Jane Doe / Serena
 - Madison Wolfe as young Serena
- Susanna Thompson as Jeanne
- Christian Clemenson as Dr. Victor Fields
- Amir Aboulela as Dr. Gregory
- Ruben Pla as Officer Rubin
- Paula Marshall as Beverly
- Zoë Bell as Scorpion
- Dan Ramos as Basco
- Shaunte Johnson as Beta
- Natalia Safran as Nurse Betty
- Ray Chase as Gabriel (voice)
 - Marina Mazepa as Gabriel (physical performer)
- Andy Bean as Frank
- Patricia Velásquez as Nurse Velasquez



Annabelle Wallis stars as Madison Mitchell

Production

Development

In July 2019, it was announced that <u>James Wan</u> would direct the film at <u>New Line Cinema</u> from a screenplay by <u>Akela Cooper</u> and <u>J. T. Petty</u>, based on an original story he wrote alongside his wife <u>Ingrid Bisu</u>. Cooper ultimately received sole screenplay credit, with Wan, Bisu, and Cooper sharing "story by" billing; Wan served as a producer alongside Michael Clear under his <u>Atomic Monster</u> banner. That September, Wan officially revealed the title as *Malignant*, with <u>Bloody Disgusting</u> reporting the film would be in line with a <u>giallo film</u>. Bisu's fascination with medical anomalies led her to read about <u>Edward Mordake</u>, which inspired the Gabriel character.

On October 24, 2019, Wan clarified that the film is not based on his graphic novel <u>Malignant Man</u>, stating, "It's definitely not a superhero film [Malignant Man is a superhero]. *Malignant* is an original thriller not based off any existing IP." He cited the influence of Italian horror filmmaker <u>Dario Argento</u>, particularly his films <u>Tenebrae</u> (1982), <u>Phenomena</u> (1985), and <u>Trauma</u> (1993). [12]



Director James Wan

Casting

In August 2019, <u>Annabelle Wallis</u>, <u>George Young</u>, and <u>Jake Abel</u> were cast in the film. [13][14][15] In September 2019, <u>Maddie Hasson</u>, <u>Michole Briana White</u>, and <u>Jacqueline McKenzie</u> were also added, [16][17] as was Mckenna Grace in March 2020. [18]

Filming

Production began on September 24, 2019, in Los Angeles 19[20] and concluded on December 8, 2019,

Release

Malignant was theatrically released in a few international markets (including France) on September 1, 2021, and then in the United States on September 10, distributed by Warner Bros. Pictures under the New Line Cinema banner. [23] It was originally scheduled for release on August 14, 2020, [24] but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the film was removed from the release schedule in March 2020. [25] As part of its plan for their 2021 films, Warner Bros. streamed Malignant simultaneously on HBO Max for one month, after which the film was removed until the normal home media release schedule period. [26] The film is also released at the video-on-demand through digital streaming on October 22, 2021, and on Blu-ray and DVD on November 30, 2021. It was released on 4K on May 24, 2022. [27]

Reception

Audience viewership

According to <u>Samba TV</u>, the film was streamed by 753,000 U.S. households in its first weekend. <u>[28]</u> By the end of its first month, the film had been watched in over 1.6 million U.S. households. <u>[29]</u>

Box office

Malignant grossed \$13.4 million in the United States and Canada, and \$21.5 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$34.9 million. [2][3]

In the United States and Canada, *Malignant* was projected to gross \$5–9 million from 3,500 theaters in its opening weekend. It made \$2 million on its first day, and went on to debut to \$5.6 million, finishing third at the box office. It dropped 51% to \$2.7 million in its second weekend, finishing fifth.

Critical response

On <u>review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes</u>, the film has an approval rating of 76% based on 172 reviews, with an average rating of 6.3/10. The website's critics consensus reads, "Although *Malignant* isn't particularly scary, director James Wan's return to horror contains plenty of gory thrills—and a memorably bonkers twist." On <u>Metacritic</u>, the film has a weighted average score of 51 out of 100 based on 23 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews". Audiences polled by <u>CinemaScore</u> gave the film an average grade of "C" on an A+ to F scale, while <u>PostTrak</u> reported 59% of audience members gave it a positive score, with 38% saying they would definitely recommend it.

Andrew Barker of *Variety* wrote, "It's hard to say whether a film this bonkers 'works' or not, but it's impossible not to admire both the craft and the extravagant bad taste behind its go-for-broke energy." [34] Meagan Navarro of *Bloody Disgusting* rated the film 3.5 out of 5 and said, "It's silly, it's outrageous, and it's a blast." [35] Josh Millican of *Dread Central* gave the film 4 out of 5 and called it "the best horror movie of the year." [36] Michael Gingold of *Rue Morgue* described the film as having "WTF energy" but criticized the implausibility of the plot, saying, "Too often, it's hard to know whether Wan and co. are kidding or not." [37] A.A. Dowd of *The A.V. Club* gave the film a grade of B, describing it as "a zany psychodramatic creepfest that, here and there, veers into gory action hilarity, as though Pazuzu had taken over the body of a Batman movie". [38] Charles Bramesco of *The Guardian* gave the film a score of 3 out of 5 stars, writing: "around the midway point... the script shifts gears into an agreeable register of B-movie lunacy, but it takes too much of the nearly two-hour run time to get there". [39]

<u>Frank Scheck</u> of <u>The Hollywood Reporter</u> was more critical, writing: "The film might have been outrageously bizarre fun if it displayed any humor or ironic self-consciousness, but everything is played so straight that viewers will find themselves laughing not with the film, but at it." <u>[40]</u> Lindsey Bahr of the <u>Associated Press</u> gave the film a score of 1 out of 4 stars, describing it as "simply ridiculous" and writing: "If you must see *Malignant*, a theater might honestly be the best bet. That way at least you can laugh along in utter shock with your fellow theater-goers." <u>[41]</u> Simon Abrams of <u>RogerEbert.com</u> also gave the film 1 out of 4 stars, describing it as "a horror movie that is as long as it is underwhelming." <u>[42]</u>

Some critics suggested the film was intended as parody or <u>self-parody</u>. [43][44][45][46] Ian Linn of *Study Breaks* wrote, "*Malignant* seems to take these tropes of Wan's earlier works to such extreme lengths it becomes difficult to see them as anything other than deliberate self-parody." Herpai Gergely of *theGeek* wrote, "Seeing *Malignant*, one almost wonders if, on the contrary, this joker is not knowingly laughing in the face of these new audiovisual actors. Indeed, everything in the film rhymes with parody."

About the reception, James Wan said:

I would tell people that knowing as little as possible about Malignant is the best way to go into the film. We were also very conscious about the trailer not giving too much away. I purposely wanted the movie to feel like you were coming into a typical James Wan-type horror film, only to then pull the rug out from underneath you toward the end of the movie. And that either turned people off or it made them completely reassess the film in a different light. So it got a very strong reaction. [47]

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