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Fair Play (2023 film)

Fair Play is a 2023 American erotic psychological thriller film written and directed by Chloe Domont in her feature directorial debut. Starring Phoebe Dynevor, Alden Ehrenreich, Eddie Marsan, and Rich Sommer, the film focuses on a young couple whose relationship begins to unravel following an unexpected promotion at a cutthroat hedge fund firm. Rian Johnson was an executive producer on the film.

Fair Play premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival on January 20, and was released in select theaters on September 29, 2023, before its streaming release by Netflix on October 6. The film received positive reviews from critics.

Plot

Emily Meyers and Luke Edmunds, analysts at the cutthroat Manhattan hedge fund One Crest Capital, are in a secret passionate relationship unbeknownst to their coworkers. Luke proposes to Emily while at his brother's wedding, and she happily accepts. The next day, one of the company's portfolio managers is fired. Emily tells Luke she overheard her colleagues mentioning Luke being considered as a replacement and they celebrate that night. However, at a late-night meeting with Campbell, the firm's CEO, Emily learns she will be receiving the promotion. Emily reluctantly breaks the news to Luke, but he expresses his support.

As Emily settles into her new job, Luke's resentment over not being promoted becomes increasingly apparent, leading to tensions in his relationship with Emily. Luke becomes consumed with the work of a self-help guru coaching people on how to assert themselves in the workplace. When Emily questions his choice to spend \$3,000 on the course, Luke suggests she could benefit from becoming more assertive, to which she becomes defensive. Luke rebuffs Emily's attempts to initiate sex and goes to bed.

While out for drinks with Campbell and Paul, a senior executive at the fund, Emily learns Campbell is seeking to get rid of Luke, considering him ineffectual. Emily attempts to advocate more for Luke in the workplace, but it backfires when Luke makes a poor trading call that loses the company

<i>Fair Play</i>	
 <div>Theatrical release poster with original streaming release date</div>	
Directed by	<u>Chloe Domont</u>
Written by	Chloe Domont
Produced by	<u>Tim White</u> <div><u>Trevor White</u><div>Allan Mandelbaum</div>Leopold Hughes</div> Ben LeClair
Starring	<u>Phoebe Dynevor</u> <div><u>Alden Ehrenreich</u><div><u>Eddie Marsan</u><div><u>Rich Sommer</u></div></div></div>
Cinematography	Menno Mans
Edited by	Franklin Peterson
Music by	Brian McOmber
Production companies	<u>T-Street</u> <div>Star Thrower Entertainment</div> <u>MRC</u>

\$25 million, leading to Campbell insulting her. Luke attempts to rectify himself by feeding Emily insider information confirming the alleged collapse of a company whose stock the fund can short. Concerned about the trade being illegal, Emily recommends Campbell to short another company, which proves successful. When the short sale is closed, Emily receives a \$575,000 commission check. Emily considers celebrating her success with Luke, who is in her office after hours to discuss strategies for future trades but opts to go to a strip club with her male co-workers. She comes home intoxicated while Luke, after seeing the check, has no interest in having sex with her.

Distributed by	<u>Netflix</u>
Release dates	January 20, 2023 (<u>Sundance</u>) September 29, 2023 (United States)
Running time	113 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English

When another portfolio manager is fired the next day, Luke wants Emily to recommend him for the role, but she hints Campbell is not interested in promoting him. Luke goes to Campbell's office and makes an elaborate speech pledging his loyalty to him, only to learn Campbell has already hired a new portfolio manager. That night, Emily learns her mother had planned a surprise engagement party for them that Friday. A drunken Luke accuses Emily of stealing his job, but Emily reveals Campbell wanted to fire him, leading Luke to storm out.

The next day, while Emily, Campbell, and Paul pitch to overseas investors, Luke barges into the conference room intoxicated and causes a scene, berating Campbell for denying him a promotion and revealing his relationship with Emily, which has violated company policy since her promotion. An infuriated Emily is unable to reach Luke over the phone, only to find him at the engagement party. The two argue in front of their families, and Emily smashes a bottle on Luke's head when he suggests she had traded sexual favors for the promotion. Emily retreats to a bathroom where Luke finds her and the two argue before having sex. During sex, Luke forces Emily forward twice, causing her face to slam against the bathroom counter. Emily tells Luke to stop, but he does not. The next morning, to protect her job, Emily tells Campbell she was being stalked by Luke and they were never in a relationship.

Emily returns home to find Luke there, having packed up his belongings and planning to move in with his brother. Infuriated by his nonchalant attitude and demanding an apology for raping her, Emily threatens Luke with a knife. She attacks Luke with the knife until he apologizes and breaks down crying. Luke begs for her forgiveness and Emily orders him to leave before dropping the knife and smiling.

Cast

- [Phoebe Dynevor](#) as Emily Meyers
- [Alden Ehrenreich](#) as Luke Edmunds
- [Eddie Marsan](#) as Campbell
- [Rich Sommer](#) as Paul
- [Sebastian de Souza](#) as Rory
- [Sia Alipour](#) as Arjun
- [Brandon Bassir](#) as Dax
- [Geraldine Somerville](#) as Emily's mother
- [Patrick Fischler](#) as Robert Bynes

Production

The film was announced in December 2021, with [Chloe Domont](#) writing and directing, and [Alden Ehrenreich](#) and [Phoebe Dynevor](#) set to star in the film.^[2] Production began in January 2022 in [Serbia](#).^[3] In February, [Sebastian de Souza](#), [Eddie Marsan](#) and [Rich Sommer](#) joined the cast.^{[4][5][6] [7]}

Release

Fair Play was released in [select theaters](#) on September 29, 2023, before streaming on [Netflix](#) on October 6, 2023.^[8] The film's streaming release was originally scheduled for October 13, before it was moved up.^[9]

The film premiered at the [2023 Sundance Film Festival](#) on January 20, 2023.^[10] Shortly after, Netflix acquired distribution rights to the film, after a [bidding war](#) between at least seven companies including [Searchlight Pictures](#) and [Neon](#), for \$20 million.^{[11][12]} It had its international premiere at the [48th Toronto International Film Festival](#) on September 11, 2023.^{[13][14]}

For its European premiere, the film was shown in the section *Feature Film Competition* of the 19th [Zurich Film Festival](#) in late September 2023.^[15]

Reception

Critical response

On the [review aggregator](#) website [Rotten Tomatoes](#), 85% of 231 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7.4/10. The website's consensus reads: "With assured style that's at times reminiscent of the best '90s nail-biting thrillers, *Fair Play* juxtaposes premarital disharmony with greed and gender politics in the cutthroat finance world."^[16] [Metacritic](#), which uses a [weighted average](#), assigned the film a score of 73 out of 100, based on 47 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.^[17]

In his review for *Variety*, [Owen Gleiberman](#) lauded Domont's screenplay and direction, as well the cast performances, writing that "*Fair Play*, while full of sex, money, corporate backstabbing, and a lot of other things that are fun to watch, really is a good little movie."^[18]

Describing it as a "steamy, razor-wired, barking-mad movie" in his review for *IndieWire*, [Ryan Lattanzio](#) assigned the film a grade of A– and praised the screenplay and cast performances (particularly Ehrenreich's).^[19]

[Kevin Maher](#) of the *Times* gave it a score of four out of five, stating: "There's something bracingly modern yet deliberately old-fashioned about this guilty pleasure thriller set in the aspirational world of Manhattan high finance."^[20]

Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
Sundance Film Festival	January 27, 2023	Grand Jury Prize – Dramatic	<i>Fair Play</i>	Nominated	^[21]
Zurich Film Festival	October 8, 2023	Best International Feature Film		Nominated	^[22]
Indiana Film Journalists Association	December 18, 2023	Best Picture		Nominated	^[23]
		Best Original Screenplay	Chloe Domont	Nominated	
		Best Lead Performance	Phoebe Dynevor	Nominated	
		Best Editing	Franklin Peterson	Nominated	
		Breakout of the Year	Chloe Domont	Nominated	
Astra Film and Creative Awards	January 6, 2024	Best First Feature		Nominated	^[24]

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External links

- *Fair Play* (<https://www.netflix.com/title/81674326>) on Netflix
 - *Fair Play* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt16304446/>) at IMDb
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