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Monkey Man (film)

Monkey Man is a 2024 action thriller film directed and produced by Dev Patel in his directorial debut, who also co-wrote the screenplay with Paul Angunawela and John Collee. The film stars Patel, Sharlto Copley, Pitobash Tripathy, Vipin Sharma, Sikandar Kher, Adithi Kalkunte, Sobhita Dhulipala, Ashwini Kalsekar, Makarand Deshpande, Jatin Malik, and Zakir Hussain.

Monkey Man premiered at South by Southwest on March 11, 2024, and was released theatrically in the United States and Canada by Universal Pictures on April 5, 2024. The film received generally positive reviews from critics and grossed \$34 million worldwide against a \$10 million budget.

Plot

In a forest village in India, Kid lives with his mother Neela and is inspired by the tales of Hanuman that she regales him with. Baba Shakti, a ruthless spiritual guru in the nearby city of Yatana, sends Rana Singh, the corrupt police chief, to evict the villagers and acquire their land. The village is massacred, but Neela is able to hide Kid before Rana kills her and sets her body on fire. Kid's futile attempts to save her leave his hands terribly burned and scarred.

Years later, Kid earns a meek living in Yatana as a monkey-masked fighter at Tiger's Temple, an underground boxing club, where he is incentivised to lose. He intends to exact revenge on Baba, now an influential political figure, and Rana, who frequents Kings, a luxury brothel run by Queenie Kapoor. He obtains a job in the kitchen, where he uses the alias "Bobby" from a cleaning product and befriends Alphonso, a gangster working for Queenie. Kid helps Alphonso win a large bet on a bout at Tiger's Temple in exchange for promotion to a waiter to access the VIP floor.

He buys a gun and trains a stray dog to carry it past security. He serves Rana cocaine spiked with powdered bleach in order to confront and shoot him in the bathroom. This assassination attempt fails, forcing Kid to fight his way out of the building. Fleeing in Alphonso's supercharged auto rickshaw, he crashes and is arrested, but escapes. The chase ends when he is shot by police and falls

Monkey Man



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Dev Patel</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Dev Patel</u> <u>Paul Angunawela</u> <u>John Collee</u>
Story by	<u>Dev Patel</u>
Produced by	<u>Dev Patel</u> <u>Jomon Thomas</u> <u>Jordan Peele</u> <u>Win Rosenfeld</u> <u>Ian Cooper</u> <u>Basil Iwanyk</u> <u>Erica Lee</u> <u>Christine Haebler</u> <u>Anjay Nagpal</u>
Starring	<u>Dev Patel</u> <u>Sharlto Copley</u> <u>Pitobash</u>

into the river. He is rescued by Alpha, the keeper of Ardhanarishvara, a local temple whose hijra community is being targeted by Baba's growing political movement.

Learning that he is now a wanted fugitive, Kid recovers at the temple. Alpha guides him through a hallucinogenic experience in which he is able to confront the trauma of his mother's death. Now with a newfound purpose, Kid trains in combat to fight for both himself and for the marginalized. When the hijra's sanctuary is threatened, he returns to fight at Tiger's Temple, placing a large bet on himself. He emerges victorious with enough money to save Alpha's temple. During Diwali, Baba's candidate is elected and their nationalist party celebrates at Kings. Kid bleaches his monkey mask white and fights his way inside with improvised weapons, joined by Alpha and her warriors.

Queenie attempts to shoot Kid, but is killed by Sita, one of the exploited prostitutes and Kid's co-worker. Using Queenie's severed thumb to access the penthouse, Kid confronts Rana and beats him to death in a fistfight. He reaches Baba, who wounds him with blades hidden in his *padukas*. Kid kills Baba using the same blades against him. Having finally avenged his mother's death, Kid collapses from his injuries, reminiscing about Neela and his devotion to Hanuman.

Cast

- Dev Patel as Kid / Bobby / Monkey Man
 - Jatin Malik as Young Kid
- Sharlto Copley as Tiger
- Pitobash as Alphonso
- Vipin Sharma as Alpha
- Sikandar Kher as Rana Singh
- Sobhita Dhulipala as Sita^[8]
- Ashwini Kalsekar as Queenie Kapoor
- Adithi Kalkunte as Neela
- Makarand Deshpande as Baba Shakti
- Zakir Hussain as a hijra tabla maestro

Production

On October 29, 2018, it was reported that Dev Patel would make his directorial debut with an action thriller film titled *Monkey Man*, which he co-wrote with Paul Angunawela and John Collee, and was set to star in.^{[9][10][11]} Initially, Patel tried to recruit previous collaborator Neill Blomkamp to direct but Blomkamp declined and suggested he direct it himself.^{[12][13]} Speaking of his work on the

	<div><div><div><div><div></div><div>Vipin Sharma</div></div><div><div></div><div>Sikandar Kher</div></div></div><div><div><div></div><div>Adithi Kalkunte</div></div><div><div></div><div>Sobhita</div></div></div><div><div><div></div><div>Dhulipala</div></div><div><div></div><div>Ashwini</div></div></div><div><div><div></div><div>Kalsekar</div></div><div><div></div><div>Makarand</div></div></div><div><div><div></div><div>Deshpande</div></div><div><div></div><div>Jatin Malik</div></div></div><div><div><div></div><div>Zakir Hussain</div></div></div></div></div>
Cinematography	Sharone Meir
Edited by	Dávid Jancsó ^[1] <div>Tim Murrell^[1]</div> Joe Galdo
Music by	Jed Kurzel
Production companies	<div>Universal Pictures^{[2][3]}</div> <div>Bron Studios^{[2][3]}</div> <div>Thunder Road Films^{[2][3]}</div> <div>Monkeypaw Productions^{[2][3]}</div> <div>Minor Realm^{[2][3]}</div> <div>S'YA Concept^{[2][3]}</div> <div>WME Independent^[2]</div> <div>Creative Wealth Media^{[2][3]}</div>
Distributed by	Universal Pictures
Release dates	March 11, 2024 (SXSW) <div>April 5, 2024 (United States and Canada)</div>
Running time	121 minutes ^[4]

film, Patel stated, "I think the action genre has sometimes been abused by the system. I wanted to give it real soul, real trauma, real pain ... And I wanted to infuse it with a little bit of culture."^[14]

Patel had seen Pitobash Tripathy in *Million Dollar Arm* (2014), and invited the actor to audition for Alphonso.^[15] Vipin Sharma, who had a small role in *Hotel Mumbai* (2018) starring Patel, was quickly cast as Alpha after a brief audition.^[16] Prior to her first ever film role in *Raman Raghav 2.0* (2016), Sobhita Dhulipala had auditioned for *Monkey Man* before getting her first film role in 2016, but did not hear back from the production team until 2019, when Patel confirmed that she got the part of Sita "from the moment he saw her audition".^[17]

Countries	Canada United States
Language	English
Budget	\$10 million ^[5]
Box office	\$34.4 million ^{[6][7]}

Initially gearing up to shoot on location in India in early 2020, the film was postponed and nearly canceled as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Patel then opted to shoot the film on a small island in Batam, Indonesia.^[18] While filming the first action sequence, Patel broke his hand.^{[14][19]}

On March 12, 2021, it was announced that filming was completed and Thunder Road Films had sold worldwide rights to Netflix for \$30 million.^[20] However, Netflix later felt the film was too gritty for Indian audiences and was concerned about their reaction to the film's political commentary, instead quietly shopping it around and nearly cancelling the release.^{[21][22]} Of this decision, Patel said, "[Netflix] didn't really know what they'd bargained for. The actual film itself is a lot denser and it's saying a lot... it's not your usual action scene on page one, and then you continue fighting nonstop. It's trying to do a bit more."^[23] Sometime thereafter, Jordan Peele saw the film and came on board as producer under his Monkeypaw Productions banner and persuaded Universal Pictures to acquire the film from Netflix for under \$10 million.^[24] Patel later stated that Peele "took us from this thing that was brushed under the carpet to putting us on top of the mantel piece."^[25]

Soundtrack

Jed Kurzel composed a new score for the film, replacing original composer Volker Bertelmann.^[26] The soundtrack includes a song by the Indian folk metal band Bloodywood.^[27]

Themes

Monkey Man explores themes of societal challenges, including corruption, discrimination, caste system, poverty and the experiences of the Hijra community in India.^[28]

Release

Monkey Man had its world premiere at South by Southwest on March 11, 2024.^[25] It had its Sydney premiere on April 2, 2024, attended by Patel and his partner, Australian actress Tilda Cobham-Hervey,^[29] and was released in Australian cinemas on April 4.^[30] The film was released in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Ireland by Universal Pictures on April 5, 2024.^{[25][31][32]}

The film is scheduled to release in India on April 19, 2024. However, it had reportedly been delayed amid concerns that the Central Board of Film Certification would require edits be made.^{[33][34][35]} According to a report by Bollywood Hungama on March 31, the movie still had yet to be certified by the CBFC.^[36] In

articles for both IndieWire and Time, Indian film critic Siddhant Adlakha posited that the film's violent content and political themes might be the root cause for the delay.^{[35][37]}

Reception

Box office

As of May 19, 2024, *Monkey Man* has grossed \$25.1 million in the United States and Canada and \$9.2 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$34.4 million.^{[7][6]}

In the United States and Canada, *Monkey Man* was released alongside *The First Omen*, and was projected to make around \$12 million from 3,029 theaters in its opening weekend.^[38] It made \$4.3 million on its first day, including \$1.4 million during its Thursday night previews. It went on to debut to \$10.2 million , finishing second behind holdover *Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire*.^[39] In its second weekend the film made \$4.1 million, finishing in sixth.^[40]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 89% of 273 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7.2/10. The website's consensus reads: "An audacious effort from debuting director Dev Patel, *Monkey Man* dispenses action and sociopolitical commentary with equal aplomb."^[41] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 70 out of 100, based on 48 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.^[42] Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B+" on an A+ to F scale.^[39]

Saffron Maeve, writing for *The Globe and Mail*, described the film as "solid and blockbuster-audience friendly", but that its "woozy overediting [...] makes the theatrical experience tiring."^[43]

The New York Times wrote, "As the story comes into blurry focus, Patel gestures at the real world and folds in some mythology, but these elements only create expectations for a complex story that never emerges. What mostly registers is an overarching sense of exploitation and desperation: Everyone is always hustling someone else. That gives the movie a provocative pessimism".^[44] *The Washington Post* noted that "*Monkey Man* addresses the inequities of India's caste system in ways more pointed than you would expect. The glimpses of Mumbai poverty are brief but harsh, and at one point Kid takes refuge in a temple of abused transgender women [...] There's also the matter of the movie's main villain, Baba Shakti — a white-haired ultranationalist power broker who whips worshipful mobs into a frenzy."^[45]

Penelope DeBelle wrote in *InReview*: "This wild and stylish film... is totally brilliant and completely engaging", and that "Patel carries the movie in every sense".^[46]

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- [Official website](https://www.monkeyman.movie/) (<https://www.monkeyman.movie/>)
 - *Monkey Man* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9214772/>) at [IMDb](#)
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