

The Last Voyage of the Demeter

The Last Voyage of the Demeter (also known as ***Dracula: Voyage of the Demeter*** in some international markets)^[7] is a 2023 American supernatural horror film directed by André Øvredal and written by Bragi F. Schut, Jr.^[c] and Zak Olkewicz. It is an adaptation of "The Captain's Log", a chapter from the 1897 novel *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. The film stars Corey Hawkins, Aisling Franciosi, Liam Cunningham, and David Dastmalchian. Its plot follows the doomed crew of the merchant ship *Demeter* led by Captain Elliot (Cunningham) who attempt to survive the treacherous ocean voyage from Transylvania to London while being stalked by a legendary vampire known as Dracula (Javier Botet).

Planning for the film adaptation of "The Captain's Log" began when Schut wrote the initial spec script when he befriended a colleague who worked on *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), but did not come to fruition, languishing in development hell for more than two decades. After Amblin Partners obtained the rights in October 2019, it was announced that Øvredal would direct the film. The main cast members were confirmed in 2021. Principal photography began on June 30, 2021, in Berlin, continued in Malta, and ended on October 1. Some of the movie scenes were also recorded in the fortress city of Mdina. Thomas Newman was originally hired to compose the film's score, but was replaced by Bear McCreary due to Newman's scheduling conflicts.

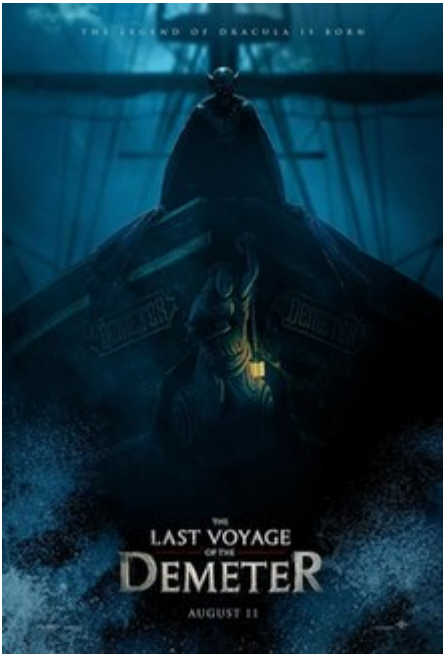
The Last Voyage of the Demeter was theatrically released in the United States on August 11, 2023, by Universal Pictures. The film received mixed reviews from critics, and grossed \$21.7 million worldwide against a budget of \$45 million, making it a box-office bomb.^[8]

Plot

On August 6, 1897, the merchant ship *Demeter* washes ashore in England. Among the wreckage found by the police is the log kept by her captain, Eliot.

One month earlier, the *Demeter* makes port in Varna, Bulgaria, to pick up cargo for transportation to London. The shipment, consisting of multiple large wooden crates, is transported by locals from Romania. However, the locals refuse to load the cargo onto

The Last Voyage of the Demeter



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>André Øvredal</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Bragi Schut, Jr.</u> <div><u>Zak Olkewicz</u></div>
Story by	<u>Bragi Schut, Jr.</u>
Based on	"The Captain's Log" from <i><u>Dracula</u></i> by <u>Bram Stoker</u>
Produced by	<u>Bradley J. Fischer</u> <div><u>Mike Medavoy</u><div><u>Arnold W. Messer</u></div></div>
Starring	<u>Corey Hawkins</u> <div><u>Aisling Franciosi</u><div><u>David Dastmalchian</u></div></div>

the ship, insisting that they must leave the area before sundown. One of them hands the quartermaster, Wojchek, and another crewman, Olgaren, a large sum of money and wishes the *Demeter* a safe voyage before departing with the others.

Clemens, a doctor educated at the University of Cambridge, overhears that the ship is looking for crewmen. He attempts to convince the crew that his medical skills and knowledge of astronomy would make him a valuable asset to them. Wojchek rejects him and hires an older man instead, but while helping to load one of the crates, the new hire – frightened upon recognizing the dragon emblem on its shorter side – accidentally releases the tackle rope, causing the crate to fall. Clemens witnesses the accident and saves Eliot's grandson, Toby, from being crushed by the loose crate. The new hire declares the dragon emblem a bad omen and leaves; out of gratitude for Clemens' intervention, Eliot hires him as a replacement.

One of the crates falls and breaks open in the cargo hold. Clemens investigates and finds a woman buried in dirt inside. She is barely alive, and he performs blood transfusions on her to treat what he believes to be an infection. Later in the Aegean Sea, Clemens and Olgaren see a mysterious figure in the fog on deck.

The next night, all the animals aboard the ship are killed, including the ship's dog, Huckleberry. The crew, fearing a rabies outbreak, throws them all overboard. Anna, the secret stowaway, wakes up and warns them about a monster from Transylvania, a creature that feeds on the blood of humans. In her town they called it Dracula, to whom she was given as a slave of blood so that the monster would leave them alone. She claims that Dracula is already aboard the ship and looking to feed, revealing several bites on her body.

Dracula hunts the crew during the night, biting Olgaren and turning him into a vampiric thrall. Olgaren is temporarily restrained, tied to a table; he breaks free, and, seeing Toby in the hold, begins hunting the boy and traps him in the captain's quarters, along with Dracula. As the crew attempts to save him, Toby is bitten by Dracula. The next morning, the vampiric Olgaren, who had been tied to the mast by the crew, bursts into flames as the sun rises. Despite blood transfusions from his grandfather, Toby dies, and is wrapped in parts of the sailcloth for his sea-burial. During the funeral, the captain believes he sees Toby moving; he unwraps him, only for Toby to suddenly attack. The vampiric Toby catches fire in the sunlight (also severely burning his grandfather) before Clemens is able to throw him into the ocean.

The remaining crew want to destroy the ship and drown Dracula to prevent him from causing chaos once they reach London. Captain Eliot, Abrams, and Wojchek are killed by Dracula, and Anna is bitten during an attempt to save Clemens. Clemens rescues Anna by hitting Dracula with an axe, and Anna manages to

	<u>Liam Cunningham</u>
Cinematography	<u>Tom Stern</u> ^[a]
Edited by	Patrick Larsgaard
Music by	<u>Bear McCreary</u> ^[b]
Production companies	<u>DreamWorks Pictures</u> ^[2] <u>Reliance Entertainment</u> ^[3] <u>Storyworks Productions</u> ^[3] <u>Studio Babelsberg</u> ^[3] <u>Phoenix Pictures</u> ^[3] <u>Wise Owl Media</u> ^[3]
Distributed by	<u>Universal Pictures</u>
Release dates	10 August 2023 (Italy) 11 August 2023 (United States)
Running time	119 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$45 million ^[4]
Box office	\$21.8 million ^[5] ^[6]

crush Dracula with a part of the mast. Anna and Clemens jump ship, thinking the vampire is dead; before sinking, the ship ends up running aground on the British coast, enabling Dracula to push the mast off of his body, roaring in victory.

Anna and Clemens float away on debris, and she reveals to Clemens that she is becoming a vampire after Dracula's bite; Clemens' blood transfusions only delay the change. As the day dawns, and not wanting to become a monster, Anna willingly immolates herself in the sunrise as Clemens drifts ashore.

Arriving in London, Clemens goes to a local tavern where he draws Anna's portrait in his notebook. He hears the knocking signal from the *Demeter's* crew of "all clear", and then sees Dracula, dressed as an aristocrat, laughing at him; the vampire disappears. Leaving the pub, Clemens sees Dracula's shadow and follows him; he vows, for the memory and honour of his dead companions, that he will kill Dracula and send him back to Hell.

Cast

- [Corey Hawkins](#) as Clemens, a doctor who joins the *Demeter*
- [Aisling Franciosi](#) as Anna, an unwitting stowaway and the slave of [Dracula](#)
- [Liam Cunningham](#) as Captain Eliot, the captain of the *Demeter*
- [David Dastmalchian](#) as Wojchek, the *Demeter's* quartermaster
- [Javier Botet](#) as [Dracula](#)/[Nosferatu](#) (the credits mention both Dracula and Nosferatu), a legendary Transylvanian vampire
- [Woody Norman](#) as Toby, Eliot's grandson
- [Jon Jon Briones](#) as Joseph, the cook
- [Stefan Kapičić](#) as Olgaren
- [Nikolai Nikolaeff](#) as Petrofsky
- [Martin Furulund](#) as Larsen
- [Chris Walley](#) as Abrams
- [Nicolo Pasetti](#) as Deputy Hirsch^[9]
- [Sally Reeve](#) as Landlady

Production

Development

While working at a model shop in [Hollywood](#), Bragi Schut, Jr. befriended a colleague who worked on *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). Schut took interest in a [miniature](#) of the *Demeter* used for the film and began writing an *Alien*-inspired film set aboard the ship.^[10] Based on the chapter "The Captain's Log" from Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, Schut researched the time period to ensure authenticity.^[11] In 2003, [Phoenix Pictures](#) acquired the film and tapped [Robert Schwentke](#) to direct and rewrite the script with [Mitch Brian](#).^{[12][13]} Progression on the film would stagger until December 2006 when [James V. Hart](#), screenwriter of *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, turned in a new draft of the script.^[14] By May 2009, Schwentke moved on and [Marcus Nispel](#) would step in as his replacement. Production was slated to begin that year.^{[15][16]} However, due to complications adapting the period setting and filming on the water, Nispel too would depart. By March 2010, the studio moved onto [Stefan Ruzowitzky](#) to direct while [Mike Medavoy](#), [Arnold W. Messer](#), and [Bradley J. Fischer](#) were slated to produce.^[17] After generating [Oscar](#) buzz, Fischer sought out a

meeting with Noomi Rapace in August 2010 to discuss the film.^[18] He performed his own revisions to the script and officially cast Rapace and Ben Kingsley in October of that year.^[19] Ruzowitzky would exit the film in favor of taking on Deadfall (2012).^[20]

David Slade became attached to the film in February 2011, but reports indicated that Rapace was likely to drop out of the film due to her impending commitments to Prometheus (2012).^[21] Rapace would verify these doubts the following month.^[22] Days later, Jude Law was reportedly in line to lead the film.^[23] The next month, Slade reassured that film was still moving forward despite signing on to a Daredevil film.^{[24][25]} In May 2012, Neil Marshall and Millenium Films boarded the film to direct and produce.^{[26][27]} Novelist Lowell Cauffiel was brought along for further rewrites.^[28] By June, Viggo Mortensen began talks to portray the lead role. Kingsley was still said to be attached to the project while Rapace's involvement stayed in doubt.^[29] In December 2014, Marshall remained hopeful that the film would be made.^[30] Much like the filmmakers before him, Marshall would leave too.

In October 2019, it was announced André Øvredal would direct the film with Amblin Partners obtaining the rights.^[31] In January 2021, Corey Hawkins joined the cast of the film with a new draft written by Zak Olkewicz.^[32] In December 2022, Schut and Olkewicz received screenplay credit, Schut received screen story credit, and Brian, Cauffiel, Hart, Ruzowitzky, and Schwentke received off-screen additional literary material credit.^[33]

Casting

In June 2021, David Dastmalchian, Liam Cunningham, Aisling Franciosi, Javier Botet, Jon Jon Briones, Stefan Kapičić, Nikolai Nikolaeff, Woody Norman, Martin Furulund and Chris Walley joined the cast of the film.^[34]

Filming

Principal photography began on June 30, 2021, in Berlin, before occurring in Malta, and ended on October 1. Some of the movie scenes were also recorded in the fortress city of Mdina.^{[35][36][37]}

Special makeup and digital effects

Göran Lundström served as makeup designer on the film.^[38] Lundström initially declined the position when it was offered to him by Fischer in 2021, as Lundström was then working as a makeup artist on the biographical crime drama film *House of Gucci*, but he later joined the project.^[38] Lundström described the process of fully applying prosthetic makeup to Botet as having taken "a long time, it was like a four-hour application. They're never as long as actors say they are, but I don't think Javier has exaggerated this one. Usually we aim for three hours, which is a normal makeup time for full coverage, but for this creature suit, sticking things on and gluing things down and covering it, it was a four-hour job."^[38]

Lundström said that the practical makeup effects team collaborated little with the post-production team responsible for creating the film's computer-generated (CG) effects, stating, "We did interact a little on set; I showed them what we had, I gave them scans of all our sculptures, they took photos of all the eyeballs we had made to put in front of Javier's eyes, and they scanned him on set in the suit. But for the rest of it, we weren't really involved, which is a shame."^[38]

Music

In April 2022, Thomas Newman was originally announced as the composer for the film.^[39] However, in June 2023, Newman left the project due to his scheduling conflicts, with Bear McCreary serving as his replacement.^[40] The soundtrack album was released on August 11, 2023, the same day as the theatrical release.^[41]

Release

The Last Voyage of the Demeter was released theatrically in the United States on August 11, 2023, by Universal Pictures.^{[2][42]} It was previously scheduled for January 27, 2023.^[43]

Home media

The Last Voyage of the Demeter was released for digital platforms on August 29, 2023, followed by a Blu-ray and DVD release on October 17, 2023.^[44]

Reception

Box office

The Last Voyage of the Demeter has grossed \$13.6 million in the United States and Canada and \$8.2 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$21.8 million.^{[5][6]}

In the United States and Canada, *The Last Voyage of the Demeter* was projected to gross \$6–11 million from 2,715 theaters.^[45] The film made \$2.6 million on its first day, including \$750,000 from Thursday night previews. It went on to debut to \$6.5 million, finishing fifth at the box office.^[4] The film dropped 62% in its second weekend to \$2.5 million, falling to tenth.^[46]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 49% of 190 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5.6/10. The website's consensus reads: "*The Last Voyage of the Demeter* finds a fresh angle on Dracula's oft-told tale, although lackluster execution often undercuts the story's claustrophobic tension."^[47] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 52 out of 100, based on 33 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[48] Audiences surveyed by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B−" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled at PostTrak gave it a 66% overall positive score.^[4]

Vulture's Bilge Ebiri wrote, "What truly distinguishes *Last Voyage of the Demeter*, beyond its thick atmosphere of dread, is its gleeful cruelty, the delicious mean streak with which it sets up its suspense set pieces and its kills... The film is filled with delightfully savage surprises. And suddenly, in this most predetermined of movies, anything seems possible."^[49] Peter Sobczynski of *RogerEbert.com* gave the film 3.5/4 stars, calling it "a smart, well-made, and sometimes downright creepy take on the tale that both horror buffs and regular moviegoers can appreciate in equal measure."^[50] *The Boston Globe*'s Odie Henderson gave it 3/4 stars, writing, "This is good, fun summer fare, shot in ominous shades of darkness by cinematographers Roman Osin and Tom Stern and fueled by an effective score by Bear McCreary that isn't obtrusive."^[51]

Frank Scheck of *The Hollywood Reporter* praised Øvredal's direction, but added, "he's not able to bring much spark to Bragi Schut, Jr. and Zak Olkewicz's slow-paced, formulaic screenplay, which lacks the dark wit necessary to keep us invested in the gory proceedings."^[52] *The Guardian*'s Benjamin Lee gave it 2/5 stars, writing, "There's no real surprise to where we're heading, given the source material, and so a great deal of the film is a rather meandering wait for the inevitable. It's ultimately a doomed voyage: for the crew, for the audience and for Universal's monster movie strategy at large."^[53] *IndieWire*'s David Ehrlich gave it a D grade, saying that Øvredal "falls back on chaos and cruelty, his movie sorely lacking the sense of dread required to justify either one", and concluded, "if you're going to make an R-rated horror wank about Dracula slurping throats with a smile on his face, make sure that the rest of the movie doesn't suck as hard as he does."^[54]

Notes

- a. Roman Osin was the original cinematographer,^[1] however, Tom Stern was officially credited as cinematographer in the poster's billing block as well as the film's credit.
- b. Thomas Newman was originally attached to compose the score before being replaced by McCreary due to scheduling conflicts.
- c. Schut was both credited as "Screenplay by" and "Story by".

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- [Official website \(https://www.demetermovie.com/\)](https://www.demetermovie.com/)
 - [Official website \(https://amblin.com/movie/the-last-voyage-of-the-demeter/\)](https://amblin.com/movie/the-last-voyage-of-the-demeter/) at Amblin
 - *The Last Voyage of the Demeter* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1001520/>) at IMDb
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