

Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery

Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery (titled onscreen as simply Glass Onion) is a 2022 American mystery film written and directed by Rian Johnson and produced by Johnson and Ram Bergman. It is a standalone sequel to the 2019 film Knives Out, with Daniel Craig reprising his role as master detective Benoit Blanc as he takes on a new case revolving around tech billionaire Miles Bron (played by Edward Norton) and his closest friends. The ensemble cast also includes Janelle Monáe, Kathryn Hahn, Leslie Odom Jr., Jessica Henwick, Madelyn Cline, Kate Hudson, and Dave Bautista.

Johnson had considered several films featuring the Benoit Blanc character before the first film's release. A sequel was greenlit by its original distributor <u>Lionsgate</u> in 2020, but in March 2021 <u>Netflix</u> bought the rights to two *Knives Out* sequels for \$469 million. The cast signed on that May. Filming took place with a \$40 million budget on the island of <u>Spetses</u>, <u>Greece</u>, in June and July 2021, and continued in <u>Belgrade</u>, <u>Serbia</u>, until September. The second sequel is in development as of August 2023.

Following its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival on September 10, 2022, *Glass Onion* began a one-week limited theatrical release on November 23, 2022, receiving the widest theatrical release ever for a Netflix film and grossing \$15 million; Netflix began streaming it on December 23. Like its predecessor, *Glass Onion* received critical acclaim, with reviewers praising Johnson's screenplay and direction, the performances of the cast, and the musical score. The National Board of Review named *Glass Onion* as one of the top ten films of 2022. The film received a nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay at the 95th Academy Awards, and received numerous other accolades.

Plot

During the <u>COVID-19 pandemic</u> in May 2020, Miles Bron, the co-founder of technology company Alpha, hosts a <u>murder mystery game</u> at the Glass Onion, his mansion on a private island in <u>Greece</u>. He invites his friend group, the "Disruptors": Alpha head scientist Lionel Toussaint, <u>Connecticut</u> governor Claire Debella, controversial model-turned-fashion designer

Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery



Release poster

Directed by	Rian Johnson
Written by	Rian Johnson
Produced by	Ram Bergman
	Rian Johnson
Starring	Daniel Craig
	Edward Norton
	Janelle Monáe
	Kathryn Hahn
	Leslie Odom Jr.
	Jessica Henwick
	Madelyn Cline
	Kate Hudson
	Dave Bautista
Cinematography	Steve Yedlin
Edited by	Bob Ducsay
Music by	Nathan Johnson
Production company	T-Street Productions
Distributed by	Netflix

Birdie Jay, <u>men's rights</u> <u>streamer</u> Duke Cody, and ousted Alpha co-founder Cassandra "Andi" Brand. The five friends are delivered a wooden <u>puzzle box</u> to decipher to find the invitation inside.

The five travel to Miles's island, along with Birdie's assistant Peg and Duke's girlfriend Whiskey. Famous detective Benoit Blanc joins them, claiming Miles invited him as well. However, Miles privately tells Blanc otherwise. Nevertheless, Miles allows Blanc to stay, assuming another guest sent him their invitation. Before dinner, Miles shows off his glass sculpture collection and the *Mona Lisa*, which he has on loan from the Louvre. Miles also reveals that the mansion is powered by "Klear", a hydrogen-based alternative fuel that

Alpha v	will soon	launch,	despite	Lionel	and	Claire's	knowledge	that	it is
dangero	us.								

Blanc solves Miles's murder mystery game immediately and privately warns Miles that the Disruptors all have motives to kill him. After an argument with the rest of the group, Andi storms off. Duke suddenly dies after drinking from Miles's glass and the panicked group suspects Andi of attempting to poison Miles. The police are summoned but will not arrive until morning. After the group discovers Duke's pistol is missing, the power goes out and everyone splits up. Blanc finds Andi, but an unseen assailant shoots her. Blanc gathers the group and announces that he has solved Andi's murder.

An extended flashback shows that Andi actually died a week earlier, apparently by suicide. Her twin sister Helen hired Blanc to investigate. At Alpha, Andi had halted Klear's development because of its dangerous properties, so Miles had her removed as CEO. Andi sued to regain control of Alpha, but Miles won because the Disruptors all <u>perjured</u> themselves by

Release dates	September 10, 2022 (TIFF) November 23, 2022 (United States) December 23, 2022
D	(Netflix) 139 minutes ^[1]
Running time	139 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$40 million
Box office	\$15 million ^[2]



<u>Leonardo da Vinci</u>'s early 16th century painting, <u>Mona</u> <u>Lisa</u>, which is featured as a major plot point in the film

testifying that Miles had single-handedly sketched out the plan for Alpha on a napkin years before. The napkin was actually Andi's work. Shortly before her death, she'd emailed the group a photo showing the original napkin still in her possession. Helen suspects that someone in the group killed Andi and stole the napkin to protect Miles and themselves. With Andi's death not yet public knowledge, Blanc persuaded Helen to pose as Andi at Miles's party and help him investigate.

Helen helps Blanc discover the Disruptors' motives to protect Miles: Lionel and Claire have staked their reputations on Klear, Birdie needs Miles's financial assistance to handle the fallout of ignorantly employing sweatshops, and Duke is hoping for a show on Alpha News. Each of them visited Andi's home on the day she died. She searches the guests' rooms but does not find the napkin. When Helen is shot, Andi's journal in her jacket pocket stops the bullet. Blanc tells Helen to search Miles's office.

Blanc deduces that Miles committed both murders. He killed Andi after learning she had the napkin but was spotted by Duke leaving her house. During the party, Duke saw a news report of Andi's death and, realizing that Miles was responsible, attempted to blackmail him. Miles then poisoned Duke with pineapple juice, which Duke was deathly allergic to, and took Duke's pistol, with which he shot Helen.

Helen locates Andi's napkin in Miles's office and reveals her identity to the group. Miles burns the napkin, eliminating the evidence, and his friends refuse to testify against him. Blanc tells Helen that he has done all he can and goes outside. In a rage, Helen destroys Miles's glass sculptures, which the Disruptors eventually join in, before Helen lights a bonfire and throws a shard of Klear that Blanc had slipped her into the blaze, causing an explosion that destroys the mansion and the *Mona Lisa*. Realizing the painting's destruction will reveal that Klear is dangerous and ruin Miles, the group decides to testify against him. At the beach, Helen and Blanc watch as police boats arrive.

Cast

- Daniel Craig as Benoit Blanc, [3][4] a private investigator [5]
- Edward Norton as Miles Bron, a billionaire and owner of Alpha, a large technology company [6][7]
- Janelle Monáe as:
 - Andi Brand, co-founder of Alpha and Miles's ex-business partner
 - Helen Brand, Andi's identical twin sister, an elementary school teacher from Alabama^{[3][5][8]}
- <u>Kathryn Hahn</u> as Claire Debella, the governor of Connecticut, now running for the United States Senate^{[3][9]}
- Leslie Odom Jr. as Lionel Toussaint, the head scientist for Miles's company^{[3][10]}
- Kate Hudson as Birdie Jay, a hedonistic, politically incorrect former supermodel turned fashion designer in Manhattan^{[3][11]}
- Dave Bautista as Duke Cody, a <u>video game streamer</u> and <u>men's rights</u> activist on <u>Twitch</u> and YouTube[3][12]
- Jessica Henwick as Peg, Birdie's assistant [3][13]
- Madelyn Cline as Whiskey, Duke's girlfriend and Twitch channel assistant [3][14]
- Noah Segan as Derol, a slacker who lives on Miles's island. Segan previously appeared in Knives Out (2019) as Trooper Wagner^[15]
- Jackie Hoffman as Ma, Duke's mother^[16]
- Dallas Roberts as Devon Debella, Claire's husband^[17]

Additionally, <u>Ethan Hawke</u> appears briefly as Miles's assistant (credited as "Efficient Man"), <u>[18][19][20]</u> Hugh Grant cameos as Phillip, Blanc's <u>domestic partner</u>, and <u>Joseph Gordon-Levitt</u> voices Miles's clock, the Hourly Dong; Gordon-Levitt had a vocal cameo in the previous film as Detective Hardrock. <u>[21]</u> Several celebrities make cameo appearances as themselves, including <u>Stephen Sondheim</u>, <u>[22]</u> <u>Angela Lansbury</u>, <u>[22]</u> <u>Natasha Lyonne</u>, <u>[23]</u> <u>Kareem Abdul-Jabbar</u>, <u>[24][25]</u> <u>Yo-Yo Ma</u>, <u>[23]</u> <u>Jake Tapper</u>, and <u>Serena Williams</u>. <u>[26]</u> Sondheim and Lansbury both died before *Glass Onion* was released, <u>[22]</u> and the film is dedicated to both of them. <u>Jared Leto</u> and <u>Jeremy Renner</u>'s likenesses appear on bottles of <u>kombucha</u> and <u>hot sauce</u>, respectively. <u>[27]</u>

Production

Development



<u>Daniel Craig</u> reprises his role as Detective Benoit Blanc.

The 2019 film *Knives Out* was a commercially successful production from MRC and Lionsgate Films. It grossed over \$311 million on a budget of \$40 million, making it the second-highest-grossing original movie of the year that was not based on existing intellectual property. Before its release, writer and director Rian Johnson had teased the possibility of a sequel revolving around the lead character, Detective Benoit Blanc. Lionsgate officially greenlighted the sequel in early 2020.

In March 2021, <u>Netflix</u> outbid <u>Amazon</u> and <u>Apple</u> at an auction to acquire the rights to the film and another sequel to *Knives Out* for \$469 million, with Johnson returning as director, <u>Daniel Craig</u> set to reprise his role as Blanc, and a budget of at least \$40 million for the first installment. [4][32] Johnson, Craig, and the producer <u>Ram Bergman</u> reportedly earned more than \$100 million for both productions. [32][33] A losing bidder called it an inexplicable and "mind-boggling" deal.



Writer, director, and producer Rian Johnson

Craig worked with a <u>dialect coach</u> to regain familiarity with Blanc's <u>Southern accent</u>. Johnson previously considered having Blanc speak with an inexplicably different accent in each film. [36]

Writing

Johnson wrote *Glass Onion* in 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown, with its setting of Greece coming from a desire to travel abroad when international travel had been shut down. [37][38] His writing began from the premise that he wanted to write a whodunnit "vacation mystery" in the style of stories Johnson loves such as *Evil Under the Sun*, *Death on the Nile* and *The Last of Sheila*. [37]



Rian Johnson and most of the main cast at TIFF 2022

Johnson made it clear that *Glass Onion* was not a continuation of its predecessor but a standalone film featuring a new story and cast, similar to the <u>Hercule Poirot</u> novel series by <u>Agatha Christie</u>. [39][40]

In addition to Christie novels, he took inspiration from "tropical getaway murder mysteries" like the film adaptation of Christie's *Evil Under the Sun* and especially *The Last of Sheila*, ^[19] saying: "It's structured around a group of friends, or <u>frenemies</u>, who all have a power dynamic with one of their successful friends. It begins with him inviting them to come and play this murder mystery game at this exotic locale. In *The Last of Sheila*, it's on his yacht, and everything ends up going horribly wrong. That is essentially how *Glass Onion* begins." Johnson wanted the film's title to refer to something hidden in plain sight. He chose "glass" because it is clear. He searched his phone for songs with the word, finally settling on "Glass Onion" by the Beatles. ^[7] The song is featured in the end credits. ^[19]

The character of Benoit Blanc was revealed as gay in the film. Johnson said this "did not feel like a big decision" and "felt very natural" when depicting Blanc's home life. [41]

Casting

Johnson described casting the film as "throwing a dinner party". [7] <u>Dave Bautista</u> said Johnson encouraged him to audition during an unprompted call, and <u>Kathryn Hahn</u> secured her role over several <u>Zoom</u> calls with Johnson. [42][43]

Filming

Returning *Knives Out* crew members included cinematographer <u>Steve Yedlin</u>, editor <u>Bob Ducsay</u>, and composer <u>Nathan Johnson</u>. Filming began on <u>Spetses</u>, an island in Greece, on June 28, 2021. Johnson discovered the <u>Amanzoe</u>'s Villa 20 in Porto Heli and decided to use it as a major filming location. It also housed the cast and their families for the majority of the shoot, which Johnson described as "a summer vacation where we also made a movie". The shoot moved out of Greece on July 30 to continue shooting interior and New York scenes in <u>Belgrade</u>, and wrapped officially on September 13, 2021.

In addition to the title, the film contains references to other songs by the Beatles; two of the glass sculptures include a walrus ("I Am the Walrus") and strawberries ("Strawberry Fields Forever"), and the switch that controls the safety enclosure around the *Mona Lisa* is modeled as "The Fool on the Hill". [49]

Music

Rian's cousin and frequent collaborator, <u>Nathan Johnson</u>, returned to score *Glass Onion*; it marks their fifth collaboration after <u>Brick</u> (2005), <u>The Brothers Bloom</u> (2009), <u>Looper</u> (2012), and the predecessor, *Knives Out* (2019). Netflix Music released the album on November 25, 2022. [50]

Other songs featured in the film include "<u>Under the Bridge</u>" by <u>Red Hot Chili Peppers</u>; "Star"; "<u>To Love Somebody</u>" by the Bee Gees; "Starman" by David Bowie; "Take Me Home, Country Roads" by Toots and <u>The Maytals</u>; and "<u>Mona Lisa</u>" by <u>Nat King Cole</u>. Edward Norton plays "<u>Blackbird</u>" by <u>The Beatles</u> on guitar. "Glass Onion" by The Beatles plays during the end credits. [51]

Release

Marketing

A *Glass Onion* teaser trailer was released on September 8, 2022, ^[52] followed by a full trailer on November 7, 2022. ^[53]

Johnson said he was "pissed" that *A Knives Out Mystery* was added as the subtitle, originally intending the film to be titled *Glass Onion* and act as a standalone story. [37][54] While he said he understood the need for audiences to understand that *Glass Onion* was part of a series, he believes that "the whole appeal to me is it's a new novel off the shelf every time" and that there is an industry trend with "the gravity of a thousand suns toward serialized storytelling". [55]

Theatrical and streaming

Glass Onion premiered at the <u>Toronto International Film Festival</u> on September 10, 2022. [1][19][56] It also screened at the <u>Philadelphia Film Festival</u> in October 2022, closed the <u>BFI London Film Festival</u> on October 16 and Film Fest 919 on October 30, 2022, [57][58] and screened at the <u>Miami International Film</u>

<u>Festival</u> as its opening night film on November 3, 2022. The <u>Los Angeles</u> premiere took place at the <u>Academy Museum of Motion Pictures</u> on November 14, 2022. It was released on Netflix on December 23, 2022. Over its first 10 days of digital release, the film logged over 209.5 million hours viewed worldwide. Between January and June 2023, the film totaled 142.9 million hours watched (equal to 61.7 million views).

Netflix was reportedly considering a new release model for films like *Glass Onion*, which would give the film a 45-day window in theaters before being released on the streaming service. [64] On October 6, 2022, Netflix announced that after signing deals with the three largest theater chains in the United States (AMC Theaters, Regal Cinemas, and Cinemark, the latter with whom Netflix had a pre-existing deal), the film would see a limited one-week theatrical release (billed as a "sneak preview" release) from November 23 to 29, 2022, in roughly 600 theaters in the largest markets across the United States as well in other international markets, marking the first time a Netflix-distributed film would be shown in all three major theater chains in the United States. After the release was over, Netflix would then pull the film from distribution until the Netflix release on December 23. At that point, Netflix would allow theaters to show the film again. [65] Deadline later reported that Netflix agreed to take a lower amount of the rental revenue than usual from theaters (40% vs. 60–70%), as well as to kick in four times the average amount of money for exhibitor marketing. Deadline also reported that some smaller exhibitors that were interested in playing the film were shut out from the one-week limited release, as Netflix preferred more popular theaters for *Glass Onion*. [66]

Home media

On December 23, 2022, in an interview with *TheWrap*, Johnson and Bergman confirmed that discussions between Netflix and the creatives about a possible <u>Blu-ray</u> release of the film had taken place, with Bergman saying, "There have been conversations but no results yet. I really hope we can do it. We've got plenty of good stuff to fill out a disc if anyone's interested." Johnson—a longtime advocate of physical media—also was hopeful, saying that even if it does not come to fruition, he will strive to make an audio commentary available in some form. [67]

Reception

Box office

In the United States and Canada, *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* was released alongside <u>Strange World, Devotion</u>, and <u>Bones and All</u> and <u>The Fabelmans</u>, and was initially projected to gross around \$6–8 million from 698 theaters over its five-day opening weekend. As with their other theatrical releases, Netflix did not release any box office numbers for the film. <u>Deadline Hollywood</u> reported that the film made an estimated \$2–2.5 million on its first day, which led to estimates being raised to as much as \$12.3 million. The <u>Hollywood Reporter</u> later reported that the film went on to debut with an estimated \$13.1 million over the five-day weekend, which would be the best-performing theatrical release for Netflix, and third for the weekend had Netflix officially released box office numbers, behind <u>Black Panther:</u> Wakanda Forever and Strange World. [70]

Critical response

On the <u>review aggregator</u> website <u>Rotten Tomatoes</u>, 92% of 408 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 8/10. The website's consensus reads: "*Glass Onion* brings back Benoit Blanc for another wildly entertaining mystery rounded out by an outstanding ensemble cast." Metacritic, which uses a <u>weighted average</u>, assigned the film a score of 81 out of 100, based on 62 critics, indicating "universal acclaim". [72]

<u>Variety</u>'s <u>Owen Gleiberman</u> praised the film as "a bigger, showier, even more elaborately multi-faceted shell-game mystery" than the first film. Christy Lemire of <u>RogerEbert.com</u> gave the film 3 out of 4 stars, writing: "The clever details, amusing name-drops, and precisely pointed digs at vapid celebrity culture keep Johnson's movie zippy when it threatens to drag." Writing for <u>The Guardian</u>, Peter Bradshaw gave the film 4 out of 5 stars and said: "Glass Onion is never anything less than entertaining, with its succession of A-lister and A-plus-lister cameos popping up all over the place. And Johnson uncorks an absolute showstopper of a flashback a half-hour or so into the action, which then unspools back up to the present day, giving us all manner of cheeky POV-shift reveals."

The film's characters and plot have been likened to current <u>business magnates</u>. Calder McHugh of <u>Politico</u> described the film as "an allegory for all of us living with the omnipresent <u>Elon Musk</u>, <u>Donald Trump</u>, and <u>Jeff Bezos</u>", ^[75] while James Downie of <u>MSNBC</u> claimed Norton's character Miles Bron's "mixture of bluster, hubris, and half-baked ideas will likely bring to mind Twitter owner and part-time car enthusiast Elon Musk." ^[76] Of the film's relevance to <u>Elon Musk's recent takeover of Twitter</u>, Rian Johnson commented, "A friend of mine said, 'Man, that feels like it was written this afternoon.' And that's just sort of a horrible, horrible accident, you know?" Shirley Li of <u>The Atlantic</u> praised the film for "observing the absurd privileges of wealth and skewering the ignorance of the 1 percent" such as in the "overflowing smarm" of Edward Norton's performance as Miles Bron. ^[78] Clay Cockrell, a therapist for rich people, writing in *The Guardian* said that the film illustrated how the very rich could not trust either their pre-wealth friends, or new friends, as he had seen in real life. ^[79]

Accolades

At the <u>95th Academy Awards</u>, *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* received a nomination for <u>Best Adapted Screenplay</u>. The film's other nominations include six <u>Critics' Choice Movie Awards</u> (winning two) and two <u>Golden Globe Awards</u>. It was named one of the <u>ten best films</u> of 2022 by the <u>National Board of Review</u>.

Sequel

Netflix holds the film rights to at least one more film in the series. [32] In September 2022, Johnson confirmed his intention to make more. [84] Later that month Craig and Johnson separately said that they would continue making further films in the series, so long as they were both involved together. [85] In November 2022, Johnson said that he was preparing to work on writing the third film. [86] By January 2023, Johnson confirmed that he had started writing the script for the third film, stating that it will be tonally and thematically different from the previous installments. [87] Johnson later stated that though he had approved the subtitle of *A Knives Out Mystery* for *Glass Onion*, he would like to rename the series and add *A Benoit Blanc Mystery* as subtitles to future installments.

In October 2023, Johnson spoke further about the progress of *Knives Out 3* in *TheWrap*. "I obviously couldn't work during the Writers Guild of America strike, and now that it's over, I'm diving in full force, and so it's coming along. I've got the premise, I've got the setting, I've got what the movie is in my head. It's just a matter of writing the damn thing." [89] Filming is expected to start in fall 2024, in London.

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External links

- Screenplay (https://deadline.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Glass-Onion-A-Knives-Out-M ystery-Read-The-Screenplay.pdf)
- Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery (https://www.netflix.com/title/81458416) on Netflix
- Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11564570/) at IMDb
- Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery (https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v12151469628) at AllMovie

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