

Gretel & Hansel

Gretel & Hansel (also known as ***Gretel & Hansel: A Grim Fairy Tale***) is a 2020 dark fantasy horror film directed by Osgood Perkins from a screenplay by Rob Hayes, and produced by Fred Berger, Brian Kavanaugh-Jones, and Dan Kagan. Sophia Lillis and Sam Leakey portray the titular characters, with Alice Krige and Jessica De Gouw also starring. The film is based on the German fairy tale *Hansel and Gretel* by the Brothers Grimm, and its storyline follows Gretel and Hansel as they become lost in the forest and then stumble upon the home of a witch.

In October 2018, Orion Pictures announced the start of the film's development, with Lillis set to star. Filming took place between November and December 2018, in Dublin, Ireland.

Orion released *Gretel & Hansel* in North America on 31 January 2020 through United Artists Releasing. The film grossed \$22 million worldwide and received mixed reviews from critics, with praise for its visuals and cinematography as well as the horror elements and acting, but with criticism levelled at the film's slow pacing and lacklustre screenplay.

Plot

The prologue opens with a story about "A Beautiful Child with a Pretty Pink Hat". A father takes his mortally ill baby daughter to be cured by a witch, who performs healing spells, bestowing supernatural abilities on the child in the process. As the girl grows up, the villagers come to hear her premonitions, but her wicked nature is soon revealed when she begins murdering innocent people, including her own father. The girl is then abandoned in the woods, where she lures children to their death.

The scene shifts to teenage Gretel (who is implied also to possess supernatural abilities and powers) and her younger brother, Hansel. As their father dies, their mother sends them out to find work. Gretel is offered a housekeeping job but turns it down when the master of the house asks about her virginity. Their mother rebukes Gretel for failing to provide for them and threatens to kill both children if they do not leave the house.

The siblings flee and find temporary accommodations to stay for the night, but a ghoulish man appears and attacks Hansel. A huntsman saves the children and takes them to his home for the

Gretel & Hansel



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Osgood Perkins
Screenplay by	Rob Hayes
Based on	<i>Hansel and Gretel</i> by The Brothers Grimm
Produced by	Brian Kavanaugh-Jones Fred Berger
Starring	Sophia Lillis Sam Leakey Alice Krige Jessica De Gouw
Cinematography	Galo Olivares
Edited by	Josh Ethier Julia Wong
Music by	Robin Coudert

night, before sending them off to find work the next morning. They get lost in the woods and, suffering from hunger, are attracted by the scent of baked cake to a hut in the forest, in which a woman named Holda lives. She invites the children in for a meal and allows them to stay, in exchange for performing work around the house. Hansel is sent into the woods to practice woodcutting with an axe, while Gretel assists with housekeeping. Hansel is happy with their new home, but Gretel is suspicious of Holda and troubled by disturbing visions and nightmares. Sensing Gretel's abilities, Holda initiates her into witchcraft and teaches her to fly on a broomstick with the aid of flying ointment.

Hansel soon becomes wary of Holda after discovering a satanic pentagram carved into a tree. The siblings have an argument that night, and Hansel leaves the hut and is then lured into a trap by Holda. Gretel confronts the witch, who insists she is doing Gretel a favour by getting rid of Hansel. It is then revealed that Holda was the mother of the wicked girl from the prologue story; Holda loathed her daughter for killing her husband. After exiling her daughter into the woods, Holda was haunted by the girl's spirit into eating her other children to gain the same powers. Holda has been luring the children lost in the forest to their death in the guise of an elderly woman ever since.

Holda drugs Gretel and straps her down in the cellar, where she plans for Hansel to be eaten. Now in the form of a young woman, Holda lures Hansel into a cage atop a large fire pit so she can cook him. Gretel manages to free herself and uses flying ointment on her hands and face to fly on a broomstick. Holda is pinned against the wall, where she slowly burns to death over the fire, which brings Hansel to from his drugged state.

The next morning, Gretel assures her brother that Holda is gone for good and sends him back home (their mother is implied to have died in the meantime and Hansel should be able to start working at home as a woodsman). Gretel stays behind to hone her craft. She sees the ghosts of the children murdered by Holda, now finally free to pass on, just as her fingertips begin to turn black, like Holda's.

Production companies	<u>Orion Pictures</u> <u>Automatik Entertainment</u> <u>Bron Creative</u>
Distributed by	<u>United Artists Releasing</u>
Release date	31 January 2020
Running time	87 minutes
Countries	Canada ^{[1][2]} United States ^[2] Ireland ^[2]
Language	English
Budget	\$5 million ^[3]
Box office	\$22.1 million ^{[4][5]}

Cast

- Sophia Lillis as Gretel, a 16-year-old girl and Hansel's older sister.^[6]
- Sam Leakey as Hansel, Gretel's 8-year-old brother (the role was Leakey's acting debut).^[7]
- Alice Krige as Holda, a terrifying and powerful evil witch who lives in the forest and kidnaps Gretel and Hansel.^[7]
 - Jessica De Gouw as young Holda
- Charles Babalola as Huntsman, a young man who helps Gretel and Hansel early in the story.^[8]
- Fiona O'Shaughnessy as Mother
- Donncha Crowley as Master Stripp
- Melody Carrillo as Enchantress
- Jonathan Delaney Tynan as Father

- Jonathan Gunning as emaciated man
- Ian Kenny as Knight
- Abdul Alshareef as Knight
- Manuel Pombo as Knight
- Giulia Doherty as Beautiful Child
- Beatrix Perkins as Clicky (uncredited)

Production

In October 2018, the *Hollywood Reporter* wrote that Orion Pictures had started developing a film adaptation of the German folklore tale Hansel and Gretel, with Oz Perkins directing a screenplay he had co-written with Rob Hayes, and Sophia Lillis starring as the lead character.^[9] Sinister producer Brian Kavanaugh-Jones and The Autopsy of Jane Doe producer Fred Berger, partners at Automatik Entertainment, were announced as producers, with Sandra Yee Ling and Macdara Kelleher as executive producers.^[7] Hayes eventually received sole screenplay credit.

In November 2018, Charles Babalola was cast as the Hunter, a new character who helps Gretel and Hansel navigate the woods.^[8] In April 2019, Alice Krige, Jessica De Gouw, and Sam Leakey joined the cast, with Leakey making his acting debut.^[7]

Perkins explained in an interview that the title was changed because this version focuses on Gretel:

"It's awfully faithful to the original story. It's got really only three principal characters: Hansel, Gretel, and the Witch. We tried to find a way to make it more of a coming of age story. I wanted Gretel to be somewhat older than Hansel, so it didn't feel like two 12-year-olds – rather a 16-year-old and an 8-year-old. There was more of a feeling like Gretel having to take Hansel around everywhere she goes, and how that can impede one's own evolution, how our attachments and the things that we love can sometimes get in the way of our growth."^[10]

Principal photography on the film began on 9 November 2018 in Dublin, Ireland, and wrapped up in December 2018.^[11] Additional filming and reshoots started in January 2019 in Langley, British Columbia, Canada.

Music

The score was composed by Robin Coudert, also known by his stage name, Rob. With the soundtrack in mind, Rob avoided using typical symphonic orchestral themes to create a unique film score saying, “I find it essential to create melodies that we can sing or whistle as, in horror cinema, it is usually the opposite, where the music rather has a tendency toward structure and abstraction. For this project, which is a film about kids, it seemed important to have that.” The soundtrack was released by Waxwork Records in 2020 as a single LP.^[12]

Release

The film was released on 31 January 2020 by United Artists.^[7]

Home video

Warner Bros. Home Entertainment released the film digitally on 7 April 2020, and on DVD and Blu-ray on 5 May 2020.^[13]

Reception

Box office

In the United States and Canada, the film was released alongside *The Rhythm Section*, and was projected to gross \$4–7 million from 3,000 theaters in its opening weekend.^{[14][3]} The film made \$2.3 million on its first day (including \$475,000 from Thursday night previews). It debuted to \$6.1 million, finishing fourth.^[15]

Critical response

On Rotten Tomatoes, the film holds an approval rating of 63% based on 112 reviews, with an average rating of 6.3/10. The site's critical consensus reads: "*Gretel & Hansel*'s rich visuals satisfy, even if this adaptation of a classic fairytale gets a little lost in the woods on the storytelling front."^[16] On Metacritic, the film has a weighted average score of 64 out of 100, based on 17 critics, indicating "generally favorable reviews".^[17] Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "C−" on an A+ to F scale.^[15]

Contrarily, Andrew Barker of *Variety* wrote, "The film certainly looks nice, with a wealth of eye-catching compositions," but added, "The problem is that so many of its virtues feel compromised." Kimber Myers wrote for *The Los Angeles Times*, "While [Perkins] offers a stunning feast for the eyes, the substance is likely to leave viewers still hungry."^[18]

Chandler Levack from *The Globe and Mail* wrote, "Everything about *Gretel & Hansel* is weirder, smarter and way more cinematic than I'd expected, thanks to some fascinating movie choices made by director Oz Perkins." Kate Rife from *The A.V. Club* wrote, "If one of the boundaries being tested in this film is viewers' patience, the reward for—to use a refrain repeated throughout the film—'trusting the darkness' is well worth the commitment." Frank Sheck of *The Hollywood Reporter* wrote, "*Gretel & Hansel* may alienate some horror movie fans with its extremely leisurely pacing and emphasis on atmosphere and mood rather than visceral shocks. But while the film certainly demands patience, it provides ample rewards with its lush stylization."

Mark Kennedy of the Associated Press wrote, "*Gretel & Hansel* is as visually arresting as it is tedious, a 90-minute movie that really should have been a 3-minute music video for Marilyn Manson or Ozzy Osbourne. It's in the horror genre only loosely. It's more eerie, if that's a genre. Actually, it's like dread for 90 minutes. It's dreadful." Jeannette Catsoulis of *The New York Times* labeled the film "Essentially the story of a young woman coming into her power, *Gretel & Hansel* is quietly sinister, yet too underdeveloped to truly scare."^[19]

See also

- List of films about witchcraft

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External links

- *Gretel & Hansel* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9086228/>) at *IMDb*
 - *Gretel & Hansel* (<https://letterboxd.com/film/gretel-hansel/>) at *Letterboxd*
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