

Fresh (2022 film)

Fresh is a 2022 American horror thriller film directed by Mimi Cave, in her directorial debut, from a screenplay by Lauryn Kahn. The film stars Daisy Edgar-Jones and Sebastian Stan. It is a co-production between Legendary Pictures and Hyperobject Industries; Adam McKay produced the film alongside Kevin J. Messick. The film follows Noa (Daisy Edgar-Jones), who meets the alluring Steve (Sebastian Stan) at a grocery store and – given her frustration with dating apps – takes a chance and gives him her number. After their first date, Noa is smitten and accepts Steve's invitation to a romantic weekend getaway, only to find that her new paramour has been hiding some unusual appetites.

Fresh had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival on January 20, 2022, and was released on March 4, 2022, via Hulu by Searchlight Pictures in the United States and Disney+ via Star internationally, marking the first Legendary film released by Disney rather than Warner Bros. Pictures, Universal Pictures or Netflix. The film received generally positive reviews from critics.

Plot

Noa, a woman from Portland, is increasingly disillusioned with online dating and the rude men she interacts with. One day at the supermarket, a man named Steve flirts with her and they exchange numbers. On their first date, the two quickly hit it off and have sex. After several dates, Steve invites Noa for a weekend break away alone with him. Against the advice of her best friend Mollie, Noa agrees to the trip. Planning to travel early the following day, Noa spends the evening at Steve's luxury home. Steve drugs Noa's cocktail and she falls unconscious.

Noa wakes up in captivity, chained to the ground. Steve explains that he is a butcher of human meat, which he both consumes himself and sells to wealthy clients, revealing himself as a sadistic cannibal. His clients prefer the meat of young women, so he regularly lures and abducts women on dates. He says that he will keep Noa alive as long as possible in order to keep her meat fresh as he intends to surgically remove different pieces of her body over time. Steve allows Noa to take a shower, but she tries to escape. Steve captures her and harvests her buttocks as punishment. Noa speaks to a woman named Penny who is being

Fresh



Release poster

Directed by	Mimi Cave
Written by	Lauryn Kahn
Produced by	Adam McKay Kevin Messick
Starring	<u>Daisy Edgar-Jones</u> <u>Sebastian Stan</u> <u>Jonica T. Gibbs</u> <u>Charlotte Le Bon</u> <u>Andrea Bang</u> <u>Dayo Okeniyi</u> <u>Brett Dier</u>
Cinematography	<u>Paweł Pogorzelski</u>
Edited by	<u>Martin Pensa</u>
Music by	<u>Alex Somers</u>
Production companies	<u>Hyperobject Industries</u> <u>Legendary</u>

held captive in an adjacent room. Penny shares with Noa that a woman that can be heard singing incoherently is another victim named Melissa who has gone insane.

Meanwhile, Mollie becomes concerned about Noa's disappearance and begins investigating with her friend Paul, a bartender who served Noa and Steve drinks on their first date. After searching online, Mollie discovers Steve is actually named Brendan, and is married to a woman named Ann with whom he has children. Mollie visits Ann and informs her of Brendan's apparent affair. Brendan arrives, but denies any knowledge of Noa when questioned by Mollie. As she leaves, Mollie calls Noa's phone, which begins ringing in Brendan's pocket. Ann, realizing he's been caught, knocks Mollie unconscious. In a shower scene with Ann, it is revealed that she has a prosthetic leg, implying that she might have been one of Brendan's past victims.

	<u>Pictures</u>
Distributed by	<u>Searchlight Pictures</u>
Release dates	January 20, 2022 (<u>Sundance</u>) March 4, 2022
Running time	114 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$15–20 million ^[1]

Noa gains Brendan's trust by flirting and pretending to be interested in what human meat tastes like. Brendan invites her to dinner and persuades her to taste a lavish meal containing human meat, which Noa eats, pretends to enjoy and later vomits in her cell. Meanwhile, Brendan takes Mollie away for harvesting. Brendan invites Noa to another dinner, providing her with a pink dress as a gift. Before dinner, Brendan shows Noa a hidden compartment filled with items belonging to his victims, indicating he has abducted and murdered dozens of women before her. While observing Brendan's trophies, Noa recognizes Mollie's phone amongst those of the kidnapped victims. At dinner, he feeds Noa breast meat, which Brendan connotes as possibly tasting "familiar." Following dinner, Noa persuades Brendan to have sex with her and let her perform fellatio on him; she instead, bites off his penis. With Brendan injured, but in pursuit, Noa helps Mollie and Penny escape from their rooms. The three encounter Brendan in the kitchen and fight him, then escape into the woods with Brendan pursuing them with a gun.

In the meantime, before she was abducted, Mollie had shared her location via phone with Paul. When he does not hear back from Mollie, Paul follows the location and arrives at Brendan's house. However, hearing gunshots fired by Brendan, Paul turns away fearing for his life.

In the woods, Noa, Mollie, and Penny manage to attack him again, with Noa taking the gun and shooting Brendan dead. Ann arrives at the house and finds Brendan's body. She encounters Noa in the woods and tries to strangle her, but Noa stabs Ann in the neck with car keys. As Ann recovers and attempts to strangle Noa again, Mollie angrily bludgeons Ann to death with a shovel. As she and Mollie relax at last, Noa receives a text from a man she went out with at the beginning of the film.

A mid-credits scene depicts five of Brendan's clients in a white room, seated at a table with bleeding human meat at the center.

Cast

- Daisy Edgar-Jones as Noa
- Sebastian Stan as Steve/Brendan
- Jonica T. Gibbs as Mollie
- Charlotte Le Bon as Ann
- Andrea Bang as Penny

- Dayo Okeniyi as Paul
- Brett Dier as Chad

Production



The cast includes Daisy Edgar-Jones (left) as Noa and Sebastian Stan (right) as Steve.

Screenwriter Lauryn Kahn, a fan of the horror genre growing up, said she wanted to write a film that would appeal to people who were horror fans and people who were not.^[2] In July 2020, it was reported Mimi Cave would direct the film in her directorial debut for Legendary Pictures, with Adam McKay producing under his Hyperobject Industries banner.^[3] To play the antagonist, Sebastian Stan sent Cave an audition video featuring himself dancing with a knife in hand. He added, "The dance sequences were a big concern for [Cave] and just in case she had any doubts that I could do it, I recorded myself in this video."^[4] Between September and December 2020, Daisy Edgar-Jones,^[5] Stan,^[6] and Jonica T. Gibbs were announced to star.^[7] Principal photography took place from February 3 to March 17, 2021, in British Columbia, Canada.^[1] Alex Somers composed the score.^[8]

Release

The film premiered online at the Sundance Film Festival on January 20, 2022.^[9] Ahead of its premiere, Searchlight Pictures acquired the film's worldwide distribution rights.^[10] An in-person premiere was held on March 3, 2022, inside Hollywood Legion Post 43 on Highland Avenue. Instead of an afterparty, the premiere had a pre-screening reception due to the film's subject matter. Gina Wade Creative created a display for the reception featuring a large table with food on it, cleavers hanging on a wall, glass jars filled with raw meat, and boxes of snacks shaped like body parts.^[11] *Fresh* was released on Hulu in the United States on March 4, 2022, with a Latin American premiere on Star+ and a Disney+ release in all other territories on the same date via the Star content hub. The film was released on March 18, 2022, in the United Kingdom and Ireland, after being pushed back a few weeks.^{[12][13]}

Reception

Audience viewership

According to Whip Media's TV Time, *Fresh* was the second most streamed movie across all platforms, in the United States during the week of March 4 to March 6, 2022,^[14] and the sixth during the week of March 11 to March 13, 2022.^[15] According to the streaming aggregator Reelgood, *Fresh* was the sixth most watched program across all platforms during the week of March 24, 2022.^[16]

Critical reception

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 81% of 208 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7.1/10. The website's consensus reads: "As gripping as it is upsetting, *Fresh* makes a provocative meal out of the horror of modern dating."^[17] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 67 out of 100, based on 34 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.^[18]

Angela Tricarico of Business Insider found the portrayal of modern dating across the horror genre authentic and realistic while complimenting the chemistry of Daisy Edgar-Jones and Sebastian Stan.^[19] William Bibbiani of TheWrap praised the chemistry between Jones and Stan through the film, and claimed that Mimi Cave and Pawel Pogorzelski successfully manage to provide a horror movie that balances between romance and gore.^[20] Sarah-Tai Black of Los Angeles Times stated that the movie takes a fresh approach to the horror genre through its handle of horror and comedy elements, and praised the performance of Stan.^[21]

Tara Brady of The Irish Times rated the film four out of five stars, complimented the performance of the cast, and reviewed positively the feminist approach of the movie across the mental trust and friendship provided between the female characters.^[22] Tomris Laffly of RogerEbert.com rated the film three out of four stars and declared that Cave and Pogorzelski skillfully create a satirical movie through its use humor and gore, while acclaiming the performances of Jones and Stan.^[23]

Accolades

Year	Award	Category	Nominee(s) and recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
2022	<u>Hollywood Critics Association Midseason Film Awards</u>	Best Actor	<u>Sebastian Stan</u>	Nominated	^[24]
		Best Actress	<u>Daisy Edgar-Jones</u>	Nominated	
		Best Horror	<i>Fresh</i>	Won	
	<u>Hollywood Critics Association TV Awards</u>	Best Streaming Movie		Nominated	^[25]
		Best Actor in a Streaming Limited or Anthology Series or Movie	Sebastian Stan	Nominated	
		Best Actress in a Streaming Limited or Anthology Series or Movie	Daisy Edgar-Jones	Nominated	
		Best Directing in a Streaming Limited or Anthology Series or Movie	Mimi Cave	Nominated	
2023	<u>Critics' Choice Awards</u>	Best TV Movie	<i>Fresh</i>	Nominated	^[26]
	<u>Satellite Awards</u>	Best Television Film		Nominated	^[27]

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