

News of the World (film)

News of the World is a 2020 American Western film co-written and directed by Paul Greengrass, based on the 2016 novel of the same name by Paulette Jiles, and starring Tom Hanks and introducing Helena Zengel in her international film debut. The film follows an aging Civil War veteran who must return a young girl who was taken in by the Kiowa, and raised as one of them, to her last remaining family. She has lost both her birth and Kiowa families.

News of the World was released theatrically by Universal Pictures in the United States on December 25, 2020, and grossed \$12 million. Internationally, the film was released by Netflix in other territories on February 10, 2021.^[5] It received positive reviews from critics who praised Hanks and Zengel's performances as well as the cinematography, musical score, and Greengrass's direction. At the 93rd Academy Awards, the film received nominations for Best Original Score, Best Cinematography, Best Production Design, and Best Sound. Zengel received nominations for Best Supporting Actress at the Golden Globes and Screen Actors Guild Awards.

Plot

In 1870, Captain Jefferson Kyle Kidd, a former Confederate officer who served in the 3rd Texas Infantry, makes a meager living traveling from town to town in Texas and reading newspaper stories to local residents for an admission fee of ten cents. After departing Wichita Falls, Kidd comes across an overturned wagon on the road and finds the driver, a black freedman, had been lynched. He also finds a young white girl who only speaks Kiowa and wearing a Kiowa dress and boots. Kidd learns from the girl's paperwork that she is Johanna Leonberger, who had been kidnapped and adopted by Kiowa six years earlier. Union Army troops discovered Johanna while dispersing a Kiowa camp and she was being taken to her living aunt and uncle by the freedman. A passing Union Army patrol instructs Kidd to take the girl to Union officials at an outpost in a town up the road. Kidd has little choice but to acquiesce.

At the town, Kidd is informed that the outpost's Bureau of Indian Affairs representative will be unavailable for three months. Kidd initially plans to leave Johanna in the care of

News of the World



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Paul Greengrass</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Paul Greengrass</u> <u>Luke Davies</u>
Based on	<i><u>News of the World</u></i> by <u>Paulette Jiles</u>
Produced by	<u>Gary Goetzman</u> <u>Gail Mutrux</u> <u>Gregory Goodman</u>
Starring	<u>Tom Hanks</u> <u>Helena Zengel</u>
Cinematography	<u>Dariusz Wolski</u>
Edited by	<u>William Goldenberg</u>
Music by	<u>James Newton Howard</u> ^[1]
Production companies	<u>Universal Pictures</u> <u>Perfect World Pictures</u> <u>Playtone</u> ^[2] <u>Pretty Pictures</u> ^[2]

friends Simon and Doris Boudlin, but accepts responsibility for returning the girl to her family in Castroville, some 400 miles away, after she recklessly tries to run away with a band of traveling Native Americans during a storm. In Dallas, Kidd stops at a local inn run by Ella Gannett, an intimate old acquaintance, whom he discovers speaks Kiowa and learns that Johanna's adoptive Native American family was also killed, making her "an orphan twice-over." He also finds out through translation that her Kiowa name is Cicada. After reading the news the next night, Kidd and Johanna are accosted by three ex-Confederate soldiers who want to purchase Johanna from him. Kidd refuses and flees with the girl, but the men pursue him into the wilderness. Despite being outgunned, Kidd is able to kill the men after Johanna points out that the dimes Kidd earned from his work could be used as makeshift ammunition for his shotgun.

Distributed by	Universal Pictures (United States) <u>Netflix</u> (International)
Release date	December 25, 2020
Running time	118 minutes
Country	United States
Languages	English <u>Kiowa</u> German
Budget	\$38 million ^[3]
Box office	\$12.7 million ^[4]

On the border of Erath County, Kidd and Johanna are detained by militiamen led by Farley, a racist cattle baron who took over the county and had all non-white residents violently expelled. Farley coerces Kidd into reading propaganda that glorifies him to his workers, but Kidd instead reads a story about a disaster in a Pennsylvania coal mine that whips Farley's workers into a rebellious fury. Kidd and Johanna make a run for it in the ensuing melee, but are caught by Farley and his henchman. Just as Farley is about to shoot Kidd, Johanna wounds Farley with Kidd's shotgun, and John Calley, one of Farley's henchmen who was inspired by Kidd's words, deals with the other henchman and kills Farley.

As the pair continue their journey, their wagon is wrecked and their horses fatally injured when Kidd loses control on a steep road. Kidd and Johanna proceed on foot. After enduring the heat and a blinding sandstorm, they encounter a traveling group of Kiowa who give Johanna a horse. Saved by that gift, Kidd and Johanna eventually reach the Leonberger farmstead. After speaking with Johanna's Aunt Anna and Uncle Wilhelm, Kidd reluctantly leaves her with them. He then continues to San Antonio to visit the grave of his wife Maria, who had died of cholera 5 years before while he was away serving in the Confederate Army. As he bids farewell to Maria, Kidd realizes that Johanna has become family to him, and rides back to her and apologizes for leaving her behind.

Anna and Wilhelm, though not uncaring, had her tied to a post to prevent Johanna from repeatedly running away. They permit Johanna to go with Kidd, with whom she is clearly much happier after Kidd had recently learned how to speak Kiowa.

Later, Captain Kidd enthusiastically reads the news to an audience in a large hall with Johanna's assistance, and Kidd introduces her as his daughter Johanna Kidd.

Cast

- Tom Hanks as Captain Kidd
- Helena Zengel as Johanna
- Michael Angelo Covino as Almay
- Ray McKinnon as Simon Boudlin
- Mare Winningham as Doris Boudlin

- [Elizabeth Marvel](#) as Mrs. Gannett
- [Fred Hechinger](#) as John Calley
- [Bill Camp](#) as Mr. Branholme
- Thomas Francis Murphy as Mr. Farley
- [Gabriel Ebert](#) as Benjamin Farley

In addition, [Neil Sandilands](#) and Winsome Brown portray Johanna's Uncle Wilhelm and Aunt Anna, respectively.

Production

Development and casting

In May 2017, [Fox 2000 Pictures](#) bought distribution rights to an adaptation of the [Paulette Jiles](#) novel with [Luke Davies](#) writing the screenplay and [Tom Hanks](#) set to star.^[6] In February 2019, [Paul Greengrass](#) was announced as director.^[7] As a result of [Disney](#) acquiring Fox 2000's parent company, [21st Century Fox](#), the film was transferred to [Universal Pictures](#).^[8] In August, [Helena Zengel](#), Michael Covino, and Fred Hechinger were added to the cast, and Thomas Francis Murphy joined in September.^[9]

Filming

Filming commenced on September 2, 2019, in [Santa Fe, New Mexico](#)^[10] and finished in approximately November 2020.^[11] Scenes set in towns and in [Dallas, Texas](#) were shot at the western sets of the Bonanza Creek Ranch near the ruins of [Bonanza City, New Mexico](#). Some [computer-generated imagery](#) was used to add more buildings.^[12]

Kiowa Tribe member Dorothy WhiteHorse coached Zengel in the [Kiowa language](#) and other details of Native American life and behavior, while Tribal Chairman Matthew Komalty praised the film's crew for their attention to accuracy.^[13]

In November 2020, Netflix bought the international distribution rights to the film (excluding the United States). Helena Zengel dubbed herself in the Italian,^[14] German,^[15] French^[15] and Spanish^[15] versions; the dubbing is limited to the lines she spoke in English.

Release

News of the World was theatrically released by Universal Pictures in the United States on December 25, 2020, which was followed by a [Premium video on demand \(PVOD\)](#) release in the United States on January 15, 2021. It originally was going to be released by Fox 2000 Pictures. In November 2020, it was announced that Netflix had acquired international distribution rights, except for the United States and China, and released it digitally on its streaming service on February 10, 2021.^[2] On March 2, 2021,

Universal Pictures Home Entertainment officially announced that the release date for *News of the World* to physical media, including Blu-ray Disc, 4k Ultra HD Blu-ray Disc, and DVD, would be March 23, 2021.^[16] In the United States, the film was released on HBO/HBO Max on September 4, 2021.

Reception

Box office

In the United States, *News of the World*, released alongside *Wonder Woman 1984*, *Promising Young Woman*, and *Pinocchio*, was projected to gross around \$4 million from 1,900 theaters in its opening weekend.^[17] The film made \$1.05 million on its first day, and went on to debut to \$2.3 million, finishing second at the box office behind *Wonder Woman 1984*; 70% of the audience was over the age of 35.^{[18][3]} The film fell 25% in its second weekend, grossing \$1.7 million, then made \$1.24 million in its third weekend.^[19]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 88% of 273 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7.4/10. The website's consensus reads: "*News of the World* takes a slow but absorbing ride down a comfortingly familiar Western trail, guided by Tom Hanks in peak paternal mode."^[20] On Metacritic, it has a weighted average score of 73 out of 100, based on 45 critics, indicating "generally favorable reviews".^[21] Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B+" on an A+ to F scale.^[3]

Writing for *IndieWire*, David Ehrlich gave the film a grade of B and said, "If Greengrass' broadly entertaining (if gallingly relevant) film is a bit too soft and spread thin to hit with the emotional force that it could, so much of its simple power is owed to the grounded nature of the director's approach, which allows these desperate characters to feel as if they're trying to escape the very genre that threatens to define them forever."^[22]

A.A. Dowd of *The A.V. Club* gave the film a "B−" and wrote: "Ultimately, *News Of The World* lives and dies on the presence of its iconic headliner, on the Hanks of it all. That's the most old-fashioned thing about it: It's a true star vehicle, practically a tribute to his enduring appeal. Yet for as comforting as Hanks is in the role, and for as much as he sells the poignancy of the film's bittersweet final stretch, the film feels almost too built around his signature nobility to ever gain much in the way of actual drama."^[23]

Mark Kermode of *The Observer* awarded the film 4 out of 5 stars and wrote, "Having emerged from news documentaries to become a peerless director of vivid real-life dramas (*Bloody Sunday*, *United 93*) and frenetically visceral adventures (*The Bourne* franchise), Greengrass relishes the opportunity to take a more languorous attitude to character development and location, a quality that seems to have confounded some fans of the director's more urgent fare. Yet I found this a rewarding and entertaining drama, heavy with the weight of the past, yet buoyed up by the possibilities of the future."^[24]

Contrasting views display the comments on the movie by Philipp Emberger, the critic of ORF, the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation: under the title "Helena Zengel Overpowering Tom Hanks", he describes her scenes as the highlights of the film, compared to Tom Hanks's solos that seem "arduously one-dimensional", concluding that "Tom Hanks delivers a lot of forgivingness, besides the Dad-vibes", which

makes the film "a quiet and steady Western with elements of road-movie, beautiful pictures of landscapes, a relevant topic, lots of heart, and a star named Helena Zengel."^[25] Peter Bradshaw of The Guardian gave the film 2 out of 5 stars, writing that although Hanks's "persona here is equable and easy-going, qualities which are of course necessary to his sympathetic brand identity, he doesn't plausibly change in any dramatic way", and describing the film as a "handsomely shot but stolid and blandly self-satisfied western".^[26]

A. O. Scott of The New York Times gave a mixed review, writing that "this isn't a bad movie. The problem is that it's too nice a movie, too careful and compromised, as if its makers didn't trust the audience to handle the real news of the world."^[27]

Tom Gliatto of *People* named it the fifth best film of the year.^[28]

Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<u>AARP's Movies for Grownups Awards</u>	March 28, 2021	<u>Best Actor</u>	<u>Tom Hanks</u>	Nominated	[29]
		<u>Best Screenwriter</u>	<u>Paul Greengrass</u> and <u>Luke Davies</u>	Nominated	
<u>Academy Awards</u>	April 25, 2021	<u>Best Cinematography</u>	<u>Dariusz Wolski</u>	Nominated	[30]
		<u>Best Original Score</u>	<u>James Newton Howard</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Production Design</u>	<u>David Crank</u> and <u>Elizabeth Keenan</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Sound</u>	<u>Oliver Tarney</u> , <u>Mike Prestwood Smith</u> , <u>William Miller</u> , and <u>John Pritchett</u>	Nominated	
<u>American Society of Cinematographers Awards</u>	April 18, 2021	<u>Outstanding Achievement in Cinematography in Theatrical Releases</u>	<u>Dariusz Wolski</u>	Nominated	[31]
<u>Art Directors Guild Awards</u>	April 10, 2021	<u>Excellence in Production Design for a Period Film</u>	David Crank	Nominated	[32]
<u>British Academy Film Awards</u>	April 11, 2021	<u>Best Cinematography</u>	Dariusz Wolski	Nominated	[33]
		<u>Best Original Music</u>	James Newton Howard	Nominated	
		<u>Best Production Design</u>	David Crank and Elizabeth Keenan	Nominated	
		<u>Best Sound</u>	Michael Fentum, William Miller, Mike Prestwood Smith, John Pritchett, and Oliver Tarney	Nominated	
<u>Cinema Audio Society Awards</u>	April 17, 2021	<u>Outstanding Achievement in Sound Mixing for a Motion Picture – Live Action</u>	John Patrick Pritchett, Mike Prestwood Smith, William Miller, Shawn Murphy, Mark DeSimone, and Adam Fil Méndez	Nominated	[34]
<u>Critics' Choice Awards</u>	March 7, 2021	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>News of the World</i>	Nominated	[35]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Tom Hanks	Nominated	
		<u>Best Young Actor/Actress</u>	Helena Zengel	Nominated	
		<u>Best Adapted Screenplay</u>	Luke Davies and Paul Greengrass	Nominated	
		<u>Best Cinematography</u>	Dariusz Wolski	Nominated	
		<u>Best Production Design</u>	David Crank and Elizabeth Keenan	Nominated	
		<u>Best Score</u>	James Newton Howard	Nominated	

<u>Golden Globe Awards</u>	<u>February 28, 2021</u>	<u>Best Supporting Actress – Motion Picture</u>	Helena Zengel	Nominated	[36]
		<u>Best Original Score</u>	James Newton Howard	Nominated	
<u>Hollywood Critics Association Awards</u>	<u>March 5, 2021</u>	<u>Best Cinematography</u>	Dariusz Wolski	Nominated	[37]
		<u>Best Score</u>		Nominated	
<u>Hollywood Music in Media Awards</u>	<u>January 27, 2021</u>	<u>Best Original Score in a Feature Film</u>	James Newton Howard	Won	[38]
<u>Motion Picture Sound Editors Golden Reel Awards</u>	<u>April 16, 2021</u>	<u>Outstanding Achievement in Sound Editing – Feature Underscore</u>	Arabella Winter, David Olson, and Jim Weidman	Nominated	[39]
		<u>Outstanding Achievement in Sound Editing – Feature Dialogue/ADR</u>	Oliver Tarney, Rachael Tate and Anna MacKenzie	Nominated	
		<u>Outstanding Achievement in Sound Editing – Feature Effects/Foley</u>	Oliver Tarney, Mike Fentum, Kevin Penney, Dawn Gough, Hugo Adams, Sue Harding, Andrea King, and Oliver Ferris	Nominated	
<u>Satellite Awards</u>	<u>February 15, 2021</u>	<u>Best Supporting Actress – Motion Picture</u>	Helena Zengel	Nominated	[40]
		<u>Best Adapted Screenplay</u>	Luke Davies and Paul Greengrass	Nominated	
		<u>Best Cinematography</u>	Dariusz Wolski	Nominated	
		<u>Best Original Score</u>	James Newton Howard	Nominated	
<u>Screen Actors Guild Awards</u>	<u>April 4, 2021</u>	<u>Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role</u>	Helena Zengel	Nominated	[41]
		<u>Outstanding Performance by a Stunt Ensemble in a Motion Picture</u>	<i>News of the World</i>	Nominated	
<u>Set Decorators Society of America Awards</u>	<u>March 31, 2021</u>	<u>Best Achievement in Décor/Design of a Period Feature Film</u>	Elizabeth Keenan and David Crank	Nominated	[42]
<u>Visual Effects Society Awards</u>	<u>April 6, 2021</u>	<u>Outstanding Supporting Visual Effects in a Photoreal Feature</u>	Roni Rodrigues, Dayaliyah Lopez, Ian Fellows, Andrew Morley, and Brandon K. McLaughlin	Nominated	[43]
<u>Writers Guild of America Awards</u>	<u>March 21, 2021</u>	<u>Best Adapted Screenplay</u>	Luke Davies and Paul Greengrass	Nominated	[44]

See also

- Olive Oatman

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External links

- Official website (<https://www.newsoftheworldfilm.com/>)
- *News of the World* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6878306/>) at IMDb
- Script (<https://deadline.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/News-of-the-World-Screenplay.pdf>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210202193625/https://deadline.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/News-of-the-World-Screenplay.pdf>) February 2, 2021, at the [Wayback Machine](#)

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