

The Rental

The Rental is a 2020 American horror film co-written, produced and directed by Dave Franco, in his feature directorial debut. Franco co-wrote the screenplay with Joe Swanberg from a story by Franco, Swanberg, and Mike Demski. It stars Dan Stevens, Alison Brie, Sheila Vand, Jeremy Allen White, and Toby Huss, and follows two couples who begin to suspect they are being watched in the house they rented.

The film was released on video-on-demand and in select theaters in the United States on July 24, 2020, by IFC Films. It received generally positive reviews from critics, and became the second film to ever top video-on-demand (VOD) charts and the box office in the same weekend.

Plot

Charlie, his wife Michelle, his brother Josh, and Josh's girlfriend/Charlie's business partner Mina rent a remote house on the Oregon Coast for a weekend getaway. The house owner Taylor gives them the key to the house. After settling in, Michelle goes to bed while the others take MDMA (ecstasy). Josh passes out on the couch, and Mina and Charlie have sex in the shower.

The next morning, Charlie and Mina agree to keep the one-night stand a secret. While taking a shower, Mina discovers a hidden camera and alerts Charlie; the two believe Taylor has installed it. Charlie stops her from calling the police, fearing Michelle and Josh would learn of their affair. He assures her that Taylor would not reveal the footage because it would involve him admitting to spying on them.

That night, Michelle calls Taylor over to fix the hot tub, while Josh realizes his dog has gone missing. Josh is suspicious that Taylor may have taken the dog, so he confronts Taylor upon his arrival, but he denies it. Taylor fixes the hot tub, and Mina privately confronts him about the hidden camera in the shower, which he claims to be unaware of. Mina threatens to call the police but Taylor calls her bluff. Hearing the commotion, Josh rushes in and, assuming Taylor was attacking Mina, beats him unconscious. Mina is forced to explain the hidden camera, omitting the affair with Charlie. While the group discusses what to do in the living room, a

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Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Dave Franco
Screenplay by	Dave Franco <div></div> Joe Swanberg
Story by	Dave Franco <div></div> Joe Swanberg <div></div> Mike Demski
Produced by	Dave Franco <div></div> Elizabeth Haggard <div></div> Teddy Schwarzman <div></div> Ben Stillman <div></div> Joe Swanberg <div></div> Christopher Storer
Starring	Dan Stevens <div></div> Alison Brie <div></div> Sheila Vand <div></div> Jeremy Allen White

masked man sneaks in and smothers Taylor to death. When the others find Taylor dead in the bathroom, they assume that he died from Josh's beatings.

Frantic, Michelle demands they call the police, but Charlie refuses, unwilling to let Josh, who has previously been incarcerated, return to prison. He suggests staging Taylor's death as an accident by throwing him off the cliff into the ocean. Michelle refuses to take part and goes to the bedroom. The other three carry Taylor's body to the cliff. It falls onto an outcrop, forcing Josh to go down and push it into the sea. Back at the house, Michelle is lured into a room where a TV plays the footage of Charlie and Mina having sex. Michelle angrily confronts Charlie and drives off. Down the road, she runs over metal spikes, crashes into a tree, and is attacked by the masked man while texting Charlie for help.

Charlie goes to search for Michelle. He finds her dead body on the road and is then attacked and murdered by the masked man. Back at the house, Mina and Josh are looking for the shower camera's transceiver to destroy any footage it recorded. Josh receives texts from Charlie's phone that contain evidence of Charlie and Mina having sex. Josh then hears someone enter the house and, thinking it is Charlie, rushes to confront him. Instead, the masked man ambushes and kills Josh. Mina flees, pursued by the masked man. Sprinting through the forest in the darkness and fog, she accidentally runs off a cliff and falls into the ocean.

The masked man returns to the house, removing all evidence and surveillance equipment and then removes his mask (revealing dark hair and what is implied to be a younger man, though his face is not shown). As the man is about to depart, Josh's dog runs in through the backdoor, showing that he did indeed just run off for a day as opposed to being killed. The man attempts to pet the dog gently but the dog recoils, and the man departs without harming the dog.

He rents a new property and installs cameras in it. It becomes clear that as a serial killer; he first rents a property and installs the surveillance equipment, and at some point in the future, he uses that equipment to aid in killing future renters before removing the equipment and moving on. During the credits, footage is shown from the hidden cameras of the masked man attacking a sleeping couple as he emerges from a closet.

Cast

- [Dan Stevens](#) as Charlie
- [Alison Brie](#) as Michelle
- [Sheila Vand](#) as Mina
- [Jeremy Allen White](#) as Josh
- [Toby Huss](#) as Taylor

Production

	Toby Huss
Cinematography	Christian Sprenger
Edited by	Kyle Reiter
Music by	Danny Bensi Saunder Jurriaans
Production company	Black Bear Pictures
Distributed by	IFC Films (United States) STXfilms (International) ^[1]
Release dates	June 18, 2020 (Vineland Drive-In) July 24, 2020 (United States)
Running time	88 minutes ^[2]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$3.5 million ^[3]
Box office	\$4.3 million ^[4] ^[5]

In March 2019, it was announced [Alison Brie](#), [Dan Stevens](#), [Sheila Vand](#) and [Jeremy Allen White](#) had joined the cast of the film, with [Dave Franco](#) directing from a screenplay he wrote alongside [Joe Swanberg](#).^[6] Franco, Elizabeth Haggard, [Ben Stillman](#), [Teddy Schwarzman](#), Swanberg and Christopher Storer served as producers on the film, under their [Ramona Films](#) and [Black Bear Pictures](#) banners, respectively, while Michael Heimler and [Sean Durkin](#) acted as executive producers.^[7]

[Principal photography](#) began on April 22, 2019, lasting through May 24, in [Bandon](#) and [Portland, Oregon](#).^{[8][9]}

Danny Bensi and Saunder Jurriaans composed the film's score, released by [Lakeshore Records](#).

Release

In April 2020, [IFC Films](#) acquired distribution rights to the film and scheduled it to be released on July 24, 2020.^[10] Due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), the film held its premiere at the [Vineland Drive-In theatre](#) in [City of Industry, California](#) on June 18, 2020.^[11]

Reception

Box office and VOD

The film made an estimated \$130,000 from 251 theaters in its first day, and \$420,871 over the weekend, topping the box office.^[12] It also was the top-rented film on [Apple TV](#), the [iTunes Store](#) and other streaming services, becoming just the second film to ever top both the box office and rental charts.^[13] In its second weekend the film retained the top spot at the box office, grossing \$290,272 from 242 theaters.^[14] It also remained in the top 10 at the iTunes Store, Apple TV, and [Spectrum's](#) rental charts.^[15] In its third weekend the film made \$123,700 at the box office and came in fourth, while also remaining the top-rented horror film at iTunes.^[16]

Critical response

On review aggregator [Rotten Tomatoes](#), the film holds an approval rating of 74% based on 196 reviews, with an average rating of 6.4/10. The website's critics consensus reads: "Some tricky genre juggling makes *The Rental* a bit of a fixer-upper, but effective chills and a solid cast make this a fine destination for horror fans."^[17] On [Metacritic](#), the film has a [weighted average score](#) of 62 out of 100, based on 30 critics, indicating "generally favorable reviews".^[18]

Writing for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, [Richard Roeper](#) gave the film three-and-a-half stars out of four, saying: "*The Rental* would have worked purely as a compelling character study about four dysfunctional adults unraveling over the course of a long weekend — but when the presence of a homicidal maniac is introduced to the proceedings, the transition to horror film is brilliant and wacky and pretty darn great."^[19] [Owen Gleiberman](#) of *Variety* said the film had "tense flavor and skill" and wrote: "There's some crafty artistry at work in *The Rental*, and also some fairly standard pandering, which feels like a violation of the movie's better instincts. That said, most of it is skillful and engrossing enough to establish Franco as a director to watch."^[20] In a negative review, Oliver Jones of the *Observer* said the film's ideas aren't fully explored or developed enough, which results in "a tweener: a film that is part infidelity drama and part

slasher film while never fully committing to either idea."^[21] Jones added the plot felt "paper-thin" and the characters insubstantial, concluding "there are seeds of ideas about the toxicity of aspirational real estate and those that indifferently own it that could have possibly have flowered into something worth exploring."^[21]

Potential sequel

Franco has voiced his interest in a sequel, saying: "It was the intention from the beginning to leave the ending ambiguous enough that we carry on the story if given a chance... I have a very strong idea for what I would want to do with a sequel."^[9]

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