

Boss Level

Boss Level is a 2020 American science fiction action film directed by Joe Carnahan and written by Carnahan and Chris and Eddie Borey, from a story by the Boreys. It stars Frank Grillo as a retired special forces soldier who tries to escape a never-ending time loop that results in his death. Mel Gibson, Naomi Watts and Michelle Yeoh co-star.

Originally announced in 2012 as *Continue*, it was developed by Carnahan at 20th Century Fox but did not move forward. It was reannounced in November 2017, with Carnahan, Grillo, Randall Emmett and George Furla producing. Filming took place in Georgia from March to May 2018. It was scheduled for release by Entertainment Studios Motion Pictures on August 16, 2019, but was delayed. It was released in the United States on March 5, 2021 by Hulu.

Plot

Roy Pulver, a retired Delta Force soldier in Atlanta, has been stuck in a time loop for nearly 140 days and has learned the day's patterns through many previous loops. He wakes at 07:00 AM each day, avoids an assassin in his apartment and an attack by a gunman in a helicopter outside his window, then escapes his apartment before it explodes. He has been able to elude more assassins throughout the morning, but finds himself unable to figure out how to survive a final attack at 12:47 PM, waking up back in his apartment on the next loop.

On the day before Roy entered the loop, his estranged wife Jemma had asked Roy to visit her at defense contractor Dynow Labs under the pretense of a job interview. The two argue over Joe, their son, whom Jemma has led to believe that Roy is just a family friend. When Colonel Clive Vantor, head of Dynow, discovers Roy near Jemma's highly classified project, he has him escorted out, but not before Jemma obtains a sample of Roy's hair.

In one loop, Roy tries to call Jemma but instead reaches Vantor, who tells him that Jemma died from a lab accident the day before. Roy becomes suspicious. On a later loop, he finds Joe at Underground Atlanta, skipping school for a video game

Boss Level



Official release poster

Directed by	<u>Joe Carnahan</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Chris Borey</u> <u>Eddie Borey</u> <u>Joe Carnahan</u>
Story by	<u>Chris Borey</u> <u>Eddie Borey</u>
Produced by	<u>Joe Carnahan</u> <u>Frank Grillo</u> <u>Randall Emmett</u> <u>George Furla</u>
Starring	<u>Frank Grillo</u> <u>Mel Gibson</u> <u>Naomi Watts</u> <u>Annabelle Wallis</u> <u>Michelle Yeoh</u>
Cinematography	<u>Juan Miguel Azpiroz</u>
Edited by	<u>Kevin Hale</u>
Music by	<u>Clinton Shorter</u>

tournament. Roy spends the day with Joe but does not mention Jemma's death. The assassins arrive to kill Roy, and Roy uses his body to protect Joe, telling him as he dies that he is his father.

When Roy next wakes, he realizes that the assassins had followed him using a dental tracking device implanted by Alice, his date from the night before, who is a dental hygienist. Through more trial-and-error loops, Roy finds a way to remove the tracker and sneak into Dynow, killing several guards and assassins, but is always stopped by Venter and the sword wielding Guan Yin. Venter reveals to Roy that Jemma's project is the Osiris Spindle, a quantum device capable of rewriting history, which Venter plans to use to set himself up as the world's dictator. Venter admits he was responsible for Jemma's death after an argument the night before. As she had started the Spindle and no one else knows how to operate it, Venter warns Roy the Spindle will destroy the world if it runs too long.

On further loops, Roy makes the connection to the Egyptian god of the afterlife, Osiris, from a book with a hidden message that Jemma gifted him for his birthday, and he realizes that Jemma must have placed him in the Spindle to stop Venter. While he is able to further infiltrate Dynow and kill Venter after learning sword fighting from "daily" lessons from Dai Feng, Roy learns the assassins were sent to kill Joe, and arrives too late. As he mourns over Joe, the Osiris Spindle explodes and destroys the world.

Roy spends several loops in a despondent state, then decides to spend several more loops with Joe, staying with him until the Spindle's explosion. In one loop, he learns that Jemma had called Joe that morning, later than he previously thought she was still alive, and realizes he can save her. After determining the exact time and place she died at Venter's hands in Dynow, fourteen minutes after he wakes up, Roy uses the next loop to hijack the helicopter, get to Dynow, kill the waiting assassins, and stop Venter before he kills Jemma.

Roy tells Jemma he has been spending his loops with Joe, and that he has seen the end of the world. Jemma tells Roy that he has to enter the Osiris Spindle in order to reset it, and that either he would wake up and repeat the day once more or die and stay dead. Roy kisses Jemma before entering the spindle as Jemma looks on in awe. Roy reawakens back in bed and tells himself not to die as the attacks begin.

The international release ends as he enters the Spindle. No mention is made of having to repeat the day, but rather that he may "cease to be" if he enters the Spindle.

Cast

- Frank Grillo as Roy Pulver
- Mel Gibson as Colonel Clive Venter
- Naomi Watts as Jemma Wells
- Annabelle Wallis as Alice

Production companies	<u>Highland Film Group</u> <u>Emmett/Furla Oasis</u> Diamond Film Productions <u>MoviePass Films</u> The Fyzz Facility <u>Ingenious Media</u> WarParty Films
Distributed by	<u>Hulu</u>
Release dates	February 11, 2020 (Los Angeles) ^[1] February 25, 2021 (Australia) ^[2] March 5, 2021 (United States)
Running time	100 minutes ^[3]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$45 million ^[4]
Box office	\$2 million ^[5]

- Ken Jeong as Chef Jake
- Will Sasso as Brett
- Selina Lo as Guan Yin
- Meadow Williams as Pam
- Michelle Yeoh as Dai Feng
- Mathilde Ollivier as Gabrielle
- Rob Gronkowski as the Helicopter Gunner (credited as "Gunner")
- Rio Grillo as Joe

In addition, Sheaun McKinney plays Dave, the counter surveillance expert, and Armida Lopez plays Esmeralda the chauffeur while the remaining assassins are: Buster Reeves as Mr. Good Morning; Eric Etebari as Roy #2; Quinton "Rampage" Jackson and Rashad Evans as the German Twins; Adam Simon as Loudmouth; Aaron Beelner as Marshall / Kaboom; and Michael Tourek as Smiley. Director Joe Carnahan cameos as a patron in the bar.

Production

In January 2012, Joe Carnahan announced that he was working on the film, originally titled *Continue*, for 20th Century Fox, and described it as "*Groundhog Day* as an action movie", inspired by video game rules.^[6] In May 2012, it was reported that Fox was moving forward with the project.^[7] In September 2012, Carnahan posted screen tests that he had filmed with actor Frank Grillo on Twitter, saying he was sharing them "to show you how cool this movie could have been..."^[8]

In November 2017, it was reported that Grillo and Mel Gibson were negotiating to star in the film, now titled *Boss Level*, with Carnahan writing and directing.^[9] Further casting continued in March 2018 with the additions of Will Sasso, Naomi Watts, Annabelle Wallis and Rob Gronkowski.^{[10][11][12][13]} Filming began that month in Savannah, Georgia.^{[14][15]} Ken Jeong, Mathilde Ollivier, Selina Lo and Michelle Yeoh joined the cast the following month.^{[16][17]}

In April 2018, filming took place in Atlanta, including in Pullman Yard, the Oakland City MARTA station, and near the Georgia Aquarium. Filming also took place in Decatur.^[18] A restaurant scene was filmed in Atlanta on May 12 and 13, 2018.^[19] On May 13, *Screen Daily* reported that filming had wrapped.^[20] The film's budget was \$45 million.^[4]

Release

In April 2018, Entertainment Studios Motion Pictures acquired U.S. distribution rights to the film.^[21] It was scheduled to be released on August 16, 2019,^[22] but missed its release date.^[23]

A special free advance screening of the film, sponsored by entertainment website Collider, was held at the ArcLight Cinemas in Hollywood on February 11, 2020, followed by a Q&A session with Grillo and Carnahan.^{[1][24]}

In June 2020, Entertainment Studios dropped the film.^{[4][23]} In November 2020, the U.S. distribution rights were acquired in an eight-figure deal by Hulu,^[25] which was later revealed to be worth \$11,750,000.^[26] The film was released on March 5, 2021.^[27]

In July 2021 Blumhouse Productions sued the producers of the film for breach of contract. Blumhouse asserts that they were brought in to recut the film after the original version failed to secure distribution, but have not been compensated for their work, which was to be 5% of the acquisition fee paid by Hulu. Blumhouse also sued Hulu for continuing to stream their cut of the film after being sent multiple cease and desist notices.^[26]

It was released in the United Kingdom on Amazon Prime Video.^[28]

Reception

On the review aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes, the film has an approval rating of 73%, based on 83 reviews, with an average rating of 6.50/10. The site's critics consensus reads: "*Boss Level* powers up the increasingly crowded time-loop genre with a gleefully over-the-top sci-fi action thriller that revels in its own excess."^[29] On Metacritic, the film has a weighted average score of 56 out of 100, based on 16 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews".^[30]

Writing for *IndieWire*, Christian Blauvelt gave the film a grade of B and said, "It's a star part, and Grillo commands it. Most importantly, he gets you to invest in Roy enough that, even without a controller in your hands, you never feel like you're simply watching someone else play a videogame. With no pixels in sight, Grillo gives *Boss Level* the thing most videogame movie riffs lack: a pulse."^[31]

See also

- Boss (video games)
- Level (video games)
- List of films based on video games
- List of films featuring time loops

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