

# Vivarium (film)

***Vivarium*** is a 2019 science fiction psychological thriller film directed by Lorcan Finnegan, from a story by Finnegan and Garret Shanley. An international co-production between Ireland, Denmark, and Belgium, it stars Imogen Poots, Jesse Eisenberg, Jonathan Aris, and Éanna Hardwicke. It premiered at the Cannes Film Festival on 18 May 2019, and was released in Ireland on 27 March 2020 by Vertigo Releasing. The film follows a couple (Eisenberg and Poots) who are forced to care for a mysterious humanoid creature while trapped in a strange, vivarium-like neighbourhood.

## Plot

The opening scene depicts the brood parasitism of a cuckoo before introducing primary school teacher Gemma and her landscaper boyfriend Tom. He buries a dead altricial chick ejected from its nest, hiding this horrible fact of nature. They drive to meet with real estate agent Martin, who leads them to Yonder, an enormous suburban development of identical green houses. Martin shows them around house number 9, asking if they have children. When Gemma replies, "No, not yet", Martin mimics her perfectly. After looking around the garden they find Martin has vanished. Attempting to leave, they repeatedly find themselves back at number 9. They drive around the endless, identical streets until they run out of fuel.

They sleep in the house. The next morning, they try to escape on foot, climbing over fences in identical backyards, but at the end of an exhausting day they are back at number 9. They find a box of tasteless vacuum-packed food in front of the house. Tom sets fire to the house in order to send up a smoke signal; they watch the building burn, then fall asleep on the pavement. When they awaken, they discover another box containing an infant and the message, "Raise the child and be released." The smoke clears, but house number 9 is undamaged.

Months later, the infant is the size of a ten year-old boy. It mimics Tom and Gemma and shrieks when it wants food. When it calls Gemma "Mother", she insists that she is not its mother, while Tom refers to The Boy as "it". Gemma and Tom wait in the garden with a pickaxe to attack whoever delivers the food, but they never see

### Vivarium



Theatrical release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	Lorcan Finnegan
<b>Screenplay by</b>	Garret Shanley
<b>Story by</b>	Garret Shanley Lorcan Finnegan
<b>Produced by</b>	<u>John McDonnell</u> <u>Brendan McCarthy</u>
<b>Starring</b>	<u>Imogen Poots</u> <u>Jesse Eisenberg</u>
<b>Cinematography</b>	<u>MacGregor</u>
<b>Edited by</b>	Tony Cranstoun
<b>Music by</b>	<u>Kristian Eidnes Andersen</u>
<b>Production companies</b>	<u>XYZ Films</u> <u>Fantastic Films</u>

anyone. Tom begins digging a hole in the garden and becomes withdrawn. Later, he starts hearing strange sounds underground. In the living room, The Boy watches fractal-like patterns on the television.

Tom locks The Boy in their car, thinking that if someone comes for it, they could force them to free them. However, Gemma takes pity and releases The Boy. Tom continues digging every day and begins sleeping in the hole. One day The Boy goes missing and returns with a book of odd symbols and diagrams of humanoids with throat sacs. When Gemma asks it to mimic the person who gave it the book, it makes rasping sounds and inflates its throat sacs, horrifying Gemma.

The Boy matures to resemble a young adult and Tom becomes ill, but continues to dig. The Boy leaves each day and Gemma tries to follow it but always finds herself back at number 9. In the hole, Tom finds a buried corpse in a vacuum bag. The Boy locks Gemma and Tom out of the house and they sleep in the car. Gemma pleads with The Boy for medicine for Tom but it replies, "Maybe it's time he was released." Tom expresses his love for Gemma as he dies. The Boy then zips him into a vacuum bag and throws it into the hole Tom had dug.

Gemma wounds The Boy with the pickaxe. The Boy hisses and crawls into a labyrinth under the sidewalk. Gemma follows and crashes through a door into multiple rooms in other houses with more Boys and several strangers, one of whom has committed suicide.

She lands back in number 9, weak and moaning. The Boy carries her to a vacuum bag, explaining that mothers die after raising their sons. She tells it that she is not its mother and dies as it zips her in. The Boy buries her with Tom and drives back to the real estate office, where an aged Martin lies dying in its chair.

	Frakas Productions PingPong Film <u>VOO</u> <u>BeTV</u>
<b>Distributed by</b>	<u>Vertigo</u> <u>Releasing and</u> <u>Wildcard</u> Distribution (Ireland) <sup>[1]</sup> Angel Films (Denmark) <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Release dates</b>	18 May 2019 ( <u>Cannes</u> ) 26 March 2020 (Ireland)
<b>Running time</b>	97 minutes
<b>Countries</b>	Ireland <sup>[3]</sup> Denmark <sup>[3]</sup> Belgium <sup>[3]</sup>
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	€4 million <sup>[4]</sup>
<b>Box office</b>	\$434,030 <sup>[5]</sup>

Martin gives The Boy its name tag and dies. The Boy places Martin in a vacuum bag and puts it into a garbage chute disguised as a file drawer. When a couple walks in the door, The Boy greets them just as Martin did.

## Cast

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- [Imogen Poots](#) as Gemma
- [Jesse Eisenberg](#) as Tom
- [Jonathan Aris](#) as Martin
- [Danielle Ryan](#) as Mom
- Molly McCann as Young Girl
- Senan Jennings as The Boy
- [Éanna Hardwicke](#) as The Boy (older)
- [Côme Thiry](#) as The Boy (baby)

## Production

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In May 2018, it was announced that Lorcan Finnegan would direct *Vivarium* from a story he co-wrote with Garret Shanley, and that Jesse Eisenberg and Imogen Poots had joined the cast.<sup>[6]</sup> It was shot in locations in Belgium and Ireland before moving to [Ardmore Studios](#), [Wicklow](#), Ireland.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Release

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*Vivarium* premiered at the [Cannes Film Festival](#) on 18 May 2019.<sup>[8][9]</sup> Shortly after, [Saban Films](#) and [Vertigo Releasing](#) acquired US and UK distribution rights, respectively.<sup>[10][11]</sup> It was released in the United States, UK and Ireland on 27 March 2020, with a limited theatrical release and video-on-demand release the same day.<sup>[12][13]</sup>

## Reception

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On [Rotten Tomatoes](#), *Vivarium* has an approval rating of 72% based on 149 reviews, with an average rating of 6.6/10. The site's critics consensus reads, "*Vivarium* may confound almost as often as it intrigues, but this well-acted sci-fi/horror hybrid has interesting ideas—and explores them with style."<sup>[14]</sup> On [Metacritic](#), the film has [weighted average](#) score of 64 out of 100 based on reviews from 23 critics, indicating "generally favorable reviews".<sup>[15]</sup>

## See also

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- [Stopover in a Quiet Town](#)

## References

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## External links

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- [Official website](https://web.archive.org/web/20200804052821/http://vivariumfilm.co.uk/) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20200804052821/http://vivariumfilm.co.uk/>) at the Wayback Machine (archived August 4, 2020)
  - *Vivarium* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8368406/>) at IMDb
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