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# Abigail (2024 film)

***Abigail*** is a 2024 American horror film directed by Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett from a screenplay written by Stephen Shields and Guy Busick. The film follows a group of kidnappers who capture the daughter of a powerful underworld figure and demand \$50 million for her release, unaware of something sinister. It stars Alisha Weir as Abigail, alongside Melissa Barrera, Dan Stevens, Kathryn Newton, Will Catlett, Kevin Durand, Angus Cloud, and Giancarlo Esposito.

The film was announced to be in development in April 2023, with Bettinelli-Olpin and Gillett attached as directors, and Shields and Busick hired to write the screenplay. It was also announced that the film would be a co-production between Bettinelli-Olpin, Gillett, and Chad Villella's Radio Silence Productions, James Vanderbilt, Paul Neinstein, and William Sherak's Project X Entertainment, and Tripp Vinson's Vinson Films.

*Abigail* had its world premiere at the Overlook Film Festival on April 7, 2024, and was theatrically released in the United States by Universal Pictures on April 19, 2024. The film received generally positive reviews from critics and has grossed over \$39 million worldwide.

## Plot

In New York City, young ballet dancer Abigail is abducted by six criminals and brought to the secluded Wilhelm Manor. Before leaving, their leader Lambert instructs them to guard Abigail for 24 hours, at which point they will receive an equal share of a \$50 million ransom paid by her father. Using fake names to avoid any member from identifying the others, the group consists of: former Army medic and recovering drug addict Joey; former NYPD detective Frank; thrill-seeking hacker Sammy; former Marine sniper Rickles; dimwitted mob enforcer Peter; and sociopathic driver Dean.

Though reluctant to continue with the plan as she was unaware the target was a child, Joey is tasked with managing Abigail. Joey is sympathetic to her, sharing that she has a son and promising to protect Abigail from harm. Abigail admits her father does not care about her and will not pay the ransom, before apologizing for what

Abigail	
	
Theatrical release poster	
Directed by	<u>Matt Bettinelli-Olpin</u> <u>Tyler Gillett</u>
Written by	<u>Stephen Shields</u> <u>Guy Busick</u>
Produced by	<u>William Sherak</u> <u>James Vanderbilt</u> <u>Paul Neinstein</u> <u>Tripp Vinson</u> <u>Chad Villella</u>
Starring	<u>Melissa Barrera</u> <u>Dan Stevens</u> <u>Kathryn Newton</u> <u>Will Catlett</u> <u>Kevin Durand</u> <u>Angus Cloud</u> <u>Alisha Weir</u>

is going to happen to Joey. Perturbed by Abigail's words, Frank violently confronts her, learning that her father is Kristof Lazaar, a powerful, almost mythical crime lord.

After unsuccessfully flirting with Sammy, Dean enters the basement where he is attacked by an unseen assailant. Investigating his screams, Sammy finds Dean's decapitated corpse. The group realize that Lazaar's legendarily violent enforcer Valdez must be inside the house and try to leave but the home's security system seals the property, preventing escape. While looking for a way out, Rickles is mutilated and killed. The group confronts Abigail for information but she transforms into a vampire, revealing she is Valdez. Frank shoots Abigail but her injuries instantly heal and the group flees in terror.

They return and ineffectively attack Abigail with tropes of vampiric lore such as garlic and crucifixes, and her strength and speed allow her to easily overwhelm and prevent the group from stabbing her through the heart with wooden stakes. Joey successfully incapacitates Abigail with a tranquilizer and the team imprison her, though not before she bites Sammy. Upon awakening, the centuries-old Abigail reveals that she knows the group's true identities and arranged for them to abduct her, through Lambert, so she can kill them for entertainment, as each has wronged her father. Joey deduces that Abigail has killed dozens of her father's enemies in a failed effort to earn her father's love.

Abigail effortlessly escapes her confines and attacks Frank, but Joey rips wooden planks off a window to expose Abigail to sunlight, which severely wounds her. With only hours before sunset, the group splits up to find an escape route, but Sammy is transformed into a vampire thrall under Abigail's control and kills Peter. Abigail has Sammy attack Frank and Joey, forcing Joey to destroy Sammy with reflected sunlight.

Lambert lures Frank and Joey to the hidden security room, where he reveals Abigail turned him into a vampire years earlier for helping Frank avoid Lazaar's wrath. Frank allows Lambert to turn him into a vampire so they can work together to kill Abigail and Lazaar, but following his transformation, Frank kills Lambert for leading him into Abigail's trap. Abigail attacks Frank, but he overpowers her and drains her blood, leaving her weakened. Cornered, Joey leaves a phone message for her son, apologizing for having been absent from his life for many years. Revelling in his power, Frank bites Joey, intending to turn her into his thrall and force her to kill Abigail and eventually her own son. However, Joey's enthrallment fails due to Frank's inexperience with his new abilities, and she and Abigail team up to kill him.

	<u>Giancarlo Esposito</u>
<b>Cinematography</b>	Aaron Morton
<b>Edited by</b>	<u>Michael P. Shawver</u> <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Music by</b>	<u>Brian Tyler</u>
<b>Production companies</b>	Project X Entertainment Vinson Films <u>Radio Silence Productions</u>
<b>Distributed by</b>	<u>Universal Pictures</u>
<b>Release dates</b>	April 7, 2024 ( <u>Overlook Film Festival</u> ) April 19, 2024 (United States)
<b>Running time</b>	109 minutes <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$28 million <sup>[3]</sup>
<b>Box office</b>	\$39.9 million <sup>[4]</sup> <sup>[5]</sup>

Abigail encourages Joey to leave and be present in her son's life, but Lazaar arrives and threatens Joey.<sup>[a]</sup> Abigail defends Joey for being present when she needed her while Lazaar was not. Although Lazaar angrily rebuts her, he relents for Abigail's sake and allows the bloodied and battered Joey to leave.

## Cast

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- [Melissa Barrera](#) as Joey: A skilled former military medic struggling with substance abuse issues.<sup>[7][1]</sup>
- [Dan Stevens](#) as Frank: An amoral former police detective<sup>[1][8]</sup>
- [Alisha Weir](#) as Abigail: A centuries-old vampire who appears as a 12-year-old girl<sup>[9][1]</sup>
- [Will Catlett](#) as Rickles: A skilled former military sniper<sup>[1]</sup>
- [Kathryn Newton](#) as Sammy: A skilled technician and hacker who commits crimes for entertainment<sup>[10][1]</sup>
- [Kevin Durand](#) as Peter: A physically imposing mercenary and alcoholic<sup>[11][1]</sup>
- [Angus Cloud](#) as Dean: A talented driver and sociopath<sup>[1]</sup>
- [Giancarlo Esposito](#) as Lambert: The team's shady handler<sup>[12][1]</sup>
- [Matthew Goode](#) as Father / Kristof Lazaar: An infamous crime lord and Abigail's father<sup>[6]</sup>

## Production

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### Development

In April 2023, it was reported that [Radio Silence Productions](#) was developing a monster thriller film for [Universal Pictures](#), with [Matt Bettinelli-Olpin](#) and [Tyler Gillett](#) attached to direct, with [Chad Villella](#) serving as producer alongside [William Sherak](#), [Paul Neinstein](#) and [James Vanderbilt](#) at Project X Entertainment, while [Stephen Shields](#) and [Guy Busick](#) would write the screenplay. The project was stated to be a modern-day adaptation of one of the [Universal Classic Monsters](#) characters similar in approach to *The Invisible Man* (2020) or *Renfield* (2023), with the synopsis being described as "a unique take on legendary monster lore and will represent a fresh, new direction for how to celebrate classic characters". Originally intended to be Bettinelli-Olpin and Gillett's next project following the release of the fifth *Scream* installment, the duo delayed its realization until after *Scream VI*.<sup>[13]</sup>

The project was originally titled *Dracula's Daughter*, the same name as the 1936 film upon which it is based;<sup>[9]</sup> with Universal restating that while they had considered a [singular continuity](#) with *The Mummy* (2017), each release will continue to be "rooted in the horror genre, with no restrictions on budget, rating or genre. They are not part of a shared interconnected universe, which allows each film to stand on its own. This new direction is filmmaker-driven, inviting innovative filmmakers with original, bold ideas for these characters to develop the stories and pitch them."<sup>[7][9][8][11]</sup> The film was officially titled *Abigail* in January 2024.<sup>[14]</sup>

### Casting

In April 2023, [Melissa Barrera](#) was cast for one of the main roles of the film after previously appearing in the filmmaking duo's *Scream* films.<sup>[7]</sup> The following month, [Dan Stevens](#), [Kevin Durand](#), [Alisha Weir](#), [Kathryn Newton](#), [Angus Cloud](#), and [Will Catlett](#) joined the cast.<sup>[8][11][9][10]</sup> In June 2023, it was

announced that [Giancarlo Esposito](#) was cast in a supporting role.<sup>[12]</sup> Weir, known for her role as [Matilda Wormwood](#) in the [2022 Netflix musical film](#), was later revealed to be playing Dracula's daughter.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Filming

[Principal photography](#) began on June 30, 2023, in [Dublin](#), Ireland,<sup>[16]</sup> under the working title *Abducting Abigail*,<sup>[17]</sup> but filming was suspended in July due to the [2023 SAG-AFTRA strike](#).<sup>[18]</sup> [Aaron Morton](#) served as the cinematographer.<sup>[19]</sup> [Cloud](#) finished filming his scenes prior to his death on July 31, 2023.<sup>[20]</sup> Weir learned [ballet](#) for her role, incorporating it into her character's movements, and performed her own stunts.<sup>[21]</sup> Filming wrapped on December 15 of the same year.<sup>[22]</sup> In the film, there is a brief [easter egg](#) that shows the character [Tony Le Domas](#) from [Radio Silence's Fox Searchlight Pictures](#) film *Ready or Not* (2019) in a portrait on the mansion.<sup>[23][24]</sup>

## Music

[Brian Tyler](#) composed the film's score; he collaborated with [Bettinelli-Olpin](#) and [Gillett](#) on prior projects.<sup>[25]</sup> The directors commissioned [Jean Dawson](#) for an original song, "Burn My Tongue", which plays over the closing credits.<sup>[26][27]</sup> The soundtrack album, featuring Tyler's score and "Burn My Tongue", was released on April 19.<sup>[27]</sup>

## Soundtrack

No.	Title	Writer(s)	Producer(s)	Length
1.	"Tchaikovsky: I. Scene – Swan Theme (Swan Lake Suite OP.20a" (performed by <a href="#">Berliner Philharmoniker</a> )	<a href="#">Pytor Tchaikovsky</a>	<a href="#">Cord Garben</a>	3:03
2.	"Glamorous Lifestyle" (performed by <a href="#">The Jacka</a> feat. <a href="#">Andre Nickatina</a> )	<a href="#">Andre Adams</a> , <a href="#">Sultan Banks</a> , <a href="#">Dominick Newton</a>	<a href="#">Traxamillion</a>	3:57
3.	"Goodbye, Good Luck, God Bless You" (performed by <a href="#">Buck Owens</a> and the <a href="#">Buckaroos</a> )	<a href="#">Buck Owens</a>	<a href="#">Ken Nelson</a>	2:16
4.	"Anyhow, I Love You" (performed by <a href="#">Guy Clark</a> feat. <a href="#">Waylon Jennings</a> & <a href="#">Emmylou Harris</a> )	<a href="#">Guy Clark</a>	<a href="#">Neil Wilburn</a>	3:55
5.	"Smokestack Lightnin'" (performed by <a href="#">Howlin' Wolf</a> )	<a href="#">Chester Burnett</a>	<a href="#">Leonard Chess</a> , <a href="#">Phil Chess</a> & <a href="#">Willie Dixon</a>	3:08
6.	"Blood and Tears" (performed by <a href="#">Danzig</a> )	<a href="#">Glenn Danzig</a>	<a href="#">Rick Rubin</a>	4:20
7.	"Burn My Tongue" (performed by <a href="#">Jean Dawson</a> )	<a href="#">Jean Dawson</a>	<a href="#">Jean Dawson</a> , <a href="#">Hoskins</a> , <a href="#">Biako</a> , & <a href="#">Johnny May</a>	3:07
Total length:				23:36

## Release

*Abigail* had its world premiere at the Overlook Film Festival on April 7, 2024,<sup>[28]</sup> and was released by Universal Pictures in the United States on April 19, 2024.<sup>[10]</sup> The film was released on premium video on demand by Universal Pictures Home Entertainment on May 7, 2024.<sup>[29]</sup>

## Reception

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### Box office

As of May 21, 2024, *Abigail* has grossed \$25.7 million in the United States and Canada and \$14.2 million in other territories, currently has made a total of \$39.9 million.<sup>[4]</sup>

In the United States and Canada, *Abigail* was released alongside *The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare* and *Spy × Family Code: White*, and was projected to gross \$12–15 million from 3,384 theaters in its opening weekend.<sup>[3]</sup> The film made \$4 million on its first day, including \$1 million from Thursday night previews. It went on to debut to \$10.2 million, finishing second at the box office behind holdover *Civil War*.<sup>[30]</sup>

### Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 84% of 196 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 6.8/10. The website's consensus reads: "Carrying off well-worn vampire tropes with a balletic flourish, *Abigail* dances around the familiarity of its premise with a game cast and slick style."<sup>[31]</sup> Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 62 out of 100, based on 37 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.<sup>[32]</sup> Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B" on an A+ to F scale.<sup>[30]</sup>

BJ Colangelo wrote in *Slashfilm* that "With a pitch-perfect ensemble cast, exquisitely timed laugh-out-loud moments of humor, a barrage of twists (or should I say pirouettes?), an unbelievable amount of blood, killer action set pieces, and a downright transcendent performance by one of the best child actors in the game — *Abigail* sets the bar as the most fun you can have with a horror movie of the year. In other words, *Abigail* is horror on pointe... Traditionally, films that are this delightfully raucous, bloody (and I mean BLOODY), and silly are relegated to B-movie schlock (not a bad thing, for the record), but *Abigail* still embraces the excessive and ornate gothic aesthetics of classic horror movies. The result is an old-school vampire movie with modern frisk and flair and an absolute blast of a movie to watch with a crowd. I'm sure there will be plenty who think I'm overhyping the film or exaggerating how good it is, but I honestly wouldn't change a thing. *Abigail* is a perfect horror movie and already one of the best films of 2024. I pinky promise."<sup>[33]</sup>

Manohla Dargis wrote in *The New York Times* that "*Abigail* has been described as a take on *Dracula's Daughter* (1936), one of the horror films in Universal's vault, some of which it has resurrected in some fashion. The press notes for *Abigail* name-check a few vampire titles, but *Daughter* isn't among them, and for good reason because there's little to link these two. That's too bad; the earlier film is a true curiosity. It stars Gloria Holden as a countess who preys on men and women alike, and begs a doctor to help her with her 'ghastly' condition. With its lesbian overtones, the movie is a vexed and tasty text — censors urged the studio to avoid suggestions of 'perverse sexual desire' — and the countess a complex villain in a film that is very much worth a look."<sup>[34]</sup>

David Fear of *Rolling Stone* wrote, "It's a gas, watching this ensemble bouncing off each other when the shit goes down and navigating the obstacle course that Bettinelli-Olpin and Gillett have set for them in the film's chaotic, mondo bloody back half. (We weren't joking about that whole exploding body thing.) Stevens has previously shown a knack for playing complicated douchebags, and that talent becomes refined here. Weir, who's a bit of a find in terms of playing a centuries-old fiend in the body of a tween, puts a sickly, sharp spin on a lot of her juicier lines. Cloud (R.I.P.) and Durand finds different ways of showcasing the dim-wittery of their characters, Newton once again reminds you that she's a first-rate pickpocket when it comes to stealing scenes, and Barrera steps into the role as steely scream queen extraordinaire in a way that makes you hope she really does have a long career in front of her instead of an aborted one already behind her."<sup>[35]</sup>

## Notes

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- a. Lazaar suggests he has had many different names over many centuries, implying Lazaar is a contemporary name for *Dracula*.<sup>[6]</sup>

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## External links

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- [Official website \(<https://www.abigailmovie.com/>\)](https://www.abigailmovie.com/) 
  - *Abigail* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt27489557/>) at IMDb
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