

Rebel Moon – Part One: A Child of Fire, or simply ***Rebel Moon***, is a 2023 American epic space opera film directed by Zack Snyder from a screenplay he co-wrote with Kurt Johnstad and Shay Hatten. Its ensemble cast features Sofia Boutella, Djimon Hounsou, Ed Skrein, Michiel Huisman, Doona Bae, Ray Fisher, Charlie Hunnam, and Anthony Hopkins. The film is set in a fictional galaxy ruled by the imperialistic Motherworld, whose military, the Imperium, threatens a farming colony on the moon of Veldt. Kora, a former Imperium soldier, ventures on a quest to recruit warriors from across the galaxy to make a stand against the Imperium before they return to Veldt.

Following a limited theatrical release on December 15, 2023, *Rebel Moon* was released by Netflix on December 22. It received generally negative reviews from critics. An R-rated director's cut, titled *Rebel Moon – Chapter One: Chalice of Blood* is set for release in mid-2024,^{[3][4]} and a sequel, *Rebel Moon – Part Two: The Scargiver*, released on April 19, 2024.

Plot

Atticus Noble, the sadistic admiral of the militaristic Imperium, arrives on the backwater moon of Veldt on behalf of the Motherworld, an interstellar empire fueled by centuries of conquest and war. He explains that his troops are hunting for a band of rebels led by siblings Devra and Darrian Bloodaxe, and offers to buy the village's surplus grain. The village's leader, Sindri, refuses the offer, claiming they barely have enough to survive. A farmer, Gunnar, ignores earlier warnings from Sindri and farmer Kora and indicates that the village might have some surplus. Noble kills Sindri and orders Gunnar to prepare grain for them in ten weeks, which would not leave the village with enough to survive. Noble departs, leaving a handful of soldiers and a "Jimmy" robot to oversee the harvest. After being harassed by a peer, Jimmy starts to become independent. One villager, Kora, finds the other soldiers preparing to rape a villager and kills them with help from Jimmy, who has defected. Kora warns the villagers that Noble will massacre the village once he returns, unless they mount a defense.

Rebel Moon – Part One: A Child of Fire



Release poster

Directed by	<u>Zack Snyder</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Zack Snyder</u> <u>Kurt Johnstad</u> <u>Shay Hatten</u>
Story by	<u>Zack Snyder</u>
Produced by	<u>Deborah Snyder</u> <u>Eric Newman</u> Zack Snyder Wesley Collier
Starring	<u>Sofia Boutella</u> <u>Djimon Hounsou</u> <u>Ed Skrein</u> <u>Michiel Huisman</u> <u>Doona Bae</u> <u>Ray Fisher</u> <u>Charlie Hunnam</u> <u>Anthony Hopkins</u>
Cinematography	Zack Snyder

Kora and Gunnar depart for the port town of Providence to recruit warriors for the village's defense, including Titus, a disgraced Imperium general. During their journey, she reveals to Gunnar that she once served the Imperium as a soldier, having been adopted and renamed to Arthelais by Balisarius, an Imperium commander, after he killed her family and eradicated her home planet's population. She became bodyguard to Motherworld princess Issa, who was expected to usher in an end to the Imperium's conquests. However, despite her efforts, the royal family was assassinated during Issa's coronation, and Balisarius subsequently declared himself regent before renewing their conquests.

Arriving at Providence, the pair meets smuggler and criminal Kai, who agrees to take them to recruit Titus. On the way, Kai takes them to two additional warriors: Tarak, a beast tamer, and Nemesis, a talented swordswoman enhanced by cybernetics. The group arrives at a gladiator arena on a remote moon, finding Titus in a drunken stupor. Titus initially refuses to join, but agrees to do so after Kora suggests that he avenge his fallen soldiers. Using Gunnar's previous dealings with the Bloodaxes, they then arrive at Sharaan to meet them. Darrian agrees to defend the village and brings a handful of rebels, including Milius, while Devra and the rest of the rebellion leave Sharaan. After they depart, Noble arrives and eradicates its population as punishment for assisting the rebels.

Kai tells Kora that he has been moved by her quest to abandon his life as a smuggler and that he has one last shipment to drop off. He takes the group to a trading post, at which Noble's ship has arrived and restrains them, betraying them to Noble and revealing he had always intended to do so for the bounties on their heads. Noble identifies Kora and Titus as deserters, Tarak as a criminal and former prince, and Nemesis as the killer of several Imperial officers in revenge for her murdered children. Kai demands that Gunnar paralyze Kora; Gunnar instead frees her and kills Kai. The other warriors are also freed; Darrian is killed in the ensuing battle and Kora kills Noble. Afterwards, the surviving warriors return to Veldt, with Jimmy watching them from afar on their way to the village.

Noble's corpse is recovered by Motherworld forces, and he is resurrected after having spoken on an astral plane with Balisarius,^[5] who demands that Noble end the insurgency and bring Kora to him alive so he can execute her himself.

Edited by	<u>Dody Dorn</u>
Music by	<u>Tom Holkenborg</u>
Production companies	<u>The Stone Quarry</u> Grand Electric
Distributed by	<u>Netflix</u>
Release dates	December 15, 2023 (United States) December 22, 2023 (Netflix)
Running time	134 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$166 million (shared with <i>Part Two: The Scargiver</i>) ^{[1][2]}

Cast

- Sofia Boutella as Kora/Arthelais, a former Imperium soldier who rallies warriors from across the galaxy to fight against Motherworld
 - Elizabeth Martinez portrays Kora as a child
- Djimon Hounsou as Titus, a former general of the Imperium recruited to lead the fight against Motherworld
- Ed Skrein as Atticus Noble, an admiral and Balisarius' right-hand man
- Michiel Huisman as Gunnar, a farmer secretly in love with Kora who joins her in her attempts to defend his homeworld, Veldt
- Doona Bae as Nemesis, a cyborg swordmaster

- Ray Fisher as Darrian Bloodaxe, a warrior and Devra's brother recruited by Kora
- Charlie Hunnam as Kai, a mercenary and starship pilot hired by Kora
- Anthony Hopkins as the voice of Jimmy, the last member of a race of mechanical knights^[6]
 - Dustin Ceithamer as the body-double on the set of Jimmy
- Staz Nair as Tarak, a nobleman-turned-blacksmith with the ability to bond with animals of nature
- Fra Fee as Balisarius, a tyrant and Kora's adoptive father who seized control of the Motherworld
- Cleopatra Coleman as Devra Bloodaxe, Darrian's sister and the leader of a band of insurgents opposing the Motherworld
- Stuart Martin as Den, a local farmer, hunter and Kora's fling
- Ingvar Sigurdsson as Hagen, a friend of Kora who helped her rebuild her life after she abandoned the Imperium
- Alfonso Herrera as Cassius, Noble's team warrior^[7]
- Cary Elwes as the King
- Rhian Rees as the Queen
- Elise Duffy as Milius,^[8] a rebel fighter under Devra's command.
- Jena Malone as Harmada, a spider-like humanoid alien
- Sky Yang as Aris, a young Motherworld soldier who stands up against his comrades' brutality
- Charlotte Maggi as Sam, a water girl who warmly welcomes any outsiders that come to her village^{[9][10]}
- Corey Stoll as Sindri, a village chief on Veldt
- Stella Grace Fitzgerald as Princess Issa
- Greg Kriek as Marcus, a Motherworld soldier who arrived on Veldt to demand their harvest
- Brandon Aurret as Faunus, a Motherworld commander, left in charge of the farming village on Veldt
- Ray Porter as Hickman, a farmer whom Tarak is indebted to
- Dominic Burgess as Dash Thif, a connected man who came into conflict with Kora and Gunnar in Providence
- Tony Amendola as King Levitica, an alien king who shelters the Bloodaxes and their rebellion
- Derek Mears as Simeon, a Hawkshaw working for the Imperium, hunting their enemies for profit.

Production

Development

Rebel Moon is inspired by the works of Akira Kurosawa, the *Star Wars* films and *Heavy Metal* magazines; its logo is an homage to the latter.^[11] Snyder initially conceived the idea for the film in college,^[12] before discussing it with Johnstad in 1997.^[8]

Snyder then pitched it as a *Star Wars* film to Lucasfilm, shortly after its sale to The Walt Disney Company in 2012.^[13] He also pitched his idea as both a video game and a film to Warner Bros. Pictures "a couple of times".^[14] The project was at one point planned as an original television series by Snyder and producer Eric Newman, before pitching it as a film to Netflix.^[15]

Following concerns from Netflix Films chairman Scott Stuber that the project would underperform due to its length, Snyder, unwilling to "lose all the character", decided to split the film into two parts.^[16]

Casting

Sofia Boutella's casting in the lead role was announced in November 2021.^[17] Charlie Hunnam, Djimon Hounsou, Ray Fisher, Jena Malone, Staz Nair, Doona Bae, Stuart Martin, and Rupert Friend joined the project in February 2022.^{[18][19]} Fisher first became aware of the project around 2019 or 2020 back when Snyder planned it to be a TV show, being shown whiteboards and showing his interest when Snyder explained that those were for a "little space thing" he was working on.^[20] Cary Elwes, Corey Stoll, Michiel Huisman and Alfonso Herrera joined the cast in April 2022.^[21] On May 16, 2022, it was announced that Ed Skrein had replaced Friend as the film's main antagonist due to scheduling conflicts, with Cleopatra Coleman, Fra Fee and Rhian Rees joining the project.^[22] On June 8, 2022, it was announced that Anthony Hopkins had joined the cast as the voice of Jimmy, a sentient JC1435 mechanized battle robot and one-time defender of the slain king.^[23]

Filming

Filming commenced on April 19, 2022,^[24] with Snyder sharing the first images from the set on Twitter that day.^[25] Snyder also served as cinematographer.^[26] It ran until December 2,^[27] with 152 days of filming taking place in California, to tap into \$83 million in qualified spending and tax incentives.^[28] Stuart Martin, Cary Elwes, Rhian Rees and Ray Porter acted out and recorded the film's script for Snyder to listen to while preparing the day's shoot;^[29] they appear in the film as Den, The King, The Queen, and Hickman, respectively.^[30]

For the two-part *Rebel Moon*, the below-the-line wages to California workers and payments to in-state vendors was \$166 million.^{[31][32]}

Post-production and visual effects

On August 20, 2023, the titles for the two parts were reported to be *A Child of Fire* and *The Scargiver*, respectively.^[33] Two days later, Zack Snyder appeared at gamescom opening night to present the teaser trailer for the two parts, which confirmed the titles.^{[34][35]}

Production VFX supervisor Marcus Taormina (https://www.imdb.com/name/nm3000470/?ref_=nv_sr_srsq_0_tt_1_nm_1_q_Marcus%2520Taormina)^[36] worked with Framestore, Luma Pictures, Mammal Studios, Rodeo FX, Scanline VFX and Weta FX. Framestore delivered key creatures the Benu and Harmada.^{[37][38]}

Music

The score was composed by Tom Holkenborg, who has previously contributed to the score for the Snyder-directed *Man of Steel* (2013) and scored *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016) alongside Hans Zimmer, in addition to scoring *Zack Snyder's Justice League* and *Army of the Dead* (both 2021) as well the Snyder-produced *300: Rise of an Empire* (2014).^[39]

Release

Rebel Moon had a limited theatrical release on 70 mm film in four major cities: Los Angeles (Egyptian Theatre), New York City (Paris Theater), Toronto (TIFF Lightbox), and London (Prince Charles Cinema) on December 15, 2023,^[40] before its streaming debut on December 22, by Netflix.^[41] Snyder announced plans to issue an R-rated director's cut in addition to its original PG-13-rated cut.^{[42][43][44]}



Planets floating above the Lublin Castle as a *Rebel Moon* advertisement

Reception

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 21% of 174 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 4.2/10. The website's consensus reads: "*Rebel Moon: Part One – A Child of Fire* proves Zack Snyder hasn't lost his visual flair, but eye candy isn't enough to offset a storyline made up of various sci-fi/fantasy tropes."^[45] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 31 out of 100, based on 40 critics, indicating "generally unfavorable" reviews.^[46]

Variety writer Owen Gleiberman commented, "while eminently watchable, [*Rebel Moon*] is a movie built so entirely out of spare parts that it may, in the end, be for Snyder cultists only."^[47] Clarisse Loughrey of The Independent gave the film 1/5 stars, calling it "a film populated by some of the Zack Snyder's *Justice League* filmmaker's worst impulses: a mess of imagery, some of it attempting to shock, congregated largely around the idea of what might look good in a trailer."^[48] The Guardian's Charles Bramesco also gave the film 1/5 stars, writing, "the finished product has only the vaguest contours of ambition, diminished by a half-assedness dinkifying the latest CGI-jammed saga to decide the fate of the universe."^[49] RogerEbert.com's Simon Abrams gave the film 1 star out of 4 and characterized it as too similar to *Star Wars* and *Seven Samurai*, containing an over-reliance of visual spectacle with clichéd characters and themes.^[50]

Robbie Collin of The Daily Telegraph gave the film 2/5 stars, noting its similarities to *Star Wars* and saying that "this first half of Snyder's diptych... is more of a loosely doodled mood board than a functioning film – a series of pulpy tableaux that mostly sound fun in isolation, but become numbingly dull when run side by side."^[51] The Messenger's Jordan Hoffman gave it a score of 4/10, writing, "As a space opera, it has none of the weight of *Dune*, none of the characterizations of *Guardians of the Galaxy*, none of the madness of *Jupiter Ascending* or *The Fifth Element* and none of the pep of *Star Wars*."^[52] Writing for The A.V. Club, Lauren Coates said, "while Snyder may do his best to invent a dark, gripping universe to engross viewers, *Rebel Moon* is a limp, soulless regurgitation of tropes stolen from much more formidable films" and gave the film a D– grade.^[53]

Fred Topel of United Press International was more positive, calling the film "an entertaining filtering of science fiction and general storytelling tropes through the lens of creator/director Zack Snyder."^[54] The South China Morning Post's Daniel Eagan gave it 3.5/5 stars, writing, "What Snyder brings to the project is a sensational world-building vision and a muscular filmmaking style that can pummel viewers into submission."^[55] Adam Graham of The Detroit News gave it a B– grade, saying, "To its credit, it borrows

from a solid slate of sources, and while it's highly derivative, it's also highly watchable. Its referential nature helps it clip along at an expedient pace, and while it never feels like you're watching something new, it at least feels like you're watching something familiar."^[56]

Viewership

After premiering December 22 on Netflix, the film garnered 23.9 million views in three days, making it the #1 most viewed English-language film on the service from December 18 to 24,^[57] the second consecutive Netflix #1 for Snyder, starting with *Army of the Dead*;^[58] it was the ninth best 2023 debut for a Netflix original film.^[59] The film stayed in first place with 34M views in its first full week of availability, following its debut weekend.^[60] The week after that, the film slipped to second place with 11.1M views.^[61] In its fourth week, it had dropped to eighth place while earning 3.9M views, as the film also earned an overall worldwide total of 72.9M views.^[62] In 2024, for the week of April 15 to April 21, the film re-entered charts at number five, bringing in 5.5M views.^[63] The film jumped to fourth place on the top ten chart for the week of April 22 to April 28, adding 6M views.^[64]

Future

Sequels

Rebel Moon is planned to be a franchise that begins with a two-part film; each part to be shot back-to-back.^[30] By August of the same year, the follow-up was officially confirmed with the title *Rebel Moon – Part Two: The Scargiver*, and scheduled for release on April 19, 2024.^{[65][35]} Development of additional installments in the story are ongoing, with the script for the third film already being worked on as of December 2023.^{[66][67][68]} Snyder's exact series-length plans are unclear, having stated that the film is intended to be the first in a trilogy,^[69] but also that it would be followed by a "trilogy of sequels", implying four or five total.^[70] In April 2024, co-writer Kurt Johnstad clarified that though the original plan was for a trilogy of movies, the franchise will eventually consist of a total of six films; explaining that the stories for each original installment have been expanded into two parts. The writer stated that the treatments are completed for the third and fourth movie and Snyder is currently writing the third film.^[71] On the same day, Snyder stated that the total number of films in the series will be either four or six, depending on whether or not the second and third entries of the trilogy each get split into a two-part movie as well.^[72]

Other media

Snyder has stated that his intent is for *Rebel Moon* to become "a massive IP and a universe that can be built out."^[15] A role-playing video game based on *Rebel Moon* was in development as of March 2023, alongside an animated short and a graphic novel.^{[73][74]} A novelization of the film written by V. Castro was published by Titan Books on December 26, 2023.^[75] Snyder announced in July 2023 plans for a TV series focusing on Balisarius.^[76] At Gamescom in August 2023, Snyder announced that Super Evil Megacorp was developing a four-player co-op action game that would be exclusively available on the Netflix Games platform.^[77] In September 2023, Evil Genius Games sued Netflix for terminating a deal that allowed them to produce a tabletop role-playing game set in the *Rebel Moon* universe.^[78]

A four-issue prequel comic entitled *Rebel Moon: House of the Bloodaxe* by writer Magdalene Visaggio and artist Clark Bint was published by Titan Comics in January 2024.^[79] Set five years before the events of the film, the comic depicts the backstory for the characters of Devra and Darrian Bloodaxe. In November 2023, a narrative-podcast, an animated comic book, and an animated series were announced to be in development with each project taking place chronologically before the feature films.^[80] The animated short is set to tell the story of the Kali, the "shadowy figures" who power the Motherworld's "most dangerous technology".^[6]

Notes

- 1.^ *Variety* reported that \$166 million is only the below-the-line cost to California workers and that the total cost will be much higher.

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External links

- *Rebel Moon* (<https://www.netflix.com/title/81464239>) on Netflix
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