

Fatman (2020 film)

Fatman is a 2020 American black comedy action film written and directed by Eshom Nelms and Ian Nelms, and starring Mel Gibson, Walton Goggins and Marianne Jean-Baptiste. The film is an unorthodox slant on holiday traditions that follows a jaded, gritty Santa Claus who struggles with ennui, production issues, government interference, and an embittered assassin sent by a vengeful naughty kid.

Filmed in Canada and released worldwide on November 13, 2020, the film received mixed reviews from critics.

Plot

Chris Cringle and his wife Ruth operate a Christmas present workshop on an old isolated farm near the small town of North Peak, Alaska. Struggling with declining income over the years due to children becoming increasingly vicious, the United States Government, who maintains an interest share in Chris's business because Christmas is a major economic stimulus, starts cutting back on their subsidies. To remedy Chris' income loss, US military Captain Jacobs is sent to propose a two-month contract for producing jet fighter components, which is outright refused. The liaison agents override Chris's misgivings by implying next year Government's subsidies will likely decrease. Ruth manages to restore Chris's spirits, who grudgingly accepts their offer only this one time.

Billy Wenan, an amoral pernicious boy who lives with his old money grandmother, is the quintessential vicious child who commits several despicable acts against people he considers inferior. On Christmas Eve, Billy receives a lump of coal from Chris, swears revenge, and hires his personal hit man, Jonathan Miller, to assassinate Chris. Miller, who also harbors a bitter childhood grudge against Chris, sets off on a killing spree until he successfully follows Chris to his confidential address after waiting for him to collect his mail from the Postal Service. Miller trails Chris to the farm, kills the US Army guards and infiltrates the workshop until an elf worker raises the alarm. Jacobs succeeds in evacuating the workers before Miller kills him and blows up the workshop.

Table with 2 columns: Field (Directed by, Written by, Produced by, Starring, Cinematography, Edited by, Music by, Production companies) and Value (Eshom Nelms, Ian Nelms, Todd Courtney, Nadine de Barros, Michelle Lang, Robert Menzies, Lisa Wolofsky, Mel Gibson, Walton Goggins, Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Johnny Derango, Traton Lee, Mondo Boys, Fortitude International, Mammoth Entertainment)

Chris fights Miller and gains the upper hand, but Miller wounds Chris using a hidden blade and then shoots Chris in the head, leaving him for dead. Ruth kills Miller afterwards, and Chris recovers from his injuries. Backtracking Miller's assignment, Chris and Ruth pay a visit to Billy and interrupt Billy poisoning his grandmother's milk to cover his check forgeries. Irritated, Chris admits he has become lax when dealing with children like Billy, and warns him that from now on he will come for all vicious children in the night if they keep harming people. Back at the farm, Chris, Ruth, and the elves start rebuilding the workshop bigger and better with renewed confidence in the future.

Cast

- Mel Gibson as Chris Cringle, who is frustrated with the world turning into an unruly place^[7] and not above wielding guns to defend himself
- Walton Goggins as Jonathan Miller (credited as "Skinny Man"), a hitman who works in a toy store^[8] and has a personal grudge against Chris for "letting him down" in his unhappy childhood
- Marianne Jean-Baptiste as Ruth Cringle, Chris' loving wife and moderating influence
- Chance Hurstfield as Billy Wenan, an amoral rich kid who is neglected by his father and cannot stand to lose
- Robert Bockstael as Captain Jacobs, the commander of the US Army guards assigned to Chris' workshop and his liaison to the US government
- Eric Woolfe as Elf 7, Chris' foreman in the workshop
- Susanne Sutchy as Sandy, a friend of Chris Kringle and barkeeper in North Peak
- Deborah Grover as Anne Marie, Billy's wealthy grandmother whose accounts are secretly fleeced by her grandson to finance his assignments for Miller

Production

Ian and Eshom Nelms originally wrote the screenplay for *Fatman* in 2006, and had been shopping it around for over 10 years.^[1] On May 8, 2019, it was announced that Gibson would play Santa Claus in the film.^{[7][9]} On January 29, 2020, it was announced that Walton Goggins had joined the cast,^[8] and Marianne Jean-Baptiste joined the following month.^[10]

Principal photography occurred in the Ottawa Valley (Ontario and Quebec, Canada) and in the towns of Carleton Place and Mississippi Mills in February 2020.^[11] The climactic shootout sequence took four days to film, with the temperature hitting as low as 36 below zero Celsius.^[1]

Release

Saban Films acquired the film's United States distribution rights in September 2020.^[12] It was released in the United States in select theaters on November 13, 2020.^[13] It also received a limited release in Australia on November 19, 2020.^[14]

	<u>Rough House Pictures</u>
	<u>Sprockefeller Pictures</u>
	<u>Ingenious Media</u>
Distributed by	<u>Saban Films</u>
Release date	November 13, 2020
Running time	100 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$20 million ^[1]
Box office	\$1.7 million ^{[2][3]}

Fatman was released via digital download on November 17, 2020.^[13] It was also released on video-on-demand on November 24, 2020.^{[15][16][17]}

Reception

Box office and VOD

In its opening weekend, the film grossed \$108,000 from 259 theaters.^[18] In its second weekend the film made \$51,266 from 177 theaters, and was also the third-most rented film on FandangoNow, Spectrum, and Apple TV, and fourth on Google Play.^{[19][20]} It remained in the top four spots on all four platforms the following weekend, while also grossing \$11,895 from 42 theaters.^{[21][22]}

Critical response

On Metacritic, the film has a weighted average score of 40 out of 100, based on 24 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews".^[23] On the review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes, the film holds an approval rating of 45% based on 114 reviews, with an average rating of 5.3/10. The website's critics consensus reads, "*Fatman* takes a surprisingly serious approach to a potentially ludicrous twist on the Santa Claus legend, aiming for edgy but mostly missing the mark."^[24]

John DeFore of *The Hollywood Reporter* gave the film a positive review and wrote, "Less gonzo than it sounds, for better and worse."^[25] Julian Roman of MovieWeb also gave the film a positive review and wrote, "*Fatman* reflects the worst instincts of modern times. It shows how selfishness and immorality can lead to violent outcomes."^[26] Hunter Lanier of *Film Threat* gave the film a 7 out of 10.^[27] Chris Bumbray of JoBlo.com gave the film an 8 out of 10.^[28]

Bill Goodykoontz of *The Arizona Republic* awarded the film two stars.^[15] Chuck Bowen of *Slant Magazine* awarded the film one and a half stars out of four.^[29] Owen Gleiberman of *Variety* gave the film a negative review and wrote, "Yet you get the distinct feeling that the Nelms brothers think this is all a lot funnier, crazier, and more resonant than it is."^[30]

Alonso Duralde of *TheWrap* also gave the film a negative review and wrote, "It never makes it past the idea stage, unfortunately, since mixing these disparate genres together would require an absolute mastery of tone that the film can't quite muster."^[31] David Ehrlich of IndieWire graded the film a D, saying "Combining the crude spirit of *Bad Santa* with the grittiness of a Zack Snyder film, *Fatman* is worse than a lump of coal in your stocking."^[16]

See also

- List of Christmas films

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External links

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