

The Woman in the Window (2021 film)

The Woman in the Window is a 2021 American psychological thriller film directed by Joe Wright from a screenplay by Tracy Letts, based on the bestselling 2018 novel of the same name by author A. J. Finn. The film follows an agoraphobic woman (Amy Adams) who begins to spy on her new neighbors (Gary Oldman, Fred Hechinger, and Julianne Moore) and is witness to a crime in their apartment. Anthony Mackie, Wyatt Russell, Brian Tyree Henry, and Jennifer Jason Leigh also star.

The film was produced by Fox 2000 Pictures and was originally scheduled to be theatrically released by 20th Century Fox in October 2019, but was delayed to May 2020 and subsequently sold to Netflix due to the COVID-19 pandemic.^[5] It was released on May 14, 2021, and ranked among the best performing Netflix titles of 2021.^[6] Critical reception was mixed to negative, with critics praising the performances but describing the plot as convoluted and derivative.^[7] The film and the source novel were among the inspirations for the 2022 Netflix dark comedy series *The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window*, which spoofed tropes from the psychological thriller genre.^[8]

Plot

Child psychologist Anna Fox lives alone in a Manhattan brownstone after separating from her husband Edward; he lives away with their daughter Olivia, but she talks to them on a daily basis. Anna suffers from agoraphobia and her housebound state leads her to observe all of her neighbors from a second-storey window, including the Russell family who recently moved in across the street. She also takes a large number of medications and drinks heavily.

One evening, Jane Russell visits Anna and they befriend one another. She also meets Ethan, Jane's teenage son, who suggests his father Alistair is abusive. One night, Anna witnesses Jane being stabbed to death in the living room. She contacts the police but they do not believe her, claiming everyone in the family is fine. Alistair arrives along with "Jane" who, to the shock of Anna, is a different woman from the one she met. She begins spying on the Russell family.

The Woman in the Window



Official release poster

Directed by	<u>Joe Wright</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Tracy Letts</u>
Based on	<i><u>The Woman in the Window</u></i> by <u>A. J. Finn</u>
Produced by	<u>Scott Rudin</u> <u>Eli Bush</u> <u>Anthony Katagas</u>
Starring	<u>Amy Adams</u> <u>Gary Oldman</u> <u>Anthony Mackie</u> <u>Fred Hechinger</u> <u>Wyatt Russell</u> <u>Brian Tyree Henry</u> <u>Jennifer Jason Leigh</u>

Anna's tenant David, who lives in her basement, claims he did not hear or see anything, though she learns David was once in prison and broke his parole conditions. She receives an anonymous e-mail with a photo of her sleeping. She again contacts the detectives, who are joined by the Russells and David in Anna's house, and Anna breaks down when it is revealed by a detective that Edward and Olivia are dead as a result of a car crash that Anna accidentally caused. Anna is now agoraphobic as a result and her medication has caused her to have hallucinations and conversations with people who are not there.

Anna apologizes to the Russell family and stops pursuing her suspicions. She records a video on her cell phone, planning to commit suicide by overdose. She then discovers a photograph she took of her cat and, in the reflection of a wine glass, sees the original Jane, proving she is real. Anna shows David the photo and he confesses the original Jane she met is a woman named Katie Melli, Ethan's biological mother. Katie had been stalking the Russell family, trying to get close to Ethan. David refuses to help Anna prove the truth; he is then suddenly attacked and killed by Ethan, who had been lurking inside the house.

Ethan reveals to Anna that he murdered Katie and is a serial killer, having also killed Alistair's secretary in Boston, and now intends to kill Anna. He had been letting himself into her house all week with a stolen key, and he was the one who took the photo of her sleeping. Anna flees to the roof, where they fight until she pushes Ethan through the skylight to his death.

As Anna recovers in the hospital, Detective Little visits and tells her they have arrested Alistair and Jane for helping Ethan cover up Katie's murder and that they have found Katie's body. Little admits he watched Anna's suicide video, but hands back her phone to allow her to delete it before she has to return it for evidence. He apologizes for not believing her.

Nine months later, Anna, now sober and healthy, says goodbye to her house before she moves out and on with her life, now no longer afraid of the outside world.

Cast

	<u>Julianne Moore</u>
Cinematography	<u>Bruno Delbonnel</u>
Edited by	Valerio Bonelli
Music by	<u>Danny Elfman</u>
Production companies	<u>20th Century Studios</u> ^[1] <u>Fox 2000 Pictures</u> ^[1]
Distributed by	<u>Netflix</u> ^{[2][3]}
Release date	May 14, 2021
Running time	100 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$40 million ^[4]



Amy Adams



Gary Oldman



Anthony Mackie

- Amy Adams as Dr. Anna Fox

- Gary Oldman as Alistair Russell
- Anthony Mackie as Edward Fox
- Fred Hechinger as Ethan Russell
- Wyatt Russell as David Winter
- Brian Tyree Henry as Detective Little
- Julianne Moore as Katherine Melli
- Jennifer Jason Leigh as Jane Russell
- Jeanine Serralles as Detective Norelli
- Tracy Letts as Dr. Karl Landy, Anna's psychiatrist
- Mariah Bozeman as Olivia Fox
- Daymien Valentino as Mover
- Myers Bartlett as 911 Dispatcher (voice)
- Haven Paschall as Shelly (voice, credited as Haven Burton)
- Anna Cameron as Alex (V.O)
- Ben Davis as Steve (V.O)
- Blake Morris as 911 Dispatcher (V.O)

Production

In September 2016, Fox 2000 Pictures acquired screen rights to the novel of the same name by A.J. Finn.^[9] In March 2018, it was announced Joe Wright would direct the film, from a screenplay by Tracy Letts, with Scott Rudin and Eli Bush serving as producers on the film.^[10] In April 2018, Amy Adams was set to star,^[11] and in July 2018, Julianne Moore, Wyatt Russell, Gary Oldman and Brian Tyree Henry joined the cast of the film.^{[12][13][14][15]} In August 2018, Fred Hechinger and Anthony Mackie were also added.^{[16][17]}

Principal photography began in New York City on August 6, 2018,^{[18][19]} and wrapped on October 30.^[20] Rudin later hired Tony Gilroy to perform rewrites for reshoots, following the film's initial delay from the October 4, 2019, release date.^[21] The score was originally set to be composed by Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross, but they were replaced by Danny Elfman.^{[22][4]}



Director Joe Wright

Release

The Woman in the Window was originally scheduled to be theatrically released on October 4, 2019, by 20th Century Fox,^[23] but on July 9, 2019, it was delayed, with Fox's new owner Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures re-editing the film after test screenings,^[24] and a new release date of May 15, 2020, was set.^[25] On March 17, 2020, the film was removed from the release calendar due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the intent to reschedule it for later in 2020.^[26] On August 3, 2020, it was announced that Netflix was in final talks to acquire the distribution rights to the film from 20th Century Studios, which it did,^[27] releasing it on its streaming service on May 14, 2021.^{[28][29][30]} It was the final film to be released under the Fox 2000 label; as part of the Walt Disney Company's acquisition of 21st Century Fox, the label was discontinued.^[31]

According to director Joe Wright, the final product was "watered down" from its original version, resulting in the negative reviews.^[32] Wright expressed an openness to a director's cut version in the future.^[32]

The film was the twenty-ninth best performing Netflix titles of 2021.^[33]

Reception

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 25% of 217 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 4.6/10. The website's consensus reads: "A milquetoast and muddled thriller that drowns in its frenzied homages, *The Woman in the Window* will have audiences closing their curtains."^[34] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 41 out of 100, based on 39 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[35]

Many critics commented that the film's release after more than a year of COVID-19 lockdowns ironically made for timely viewing, with *The Hollywood Reporter* saying the film's "homebound protagonist has become that much more understandable to audiences",^[1] and *Decider* calling it "the perfect post-lockdown catharsis."^[36]

Adams' performance and the film's visuals were praised.^{[1][37]} *Rolling Stone*'s David Fear wrote, "A versatile actress who can go light (*Enchanted*), dark (*Sharp Objects*), or any shade in between...Adams has an uncanny knack for bringing a woman-next-door quality to most of her roles".^[38] Christy Lemire of *RogerEbert.com* said, "Director Joe Wright puts many of his showy camerawork instincts on display, making Adams' character's Manhattan brownstone feel both cavernous and claustrophobic."^[39] Stephanie Zacharek of *Time* called it the film a "coolly tasteful psychological thriller."^[40] *GQ* praised it as "a camp masterpiece" with "avant garde-ish flair."^{[41][42]} Zacharek added, "The picture is enjoyable not so much for its twisty plot...as for its artful dedication to its own highly theatrical, drapes-drawn somberness."^[40]

The excesses of the plot and its contrivances were widely panned. Fear stated viewers "will need to endure an Overlook Hotel-level maze of plot twists",^[38] and A.O. Scott of *The New York Times* said the film "resembles other psychological thrillers about women in distress...without being terribly thrilling or psychologically insightful".^[43] NPR's Linda Holmes said, "Inventiveness means using the formula to do something meaningfully new, and that's where this film falls short."^[44]

Owen Gleiberman of *Variety* criticized some of the dialogue in Tracy Letts' screenplay as "weirdly stilted" and said one of the drawbacks is that the narrator is made to be "so unreliable that we can't tell where her grand delusions leave off" and where the film's objective action begins.^[45] Lemire noted the film could have used more of Anna's character development, as "the underlying trauma [Anna's] working through gives the film some genuine heft."^[39] She concluded the film "offers a lot of build-up, a lot of possibility. But the revelation of what's truly going on here is anticlimactic—the equivalent of closing the curtains and turning away from the window with a disappointed sigh."^[39]

The film was seen as a disappointment given the level of talent involved.^{[43][46]} Justin Chang of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote "the most interesting thing here may be the marshaling of so many smart people in service of a misfire that probably seemed like an intuitive showcase for their talents. In the scripts he's adapted from his own plays ('*Bug*,' '*Killer Joe*'), Letts has demonstrated his facility for staging psychological breakdowns in close quarters. And Wright, in his own previous literary adaptations...has proven admirably willing to treat the camera as an active participant in the telling, using the formal resources of cinema to liberate his stories as much as possible from the printed page. It hasn't always worked, but the results have

never been dull."^[47] Others pointed out that actors such as Julianne Moore, Gary Oldman, and the "wildly charismatic" Brian Tyree Henry felt underused.^{[48][44][49][50]} Holmes expressed that "if there had been a way to make the film more of a two-hander between [Adams and Henry] as she tries to convince him to believe her, it might have felt like a stronger story."^[44]

Some reviewers saw the film as a positive and perceptive exploration of grief and agoraphobia.^{[51][52][53]} s.e. smith of *Bitch Media* wrote the film "explores disability in an intimate way, yet ultimately returns to a cultural status quo".^[54]

Accolades

Year	Award	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
2022	Golden Raspberry Awards	<u>Worst Picture</u>		Nominated	[55]
		<u>Worst Director</u>	<u>Joe Wright</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Worst Actress</u>	<u>Amy Adams</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Worst Screenplay</u>	<u>Tracy Letts</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Worst Prequel, Remake, Rip-off or Sequel</u>	<i>The Woman in the Window</i> (rip-off of <i>Rear Window</i>)	Nominated	

See also

- *Rear Window* (1954)
- *Gone Girl* (2014)
- *The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window*

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