

# Hypnotic (2023 film)

***Hypnotic*** is a 2023 American mystery action thriller film directed by Robert Rodriguez, who co-wrote the screenplay with Max Borenstein. The film stars Ben Affleck, Alice Braga, J. D. Pardo, Hala Finley, Dayo Okeniyi, Jeff Fahey, Jackie Earle Haley and William Fichtner. Rodriguez also produced, co-shot, and edited the film, while his sons Rebel Rodriguez and Racer Max served as composer and producer, respectively.

*Hypnotic* was released in the United States by Ketchup Entertainment and Relativity Media on May 12, 2023. The film received mixed reviews from critics and grossed \$16 million.

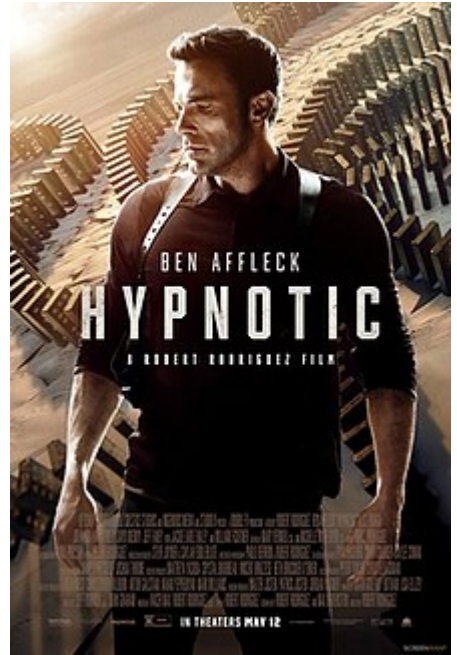
## Plot

Danny Rourke, an Austin Police Department detective, recalls to his therapist the abduction of his seven-year-old daughter, Minnie, which occurred three years ago and led to the dissolution of his marriage. Afterwards, he is picked up by his partner, Nicks, who informs him they have received an anonymous tip that a safe deposit box will be robbed. While staking out the bank, they witness a mysterious man give instructions to civilians and fellow policemen who immediately follow his commands. Rourke suspects they are all in an elaborate heist and races to the targeted safe deposit box. Inside, he only finds a picture of Minnie with the message "Find Lev Dellrayne" written on it.

The mysterious man escapes, but Rourke is now convinced the heist has something to do with his daughter's disappearance. A trace run by Nicks on the tip-off call leads Rourke to the address of fortune-teller Diana Cruz. Cruz tells Rourke that the mysterious man from the bank is named "Lev Dellrayne" and that he and Cruz are both the escaped "Hypnotics": powerful hypnotists trained by a secretive government "Division" to control people's minds. She also tells Rourke that he is mysteriously immune to her own mind control abilities.

Dellrayne hypnotizes Nicks into attacking Rourke and Cruz, forcing Cruz to kill him in self-defense. Now seen as the two primary suspects in Nicks' murder, Rourke and Cruz flee to Mexico. There, they learn from a former Division contact of Cruz's that Dellrayne is searching for "Domino", a weapon developed by the Division which was stolen and hidden by Dellrayne when he

### *Hypnotic*



Theatrical release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	<u>Robert Rodriguez</u>
<b>Screenplay by</b>	<u>Robert Rodriguez</u> <u>Max Borenstein</u> <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Story by</b>	<u>Robert Rodriguez</u>
<b>Produced by</b>	<u>Mark Gill</u> <u>Guy Botham</u> <u>Lisa Ellzey</u> <u>Jeff Robinov</u> <u>John Graham</u> <u>Racer Max</u> <u>Robert Rodriguez</u>
<b>Starring</b>	<u>Ben Affleck</u> <u>Alice Braga</u> <u>J. D. Pardo</u> <u>Hala Finley</u>

escaped. Dellrayne then wiped his own memory and left behind "triggers" that will prompt him to gradually recall Domino's location and simultaneously increase his regained hypnotic power. Dellrayne uses his ability to control civilians to pursue Rourke and Cruz from the contact's apartment and into the surrounding city. However, Rourke taps into his own (previously unknown) hypnotic power to stop Dellrayne's control of the civilians, allowing him and Cruz to escape.

Rourke and Cruz next seek out River, a reclusive Division hacker. He hacks into the Division database and learns that Rourke's former wife, Vivian, was a member of the Division. Cruz and River theorize that Rourke must be another Hypnotic whose memory was wiped. Later that night, Rourke investigates River's database on his own, learning that Minnie is actually the "Domino." She is the daughter of two powerful hypnotics: Rourke and Vivian. Furthermore, "Cruz" is actually Vivian; Rourke's memory of his wife's face had been altered so that he believed "Cruz" to be a stranger. Rourke then realizes that all the events and locations seen up to this point have been hypnotic constructs created within a facility populated by Division agents that have simply acted out the roles of all the people he's met up to this point.

Vivian and "Dellrayne" explain that Minnie was born and raised within the Division, but Rourke escaped with her to stop her from becoming their weapon. Rourke hid Minnie and then wiped his memory, so the Division has been repeatedly putting him through a constructed scenario to make him remember. Rourke's mind is then "reset," bringing him back to the therapy session at the start of the film, but his powers allow him to soon awaken from the construct and escape. He flees just as the Division realizes that "Find Lev Dellrayne" refers not to a person but "Deer Valley Lane" - a dead-end road with a single ranch on it.

Rourke arrives at the ranch and is reunited with Minnie as well as his own foster parents, who have been raising her for the past three years while she gained control of her powers. Division agents invade the ranch, but Minnie uses her power to confuse and disorient them. Minnie restores Vivian's memories, causing Vivian to realize she aided Rourke and Minnie's escape and subsequently wiped her memory so that when Minnie was finally powerful enough to defeat the entire Division at once, Vivian could unwittingly lead them to her. Minnie is revealed to be the one who secretly provided the "Find Lev Dellrayne" photo to the Division, setting the search in motion. Minnie then forces all the Division agents to kill each other. Minnie, her parents, and Rourke's foster parents celebrate their newfound freedom.

## Cast

- [Ben Affleck](#) as Danny Rourke

	<div><a href="#">Dayo Okeniyi</a></div> <div><a href="#">Jeff Fahey</a></div> <div><a href="#">Jackie Earle Haley</a></div> <div><a href="#">William Fichtner</a></div>
<b>Cinematography</b>	<div>Pablo Berron</div> <div>Robert Rodriguez</div>
<b>Edited by</b>	<div>Robert Rodriguez</div>
<b>Music by</b>	<div>Rebel Rodriguez<sup>[2]</sup></div>
<b>Production companies</b>	<div><a href="#">Solstice Studios</a></div> <div><a href="#">Ingenious Media</a></div> <div><a href="#">Studio 8</a></div> <div><a href="#">Double R Productions</a></div>
<b>Distributed by</b>	<div><a href="#">Ketchup Entertainment</a></div> <div><a href="#">Relativity Media</a></div>
<b>Release dates</b>	<div>March 12, 2023 (SXSW)</div> <div>May 12, 2023 (United States)</div>
<b>Running time</b>	<div>94 minutes<sup>[3]</sup></div>
<b>Country</b>	<div>United States</div>
<b>Language</b>	<div>English</div>
<b>Budget</b>	<div>\$65 million<sup>[4]</sup></div>
<b>Box office</b>	<div>\$16.3 million<sup>[5]</sup><sup>[6]</sup></div>

- [Alice Braga](#) as Diana Cruz
- [J. D. Pardo](#) as Nicks
- [Dayo Okeniyi](#) as River
- [Jeff Fahey](#) as Carl
- [Jackie Earle Haley](#) as Jeremiah
- [William Fichtner](#) as Dellrayne
- [Zane Holtz](#) as Trout
- [Ruben Cabaalero](#) as Watkins
- [Kelly Frye](#) as Viv
- [Sandy Avila](#) as Thelma
- [Ryan Ryusaki](#) as Bong
- [Hala Finley](#) as 10-year old Minnie
- [Ionie Olivia Nieves](#) as 7-year old Minnie

## Production

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### Development

[Robert Rodriguez](#) had written the initial screenplay for *Hypnotic* back in 2002, calling it "one of my favorite stories".<sup>[7]</sup> In November 2018, Rodriguez was confirmed to direct, with [Max Borenstein](#) rewriting the original script for [Studio 8](#).<sup>[8][9]</sup> In November 2019, it was reported that Studio 8 would co-produce with [Solstice Studios](#), which had domestic distribution rights.<sup>[10]</sup>

### Casting

In November 2019, [Ben Affleck](#) was set to star.<sup>[11]</sup> In May 2021, [Alice Braga](#) was added, with filming set to begin on September 20 in [Austin, Texas](#).<sup>[12]</sup> In September 2021, [Hala Finley](#) joined the cast.<sup>[13]</sup> In October 2021, it was reported [Dayo Okeniyi](#), [William Fichtner](#) and [JD Pardo](#) had signed on.<sup>[14][15]</sup>

### Filming

[Principal photography](#) began in Austin on September 27, 2021, and concluded on November 19 of the same year.<sup>[13][16]</sup>

### Post-production

In April 2022, Rodriguez confirmed that, similar to his previous films, he and his family members collaborated on the project:

My son [Rebel] now is my full-time composer. My other son [Racer Max] is my co-writer/producer. My daughter [Rhiannon] is doing storyboards. My other son's [Rogue] doing the animatics, because he's using his game engine stuff that he designed the sets for *Heroes* with. And then my other son [Rocket] edits with me. So, it's a family affair.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Release

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*Hypnotic* was originally set to be released theatrically in the United States by Solstice Studios.<sup>[10]</sup> In March 2023, it was reported that Ketchup Entertainment would serve as the domestic distributor after Solstice Studios shut down in late-2022. A "work-in-progress" cut of the film was screened at South by Southwest on March 12, 2023.<sup>[17]</sup> *Hypnotic* was released by Ketchup Entertainment and Relativity Media in the United States on May 12, 2023.<sup>[18][19][20][21]</sup>

The film was released for digital platforms on May 30, 2023, followed by a Blu-ray and DVD release on February 13, 2024.<sup>[22]</sup>

## Reception

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### Box office

Released alongside *Book Club: The Next Chapter*, the film made \$940,000 from 2,118 theaters in its first day. It went on to debut to \$2.4 million, finishing in sixth.<sup>[23]</sup> *Hypnotic* grossed \$4.5 million in the United States and Canada, and \$11.8 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$16.3 million.<sup>[24]</sup>

### Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 32% of 114 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 4.7/10. The website's consensus reads: "Although *Hypnotic* isn't without glimmers of inspiration, the ultimate effect of this often clunky crime caper will be to leave you feeling rather sleepy."<sup>[25]</sup> Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 53 out of 100, based on 31 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.<sup>[26]</sup> Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "C+" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled by PostTrak gave it a 69% positive score, with 44% saying they would definitely recommend it.<sup>[23]</sup>

Mark Kermode of *The Observer* gave the film a score to two out of five, saying that Rodriguez and Borenstein "go on a thematic shoplifting spree, snatching psychic pushes from Stephen King's *Firestarter*, dozy psycho-crime plot twists from *Primal Fear*, and Philip K Dick false memories from *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall* et al."<sup>[27]</sup> Danny Leigh of the *Financial Times* also gave the film a score of two out of five, writing, "The mood is gun-happy and conspiracy-minded, but the real killer is what feels like 80 percent of the running time being spent with Affleck and co-stars standing in rooms explaining the plot."<sup>[28]</sup> Kevin Maher of *The Times* gave the film a score of one out of five, writing, "It's sloppily executed, without a hint of dramatic tension."<sup>[29]</sup>

Richard Roeper of the *Chicago Sun-Times* gave the film a score of three out of five, calling it "An uneven, at times mesmerizing and dazzling mind-bender of a psychological thriller that plays like a drive-in movie version of a Christopher Nolan film."<sup>[30]</sup> Glenn Kenny of *The New York Times* wrote, "The movie is, if

nothing else, ruthlessly efficient enough in delivering its crowd-pleasing bits that truly starving suspense genre hounds, at least, won't necessarily mind."<sup>[31]</sup> Brian Lowry of CNN said the film "becomes a little strained over its final act, but for the most part it's fast-paced and clever, capitalizing on Rodriguez's economical filmmaking style".<sup>[32]</sup>

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## External links

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- Official website (<https://www.ketchupentertainment.com/films#/hypnotic>)
  - *Hypnotic* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8080204/>) at IMDb
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