

Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City

Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City is a 2021 action horror film^[7] written and directed by Johannes Roberts. Adapted from the stories of the first and second games by Capcom, it serves as a reboot of the *Resident Evil* film series and is the seventh live-action film based on the video game series. The film stars Kaya Scodelario, Hannah John-Kamen, Robbie Amell, Tom Hopper, Avan Jogia, Donal Logue, and Neal McDonough. Set in 1998, it follows a group of survivors trying to survive during a zombie outbreak in Raccoon City. It is the first live-action film in the series not to feature Milla Jovovich in the lead role or her character Alice.

Development took place in early 2017, after *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* was released, with producer James Wan expressing interest in the project. Later, Constantin Film chairman Martin Moszkowicz said that a reboot of the film series was in development. In the same month, Wan was called to produce the reboot with a script by Greg Russo; subsequently, Roberts was hired as both writer and director and both Wan and Russo left the project. Filming began on October 17, 2020, in Greater Sudbury, Ontario, Canada. The film underwent reshoots in May 2021.

Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City had its world premiere at the Grand Rex in Paris on November 19, 2021, and was theatrically released on November 24, 2021, in the United States by Sony Pictures Releasing. The film grossed over \$42 million worldwide and received mixed reviews from critics.

Plot

In the 1980s, Claire Redfield and her older brother Chris are children living at the Raccoon City Orphanage. Claire befriends Lisa Trevor, a disfigured girl who has been experimented on by Dr. William Birkin, an employee for the Umbrella Corporation, who takes children for his experimental research. Claire escapes the orphanage.

Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City



Theatrical release poster

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|-----------------------------|--|
| Directed by | <u>Johannes Roberts</u> |
| Written by | <u>Johannes Roberts</u> |
| Based on | <i>Resident Evil</i> by <u>Capcom</u> |
| Produced by | <u>James Harris</u> <u>Robert Kulzer</u> <u>Hartley Gorenstein</u> |
| Starring | <u>Kaya Scodelario</u> <u>Hannah John-Kamen</u> <u>Robbie Amell</u> <u>Tom Hopper</u> <u>Avan Jogia</u> <u>Donal Logue</u> <u>Neal McDonough</u> |
| Cinematography | <u>Maxime Alexandre</u> |
| Edited by | <u>Dev Singh</u> |
| Music by | <u>Mark Korven</u> ^[1] |
| Production companies | <u>Screen Gems</u> |

In 1998, she returns to Raccoon City, hitchhiking in a semi-truck. The truck driver accidentally hits a woman on the road, who disappears. The driver's Dobermann licks the blood left behind, and over time becomes erratic. At a diner, rookie police officer Leon S. Kennedy notices that the diner's owner has blood coming out of her eyes. Claire warns Chris about Umbrella's experiments, revealing journalist Ben Bertolucci as her source. After Chris leaves, a child breaks into the house, running from his mother; both are erratic and bloody. Claire escapes.

At the police station, the STARS Alpha team meets with Chief Brian Irons, who explains that the Bravo team went missing while investigating a death at the remote Spencer Mansion. The Alpha team, composed of Chris, Jill Valentine, Richard Aiken, Brad Vickers, and Albert Wesker, is sent to the mansion by helicopter to investigate. Unknown to his teammates, Wesker is an operative for an unidentified party, tasked with stealing Birkin's virus. Inside, the team encounters zombies eating the bodies of the Bravo team. Brad gets bitten and crashes the helicopter. Richard is eaten; Chris and Jill flee into the secret passage Wesker unlocked.

The truck driver, bitten by his dog, transforms into a zombie and crashes his truck in front of the police station. Chief Irons tries to drive out of the city but is fired on by Umbrella guards attempting to contain the outbreak. He returns to the station, where Claire and Leon encounter Bertolucci locked in a cell. Bertolucci is bitten by a zombie inmate and the station becomes overrun. Leon, Claire, and Irons escape to the Orphanage, looking for a secret Umbrella tunnel leading to the mansion.

A Licker kills Irons and attacks Leon, but he is saved by Lisa. She recognizes Claire and gives them the keys to the secret passage. The pair discovers the secret lab where Umbrella was experimenting on children. Wesker encounters Dr. Birkin and his family inside and has a shootout with them; he kills Birkin's wife in self-defense. Jill shoots Wesker. Before dying, Wesker tells her to escape via the underground train before the Umbrella Corporation destroys the city. Birkin injects himself with the "G-Virus" and mutates.

Chris, Sherry, Jill, Claire and Leon board the train but are derailed when Raccoon City is destroyed, allowing a monster version of Birkin to reach them. Leon destroys the monster with a rocket launcher. As the Corporation states that there were zero civilian survivors in the aftermath of the destruction, the five survivors walk out of the train tunnel, leaving Raccoon City behind.

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|-----------------------|---|
| | Capcom Co. Ltd. <u>Constantin Film International</u> <u>Davis Raccoon Films</u> The Fyzz Facility ^[2] The Tea Shop and Film Company ^[2] |
| Distributed by | <u>Sony Pictures Releasing</u> (Worldwide) Constantin Film (Germany) ^[2] |
| Release dates | November 19, 2021 (<u>Paris</u>) November 24, 2021 (United States) November 25, 2021 (Germany) December 3, 2021 (United Kingdom) |
| Running time | 107 minutes ^[3] |
| Countries | United States Germany United Kingdom ^[2] |
| Language | English |
| Budget | \$25 million ^[4] |
| Box office | \$42 million ^{[5][6]} |

In the mid-credits scene, Wesker awakens in a body bag, unable to see anything. A mysterious figure hands him sunglasses and introduces herself as Ada Wong.

Cast

- Kaya Scodelario as Claire Redfield, Chris's estranged younger sister who is investigating the Umbrella Corporation
- Hannah John-Kamen as Jill Valentine, a member of the STARS (Special Tactics And Rescue Service) Alpha Team and Chris's partner
- Robbie Amell as Chris Redfield, Claire's estranged older brother and a member of the STARS Alpha Team who is dispatched to investigate the Spencer Mansion
- Tom Hopper as Albert Wesker, a member of the STARS Alpha Team who is working as a double agent for a rival company
- Avan Jogia as Leon Kennedy, a Raccoon City Police Department (RPD) rookie who teams up with Claire and Irons to escape the city
- Donal Logue as Chief Irons, the RPD's chief of police^[8]
- Neal McDonough as William Birkin, one of the leaders of Umbrella's experiments
- Lily Gao appears as Ada Wong, a mysterious spy, during a mid-credits scene
- Chad Rook as Richard Aiken
- Marina Mazepa as Lisa Trevor, one of Umbrella's experiments
- Nathan Dales as Vickers
- Josh Cruddas as Ben Bertolucci, a conspiracy theorist investigating the Umbrella Corporation
- Pat Thornton as the truck driver, a man who helps Claire
- Holly De Barros as Sherry Birkin, the daughter of William and Annette
- Janet Porter as Annette Birkin, William's wife
- Dylan Taylor as Kevin Dooley^[9]
- Sammy Azero as Enrico Marini

Production

Writing

Greg Russo's version

Pre-production took place in early 2017 while *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* was still in theatres, with Constantin Film chairman Martin Moszkowicz saying that a reboot of the series was in development, and producer James Wan expressing interest in the project.^{[10][11]} Greg Russo was attached as writer in 2017. Russo, who was also attached to write the script for *Mortal Kombat* (2021) at the time, worked with Wan in creating a *Resident Evil* story he considered to be "brutal and horrifying", and drew inspiration from the 2017 video game *Resident Evil 7: Biohazard*, though he would later clarify he only drew on the tones of the game—"scary, isolated, alone"—rather than the story itself.^[12] Russo wanted *Moonlight Sonata*, a composition featured in several Resident Evil games, to feature in the opening credits.^[13] Constantin was unimpressed with this script, feeling the game was too recent and its potential failure could harm film sales.

Seeking alternate story ideas, Constantin proposed the incorporation at one point of a time travel subplot. Ultimately, Wan and Russo decided to leave the project citing creative differences and their departures were confirmed in December 2018.^{[14][15][16]}

Johannes Roberts' version

What I loved about the games was that they were just scary, and that's a lot of what I wanted, that atmosphere. It's raining constantly, it's dark, it's scary, Raccoon City is a rotten character. I wanted to put [it] and mix it with the fun side, especially with the narrative style of the first game. We had a lot of fun, we even used the fixed angles that the first game has when the characters are at Spencer Mansion.

—Johannes Roberts^[17]

In December 2018, it was announced that Johannes Roberts was attached to write and direct the film.^[18] In August 2019, Roberts told Screen Rant that the reboot would be "super, super scary" and more faithful to the games than the previous films.^[19] In a statement to Deadline Hollywood, Roberts said the film would be based on Resident Evil (1996) and Resident Evil 2 (1998).^[20]

Roberts said he wanted to give the film a darker tone. Inspired by John Carpenter's films, including Halloween, Assault on Precinct 13, and The Fog, the filmmaker explained that the story was divided between two main locations: Spencer Mansion from the first game and the Raccoon Police Department, which first appeared in Resident Evil 2. Roberts chose the tone for the remake of the second game as a model for the film.^[17] Although director Paul W. S. Anderson and Milla Jovovich released six commercially successful films based on the games between 2002 and 2017, Roberts emphasized that his version was different from the series that preceded it:

It's a totally separate story that is based on the roots of the game and the world of terror. I fell in love with Milla Jovovich, that first film is a lot of fun... but it was a real pleasure to get the reins of a new franchise. I had never seen the horror and atmosphere of the games [in the movies], what I felt when I was playing those games or watching from behind the shoulders of people playing games. I never felt it on the screen, and this is something I wanted to tell you about.^[17]

In early drafts, the screenplay was ambitious, incorporating a variety of mutants from the first two games into the narrative even if only passively. The story was from the start intended as an ensemble piece comparable to Resident Evil: Apocalypse, following several major characters in the film as their paths converge. Over the course of 2019 and 2020, the film script was repeatedly altered, keeping the main story but removing a number of CG-heavy elements, condensing the supporting cast and tweaking the protagonists' arcs. Earlier drafts also included more original characters, monsters and locations from the games, before Roberts had to make changes to his script after the budget was cut from \$40 million to \$25 million.^[21] Some of the cuts and changes were made so late that most of the concept artwork done by Daniel Carrasco for the monsters to be featured was finished, including Hunters, Chimeras, Crimson Heads, Pale Heads, giant spiders, Neptune (giant shark), Tyrant (aka Mr. X), and others.^{[22][23][24]}

Originally, Claire and Chris had no connection with Birkin or Ben Bertolucci, this was added later to help streamline the story after other script changes. The characters were also closer to their original video game versions; Jill was not written as a reckless wildcard and Claire was not a conspiracy theorist who already knew of Umbrella's intentions. Barry Burton, Rebecca Chambers and other characters from the games were originally in the scripts, and some had death scenes written for them. Some of the action scenes were cut down or changed, mostly due to budget cuts, such as a scene where Lisa Trevor sacrifices herself attacking Birkin while everyone else escapes on the train.^{[21][25]}

Casting

In early 2020, casting was underway but was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.^[26] On October 6, *Deadline Hollywood* reported that Scodelario and Hannah John-Kamen had been cast as Claire Redfield and Jill Valentine, alongside Robbie Amell, Tom Hopper, Avan Jogia, and Neal McDonough as Chris Redfield, Albert Wesker, Leon S. Kennedy, and William Birkin, respectively.^[20] That November, Donal Logue was cast as Chief Brian Irons,^[8] alongside Chad Rook as Richard Aiken,^[9] and Lily Gao as Ada Wong.^[27]

In Japan, Capcom later confirmed the characters will be dubbed by voice actors different from the Anderson films. For example, Chris and Claire are voiced by Subaru Kimura and Fairouz Ai instead of Hiroki Tōchi and Hiroe Oka.^[28]

Filming

Principal photography began in Greater Sudbury, Ontario, Canada, on October 17, 2020,^{[29][30][31]} with Maxime Alexandre serving as cinematographer.^[32] Filming was completed on December 24, 2020.^[33] In March 2021, Roberts revealed the full title as *Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City*.^{[17][34]} In May 2021, Amell revealed that the film was undergoing reshoots in Toronto^[35] and Hamilton.

Music

The film score was composed by Mark Korven. Milan Records and Sony Classical released the soundtrack.

Source:^[36]

| No. | Title | Length |
|-----|---------------------------|--------|
| 1. | "Opening" | 1:40 |
| 2. | "Highway Accident" | 3:04 |
| 3. | "Chasing Lisa" | 2:26 |
| 4. | "The Crow" | 3:31 |
| 5. | "Claire & the Neighbours" | 3:29 |
| 6. | "RPD" | 1:50 |
| 7. | "Runaway Truck" | 4:58 |
| 8. | "Helicopter - Dog Attack" | 6:34 |
| 9. | "Mansion Search" | 5:57 |
| 10. | "Library - Ben in Jail" | 4:06 |
| 11. | "Breach - Orphanage" | 3:48 |
| 12. | "Nursery - Battle" | 6:31 |

| <i>Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack)</i> | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Film score by Mark Korven | |
| Released | November 19, 2021 |
| Length | 59:15 |
| Label | Milan Records · Sony Classical |

Release

Theatrical

Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City had its world premiere at the Grand Rex in Paris, France, on November 19, 2021, but was theatrically released on November 24, 2021, by Sony Pictures Releasing in the United States.^{[37][38]} It was delayed from its original release dates of September 3 and 9, 2021.^{[39][40]} The film was a modest financial success.^[41]

Home media

Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City was released on video-on-demand on December 21, 2021,^[42] and was the top-rented film on Vudu during its first weekend.^[43] The film was released on DVD, Blu-ray and Ultra HD Blu-ray on February 8, 2022, by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.^[44] The film grossed over \$3.6 million from North America video sales.^[45]

Reception

Box office

Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City grossed \$17 million in the United States and Canada, and \$25 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$42 million.^{[46][47]}

In the United States and Canada, the film was released alongside *House of Gucci* and *Encanto*, and was projected to gross \$8–10 million from 2,803 theaters over its five-day opening weekend.^[4] The film opened nationwide on Wednesday, November 24, 2021, and made \$2.5 million on its first day—including \$935,000 from Tuesday night previews—from a total of 225,000 theater admissions. The film went on to make \$8.85 million in its first five days, placing fifth.^{[48][49]} Audiences were 64% male as well as 68% between the ages of 18 and 34.^[50] In its second weekend, the film earned \$2.69 million.^{[51][52]} In its third, the film made \$1.66 million and finished sixth at the box office.^{[53][54]} The film was tenth in its fourth weekend, earning \$316,480 from 719 theaters.^{[55][56]}

Outside the U.S. and Canada, the film earned \$5.1 million from 15 markets in its opening weekend.^[57] It made \$4.2 million in its second weekend and \$2.3 million in its third.^{[58][59]} In Thailand, the film earned \$253,735 from the box office.^[60] Japan was the film's highest-grossing foreign market, contributing \$5.1 million from the box office.^[61]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 30% of 90 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 4.9/10. The website's consensus reads: "*Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City* is an affectionately faithful adaptation that further proves its source material is ill-suited to the big screen."^[62] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 44 out of 100, based on 21 critics,

indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[63] Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "C+" on an A+ to F scale, while those at PostTrak gave it a 61% positive score, with 48% saying they would definitely recommend it.^[50]

In a positive review, Johnny Oleksinski from the New York Post gave 3 out of 4 stars and said the film is "empty-headed good fun that's blessedly under two hours and has just enough character development to make you kind of care when someone gets bitten".^[64] Ferdosa Abdi from Screen Rant called it a "fun and faithful adaptation of the games", but felt it was "lacking in character substance".^[65] Sean Keane from CNET praised the film: "Despite the lack of scares, minor tweaks to the games' lore and overall silliness, director Johannes Roberts' love for *Resident Evil* is clear in every moment of *Welcome to Raccoon City*. With a barrage of Easter eggs and fascinating takes on classic characters, the film's a gleeful trip back to the Spencer Mansion and Raccoon Police Department aimed squarely at fans."^[66]

Taylor Lyles of IGN gave the film a 6/10 score, explaining, "Director Mr. Roberts does deserve some credit for sticking much more closely to the source material than the Paul W. S. Anderson films, but a short runtime, a rushed third act, and lack of elements to make it truly scary to watch in the dark hold it back immensely. Nevertheless, it should serve as decent fun for fans."^[67] In a mixed review, Mark Hanson from SLANT wrote "Roberts clearly establishes the hauntingly depressed industrial environment of Raccoon City while methodically spacing out his zombie attacks, which, while not especially innovative, at times put a pit in your stomach like the *Resident Evil* games do."^[68]

Charles Bramesco from The A.V. Club gave the film a C+ and called it "totally bereft of the visual distinction or creative personality that often made its predecessors intriguing diamonds in the rough".^[69] Nick Schager from Variety criticized the "bevy of unexplained details, dropped subplots, paper-thin characterizations and fright-free mayhem".^[70] Kimberly Myers from the Los Angeles Times also gave a negative review, noting the film "may reward longtime fans of the video games by returning to the series' origins, but others will find themselves wanting to leave town, much like the movie's characters".^[71]

Future

Director Johannes Roberts stated that if a sequel were to be developed, he would like to adapt the story from *Resident Evil – Code: Veronica*—referenced in the film with an appearance of the Ashford Twins^{[72][73]}—and then *Resident Evil 4*. He also expressed interest in adapting *Resident Evil 7: Biohazard* and *Resident Evil Village* in the future.^[74]

Robbie Amell stated he hoped to return as Chris in a sequel that included his boulder-punching scene from *Resident Evil 5*.^[75] By June 2022, Tom Hopper confirmed Sony and Constantin Film were pleased with the film's success on video-on-demand and said he hoped to play Albert Wesker again.^[76]

By October 2022, the film was one of several projects confirmed by executive producer Martin Moszkowicz to be in development alongside another television series which would have replaced Netflix's series cancelled two months prior, though the exact details were not given, and Moszkowicz was sceptical of films being released for theatres if not projected to be successful.^[77]

In April 2023, Raccoon HG Film Productions, which financed *Welcome to Raccoon City*, received a grant of CA\$2 million from the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation for the production of a film titled *Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles*. Greater Sudbury was picked as the principal film location.^[78]

See also

- List of films based on video games

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External links

- Official website (<https://www.sonypictures.com/movies/residentevilwelcometoraccooncity>)
- Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6920084/>) at IMDb

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