

Gran Turismo (film)

Gran Turismo^[b] is a 2023 American biographical sports drama film directed by Neill Blomkamp from a screenplay by Jason Hall and Zach Baylin. Produced by Columbia Pictures, PlayStation Productions, and 2.0 Entertainment, it is based on the racing simulation video game series of the same name developed by Polyphony Digital. It tells the true story of British teenager Jann Mardenborough, a teenage *Gran Turismo* player who became a professional racing car driver. The film stars Archie Madekwe as Mardenborough alongside David Harbour, Orlando Bloom, Darren Barnet, Geri Halliwell Horner, and Djimon Hounsou.^[5]

Development of a film based on *Gran Turismo* was revealed in July 2013, with Michael De Luca and Dana Brunetti producing and a script by Alex Tse. Joseph Kosinski was set to direct the film in June 2015 from a new screenplay by Jon and Erich Hoeber. However, the Kosinski version was no longer moving forward as of February 2018. In May 2022, it was announced the film was again in development, with Blomkamp attached to direct it in June. The main cast were announced in September 2022, while other cast additions signed in November. Filming began in Hungary in the same month and wrapped in December. The film score was composed by Lorne Balfe and Andrew Kawczynski.

Gran Turismo premiered at the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium on July 30, 2023, and was theatrically released in the United States on August 25, 2023, by Sony Pictures Releasing. It has grossed \$122 million worldwide against its \$60 million budget and received positive reviews from critics, who praised Blomkamp's direction and racing sequences, but criticized its writing and use of Mardenborough's crash at the Nürburgring Nordschleife as a narrative element.

Plot

Following a pitch by marketing executive Danny Moore, Nissan, establishes the GT Academy to recruit skilled players of the racing simulator *Gran Turismo* and turn them into real racing drivers. Danny recruits former driver-turned-mechanic Jack Salter to train the players. Reluctant at first, Jack accepts the offer after tiring of his team's driver's arrogance, Nicholas

Gran Turismo



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Neill Blomkamp
Screenplay by	Jason Hall <div>Zach Baylin</div>
Story by	Jason Hall <div>Alex Tse</div>
Based on	<i>Gran Turismo</i> <div>by Polyphony Digital</div>
Produced by	Doug Belgrad <div>Asad Qizilbash<div>Carter Swan<div>Dana Brunetti</div></div></div>
Starring	David Harbour <div>Orlando Bloom<div>Archie Madekwe<div>Darren Barnet<div>Geri Halliwell Horner<div>Djimon Hounsou</div></div></div></div></div>
Cinematography	Jacques Jouffret
Edited by	Colby Parker, Jr.

Capa. Meanwhile, Jann Mardenborough, a teenage computer gamer from Cardiff, is an avid player who dreams of becoming a racing driver despite the disapproval of his former football player father, Steve.

One day, Jann learns he is eligible to join the GT Academy after setting a time record. The night before his race, Jann and his brother Coby are invited to a party, where Jann develops a crush on a young woman, Audrey . However, the police arrive, and Jann and Coby are caught. As punishment, Jann is brought to his father's place of employment the next day, but leaves early to partake in the qualifying race, which he wins, earning a place in GT Academy.

At the academy camp, Jack puts the competitors through their paces in various tests, through which ten competitors are narrowed down to five. During the tests, Jann impresses Jack with his knowledge after asserting that a wreck was caused by his car's brakes being glazed, later proven correct by analysts. The remaining five competitors compete in a final race to determine who will represent Nissan. Jann narrowly wins the race against American competitor Matty Davis, but Danny insists Matty should be chosen as the representative due to his better commercial viability. However, Jann is selected at Jack's insistence.

Jann is told that if he finishes at least fourth in any one of a series of qualifying races, he will earn a professional license and contract with Nissan. In his first professional race in Austria, he finishes last after Nicholas taps him into a spin, and despite gradually improving over the next few races, he does not finish the penultimate race in Spain. He travels to Dubai for his last qualifying race, during which Nicholas crashes, and despite debris damaging Jann's car, he achieves a fourth-place finish and earns his license. He then travels to Tokyo with Danny and Jack to sign his contract and uses his signing bonus to fly Audrey to Tokyo as they start a relationship.

Jann's first race after signing is at the Nürburgring Nordschleife. He starts the race well and maintains a high position until the front of his car lifts into the air at the Flugplatz corner, hitting a barrier and launching into a crowded spectator area. Jann is airlifted to the Nürburgring Medical Center and is informed while in hospital that a spectator was killed in the crash, much to his horror. When Jann is reluctant to return to racing and blames himself for the spectator's death, Jack returns him to the Nürburgring. He reveals that he was involved in a fatal accident at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, which led to a fellow driver dying and subsequently Jack's retirement from driving. He encourages Jann to return to racing. An inquiry clears Jann of any wrongdoing, but professional sentiment turns against sim drivers. In response, Danny decides that a sim driver team needs to compete at Le Mans and finish on the podium to prove their viability.

Danny enlists Matty and fellow GT Academy participant Antonio Cruz to make up the three-driver team alongside Jann. On race day, Jann's father apologizes for not initially supporting his passions. Early in the race, Jann is left shaken after one of the competitors crashes and catches fire, but is encouraged through his first shift by Jack playing "Songbird" and "Orinoco Flow" through the car's communication system, songs

	Austyn Daines
Music by	<u>Lorne Balfe</u> Andrew Kawczynski
Production companies	<u>Columbia Pictures</u> <u>PlayStation</u> <u>Productions</u> 2.0 Entertainment
Distributed by	<u>Sony Pictures</u> Releasing
Release dates	July 30, 2023 (<u>Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps</u>) August 25, 2023 (United States) September 15, 2023 (Japan ^[a])
Running time	134 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$60 million ^[2]
Box office	\$122.1 million ^{[3][4]}

which Jann had previously used as motivational music during training. Matty and Antonio complete their first shifts without issue, but the latter is brought in from his last session early due to experiencing cramps. A wheel nut is dropped by mechanic Felix during the pit stop, causing Jann to lose several positions. Deviating from advised racing lines, he uses instead lines he learned from playing the video game to regain his position, breaking the lap record in the process. On the final lap, Jann is pitted against Nicholas, with Jann once again narrowly in front on the final straight to earn third place and a podium finish for Nissan.

In the epilogue, the real Jann Mardenborough is shown, having competed in over 200 races and served as his own stunt double in the film.

Cast

- Archie Madekwe as Jann Mardenborough, a young retail worker and a fan of the Gran Turismo video games aspiring to become a professional racer.
 - Jann Mardenborough also portrays himself, serving as Madekwe's stunt double.
- David Harbour as Jack Salter, a former professional racer turned mechanic who becomes Jann's trainer for the GT Academy.
- Orlando Bloom as Danny Moore, a marketing executive at Nissan.
- Takehiro Hira as Kazunori Yamauchi, the creator of *Gran Turismo*.
 - The real Yamauchi cameos as a sushi chef in Tokyo.
- Darren Barnet as Matty Davis, a top GT Academy driver and Jann's rival, later co-driver for Jann at Le Mans.
- Geri Halliwell-Horner as Lesley Mardenborough, Jann's mother.
- Djimon Hounsou as Steve Mardenborough, a former footballer turned miner and Jann's father.
- Joshua Stradowski as Nicholas Capa, a hot-headed and underhanded driver who rivals Jann.
- Daniel Puig as Coby Mardenborough, Jann's brother.
- Maeve Courtier-Lilley as Audrey, Jann's love interest.
- Pepe Barroso as Antonio Cruz, a Spanish GT Academy student driver, one of Jann's friends and later co-driver for Jann at Le Mans. Loosely based on Lucas Ordóñez.
- Emelia Hartford as Leah Vega, an American female GT Academy student driver and race candidate.
- Sang Heon Lee as Joo-Hwan Lee, a Korean GT Academy student driver and race candidate.
- Max Mundt as Klaus Hoffman, a German GT Academy student driver and race candidate.
- Mariano González as Henry Evas, an Argentinian GT Academy student driver.
- Harki Bhambra as Avi Bhatt, a British-Indian GT Academy driver.
- Lindsay Pattison as Chloe McCormick, a British female GT Academy student driver and race candidate.
- Théo Christine as Marcel Durand, a French GT Academy student driver and race candidate.
- Niall McShea as Frederik Schulin, a professional racing driver and second rival of Jann.
- Jamie Kenna as Jack Man Jones, Jann's pit crew member.
- Thomas Kretschmann as Patrice Capa, Nicholas' father
- Richard Cambridge as Felix, a mechanic

- Nikhil Parmar as Persol, one of Jann's friends from the video game arcade where Jann would race.

Production

Development

In July 2013, it was announced that Sony Pictures was developing a *Gran Turismo* film with Michael De Luca and Dana Brunetti producing it^[6] and a script by Alex Tse.^[7] In 2015, Joseph Kosinski was set to direct the film,^[8] with a new screenplay by Jon and Erich Hoeber.^[9] By 2018, the Kosinski version was no longer moving forward.^[10]

In May 2022, it was announced that a film adaptation of Polyphony Digital's *Gran Turismo* video games was in early development at Sony Pictures and PlayStation Productions. Shortly afterward, Neill Blomkamp was hired to direct a screenplay written by Jason Hall, and Sony set a release date of August 11, 2023.^[11] The lead roles were cast in September 2022 with David Harbour as a veteran race car driver who mentors Archie Madekwe as the teenage trainee,^{[12][13]} with the film being confirmed to also be a biographical film based on the story of Jann Mardenborough. Orlando Bloom was cast as a motorsport marketing executive and Darren Barnett as a threatened GT Academy racer.^[14] Additional cast additions were announced while filming in November included Djimon Hounsou, Geri Halliwell-Horner, Daniel Puig, Joshua Stradowski, Thomas Kretschmann, Maeve Courtier-Lilley, Emelia Hartford, Pepe Barroso, and Sang Heon Lee.^{[15][16]} Max Mundt, Mariano González, Harki Bhambra, Lindsay Pattison, Théo Christine, and Nikhil Parmar were added to the cast in December 2022.^[17]

Filming

Filming began in Hungary in November, and wrapped in December 2022, with Jacques Jouffret serving as cinematographer.^{[14][15][18]} Jouffret took advantage of the Rialto extension/detachment system of Sony Venice 2 cameras in order to place sensors in tight locations of cars, away from the main camera body.^[19] Jann Mardenborough himself is a co-producer on the film and served as the racing stunt double for Madekwe, who portrayed him.

Music

In September 2022, it was reported that Stephen Barton would compose the score for the film.^[20] But on April 24, 2023, Lorne Balfe was announced to take over by scoring the film instead.^[21] The soundtrack album, also composed by Andrew Kawczynski, was released on August 11, 2023, the same day as the limited theatrical release.^[22]

Release

Gran Turismo premiered at the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps on July 30, 2023, following the Formula One 2023 Belgian Grand Prix.^[23] *Gran Turismo* held several preview screenings beginning on August 11, 2023, before being released in the United States on August 25, by Sony Pictures Releasing.^[24] It was originally scheduled for a wide release on August 11,^[25] but plans changed due to the SAG-AFTRA strike.^[24] Despite the delay in the United States, the film's release date remains unchanged in various international markets such as the United Kingdom, where the film was released on August 9, 2023.^[26]

An update to *Gran Turismo* 7 added a livery for the Nissan Nismo GT-R that was inspired by the film, and was given for free to all players who watched the movie trailer in-game.^[27]

Gran Turismo was released on digital platforms on September 26, 2023^[28] and, in selected markets, was one of the first early-access titles on the Sony Pictures Core platform;^[29] it was later released on Blu-ray and DVD on November 7.^{[30][31]} The movie was released on Netflix as part of a first-window deal on December 25, 2023.^[32]

Reception

Box office

Gran Turismo has grossed \$44.4 million in the United States and Canada, and \$77.7 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$122.1 million.^{[3][4]}

In the United States and Canada, *Gran Turismo* was released alongside *The Hill*, *Retribution*, and *Golda*, and was projected to gross \$12–15 million from 3,856 theaters in its opening weekend.^[33] The film made \$8.5 million on its first day, including \$5.3 million from several preview screenings in the weeks leading up to its release. It went on to debut to \$17.4 million, finishing first at the box office, though Warner Bros. claimed its holdover *Barbie* actually won the weekend with \$15.1 million, disputing Sony's inclusion of the \$5.3 million from weeks of previews; other studios and trade publications sided with Sony, noting lumping preview screenings into opening day figures is standard practice.^{[34][35][36]} The film made \$6.6 million in its second weekend (a drop of 64%) and finishing fourth, then grossed \$3.5 million in its third weekend.^{[37][38]}

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 65% of 225 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 6.1/10. The website's consensus reads: "*Gran Turismo*'s brisk action and feel-good underdog drama are undermined by its loose telling of the fact-based story, but this is still a generally solid racing movie."^[39] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 48 out of 100, based on 47 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[40] Audiences surveyed by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "A" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled at PostTrak gave it a 90% overall positive score.^[34]

The racing sequences and Blomkamp's direction, especially during the climactic 24-hour race in France, were praised by most critics, who noted that, while transitioning from its video game origins to a standard race car film, *Gran Turismo* also serves as a cautionary example of adapting source material that may not align with a cohesive narrative.^[41] Owen Gleiberman of *Variety* said of the film, "There's an innocence to this one, and a surprise authenticity," commenting, "It's like a *Fast and Furious* movie made without cynicism, and it gets to you", finding the climax "satisfying".^[42] Kristen Lopez of *TheWrap* said, "*Gran Turismo* works best because it eschews its video game origins quickly before settling into a standard race car film. It's unknown how fans of the game will respond to the movie — no one watching the movie in this critic's theater pointed out any specific game Easter eggs — but on the whole fans of racecar films should be in for a good time."^[43]

Conversely, Ryan Gilbey's negative review for the *Guardian* called the film "a simulation of cinema, with scarcely a human fingerprint anywhere on its chassis."^[44] Tim Robey of the *Telegraph* called the film "a purringly complacent insult to a great video-game".^[45] Oli Welsh of *Polygon* gave the film a negative review, saying that "*Gran Turismo* could have used this inspiring true story to show how video games open up possibilities and remove barriers in the real world. Instead, it just uses it to score points."^[46]

Accolades

The film was nominated for "Best Adaptation" at *The Game Awards 2023*.^[47]

Criticism of crash depiction

The film was widely criticized for its use of Mardenborough's crash at the *Nürburgring Nordschleife* as a narrative element. This segment faithfully re-enacted a 2015 crash during which his *Nissan GT-R Nismo* became airborne at the notorious Flugplatz turn and cartwheeled over the fence into spectators.^[48] One spectator was killed almost immediately and others were taken to the hospital with serious and severe injuries.^{[48][49]} This crash was depicted in *Gran Turismo* as a traumatic event for Mardenborough that impacted his racing performance during his debut at the 24 Hours of Le Mans. In reality, the crash occurred roughly two years after his Le Mans debut.^{[50][51][52]}

The use of a dead spectator to enhance the plot was negatively received by critics, with the film being labeled as "tasteless" and "reprehensible".^{[53][46]} In her review, Grace Randolph speculated that other critics would temper their approval of *Gran Turismo* because of the way it frames the accident.^[54]

Notes

- a. September 15, 2023 coincides with the same date of the *Pretty Cure All Stars F* release.
- b. Later marketed as ***Gran Turismo: Based on a True Story***

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External links

- Official website (<https://www.granturismo.movie/>)
- *Gran Turismo* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4495098/>) at IMDb
- *Gran Turismo* (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/gran_turismo_the_movie) at Rotten Tomatoes

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