

# Haunted Mansion (2023 film)

***Haunted Mansion*** is a 2023 American supernatural horror comedy film directed by Justin Simien from a screenplay by Katie Dippold. It stars LaKeith Stanfield, Tiffany Haddish, Owen Wilson, Danny DeVito, Rosario Dawson, Dan Levy, Jamie Lee Curtis and Jared Leto. Produced by Walt Disney Pictures and Rideback, it is the second film adaptation of Walt Disney's eponymous theme park attraction, following *The Haunted Mansion* (2003). In the film, a single mother and her son (Dawson and Chase W. Dillon, respectively) enlist the aid of an astrophysicist turned tour guide (Stanfield), a struggling psychic (Haddish), a conman posing as a priest (Wilson) and a college historian (DeVito) to help exorcise the ghostly inhabitants of the titular building that they have recently moved into.

Plans for the reboot adaptation based on the Haunted Mansion began in July 2010, when Guillermo del Toro, who intended to write and produce, stated the project would take place in a heightened reality rather than in a real-world setting. Del Toro was no longer attached as the project's director in July 2013. After years in development hell, Disney officially announced *Haunted Mansion* in August 2020, with Dippold signed on to write a new screenplay. Simien negotiated to direct the film by April 2021, and was officially confirmed three months later. The primary cast was confirmed from July to October, and additional cast was announced the following year. Principal photography took place from mid-October 2021 to late-February 2022 on a \$150 million budget.

*Haunted Mansion* premiered at Disneyland in Anaheim, California, on July 15, 2023, and was released in the United States on July 28 by Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures. The film received mixed reviews from critics and grossed \$118 million worldwide, failing to meet box office expectations and losing Disney an estimated \$117 million.

## Plot

During a New Year's party, Ben Matthias, an astrophysicist developing a camera to detect dark matter, meets ghost tour guide Alyssa and becomes entranced with her belief in the supernatural. Ben marries Alyssa, who later dies in a car crash. Distraught, Ben gives up his career and continues to run her ghost tour. Ben

### Haunted Mansion



Theatrical release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	<span>Justin Simien</span>
<b>Screenplay by</b>	<span>Katie Dippold</span>
<b>Based on</b>	<span>The Haunted Mansion</span> <div>by <span>Walt Disney</span></div>
<b>Produced by</b>	<span>Dan Lin</span> <div><span>Jonathan Eirich</span></div>
<b>Starring</b>	<div> <div><span>LaKeith Stanfield</span></div> <div><span>Tiffany Haddish</span></div> <div><span>Owen Wilson</span></div> <div><span>Danny DeVito</span></div> <div><span>Rosario Dawson</span></div> <div><span>Dan Levy</span></div> <div><span>Jamie Lee Curtis</span></div> <div><span>Jared Leto</span></div> </div>
<b>Cinematography</b>	<span>Jeffrey Waldron</span>
<b>Edited by</b>	<span>Phillip J. Bartell</span>

searches famous haunted places looking for signs of his wife, but eventually becomes despondent and depressed after finding no evidence of ghosts. Years later, widowed doctor Gabbie and her son Travis move from New York into Gracey Manor to turn it into a bed and breakfast, only to discover that it is infested with ghosts.

Ben is visited by exorcist priest Father Kent, who hires him to photograph Gracey Manor's ghosts. Incredulous, Ben returns home and is haunted by a ghost of a mariner, forcing him to return to the mansion. Ben learns that Gabbie, Travis and Kent have also fallen victim to hauntings, forcing them to return to the mansion. Ben and Kent recruit Harriet, a psychic, and steal blueprints to the mansion from historian Professor Bruce Davis. The group finds a hidden séance room and Harriet manages to contact the spirit of William Gracey, who writes a message instructing them to talk to the legendary medium Madame Leota. However, before they can continue, an entity forces Harriet out of the house. Bruce arrives and is forced out as well.

The group stays at the mansion and proceed to look for Leota. Ben goes into the attic, runs afoul of ghostly bride Constance Hatchaway and finds a locked trunk. Examining the contents, they find a crystal ball which houses Leota, who reveals that William Gracey bought the place and recruited her in an attempt to contact the spirit of his late wife every night for an entire year, resulting in the mansion's ghosts taking up residence. A malevolent spirit later surfaced as it tricked Gracey into committing suicide and trapped Leota inside her crystal ball. Harriet attempts to perform an astral projection for more answers but ends up sending Ben out of his body. He soon meets Gracey's ghost before having an encounter with the malevolent spirit, a ghost of a man dressed in a top hat and cloak whose head disappears from his body and disembodily reappears within a hatbox he carries.

The next morning, Bruce takes Ben to get a sketch artist at the local police station to draw up the ghost, identifying him as Alistair Crump, a wealthy heir who was abused by his overbearing father after his mother's death and eventually expelled from their family home. Upon reaching adulthood after his father died from undisclosed causes, he reacquired their home and threw parties over the years to lure his fellow socialites to their deaths out of revenge for society's shunning against him while developing an obsession with the occult, before he was later assassinated by his much-abused staff. Crump then attempts to deter the group by locking the mansion down, but Ben, Kent and Travis manage to escape. They arrive at Crump Manor, which has become a historical site, and learn from the Mariner, who followed them, that Crump has acquired nine hundred ninety-nine souls and now seeks to gain one more in order to escape the mansion and exact the revenge he promised before his assassination on the living world. Travis finds Crump's hat, which they can use as part of a ritual to banish Crump back to the netherworld from whence he came.

The trio make it back to Gracey Manor where Ben and Kent, who reveals he is actually a conman, rescue Gabbie, Harriet and Bruce, but Crump incinerates his hat. Having been impersonating Travis' late father, Crump plots to exploit the former's grief and make him his final soul. Ben finds Travis and convinces him to let go of his father as they and Gabbie confront Crump in the graveyard. Kent rallies the ghosts to rebel

<b>Music by</b>	<u>Kris Bowers</u>
<b>Production companies</b>	<u>Walt Disney Pictures</u> <u>Rideback</u>
<b>Distributed by</b>	<u>Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures</u>
<b>Release dates</b>	July 15, 2023 (Disneyland) July 28, 2023 (United States)
<b>Running time</b>	123 minutes <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$150 million <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Box office</b>	\$117.5 million <sup>[3][4]</sup>

against Crump and side with them. Meanwhile, Bruce delivers the remnants of the hat to Harriet, who starts the banishment ritual. When Crump attempts to get Ben to die willingly to see Alyssa again, he reveals he has made peace with losing her as the ritual is complete and Crump is sent back to the netherworld.

Many ghosts decide to stay at the mansion, now in harmony with Gabbie and Travis. Ben goes back to teaching and, upon leaving his apartment, pets the cat who has been hanging out by his door, discovering its name is Tater Tot, a nod to his wife's love for the food of the same name. The group reunites at the mansion for a Halloween party. Harriet regains confidence in her psychic abilities, Kent becomes an actual priest, Travis is voted to his school's student council, Gabbie becomes the newest member of New Orleans General and Bruce maintains his newfound friendships.

## Cast

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- LaKeith Stanfield as Ben Matthias, a cynical astrophysicist turned tour guide
- Tiffany Haddish as Harriet, a psychic with genuine abilities
- Owen Wilson as Father Kent, a conman posing as a priest and trained exorcist
- Danny DeVito as Bruce Davis, a college historian and professor at Tulane University
- Rosario Dawson as Gabbie, a widowed doctor from New York who moves to New Orleans with her son to open a bed and breakfast at the mansion
- Chase W. Dillon as Travis, Gabbie's son
- Jamie Lee Curtis as Madame Leota, the psychic responsible for summoning the mansion's many ghostly occupants, including Crump, who is subsequently confined in her crystal ball by the latter.
- Jared Leto as Alistair Crump alias The Hatbox Ghost;<sup>[5]</sup> Leto's likeness was used for Crump in an enhanced police sketch and in the animation depicting his backstory.
- J. R. Adduci as William Gracey, the first owner of the mansion, where he conducted seances with Leota's assistance to contact his late wife, but instead attracted the mansion's ghosts.
- Jo Koy as a daytime bartender
- Marilu Henner as Carol, a tourist in New Orleans
- Steve Zissis as Roger
- Hasan Minhaj as a police sketch artist<sup>[6]</sup>
- Daniel Levy as Vic, an entertainment tour guide<sup>[7]</sup>
- Winona Ryder as Pat, a New Orleans tour guide (uncredited)<sup>[8]</sup>

## Production

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### Development

In July 2010, it was announced that a reboot adaptation based on The Haunted Mansion was in development for Walt Disney Pictures, with Guillermo del Toro as writer and producer.<sup>[9][10]</sup> Del Toro stated the project would not take place in a real-world setting, but in a heightened reality. He revealed that the Hatbox Ghost would be one of the main characters and said the film would be "scary and fun at the same time, but the scary will be scary."<sup>[11][12]</sup> In June 2011, Walt Disney World Imagineer Jason Surrell was brought onto the project as a creative consultant.<sup>[13]</sup> In August 2012, Del Toro submitted the final draft of his script to Walt Disney Studios, intended for a PG-13 rating.<sup>[14][15]</sup> By July 2013, Del Toro announced

he was no longer the project's director, but remained as co-writer and executive producer.<sup>[16]</sup> In April 2015, Ryan Gosling was in early negotiations to star, while D.V. DeVincentis was hired to rewrite the script.<sup>[17][18]</sup> In September 2016, Brigham Taylor was hired as producer.<sup>[19]</sup>

In August 2020, it was announced that Katie Dippold signed on to write a new screenplay for the film, after it was decided that Del Toro's script was too scary for family audiences. Dan Lin and Jonathan Eirich were hired as producers. The project will be a joint-venture production between Walt Disney Pictures and Rideback.<sup>[20][21]</sup> By April 2021, Justin Simien entered early-negotiations to direct the film,<sup>[22]</sup> and was officially confirmed as director by July 2021.

Bryan Cogman, Del Toro, DeVincentis, Micah Fitzerman-Blue, Noah Harpster, Justin Haythe, Jeff Nathanson, Matthew Robbins, Simien, Steven Thompson, and Chris Weitz wrote additional literary material for the film.<sup>[23]</sup>

In a behind-the-features featurette, production designer Darren Gilford revealed that the crew had an after-hours tour on the actual Haunted Mansion ride at Walt Disney World. The crew then pulled details from the ride to the sets.<sup>[24]</sup>

## Casting

Tiffany Haddish, LaKeith Stanfield, Owen Wilson, Rosario Dawson, and Danny DeVito were each cast to appear in the film.<sup>[25][26][27][28]</sup> In July 2022, Jamie Lee Curtis and Jared Leto were revealed to have been cast.<sup>[29][30]</sup> During the 2022 D23 Expo presentation, it was revealed that Winona Ryder, Dan Levy, and Hasan Minhaj were cast.<sup>[31]</sup>

## Filming and post-production

Principal photography ran from October 4, 2021,<sup>[32]</sup> to late February 2022 in New Orleans, Louisiana and Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>[26][28]</sup> Production also occurred at Trilith Studios.<sup>[33]</sup> The visual effects were handled by DNEG<sup>[34]</sup> and Industrial Light & Magic.<sup>[35]</sup>

## Music

Kris Bowers composed the film's score.<sup>[36]</sup> The soundtrack album was released on July 26 by Walt Disney Records, two days before the film.<sup>[37]</sup>

## Release

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### Theatrical release



Director Justin Simien at the 2023 San Diego Comic-Con



Construction of a film set on Royal Street in the French Quarter of New Orleans, January 2022

*Haunted Mansion* had its world premiere at Disneyland in Anaheim, California on July 15, 2023. Due to the 2023 SAG-AFTRA strike, the film's cast members could not attend the premiere. Instead, the park's Disney characters including Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, and Disney villains such as Maleficent, Cruella de Vil, and the Evil Queen walked the red carpet.<sup>[38][39]</sup> It was released theatrically in the United States on July 28<sup>[40]</sup> in 4DX<sup>[41]</sup> and Dolby Cinema formats.<sup>[42]</sup> It was previously scheduled for March 10, 2023<sup>[43]</sup> and then August 11, 2023.<sup>[44]</sup>



Pedicab promoting *Haunted Mansion* in San Diego, California

## Marketing

Before the film's release, the cast appeared on the game show *Celebrity Family Feud*.<sup>[45]</sup>

## Home media

*Haunted Mansion* was released on digital platforms on October 3, Disney+ on October 4, and Blu-ray and DVD on October 17.<sup>[46][47]</sup>

## Reception

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### Box office

*Haunted Mansion* grossed \$67.7 million in the United States and Canada, and \$49.8 million in other territories, for worldwide gross of \$117.5 million.<sup>[3][4]</sup> *Deadline Hollywood* calculating the net losses of the film to be \$117 million, when factoring together all expenses and revenues.<sup>[48]</sup>

In the United States and Canada, the film was released alongside *Talk to Me*, and was projected to gross \$25–30 million from 3,740 theaters in its opening weekend, though a debut of \$20–25 million had also been considered possible.<sup>[49][50]</sup> It made \$10 million on its first day, including \$3.1 million from Thursday night previews.<sup>[2][51]</sup> It went on to debut to \$24.1 million, finishing in third below *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*, and failing to top the opening weekend of the 2003 film (\$24.3 million, unadjusted for inflation). Reasons for the low opening have been cited for competition from *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*, lack of marketing, divided word of mouth, and its Halloween-esque tone. Disney suggested that not having the cast available for promotional appearances (due to the 2023 SAG-AFTRA strike) had a negative impact on the opening weekend.<sup>[52]</sup> Given its \$150 million production budget, *Variety* opined the opening was "not a great result for a kid-centric tentpole", and that the film was "Halloween-esque".<sup>[53]</sup> The film fell 62% in its second weekend to \$9.2 million, finishing fifth.<sup>[54]</sup>

### Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 37% of 254 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5.1/10. The website's consensus reads: "*Haunted Mansion*'s talented cast makes the movie a pleasant enough destination, although it's neither scary nor funny enough to wholeheartedly recommend."<sup>[55]</sup> Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 47 out of 100,



based on 52 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.<sup>[56]</sup> Audiences surveyed by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B+" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled at PostTrak gave it an 80% overall positive score, with 60% saying they would definitely recommend the film.<sup>[2]</sup>

Peter Bradshaw from The Guardian gave the film two out of five stars, and stated, "Lakeith Stanfield, Rosario Dawson, Owen Wilson and Jamie Lee Curtis cannot save this laborious story of a creepy old dwelling and the awful Hatbox Ghost".<sup>[57]</sup> Peter Debruge of Variety wrote, "While the visual effects are surprisingly weak for a film of this scale, the script proves far better than anyone might expect, establishing an emotional foundation for what might otherwise be a gimmick-driven haunted house movie."<sup>[58]</sup> Lucas Trevor of The Washington Post wrote, "It's too dark for a family film, too weightless and juvenile for grown-ups. In a season notable for high-level action spectacle and important auteur projects, *Haunted Mansion* is not just confused but inconsequential."<sup>[59]</sup>

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## External links

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- Official website (<https://movies.disney.com/haunted-mansion>) 
  - Haunted Mansion* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1695843/>) at IMDb
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