

Argylle is a 2024 spy action comedy film directed and produced by Matthew Vaughn, and written by Jason Fuchs. The film features an ensemble cast that includes Bryce Dallas Howard, Sam Rockwell, Bryan Cranston, Catherine O'Hara, Henry Cavill, Dua Lipa, Ariana DeBose, John Cena, and Samuel L. Jackson. Its plot centers on a reclusive author who is drawn into the world of spies and espionage after she realizes that a new spy novel she is writing mirrors real-world events.

Argylle was filmed in Europe from August to December 2021. It premiered at Odeon Luxe Leicester Square in London on January 24, 2024, before it was released by Universal Pictures and Apple Original Films in the United Kingdom on February 1, 2024, and in the United States the following day on February 2, 2024. The film received generally negative reviews from critics and grossed over \$96 million worldwide against a \$200 million budget.

Plot

Elly Conway, an introverted spy novelist, has almost finished her fifth book about Aubrey Argylle, the eponymous character of the *Argylle* series, but suffers from writer's block after feedback from her mother, Ruth. On a train journey to visit Ruth and her father, Barry, Elly is saved from an ambush by an actual spy, Aidan Wilde, who explains to her that a devious organization, known as the Division, has targeted her because her novels seemingly predict their future. Aidan travels with Elly to England, hoping that her next chapter will reveal how to stop the Division.

In London, the duo searches for a "Masterkey"^[b] that would help expose the Division referenced in Elly's novels. Suspecting Aidan wants to kill her too, Elly calls her parents for help. As they arrive, Aidan reveals that her parents are operatives of the Division, forcing him and Elly to fend them off before fleeing. Escaping to France, Aidan and former CIA deputy director Alfie Solomon reveal that Argylle is not entirely fictional: Elly is in fact agent Rachel Kylie ("Argylle" seemingly having been derived from "R. Kylie"), who was captured and brainwashed by the Division five years earlier and made to believe that Dr. Margaret Vogeler (Ruth) and Director Ritter (Barry) were her parents. Elly put her suppressed memories, in modified form, into her novels;

Argylle



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Matthew Vaughn</u>
Written by	<u>Jason Fuchs</u>
Produced by	<u>Matthew Vaughn</u> <u>Adam Bohling</u> <u>David Reid</u> <u>Jason Fuchs</u>
Starring	<u>Henry Cavill</u> <u>Bryce Dallas Howard</u> <u>Sam Rockwell</u> <u>Bryan Cranston</u> <u>Catherine O'Hara</u> <u>Dua Lipa</u> <u>Ariana DeBose</u> <u>John Cena</u> <u>Samuel L. Jackson</u>
Cinematography	<u>George Richmond</u>

Aidan resurfaces as one of her characters, Wyatt, while Alfie reappears as her cat. With the latest *Argylle* novel, Rachel was about to reveal the whereabouts of the Masterkey to the world.

Aidan and Rachel travel to the Arabian Peninsula, where they retrieve the Masterkey, but are cornered by the Division, who return them to their base. Ritter reveals that Rachel was in actuality a double agent and one of their most loyal assets for the Division, after which she offers to interrogate and subsequently shoots Aidan. She also locates Alfie for them, but reveals that she in fact sent him the Masterkey, betraying the Division. Aidan, revealed to have been shot in non-lethal areas, reunites with Rachel, and the two fight their way through the facility. Ritter interrupts the transmission of the Masterkey to Alfie, but is fatally shot after Rachel's cat scratches out his eyes. Aidan and Rachel escape to outside the Division facility, revealed to be a cargo ship, to use the satellite connection to send the Masterkey. Ruth uses a mental trigger code to force her "daughter" to attack Aidan until Ruth is killed by Keira, a former CIA agent. Keira had once been Rachel and Aidan's sister-in-arms, and was thought dead during a mission with Rachel; these events, along with Keira as an identical, fictional version of herself, had also appeared in Elly's novels. Alfie finally receives the Masterkey transmission and Aidan detonates the Division's oil tanker headquarters.

Resuming her novelist persona, Rachel publishes her final *Argylle* novel, where at a reading, the real Argylle reveals himself, much to her shock and confusion. In a mid-credits scene, taking place twenty years earlier, a young Argylle is revealed to be a Kingsman agent, with the first novel being based on his life.

Cast

- Bryce Dallas Howard as Elly Conway^{[8][9]}
- Sam Rockwell as Aidan Wilde^[10]
- Bryan Cranston as Director Ritter^[10]
- Catherine O'Hara as Ruth^{[10][8]}
- Henry Cavill as Argylle^[8]
 - Louis Partridge as young Argylle^[11]
- Sofia Boutella as Saba Al-Badr^[10]
- Dua Lipa as LaGrange^[8]
- Ariana DeBose as Keira^[10]
- John Cena as Wyatt^[10]
- Samuel L. Jackson as Alfie^[10]

Edited by	<u>Lee Smith</u> <u>Tom Harrison-Read</u> <u>Col Goudie</u>
Music by	<u>Lorne Balfe</u>
Production companies	<u>Apple Original Films</u> <u>Marv Studios</u> <u>Cloudy Productions</u>
Distributed by	<u>Universal Pictures</u> <u>Apple Original Films (through Apple TV+)</u>
Release dates	January 24, 2024 (<u>Odeon Luxe Leicester Square</u>) February 1, 2024 (United Kingdom) February 2, 2024 (United States)
Running time	139 minutes ^[1]
Countries	United Kingdom United States
Language	English
Budget	\$200 million ^[a]
Box office	\$96.2 million ^{[3][7]}

Also appearing in the film are Rob Delaney as Deputy Director Powell; Jing Lusi as a love interest of Argylle;^{[12][13]} and Tomás Paredes as Carlos, a field agent of the Division.^[14] Richard E. Grant has a cameo as Fowler, the director of Argylle's spy organisation, based on Ritter, in the *Argylle* novels,^[10] while Ben Daniels appears as a bartender/spy at The King's Man Arms.^[15]

Production

Development

Argylle was announced in June 2021, with Matthew Vaughn attached to direct and produce for Marv Studios.^[16] The ensemble cast was announced in the following months, and it was reported that the script was written by Jason Fuchs.^[8] Dua Lipa, who also stars in the film, provided original music for the title track and score.^{[17][18]}

In August 2021, Apple TV+ bought the rights to the film for \$200 million.^[19] Some industry journals wrote the production budget was \$200 million, with *The Hollywood Reporter* claiming some sources put costs as high as \$250 million.^{[5][20][6]} Director Matthew Vaughn refuted that claim, saying: "I don't know how you spend \$200 million on it. I actually don't. Unless you're going to make a five-hour CG fest."^[11] Matthew Belloni of *Puck News* and *The Ringer* later reported that the film's budget was less than the \$200 million figure, which was for the licensing and distribution rights to the film and not the actual budget as had been perceived.^[21]

Vaughn said the COVID-19 pandemic gave him the time to work on the film.^[22] He describes it as his ode to 1980s action thrillers like *Die Hard* and *Lethal Weapon*. When asked about casting Cavill, he said: "I needed someone who was born to play Bond – which Henry is – and then nick him before Bond did. He plays a larger-than-life action hero with a wink. It's very different from *Kingsman*."^[23]

Filming

Principal photography began in August 2021 in London, with cinematographer George Richmond, and took place across various locations in Europe.^{[16][24][25]} Filming wrapped in December 2021 according to Henry Cavill's update on X (Twitter).^[26] The production used studios in Greenford, Park Royal, and Bovingdon to shoot the film. Background shots were filmed in Greece and the United States.^[27]

Marketing

Elly Conway, later revealed as the fictional author of the in-universe *Argylle* novels, was initially reported to have written the book that the script was based on during the film's announcement.^[8] The claim was questioned by *The Hollywood Reporter* in September 2022, as they were unable to verify Conway's existence and their attempts to contact her, her publicist, and her talent agent were unsuccessful.^[28] The trailer revealed Conway was the film's protagonist.^[9] Several social media users attempted to identify Conway and theorized that singer-songwriter Taylor Swift had written the book with Conway as her pen name, based on several references associating Swift with *Argylle*; Vaughn denied the theory, stating Conway is not related to Swift, though Swift influenced the use of a Scottish Fold cat in the film.^{[29][30][31]} Bryce Dallas Howard, who plays Conway in the film, opined that *Argylle* is "unconsciously inspired" by

Swift.^[32] In February 2024, authors [Terry Hayes](#) and Tammy Cohen revealed they had written the tie-in novel.^[33] The tie-in book was released ahead of the film's release, on January 9, 2024.^[34] Apple and Universal spent \$80 million promoting the film, each being responsible for fronting 50% of the costs.^[35]

Release

Argylle premiered at Odeon Luxe Leicester Square in London on January 24, 2024.^[36] In June 2023, it was announced that the film would be released in theaters on February 2, 2024, by [Universal Pictures](#) and [Apple Original Films](#), before releasing on Apple TV+ on April 12, 2024.^{[37][38][39]} The film's marketing campaign cost \$80 million, of which Universal paid half. According to *Deadline Hollywood*, Universal "collects back what it's owed in marketing from the box office before it collects an 8% distribution fee."^[35]

Reception

Box office

Argylle grossed \$45.2 million in the United States and Canada, and \$50.9 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$96.1 million.^[3] *Variety* noted that for a traditional studio release, the film would need to gross around \$500 million worldwide to break even.^[20]

In the United States and Canada, *Argylle* was projected to gross \$15–20 million from 3,605 theaters in its opening weekend.^[5] The film made \$6.4 million on its first day, including \$1.7 million from Thursday night previews.^[40] It went on to debut to \$17.5 million, topping the box office, though *The Hollywood Reporter* noted that "if legacy Hollywood studios released a \$200 million movie with results like these, they would be skewered" and questioned whether Apple could continue to release \$200 million films without better box office returns.^{[35][6]} In its second weekend the film dropped 63% to \$6.5 million, remaining in first place of a "moribund box office" weekend.^[41] *Variety* called its first two weeks gross "dismal".^[42] The film made \$4.7 million in its third weekend, finishing behind newcomers *Bob Marley: One Love* and *Madame Web*.^[2]

Critical response

On the [review aggregator](#) website [Rotten Tomatoes](#), 33% of 290 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 4.9/10. The website's consensus reads: "*Argylle* gets some mileage out of its silly, energetic spin on the spy thriller, but ultimately wears out its welcome with a convoluted plot and overlong runtime."^[43] [Metacritic](#), which uses a [weighted average](#), assigned the film a score of 35 out of 100, based on 56 critics, indicating "generally unfavorable" reviews.^[44] Audiences surveyed by [CinemaScore](#) gave the film an average grade of "C+" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled by [PostTrak](#) gave it an 3 out of 5 stars.^[35]

Forbes's Erik Kain noted that, in general, reviews criticized the film's length, number of [plot twists](#), and use of [CGI](#) in action sequences, labeling it a [parody](#) of the genre.^[45] Brennan Klein of *Screen Rant* summarized the reviews as mixed, noting the polarized reception of the "[meta](#)" elements, while the cast received praise.^[46] [Peter Bradshaw](#) of *The Guardian* gave the film one star out of five and called it an "unbearably self-satisfied smirk of a spy caper from Matthew Vaughn";^[47] various other reviews were also very

negative.^[48] Jackson Weaver of CBC News conceded that the "movie's meta-backstory is much more interesting than its actual storyline, by a lot",^[49] while the Los Angeles Times's Katie Walsh, also quite critical of the film, mentioned its "amusing premise" and enjoyed Rockwell's presence.^[50]

Future

Sequels

In July 2021, it was announced that *Argylle* was intended to be first of a franchise of at least three films.^[8] In March 2022, it was confirmed that the first film will be followed by two sequels to complete a film trilogy.^[51] In October 2023, Vaughn confirmed plans to develop sequels, while stating that the second film would be a prequel, as "the first *Argylle* novel",^[52] exploring the origins of Argylle becoming a spy; while the third movie would follow additional installments.^[53] On the film's release, its mid-credits scene, after displaying a younger Argylle (portrayed by Louis Partridge) being recruited by Kingsman, displays a note onscreen stating, "'*Argylle: Book One – The Movie*' coming soon".^[54] In February 2024, Vaughn confirmed that the prequel installment is being developed with Louis Partridge in the starring role, while explaining that the actor will star as the real Argylle (as portrayed by Cavill) in his formative years.^[55]

Shared universe

In October 2023, Matthew Vaughn announced his plans to create a larger spy-themed universe through his Marv Studios, with that universe being interconnected and comprising the Kingsman franchise, the *Argylle* films, and an unnamed third franchise. His intention was to have the new upcoming films in each series culminate in a crossover in the future.^[52]

Notes

- a. Attributed to multiple references:^{[2][3][4][5][6]}
- b. The device is known as the "Masterkey" or the "Masterfile" in different versions of the film. This article uses "Masterkey".

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External links

- [Official website \(<https://www.argyllemovie.com/>\)](https://www.argyllemovie.com/) 
 - *Argylle* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt15009428/>) at [IMDb](#)
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