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They Cloned Tyrone

They Cloned Tyrone is a 2023 American science fiction comedy mystery film directed by Juel Taylor, in his feature film directorial debut, from a screenplay he wrote with Tony Rettenmaier. It stars John Boyega, Teyonah Parris, and Jamie Foxx (who also serves as a producer) as an unlikely trio uncovering a shadow government cloning conspiracy. David Alan Grier and Kiefer Sutherland also appear in supporting roles.

They Cloned Tyrone premiered at the American Black Film Festival on June 14, 2023. It was released in limited theaters on July 14, 2023, before being released by Netflix on July 21. The film received positive reviews from critics. ^[1]

Plot

Fontaine is a drug dealer in a suburban neighborhood called the Glen. His mother stays in her room all day and rarely speaks to Fontaine. He still mourns the death of his younger brother. Slick Charles, one of Fontaine's customers, initiates a fight with one of his sex workers, Yo-Yo. Fontaine goes to confront Slick Charles who owes Fontaine money and encounters Yo-Yo on the way. Fontaine is able to get some of the money from Slick but once he enters his car, he is killed by an opposing drug dealer named Isaac who blocks in his car.

The next morning, Slick is shocked when Fontaine shows up for the money once again, somehow alive and without any recollections of the previous night's events. The two find Yo-Yo to confirm Slick's claims of his death, confusing Fontaine. He remembers a man, bleeding from a gunshot, was kidnapped by a black SUV, which is now parked outside of a trap house. Fontaine, Slick and Yo-Yo enters the house to investigate.

They discover an elevator leading to an underground lab. Inside, a white scientist with an afro tells them that the operation has gone widespread. Slick snorts a mysterious white substance he thinks is cocaine, but ends up laughing and accidentally killing the scientist after Yo-Yo causes a small explosion. Before they leave, the trio discovers a corpse lying on a table, identical to Fontaine.

The next morning, Fontaine breaks into the house again, only to find that the entrance to the lab has disappeared. At a fried chicken restaurant, the diners laugh, making Slick realize that the fried

They Cloned Tyrone



Release poster

Directed by	<u>Juel Taylor</u>
Written by	Tony Rettenmaier Juel Taylor
Produced by	Charles D. King Stephen "Dr." Love Tony Rettenmaier Juel Taylor <u>Jamie Foxx</u> Datari Turner
Starring	<u>John Boyega</u> <u>Teyonah Parris</u> Jamie Foxx
Cinematography	Ken Seng
Edited by	Saira Haider
Music by	Desmond Murray

chicken contains the same substance that he consumed previously. Yo-Yo seduces the restaurant manager, who resembles the scientist Slick killed. She discovers that the entirety of the Glen is being surveilled and recorded and that the substance is also being used in grape drinks and hair products. Through some hidden messages from an alcoholic Fontaine encounters daily, they discover a Black church where the group becomes unsettled by lyrics that the churchgoers sing, due to the grape drink's influence. After the service, the group discovers an elevator in the altar.

They discover that the lab facility spans the entire Glen area and witness Black people being subject to disturbing behavioral experiments. They find that the lab has clones of many but not all Glen residents, including Fontaine and Slick Charles. They watch the predominantly white, male scientists control the clones through songs and visual stimulation. They exit through a strip club after Fontaine sets off an alarm. The DJ brainwashes the clubgoers with a song and forces them to chase the trio. A white man named Nixon and a Fontaine clone named Chester show up to halt the clubgoers.

Nixon reveals that scientists conduct experiments on impoverished, predominantly Black populations, including the Glen, to allow the operation to go unnoticed and supposedly achieve peace in America. Nixon uses a trigger word, causing the entire crowd to follow his commands with the exception of Yo-Yo. Nixon tells Fontaine to put a pistol in his mouth, which he does. Yo-Yo pleads for her life, and Nixon uses another trigger word to release them from their hypnotic state. The entire crowd was conscious the entire time, unable to control their actions. Despite the fact that Yo-Yo was an unaffected witness, Nixon still threatens to use it on the crowd again if they don't stop their investigation.

Fontaine falls deeper into a state of despair after discovering that his mother, whom he had never actually seen, was just a voice on a tape recorder. Yo-Yo decides to take matters into her own hands. However, her identity is exposed and Nixon kidnaps her. Fontaine, Isaac and Slick devise a plan with Slick and Isaac to rescue Yo-Yo, faking his death to sneak into the lab undetected. Fontaine lets Slick and Isaac in to storm the lab with numerous residents of the Glen. They free the Black people being experimented on, including the clones, while Yo-Yo frees herself and finds Slick.

Chester overpowers and takes Fontaine him to an older version of himself, the original Fontaine. He explains that he is helping scientists create "peace" by whitewashing black people into white people, through mind control and generational breeding. Fontaine's little brother's racially-motivated murder by a police officer prompted him to start making the clones. After the original Fontaine claims the country would be better with assimilation than annihilation, Fontaine uses Nixon's trigger word on Chester and has him shoot the original. Meanwhile, Yo-Yo stalls Nixon from killing her before Slick shoots him in the head.

The facility entrance to the church opens, spilling clones out to the public, exposing the country's secret operation. After Yo-Yo announces her retirement from her job, the trio decides to head to Memphis, to further expose and stop the operation.

	Pierre Charles
Production company	MACRO Media
Distributed by	<u>Netflix</u>
Release dates	June 14, 2023 (<u>ABFF</u>) July 14, 2023 (United States) July 21, 2023 (Netflix)
Running time	119 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English

Meanwhile, in Los Angeles, a man named Tyrone is identical to Fontaine and living the same lifestyle as Fontaine. With his friends, he watches as one of Fontaine's clones appears on TV.

Cast

- John Boyega as Fontaine / Old Fontaine / Chester / Tyrone
- Teyonah Parris as Yo-Yo
- Jamie Foxx as Slick Charles
- Kiefer Sutherland as Nixon
- David Alan Grier as The Preacher
- J. Alphonse Nicholson as Isaac
- Tamberla Perry as Biddy
- Eric Robinson Jr. as Big Moss

Production

Development on the film began in February 2019 when the screenplay was optioned from The Black List of popular but un-produced scripts.^[2] It was conceived as a "genre-bending" homage to the Blaxploitation films of 1970s, featuring elements of satire, mystery, horror, science fiction, and absurdist humor.^[3]

In February 2019, it was announced that Brian Tyree Henry was in negotiations to star in the film, with Taylor set to direct under the production company MACRO Media.^[4] Later that year in October, John Boyega joined the cast, replacing Henry in the lead role, with production expected to begin in early 2020 and Netflix set to distribute.^[5] Jamie Foxx and Teyonah Parris joined the cast in September 2020.^[6]

Principal photography began in November 2020, in Atlanta, Georgia.^{[7][8]} Filming took place in Blackhall Studios and wrapped in April 2021.^[9] Taylor cited *They Live*, *Groundhog Day*, *It Follows*, and *Napoleon Dynamite* as influences on the film.^[10]

Music

Release

They Cloned Tyrone premiered at the 27th American Black Film Festival (ABFF) on June 14, 2023.^{[11][12]} It also screened at the 49th Newark Black Film Festival (NBFF) on July 12, 2023.^[13] The film began a limited theatrical release on July 14, 2023, before streaming on Netflix a week later (July 21, 2023).^{[14][15]}

Marketing

On February 3, 2022, Foxx shared an image of the lead cast in-costume on the set of *They Cloned Tyrone*.^[16] CinemaBlend complimented the "stylish and cool" aesthetic of the costuming, writing: "To say their looks were interesting would be an understatement. Foxx's asymmetrical high-top alone is a statement. Each character's personality comes out through their style. Jamie Foxx personifies the high-end slick talker with his high-top, purple felt suit, and faux leather jacket. Teyonah Parris comes off as a Blaxploitation star mixed with futurism with her natural hair, faux fur yellow coat, leopard print pants, and thigh-high boots. John Boyega goes full grimy hustler in his gold tooth and striped track pants with a green hoodie and padded jacket".^[16]

A teaser trailer for the film was released, on September 24, 2022, during Netflix's global fan event Tudum.^[17] It featured a rendition of the Gap Band's 1982 song "You Dropped a Bomb on Me".^[18] *Deadline* wrote that the trailer "vibes a stylized modern yet 1970s feel".^[19] Erin Brady of *Film* liked the premise and characters introduced in the trailer and remarked: "If this isn't sci-fi throwback pulp, then what is?"^[20] Jeremy Fuster of *TheWrap* compared the film's conspiracy-theorist plot to the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study, a government-funded medical study done on Black subjects in Tuskegee, Alabama between 1932 and 1972.^[21]

Netflix released a trio of character posters on June 12, 2023, featuring the lead cast in stylized silhouettes.^[22] Cameron Bonomolo of *ComicBook.com* called them "trippy", while *Collider* speculated that "[the] shrouding of these protagonists in mystery might be a pointed reminder to audiences of the conspiracy that needs solving in the film".^{[23][24]} An official trailer was released the following day. Lengthier in runtime, it featured a rendition of the 1984 single by Rockwell featuring Michael Jackson, "Somebody's Watching Me".^[25] Yasmeen Hamadeh of *Mashable* complimented: "With its high-thrills trailer promising hilarious hijinks and '70s galore, *They Cloned Tyrone* is a must-add to your Netflix watch list".^[26]

In their May 2023 issues, *Empire* and *Entertainment Weekly* published stories on *They Cloned Tyrone*, accompanied by several images from the film.^{[27][28]}

Reception

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 95% of 132 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7.5/10. The website's consensus reads: "*They Cloned Tyrone* is provocative, clever sci-fi with an exceptional cast."^[29] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 74 out of 100, based on 27 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.^[30]

In her review of the film for *The Hollywood Reporter*, Lovia Gyarkye called *They Cloned Tyrone* a "compelling ride" and praised the "sleek" direction, "savvy" score and "reliably funny" cast performances.^[31] In *The Guardian*, Peter Bradshaw described it as an "odd, slightly baffling but likable piece of work [...] with its own peculiarly unexpected innocence and charm" and commended the "powerhouse performances" from the lead cast.^[32] Amon Warmann gave the film rating of 4 out of 5 stars in his review for *Empire* and called it a "stylish, laugh-out-loud blast that has something to say but doesn't sacrifice enjoyment to do so, anchored by a trio of great performances".^[33] Debiparna Chakraborty of *Far Out* magazine gave the film a rating of 3.5/5, writing: "While it may exhibit moments of unevenness, *They Cloned Tyrone* still makes for an entertaining ride with the potential to become a cult favourite."^[34]

In *IndieWire*, Christian Zilko gave the film a B+ grade, noting similarities between the film and *Sorry to Bother You* in their "genre-bending social satire" and praising the "infectious" chemistry of the lead cast.^[35] Todd McCarthy of *Deadline* admired the cast performances and production design, but found the film never quite reaches its full potential, summarizing: "*They Cloned Tyrone* seems poised to become something that, at least initially, feels fresh, a conjunction of sci-fi and blaxploitation that, 50 years after the latter genre's heyday, could possibly give it a welcome recharge, if not a full-bodied return. But, as ready as the audience might be to be transported to hitherto unvisited districts of the genre's potential universe, *Tyrone* never quite gets there".^[36] Owen Gleiberman of *Variety* wrote that despite its "good set-up", "the film is too sketchy and conceptual to work as a bad-dream thriller".^[37]

In an essay about the new wave of Black, satirical, absurdist films, Maya Phillips in *The New York Times* criticised *Get Out* and *American Fiction* for being limited by the way they "aimed at white liberal audiences so they can feel in on the joke. Black audiences, on the other hand, are left with a simplified representation of their race that doesn't dare be too controversial." Phillips contrasted *They Cloned Tyrone* favorably with those movies and suggested the film succeeds because it is "not just about the way characters speak or the exaggerated depictions of their lives; it's also about their internal conflicts, whether they choose to submit to a racist narrative."^[38]

Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<u>Black Reel Awards</u>	January 16, 2024	Outstanding Lead Performance	John Boyega	Nominated	[39]
		Outstanding Supporting Performance	Jamie Foxx	Nominated	
		Outstanding Screenplay	Juel Taylor and Tony Rettenmaier	Nominated	
		Outstanding Ensemble (Cast Director)	Kim Coleman	Nominated	
		Outstanding Emerging Director	Juel Taylor	Nominated	
		Outstanding Score	Desmond Murray and Pierre Charles	Nominated	
		Outstanding Costume Design	Francine Jamison-Tanchuck	Nominated	
		Outstanding Editing	Saira Haider	Nominated	
<u>Celebration of Cinema & Television</u>	December 4, 2023	Producer Award	Charles D. King	Won	[40]
<u>Gotham Independent Film Awards</u>	November 27, 2023	Outstanding Supporting Performance	<u>Jamie Foxx</u>	Nominated	[41]
<u>NAACP Image Awards</u>	March 16, 2024	Outstanding Motion Picture	<i>They Cloned Tyrone</i>	Nominated	[42]
		Outstanding Directing in a Motion Picture	Juel Taylor	Nominated	
		Outstanding Actor in a Motion Picture	John Boyega	Nominated	
		Outstanding Breakthrough Creative Motion Picture	Juel Taylor	Nominated	
		Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Motion Picture	Jamie Foxx	Nominated	
		Outstanding Ensemble Cast in a Motion Picture	The Cast of <i>They Cloned Tyrone</i>	Nominated	
		Outstanding Writing in a Motion Picture	Juel Taylor and Tony Rettenmaier	Nominated	

		Outstanding Cinematography in a Feature Film	Ken Seng	Nominated	
		Outstanding Stunt Ensemble (TV or Film)	The Stunt of <i>They Cloned Tyrone</i>	Nominated	

See also

- *They Cloned Tyrone* (soundtrack)

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External links

- [Official website \(https://www.theyclonedtyronemovie.com/home/\)](https://www.theyclonedtyronemovie.com/home/) 
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