

Madame Web (film)

Madame Web is a 2024 American superhero film featuring the Marvel Comics character of the same name. Produced by Columbia Pictures and Di Bonaventura Pictures in association with Marvel Entertainment and TSG Entertainment, and distributed by Sony Pictures Releasing, it is the fourth film in Sony's Spider-Man Universe (SSU). Directed by S. J. Clarkson from a screenplay she co-wrote with Claire Parker and the writing team of Matt Sazama and Burk Sharpless, it stars Dakota Johnson in the title role, alongside Sydney Sweeney, Isabela Merced, Celeste O'Connor, Tahar Rahim, Mike Epps, Emma Roberts, and Adam Scott. In the film, the origin story of Cassie Webb (Johnson) is explored as she confronts her past while trying to save three young women (Sweeney, Merced, O'Connor) from Ezekiel Sims (Rahim), who wants to kill them before they become Spider-Women in the future and kill him.

Sony began development on a *Madame Web* film for its shared universe by September 2019, with Sazama and Sharpless writing the script. Clarkson joined as director in May 2020, in her feature film directorial debut, and Johnson was cast in early 2022. Additional castings, particularly for the Spider-Women characters, took place in the following months. Filming began in mid-July 2022 and wrapped before the end of the year, occurring throughout Massachusetts, including Boston, and in New York City and Mexico. Clarkson and Parker's involvement as writers was revealed in November 2023. Johan Söderqvist, a frequent collaborator of Clarkson's, composed the film's score.

Madame Web premiered at the Regency Village Theatre in Westwood, Los Angeles, on February 12, 2024, and was released in the United States on February 14. The film was panned by critics and was a box-office bomb, grossing over \$100 million worldwide against a production budget of \$80–100 million.

Plot

In 1973 in the jungles of Peru, a research team led by Ezekiel Sims and his pregnant colleague Constance Webb discovers an unidentified species of spider with rare healing properties. Ezekiel betrays the team and claims the spider for himself, shooting Constance in a struggle over the spider before leaving

Madame Web



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>S. J. Clarkson</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Matt Sazama</u> <u>Burk Sharpless</u> <u>Claire Parker</u> <u>S. J. Clarkson</u>
Story by	<u>Kerem Sanga</u> <u>Matt Sazama</u> <u>Burk Sharpless</u>
Based on	<u>Marvel Comics</u>
Produced by	<u>Lorenzo di Bonaventura</u>
Starring	<u>Dakota Johnson</u> <u>Sydney Sweeney</u> <u>Isabela Merced</u> <u>Celeste O'Connor</u> <u>Tahar Rahim</u> <u>Mike Epps</u> <u>Emma Roberts</u> <u>Adam Scott</u>

her for dead. An indigenous tribe attempts to save Constance by having the spider bite her, but she dies shortly after giving birth to Cassandra. Thirty years later, Cassandra, going by "Cassie", works as a paramedic in New York City alongside her co-workers Ben Parker and O'Neil. During a dangerous call, Cassie falls into the water and has a near-death experience. Ben revives her, but she begins to experience visions. Initially, she dismisses them as *déjà vu*, but after failing to prevent O'Neil's death, Cassie realizes that she can see into the future.

Ezekiel, who has limited precognition power and enhanced physical abilities, collects information on three teenage girls: Julia Cornwall, Anya Corazon, and Mattie Franklin. His visions lead him to believe that they are destined to kill him. Cassie is also drawn to the same girls and intervenes to stop Ezekiel from ambushing them at Grand Central Terminal. She steals a taxi and takes Julia, Anya, and Mattie out of the city to hide them in a nearby forest. Cassie returns to her apartment and finds Constance's notes, which reveal Ezekiel's identity and the true nature of his powers. Ignoring Cassie's instructions, the girls go to a diner where Ezekiel finds them. After briefly incapacitating Ezekiel by ramming him with the car, Cassie takes the girls back to Queens and they take refuge in Ben's house.

Cassie flies to Peru and tracks down the tribal chief who saved her mother. The chief puts Cassie through a ritual that separates her soul from her body. She experiences a plane of higher consciousness where all living things are connected and where every possible future can be seen. She learns that Constance sought the spider not for fame or money, as she had originally thought, but to save her from having the same fatal hereditary disease that Constance suffered from. Ben's pregnant sister-in-law Mary goes into labor earlier than expected and he takes her to the hospital, along with the girls, who are seen on camera when in the car. Ezekiel intercepts them again, but Cassie rescues the girls in an ambulance and distracts Ezekiel so Ben and Mary can escape. The group lures Ezekiel to a condemned firework factory and sets up traps to disorient him while Cassie calls for a medical evacuation helicopter to fly to their location. Ezekiel destroys the helicopter and separates the girls, then taunts Cassie with Constance's death.

Cassie uses her powers to guide the girls to safety. She sets off the final trap, which fatally crushes Ezekiel. An ignited firework strikes Cassie in the face, blinding her. Cassie is taken to the hospital just as Mary gives birth to her son.^[a] Cassie wakes up to discover that she is now blind and paraplegic due to her injuries. However, her clairvoyance enables her to see fully into the future. Cassie assures the girls that she will mentor them in their future roles when the time comes.

Cast

- Dakota Johnson as Cassandra "Cassie" Webb / Madame Web:
A paramedic in Manhattan who, after an accident, develops psychic abilities as a clairvoyant

Cinematography	<u>Mauro Fiore</u>
Edited by	<u>Leigh Folsom Boyd</u>
Music by	<u>Johan Söderqvist</u>
Production companies	<u>Columbia Pictures</u> ^[1] <u>Di Bonaventura Pictures</u> ^{[1][2]} <u>Marvel Entertainment</u> ^{[1][2]} <u>TSG Entertainment</u> ^[3]
Distributed by	<u>Sony Pictures Releasing</u>
Release dates	February 12, 2024 (<u>Regency Village Theatre</u>) February 14, 2024 (United States)
Running time	116 minutes ^[4]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$80–100 million ^{[5][6][7]}
Box office	\$100.3 million ^[8]

which allow her to see future events within the "spider world", and is a reluctant hero.^{[10][11][12][13]} In the film, Cassie is depicted as an inexperienced clairvoyant in her 30s learning her new powers, in contrast to the comic book version which is a blind and paralyzed elderly woman connected to a life support system and a "fully fledged" clairvoyant. Johnson and director S. J. Clarkson sought to differentiate the film's portrayal from this version while embracing the character traits from the comics.^{[11][14]} Johnson felt Cassie's wit, humor, and abrasiveness were balanced with her compassion, particularly through her forming a "sort of family" with the three young women after not getting along through the film's events.^[14] which stemmed from Cassie being on an "unending, insatiable quest" to save people after she was unable to save her mother.^[13] She was interested in playing a female character whose superpowers stem from her mind, and by the prospect of seeing into the future while understanding the character's past and present, while Clarkson was inspired by the psychological and cerebral aspects of the character, with Cassie questioning her sanity which she battles within herself and attempts to understand.^[11] Clarkson called Cassie a loner and described her as somewhat abrasive, quirky, and "on the outer edges of things", which she compared to the title character of the Marvel Television series *Jessica Jones* (2015–2019).^[15]



The main cast (left to right), Isabela Merced as Anya Corazon, Dakota Johnson as Cassandra Webb / Madame Web, Sydney Sweeney as Julia Cornwall, and Celeste O'Connor as Mattie Franklin, in costume during filming in New York

- Sydney Sweeney as Julia Cornwall: An awkward teenage girl who lives with her father and stepmother following her mother's departure. She is hunted by Sims for being a future Spider-Woman and one of those responsible for his death.^{[11][16]}
- Isabela Merced as Anya Corazon: A teenager forced to live alone after her father's deportation. She is also hunted by Sims for being one of the three future Spider-Women responsible for his death.^{[11][17]}
- Celeste O'Connor as Mattie Franklin: A teenage girl from a wealthy family, but with absent parents. She is one of the three future Spider-Women hunted by Sims.^{[11][17]}
- Tahar Rahim as Ezekiel Sims: A former explorer who searched for a secret tribe in the Amazon rainforest in Peru alongside a research team with Cassie's mother, whom he betrays.^{[18][19]} He gained their enhanced strength and health abilities through a powerful spider, as well as clairvoyance which allows him to see the future and his death, making him obsessively search for his killers.^[18] This leads him to hunt three young women who have the potential to become Spider-Women in the future.^{[18][19]} Clarkson said the character was not afraid to be intense and had a "level of ambiguity" with multiple layers.^[14] He also wears a black suit, styled similar to Spider-Man.^[19]
- Mike Epps as O'Neil: Cassie and Ben's co-worker and friend.^{[20][21]}
- Emma Roberts as Mary Parker: Ben's pregnant sister-in-law.^[22]
- Adam Scott as Ben Parker: Cassie's paramedic partner and friend.^{[22][1]}
- Kerry Bishé as Constance Webb: Cassie's mother and a scientist whose work researching spiders brought her to the Amazon in 1973 in hopes of healing Cassie's muscular disorder.^{[1][23]}
- Zosia Mamet as Amaria: A gifted hacker and Sims's research assistant.^{[24][1]}

- José María Yazpik as Santiago: A member of *Las Arañas*, a secret tribe from the Peruvian jungle with spider-based abilities.^[21]

Also appearing are Kathy-Ann Hart as O'Neil's wife, Susan; Josh Drennen as Julia's father; Yuma Feldman as her half-brother; and Jill Hennessy as a National Security Agency (NSA) agent seduced by Sims.^{[25][26]} An uncredited infant actor portrays Mary's son Peter Parker, whose birth is depicted in the film.^[9]

Production

Development



S. J. Clarkson made her feature film directorial debut with *Madame Web*.

After their work on the Marvel Comics-based film *Morbius* (2022), part of Sony's Spider-Man Universe (SSU), Sony Pictures hired Matt Sazama and Burk Sharpless in September 2019 to write a script centered on the Marvel character Madame Web.^[27] Sony's executive vice president Palak Patel was overseeing the project.^[28] Kerem Sanga had previously written a draft for the film.^[29] In May 2020, S. J. Clarkson was hired to develop and direct Sony's first female-centric Marvel film, which was reported to be *Madame Web*.^{[30][31]} The studio was looking to attach a prominent actress such as Charlize Theron or Amy Adams to the project, before hiring a new writer to further develop the film with her in mind.^[30] After meeting with several "A-listers" for the title role, Sony narrowed their shortlist during December 2021 and January 2022. Dakota Johnson became the frontrunner by the end of 2021, and was in talks to star as Madame Web by early February. Clarkson was confirmed to be directing *Madame Web* at that

time.^[29]

Sydney Sweeney joined the cast in March 2022, alongside Johnson.^[32] Justin Kroll of *Deadline Hollywood* described the project as being "Sony's version of *Doctor Strange*" due to Madame Web's comic book abilities, though he noted that the film could be departing from the source material since the comics version of Madame Web is an elderly woman, named Cassandra Webb, connected to a life-support system that looks like a spider web. Kroll noted because of this that the film reportedly could "turn into something else".^[29] Grant Hermanns of *Screen Rant* noted speculation on whether Johnson was playing Cassandra Webb or the younger Julia Carpenter, who was the second character in the comics to be known as Madame Web.^[33] A month later, Sony gave *Madame Web* a release date of July 7, 2023, and confirmed Johnson and Sweeney would star in the film.^[34] Lorenzo di Bonaventura, who produced the film for Sony through his production company Di Bonaventura Pictures,^{[10][1]} described the film as a thriller and called the titular character's clairvoyance a "tricky skill set" that was not likely to be used for an action film,^[35] with Sweeney believing this approach would differentiate the film from audiences's expectations of other superhero films.^[36] Di Bonaventura explained that Sony decided not to reveal many details about the film ahead of its release because the Madame Web character was not well-known to general audiences.^[35]

Pre-production

Sony Pictures CEO and chairman Tom Rothman said in May 2022 that filming would begin "in the spring",^[37] while Celeste O'Connor joined the cast.^[12] This was followed by the castings of Isabela Merced, Tahar Rahim, and Emma Roberts throughout the following month.^{[38][39][40]} Responding to these

castings, Sabina Graves of *Gizmodo* opined that many of the actresses could be playing "more recognizable" characters from the Spider-Man comics, such as the Spider-Women versions of Jessica Drew and Gwen Stacy, in the film as a "reimagining" of the *Spider-Verse* crossover comic book.^[41] Sweeney and Johnson were preparing for their roles by then, when filming was scheduled to begin in mid-July.^{[42][43][44]} Sweeney completed an athletic assessment test and read comics featuring her character, Julia Carpenter, while Johnson underwent training.^{[36][43]} Mike Epps joined the cast in early July.^[45]

During the casting process, *Deadline Hollywood* described *Madame Web* as an origin story for the titular character.^[12] Sony later described the film as a "standalone origin story" and a "suspense-driven thriller" that diverged from the typical superhero film genre,^[46] while Di Bonaventura said it would present a fresh take on the character and her origin.^[47] Clarkson sought to incorporate a female-led and grounded and gritty tone similar to her work on the *Marvel Television* series *Jessica Jones* (2015–2019), and said she was given creative freedom in making the film.^{[11][15]} Clarkson described the center of the story revolving around Cassie's mother. The film was set in 2003 since the initial scripts, with Clarkson choosing to provide a "timeless" quality to the film by including music from the 1990s and on "the edge of 2003" and featuring vintage clothing. She opted to avoid a post-credits sequence as she felt she "said everything we needed to say".^[48] The script had undergone substantial changes throughout production.^[49] Johnson felt it was important to depict Cassie in a grounded and human reality that audiences could relate to, compared to other superhero films.^[11]

Filming

Principal photography began on July 11, 2022,^{[50][51]} in the Financial District of Boston through July 14, with scenes modeling 2000s New York City,^[51] including Chinatown, Manhattan.^[52] Filming occurred using the working title *Claire*,^[44] with Mauro Fiore serving as cinematographer, after previously doing so for Sony's *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (2021).^{[1][53]} Shortly after filming started, Adam Scott joined the cast,^[54] and the film's release date was delayed to October 6, 2023.^[55] In late July, filming occurred in Allston at Kelton Street.^[52] Zosia Mamet was cast in August.^[56] Filming that month occurred in Chelsea, Massachusetts,^[52] while construction of a set in Andover, Massachusetts had also begun to stand-in for the 4-Star Diner, a comics location,^{[52][57]} and took place at baseball fields in West Andover.^[57] The crew often filmed multiple versions of the same scenes with slightly altered outcomes dependent on Cassie's visions, with Johnson occasionally conferring with Clarkson to deduce which scenes were real and which were set in Cassie's head.^[11] As a result, filming futuristic scene had significantly increased the production workload.^[49] Clairvoyance scenes required careful planning from Clarkson, citing them as the most challenging in her career; she had prepared multiple call sheets and notes when filming. They were often filmed in camera, including the creation of the diopter effect. Scenes filmed with Johnson had to occasionally be done separately as she could not see what was occurring in the direction.^[48]

Filming occurred in Worcester, Massachusetts for precision driving and exterior street shots in mid-September 2022 to last for three days, on various street locations,^{[58][59]} using the working titles *Claire* and *Peru*.^[58] Johnson filmed a day of stunt driving.^[11] At that time, the release was further delayed to February 16, 2024.^[60] Filming was also set to take place in other areas in the South Shore of Massachusetts, including a former hangar of the Naval Air Station South Weymouth.^[44] Filming in Massachusetts, particularly for the Boston unit, lasted for three months until September 2022.^{[44][61]} The production then moved to New York City by October 11,^[62] occurring at Grand Central Terminal,^[63] and Sweeney completed filming her scenes by October 18 after a three and a half-month shoot;^[64] Sweeney worked on the film in Boston for five months.^[36] Filming was completed before the end of the year,^[65] and was

confirmed to have wrapped in mid-January 2023.^[66] Filming also took place in Mexico.^[44] Sony reported the film had a final production budget of \$80 million, though *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Deadline Hollywood* both reported that sources indicated the cost of the film could have been "in the low \$100 million range."^{[6][7]}

Post-production



(From left to right) Tahar Rahim portrays the film's antagonist Ezekiel Sims, while Emma Roberts and Adam Scott play Mary and Ben Parker, all characters associated with Spider-Man in the comics

Sweeney's role was reported in March 2023 as Julia Carpenter,^[67] which was confirmed in May along with Johnson as Cassandra Webb.^[16] Sweeney's character was ultimately named Julia Cornwall.^[11] In July, the film's release was moved forward slightly to February 14, 2024.^[68] The first trailer, released in November 2023, revealed that Merced, O'Connor, and Rahim were respectively portraying Anya Corazon, Mattie Franklin,^[17] and Ezekiel Sims.^{[10][19]} The characters of Carpenter, Corazon, and Franklin were noted for appearing in their Spider-Woman costumes from the comics.^[17] *Spider-Man* comic book writer and Sims's co-creator J. Michael Straczynski said while Sims was the same character he created, he felt the film's interpretation combined elements from Morlun, another Spider-Man villain he co-created in the comics who is associated with the multiverse and the Spider-Verse. Emily Garbutt at *Total Film* noted that the film's version of Sims could see into the future, compared to the comics's version who is a rich businessman who gained similar powers as the character Spider-Man through a ritual, and noted that Morlun could drain the life force of others through physical contact.^{[69][70]} At that time, the film's final writing credits were also revealed: Sazama and Sharpless received credit for the screenplay alongside the writing team of Claire Parker and Clarkson, while credit for the story was attributed to Sanga, Sazama, and Sharpless, with off-screen additional literary credit given to Chris Bremner.^{[1][71][72]} An official premise for the film released then began with the line "Meanwhile, in another universe...". This wording had previously been used in a trailer for Sony's animated film *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018) that was attached to the end of their SSU film *Venom* (2018);^{[46][73][74]} Clarkson later said the Madame Web character existed in a standalone world.^[11]

Journalist Jeff Sneider reported in January 2024 that Sony had performed reshoots for *Madame Web* to remove references to an originally planned 1990s setting of the film. Sneider explained that this original time period was intended to allow for the version of Peter Parker / Spider-Man played by Andrew Garfield in *The Amazing Spider-Man films* (2012–14) exist within the film's continuity, but noted that the character was not planned to appear. Sneider further reported that after Sony decided to instead plan for the version of the character played by Tom Holland in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) *Spider-Man films* (2017–2021) exist within this film's continuity, this timeline needed to be adjusted to align with that character's age,^[75] with the film ultimately set in 2003.^{[11][75]} Sneider also reported that there was potential for the different Spider-Women characters to appear in costume for a single scene in the film, and he believed that younger versions of the Spider-Man characters Mary and Ben Parker would also appear.^[75] Ahead of the

film's release, Clarkson confirmed in early February that those characters were respectively portrayed by Roberts and Scott;^{[76][20][22]} Mary Parker is pregnant in the film, which features an infant version of Peter Parker appear at the end, played by an uncredited infant.^[9] Leigh Folsom Boyd edited the film after previously doing so on *No Way Home*.^{[1][53]} Visual effects were provided by Digital Domain, beloFX, One of Us, and Outpost VFX.^[77]

Music

Johan Söderqvist was revealed in November 2023 as the film's composer, after he previously worked with Clarkson on *Anatomy of a Scandal* (2022).^[78]

Marketing

The first trailer for the film was released on November 15, 2023. While commenting about the trailer, McKinley Franklin at *Variety* described *Madame Web* as a suspense thriller.^[79] Charles Pulliam-Moore at *The Verge* felt the trailer did not give an indication as to what universe the film was set in or why the film's antagonist Ezekiel Sims wore a suit similar to that of the character Spider-Man, and found it weird to see another Marvel-based project from Sony centered on the Spider-Man lore from the comics without featuring the Spider-Man character.^[80] Zoe Guy, writing for *Vulture*, said the trailer provided a lot of details and highlighted its use of "Bury a Friend" by Billie Eilish.^[81] Joshua Rivera of *Polygon* criticized the trailer for focusing its three-minute runtime on explaining Cassandra Webb's powers and appearing as a "run-of-the-mill 2000s thriller" instead of showcasing the "wildly interesting and truly strange" Spider-Man-related characters.^[82] Conversely, Graham Day at *The Escapist* was excited for the film by the trailer and highlighted Sony's unconventional and eccentric style, which he noted had resulted in commentators making various memes surrounding the film. Day compared such moments to similar scenes and responses to Sony's *Venom* (2018) and Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* films, feeling the stunt work in the trailer was fascinating and similar to that of *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012) and *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* (2014), which he believed was under appreciated.^[83] One line of dialogue from the trailer delivered by Johnson, stating: "[he] was in the Amazon with my mom when she was researching spiders right before she died", received particular mockery from commentators, with several memes incorporating the line into other film quotes.^{[84][85]} The line was not included in the final cut of the film.^[86] Ahead of the film's release, Sony pivoted television spots to focus on the film's thriller tone rather than connections to the *Spider-Man* franchise.^[5] The studio spent \$60 million promoting the film, with 75% of the campaign spent on social media advertisements.^[6]

Release

Theatrical

Madame Web premiered at the Regency Village Theatre in Westwood, Los Angeles on February 12, 2024,^[87] and was theatrically released in the United States on February 14,^[68] in IMAX, 4DX, and ScreenX.^{[60][88]} It was previously scheduled for July 7, 2023,^[34] October 6, 2023,^[55] and then on

February 16, 2024.^[60] This was the first film to use the new Columbia Pictures logo commemorating the studio's 100th anniversary, with a computer-generated animated version of the "Lady with the Torch" iconography.^[89]

Home media

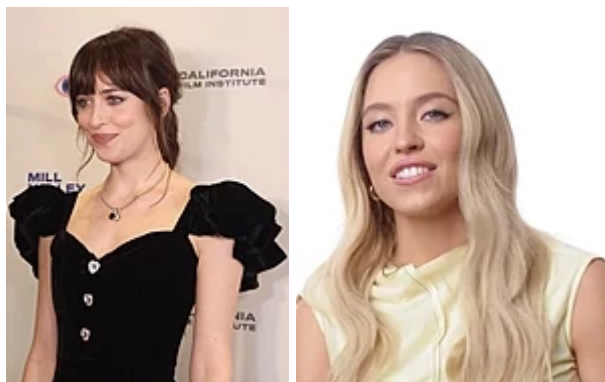
In December 2022, Sony signed a long-term deal with the Canadian-based streaming service Crave for their films starting in April 2023, following the films' theatrical and home media windows. Crave signed for the "pay-one" window streaming rights, which included *Madame Web*.^[90] *Madame Web* was released by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment on digital download on March 15, 2024,^[91] and was released on Ultra HD Blu-ray and Blu-ray on April 30, with SteelBook packaging featuring the suit worn by Johnson's Webb in the film.^[92] *Madame Web* was made available for streaming on Netflix in the United States on May 14, 2024.^[93]

Reception

Box office

Madame Web grossed \$43.8 million in the United States and Canada, and \$56.5 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$100.3 million.^{[8][2]} In the United States and Canada, *Madame Web* was released alongside *Bob Marley: One Love*, and was projected to gross \$20–25 million from 4,013 theaters over its six-day opening timeframe.^[5] In the days leading up to its release, theater chains noted a large number of pre-ordered tickets were cancelled following the reveal of the poor critical reviews.^[7] The film made \$6 million on its first day, \$2.2 million on its second, and \$4.3 million on its third.^{[94][95]} It went on to have a six-day opening of \$25.8 million (including \$15.1 million in its traditional weekend), finishing second behind *One Love*; IMAX screenings accounted for \$3.1 million of the total.^[6] In its second weekend the film made \$6 million (a drop of 61%), finishing in fourth.^[96]

Critical response



The film's performances and dialogue, including a line spoken by Dakota Johnson (left) in the trailer only, received particular criticism and mockery before and after its release; fellow cast member Sydney Sweeney (right) also lampooned the film's poor reception.

Madame Web received negative reviews from critics,^{[97][98]} who panned it as an "embarrassing mess",^{[99][100][101]} and the "worst comic book movie" yet.^[102] On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 11% of 246 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 3.4/10. The website's

consensus reads: "*Madame Web*'s earnest approach to the title character's origin story has a certain appeal, but its predictable plot and uneven execution make for a forgettable superhero adventure."^[103] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 26 out of 100, based on 51 critics, indicating "generally unfavorable" reviews.^[104] Audiences surveyed by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "C+" on an A+ to F scale, while those at PostTrak gave it a 54% overall positive score.^{[94][6]}

Lovia Gyarkye of *The Hollywood Reporter* believed the film did not meet its lowest expectations, calling it "airless" and "stilted". She criticized its screenplay as "mechanical" as well as the reliance on exposition "forcing people to explain themselves" while operating on a "need-to-know basis" for the audience.^[1] Peter Travers of ABC News named the film the worst in Sony's Spider-Man Universe, calling it "God-awful" and "second to none in the dark art of boring you breathless".^[105] *The New York Times*'s Manohla Dargis was critical of the film's story and dialogue, which she called absurd and "snort-out-load risible". She felt the fight sequences were "uninspired", although she did note that Johnson appeared to be "wholly detached from the nonsense swirling around her".^[106] *The Guardian*'s Benjamin Lee, Kevin Maher of *The Times*, and *The Daily Telegraph*'s Robbie Collin each gave the film one out of five stars. Lee felt it was "dumb and schlocky" and comparable to some of the worst superhero films made, reiterating criticisms of the dialogue as "unfunny" and "inelegant" and said the action sequences were "uninvolving". He also negatively compared the visual effects to that of "lousy network TV". Maher deemed the film "sheer mind-boggling awfulness" and declared it represented the "death of the superhero genre, the burning of the superhero genre to the ground and then the returning in the middle of the night to piss on the superhero genre's ashes". Likewise, Collin described the film as a "two-hour explosion in a boringness factory, in which the forces of dullness and stupidity combine in new and infinitely perturbing ways".^{[107][108][109]}

In a negative review for *Variety*, Peter Debruge criticized the plot of Cassie "babysitting the three young ladies" for the majority of the film and called out the "less-than-sly nods to year-2003 consumerism" with the product placement of a vintage Pepsi brand, a classic advertisement for Calvin Klein, and a table dance played to the Britney Spears song "Toxic". He concluded that *Madame Web* felt like an "extended soda commercial" combined with a "teaser trailer for still more spinoffs", and deemed the film's potential franchise as dead on arrival.^[3] Conversely, Sam Adams of *Slate* said he "enjoyed the hell out of it" for being a "travesty", "disaster", and a "blight on the history of superheroes and cinema itself". He described it as "marginally competent at its best" and at its worst as "an incoherent mishmash populated by slumming movie stars who make little effort to disguise the dawning realization that they've made a terrible mistake".^[110] *The Washington Post*'s Michael O'Sullivan gave it two-and-a-half stars out of four, saying that it "is no blockbuster, but in its own quiet way, it manages to break down a few barriers",^[111] while Charles Pulliam-Moore of *The Verge* found the film "surprisingly committed to transporting you back to 2003—a golden age for comic book movies that were aggressively mid or worse".^[112]

Some critics compared the film to *Morbius*, as both films became satirical "meme fodder" and received media attention despite low critic ratings,^[113] while Pamela McClintock and James Hibberd of *The Hollywood Reporter* and Callie Holtermann of *The New York Times* noted that the film had been regarded by some commentators as a "future cult classic" and a "camp classic".^{[7][114][115]} Particular mockery was directed toward the dialogue from the film's trailer that was not included in the final film,^[116] with John Mulaney referencing the line while presenting at the 96th Academy Awards shortly after the film's release,^{[117][115]} while Sweeney mocked the film's performance in her opening monologue for the 49th

season of *Saturday Night Live* (2024).^[118] Filmmaker Mike Flanagan referenced Nicole Kidman's promotional monologue for AMC Theatres, which had received similar media attention, in his review of the film and used tags criticizing elements of the film, such as the automated dialogue replacement (ADR).^[119]

Future

Sony had reportedly planned for *Madame Web* to be the first film in a potential new franchise, but following the film's low opening weekend box office, these plans were reportedly abandoned. *The Hollywood Reporter* stated that while Sony was willing to take risks with their superhero films—with *Madame Web* avoiding the typical superhero genre tropes—the studio also wanted "home runs", with executives at Sony said to be in a "gloomy" mood after the film's poor performance. The report noted that the superhero genre had been in a transition period and that the future reception of their franchise could change depending on whether the next SSU film that was then scheduled for release, *Kraven the Hunter*, were successful.^[7] Dakota Johnson was not surprised by the film's reception, and she felt it was unlikely that she would make another superhero film after *Madame Web*, believing that she did not "make sense in that world".^[120]

See also

- List of comic-based films directed by women

Notes

- Identified off-screen as Peter Parker.^[9]

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External links

- Official website (<https://www.madamewebmovie.net/>) 
- Madame Web* (<https://www.sonypictures.com/movies/madameweb>) at Sony Pictures Entertainment
- Madame Web* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11057302/>) at IMDb

- *Madame Web* (<https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v734593>) at [AllMovie](#)
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