

Gladiator II: Back To the Colosseum [B2]

Ridley Scott firma il sequel del suo stesso successo, con l'irlandese Paul Mescal nel ruolo dello schiavo che cerca di liberarsi combattendo nel colosseo.

Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* became a [box-office](#) sensation and one of the most celebrated films of 2000. It won five Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Actor for New Zealander Russell Crowe as the Roman general-turned-gladiator Maximus Decimus Meridius. Nearly a quarter of a century later, the saga continues with a highly-anticipated sequel that has been in development since at least 2003.

THE PLOT

The new story picks up with Lucius, son of Rome's former emperor Lucius Verus I and grandson of Marcus Aurelius. Having lost touch with his mother, Lucius leads a peaceful life with his family in Numidia, an ancient kingdom on the north coast of Africa the [boundaries](#) of which corresponded roughly to those of modern western Tunisia and eastern Algeria. That is until Roman soldiers, commanded by General Marcus Acacius, invade the region. Lucius, played by Irish actor Paul Mescal, is then captured and forced to fight as a gladiator. *Gladiator II* is set to resolve one of the [lingering](#) questions from the first film: is Lucius (played in the first film by twelve-year-old Spencer Treat Clark) the son of a former emperor, or the result of a secret affair between Maximus and Lucilla?

THE LEAD

Twenty-eight-year-old Mescal had his [breakthrough](#) in 2020 when he won a [BAFTA](#) award for Best Actor for his performance in the miniseries *Normal People*. Based on the novel by Sally Rooney, the series [resonated with](#) the public and firmly established Mescal as an [up-and-coming](#) actor. He continued to earn [praise](#) and [accolades](#) for his roles in enigmatic movies

such as *The Lost Daughter* and *Aftersun*. During the promotion for *Gladiator II*, Mescal shared his reaction to the news that he had [landed](#) a role that was very different from the ones he had played before. **Paul Mescal (Irish accent):** I was walking to the theatre, I was doing A [Streetcar](#) Named Desire in London. I was walking through Islington to get down to the theatre and my agents called me. It was kind of one of those things where it feels like everything goes into slow motion where it's like I had my earphones in and I was getting this news that I knew would change the course of my life. But you're in this [weird bubble](#) where nobody else has a [clue](#) that *Gladiator II* even exists at this point. And then I think I, like, [blacked out](#) in my head. I was like, well, I can't really remember the rest of that. There's just a lot of information to absorb.

A BALANCING ACT

Mescal was a fan of *Gladiator* as a child. Taking part in the epic historical action film sequel feels almost [surreal](#), says the actor. **Paul Mescal:** It's kind of a [weird](#) thing to try and disassociate yourself from being a fan of what this film represents, but also to be in it is a [weird](#) psychological balancing act. To be sat here talking to you about the sequel to one of the most popular films in recent memory is something that I'm still [pinching](#) myself about. I've seen the film and I'm incredibly, incredibly excited. So, fingers crossed people go out and watch it.

CINEMATIC

With streaming still popular, it takes a visually-spectacular adventure movie to draw audiences to the big screen. Mescal believes *Gladiator II* has what it takes to capture the magic of cinema. He has acted in theatre as well as television, but this is his first project set in such a distinctive historical period, presenting a new challenge. **Paul Mescal:** I've never done a [period piece](#) like this before and to kind of [step into](#) a world that is already so iconic and kind of an aesthetic that is so iconic is both incredibly exciting and incredibly [daunting](#) at the same time. It's definitely something that I'm excited to show an audience in terms of a totally different side to myself as a [performer](#) and

also just on that scale... The cinema for me is one of the most special places in the world, and films like this really, really [thrive](#) in that environment.

NEW CHARACTERS

Although it is a sequel, *Gladiator II* largely introduces new characters, as Russell Crowe's character, Maximus, died at the end of the first film. Connie Nielsen [reprises](#) her role as Lucilla, Lucius' mother, but in the sequel she is one of the few familiar faces. Denzel Washington [takes on](#) a key role as Macrinus, a former slave who mentors Lucius, while Chilean-American actor Pedro Pascal, known for his roles in *The Last of Us* and *Game of Thrones*, appears as Marcus Acacius, a Roman general and Lucius' enemy. As an admirer of Russell Crowe, who won the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role as Maximus, Mescal [has big shoes to fill](#) but ultimately his goal is to impress the spectators, and he hopes that this sequel also lives up to the expectations of those who loved the first film. **Paul Mescal:** I hope he enjoys it. I hold his performance in... like, very [dearly](#). But more so than that, we've always got to remember that these films are for an audience, they're not for the people within it. It's our job that we love doing, but ultimately you're providing a service and a film for an audience to enjoy. So as much as I hope that the people who hold this film very [dearly](#) on a personal level [enjoy it], it is ultimately for the people who go and spend their money on a ticket.

PHYSICAL TRAINING

A significant part of Mescal's preparation for the role of Lucius involved intense physical training, similar to that which actors [undergo](#) for major action films like superhero movies. However, he notes that unlike in similar films, this physical training carried a sense of historical significance. **Paul Mescal:** You want to play someone that is capable of inflicting damage and survive in this world that's brutal to the extreme. It was honestly just a lot of weight-lifting and then the closer we got to filming, we put in more cardio.

HOW REAL IS GLADIATOR?

Gladiator movies often suggest that gladiators were treated similarly to modern-day athletes, but in reality, they were considered [lowly](#) and merely provided entertainment. They certainly were not celebrities, nor did spectators care about their lives outside the arena. The main character in Gladiator, Maximus Decimus Meridius, never existed. Ridley Scott's film is fictional and takes many creative liberties, though it is [loosely](#) inspired by real historical figures and events. For example, the emperor in the film, Marcus Aurelius (played by Richard Harris), was a historical ruler of Rome and, much like in the film, was generally considered a good and just leader. His son, Commodus (played by Joaquin Phoenix) was less likeable, as the film portrays. There is no historical consensus on whether Commodus murdered his father. While there is some ambiguity, the historically-accepted account is that Marcus Aurelius died of the [plague](#), though some mystery still surrounds his death. Gladiator chose the more sensationalist storyline of patricide.

Glossary

- **accolades** = riconoscimenti
- **clue** = idea
- **blacked out** = avere un black out, perdere i sensi
- **pinching** = pizzicare
- **has big shoes to fill** = trovarsi di fronte a una grande sfida
- **dearly** = avere a cuore
- **breakthrough** = svolta, passi avanti
- **resonated with** = trovare il favore di
- **loosely** = liberamente
- **bubble** = bolla
- **BAFTA** = organizzazione cinematografica (British Academy of Film and Television Arts)
- **up-and-coming** = emergente
- **period piece** = opera d'epoca
- **step into** = entrare
- **reprises** = riprendere
- **lingering** = persistenti
- **weird** = strana
- **surreal** = surreale
- **daunting** = spaventoso, intimoriente
- **performer** = interprete
- **box-office** = botteghino
- **landed** = ottenere
- **thrive** = prosperare
- **undergo** = sottoporsi
- **Streetcar** = tram
- **takes on** = assumere
- **boundaries** = confini
- **praise** = elogi
- **lowly** = modesto
- **plague** = peste