

= Monsters (2010 film) =

Monsters is a 2010 British science fiction monster film written and directed by Gareth Edwards in his feature film directorial debut . Edwards also served as the cinematographer , production designer , and visual effects artist . Monsters takes place years after a NASA probe crash in Mexico which led to the sudden appearance of giant tentacled monsters . It follows Andrew Kaulder (played by Scoot McNairy) , an American photojournalist tasked with escorting his employer 's daughter Samantha Wynden (played by Whitney Able) back to the U.S. by crossing through Mexico 's " Infected Zone " where the creatures reside .

Edwards conceived the idea for the film after seeing fishermen attempt to bring a creature in with a net , and imagining a monster inside . He pitched the idea to Vertigo Films , who suggested he watch *In Search of a Midnight Kiss* , a low @-@ budget film starring Scoot McNairy . Edwards cast McNairy and Whitney Able in the lead roles . Principal photography lasted three weeks and had a production crew of six people . Filming took place in five countries , and many locations were used without permission . Most of the extras were people who were at these locations during filming and were persuaded to act in it ; all of their dialogue was improvised , and Edwards provided outlines of the primary plot points .

Monsters premiered at South by Southwest on 13 March 2010 . Hours later , Magnet Releasing acquired the rights to distribute it in North America . It had a limited release there , beginning on 29 October 2010 , followed by a theatrical release in the United Kingdom on 3 December 2010 . The film received generally positive reviews and was a box office success , grossing US \$ 4 @. @ 2 million against a budget of less than \$ 500 @, @ 000 . Monsters : Dark Continent , a sequel , was released in the UK on 1 May 2015 .

= = Plot = =

After a NASA deep @-@ space probe (sent to verify the existence of extraterrestrial life within the solar system) crash lands in Mexico , extraterrestrial life forms spread throughout the Mexico ? United States border region , leading to the quarantine of the northern half of Mexico . U.S. and Mexican troops battle to contain the creatures , and a wall stretching along the American border ostensibly keeps the U.S. protected .

American photojournalist Andrew Kaulder (Scoot McNairy) receives a call from his employer , who tasks Andrew with finding his daughter , Samantha Wynden (Whitney Able) , and escorting her back to the U.S. Andrew locates Samantha in a Mexican hospital and the pair board a train , until learning the tracks ahead have been damaged . They discover that if they do not leave the country within a few days , sea and air travel will be blocked for six months . Andrew and Samantha decide to hitchhike their way to the coast .

Andrew buys Samantha an expensive ferry ticket for the next morning . After enjoying the local nightlife together , Andrew has sex with a local girl who steals their passports . Unable to board the ferry , Samantha is forced to barter her engagement ring for passage through the quarantine zone .

They travel by riverboat until being transferred to a group of armed escorts who are to lead them overland to the Mexico ? US border . The convoy is attacked by the creatures . Andrew and Samantha escape , but none of the guards survive . Continuing on , they discover the bodies of dead travellers and bond at the top of an ancient pyramid in sight of the US border wall . By the time they reach the border , the creatures have broken through . They travel through a ghost town in Texas , find an abandoned gas station with power and call the army for help .

While waiting for help to arrive , they make phone calls to their respective families . A lone creature silently approaches the station . Hiding , Samantha observes several tentacles exploring the inside of the store , seemingly soaking up a television 's light . Samantha quickly unplugs the television and the creature loses interest . Another creature appears , and they communicate with one another and mate via light impulses . The creatures leave as the military arrives . Samantha and Andrew kiss before they are rushed into different vehicles . The chronological ending takes place at the beginning of the film , filmed in green night vision sight , when the military rescue team is attacked

by a single creature .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

While attending university in 1996 , Edwards made a short monster movie set in suburbia . He initially wanted to expand on that idea , but after the release of War of the Worlds , he believed it was " not going to be special anymore " . Considering that the film would have to be low @-@ budget , Edwards decided to embrace the found footage style of The Blair Witch Project , and mix that element with his original concept . After learning about Cloverfield 's similar premise , he abandoned this idea and moved on to a concept where a " war [is] going on somewhere on the other side of the world , and no one cares " .

Edwards conceived the film while watching some fishermen struggling to haul in their net and imagining a monster inside of it . He had the idea to make a monster movie set " years after most other monster movies end , when people aren 't running and screaming , but life is going on " and " where a giant , dead sea monster is considered completely normal " .

= = = Pre @-@ production = = =

Edwards pitched his idea to Vertigo Films , where producer James Richardson asked him to watch In Search of a Midnight Kiss for an example of low @-@ budget filmmaking . It starred Scoot McNairy and had been made for \$ 15 @,@ 000 . Edwards was impressed by McNairy but wanted a real couple to portray the lead characters . McNairy sent Edwards a picture of his then @-@ girlfriend , actress Whitney Able , who Edwards initially thought was " too good @-@ looking " . He changed his mind after meeting them and cast them both .

= = = Filming = = =

The film was written and directed by Gareth Edwards , while Allan Niblo and James Richardson of Vertigo Films served as producers . Edwards did not storyboard or script the film , but wrote a treatment of the story and outlines that detailed specifics points that needed to be hit in dialogue . The filming equipment cost approximately \$ 15 @,@ 000 , and the production budget came in " way under " \$ 500 @,@ 000 . The film was able to be made on such a low budget largely due to the production using consumer grade prosumer level equipment instead of professional paraphernalia . For instance , the film was shot using digital video cameras rather than the more expensive 35mm film and was edited on a laptop computer . Many of the locations in the film were used without permission , and most of the extras were people who were already at the locations . As the extras were non @-@ actors who were persuaded to be in the film , their actions were improvised .

The film was shot in Belize , Mexico , Guatemala , Costa Rica , and the United States over three weeks . For about 90 % of the principal photography , the crew consisted of seven people transported in one van : Edwards , Able , McNairy , sound operator Ian MacLagan , line producer Jim Spencer , Mexican fixer Verity Oswin , and a driver .

= = = Editing and effects = = =

Every night after shooting , editor Colin Goudie and his assistant Justin Hall would download the footage so the memory sticks could be cleared and ready for the next day . While new footage was being captured , the previously filmed footage was edited at the production team 's hotel . After filming concluded , the crew had over 100 hours of footage . The original cut was over four hours long but was trimmed to 94 minutes after eight months of editing . Edwards originally had the ending of the film both at the beginning and the end . He and the film 's producers disagreed about the

placement , so he decided to put the chronological ending of the film at the beginning and end the film immediately after Andrew and Samantha kiss .

Edwards created the visual effects himself using off @-@ the @-@ shelf Adobe software , ZBrush , and Autodesk 3ds Max . He had five months to create all 250 visual effects shots , a process he undertook in his bedroom . He produced two shots a day until he reached the first creature shot , when " suddenly two months went by and [he] still hadn 't finished a single creature shot " ; Edwards stated that the creatures ' visual effects were the most challenging element of production . Due to time constraints , the sound effects had to be produced before the visual effects .

= = Release = =

Monsters premiered at the South by Southwest Film Festival on 13 March 2010 . In May , the film was screened at the Cannes Film Market . It also screened as part of the 64th Edinburgh International Film Festival on 18 June 2010 , and screened twice at the Los Angeles Film Festival on 23 and 26 June . The film was first released in Russia on 30 September 2010 . Monsters later released in the United States on 29 October , in Canada on 5 November , and the United Kingdom on 3 December . In the weeks leading up to the UK release , a marketing campaign using social network Foursquare was announced . Vue Entertainment and Cineworld Cinemas set up ' infected locations ' which gave users access to exclusive Monsters content and the chance to win random on @-@ the @-@ spot prizes .

= = = Box office = = =

Hours after the film 's screening at South by Southwest , Magnet Releasing acquired the distribution rights in the United States . Tom Quinn , an executive at Magnet , stated that they " were blown away by Monsters " and were " thrilled to bring his vision to American audiences . " Shortly after , D Films acquired the rights to distribute the film in Canada . Monsters was released in 19 countries between September 2010 and December 2011 . It grossed \$ 4 @. @ 2 million from worldwide ticket sales , earning over \$ 1 million in the United Kingdom and Russia and over \$ 100 @, @ 000 in Mexico , France , the United States , Australia , Germany , Spain , Poland , and Turkey .

= = = = United Kingdom = = = =

The film was released in the United Kingdom on 3 December 2010 . On its opening weekend , Monsters grossed \$ 550 @, @ 110 in 164 theatres , averaging \$ 3 @, @ 354 per theatre . The following weekend , the film dropped to 153 and grossed \$ 244 @, @ 607 , a 55 @. @ 5 % decrease , averaging \$ 1 @, @ 599 . Over its three subsequent weekends , the film grossed \$ 99 @, @ 891 . The film concluded its five @-@ week run on 2 January 2011 ; the gross was \$ 1 @, @ 442 @, @ 633 .

= = = = North America = = = =

The film was released in North America on 29 October 2010 . On its opening weekend , Monsters grossed \$ 20 @, @ 508 in three theatres , for an average of \$ 6 @, @ 836 per theatre . The following weekend , the film screened in 13 theatres and grossed an additional \$ 28 @, @ 590 . In its third weekend , the film expanded to 25 theatres and grossed \$ 48 @, @ 680 , averaging \$ 1 @, @ 947 per theatre . Over its six subsequent weekends , the film grossed an additional \$ 60 @, @ 141 . On 26 December 2010 , the film concluded its nine @-@ week run with a gross of \$ 237 @, @ 301 .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Monsters received generally positive reviews from critics . The review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes reported a 72 % approval rating and an average rating of 7 @. @ 1 / 10 based on 147 reviews . The site 's consensus states : " It doesn 't quite live up to its intriguing premise , but Monsters is a surprising blend of alien @-@ invasion tropes , political themes , and relationship drama . " On Metacritic , which assigns a normalized rating out of 100 based on reviews from critics , the film has a score of 63 based on 26 reviews , which is considered to be " generally favorable reviews " .

Roger Ebert awarded the film three and a half out of four stars , praising its focus on " characters , relationships , fear and mostly unseen menace " rather than its visual effects , as well as the acting . He also commended Edwards for " evoking ... awe and beauty " and for the creature designs . Peter Bradshaw , writing for The Guardian , gave it four stars out of five , described the film as a " terrifically exciting sci @-@ fi movie " and concluded that Edwards " channels the upriver nightmares of [Werner] Herzog and [Francis Ford] Coppola , with a strong streak of Spielbergian wonder at the sight of two aliens apparently dancing " . Michael Phillips of the Chicago Tribune was critical of the performances but praised the film 's " considerable , crafty virtues " , its premise , and its ending . Jeanette Catsoulis of The New York Times called the film " wondrously atmospheric " and " effortlessly compel [ling] " , and praised Edwards ' " beautiful , otherworldly " visual effects . Dan Jolin of Empire echoed the comparison to Herzog , opining that the film " exhibits the lyrical surrealism of [his] jungle excursions " . He also praised the visual effects , Edwards ' cinematography , and the " simmering " chemistry between McNairy and Able , concluding that the film was " both shoestring and sci @-@ fi filmmaking at its best " . Michael Rechtshaffen of the Associated Press praised Edwards for " add [ing] original touches to the genre " and for his production design . He criticized the " tentative " and " alienating " performances of McNairy and Able , but stated that " the overall picture still impresses " . Jennie Punter of The Globe and Mail disagreed , comparing the lead actors ' chemistry to Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy in Before Sunrise and praising the pacing . Clark Collis of Entertainment Weekly gave the film a B + , also praising the performances of McNairy and Able and commending Edwards ' work .

Conversely , Ty Burr of the Boston Globe gave the film a mixed review , granting it two and a half stars out of five . Though he praised the score , he stated that it is " more fascinating for its ambitions than for what it accomplishes " and criticized the main characters for being " too shallow " and unengaging . Robert Abele of the Los Angeles Times criticized the " weak plot , forgettable dialogue and sloppy politics " and called the lead characters " empty @-@ headed blanks " . Amy Biancolli of the San Francisco Chronicle called McNairy and Able a " semi @-@ interesting " pair , but disliked the lack of monsters in the film , the dialogue , and the familiarity of the story . Michael O ' Sullivan of The Washington Post called the film " a less @-@ than @-@ compelling relationship drama " , criticizing it for being unoriginal and predictable , and that hiding the monsters made them less frightening .

= = = Accolades = = =

At the 13th British Independent Film Awards , Monsters was nominated in six categories including Best Picture , Best Director for Edwards , and Best Actor for McNairy . The film won for Best Director , Best Technical Achievement , and Best Achievement in Production . At the 64th British Academy Film Awards , Edwards was nominated for Outstanding Debut by a British Director , but lost to Chris Morris for Four Lions . It won Best Independent Movie at the 2011 Scream Awards , and was nominated for Best Science Fiction Movie . The film also won Best International Film at the 37th Saturn Awards . The National Board of Review named the film one of the top ten independent films of 2010 , and it placed third on Moviefone 's Top 10 Sci @-@ Fi Movies of 2010 list .

= = Sequel = =

A sequel , Monsters : Dark Continent , started filming in March 2013 in Jordan and Detroit , with

Tom Green directing and Jay Basu writing . Gareth Edwards and Scoot McNairy served as executive producers . Johnny Harris , Sam Keeley , and Joe Dempsie starred in the film . Originally scheduled to be released on 28 November 2014 , the film 's release date was then moved to 27 February 2015 , and was eventually released by Vertigo on 1 May 2015 . In contrast to Monsters , Monsters : Dark Continent was not well received by critics , with a 18 % score on review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes based on 34 reviews .