

= Hard Candy ( film ) =

Hard Candy is an American 2005 crime thriller film focusing on the torture of a male sexual predator by a 14 @-@ year @-@ old female vigilante . The film was directed by David Slade , written by Brian Nelson , and starred Ellen Page and Patrick Wilson . It was the first feature film for Slade , who had previously mainly directed music videos .

The film premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival , and was screened at the Florida Film Festival in April 2006 . It had limited release in two theaters in the US . The film made over \$ 7 million at the box office , including almost \$ 6 million from outside the US , on a budget of under \$ 1 million .

Hard Candy won three awards at the 2005 Sitges Film Festival , four awards at the Málaga Film Festival , and was also awarded Overlooked Film of the Year at the 2006 Phoenix Film Critics Society Awards . Page won Best Actress at the 2006 Austin Film Critics Association Awards .

= = Plot = =

The film opens with a sexually charged , flirtatious online chat between 14 @-@ year @-@ old Hayley Stark and Jeff Kohlver , a photographer in his mid @-@ 30s . Jeff and Hayley meet at a coffeehouse , and he takes her back to her apartment . Hayley makes them both screwdrivers and asks him to take photographs . Before he can , Jeff gets dizzy , his vision blurs , and he falls to the floor unconscious .

When Jeff wakes , he is bound to a chair . Hayley explains she has been tracking him and drugged him because she knows he is a pedophile , child rapist , and murderer . Jeff denies these allegations , claiming he had innocent intentions . Hayley searches Jeff 's house and finds his gun and safe . In the safe , Hayley finds " sick " pictures and a photo of Donna Mauer , a local girl who had been kidnapped and remains missing . Jeff denies involvement in Mauer 's disappearance and succeeds in reaching his gun , but when he ( still bound to the chair ) attacks Hayley , she renders him unconscious by asphyxiating him with plastic wrap .

When Jeff wakes , he finds himself bound to a steel table with a bag of ice on his genitals . Hayley explains she will castrate Jeff . TJeff threatens , bribes and sweet @-@ talks Hayley to dissuade her ; when that doesn 't work , he tries to get her sympathy by telling her he was abused as a child . Following the operation , Hayley leaves the kitchen , claiming to take a shower . Jeff struggles and frees himself . When he reluctantly checks the site of the operation , he realizes he is actually unharmed , and Hayley has elaborately faked his castration . He storms off in a rage to get Hayley in the bathroom , where the shower is running . Scalpel in hand , he attacks , only to find the shower empty . Hayley attacks him from behind , and as they struggle , Hayley incapacitates him with a stun gun .

Hayley poses as a police officer and asks Jeff 's ex @-@ girlfriend , Janelle , to come immediately to Jeff 's house . Jeff regains consciousness to find that Hayley has bound his wrists and hoisted him to stand on a chair in his kitchen with a noose around his neck . Hayley makes Jeff an offer : if he commits suicide , she promises to erase the evidence of his crimes , but if he refuses , she promises to expose his secrets . The conversation is interrupted when a neighbor knocks on the front door , selling Girl Scout cookies . Hayley tells the neighbor that she is Jeff 's niece ; the neighbor leaves shortly afterwards . When Hayley returns , Jeff breaks free from his bindings and pursues her , eventually finding her on the roof of his house , where she has lured him . Hayley has brought her rope from the kitchen and fashioned it into a noose secured to the chimney . Hayley keeps Jeff at bay with his own gun .

Jeff finally confesses that he watched while another man raped and murdered Donna Mauer . Jeff promises Hayley that , if she spares his life , he will tell her the other man 's name so she can exact her revenge . Hayley confesses that she knows his name and says , " Aaron told me you did it before he killed himself . " Janelle arrives , and Hayley once again urges Jeff to hang himself , promising that she will destroy the evidence . Defeated , Jeff lets Hayley slide the noose around his neck , and takes the last fatal step off the roof . At the moment Jeff dies , Hayley says , " Or not . "

She then gathers her belongings and escapes through the woods . The film ends as Hayley walks down the road in her red hoodie .

= = Cast = =

Ellen Page as Hayley Stark  
Patrick Wilson as Jeff Kohlver  
Sandra Oh as Judy Tokuda , the neighbor  
Odessa Rae ( credited as Jennifer Holmes ) as Janelle Rogers  
Erin Kraft as Donna Mauer in photos  
Gabe Kerr as Nighthawks Clerk  
Cori Bright as girl in Nighthawks

= = Production = =

The idea for Hard Candy came from a news story producer David W. Higgins saw on 20 / 20 about young Japanese girls who would lure older businessmen to a location with the promise of meaningful conversation , only to assault and mug the men with a gang of other girls . This led him to wonder , " What if the person you expect to be the predator is not who you expect it to be ? What if it 's the other person ? " He then hired writer Brian Nelson to flesh out the idea . Due to the controversial nature of the work , the budget was kept under \$ 1 million so that the production company would not ask to change anything .

Very little dubbing was used in the film , with only a couple of lines modified in post @-@ production . Only nine minutes of music are present in the film , with ambient sounds , such as heavy breathing , making up most of the soundtrack . The film was shot in 18 days , largely in sequence , and mostly on a soundstage . Hayley wears a red hooded sweatshirt that is often seen as an allusion to Little Red Riding Hood . However , this was a serendipitous wardrobe choice by the creative team that was not realized until later on . Foreign marketing for the film made use of this allusion . For example , a tagline on the Japanese site for the film reads : " Red Hood traps the Wolf in his own game . "

Jean @-@ Clement Sorret was the digital colorist for the film , this being one of the few instances in which a colorist received a spot in the opening credits . The film contains many coloring effects and " density shifts " of lighting to reflect the moods of the characters . For example , when Hayley gets angry , the colors would be edited to be of lower frequency . One effect used which , as far as the director is aware , had not been done in cinema before , was to brighten the lighting in filming and correct everything down in post @-@ production . This allowed for facial details to be visible even while having a darkened atmosphere . According to the DVD extras , the process required a custom @-@ built digital intermediate to be made and proved to be extremely difficult , with corrections having to be made frame @-@ by @-@ frame in some instances . This technique , known as ETTR , is a standard procedure in digital photography and cinematography to minimize the amount of noise in shadows and midtones . Early working titles of the script were Vendetta and Snip Snip . The producer wanted a title with a " sugar and spice combination and a mixture of harsh roughness , innocence , and vulnerability " , and settled on the title Hard Candy .

= = Reception = =

= = = Box office = = =

The film premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival with a midnight screening . The Dolby Surround System failed before the screening and the audience was kept out until it was fixed . Hard Candy was also screened at the Florida Film Festival on April 1 , 2006 .

Hard Candy opened in two theaters in Los Angeles and New York City on April 14 , 2006 in a

limited release . During its opening weekend , the film grossed \$ 58 @, @ 049 averaging \$ 29 @, @ 704 per theater , the highest per @-@ screen average in the top 50 . It ended its run with \$ 1 @, @ 024 @, @ 640 at the North American box office , and a further \$ 5 @, @ 997 @, @ 569 internationally for a total of \$ 7 @, @ 022 @, @ 209 .

= = = Critical response = = =

On Rotten Tomatoes , a review aggregator , the film has a score of 68 % based on 138 reviews and an average rating of 6 @. @ 4 out of 10 . The critical consensus states : " Disturbing , controversial , but entirely engrossing , Hard Candy is well written with strong lead performances , especially that of newcomer Ellen Page . A movie that stays with the viewer long after leaving the theater . " The film also has a score of 58 out of 100 on Metacritic based on 30 critics indicating " mixed or average reviews . "

Roger Ebert gave the film 3 and a half stars out of four and wrote that " There is undeniable fascination in the situation as it unfolds ... Seen as a film , seen as acting and direction , seen as just exactly how it unfolds on the screen , Hard Candy is impressive and effective . " Steve Persall wrote in the Tampa Bay Times he saw the movie in a crowded bar , yet " until the shocking end , there 's nothing less than rapt attention to this sordid thriller about an online predator ( Wilson ) and his not @-@ so @-@ innocent prey ( Ellen Page ) . On a party night in New Orleans ? That 's how creepy @-@ good this movie is . " Steve Schneider , writing in the Orlando Weekly , praised the films " grabber of a sicko setup ... It 's a memorably tense pas de deux , and if the movie doesn 't pay off on it properly , fault a script that ventures further and further into psychological @-@ thriller claptrap , leaving the two stars to rely on their hefty talents to keep it at all believable . "

Caroline Westbrook at Empire magazine called it a " cracking little thriller " . David Edwards at the Daily Mirror praised it as a " smart , challenging and timely look at the world of internet grooming " . Todd McCarthy at Variety praised the " spectacular performance by teenage thesp Ellen Page " . On the other hand , Jonathan Rosenbaum referred to it as torture and mutilation and wrote : " I 'd rather have this movie obliterated from my memory . " The New York Times film critic Manohla Dargis recognized the film 's debt to " Ariel Dorfman and Neil LaBute , among others " , but did not care for the torture theme " in the age of Abu Ghraib " .

Page 's performance was received well by critics ; Lynn Hirschberg of The New York Times Magazine said " a star was born , but almost no one noticed " , describing Hard Candy as Page 's initial artistic breakthrough performance , and her role in the 2007 film Juno as her mainstream popularity breakthrough performance . Claudia Puig from USA Today praised her for " remain [ ing ] consistently convincing " to her role which is both " powerful and chilling ... She manages to be both cruelly callous and likable , and hers is one of the most complex , disturbing and haunting performances of the year . "

= = Accolades = =

The film won three awards at the 2005 Sitges Film Festival and four awards at the 2006 Málaga Film Festival . The film also won Overlooked Film of the Year at the 2006 Phoenix Film Critics Society Awards . Page won the Best Actress award from the Austin Film Critics Association . Page was nominated for the Breakthrough Performer award at the 2006 Online Film Critics Society Awards , and Best Female Newcomer at the 12th Empire Awards . The film was nominated for Best Foreign Independent film at the 2006 British Independent Film Awards , and the film 's trailer was nominated for Best Thriller and Best Titles in a Trailer at the 7th Golden Trailer Awards .

= = Home media = =

The American DVD was released on September 19 , 2006 with two commentary tracks , a 52 @-@ minute making @-@ of featurette , six deleted and extended scenes , the script and director 's notebook , and trailers for Hard Candy and other Lionsgate films . Francis Rizzo III from DVD Talk

gave a positive review , praising the DVD 's quality and extras . The Blu @-@ ray was released by Lionsgate Home Entertainment on October 5 , 2010 , and contained the same special features as the DVD . Aaron Peck from High @-@ Def Digest and Jeffrey Kauffman from Blu @-@ ray.com both awarded the Blu @-@ ray four out of five stars .

= = In popular culture = =

The German Neue Deutsche Härte band Oomph ! based the video for their song " Beim ersten Mal tut 's immer weh " ( the first time always hurts ) on the film , as did American metalcore band Beneath the Sky for their song " Terror Starts at Home " .