

American Psycho

2000 | 102mins

Director: Mary Harron

Starring: Christian Bale, Willem Dafoe, Reese Witherspoon



Set in the harsh consumerism and excess of Reagan-era Wall Street, *American Psycho* deconstructs capitalism, masculinity and the American dream. Based on Brett Easton-Ellis' 1991 sharp satirical novel, the film is equal parts shocking, uncomfortable and funny.

Following Patrick Bateman, a suave, narcissistic investment banker as he moonlights as a serial killer, the film is in no doubt controversial and often misconstrued. Directed by Canadian filmmaker Mary Harron and written by American screenwriter Guinevere Turner, Harron has said that she is intrigued by stories of men idolising the psychopathic Bateman. With the film being adapted by two women from an original novel penned by a gay author, its intended criticism of toxic, heterosexual masculinity is perhaps ambiguous to some, but evident to most. Harron's adaptation builds on Easton-Ellis' novel, guiding the audience through the layers of consumption and gendered violence.

The viewer joins Bateman at the heights of his success, set amongst the luxurious restaurants of Manhattan and the cold, clinical interior of his bachelor pad. However, when envy of his equally slick colleague, Paul Allen, becomes all consuming, Bateman's shiny veneer starts to crumble as he balances his career, fiancé and murderous lifestyle.

Relative newcomer Christian Bale's Bateman is wholly believable, immediately becoming an iconic role for the four-time Oscar winning British actor. Critic Scott Tobias noted that "as Bateman, Bale exudes just the right kind of anti-charisma. It's hard to play a character without a soul, so Bale focuses on giving a face to the void within" (The Guardian). The brilliant supporting cast, including Jared Leto, Chloe Sevigny, Willem Dafoe and Reese Witherspoon, carries the fast-paced, snappy screenplay, acting as real, human foils to Bale's "faking" Bateman.

Set in New York in 1987 and released in the year 2000, the subject matter of Harron's *American Psycho* is unfortunately more salient than ever in the year 2025. The satire is sharp and timeless and will inspire important discussions indefinitely.

"Twenty years later, American Psycho hasn't left the culture, because the culture hasn't left American Psycho. The only difference is that Bateman seems more electable now than he might have been then"

-The Guardian



Excellent

Fair

Poor

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

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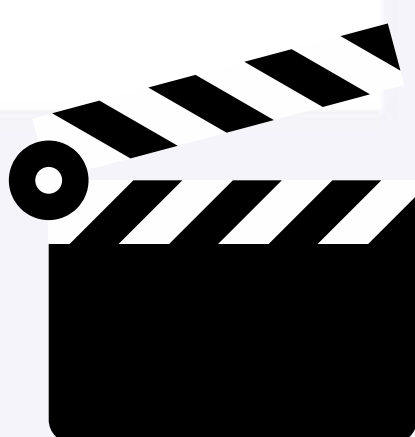
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Did You Know?

- Esteemed feminist author Gloria Steinem was one of the most prominent critics of the original novel. She also happens to be Christian Bale’s stepmother.
- Not only does a fictionalised Tom Cruise feature in the novel, living in the same complex as Patrick Bateman, but Bale based his performance on Cruise after seeing him on a talk show.

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