

## THE CIRCLE (2017)

- Released by April 28th 2017
- 1 hour 50 minutes
- \$18 million budget
- James Ponsoldt directed
- Rated PG-13 for a sexual situation, brief strong language and some thematic elements including drug use
- Imagenation Abu Dhabi FZ, Likely Story, Parkes+MacDonald Image Nation
- Produced by Stefanie Azpiazu, Peter Cron, Evan Hayes, Russell Levine

## QUICK THOUGHTS:

- Marisa Serafini
- Phil Svitek
- Demetri Panos

## DEVELOPMENT

- On December 15, 2014, *Deadline* reported that Tom Hanks would be next starring in the film adaptation of Dave Eggers' 2013 novel *The Circle*, while James Ponsoldt would write and direct the film
- In January 2015, *THR* confirmed that Anthony Bregman would produce the film through his banner Likely Story along with Ponsoldt, Hanks, and Gary Goetzman
- On May 11, 2015, it was announced that Image Nation Abu Dhabi would fully finance the film together with Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald, while IM Global would handle the international sales
- On May 23, 2015, *Deadline* revealed that producers offered Emma Watson the role of the female lead in the film. In June 2015, director Ponsoldt confirmed during an interview that Watson was not officially on board but she would be one possibility to star in the film. On June 24, 2015, *Variety* confirmed that Watson was officially set to play the lead role of Mae Holland in the film
- On August 19, 2015, John Boyega was added to the cast of the film. On September 1, 2015, Karen Gillan was cast in the film to play Annie, a warm, cute and intelligent member of The Circle.
- On September 11, 2015, Patton Oswalt joined the cast to play Tom Stenton, an Italian and one of three founders of the Circle.
- On September 16, 2015, Bill Paxton joined the film as Watson's father.
- On September 29, 2015, Ellar Coltrane joined the cast of the film portraying the role of Mercer
- Developed by A-list ex-DreamWorks producers Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald's Parkes+MacDonald Image Nation, which raised financing from Imagenation Abu Dhabi FZ and foreign sales company FilmNation. Luc Besson's French distribution company EuropaCorp picked up "The Circle" for \$8 million and partnered with STX for the North American release.

## WRITING (James Ponsoldt, Dave Eggers, Novel by Dave Eggers)

- Around the time of the book's release, the rumor was that Dave Eggers didn't actually do any research to flesh out the details in *The Circle*. The truth is that Eggers had lived in the Bay Area for decades and had friends all over the industry, whom he could lean on for useful information.

- Eggers' book *The Circle* shares storytelling techniques, situations and themes with previous dystopic science fiction novels like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)

## STORY/TOPICS

- Difference in book vs movie (endings & love story)
- Message of the movie
- Circle as both evil and good
- Mae's motives
- Annie, Mercer, and parent's take on Circle
- Villains
- Tech Talks
- HOW NOT TO MAKE A TECH MOVIE:  
<https://theringer.com/the-circle-silicon-valley-tech-movies-tv-shows-57d60ca4068b>
- Gamification of work?
- Good convo from The Verge:  
<https://www.theverge.com/2017/5/2/15509198/the-circle-tom-hanks-emma-watson-eggers-movie-roundtable>

## CAST:

### EMMA WATSON (Mae Holland)

- "I guess the big thing for me having been involved in this is just taking back the idea that this information that belongs to us, or belongs to me and just being mindful and much more aware of what's unveiling before our very eyes, oftentimes without us even realizing."
- The actress said she deleted her email app from her phone and tried to "create serious boundaries" with her use of technology, since it is so addictive. "I love social media, and I love what it can do and how it brings people together, but used in the wrong way, it's incredibly dangerous," said Watson, adding, "We need to make sure that we are using technology, and technology is not using us."

### TOM HANKS (Eamon Bailey)

- This is the second time that Tom Hanks has a role in an adaptation of a novel by Dave Eggers. The first was *A Hologram for the King* (2016)

### PATTON OSWALT (Stenton)

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### ELLAR COLTRANE (Mercer)

### KAREN GILLAN (Annie)

### JOHN BOYEGA (Ty)

- Known for *Star Wars* Eps 7 & 8

## SYMBOLISM/TRIVIA/EASTER EGGS

- Bill Paxton 's final film

- The lead role of Mae was first offered to Alicia Vikander, which according to her, was one of the three roles offered simultaneously alongside the roles of Maria in *Assassin's Creed* and Heather in *Jason Bourne* (2016). Because of fan factor, she opted to do *Bourne* instead, thus having the producers moving on to casting second choice Emma Watson instead
- This is the first time Tom Hanks and Bill Paxton have worked together since *Apollo 13* (1995)
- In the boardroom meeting, the idea of mandatory voting is brought up. In the former Soviet Union, voting was mandatory and candidates for offices were pre-selected on the ballot by the local Communist Party (one candidate per office). Most candidates received almost 100% of the vote as a result

#### **DIRECTING** (James Ponsoldt)

- He directed the drama films *Off the Black* (2006) and *Smashed* (2012), the romantic comedy-drama *The Spectacular Now* (2013), and the dramas *The End of the Tour* (2015) and *The Circle* (2017)

#### **PRODUCTION/CINEMATOGRAPHY** (Matthew Libatique)

- Principal photography on the film began on September 11, 2015, in Los Angeles, California
- On September 17, filming was taking place in Pasadena.
- Reshoots were done in January 2017
- "I think we felt like we were going insane sometimes," Ponsoldt says, "whether it was trying to create the illusion of a giant campus by using tons of locations, a campus that didn't feel schizophrenic architecturally, or the products or the screen design. We had to design fake social media apps and emails. We had to create everything."- Ponsoldt
- "I went with my production designer on scouting trips to different tech campuses," Ponsoldt says. "Really, it was with the goal of making sure we knew the world. We already knew the products, but we wanted to understand the texture of the place. We were also looking at it from a design perspective. In this building, is there a lot of glass, is there an open floor plan, are people at treadmill desks, do they have yoga ball desks, do the breakout rooms have ironic names, what do people dress like, are people on their phones all the time or looking at their watches, if there's outdoor space is it being used, are the meals free, are they partially subsidized, what kind of public events are there, are there concerts on campus, is there free yoga, what is the sound of the place? We wanted to make sure we understood it."- Ponsoldt

#### **EDITING** (Lisa Lassek, Franklin Peterson)

- Re-shoots took place 4 months before the release of " *The Circle* " which made Emma Watson's character seem more appealing, but apparently test audience reaction was even worse than previous test screenings

#### **SOUND/MUSIC** (Danny Elfman)

- *Spider-Man*, *Batman*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, *Edward Scissorhands*
- Solo artist Jónsi has just released a song he contributed to the soundtrack. The track is a vocoder-heavy, reharmonized rendition of the Shaker folk song "Simple Gifts," which was most famously interpreted by composer Aaron Copland in his *Appalachian Spring* suite.

## PROMOTION

- In February 2016, EuropaCorp acquired U.S and Canadian distribution rights to the film.
- STX Entertainment will co-distribute the film alongside EuropaCorp,
- It premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival on April 26, 2017

## BOX OFFICE

- Total Lifetime Grosses (As of April 30th): \$9,034,148
- Domestic: \$9,034,148
  - + Foreign: \$
  - = Worldwide:\$
- Domestic Summary
  - Opening Weekend: \$9,034,148
  - (#5 rank, 3,163 theaters, \$2,856 average)
  - % of Total Gross:
- > View All Weekends
  - Widest Release: 3,163 theaters
  - In Release: 6 days / 0.9 weeks
- In North America, *The Circle* was released alongside *How to Be a Latin Lover*, *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion* and *Sleight*, and was projected to gross \$10–12 million from 3,163 theaters during its opening weekend.
- However, the film underperformed, debuting at number five with \$9 million, behind *The Fate of the Furious*, *How to Be a Latin Lover*, *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion* and *The Boss Baby*

## RECEPTION

- IMDB: 5.2
- Cinemascore: D+
- RT: 17% Tatometer, 24% Audience
- Peter Travers of Rolling Stone, for one, awarded the film one star out of four: “The Circle’ feels dull, dated and ripped from yesterday’s headlines. It flatlines while you’re watching it.”
- The site's critical consensus reads, "*The Circle* assembles an impressive cast, but this digitally driven thriller spins aimlessly in its half-hearted exploration of timely themes."
- Glenn Kenny of *The New York Times* criticized the film for its repetitiveness and lack of originality: "The novel is at its most trenchantly funny when depicting the exhausting nature of virtual social life, and it's in this area, too, that the movie gets its very few knowing laughs. But it's plain, not much more than 15 minutes in, that without the story's paranoid aspects you're left with a conceptual framework that's been lapped three times over by the likes of, say, the Joshua Cohen novel *Book of Numbers* or the HBO comedy series *Silicon Valley*"
- Dan Callahan of *The Wrap* wrote: "The main problem with *The Circle* is that the evil of the tech company is made so obvious right from the start."
- Gregory Wakeman of *Cinema Blend* panned the film, arguing that "the movie's grand philosophical debate is so simplistic and comes from two opposing and extreme sides of the spectrum that it's basically rendered mute." He also wrote: "Smug, condescending, and completely without incident, *The Circle* is the reason why people hate Hollywood."
- John DeFore of *The Hollywood Reporter*, in his positive review, wrote: "The film's final message isn't as difficult to grapple with as the world we're actually living in, but that doesn't make it easy." He also described the film as "a mainstream-friendly critique of social media."

## SEQUEL/LEGACY

## FINAL THOUGHTS