

## ATOMIC BLONDE (2017)

- Released by July 28th, 2017
- 1 hour 55 minutes
- \$30,000,000 (estimated) budget
- David Leitch directed
- 87Eleven, Closed on Mondays Entertainment, Denver and Delilah Productions
- Rated R for sequences of strong violence, language throughout, and some sexuality/nudity

## QUICK THOUGHTS:

- Demetri Panos
- OPINION: ATOMIC BLONDE OR THE SPY WHO WENT INTO THE COLD IS A JOHN LA CARRE MEETS JOHN WICK. AND FOR THE MOST PART, IT WORKS! THIS COLD WAR SPY MOVIE HAS SOME FAMILIAR TRAPPINGS; A KNOCK LIST HAS GOTTEN OUT. GOOD GUYS WANT IT BACK. BAD GUYS ARE TRYING TO STEAL IT AND OH, THERE IS A TRAITOR IN THE MIST KNOWN AS: SACHEL. CHARLIZE THERON AGAIN PROVING THERE IS NOT MUCH SHE CAN'T DO. AS MI-6 OPERATIVE LORRAINE BROUGHTON, THERON SHOWS SHE CAN DO AS MUCH WITH A STARE AS SHE CAN WITH A STILLETTO HIGH HEEL. SHE IS SYMPATHETIC AS WELL AS EMPATHETIC. SHE TAKES THE HITS AND OHH BOY ARE THERE SOME BIG HITS. SHE CAN CARRY A GUN AND THROW A PUNCH AND/OR KICK. SHE IS VERY BELIEVABLE. JAMES MCAVOY KEEPS UP AS DAVID PERCIVAL AND WHILE I LIKED MCAVOY HIS CHARACTER WAS SUCH A SHIT I DIDN'T CARE IF HE WAS SACHEL OR NOT; HE NEEDED SOME COMMUPENCE! SOFIA BOUTELLA IS MAKING QUTIE THE NAME FOR HERSELF. FROM KINGSMEN, TO STAR TREK TO THE MUMMY ER..SHE WASN'T BAD, HER NEW TO THE GAME FRENCH OPERATIVE, DELPHINE IS THE GREAT FEMME FATAL AND MCGUFFIN. DIRECTOR DAVID LEITCH, WHO IS NO STRANGER TO STUNTS BEING HE WAS A STUNTMAN HIMSELF, BALANCES THE SPY ASPECTS OF THE MOVIE AND THE ACTION WELL. AND NOT JUST THE GUN PLAY. THE FIGHTS IN ATOMIC BLONDE ARE BRUTAL AND LONG. THERE IS ONE SCENE IN PARTICULAR THAT FEELS LIKE IT LASTS 20 MINUTES THAT INCLUDES GUN FIGHTS, FIST FIGHTS CAR FIGHTS!! BY THE END OF IT ALL AS AN AUDIENCE YOUR EXHAUSTED AND SO ISN'T LORRAINE BROUGHTON. BUT YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD WOMAN DOWN! THERON MANAGED ROUGHLY 90% OF HER OWN STUNTS IN THIS MOVIE. THERE IS A SCENE WHERE HER CHARACTER STRIPS DOWN AND SHE IS COVERED IN BRUISES....YOU WONDER IF ITS MAKE-UP OR REAL!! ATOMIC BLONDE ALSO HAS WITH IT A REALLY FUN THUMPING 80'S SOUNDTRACK TO IT THAT WILL KEEP YOU GOING EVEN THROUGH PARTS YOU NEED TO CATCH YOUR BREATH. THE COLD WAR IS BACK AT LEAST IN THE MOVIES...FOR NOW...
- Phil Svitek
- Marisa Serafini

## DEVELOPMENT

- An adaptation of the graphic novel *The Coldest City* was announced in May 2015
- Described by Variety, as a "Passion Project" for Theron, she first came across the story, five years prior through her production company "Denver & Delilah Prods" when they were sent the then unpublished graphic novel
- Theron's interest in the first John Wick movie inspired her to look into getting David Leitch , one of the directors, to helm the project
- Leitch would eventually leave *John Wick Chapter 2* in order to direct the film
- According to Theron, the success of *Mad Max: Fury Road* helped guide the development of *Atomic Blonde*
- Charlize Theron spent five years developing this project

## WRITING (Kurt Johnstad, Antony Johnston, Sam Hart)

- Adapted from graphic novel *The Coldest City*

- A former assistant director and key grip, Kurt Johnstad has an long-standing relationship with the military, and wrote the "Navy SEALs playing themselves" movie, "Act of Valor". But he is perhaps best known for writing the cult-classic film "300", as well as it's sequel, "300: Rise of an Empire" with Zack Snyder
- Antony Johnston is a writer and producer, known for Atomic Blonde (2017), [Dead Space](#)(2008) and Middle-Earth: Shadow of Mordor (2014)
- The film features a lesbian subplot that was not in the original book. This came from writer Kurt Johnstad who suggested it after Theron was "thinking about how do you make this different from other spy movies"
- Leitch has insisted that the scenes are not there to be "provocative" but rather "it was more about if you are a spy you will do whatever it takes to get information" and how the main character "find[s] her intimacies and her friendships in small doses"

## STORY/TOPICS

- Double Agent
- East/West Berlin
- Fighting
- Ending explained: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkeawyJkxzk>

## CAST:

- Charlize Theron's casting as the lead was announced in May 2015, while James McAvoy was announced that October
- In November John Goodman was announced as also being in talks to join the film
- It was originally hoped that David Bowie would play a part in the film, although he turned down this offer shortly before his death

## CHARLIZE THERON (Lorraine Broughton)

- Stunt double Monique Ganderton
- Charlize Theron personally trained for six to eight weeks to prepare for the long fight sequence.
- "Charlize did 98 percent of her own action including fighting, running and those kinds of things. When it comes where she has to fall down stairs or swing from a height — that she can't do insurance-wise," says Hargrave.
- "She was incredibly supportive of the ideas, and we had some great conversations about where we wanted to take it, and we were on the same page from the beginning, from that initial pitch of wanting to push this past just being a noirish spy drama with intrigue. She wanted to find a way to make it more action-driven and have a strong female protagonist who we didn't apologize for." - Leitch
- "I told Charlize when we started the training process, when I saw her abilities and her aptitude for stunts and her will to do it, I was relieved because [that meant] we [could] have this production value 10-fold. We have an Academy Award-winning actress, and I'm going to hang the action in the movie on her shoulders and people are going to go nuts and she was like, "Let's fucking do it." If you had someone that didn't have the will or the aptitude or the acting chops, this couldn't have been done." - Leitch
- To prepare for the role Theron worked with eight personal trainers who "basically made me puke every single day"
- During the process Theron cracked her teeth from clenching and had to get them fixed in surgery
- As Theron's training for the movie overlapped with Keanu Reeves' training for *John Wick Chapter 2*, the two developed a competitive relationship which included sparring together
- Charlize Theron was born in Benoni, a city in the greater Johannesburg area, in South Africa, the only child of Gerda Theron (née Gerda Jacoba Aletta Maritz) and Charles Jacobus Theron. She was raised on a farm outside the city. Theron is of Afrikaner (Dutch, with some French Huguenot and German) descent, and Afrikaner military figure Danie Theron was her great-great-uncle.
- Theron received an education as a ballet dancer and has danced both the "Swan Lake" and "The Nutcracker". There was not much for a young actress or dancer to do in South Africa, so she

soon traveled to Europe and the United States, where she got job at the Joffrey Ballet in New York. She was also able to work as a photo model. However, an injured knee put a halt to her dancing career.

- In 1994, her mother bought her a one-way ticket to Los Angeles, and Charlize started visiting all of the agents on Hollywood Boulevard, but without any luck. She went to a bank to cash a check for \$500 she received from her mother, and became furious when she learned that the bank would not cash it because it was an out-of-state check. She made a scene and an agent gave her his card, in exchange for learning American English, which she did by watching soap operas on television.
- Her first role was as a young mother in a park in a B-film in 1995, but it was a non-speaking role with three seconds of screen time. Her next role was as Helga Svelgen in *2 Days in the Valley* (1996), which landed her the role of Tina Powers in *That Thing You Do!* (1996). Since then, she has starred in movies like *The Devil's Advocate* (1997), *Mighty Joe Young* (1998), *The Cider House Rules* (1999), *The Legend of Bagger Vance* (2000) and *The Italian Job* (2003). On February 29, 2004, she won her first Academy Award, for her performance in *Monster* (2003)

### **JAMES MCAVOY** (David Percival)

- Before filming resumed, James McAvoy broke his hand on the set of *Split* (2016) and had to endure all his action scenes with his injured hand
- McAvoy was born on 21 April 1979 in Glasgow, Scotland, to Elizabeth (née Johnstone), a nurse, and James McAvoy senior, a bus driver. He was raised on a housing estate in Drumchapel, Glasgow by his maternal grandparents (James, a butcher, and Mary), after his parents divorced when James was 7. He went to St Thomas Aquinas Secondary in Jordanhill, Glasgow, where he did well enough and started 'a little school band with a couple of mates'.
- McAvoy toyed with the idea of the Catholic priesthood as a child but, when he was 16, a visit to the school by actor David Hayman sparked an interest in acting. Hayman offered him a part in his film *The Near Room* (1995) but despite enjoying the experience McAvoy didn't seriously consider acting as a career, although he did continue to act as a member of PACE Youth Theatre. He applied instead to the Royal Navy and had already been accepted when he was also offered a place at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD).
- He took the place at the RSAMD (now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) and, when he graduated in 2000, he moved to London. He had already made a couple of TV appearances by this time and continued to get a steady stream of TV and movie work until he came to attention of the British public in 2004 playing car thief Steve McBride in the successful UK TV series *Shameless* (2004) and then to the rest of the world in 2005 as Mr Tumnus, the faun, in Disney's adaptation of C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005). In *The Last King of Scotland* (2006) McAvoy portrayed a Scottish doctor who becomes the personal physician to dictator Idi Amin, played by Forest Whitaker. McAvoy's career breakthrough came in *Atonement* (2007), Joe Wright's 2007 adaption of Ian McEwan's novel.
- Since then, McAvoy has taken on theatre roles, starring in Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' (directed by Jamie Lloyd), which launched the first Trafalgar Transformed season in London's West End and earned him an Olivier award nomination for Best Actor. In January 2015, McAvoy returned to the Trafalgar Studios stage to play Jack Gurney, a delusional English earl, in the first revival of Peter Barnes's satire 'The Ruling Class', a role for which he was subsequently awarded the London Evening Standard Theatre Award's Best Actor.
- On screen, McAvoy has appeared as corrupt cop Bruce Robertson in *Filth* (2013), a part for which he received a Scottish BAFTA for Best Actor, a British Independent Film Award for Best Actor, a London Critics Circle Film Award for British Actor of the Year and an Empire Award for Best Actor. Most recently, he reprised his role as Professor Charles Xavier in *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014), and starred in the next film in the franchise, *X-Men: Apocalypse* (2016), and M. Night Shyamalan's thriller *Split* (2016)

### **EDDIE MARSAN** (Spyglass)

- Eddie Marsan was born in Bethnal Green, East London, to a lorry driver father and a school employee mother. He served an apprenticeship as a printer before becoming an actor twenty years ago. During this time he has worked with directors such as Martin Scorsese, Michael Mann, Steven Spielberg, Terrence Malick, Woody Allen, Alejandro González Iñárritu, J.J. Abrams, Peter Berg, Guy Ritchie and Richard Linklater
- He has collaborated with Mike Leigh on three films: Vera Drake (2004), for which he won the British Independent Film Award for best supporting actor; Happy-Go-Lucky (2008), for which he also won a BIFA for best supporting actor as well as the London Film Critics Circle Award and the National Society Of Film Critics; and he has just completed Mike Leigh's latest film, A Running Jump (2012). He was nominated for an Evening Standard Film Award for best actor for The Disappearance of Alice Creed (2009)
- He is a patron for the School of the Science of Acting and Kazzum, a children's theatre company that promotes the acceptance of Diversity

### **JOHN GOODMAN** (Emmett Kurzfeld)

- John Stephen Goodman is a U.S. film, television, and stage actor. He was born in St. Louis, Missouri, to Virginia Roos (Loosmore), a waitress and saleswoman, and Leslie Francis Goodman, a postal worker who died when John was a small child. He is of English, Welsh, and German ancestry. John is best known for his role as Dan Conner on the television series Roseanne (1988), which ran until 1997, and for which he won a Best Actor Golden Globe award in 1993. Goodman is also noted for appearances in the films of the Coen brothers, with prominent roles in Raising Arizona (1987), as an escaped convict, in Barton Fink (1991), as a congenial murderer, in The Big Lebowski (1998), as a volatile bowler, and in O Brother, Where Art Thou? (2000), as a cultured thief. Additionally, Goodman's voice work has appeared in numerous Disney films, including the voice for "Sulley" in Monsters, Inc. (2001). Having contributed to more than 50 films, Goodman has also won two American Comedy Awards and hosted Saturday Night Live (1975) fourteen times

### **TOBY JONES** (Eric Gray)

- Widely regarded as the one of greatest stage and screen actors both in his native Great Britain and internationally, Toby Edward Heslewood Jones was born on September 7, 1966 in Hammersmith, London. His parents, Freddie Jones and Jennie Heslewood, are actors as well. Toby has two brothers: Rupert, a director, and Casper, a fellow actor. He studied Drama at the University of Manchester from 1986 to 1989, and at L'École Internationale de Théâtre in Paris under Jacques Lecoq in Paris from 1989 to 1991. Naturally, his career began on the stage (and continues there), but film and television roles came soon after his studies.
- Toby made his film debut with a small role in Sally Potter's experimental take on Virginia Woolf's novel, Orlando (1992), starring Tilda Swinton. Other small film roles included the doorkeeper in Les Misérables (1998) and a memorable turn as the Royal Page in Ever After: A Cinderella Story (1998) with Drew Barrymore.
- Roles in the acclaimed Victoria & Albert (2001) and the Helen Mirren-starring Elizabeth I(2005) were balanced with film work, from his voice role as Dobby the House Elf in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (2002) to supporting appearances in Ladies in Lavender (2004) (co-starring his father, Freddie), Finding Neverland (2004), and Mrs Henderson Presents (2005).
- He continued stage work during this period, appearing on Broadway in The Play What I Wrote in 2003, a year after winning the Laurence Olivier Theatre Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role for his performance in the London production.
- Infamous (2006), directed by Douglas McGrath and released in 2006, was Toby's first starring role. His acclaimed portrayal of Truman Capote remained mostly in the shadow of Philip Seymour Hoffman's Oscar-winning performance of the author in 2005's Capote(2005).
- A steady stream of film roles followed with appearances in Amazing Grace (2006), The Painted Veil (2006), Nightwatching (2007), The Mist (2007), and St. Trinian's (2007). Toby then appeared

in three successive films that could have been commercial breakthroughs: kid-lit flop *City of Ember* (2008), the Oscar-nominated *Frost/Nixon* (2008), and Oliver Stone's *W.* (2008).

- He reprised the voice-role of Dobby in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 1* (2010), appeared in the *St. Trinian's* sequel, as well as the Charles Darwin biopic *Creation* (2009) and Dustin Lance Black's post-Milk (2008) directorial outing, *Virginia* (2010). More Hollywood roles followed with appearances in *The Rite* (2011), *Your Highness* (2011), and his first big live-action breakthrough as Red Skull's biochemist Dr. Arnim Zola in *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011).
- Even before Toby was announced as Cladius Templesmith in the adaptation of the novel *The Hunger Games* (2012), his star was on the rise after *Captain America*, with roles in three Oscar-nominated films: *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011), *My Week with Marilyn* (2011), and *The Adventures of Tintin* (2011). Though chances are he will forever be known by many as Cladius, the announcer for *The Hunger Games* with the booming voice and penchant for ending his statements with the phrase, "And may the odds be ever in your favor!"
- Toby followed up this massive success with roles in *Red Lights* (2012) for Buried director Rodrigo Cortés and a memorable turn as one of the dwarves in worldwide hit *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012). He will next be seen in *The Girl* (2012), a BBC/HBO co-production in which he stars as Alfred Hitchcock, in the miniseries *Titanic* (2012), Peter Strickland's *Berberian Sound Studio* (2012), Susanne Bier's *Serena* (2014), and he will reprise his role as Cladius Templesmith in *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (2013)

#### **SOFIA BOUTELLA** (Delphine Lasalle)

- Sofia Boutella was born on April 6, 1982 in Bab El Oued, Algeria. She is an actress, known for *Kingsman: The Secret Service* (2014), *Star Trek Beyond* (2016) and *The Mummy* (2017).
- "Sofia is so beautiful – incredibly stunning. I couldn't even imagine doing that with anybody else but her because we treated it like dancers. It was really about movement and choreography and, because we are both dancers, there was something that just happened with us that was very in sync."

#### **SYMBOLISM/TRIVIA/EASTER EGGS**

- In the early part of the movie, where Charlize Theron is on a car and tries to beat the two escorts, the tunnel sequence in Berlin was the same tunnel used in *Captain America Civil War*, the part where Black Panther chases down Bucky Barnes
- Broughton' character is seen throughout the movie drinking Stolichnaya on ice which is a Russian vodka. this reinforces the idea that she is the Russian double agent until the finale reveal
- It has a similar ending as *Filth*, where James McAvoy broke the 4th wall and said a signature line and died
- 25 facts: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2FP9gRC\\_Ic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2FP9gRC_Ic)

#### **DIRECTING** (David Leitch)

- David Leitch first started out in the stunt world
- David Leitch's first solo credit as director, after co-directing *John Wick* (2014) with Chad Stahelski
- David Leitch is an actor, stuntman, writer, producer, stunt coordinator and film director. He directed some scenes in *John Wick* (2014), and then went on to direct *Atomic Blonde* (2017) starring Charlize Theron.
- Leitch was a stunt double for Brad Pitt five times and two times for Jean-Claude Van Damme. He also had roles in *Tron: Legacy* (2010), and *The Matrix* trilogy

#### **PRODUCTION/CINEMATOGRAPHY** (Jonathan Sela)

- Jonathan Sela was born on April 29, 1978 in Paris, France. He is known for his work on *John Wick* (2014), *Law Abiding Citizen* (2009) and *A Good Day to Die Hard* (2013)
- Principal photography on the film began on November 22, 2015 in Budapest, and it would later move to Berlin then LA

- How the 10 minute sequence was made:  
<http://variety.com/2017/artisans/production/atomic-blonde-10-minute-action-scene-charlize-theron-1202512814/>

#### EDITING (Elísabet Ronaldsdóttir)

- Elísabet Ronaldsdóttir was born on July 6, 1965 in Iceland. She is an editor, known for *John Wick* (2014), *Contraband* (2012) and *Atomic Blonde* (2017)
- “We did the finishing work in Stockholm with a company called Chimney Pot. So we did the color grade, graphics and some sound pre-mix in Sweden. Chimney in Berlin did all the visual effects.” - Ronaldsdóttir
- “I come from a dance background and I’ve made many dance films. So I understand the basics of dance choreography – and action is kind of the same thing.” -Ronaldsdóttir
- “This is what we did with both *John Wick* and *Atomic Blonde* — we get the stunt choreographer and we have a discussion. Because you have to think of so many things. It’s not just the stunt itself. It’s also how it flows with the rest of the film, how it peaks or ebbs, etc. So it’s important to have this discussion and maybe the person involved can point out a better take where the stunt has a cleaner movement or something else.” - Ronaldsdóttir
- “On *Atomic Blonde* we have this bad ass sequence that runs for almost 12 min. meant to look like a one take. For that, I was editing on set to make sure we got a cut that worked but also to try to assist in not losing sight of keeping the story strong – “can we pan a bit over to this guy so we don’t lose track of him”- Ronaldsdóttir
- “the fight sequences are such an important part of Charlize Theron’s character’s emotional journey, and so we always made sure to follow up fights with a close up, but of course it would never work without an actor that has an amazing connection with the audience through the lens.” - Ronaldsdóttir
- “There are so many rewrites of those scripts and sometimes there are ghosts hanging around in the script. Those ghosts are a part of the process, but being new to the script it’s easier to spot the ghosts and point them out. The story is the most important part of the editing process for me. No matter how fun the action sequences are, it’s the story and the character arc that stand out.”  
“There were so many versions of the script done before I came on board and then I got the script and I was lost about certain things. When I asked about certain plot points the producers said, “Oh, that’s because this happened and this happened in previous versions of the script.” And I had to point out: that’s not in the script anymore. So there are these “ghosts” of previous script versions that can affect the story in negative ways.” - Ronaldsdóttir
- “So for me, the biggest thing is honesty. We have to be able to talk about things — difficult things. We have to be able to talk about ideas ... So I do a lot of talking in the editing room. I think probably 70% of what I do is talk. Talk, talk talk. Talk about feelings; talk about the characters; talk about the story. Everyone is working for the same goal. Everyone wants the same thing. It’s just that the only way to get there together is through dialogue.” -
- Cut on Avid.

#### SOUND/MUSIC (Tyler Bates)

- David Bowie songs: "Cat People (Putting Out Fire)," toward the beginning of the film, and his collaboration with Queen, "Under Pressure," at the end. The *Atomic Blonde* team wanted the singer to appear in the film in the interrogation scene that frames the story. "I think he really responded to the script and that it was about this city and there was music and everything. But at that time, he respectfully declined," Leitch tells *The Hollywood Reporter*. "Then during the shooting of the film, we heard of his passing, so it was even more special to us that those songs remained in the movie."
- “When I read the script, I immediately decided to write down songs that were speaking to me. And after the challenge of how do I make this pop-culture mashup in more of a commercial/fun way, the first instinct was "I want to rely on '80s music and sort of transport us." Music emotionally and psychologically transports you immediately. So I put together my playlist and I'd play that over and over and we'd play it on set in the scout van, and I started to slowly drop those specific

songs into the list as we scouted, into the actual script. "Voices Carry" came on very early in terms of the ironic lyrics of everybody listening in on each other, and I liked that. "Putting Out Fire" came on really early as well in terms of that bombastic nature and someone who's not afraid to pour gasoline on what is already a fire. It was just that slow process, but it was early on. By the time we started shooting, all of those songs were being played during the sequences as we filmed them so we would know our edits in terms of like "Der Kommissar," there's maybe five shots that that song goes through. And that was sort of planned and music video-esque" - Leitch

- "I never ever edit to music. Never ever. I think it's so important to find the music and the rhythms within the scene itself. I listen to a lot of music, even as I'm editing but I don't cut to the music. For me, it's very important to be able to watch an edit without any music. Maybe it's just my overblown ego, but I really believe there is music in the editing and if you can get the rhythm right, you can put any good music on it and it will work. I'm excited to use music that isn't necessarily on the same emotional level as what's happening in the scene, not in the same tone, I don't like to layer-cake the emotion, and to me, it actually feels more emotional to contrast the emotions on the screen. But now I know I'm generalizing too much and might even sometimes completely disagree with myself." - Ronaldsdóttir
- From the start Leitch felt that getting the right songs for the project was crucial. Part of this was attempting to answer the question "How do you reinvent this stuffy Cold War spy movie?"
- The soundtrack uses a combination of 80s songs as well as covers of 80s songs
- The latter was used in order to add "a contemporized feeling of the '80s"
- The movie's producers were initially worried that they would not be able to get the rights to all the songs that Leitch wanted to use, but Leitch himself estimated that around 75% of his picks made it into the final product

## PROMOTION

- In May 2015, Focus Features acquired distribution rights to the film
- It was scheduled to be released on August 11, 2017, but was later moved up to July 28, 2017
- The film had its world premiere at the South by Southwest on March 12, 2017

## BOX OFFICE

- Total Lifetime Grosses (As of August 4th): \$24,374,515
- Domestic: \$24,374,515
  - + Foreign: \$4,574,255
  - = Worldwide: \$28,948,770
- Domestic Summary
  - Opening Weekend: \$18,286,420
  - (#4 rank, 3,304 theaters, \$5,535 average)
  - % of Total Gross: 75.0%
- > View All Weekends
  - Widest Release: 3,304 theaters
  - In Release: 6 days / 0.9 weeks
- *Atomic Blonde* was released the same weekend as *The Emoji Movie* and was projected to gross around \$20 million from 3,304 theaters in its opening weekend
- It made \$1.52 million from Thursday night previews at 2,685 theaters, which was between the \$870,000 made by *John Wick* in 2014 and the \$2.2 million *John Wick: Chapter 2* in February 2017
- After making \$7.1 million on its first day (including previews), the film went on to open to \$18.3 million, finishing 4th at the box office behind *Dunkirk*, *The Emoji Movie* and *Girls Trip*

## RECEPTION

- IMDB: 7.2
- Cinemascore: B
- RT: 75% Tatometer, 69% Audience

- The site's critical consensus reads, "*Atomic Blonde* gets enough mileage out of its stylish action sequences – and ever-magnetic star – to make up for a narrative that's somewhat less hard-hitting than its protagonist."
- Richard Roeper of the *Chicago Sun-Times* gave the film 3.5 out of 4 stars, saying: "Borrow from *Bourne* and Bond. Rinse and repeat. This is the recipe for the quite ridiculous, ultra-violent and deliriously entertaining *Atomic Blonde*, a slick vehicle for the magnetic, badass charms of Charlize Theron, who is now officially an A-list action star on the strength of this film and *Mad Max: Fury Road*."
- Writing for *Rolling Stone*, Peter Travers praised the cast and fight scenes, giving it 3 stars out of 4 and saying, "It's the fight scenes that count – and they're astonishingly good, from a mano-a-mano beatdown involving Theron's stiletto heel and a thug's jugular vein to a climactic free-for-all in a swanky hotel suite where 99 Luftballons scores every gunshot and gut-punch."

## SEQUEL/LEGACY

- "I'm prepared for a sequel. Charlize was really looking for a character-driven action movie and I told her, 'I'm going to write this script like your character is a guy, and every guy is going to wish they were your character. I'm going to create your *Bourne* franchise.' I see it as three movies. It might be more." - Kurt Johnstad
- "That's going to take a while to figure out. We're starting that conversation right now. We're definitely talking." - Charlize Theron

## DEMETRI PANOS

### INTERESTING FACTS

⌘ The setting for the story that would become *Atomic Blonde* represents a singular time and place in history: Berlin, right before the Wall came down after standing for 28 years.

⌘ "It was a Wild West atmosphere," marvels Charlize Theron, who began developing the script almost five years ago, with an eye to perform in the action-thriller.

⌘ Producer Kelly McCormick notes that the structure's function was quite multifaceted: "The Berlin Wall didn't just hold people in—instead it held secrets that could endanger intelligence agents, ruin careers and end lives."

⌘ A LITTLE BACKGROUND ON "THE WALL":

⌘ The Wall was actually comprised of two separate barriers: the exterior wall on the West Berlin border, and a heavily guarded interior wall about 30 yards inward. In between, on the "death strip"—amidst layers of steel and concrete barriers—heavily armed soldiers patrolled with dogs while sand strips exposed the tracks of anyone who came too close. The Wall encompassed 70 miles of barbed wire, 310 guard towers, 65 anti-vehicle trenches and 40,000 Soviet-trained frontier soldiers.

⌘ A WRITERS EXPERIENCE IN BERLIN

⌘ Screenwriter Kurt Johnstad, when approached to pen the script as an adaptation of the initial graphic novel in the series, was eager to be part of the project. That stemmed from his personal connections to Berlin. The writer of 300 recalls: "My father had been a pilot for Pan Am and was based in West Berlin during the '60s, and then again in the '80s. So I got to spend a lot of time there before the Wall fell. My sister still lives there today with her family."

⌘ The author's teenage years found him in West Berlin's sectors, but also going over to the East. "Only one train line and one highway connected East and West," he recalls. Johnstad appreciated how

Berlin then was unbelievably colorful. It was this magnet for artists, musicians and anarchists...a pulsing destination set against the oppressive thumb of communism. "Creatively, it was a powerful place to be in; the art and music scenes were thriving. But I also noticed how it felt like an outpost where danger was lurking. I wanted to try and convey that heightened sense of peril.

#### OPTIONING AND PRODUCING

The Oni Press team found an enthusiastic champion in Theron, who joined as producer with her production company, Denver & Delilah, A.J. Dix and Beth Kono in optioning the provocative material. Theron's team saw the opportunity to take a story that is relentless and committed, as well as tough and fun and sexy, and explore it fearlessly on screen. In "The Coldest City," they saw something explosive, wild and incredibly entertaining.

Leading independent film finance and production entity Sierra/Affinity, run by the film's executive producers Nick Meyer and Marc Schaberg, financed and produced the film, licensing the rights to Focus Features and Universal for much of the world as well as to select high-end independent distributors. Former Sierra executive Kelly McCormick, who now produces at 87Eleven Action Design, explains: "What makes Atomic Blonde so viable is the strong female protagonist played by Oscar® winner Charlize Theron, a terrific story, and a world that was both relatable and iconic—here was a movie that was undeniable."

#### ON DIRECTOR DAVID LEITCH WORKING WITH WRITER KURT JOHNSTAD

To helm Atomic Blonde, the production would turn to director David Leitch, fresh off the sleeper-hit success of John Wick, which Leitch co-directed with Chad Stahelski. As co-founder of 87Eleven, Leitch has served as the second unit director on blockbusters from Jurassic World and Captain America: Civil War to Logan. Leitch is not simply a "stunts guy." He has an undeniable and specific command of the intersection between massive action and intimate stories...and has helped to create an entirely new brand of filmmaking.

Leitch, a longtime friend of Johnstad's, appreciated the script's combination of historical drama, espionage suspense and action. The director walks us through his interest: "I grew up in the '80s and quite clearly remember images of the Wall coming down and the significance of that, so right away I found the subject matter very compelling and interesting...especially because it is relevant with today's politics. I responded not only to the storytelling but also to the visual possibilities."

Leitch worked with Johnstad and the film's producers on the development of the script. The screenwriter describes the process as "hands down, one of the best I've had. Dave and I have a shorthand of friendship and respect. I liked how he wanted to move a classic noir spy thriller into something new, to push the envelope and take some risks."

#### Spies and Traitors: Casting the Film

James McAvoy, researched those who MI6 recruited in its early stages and found a telling fact he based his character on: The agency looked for people less likely to live long enough to divulge national secrets in later years.

#### French spy Delphine Lasalle, portrayed by Algerian actress Sofia Boutella

Boutella conceived a history for character that would inform her performance. "My character sought refuge and excitement in Berlin," the actress offers. "She wanted an alternative choice in life, and gets swept up in the contagious energy and optimism of the freedom movement. She identifies with their desires and strongly relates to those artists and leaders fighting for change in West Berlin, while

segregated from friends and family in East Berlin. All of this sparks Delphine's imagination and romanticism; she believes she can help make a difference at a pivotal time in history."

- ⌘ Re-creating 1980s Berlin:

- ⌘ Design, Locations, Props and Costumes

- ⌘ The director reunited with longtime friends and colleagues to make Atomic Blonde look deceptively effortless:

- ⌘ cinematographer Jonathan Sela, composer Tyler Bates, music supervisor John Houlihan, editor Elísabet Ronaldsdóttir and

- ⌘ second unit director and stunt coordinator SAM HARGRAVE (whom Leitch has mentored throughout his career) had all collaborated with him on John Wick.

- ⌘ David Scheunemann, after having depicted Berlin with expertise as art director on Inglourious Basterds, was engaged as production designer.

- ⌘ Cindy Evans, who had collaborated with Theron several times prior, was booked as costume designer.

- ⌘ Production Design and The Wall

- ⌘ PRODUCTION DESIGNER DAVID Scheunemann ON USING BUDAPEST TO DOUBLE FOR BERLIN, who was raised in Germany, concurs that "Berlin has changed quite a lot since 1989 with significant renovation and architectural additions. There are no longer the same textures, especially in the old town. Such textures still exist in Budapest, and could match both East and West Berlin. Budapest has stunning old abandoned buildings, which have marvelously decrepit exteriors and crumbling interiors that make perfect backdrops. Also, the city is much denser, with narrower streets, which is more cinematic for a spy story."

- ⌘ The Hungarian capital was also dressed to stand in for London and Paris, as some wider streets were found to effectively emulate the latter city.

- ⌘ Scheunemann and his art department created a 250-foot-long, 12-foot-high wood-based re-creation of the Berlin Wall. Built in several sections so as to be portable, this cinematic version was hauled to various locations in Budapest as the backdrop for scenes occurring along the sectors' borders.

- ⌘ Local graffiti artists were hired to paint the barricades in a manner similar to how citizens and visitors expressed themselves decades ago on the actual Berlin Wall, which was constructed two feet inside East German territory and not on the precise borderline. The Wall became an irresistible canvas for local and international artists to create memorable drawings, paintings and inscriptions. Many of the illustrations would mock the East German government, such as the one with an arrow pointing forward with the directions: "Socialist Paradise: 10 Meters."

- ⌘ The production designer, DAVID Scheunemann explains the dichotomy: "Because the Wall was actually in East Berlin, the West German police exercised no authority to prevent citizens from approaching its Western side and painting on it. The East Berlin guards were, of course, on the other side of the barrier and powerless to stop it. A lot of beautiful artistic work resulted!"

- ⌘ Bowie as Inspiration

⌘ The third crucial David during production was none other than Bowie, seen by Leitch as a touchstone of the film. The spirit and energy of Bowie—as well as the music of Berlin enthusiasts Nick Cave and Iggy Pop—infused the punk and New Wave influences of the time.

⌘ On the set, his “Cat People” theme (“Putting Out Fire”) was heard in the night air as an impromptu tribute to the legend, who had just passed away. Bowie had lived in Berlin during the ’70s, recording three acclaimed albums commonly referred to as the Berlin Trilogy. The second verse of his cut “Heroes” was inspired by the artist seeing his producer standing near the Wall, visible from the windows of his recording studio.

⌘ Leitch walks us through the production’s rock ’n’ roll, rebellious logic: “Western music and clothes had been illicit in East Berlin, which only made them even more coveted by youth there. So the pop sensibility of our movie is definitely inspired by the music of the time, and you will hear a lot of classic cuts on the soundtrack, plus some cool stuff that may have been under the radar at the time.”

⌘ Music and story are seamless here. The soundtrack cherry-picks songs from one of the most thriving creative eras in the last century...one that echoes current global tensions.

#### ⌘ Cinematography Design

⌘ The director worked with Scheunemann as well as cinematographer JOHNATHON Sela to conceive a palette that would be muted and gray in the London scenes but come out with more color than expected in Berlin, particularly with the West and its punk movements. To go with richness and vibrancy, Sela utilized Alexa cameras and anamorphic lenses to capture widescreen imagery. As he framed shots of the stunning, crumbling buildings that are set on isolated, narrow streets, Sela gave Budapest this forbidden, dangerous vibe.

⌘ CINEMATOGRAPHER, JOHNATHON SELA “In researching Berlin at that time, I was surprised at just how colorful it was,” Sela reveals. “That motivated us to go for super saturation; we made use of blue and pink neon, notably in the bar where Broughton and Delphine first meet. There is gray in depicting the desolation of some areas, notably on the Communist side.

⌘ “The green tones showing the surging creativity in the West contrast with blue tones in the East, which we render as starker and more sinister,” the DP continues. “The visual contrasts between East and West are there not only to express the political and economic distinctions, but also to help track, or color-code, the story as our characters court danger by crossing back and forth.”

⌘ A glossy, yellow-toned ambience was fashioned around the appearance of Schweiger, whose character’s habitat is an elegant jewelry store—one created by the art department in a previously drab storefront shop in a mall passage in central Budapest.

#### ⌘ Props

⌘ Aside from Schweiger and Theron, the most valuable player in this setting was one with its own setting: an elegant Carl F. Bucherer timepiece provided by the company for the production. The watch is worn by Theron as Broughton, but at one point in the story she must entrust it to Schweiger’s character. Similarly, a Bucherer technician was dispatched from Germany to assist in the careful maintenance of the watch during deconstruction and reconstruction—one repeated during multiple takes by a highly focused Schweiger, with the watch getting its own close-ups as a key featured player.

⌘ prop master MARCUS HAENDGEN would spend weeks tracking down and securing what was needed, such as vintage recording devices that perhaps were used by espionage agencies.

⌘ What Berlin may have lacked in political autonomy and freedom of movement, it compensated for in artistic and sexual liberty. A “rough trade” bar sequence during which Broughton and Percival have a tête-à-tête at a large circular centerpiece was filmed in a defunct Budapest cabaret theater that had been modeled after Paris’ famed Moulin Rouge. The production assembled partially clothed dancers, red vinyl booths, chandeliers, nude statues and an enormous painting depicting a scantily clad Ronald Reagan wearing a cowboy hat and chaps.

⌘ “We pulled out all the stops for that location,” marvels Scheunemann. All told, he and his team designed 85 sets for the film...some of which were redressed to be filmed on more than once.

#### ⌘ Costume Design

⌘ West Berlin’s underground club scene was vividly re-created and depicted with creative license for the Pike Club sequence.

⌘ Some 250 extras were crowded into the Pike Club set alongside principal actors and crew. COSTUME DESIGNER CINDY Evans’ mandate to her costume department was “to find the coolest elements of fashion from the ’80s, and not in a comical way but stylized. There are callbacks to the ’60s and ’70s, as there would have been in Berlin at that time.

⌘ COSTUME DESIGNER CINDY Evans sourced much of Atomic Blonde’s wardrobe from Angels Costumes in London, as well as the historic Studio Babelsberg just outside Berlin, which has in its archives impressive original GDR (East Germany) military pieces. She notes: “We also did a lot of thrift shopping in Budapest. The gold mine there was a great secondhand store called Humana, where we purchased hundreds of items. We also ended up making a number of costumes.”

⌘ The wardrobe descriptions called for Theron to wear several stunning and glamorous outfits, with the House of Dior Archives red coat lent to the production for a nighttime exterior sequence arguably outshining the rest. Evans promises: “It’s a showstopper! Exposed seams, large black buttons, swing hem...”

⌘ Broughton’s garb, however, takes its lumps, and what with the frequent bloodstains and/or tears, Evans and her team had to prepare multiples of many outfits, anticipating the violence and intensity of the fight scenes that would be sustained by Leitch in unbroken shots.

#### ⌘ Master Class in Stunts:

#### ⌘ Blonde Training

⌘ During pre-production, when Leitch saw what Theron was capable of, he would actually construct a seven-and-one-half-minute, one-camera fight scene in which Broughton systematically takes out her would-be killers in an abandoned building.

⌘ Every single shot in which one sees Broughton fighting is Theron in the film. She has a background in ballet training and trained up to five hours a day for three months—as well as memorizing days of intricate choreography—that allowed her to pull it off. Audiences have never seen her this intense, exposed and raw.

⌘ Theron began training less than two months out from *Mad Max: Fury Road* and sparred against Keanu Reeves at Leitch and Stahelski's training facility for stunt performers and actors (87Eleven Action Design) while Reeves trained for *John Wick: Chapter 2*.

⌘ Jonathan Sela has partnered with the director for years—most recently on *John Wick* and *Deadpool 2*. Their commitment to shooting fight scenes is unmatched, and the audience feels like there isn't a single edit as they're drawn into this world.

⌘ Under Leitch's guidance, the film's stunt director and second unit director, Sam Hargrave—who also plays James Gascogne in the film—put the cast through the paces slowly and methodically. Always safe, he took them to levels they never imagined they could achieve. Hargrave calls Broughton's style “a John McClane complex: she'll walk over broken glass to do what it takes to win.”

⌘ Choreography and fights were designed so that Broughton never goes strength-to-strength against opponents. She is extremely savvy, and she never hits straight on with a closed fist. Her technique is an open- or hammer-fist, quick elbows, palm strikes and three quick punches to a man's one.

⌘ Leaving Berlin with cracked teeth, Charlize did know when to draw the line...barely. Her stunt double, MONIQUE GANDERTON, jumped out of a four-story window on a cable and swung in through the second story.

⌘ Theron's strength and agility were put to the test on the first day of shooting, filming an underwater sequence in which Broughton is submerged in a sinking car. Doubling for the icy river was a heavily chlorinated pool that was kept chilly. Stunt personnel were on call, but as cameras rolled it was Theron who successfully executed the escape and surfaced from the vehicle, completely drenched, take after take. She laughs: “As a producer, I didn't necessarily like seeing my actor in a car underwater, but as that actor, I insisted on it!”

⌘ The pool was near an actual river; located in an enormous urban park on Margaret Island (known as Margit Sziged), the Olympic complex abuts the Danube River in Budapest, which played host to the production for 10 weeks. Locations around the city were complemented by soundstages filming at its Origo Studios, before production moved on to Berlin.

#### ⌘ Lensing and Editing Key Sequences

⌘ Leitch, Theron and the entire technical team pulled off a nearly impossible feat. Before the crew finally shot the sequence with handheld cameras, Theron mastered up to 30 moves of choreography...for one continuous scene that they shot again and again.

⌘ One bit of staging required Theron to slam a stunt performer, playing a Broughton attacker, onto a collapsible wooden table. The props and set decoration departments were kept busy replacing not only the piece of furniture, but also the numerous other items destroyed or displaced during the confrontation. Take after take ensued until they were, remembers Leitch, “down to our last table.”

⌘ McAvoy's scenes had to be blocked and then edited carefully because the actor had broken his arm a few weeks before filming began. But he and Leitch decided to capitalize on the imagery of his character sporting a cast, realizing that it spoke volumes about his recklessness. McAvoy smiles: “I had done some research into those who MI6 recruited in its early stages...and they in fact looked for people less likely to live long enough to divulge national secrets in later years.”

⌘ The actor narrowly escaped even more serious injury during the shoot. Secured into the driver's seat of an '80s Porsche 911, he “was doing my own driving for a scene where Percival saves Broughton. On the seventh or eighth take, the handbrake didn't set and so I kept going right towards the camera

crew. I had to force the wheel and the foot brake, and finally I was able to be stopped...by a wall." Fortunately, he was only shaken.

#### Picture Cars and Automotive Stunts

The crucial sequence uniting McAvoy, Theron and Marsan's characters loomed as the film's most logistically challenging. Approximately 400 extras were on call, extensive set decoration and signage had to be in place at every step for the characters and the camera, and dozens of 20th-century cars needed to be on view.

Many of those cars, it was decided, would be 1970s and '80s incarnations of a model named Trabant. Nicknamed the "Trabi," this was the most common vehicle in East Germany at the time, made in Saxony and exported to other Soviet-bloc countries. Its noisy two-cycle engine provided little power and excessive exhaust. The body was composed primarily of a lightweight recycled hard plastic known as Duroplast. All of this has made the car the subject of affectionate derision...and also a collector's item.

Picture vehicle coordinator ZSOLT SOMOGYI had ascertained that East Germans waited three to four years for delivery of their new Trabi, and so the cars were highly valued at the time and accordingly taken good care of. To procure some three dozen Trabis, Somogyi's unit placed advertisements and scoured the Hungarian countryside, knocking on doors with offers to buy or rent privately owned vehicles spotted in driveways or parked on streets. These now-vintage cars were of varying degrees of operational usefulness, but would lend authenticity even without moving; over the course of shooting, some 500 vehicles were sourced by the team.

One particular Trabi was a jewel in the crown: a police vehicle, needed for and then put to use in, a car chase filmed across Budapest streets over the course of a week by both the production's main and the second units.

For this complex sequence, a special vehicle camera rig was constructed for multi-angle coverage placing the audience inside a car—although not, in this case, the Trabi. Stunt driver ANDREW COMRIE explains: "The adjoining rig is essentially a motorized process trailer that allows a driver kept off-screen to hydraulically steer the rig while the actors are seated inside the picture car on screen. An Alexa mini-cam is mounted in the car on a gimbal to allow full-range panning and tilting, and the driver's pod can be reconfigured to sit atop the rig, or on either side. It lends tremendous flexibility for shooting in any direction."

The rig enables a team of five crew members to be concealed onboard while operating windshield wipers, windows and the camera, which can be refocused throughout numerous takes. The chase team rehearsed in open spaces for several days to perfect the choreography and routes before filming began within the city.

After completing its 10 weeks in Budapest, the company boarded a plane to Berlin. But heavy winds caused the flight to be diverted to Hamburg, forcing Theron and the crew to travel six hours by ground. "No one said anything about 'the windiest city,'" laughs producer Schwerin.

The weeklong Berlin leg of shooting took the unit to some of the city's best-known landmarks, encompassing iconic exteriors such as Alexanderplatz, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the World Clock and TV tower and the aging Tempelhof Airport. Continuing the mandate for risky setups, thrilling stunts and surprising moves to the very end of filming, a rooftop scene was shot high atop the Berliner Verlag building.

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/atomic-blonde-sex-scenes-charlize-theron-sofia-boutella-al-most-didnt-happen-1024754>

⌘ While the main focus in both the graphic novel and the script was always on Broughton, in the film some of the minor characters got a lot more attention than originally planned, including that of Sofia Boutella's Delphine Lasalle.

⌘ Long story short: She was originally a male character. In the graphic novel, Lorraine is shown seducing him (both characters are clothed), but you don't see any sex. The film's writer, Kurt Johnstad, cites a conversation he had with Theron that changed that.

⌘ "In the graphic novel, the Lasalle character, the French agent, is actually a man. I said, 'I think it's cool if we gender flip this and make it a woman,'" Johnstad tells Heat Vision.

⌘ Theron's response? "She was like, 'That's cool.'" The relationship between the two stars has also driven the studio's marketing campaign. In the trailer the sex scenes between the characters play a major role.

⌘ Says the film's director, David Leitch: "The relationship was flipped before I came onboard. It was a great idea. You always have to find ways to contemporize these stories, reach bigger audiences and be provocative in your storytelling."

⌘ In the film, when Broughton isn't kicking ass, chain-smoking, on a mission to find her enemy or surviving an underwater car crash, her relationship with Lasalle is what shows her more vulnerable side.

⌘ "We furthered that narrative between them and really tried to use her as a way to show Broughton's humanity," says Leitch. "The Lasalle character represents naivety and innocence that Lorraine has obviously lost. For a moment she cracks and shows humanity in a world of lies where you really can't trust anyone. She was a really important part of the story so we expanded that a bit."

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/atomic-blonde-director-interview-david-leitch-david-bowie-hints-twists-at-end-1025230>

⌘ And he found a way in to the Cold War spy drama, based on the graphic novel Coldest City, in part by using music from the '80s. Indeed, the film features multiple well-known songs from the decade, including 'Til Tuesday's "Voices Carry," used multiple times; George Michael's "Father Figure"; and two David Bowie songs: "Cat People (Putting Out Fire)," toward the beginning of the film, and his collaboration with Queen, "Under Pressure," at the end.

⌘ But his music wasn't meant to be Bowie's only contribution to the film. The Atomic Blonde team wanted the singer to appear in the film in the interrogation scene that frames the story.

⌘ "I think he really responded to the script and that it was about this city and there was music and everything. But at that time, he respectfully declined," Leitch tells The Hollywood Reporter. "Then during the shooting of the film, we heard of his passing, so it was even more special to us that those songs remained in the movie."

⌘ How did you decide which '80s songs to use? And specifically, there are a few that are used at crucial points, like "Voices Carry." How did you decide on that song?

⌘ When I read the script, I immediately decided to write down songs that were speaking to me. And after the challenge of how do I make this pop-culture mashup in more of a commercial/fun way, the first instinct was "I want to rely on '80s music and sort of transport us." Music emotionally and psychologically transports you immediately. So I put together my playlist and I'd play that over and over and we'd play it on set in the scout van, and I started to slowly drop those specific songs into the list as we scouted, into the actual script. "Voices Carry" came on very early in terms of the ironic lyrics of everybody listening in

on each other, and I liked that. "Putting Out Fire" came on really early as well in terms of that bombastic nature and someone who's not afraid to pour gasoline on what is already a fire. It was just that slow process, but it was early on. By the time we started shooting, all of those songs were being played during the sequences as we filmed them so we would know our edits in terms of like "Der Kommissar," there's maybe five shots that that song goes through. And that was sort of planned and music video-esque.