

## THE UPSIDE (2018)

- Released on January 11th, 2018
- 2 Hours 6 minutes
- \$37,500,000 (estimated) Budget
- Directed by Neil Burger
- Written by Jon Hartmere (screenplay by), Éric Toledano (based on the motion picture "Les Intouchables" by)
- Lantern Entertainment (II), The Weinstein Company
- Rated PG-13 for suggestive content and drug use
- The film had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival on September 8, 2017

## QUICK THOUGHTS

- Marisa Serafini
- Demetri Panos

## DEVELOPMENT

- THE UPSIDE is inspired by the 2011 box office hit French film *Les Intouchables*. Producers Jason Blumenthal, Todd Black and Steve Tisch from Escape Artists were thrilled at the prospect of recreating the French classic, having seen it a few years back and absolutely loving the story. Says Black, "Our decision to remake *Les Intouchables* stemmed from a desire to dive deeper into the lives of the incredible real people the original film is based on. We wanted to know more about their stories and believed we could give audiences a fresh interpretation that honored the brilliance of the French version."
- "The movie is about people bridging the divisions between us, which to me is an incredibly important theme," explains director Neil Burger. "I wanted the movie to feel real and to be as honest as possible. That goes with the depiction of Phillip and his disability. To be as honest as we could about that experience and ultimately be as respectful as we could about that. And the same with Kevin's character's experience. His background being from the South Bronx and what he's going through in his life. The movie is about respect and it's about compassion. And I think that had to be part of the filmmaking as well. To be as honest and respectful as possible."
- On August 2, 2017, the film's title was changed to *The Upside*
- It was initially scheduled to be released in the United States on March 9, 2018. However in January 2018, following the Harvey Weinstein sexual abuse allegations scandal, the film was pulled from the schedule by The Weinstein Company and moved to an unspecified 2018 date.
- English-language remake of the record-breaking 2011 French hit "Intouchables."
- STX Entertainment has partnered with the re-named Weinstein Company, Lantern Entertainment, to release *The Upside* in 2019.
- At one point, Paul Feig was set to direct, but that never came to pass.

**WRITING** (Jon Hartmere (screenplay by), Éric Toledano (based on the motion picture "Les Intouchables" by))

- In July 2011, in addition to buying distribution rights in English-speaking countries, Scandinavian countries and China, The Weinstein Company acquired the rights to remake *The Intouchables* in English

- “In fact we went back to the book written to flesh it out a little bit more and maybe even go a little bit deeper into their experiences and their back stories and their histories. We wanted to put more of that into the movie.” -Burger
- “It was very important to stay very close to the script. I will say there are actually two lines that are improvised in the movie and both of them are said by Bryan Cranston.” - Burger
- “What happened was [Producers] came back to me a year later and they had worked on the script a lot. In that time, things had shifted culturally and politically, at least in the United States. There seemed to be this growing divide. People just couldn’t speak to each other and couldn’t really see each other. There has always obviously been things like that and issues like that, but somehow it was getting to a head. I had been thinking about how to bridge these gaps between people and I read this script. It kind of spoke to that in an indirect and very personal way. The idea is that, through small acts of respect and compassion, we can bridge the gaps and divisions between us to find a common ground as fellow humans.”

### **STORY/TOPICS**

- Father Redemption
- Second chance at life/love

### **CAST**

- The filmmaking team were long-time admirers of both Bryan Cranston and Kevin Hart, and hoped the film would be a welcome challenge for the actors
- Hart and Cranston bring balance to it. Upon realizing how powerful the dynamic is between the two lead characters, the challenge for filmmakers was choosing the proper cast to surround them with. "The supporting actors have to be able to keep up with the stamina, the comedy, and the drama of what is going on," Blumenthal says

### **KEVIN HART (Dell Scott)**

- Chris Rock, Jamie Foxx and Idris Elba were considered for the role
- For Hart, this role was a departure and offered the actor an opportunity to introduce audiences to his dramatic talents, while still infusing his signature wit and humor into his performance. "People are going to be blown away, because Kevin has incredible dramatic chops that nobody's seen before," says director Neil Burger.
- "It was a challenge that I welcomed with open arms," says Hart. Adding, "I've yet to do something like this. I've yet to step into this space. I'm about opening up doors. And this is a door that I've been hesitant to open because I wanted to make sure that the project was right when I actually did it. The Upside is the perfect project for me to step in that direction of a drama-esque performance but still stay true to my comedy roots."
- “Kevin is a very smart guy and he knew exactly what the tone of this was and what he needed to do. It's perfect for him, in his career, to be able to step into a role that's not necessarily in his wheelhouse. Kevin is profoundly talented. It goes into his bones on some deep meta level and it's just there. He delivers when he needs to.” -Cranston

### **BRYAN CRANSTON (Phillip Lacasse)**

- In March 2016, it was announced that Bryan Cranston would play Phillip, replacing Colin Firth

- "I realize that's really the crux of the story: facing the challenges," says Cranston. "Whether you're an African American male just getting out of prison, or a 60 something person with quadriplegia who can't move anything below his neck for the rest of his life, neither see much of a future for themselves. There are dilemmas. Life is not easy."  
-Cranston
- Cranston's dialogue with Phillippe Pozzo Di Borgo, on whom the story is based, was essential to his preparation for the role. These conversations had a major impact on Cranston as he focused on the emotional trials Di Borgo went through. Cranston recounts, "Were there periods of time he wanted to give up? Yes. Were there depths of depression? Yes. Were there thoughts of suicide? Yes. Were there peaks where he thought, oh no, I do have some options. Yes. It's all of the above," Cranston says. "It was up to him to be able to embrace everything about the challenges ahead, both good and bad."
- The physical challenges of playing a character who is completely still ended up being solved mentally for Cranston. "At first, I thought I'd really have to focus on being absolutely still," he said. "I started practicing holding my body in a rigid manner, but that can't be sustained. You're too tense. It really had to just be the opposite of that. I had to go into a Zen-like state in order to just breathe and let it go. Just go with the fallow and have the whole-body collapse in the chair to where the only thing I can move is my neck. And that worked."

#### **NICOLE KIDMAN** (Yvonne Pendleton)

- Jessica Chastain and Michelle Williams considered for a female lead
- "Once we zeroed in on Nicole Kidman, we knew we had something truly special," Black said. "Her body of work alone has shown that she has chosen roles that challenge her and take her in different directions."
- "Nicole Kidman is just a pure delight," Cranston says. "There are a lot of times when you stop shooting and you restart a scene, and actors will go off into their dressing rooms. But Nicole is always on set. She's a brilliant actor."
- "Nicole was a sweetheart. We joked, we played in between takes. Bryan was amazing as well. The rapport that I had with both of them throughout the duration of the film was unbelievable. Bryan and I did become close. Bryan is just a great guy."

#### **AJA NAOMI KING** (Latrice)

#### **TATE DONOVAN** (Carter)

#### **JULIANNA MARGULIES** (Lily)

#### **DIRECTING** (Neil Burger)

- "There was complete apprehension. I actually didn't want anything to do with it. I had no interest in remaking movies that have been successful in a different country. It was not something I was looking to do. They brought the movie to me in 2015 and I turned it down for that reason. Why would I remake this enormous international hit? It has been made and it's great as it is."
- "There were things that I wanted to do and I saw how I could be the one to make it. After that, I immediately wanted to make it and I didn't care about the earlier movie in the

sense that I was no longer competing with that movie. It didn't matter to me that it existed in the world because I felt like this screenplay in front of me needed to be made."

### **PRODUCTION** (Stuart Dryburgh)

- Principal photography began on January 27, 2017 in Philadelphia.
- Park Avenue penthouse that serves as both Phillip's residence, and the vehicle through which he showcases his precious art collection. Knowing that Phillip's penthouse was so vital to the film meant that production designer Mark Friedberg and decorator Beth Rubino would have to abide by strict parameters.
- The process began with extensive research and preparation prior to his first meeting with Burger. In that first meeting, Friedberg came prepared with several architectural references and ideas. He had two directions in particular he felt the apartment could go, and pitched both to Burger.
- "Neil Burger liked the idea that Phillip straddles a line between a particular elitism, someone who would live on Park Avenue, but also has a bit of irreverence for that world," Friedberg said.
- Phillip's Park Avenue penthouse was built on a sound stage. The team built 6,650 feet of interior space, though it connotes a space over double the size, and they did so in roughly three months.
- The library displays more collectibles than paintings - precious books, Da Vinci drawings and scientific depictions, but the rest of the penthouse showcases the artwork that Phillip is so enamored with.

### **EDITING/VFX** (Naomi Geraghty)

- *In America, Hotel Rwanda, The Illusionist, Reservation Road, The Lucky Ones, Limitless, Billions*

### **TRIVIA/EASTER EGGS**

### **SOUND/MUSIC** (Rob Simonsen)

- Renowned film composer and newly-signed Sony Music Masterworks artist Rob Simonsen (*The Front Runner, Foxcatcher, 500 Days of Summer*).
- Of the soundtrack, composer Rob Simonsen says: "It was an honor to work with Neil Burger and his extremely creative team on the score for *The Upside* - finding just the right balance of emotion and levity in the score."
- Having learned to play the piano at a young age and with an educational background in jazz, electronic and traditional orchestral music.

### **PROMOTION**

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### **BOX OFFICE**

- Domestic (as of Jan 18th, 2019): \$26,635,269
- Foreign: \$1,300,000
- Worldwide: \$27,935,269

### **RECEPTION**

- RT: 40% Tatometer: 88%

- IMDB: 5.5/10
- Cinemascore: A

## **SEQUEL/LEGACY**