

Vice (2018 film)

Vice is a 2018 American biographical black comedy-drama film written and directed by Adam McKay. The film stars Christian Bale as former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, with Amy Adams, Steve Carell, Sam Rockwell, Justin Kirk, Tyler Perry, Alison Pill, Lily Rabe, and Jesse Plemons in supporting roles. The film follows Cheney on his path to becoming the most powerful Vice President in American history. It is the second theatrical film to depict the presidency of George W. Bush, following Oliver Stone's *W.* (2008).

Vice was released in the United States on December 25, 2018, by Annapurna Pictures, and grossed \$76 million worldwide. While the performances, especially for Bale as Cheney, received unanimous praise, the film polarized critics; some considered it to be one of the best films of the year while others thought it to be one of the worst, with McKay's screenplay and direction receiving both "scathing critiques and celebratory praise". ^{[4][5]} The film received numerous accolades, with eight nominations at the Oscars, including for Best Picture, winning Best Make-Up and Hairstyling. It also received six nominations each from the Golden Globes (including for Best Motion Picture – Musical or Comedy) and the BAFTAs. For their performances, Bale, Adams, and Rockwell were nominated at all three shows, with Bale winning the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor – Motion Picture Musical or Comedy.

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Directed by	<u>Adam McKay</u>
Written by	<u>Adam McKay</u>
Produced by	<u>Brad Pitt</u>
	<u>Dede Gardner</u>
	<u>Jeremy Kleiner</u>
	<u>Kevin J. Messick</u>
	<u>Will Ferrell</u>
Starring	<u>Adam McKay</u>
	<u>Christian Bale</u>
	<u>Amy Adams</u>
	<u>Steve Carell</u>
	<u>Sam Rockwell</u>
	<u>Tyler Perry</u>
	<u>Alison Pill</u>
	<u>Lily Rabe</u>
Cinematography	<u>Jesse Plemons</u>
	<u>Greig Fraser</u>
Edited by	<u>Hank Corwin</u>

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Plot

Vice is narrated by Kurt, a fictitious veteran of the [Afghanistan](#) and [Iraq Wars](#).

In 1963, Dick Cheney works as a [lineman](#) in [Wyoming](#) after his alcoholism led him to drop out of [Yale University](#). After Cheney is stopped by a traffic cop for driving while intoxicated, his wife [Lynne Cheney](#) tells him to clean up his life or she'll leave him.

In 1969, Cheney finds work as a White House intern during the [Nixon Administration](#). Working under Nixon's economic adviser, [Donald Rumsfeld](#), Cheney becomes a savvy political operative as he juggles commitments to his wife and their daughters, [Liz](#) and [Mary](#). Cheney overhears [Henry Kissinger](#) discussing the secret bombing of Cambodia with President [Richard Nixon](#), revealing the true power of the executive branch to Cheney. Rumsfeld's abrasive attitude leads to him and Cheney being distanced from Nixon, which works in both men's favor; after Nixon's resignation, Cheney rises to the position of White House Chief of Staff for President [Gerald Ford](#) while Rumsfeld becomes [Secretary of Defense](#). The media later dubs the sudden shake-up in the cabinet as the [Halloween Massacre](#). During his tenure, a young [Antonin Scalia](#) introduces Cheney to the [unitary executive theory](#).

After Ford is voted out of office, Cheney runs to be [representative](#) for Wyoming. After giving an awkward and uncharismatic campaign speech, Cheney suffers his first heart attack. While he recovers, Lynne campaigns on her husband's behalf, helping him to win a seat in the [U.S. House of Representatives](#). During the [Reagan Administration](#), Cheney supported a raft of conservative, pro-business policies favoring the fossil fuel industries. He also supported the abolishment of the [FCC fairness doctrine](#) which led to the rise of [Fox News](#), [conservative talk radio](#), and the increasing level of party polarization in the United States. Cheney next serves as [Secretary of Defense](#) under President [George H. W. Bush](#) during the [Gulf War](#). Outside of politics, Cheney and Lynne come to terms with their younger daughter, Mary, [coming out](#) as lesbian. Though Cheney develops ambitions to run for president, he decides to retire from public life to spare Mary from media scrutiny.

Cheney becomes the CEO of [Halliburton](#) while his wife raises golden retrievers and writes books. A false epilogue claims that Cheney lived the rest of his life healthy and happy in the private sector and credits begin rolling, only for them to abruptly end as the film continues.

Cheney is invited to become running mate to [George W. Bush](#) during the [2000 United States presidential election](#). Under the impression that Bush is more interested in pleasing his father than attaining power for himself, Cheney agrees on the condition that Bush delegates executive responsibilities to him. As Vice President, Cheney works with Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, legal counsel [David Addington](#), [Mary Matalin](#), and Chief of Staff [Scooter Libby](#), to exercise control of key [foreign policy](#) and defense decisions throughout Washington.

Music by	Nicholas Britell
Production companies	Plan B Entertainment Gary Sanchez Productions Annapurna Pictures
Distributed by	Mirror Releasing
Release date	December 11, 2018 (Samuel Goldwyn Theater) December 25, 2018 (United States)
Running time	132 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$60 million ^{[1][2]}
Box office	\$76.1 million ^[3]

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Cheney and Rumsfeld maneuver to initiate and then preside over the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The film also covers various events from his vice presidency, including his endorsement of the unitary executive theory, the Plame affair, the accidental shooting of Harry Whittington, and tensions between the Cheney sisters over same-sex marriage. Cheney's actions are shown to lead to hundreds of thousands of deaths and the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq, resulting in him receiving record-low approval ratings by the end of the Bush administration.

While narrating Cheney's tearful deathbed goodbye to his family after another hospitalization, Kurt is killed in a motor accident while jogging. In March 2012, his healthy heart is transplanted into Cheney. A few months later, Cheney acquiesces to his daughter Liz's saying she is opposed to same-sex marriage when she runs for a Senate seat in Wyoming, leaving Mary upset. Liz later wins the election to her father's former Congressional position. At the end of the film, an irate Cheney breaks the fourth wall and delivers a monologue to the audience, stating that he has no regrets about anything he has done in his career.

A mid-credits scene depicts a focus group debating if the movie had a political bias or not.

Cast

Main characters

- Christian Bale as Dick Cheney
 - Alex MacNicoll and Aidan Gail as young Dick Cheney
- Amy Adams as Lynne Vincent Cheney
 - Cailee Spaeny as young Lynne
- Steve Carell as Donald Rumsfeld
- Sam Rockwell as George W. Bush
- Tyler Perry as Colin Powell
- Alison Pill as Mary Cheney
 - Colyse Harger as young Mary Cheney
- Lily Rabe as Liz Cheney
 - Violet Hicks as young Liz Cheney
- Jesse Plemons as Kurt, the narrator

Supporting characters

- Justin Kirk as Scooter Libby
- LisaGay Hamilton as Condoleezza Rice
- Eddie Marsan as Paul Wolfowitz
- Bill Camp as Gerald Ford
- Don McManus as David Addington
- Shea Whigham as Wayne Vincent
- Stephen Adly Guirgis as George Tenet
- Josh Latzer as Secret Service Agent
- Vishesh Chachra as Secret Service Agent Robert
- Jeff Bosley as Secret Service Agent

- Camille Harman as Mary Matalin
- Jillian Armenante as Karen Hughes
- Matthew Jacobs as Antonin Scalia
 - Sam Massaro as young Scalia
- Robert Hughes as Warren E. Burger
- Paul Perri as Trent Lott
- Brandon Sklenar as Bobby Prentace
- Fay Masterson as Edna Vincent
- Kyle More as Roger Ailes
- Kirk Bovill as Henry Kissinger
- Melissa K. Marks as Heather Poe
- Chris Dougherty as Philip Perry
- John Hillner as George H. W. Bush
- Michael Reilly Burke as David Gribbin
- William Goldman as Dennis Hastert
- Tony Forsmark as Grover Norquist
- Adam Bartley as Frank Luntz
- Kevin J. Flood as Richard A. Clarke
- Paul Yoo as John Yoo
- Brandon Firla as Jay Bybee
- Matt Champagne as Douglas J. Feith
- Joseph Beck as Karl Rove
- Tony Graham as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi
- Alex Kingi as Osama bin Laden
- David Fabrizio as Lawrence Wilkerson
- Mark Bramhall as Harry Whittington
- James Hornbeck as Patrick Leahy
- Bob Stephenson as Rush Limbaugh
- Alfred Molina as Waiter (uncredited)
- Naomi Watts as News Anchor (uncredited)

Production

On November 22, 2016, it was announced that Paramount Pictures had come on board to handle the rights to a drama about Dick Cheney; the screenplay was to be written by Adam McKay, who would also direct.^[6] The film was produced by Plan B producers Brad Pitt, Dede Gardner and Jeremy Kleiner, along with McKay and his Gary Sanchez partners Will Ferrell and Kevin Messick.^[6] Bale signed on to play Cheney in April 2017, and gained 40 pounds (18 kg) for the role.^{[7][8]}

On August 22, Bill Pullman was cast as Nelson Rockefeller (though did not appear in the finished film), and a title, *Backseat*, was announced. It was later changed to *Vice*.^[9] On August 31, Sam Rockwell was cast as George W. Bush.^[10] In September 2017, Adam Bartley joined the cast.^[11]

Principal production commenced in late September 2017.^[12] Tyler Perry and Lily Rabe joined the film in October as Colin Powell and Liz Cheney, respectively.^{[13][14]}

Release

The film premiered at the Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills on December 11, 2018. ^[15]

Vice was released in both Canada and the United States on December 25, 2018^[16] alongside *Holmes & Watson*.^[17] It was previously scheduled for release on December 14, 2018.^[18] The film opened in the U.K. on January 25, 2019, with most of Europe and Hong Kong following with February 2019 release dates.^[19]

Vice was released on Blu-ray Disc and DVD by 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment on April 2, 2019.

Reception

Box office

Vice grossed \$47.8 million in the United States and Canada, and \$28.2 million in other territories, for a total worldwide gross of \$76.1 million, against a production budget of \$60 million. ^[3]

In the United States and Canada, the film was released alongside *Holmes & Watson* on Christmas Day and was projected to gross around \$13 million from 2,378 theaters over its first six days.^{[20][21]} It made \$4.8 million on its first day and \$2.9 million on its second.^[22] The film went on to have a first weekend gross of \$7.8 million, for a six-day total of \$17.7 million.^[23] According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, the film performed its "best on both coasts, versus America's heartland, although some theaters in markets including Dallas, Houston and Phoenix turned in respectable business".^[24] It then made \$5.8 million in its second weekend and \$3.3 million in its third.^{[25][26]}

Critical response

On review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes, the film has an approval rating of 65% based on 361 reviews, with an average rating of 6.70/10. The website's critical consensus reads: "*Vice* takes scattershot aim at its targets, but writer-director Adam McKay hits some satisfying bullseyes—and Christian Bale's transformation is a sight to behold."^[27] On Metacritic, the film has a weighted average score 61 out of 100, based on 54 critics, indicating "generally favorable reviews".^[28] Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "C+" on an A+ to F scale, while those at PostTrak gave it an overall positive score of 72% and a 49% "definite recommend".^[22] The critical response to *Vice* made it one of the worst-reviewed films to ever be nominated for Best Picture at the Academy Awards.^{[29][30]}

Todd McCarthy of *The Hollywood Reporter*, who named the film his favorite of 2018, wrote: "Across the board in *Vice*, everyone has risen to the occasion of their individual challenges, none of them easy, to collectively pull off a political satire that both provokes great laughs and hits home with some tragic truths".^[31] Eric Kohn of IndieWire gave the film a "B−" and called it "messy but ambitious", writing: "*Vice*, in its rambunctious and unfocused manner, takes some ludicrous risks to make cogent points about Cheney's malicious intent—and how he put his plans into action".^[32] By contrast, Peter Bradshaw of *The Guardian* awarded the film 4/5 stars, and wrote that Bale "captur[es] the former vice-president's bland magnificence in Adam McKay's entertainingly nihilist biopic".^[33]



Christian Bale, Amy Adams and Sam Rockwell's performances garnered Academy Award nominations for Best Actor, Best Supporting Actress, and Best Supporting Actor respectively.

Rolling Stone film critic Peter Travers praised the film, giving it a 4/5 rating and writing: "Adam McKay's flamethrowing take on Dick Cheney, played by a shockingly brilliant Christian Bale, polarizes by being ferociously funny one minute, bleakly sorrowful the next, and ready to indict the past in the name of our scarily uncertain future."^[34]

Stephanie Zacharek of *Time* gave the film a negative review, describing *Vice* as an "exhausting film that turns Dick Cheney into a cartoon villain".^[35] *Ikon London Magazine*, while praising the make-up artistry of Greg Cannom,^[36] noted that "the story reminds of a witch hunt".^[37]

Ann Hornaday of *The Washington Post* praised Bale's performance as Cheney but criticized the story pacing, awarding the film 2/5 stars. Hornaday had issues with the film's structure, writing that the film is "a mess, zigging here and zagging there, never knowing quite when to end, and when it finally does, leaving few penetrating or genuinely illuminating ideas to ponder".^[38] Similarly, Scott Mendelson of *Forbes* praised Bale's and Amy Adams's performances, but criticized the film as a "cinematic mediocrity".^[39]

Historical inaccuracies



Real-life photograph of Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney with President Gerald Ford at the Oval Office in 1975.

Numerous scenes from the film were identified as being historically inaccurate, heavily dramatized, or presented without necessary context.^{[40][41][42][43]} *Politifact* stated that in certain scenes, "the line between historic facts and poetic interpretation gets fuzzy".^[40]

In an early scene where Rumsfeld (played by Steve Carell) is introduced, it was stated that he was an elite Navy jet pilot. In reality, Rumsfeld never flew jet-engine aircraft during active-duty service within the United States Navy; he only flew propeller-engine aircraft such as the Grumman S-2F Tracker and North American T-6 Texan.^[44]

During the early scene when Cheney first arrives for his congressional internship program in 1969, it is depicted that Cheney still has not yet decided whom he will work for and decides to work with Illinois's 13th district Congressman, Donald Rumsfeld following Cheney listening to and admiring Rumsfeld's speech. In real-life, Dick Cheney, who had been affiliated with the Republican Party and Conservatism prior to his government service work, was actually introduced to Donald Rumsfeld by Rumsfeld's colleague in the House of Representatives, Congressman William A. Steiger from 6th district of Wisconsin, to work under Rumsfeld when he was

appointed by President Richard Nixon as Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity and needed more staff to work with. During Rumsfeld's tenure as Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, Rumsfeld also brings along his old protégé from Rumsfeld's time at Princeton University, Frank Carlucci to work along with Dick Cheney to assist Rumsfeld with tasks as Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Carlucci later-on succeeded Rumsfeld as Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity when Rumsfeld was appointed as Counselor to the President by President Nixon and coincidentally both Rumsfeld, Cheney and Carlucci would later-on served as United States Secretary of Defense. ^[45]^[44]

An important scene in the film that depicts Dick Cheney conversing with Antonin Scalia in the mid-1970s about expanding the power of the executive branch is totally fictional. However, Cheney campaigned for increased presidential authority. ^[40] In the scene, the "theory of the unitary executive" is mentioned although the phrase did not become used by legal scholars until the late 1980s. Politifact says that the film also "butchers" the meaning of the unitary executive when in reality, the theory says the president has ultimate control over the executive branch. However, the film represents the theory as advocating for the president to have unlimited powers. ^[40]

The film implies that Lynne Cheney's father murdered her mother, however there is no evidence provided for this assertion. Officially, Lynne Cheney's mother Edna drowned on the evening of May 24, 1973 at the age of 54. She was walking her dogs near Yesness Pond and slipped and fell in. She did not know how to swim and her body was found after her husband reported her missing. Both the sheriff and coroner stated that there was no evidence to indicate foul play and her drowning was ruled accidental. ^[41] Edna had been taking blood pressure medicine that often made her dizzy, her daughter Lynne Cheney theorized that she lost her balance when chasing after her dogs. Lynne Cheney never implied that her father could have killed her mother. Instead, she stated that her father was so devastated after the death of his wife that he drank himself to death two years later. The assertion made by the film was identified by some as a conspiracy theory. ^[41]

Responses from Cheney family

Dick Cheney's daughter and Congresswoman Liz Cheney criticized Christian Bale for his portrayal of her father in *Vice*, remarking during a *Fox & Friends* interview that "he finally had the chance to play a real superhero, and he clearly screwed it up". Liz also responded negatively to Bale's acceptance speech for winning the Best Actor in a Comedy or Musical Golden Globe for his portrayal of Cheney, in which the actor thanked Satan for inspiring him to play the role of Cheney. ^[46]^[47]^[48]

Accolades

Vice has received multiple awards and nominations, and was nominated for six Golden Globe Awards at the 76th annual ceremony, the most nominations of any film,^[49] with Bale winning for Best Actor – Motion Picture Musical or Comedy. ^[50] The film was subsequently nominated for eight awards at the 91st Academy Awards (winning Best Make-Up and Hairstyling),^[51] nine awards at the 24th Critics' Choice Awards (winning Best Actor and Best Actor in a Comedy for Bale),^[52] six awards at the 72nd British Academy Film Awards (winning Best Editing),^[53] and 4 nominations at the 8th AACTA International Awards. ^[54]

See also

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- Federal Advisory Committee Act

- Unitary executive theory
- Neoconservatism

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External links

- Official website (<https://www.vice.movie/home/>)
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 - *Vice* (<https://www.metacritic.com/movie/vice-2018>) at Metacritic
 - *Vice* (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/vice_2018) at Rotten Tomatoes
 - *Vice* (<https://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=dickcheneyfilm.htm>) at Box Office Mojo
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