

# **John Krasinski and the Tense Wait for 'A Quiet Place Part II'**

It's been more than a year since the film he wrote and directed was originally set for release. Now, as the sequel to the 2018 hit reaches theaters, Hollywood is holding its breath.

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On the night of March 8, 2020, John Krasinski was celebrating the imminent release of his new post-apocalyptic thriller, ["A Quiet Place Part II,"](#) which he wrote and directed. He proudly walked the red carpet for its premiere at the Rose Theater as he posed for photographs with Emily Blunt, his wife and the film's star. He told the crowd at Jazz at Lincoln Center how excited he was to share the movie with them and, shortly, with audiences everywhere.

Instead, in the days that followed, the world turned into a kind of horror movie itself. An unseen enemy drove people into seclusion; once-thriving locales turned empty and entire industries were put on hold. The release of "A Quiet Place Part II" was postponed.

Krasinski spent that time thinking mostly about the safety of his family, but when he contemplated the uncertain state of his industry he also wondered what would happen to his film.

"It was just the most bizarre circumstance," he told me recently. "What is the fate of this movie? When do people see it? How do they see it? *Do they see it?* That started to get pretty weird."

Now, after a delay of more than a year, Paramount will open "A Quiet Place Part II" in theaters on May 28, making it one of the first major films to receive an exclusive theatrical release from a Hollywood studio in

the not-quite-post-coronavirus era.

Millicent Simmonds, left, Noah Jupe and Emily Blunt in the sequel, "A Quiet Place Part II." Jonny Cournoyer/Paramount Pictures

[The original 2018 hit](#), which Krasinski also directed, was a largely silent science-fiction film about two parents (played by Krasinski and Blunt) guiding their children ([Millicent Simmonds](#) and Noah Jupe) through a world overtaken by vicious creatures that are triggered by noise and could kill the family if they make a sound.

"Part II," whose faded posters could be seen in dystopian photographs of our hollowed-out real world during the pandemic, preserves that gimmick and continues that story. But it now has much more to contend with than eerie resonances with current events.

The response that greets the sequel will reveal whether

moviegoers, who have spent recent months bingeing on streaming services at home, are ready and willing to go to theaters in large numbers again.

Its release will also be a significant test of "A Quiet Place" as a franchise for Paramount, a studio that could really use one, and of Krasinski himself, an affable actor-director who hadn't made a mark as a commercial filmmaker until he made the original movie.

None of this is lost on Krasinski. Speaking in a video call from Budapest, where he recently resumed filming [the Amazon action series "Jack Ryan,"](#) he told me that he spent the past year hovering "somewhere between optimism and naïveté" as he waited for "A Quiet Place Part II" to finally arrive.

He added, "I don't think anyone's brain was prepared for what was really about to happen."

Nearly two years ago, in August 2019, Krasinski was directing his cast on the set of "A Quiet Place Part II" in Buffalo. Standing on a cavernous sound stage built to look like the subterranean chambers of an abandoned steel mill, he called for silence and the instructions reverberated in rapid whispers as crew members conveyed them to the farthest reaches of the set.

The actors began their scene: Blunt, now a hardened survivor of the alien invasion, had entered the hiding place of a disheveled holdout played by the "Peaky

Blinders" star Cillian Murphy. Though Murphy despaired for humanity, Blunt told him not to lose faith because —

Suddenly the stillness was punctured by a staccato tick-tick-ticking: the film in one of the cameras had come to the end of its reel and was flapping obnoxiously. Krasinski called cut; the take was spoiled and would have to be tried again.

As Blunt later explained, she had grown used to such interruptions. "That has happened so many times," she said. "It's usually on your best take as well."

Krasinski said it was all part of an elaborate process he jokingly described as "marriage therapy": "All you've got to do is get a camera and put your wife through torturous stuff — you work a lot of things out."

Blunt, Simmonds and Krasinski, who said that as he waited for the film to come out, he spent the past year hovering "somewhere between optimism and naïveté." Bryan Derballa for The New York Times

If you only recognize the 41-year-old Krasinski from his role as the goofy, gallant [Jim Halpert on "The Office,"](#) you already know more than you realize about him. He is an unapologetically earnest guy who, when he gets excited about a shot working or a line of dialogue landing just right, exclaims things like "Yahtzee!"

He is also an ardent fan of popular cinema. His downtown Manhattan offices, when I visited in January 2020, were

adorned with posters of favorite films like "The Apartment," "The Graduate" and "Ordinary People" (as well as a Spanish-language advertisement for "Kramer Contra Kramer").

A smaller front room was decorated with family photos and a birthday present that Blunt had given Krasinski on the set of the first "Quiet Place": a framed picture of Steven Spielberg in the mouth of the mechanical shark from "Jaws," a movie that he and Blunt watched at least eight times when they started dating.

After "The Office" concluded, Krasinski starred in "[13 Hours](#)," Michael Bay's dramatization of the 2012 Benghazi attacks, bringing him to the attention of Bay's former producing partners Andrew Form and Brad Fuller.

While Form and Fuller sought Krasinski for the title role in "Jack Ryan," they also pitched him a draft of "A Quiet Place," by the screenwriters Bryan Woods and Scott Beck, hoping he'd play the father.

To their surprise, Krasinski not only wanted the role — he also wanted to rewrite the script and direct the movie. (Woods and Beck shared screenwriting credit with Krasinski on "A Quiet Place" and are credited for characters in "Part II." Through a representative, they declined to comment for this article.)

If done correctly, Krasinski said, the film could be a testament to "parenthood and the strength of the family."

But at that point, the entries on his directorial résumé were a few episodes of "The Office" and two little-seen features: a 2009 adaptation of David Foster Wallace's ["Brief Interviews With Hideous Men"](#) and the 2016 family comedy-drama ["The Hollars."](#)

"There was nothing we could point to, to say that John Krasinski can direct a thriller," Fuller said. But what got Krasinski the job was his enthusiasm in conversations with producers and studio executives. After a meeting with Paramount, Fuller said, "we had no resistance in terms of making the film. Our passion was based on John's insight and his passion."

The original film, with Blunt and Krasinski as a couple expecting another child, was about "the promise that all parents make to their kids, that I will always be there and protect you," the filmmaker said. Jonny Cournoyer/Paramount Pictures

Blunt said she didn't intend to make a movie with her husband. But she recalled seeing Krasinski get excited about the original "Quiet Place" screenplay around the time their younger daughter, Violet, was six weeks old. Gradually, she found herself identifying with the character of a gun-toting mother who'd just given birth.

"It's her, standing in front of her children, and protecting them at all costs," Blunt said. "The bright line between myself and the character, which I normally have on most sets, got fairly blurry for me. And some scenes absolutely left me on the floor."



"A Quiet Place," which ran a taut, tense 90 minutes, took in more than \$340 million worldwide on a production budget of about \$17 million, making a follow-up all but inevitable.

Krasinski had not planned to write or direct a sequel, and he feared that viewers would dismiss such a project as mercenary. He also worried that the achievements of the first film had been accidental and that a failed follow-up would surely expose this — apprehensions that he chalked up to his "Irish-Catholic Boston thing."

"We were brought up to not ever be like, 'I'm worth it. I deserve this,'" Krasinski explained. "I think a toxic, black bile comes out every time you say something like that."

But gradually Krasinski began to see a new story take shape and he pounded out a draft of the "Part II" screenplay in a three-and-a-half-week burst. If the original "Quiet Place" was about "the promise that all parents make to their kids, that I will always be there and protect you," he said, then "at some point, that promise has to be broken."

"So the second movie is about, once that promise is broken, how do you survive on your own?" Krasinski continued. "But it's also about the hope that a new generation has, that an old generation doesn't."

Longtime friends of Krasinski's said that he was not fundamentally altered by the staggering success of "A

Quiet Place.” Ryan Reynolds, the “Deadpool” star who has been close to him and Blunt for several years, said that Krasinski retained an essential humility even after the movie was embraced by “the most mainstreamy-est of people.”

“John certainly isn’t the guy who calls his shots in that way,” Reynolds said. “Before ‘A Quiet Place’ came out, it wasn’t like he was walking around, saying this thing’s going to blow the doors off the industry. He speaks softly about most things.”

Krasinski and Blunt on the set of the sequel. He joked that working with his wife was a form of “marriage therapy.” Jonny Cournoyer/Paramount Pictures

Reynolds, a father of three daughters, said that their conversations during the shutdown were not focused on their work but on their families. “We were mostly talking about what it’s like to raise kids in the midst of a pandemic,” Reynolds said.

But Krasinski acknowledged that there were moments when he felt frustrated and uncertain about the fate of “Part II,” whose release was pushed back multiple times. Once he and Paramount got past the obvious need for the initial delay, he said, “it took all of us weeks if not months to really figure out what was happening and understand what we were in for.”

Among the fellow filmmakers that Krasinski said he commiserated with during this period was his friend Paul

Thomas Anderson, the elusive auteur.

As Krasinski recalled one of their conversations, "He said it's like you delivered a baby and then the doctor put it back inside and said, 'I'm not quite sure when this is going to come out.'" (Through a representative, Anderson confirmed at least that he and Krasinski are friends who talk regularly.)

Krasinski also focused on projects like ["Some Good News,"](#) the online talk show he hosted from his Brooklyn home, where he spoke with celebrity guests and organized charitable acts for people whose lives had been affected by the pandemic.

But [an announcement last spring](#) that he had licensed "Some Good News" to ViacomCBS, which planned to turn it into a streaming series, [drew some fan complaints](#) that the deal undercut the altruistic spirit of the show. Krasinski now says that plans for any adaptations have been dropped.

"ViacomCBS and I were trying to figure out a way to make it into an actual weekly news show," he said, "but in the end we both agreed not to move forward and keep it in its original format." (ViacomCBS declined to comment.)

Even as Paramount sold some of its completed films to streaming sites during the pandemic, the studio said that it had always regarded "A Quiet Place Part II" as a movie intended for theaters.

"It's such an immersive experience," said Emma Watts, who became the president of Paramount's motion picture group last summer. "You don't want to be doing anything else as you watch it. You want to be fully present."

The film will become available on the Paramount+ subscription service 45 days after its release, which cuts the typical window of an exclusive theatrical release in half and creates other problems: [Bloomberg News reported](#) that Krasinski and Blunt were seeking more money from Paramount because the shortened release would diminish their back-end compensation, which is partly tied to ticket sales.

Both Krasinski and Paramount declined to comment on this report, and Watts would not say how she expected "Part II" to perform financially.

But when I spoke to Krasinski in April, he said he wasn't focused on ticket sales. Instead, he touted his plans to travel to some of the theaters playing "A Quiet Place Part II" as an act of solidarity with the audiences that go to see it.

"I have no idea what's going to happen with the box office," he said. "What's most important to me is that if you want to see this movie, I'm going to show it to you."

His voice rising to an exaggerated volume, he added, "Talk to me three months after release and I'll be like, 'What happened? Why did I say *any* of that?'"

Paramount is [eager to remain in business with Krasinski](#): it has scheduled a new film for November 2023 that he will star in with Reynolds and direct from a script that he wrote during the pandemic. (Krasinski was silent about plot specifics for the new movie; Reynolds said simply, "I'll do whatever the hell John Krasinski damn well tells me to do on set.")

The studio isn't shy, either, about its hopes that "A Quiet Place" could become a franchise in its own right and strengthen its roster of legacy properties like "Star Trek," "Mission: Impossible" and "Transformers." To that end, [it has already signed up](#) Jeff Nichols ("Midnight Special") to write and direct a third film in the "Quiet Place" series that Krasinski will help produce.

Krasinski said he expected to have only a short break between wrapping "Jack Ryan" and starting work on the new film. But if he'd learned anything from the pandemic, it's that challenges have to be faced head-on.

He reflected on the earliest weeks of the shutdown, which were spent watching his daughters give him their own version of the quizzical Jim Halpert face as he and Blunt tried to help them with school lessons over Zoom.

"The looks you get when you're like, OK, so what's 4 plus 4?" he said. "They're like, 'We're not really doing this, are we?' Yes, we actually are. Let's figure it out together."

Dave Itzkoff is a culture reporter whose latest book,

“Robin,” a biography of Robin Williams, was published in May 2018. [@ditzkoff](#)

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