

Sound of Metal

Sound of Metal is a 2019 American drama film directed and co-written by Darius Marder. It stars Riz Ahmed as a metal drummer who loses his hearing, and also features Olivia Cooke, Paul Raci, Lauren Ridloff, and Mathieu Amalric. *Sound of Metal* had its world premiere in the Platform Prize program at the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival on September 6, 2019. Amazon Studios released the film in theaters on November 20, 2020, and on Amazon Prime Video on December 4. The film was critically acclaimed, with particular praise for the performances of Ahmed and Raci, the sound design, the editing and Marder's direction and screenplay. It was listed on 52 film critics' top-ten lists for 2020. At the 93rd Academy Awards, it was nominated for Best Picture, Best Original Screenplay, Best Actor (Ahmed) and Best Supporting Actor (Raci), and won for Best Sound and Best Film Editing.^[4]

Plot

Drummer Ruben Stone performs in the avant-garde metal duo Blackgammon with his singer girlfriend, Lou. They live in an RV and tour the United States performing gigs. When Ruben begins to lose his hearing, he goes to a pharmacy seeking a diagnosis. The pharmacist refers him to a doctor, who finds that Ruben has lost most of his hearing and that the rest will deteriorate rapidly. Although cochlear implants may benefit him, insurance does not cover their high cost. The doctor suggests that Ruben eliminate all exposure to loud noises and undergo further testing, but Ruben continues to perform.

Lou wants to stop performing for his safety, but Ruben wants to continue. She is also concerned about his sobriety, as he is a recovering drug addict. They call his sponsor, Hector, who finds a rural shelter for Deaf recovering addicts run by a man named Joe, a recovering alcoholic who lost his hearing in the Vietnam War. Ruben leaves with Lou because they will not let her live there with him, and he wants only the implants. Anxious for his well-being, Lou leaves and persuades Ruben to return to the shelter.

Sound of Metal



Official release poster

Directed by	<u>Darius Marder</u>
Screenplay by	Darius Marder Abraham Marder
Story by	Darius Marder <u>Derek Cianfrance</u>
Produced by	Bill Benz Kathy Benz Bert Hamelinck Sacha Ben Harroche
Starring	<u>Riz Ahmed</u> <u>Olivia Cooke</u> <u>Paul Raci</u> <u>Lauren Ridloff</u> <u>Mathieu Amalric</u>
Cinematography	Daniël Bouquet
Edited by	<u>Mikkel E. G. Nielsen</u>
Music by	Abraham Marder

Ruben meets the other members of the shelter, attends meetings, and settles into his new life. He is introduced to schoolteacher Diane and the children in her class and learns American Sign Language. Joe tasks Ruben with writing and sitting peacefully in an effort to make him comfortable with the silence. Ruben joins Diane's class and connects with the children and the rest of the community. He gives the children and Diane drumming lessons.

Joe invites Ruben to stay as an employee of the community. Ruben illicitly uses Joe's office computer to follow Lou's activities and learns she is performing music in Paris. He has his friend Jenn sell his drums and other music equipment, then he sells his RV, using the money for cochlear implant surgery. Ruben asks Joe to loan him money to buy back his RV while he awaits the activation of the implants. Joe refuses, saying that Ruben is behaving like an addict. He asks Ruben to leave the community, as it is founded on the belief that Deafness is not a handicap.

Ruben has his implants activated but is disappointed by their distorted sound. He flies to Paris^[5] to meet Lou at the home of her wealthy father, Richard. Richard confides in Ruben that though he initially disliked him, he recognizes that Ruben made Lou happy. Lou has settled into her new lifestyle and has ceased self-harming. At a party, Lou and Richard perform a duet; Ruben's perception of the sound is distorted by the implants.

When Ruben tells Lou he wants to return to their music, she responds with interest but begins scratching her arms. Ruben tells her all is well and that she saved his life. She tells him that he saved hers too. The next morning, Ruben takes his things and leaves while Lou sleeps. In a park, the ringing of a church bell is distorted by his implants; Ruben removes his processors and sits in silence.

Cast

- Riz Ahmed as Ruben Stone, a drummer who loses his hearing
- Olivia Cooke as Louise "Lou" Berger, Ruben's girlfriend
- Paul Raci as Joe, a late-deafened and recovering alcoholic who runs a shelter for deaf recovering addicts
- Lauren Ridloff as Diane, a teacher who helps Ruben learn American Sign Language
- Mathieu Amalric as Richard Berger, Lou's father
- Chris Perfetti as Harlan
- Michael Tow as the Pharmacist

Production

Sound of Metal is directed by Darius Marder, who wrote the story with Derek Cianfrance and who also wrote the screenplay with his brother Abraham Marder. The film originated as the unfinished Cianfrance project

	<u>Nicolas Becker</u>
Production companies	Caviar Ward Four Flat 7 Productions ^[1]
Distributed by	<u>Amazon Studios</u>
Release dates	September 6, 2019 (TIFF) November 20, 2020 (United States)
Running time	120 minutes
Country	United States
Languages	<u>American Sign Language</u> English
Budget	\$5.4 million ^[2]
Box office	\$516,520 ^[3]



Riz Ahmed portrayed Ruben Stone

Metalhead, which centers on a metal drummer who suddenly becomes deaf. The film featured the members of the band Jucifer portraying themselves. However, the project was later scrapped, until Cianfrance's friend Darius Marder took it up.^[6] In January 2016, Dakota Johnson and Matthias Schoenaerts joined the cast of the film, with Marder directing.^[7] In July 2018, Riz Ahmed and Olivia Cooke joined the cast of the film, replacing Johnson and Schoenaerts, alongside Mathieu Amalric.^[8] Before the casting, Marder had spent 13 years vetting actors who would match his commitment to the film.^[9]

A large number of the cast were hired from the deaf community.^[10] For eight months, Ahmed prepared for the film by spending two hours a day learning American Sign Language, two hours a day in drum lessons, two hours a day with a personal trainer and the remainder with his acting coach.^{[9][11]} Marder wanted Ahmed to "trust his instincts" and did not allow him to review dailies of his performance or script analysis.^[9]

Sound of Metal was shot in 24 non-consecutive days from early to late 2018.^[12] Marder operated on a limited budget, and shot only two takes per scene.^[10] The film was shot in the Greater Boston area, primarily in Ipswich, Massachusetts. However, other scenes were shot in Boston, Lynn, Cambridge, Danvers, Framingham, Lawrence, Malden, Rowley, and Topsfield.^{[13][14]} Filming also took place in Antwerp, Belgium.^[12]

Release

Sound of Metal had its world premiere in the Platform Prize program at the 2019 Toronto International Film Festival on September 6, 2019.^[15] Amazon Studios acquired U.S. distribution rights to the film the week following its premiere.^[16] It was originally scheduled to be released on August 14, 2020,^[1] before being postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was released theatrically on November 20, 2020, and began streaming on Amazon Prime Video on December 4, 2020.^[17] *Sound of Metal* became a part of the Criterion Collection, with a 4K Ultra HD, Blu-ray and DVD released on September 27, 2022.^[18]

Critical reception

On review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes, the film holds an approval rating of 97% based on 281 reviews, with an average of 8.2/10. The site's critics consensus reads: "An evocative look at the experiences of the deaf community, *Sound of Metal* is brought to life by Riz Ahmed's passionate performance."^[19] On Metacritic, the film has a weighted average score of 82 out of 100, based on 36 critics, indicating "universal acclaim".^[20]

Sound of Metal received mostly positive reviews from critics. Clarisse Loughrey of *The Independent* gave the film four stars out of five and praised Marder's direction and Ahmed's performance.^[21] Jeannette Catsoulis of *The New York Times* found the film "underwritten and dramatically muted" but praised Ahmed's performance and Nicolas Becker's sound design.^[22] Mark Kermode of *The Guardian* praised the "astonishing verisimilitude" of the direction and called Ahmed's performance the best of his career.^[23] Peter Bradshaw, also writing for *The Guardian*, credited Ahmed with giving "the film energy and point" but was critical of other aspects, writing that "[the story] perhaps tries to do too much", and that it "telescopes a long story into just a few months."^[24] *Empire* critic Ian Freer praised the sound design and called the film a "powerful but sensitive exploration of a so-called disability that challenges perceptions and assumptions about loss of hearing in thoughtful but provocative ways."^[25] *Rolling Stone* journalist David Fear wrote that the film "immerses you in a noiseless world — but it's the star that makes it speak volumes loudly and

clearly".^[26] Although enthusiastic about many aspects of the film, metal-themed website *The Pit* criticized the film's portrayal of metal music, stating that it is "the latest in a long line of Hollywood movies to use metal as a lifestyle that serious characters grow out of."^[27]

At the end of the year, *Sound of Metal* appeared on 52 film critics' top-ten lists for 2020 as the ninth highest-ranked film, including first place on five lists and second place on seven lists.^[28]

Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<u>AACTA Awards</u>	<u>March 5, 2021</u>	<u>Best International Actor</u>	<u>Riz Ahmed</u>	Nominated	^[29]
<u>Academy Awards</u>	<u>April 25, 2021</u>	<u>Best Picture</u>	Bert Hamelinck & Sacha Ben Harroche	Nominated	^[30]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	<u>Riz Ahmed</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	<u>Paul Raci</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	<u>Darius Marder</u> , <u>Abraham Marder</u> & <u>Derek Cianfrance</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Film Editing</u>	<u>Mikkel E. G. Nielsen</u>	Won	
		<u>Best Sound</u>	<u>Nicolas Becker</u> , <u>Jaime Baksht</u> , <u>Michelle Couttolenc</u> , <u>Carlos Cortés</u> & <u>Phillip Bladh</u>	Won	
<u>Alliance of Women Film Journalists</u>	<u>January 4, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	<u>Riz Ahmed</u>	Nominated	^[31]
<u>American Cinema Editors Awards</u>	<u>April 17, 2021</u>	<u>Best Edited Feature Film (Dramatic)</u>	<u>Mikkel E. G. Nielsen</u>	Nominated	^[32]
<u>American Film Institute Awards</u>	<u>February 26, 2021</u>	<u>Top 10 Movies of the Year</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Won	^[33]
<u>Austin Film Critics Association</u>	<u>March 19, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	<u>Riz Ahmed</u>	Won	^[34]
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	<u>Paul Raci</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	<u>Darius Marder</u> , <u>Abraham Marder</u> & <u>Derek Cianfrance</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Editing</u>	<u>Mikkel E. G. Nielsen</u>	Nominated	
<u>British Academy Film Awards</u>	<u>April 11, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	<u>Riz Ahmed</u>	Nominated	^[35]
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	<u>Paul Raci</u>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Editing</u>	<u>Mikkel E. G. Nielsen</u>	Won	
		<u>Best Sound</u>	<u>Jaime Baksht</u> , <u>Nicolas Becker</u> , <u>Phillip Bladh</u> , <u>Carlos Cortés Navarrete</u> & <u>Michelle Couttolenc</u>	Won	
<u>Boston Society of Film Critics Awards</u>	<u>December 13, 2020</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	<u>Riz Ahmed</u>	Runner-up	^[36]
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	<u>Paul Raci</u>	Won	
<u>Casting Society of America</u>	<u>April 15, 2021</u>	<u>Low Budget – Comedy or Drama</u>	<u>Susan Shopmaker</u> , <u>Angela Peri</u> (Location Casting), <u>Lisa Lobel</u> (Location Casting), <u>Emily Fleischer</u> (Associate)	Nominated	^[37]
<u>Chicago Film Critics</u>	<u>December 21, 2020</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	<u>Riz Ahmed</u>	Nominated	^[38]

<u>Association</u>		Best Supporting Actor	Paul Raci	Won	
<u>Cinema Audio Society Awards</u>	<u>April 17, 2021</u>	<u>Motion Picture – Live Action</u>	Phillip Bladh, Nicolas Becker, Jaime Baksht, Michelle Couttolenc, Carlos Cortés Navarrette & Kari Vähäkuopus	Won	[39]
<u>Critics' Choice Movie Awards</u>	<u>March 7, 2021</u>	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Nominated	[40]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Nominated	
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Nominated	
		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	Darius Marder & Abraham Marder	Nominated	
		<u>Best Editing</u>	Mikkel E. G. Nielsen	Won	
<u>Dallas–Fort Worth Film Critics Association</u>	<u>February 10, 2021</u>	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Runner-up	[41]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Runner-up	
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Runner-up	
<u>Detroit Film Critics Society</u>	<u>March 8, 2021</u>	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Nominated	[42]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Nominated	
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Nominated	
		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Nominated	
		<u>Best Use of Music/Sound</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Won	
<u>Directors Guild of America Awards</u>	<u>April 10, 2021</u>	<u>Outstanding Directing – First-Time Feature Film</u>	Darius Marder	Won	[43]
<u>Gotham Independent Film Awards</u>	<u>January 11, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Won	[44]
<u>Georgia Film Critics Association</u>	<u>March 12, 2021</u>	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Nominated	[45]
		<u>Best Director</u>	Darius Marder	Nominated	
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Won	
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Won	
		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	Darius Marder & Abraham Marder	Nominated	
		<u>Best Original Song</u>	Abraham Marder	Nominated	
<u>Golden Globe Awards</u>	<u>February 28, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor – Motion Picture Drama</u>	Riz Ahmed	Nominated	[46]
<u>Hollywood Critics Association</u>	<u>March 5, 2021</u>	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Nominated	[47]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Nominated	
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Won	
		<u>Best Breakthrough Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Won	
		<u>Best Male Director</u>	Darius Marder	Won	

		Best Original Screenplay	Darius Marder & Abraham Marder	Nominated	
		Best First Feature	Darius Marder	Nominated	
<u>Houston Film Critics Society</u>	<u>January 18, 2021</u>	Best Actor	Riz Ahmed	Won	[48]
		Outstanding Cinematic Achievement	<i>Sound of Metal</i> (for its Immersive Sound Design)	Won	
<u>Independent Spirit Awards</u>	<u>April 22, 2021</u>	<u>Best First Feature</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Won	[49]
		<u>Best Male Lead</u>	Riz Ahmed	Won	
		<u>Best Supporting Male</u>	Paul Raci	Won	
<u>IndieWire Critics Poll</u>	December 14, 2020	Best Performance	Riz Ahmed	Won	[50]
<u>London Film Critics' Circle</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>Actor of the Year</u>	Riz Ahmed	Nominated	[51]
		<u>Technical Achievement</u>	Nicolas Becker (Sound Design)	Nominated	
		<u>British/Irish Actor of the Year (for body of work)</u>	Riz Ahmed	Won	
<u>Los Angeles Film Critics Association</u>	<u>December 20, 2020</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Runner-up	[52]
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Runner-up	
<u>Miami International Film Festival</u>	March 6, 2021	Impact Award	Riz Ahmed	Won	[53]
<u>Motion Picture Sound Editors</u>	<u>April 16, 2021</u>	<u>Outstanding Achievement in Sound Editing – Feature Underscore</u>	Carolina Santana, Nicolas Becker & Abraham Marder	Nominated	[54]
		<u>Outstanding Achievement in Sound Editing – Feature Dialogue / ADR</u>	Nicolas Becker, Carolina Santana & Michelle Couttolenc	Nominated	
		<u>Outstanding Achievement in Sound Editing – Feature Effects / Foley</u>	Nicolas Becker, Carolina Santana, Pietu Korhonen & Heikki Kossi	Nominated	
<u>National Board of Review</u>	<u>January 26, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Won	[55]
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Won	
		Top 10 Films of 2020	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Won	
<u>National Society of Film Critics</u>	<u>January 9, 2021</u>	<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Runner-up	[56]
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Won	
<u>New York Film Critics Online</u>	<u>January 26, 2021</u>	Best Actor	Riz Ahmed	Won	[57]
<u>Online Film Critics Society</u>	<u>January 25, 2021</u>	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Nominated	[58]
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Nominated	
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Nominated	
		<u>Best Debut Feature</u>	Darius Marder	Nominated	

		Technical Achievement Award	Sound of Metal – Sound Design	Won	
<u>Palm Springs International Film Festival</u>	February 26, 2021	Desert Palm Achievement Award, Actor	Riz Ahmed	Won	[59]
<u>Producers Guild of America Awards</u>	March 24, 2021	<u>Best Theatrical Motion Picture</u>	Bert Hamelinck & Sacha Ben Harroche	Nominated	[60]
<u>San Diego Film Critics Society</u>	January 11, 2021	<u>Best Picture</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Runner-up	[61]
		<u>Best Director</u>	Darius Marder	Nominated	
		<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Won	
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Won	
		<u>Best Supporting Actress</u>	Olivia Cooke	Nominated	
		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	Darius Marder, Abraham Marder & Derek Cianfrance	Runner-up	
		<u>Breakthrough Artist</u>	Riz Ahmed	Runner-up	
		<u>Best Use of Music</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Nominated	
<u>San Francisco Bay Area Film Critics Circle</u>	2021	<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Nominated	[62]
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Won	
<u>Santa Barbara International Film Festival</u>	April 3, 2021	Virtuosos Award	Riz Ahmed	Won	[63]
		Variety Artisans Award	Nicolas Becker	Won	[64]
<u>Satellite Awards</u>	February 15, 2021	<u>Best Motion Picture – Drama</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Nominated	[65]
		<u>Best Director</u>	Darius Marder	Nominated	
		<u>Best Actor in a Motion Picture – Drama</u>	Riz Ahmed	Won	
		<u>Best Sound (Editing and Mixing)</u>	Phillip Bladh, Nicolas Becker, Jaime Baksht, Michelle Couttolenc, Carlos Cortés & Carolina Santana	Won	
<u>Screen Actors Guild Awards</u>	April 4, 2021	<u>Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Leading Role</u>	Riz Ahmed	Nominated	[66]
<u>Seattle Film Critics Society</u>	February 15, 2021	<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Won	[67]
		<u>Best Actor in a Supporting Role</u>	Paul Raci	Nominated	
		<u>Best Picture of the Year</u>	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Nominated	
<u>Set Decorators Society of America Awards</u>	March 31, 2021	Best Achievement in Décor/Design of a Contemporary Feature Film	Tara Pavoni and Jeremy Woodward	Nominated	[68]
<u>St. Louis Film Critics Association</u>	January 28, 2021	<u>Best Actor</u>	Riz Ahmed	Nominated	[69]
		<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Paul Raci	Won	

Toronto Film Critics Association	February 7, 2021	Best Actor	Riz Ahmed	Won	[70]
		Best Supporting Actor	Paul Raci	Runner-up	
		Best Screenplay	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Runner-up	
Washington D.C. Area Film Critics Association	February 8, 2021	Best Actor	Riz Ahmed	Nominated	[71]
		Best Supporting Actor	Paul Raci	Nominated	
		Best Original Screenplay	Darius Marder, Abraham Marder & Derek Cianfrance	Nominated	
		Best Editing	Mikkel E. G. Nielsen	Nominated	
Writers Guild of America Awards	March 21, 2021	Best Original Screenplay	Darius Marder & Abraham Marder; story by Darius Marder & Derek Cianfrance	Nominated	[72]
Zurich Film Festival	October 6, 2019	Best Film – International Feature	<i>Sound of Metal</i>	Won	[73]

See also

- List of films featuring the deaf and hard of hearing
- Safe listening
- Sudden hearing loss

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External links

- Official website (<http://protagonistpictures.com/film/sound-of-metal/>)
 - *Sound of Metal* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5363618/>) at IMDb
 - *Sound of Metal* (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/sound_of_metal/reviews) at Rotten Tomatoes
 - *Sound of Metal* – Final Screenplay (<https://variety.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/som-screenplay-final.pdf>) via *Variety*
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