


# Mass (2021 film)

***Mass*** is a 2021 American drama film written and directed by Fran Kranz in his directorial debut. It stars Reed Birney, Ann Dowd, Jason Isaacs, and Martha Plimpton as grieving parents who meet to discuss a tragedy involving their sons. The film had its world premiere at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival on January 30, 2021, and was released on October 8, 2021, by Bleecker Street. At the BAFTA Awards, Dowd received a nomination for Best Actress in a Supporting Role.

## Plot

Jay and Gail Perry are parents grieving the death of their son Evan, a victim of a high school shooting. Richard and Linda are the parents of the teenage perpetrator Hayden, who killed himself after his shootings. Six years after the tragedy, both couples agree to meet and talk in a private room at an Episcopal Church. The couples had met previously, in which Jay and Gail made hurtful comments toward Richard and Linda when they were all going through the public legal procedures that resulted from the incident. Jay had since publicly advocated for gun control and against gun ownership, causing a brief debate between him and Richard.

After talking about their sons when they were innocent children, the two couples partake in various lengthy discussions over how the tragedy had come to be and how the tragedy impacted their lives. Jay and Gail ask for information from Richard and Linda about Hayden's upbringing that they do not already know from public information about the incident. Richard and Linda tell that they knew that he became more depressed due to their family moving houses, lack of friends, and bullying at school. The couples briefly debate whether video games had influenced Hayden's violent thoughts. While acknowledging that Hayden's schools and therapists did not respond appropriately to their findings, Richard and Linda express their guilt and regret over how their failure to see and react to any signs that their son could have become violent. Jay and Gail admit that they wanted to see Richard and Linda in as much pain as they and the other victims' parents were. Richard and Linda admit that being the parents of a murderer meant that they did not know how to navigate being public figures, since they also could not speculate about why Hayden did what he did. Richard and Linda reveal that Hayden

Mass	
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Promotional release poster	
Directed by	<u>Fran Kranz</u>
Written by	Fran Kranz
Produced by	Fran Kranz Dylan Matlock Casey Wilder Mott J.P. Ouellette
Starring	<u>Reed Birney</u> <u>Ann Dowd</u> <u>Jason Isaacs</u> <u>Martha Plimpton</u>
Cinematography	Ryan Jackson-Healy
Edited by	Yang Hua Hu
Music by	Darren Morze
Production companies	7 Eccles Street Circa 1888 5B Productions
Distributed by	<u>Bleecker Street</u>

had made friends in high school, who were also victims of bullying, and that one of his friends had access to guns. Jay and Linda become furious, causing Richard to warn against jumping to conclusions about Hayden, only for Jay to speculate that Hayden was a psychopath who was incapable of being dealt with.

Jay eventually has a short angry outburst, leading to him breaking down as he describes how Evan was killed by Hayden. Both couples reflect on the other victims and their families, and when they visited the crime scene in the aftermath. Linda reveals that she found a notebook in her son's room after learning of the shooting, detailing his plans for the shooting and his suicide in the school library. She and Richard explain that while they understood that the grieving parents would not mourn the loss of Hayden, they still wanted and held a funeral to memorialize and mourn their once-innocent son who they loved before his horrible actions. Linda expresses that she wants to remember the good memories about Hayden before his actions, rather than ignoring and condemning Hayden completely. When Linda asks Gail to tell a story about Evan, Gail recounts a positive memory of Evan when he was 12 and expresses how much she and Jay miss him. Having come to an understanding of all the pain they felt, Gail forgives Richard, Linda, and Hayden, wanting to move on from all the deep pain and grief.

The couples hold hands in silence to end their meeting, all having reached a state of empathy for each other. Richard leaves first for a business meeting. Linda follows, only to come back to speak to Gail and Jay once more. Linda recounts the moment she and Richard were the most terrified of Hayden when he angrily threatened to beat her up. She confesses that she wishes she was beaten up by him so she could truly see what he became, leading Gail to comfort her before they finally part ways. Jay becomes emotional when he overhears a choir practice in another room of the church. Gail comforts him before they finally depart.

<b>Release dates</b>	January 30, 2021 (Sundance) October 8, 2021 (United States)
<b>Running time</b>	110 minutes <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	<\$300,000 <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Box office</b>	\$250,513 <sup>[3]</sup> <sup>[4]</sup>

## Cast

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- Reed Birney as Richard
- Ann Dowd as Linda
- Jason Isaacs as Jay Perry
- Martha Plimpton as Gail Perry
- Breeda Wool as Judy
- Kagen Albright as Anthony
- Michelle N. Carter as Kendra

## Production

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In November 2019, it was announced that Fran Kranz would write and direct *Mass* in his feature directorial debut, with Reed Birney, Ann Dowd, Jason Isaacs, and Martha Plimpton attached to star.<sup>[5]</sup> Breeda Wool joined the cast in December 2019.<sup>[6]</sup> The film was shot over a roughly two week period in late 2019 at Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Hailey, Idaho.<sup>[7]</sup><sup>[8]</sup>

## Release

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*Mass* had its world premiere at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival on January 30, 2021 in the *Premieres* section.<sup>[9]</sup> In May 2021, Bleecker Street acquired distribution rights to the film.<sup>[10]</sup> By the end of its run, the film will have screened at film festivals in Busan,<sup>[11]</sup> Charlottesville,<sup>[12]</sup> London,<sup>[13]</sup> San Sebastian,<sup>[14]</sup> Sudbury,<sup>[15]</sup> Woodstock<sup>[16]</sup> and Zurich.<sup>[17]</sup> It is scheduled to be released on October 8, 2021.<sup>[18]</sup> In September 2021, Sky Cinema acquired the UK and Ireland distribution rights.<sup>[19]</sup> In the United States, the film was screened in four theaters; two in New York and two in Los Angeles.<sup>[20]</sup>

## Reception

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### Box office

In its opening weekend, *Mass* earned \$13,485 from four theaters.<sup>[21]</sup>

### Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 95% of 193 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 8.30/10. The site's critics consensus reads, "*Mass* requires a lot of its audience, but rewards that emotional labor with a raw look at grief that establishes writer-director Fran Kranz as a filmmaker of tremendous promise."<sup>[22]</sup> Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 81 out of 100, based on 33 critics, indicating "universal acclaim".<sup>[23]</sup>

Kranz's direction and storytelling techniques received praise. The *Chicago Reader* compared the film to the works of playwright Tennessee Williams, calling it "riveting and unforgettable."<sup>[24]</sup> Richard Whittaker from *The Austin Chronicle* had a similar response and said in his review that the story was "perfectly told."<sup>[25]</sup> Writing for *Little White Lies*, Hannah Strong summarized the film as a "study of human pain and anger in painstaking detail, supported by a script which is hauntingly realistic without dipping into mawkish or exploitative territory."<sup>[26]</sup> Owen Gleiberman, from *Variety*, said the film "announces Fran Kranz as a bold new filmmaker who has earned the right to excavate a subject as sensitive as this one."<sup>[27]</sup>

The performances in the film also received praise. While *Entertainment Weekly* said it was "an exceptional opportunity to watch four great character actors,"<sup>[28]</sup> *Salon.com* said the film "gives each member of the ensemble cast a big speech to emote and express what their characters are feeling. The conversation is certainly compelling as it builds."<sup>[29]</sup> In his review for *The Hollywood Reporter*, David Rooney said the film was "a harrowing watch, but a cathartic one, with each of the four superb principal actors delivering scenes of wrenching release."<sup>[30]</sup> Furthermore, *Vox* journalist Alissa Wilkinson said *Mass* "leaves plenty of

breathing room for characters to have authentic moments of emotion and puts a gentle, grace-filled frame around an almost unspeakable tragedy. It's a showcase for its performers, but it's also a valuable experience for its audience."<sup>[31]</sup>

## Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<a href="#">San Sebastián Film Festival</a>	September 28, 2021	Youth Jury Award	<a href="#">Fran Kranz</a>	Won	<a href="#">[32]</a>
		New Directors Award		Nominated	
<a href="#">Gotham Independent Film Awards</a>	November 29, 2021	<a href="#">Outstanding Supporting Performance</a>	<a href="#">Reed Birney</a>	Nominated	<a href="#">[33]</a>
<a href="#">Washington D.C. Area Film Critics Association Awards</a>	December 6, 2021	<a href="#">Best Supporting Actress</a>	<a href="#">Ann Dowd</a>	Nominated	<a href="#">[34]</a>
		<a href="#">Best Original Screenplay</a>	<a href="#">Fran Kranz</a>	Nominated	
		<a href="#">Best Ensemble</a>	<i>Mass</i>	Won	
<a href="#">St. Louis Gateway Film Critics Association Awards</a>	December 19, 2021	<a href="#">Best Supporting Actress</a>	<a href="#">Ann Dowd</a>	Won	<a href="#">[35]</a>
		<a href="#">Best Original Screenplay</a>	<a href="#">Fran Kranz</a>	Won	
		<a href="#">Best Ensemble</a>	<i>Mass</i>	Won	
<a href="#">Florida Film Critics Circle Awards</a>	December 22, 2021	<a href="#">Best Picture</a>		Nominated	<a href="#">[36]</a>
		<a href="#">Best Original Screenplay</a>	<a href="#">Fran Kranz</a>	Nominated	
		<a href="#">Best Ensemble</a>	<i>Mass</i>	Won	
		<a href="#">Best First Film</a>		Runner-up	
<a href="#">San Diego Film Critics Society</a>	January 10, 2021	<a href="#">Best Picture</a>	<i>Mass</i>	Nominated	<a href="#">[37]</a>
		<a href="#">Best Supporting Actor</a>	<a href="#">Jason Isaacs</a>	Won	
		<a href="#">Best Supporting Actress</a>	<a href="#">Ann Dowd</a>	Nominated	
			<a href="#">Martha Plimpton</a>	Nominated	
		<a href="#">Best Original Screenplay</a>	<a href="#">Fran Kranz</a>	Won	
		<a href="#">Best Breakthrough Artist</a>		Nominated	
<a href="#">Austin Film Critics Association</a>	January 11, 2022	<a href="#">Best Ensemble</a>	<i>Mass</i>	Nominated	<a href="#">[38]</a>
		<a href="#">Best Supporting Actress</a>	<a href="#">Ann Dowd</a>	Nominated	
		<a href="#">Best Original Screenplay</a>	<a href="#">Fran Kranz</a>	Nominated	
		<a href="#">Best First Film</a>		Nominated	
		<a href="#">Best Ensemble</a>	<i>Mass</i>	Nominated	

<u>Seattle Film Critics Society</u>	<u>January 17, 2022</u>	<u>Best Actress in a Supporting Role</u>	Ann Dowd	Nominated	[39]
		<u>Best Ensemble Cast</u>	Mass	Won	
		<u>Best Screenplay</u>	Fran Kranz	Nominated	
<u>Houston Film Critics Society Awards</u>	<u>January 19, 2022</u>	<u>Best Supporting Actress</u>	Ann Dowd	Won	[40]
		<u>Best Ensemble</u>	Mass	Won	
<u>Online Film Critics Society Awards</u>	<u>January 24, 2022</u>	<u>Best Supporting Actress</u>	Ann Dowd	Nominated	[41]
		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	Fran Kranz	Nominated	
		<u>Best Debut Feature</u>		Nominated	
<u>Alliance of Women Film Journalists Awards</u>	<u>January 25, 2022</u>	<u>Best Actress in a Supporting Role</u>	Ann Dowd	Nominated	[42][43]
		<u>Best Screenplay, Original</u>	Fran Kranz	Nominated	
<u>Hollywood Critics Association</u>	<u>February 28, 2022</u>	<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Jason Isaacs	Nominated	[44]
		<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	Fran Kranz	Won	
		<u>Best First Feature</u>		Nominated	
		<u>Best Indie Film</u>	Mass	Nominated	
<u>Independent Spirit Awards</u>	<u>March 6, 2022</u>	<u>Best First Screenplay</u>	Fran Kranz	Nominated	[45]
		<u>Robert Altman Award</u>	Fran Kranz, Henry Russell Bergstein, Allison Estrin, Kagen Albright, Reed Birney, Michelle N. Carter, Ann Dowd, Jason Isaacs, Martha Plimpton, Breed a Wool	Won	
<u>Vancouver Film Critics Circle Awards</u>	<u>March 7, 2022</u>	<u>Best Supporting Actress</u>	Ann Dowd	Won	[46]
<u>British Academy Film Awards</u>	<u>March 13, 2022</u>	<u>Best Actress in a Supporting Role</u>	Ann Dowd	Nominated	[47]
<u>Critics' Choice Movie Awards</u>	<u>March 13, 2022</u>	<u>Best Supporting Actress</u>	Ann Dowd	Nominated	[48]
<u>Dorian Awards</u>	<u>March 17, 2022</u>	<u>Best Unsung Film</u>	Mass	Nominated	[49]
		<u>Best Supporting Film Performance</u>	Ann Dowd	Nominated	
			Martha Plimpton	Nominated	
<u>Saturn Awards</u>	<u>October 25, 2022</u>	<u>Best Independent Film</u>	Mass	Nominated	[50]

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## External links

- *Mass* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11389748/>) at IMDb
- *Mass* ([https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/mass\\_2021](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/mass_2021)) at Rotten Tomatoes
- Official screenplay (<https://deadline.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Mass-Read-The-Screenplay-2.pdf>)

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