

Words on Bathroom Walls

Words on Bathroom Walls is a 2020 American coming-of-age^[3] romantic drama film directed by Thor Freudenthal and written by Nick Naveda, based on the novel of the same name by Julia Walton. The film stars Charlie Plummer, Andy García, Taylor Russell, AnnaSophia Robb, Beth Grant, Molly Parker and Walton Goggins.

Words on Bathroom Walls was released on August 21, 2020, by Roadside Attractions.^{[4][5]} It received generally positive reviews from critics.

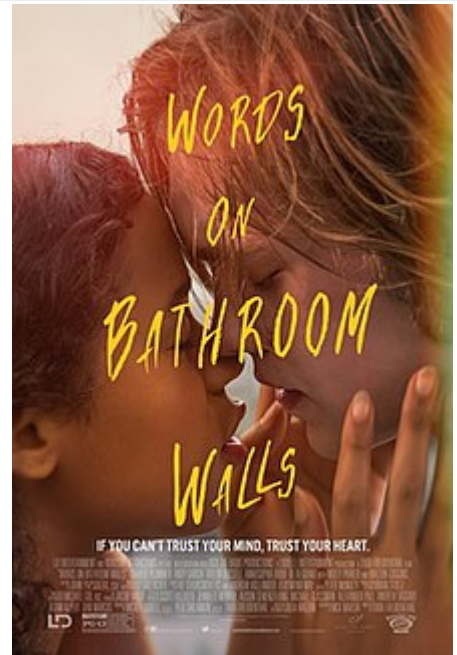
Plot

After a psychotic break causes him to accidentally burn a classmate's arm, high school senior Adam Petrazelli is then diagnosed with schizophrenia. He first self-treats by intensely focusing on cooking, which calms him. His symptoms - chiefly hallucinations of three people - worsen until he is put on a drug trial. At stressful times, his three regular "visitors" are Rebecca, a New Age hippie; Joaquin, the smutty best friend; and the overprotective and often violent "The Bodyguards"; as well as a "dark" threatening voice that represents Adam's fears of the unknown.

Adam transfers to St. Agatha's Catholic School. There, he meets Maya Arnez, a feisty, intelligent girl and class valedictorian. Adam gets Maya to tutor him and finds she helps him feel better, so he takes his new medication regularly. This reduces his visions, with only the side effect being muscle twitching. He takes a romantic interest in Maya and the two become close, but he does not disclose his condition to her out of fear of stigmatization. Adam also starts to regularly confide in Father Patrick, the sympathetic school priest, about his fears and anxieties.

When Maya doesn't show to a tutoring session, Adam visits her home. He discovers that her family is struggling financially, and she is embarrassed and angry about his unannounced visit. Once Maya realizes he doesn't care about her background, she continues tutoring him. She invites him to her restaurant job where she has him cook for her, but a taste test leads Adam to the realization his medication is negatively affecting his taste buds.

Words on Bathroom Walls



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Thor Freudenthal</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Nick Naveda</u>
Based on	<i>Words on Bathroom Walls</i> by <u>Julia Walton</u>
Produced by	<u>Pete Shilaimon</u> <u>Mickey Liddell</u> <u>Thor Freudenthal</u>
Starring	<u>Charlie Plummer</u> <u>Andy García</u> <u>Taylor Russell</u> <u>AnnaSophia Robb</u> <u>Beth Grant</u> <u>Molly Parker</u> <u>Walton Goggins</u>
Cinematography	<u>Michael Goi</u>

Adam decides to stop taking his medications, unbeknownst to his mother Beth and stepfather Paul. His moods become imbalanced and his delusions return. The news that Beth is expecting a new baby with Paul also gives rise to Adam's insecurities about being unwanted and feeling like a burden. Nevertheless, Adam's grades improve so much that his essay is selected to be read at graduation. He asks Maya to the prom and she accepts.

Beth finds out Adam has stopped his medication and confronts him. Sister Catherine, the school's headmistress, is informed about the incident and about what happened at his last school. He is temporarily suspended, with the reasoning that it is for the students' safety. Adam lashes out at Paul, believing that an email Paul wrote to Sister Catherine the previous night is behind the suspension.

The suspension bars Adam from attending the prom, but he goes anyway. Before he leaves, he takes an overdose of his medication, believing it will help the night go smoothly. He meets Maya there, but as they dance, the dark voice plagues him and he begins to act erratically. Sister Catherine tries to kick him out, but his delusions cause him to push her to the ground, run to the catwalk, and fall over the edge.

Adam wakes in the hospital to see Beth and Paul. Maya shows up to visit, but he breaks down when the visions overwhelm him. He yells at her and tells her to leave. He is expelled from St. Agatha's and placed in a psych ward. Father Patrick visits and tells Adam he wasn't aware of his struggles, saying he will pray for him. Beth brings Adam a printed copy of the email Paul sent to St. Agatha's. Contrary to what Adam thought, Paul supported his stepson and wrote that suspending him would be cruel. Realizing how much he cares, Adam runs to catch up with him and Beth, hugging Paul for the first time and accepting him as a fatherly figure.

Beth and Paul take Adam to St. Agatha's graduation ceremony, where, despite Sister Catherine's attempt to stop him, he gathers the courage to address the student body calmly, with the support of Father Patrick. He quotes his essay in which he discusses both his condition and battle with schizophrenia, saying he wished he hadn't hidden his illness. After he leaves the auditorium, Maya runs after him. Adam apologizes for not telling her about his illness, at which point they express their mutual love and share a kiss.

Adam is able to receive his high school diploma and realizes his dream of attending culinary school. As he celebrates the birth of his new sibling with his parents and Maya, it is shown that the voices are still present, but he has learned to live alongside them.

Edited by	<u>Peter McNulty</u>
Music by	<u>Alex Pall and Drew Taggart</u> Andrew Hollander
Production companies	<u>LD Entertainment</u> Kick the Habit Productions
Distributed by	<u>Roadside Attractions</u>
Release date	August 21, 2020 (United States)
Running time	111 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$9.3 million ^[1]
Box office	\$3.1 million ^[2]

Cast

- Charlie Plummer as Adam Petrazelli
- Taylor Russell as Maya Arnez
- Andy García as Father Patrick
- AnnaSophia Robb as Rebecca

- [Beth Grant](#) as Sister Catherine
- [Devon Bostick](#) as Joaquin
- Lobo Sebastian as The Bodyguard
- [Molly Parker](#) as Beth Petrazelli
- [Walton Goggins](#) as Paul
- Aaron Dominguez as Todd
- Drew Scheid as Ted
- Reinaldo Faberlle as Manuel
- Ellie Dusek as Saccharine Girl

Production

In February 2018, [Thor Freudenthal](#) was announced as the film's director, from a screenplay by Nick Naveda, based on the novel of the same name by Julia Walton, with [LD Entertainment](#) producing.^[6] Freudenthal read and enjoyed the novel, and felt that a film adaptation would allow the "opportunity for a very different kind of representation of mental illness with schizophrenia. We could create a person onscreen that was neither a mad genius nor a violent criminal, [but] who a lot of people could even see themselves in the way I did when I read the book. I loved that there was a sort of tender, compassionate, funny tone where Adam gets at some of the really tough issues with self-deprecating humor which really functions as a weapon of sorts against his pain."^[7]

In March 2018, [Charlie Plummer](#) and [Taylor Russell](#) were set to star in the film.^[8] In April 2018, [Andy García](#), [Molly Parker](#), [Walton Goggins](#), [AnnaSophia Robb](#), and [Devon Bostick](#) also joined the cast.^{[9][10]} [Andrew Hollander](#) and [The Chainsmokers](#) composed the film's score,^[11] the first time the band has scored a film.^[12] The trailer features The Chainsmokers' 2019 single "[Push My Luck](#)".^[13]

[Principal photography](#) began in May 2018.^[14] The film was shot in [Wilmington, North Carolina](#).^[15]

Release

In June 2020, [Roadside Attractions](#) acquired distribution rights to the film and set it for an August 7, 2020, release.^[16] The release date was later pushed forward a week, with the film newly scheduled for July 31, 2020. The film's official website later removed the release date, with "in theaters this summer" in its place.^[17] The trailer premiered on July 15, 2020,^[18] and the film was released to theaters on August 21, 2020.^[4]

Reception

Box office

Opening as one of the first new films in wide release during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), on August 21, 2020, the film made \$462,050 from 925 theaters in its first weekend (an average of \$499 per venue), finishing third at the box office. 54% of the audience was female, with 62% being between the ages 18–34.^[19] The film expanded to 1,395 theaters in its second weekend, and grossed \$453,000, then made \$282,000 from 1,168 theaters in its third.^{[20][21]}

Critical response

On the [review aggregator](#) website [Rotten Tomatoes](#), the film holds an approval rating of 89% based on 89 reviews, with an average of 7.2/10. The site's critics consensus reads, "Sensitive, well-acted, and solidly directed, *Words on Bathroom Walls* is an admirable addition to a genre that too rarely does justice to its worthy themes."^[22] On [Metacritic](#), the film has a weighted average score of 61 out of 100, based on 12 critics, indicating "generally favorable reviews".^[23] Audiences polled by [CinemaScore](#) gave the film an average grade of "A" on an A+ to F scale, while [PostTrak](#) reported 81% of filmgoers gave it a positive score.^[19]

Words on Bathroom Walls received praise for its performances, writing, and direction.^{[24][25]} Guy Lodge of [Variety](#) wrote, "There are pockets of truth, grace and pain in this portrait of troubled adolescence, and its talented young stars know where to find them".^[24] Writing for [AllMovie](#), Steven Yoder wrote, "Freudenthal understands the workings of the adolescent mind better than any director since [John Hughes](#), and it shows through the ease of the actors' portrayals."^[26] He added, "The script is tight, showing the progression of wellness, illness, hope, and setback without ever becoming preachy, instructional, or boring. It gives an accurate view of mental illness without being pushy about acceptance. Instead, it displays how not only someone with the illness must cope, but the varied ways that those around them react and cope as well. Nothing ever seems forced, and the action is fluid from the first moments to the closing credits."^[26]

Judith Lawrence of [The Michigan Daily](#) called the film "refreshing in its empathetic representation of schizophrenia", writing: "Neither Adam nor schizophrenia is ever demonized, a rare find in the film industry. [M. Night Shyamalan's](#) *Split*, for example, was heavily criticized for its portrayal of [dissociative identity disorder](#). This is not a singular example — mental illnesses are often vilified and used as plot devices in horror films. Part of the goal in *Words on Bathroom Walls*, though, is to show schizophrenia (and mental illness in general) as something that real people are constantly living with and battling."^[27]

Nick Naveda received a nomination for the Best Adapted Screenplay Award from the [Chlotrudis Society for Independent Films](#).^[28]

Soundtrack

The *Words on Bathroom Walls* soundtrack album, including the soundtrack and score, was produced by Andrew Hollander featuring [the Chainsmokers](#), and released on August 21, 2020.^[12]

Words on Bathroom Walls soundtrack album track listing

No.	Title	Writer(s)	Producer(s)	Length
1.	"Opening Titles"	Andrew Hollander • Andrew Taggart • Alex Pall	Andrew Hollander • the Chainsmokers	3:37
2.	"My First Psychotic Break"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	1:29

3. "Quest for a Cure"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	3:19
4. "Fire on the Nun"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	1:50
5. "First Day"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	0:57
6. "Meeting Maya"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	0:49
7. "Competition"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	1:32
8. "Searching for Maya"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	1:13
9. "I Can't Lose It All"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	2:19
10. "No More Pills"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	1:26
11. "First Kiss"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	1:25
12. "Nothing Was Designed to Work"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	3:28
13. "Push My Luck" (by the Chainsmokers)	Taggart • Richard Markowitz • Remy Gautreau	The Chainsmokers • <u>Ian Kirkpatrick</u> • SmarterChild	3:01
14. "Somebody" (by the Chainsmokers featuring <u>Drew Love</u>)	Taggart • <u>Andrew Neely</u> • <u>Emily Warren</u>	The Chainsmokers	3:41
15. "Prom Hallucinations"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	1:06
16. "If Walls Could Talk" (by the Chainsmokers)	Taggart • Tony Ann • Warren	The Chainsmokers	1:38
17. "Letter"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	2:36
18. "Adam's Speech, Pt. 2"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	2:29
19. "The Kiss"	Hollander • Taggart • Pall	Hollander • the Chainsmokers	4:12
Total length:			42:07

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External links

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