

Immaculate (2024 film)

Immaculate is a 2024 American psychological horror film directed by [Michael Mohan](#) and written by [Andrew Lobel](#). It stars [Sydney Sweeney](#) (who also produced), [Álvaro Morte](#), [Benedetta Porcaroli](#), [Dora Romano](#), [Giorgio Colangeli](#), and [Simona Tabasco](#). The plot focuses on a young [novice](#), who is invited to reside at a picturesque Italian [convent](#), but slowly realizes the terrifying secrets it harbors.

Immaculate premiered at [South by Southwest](#) on March 12, 2024, and was released theatrically in the United States by [Neon](#) on March 22, 2024. The film received positive reviews and has grossed \$23 million against a budget of \$9 million.

Plot

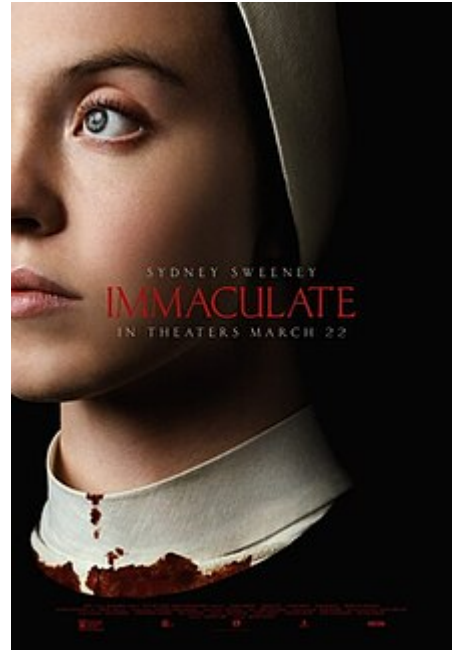
Sister Mary sneaks into a [superior's](#) bedroom at night and steals a ring of keys to escape through the locked gates of the [Roman Catholic](#) convent. She is captured and her leg broken, before being knocked unconscious by four hooded figures. She later wakes up in a coffin and is [buried alive](#).

Young [novice](#) Sister Cecilia turned to [Christianity](#) at an early age after she nearly drowned in a frozen lake and was declared dead for seven minutes, convinced that God had saved her for a purpose. She receives an invitation from Father Sal Tedeschi to join a [convent](#) in Italy that tends to dying nuns in their last days. Cecilia takes her final [vows](#) to adhere to the [evangelical counsels](#) and becomes a [nun](#), being decorated with a [rosary](#).

She befriends Sister Gwen and is struck by certain oddities, such as an elder nun having scars on her feet in the shape of crosses. The convent's chapel houses what they claim is a [Holy Nail](#) relic that was taken from the cross on which [Jesus](#) was crucified. After having nightmares of hooded figures appearing in her room, Cecilia is shocked to learn that she is [pregnant](#), even though she is a [virgin](#) and has never had relations with a man. The convent's inhabitants begin to treat her as the next [Virgin Mary](#), with many proclaiming the child is a "blessing".

Another nun, Sister Isabelle, tries to drown Cecilia out of jealousy, saying that it "should have been her". Cecilia throws up one of her own teeth and her health worsens. Her request to be taken to a proper hospital is denied by Father Tedeschi. Isabelle dies after

Immaculate



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Michael Mohan
Written by	Andrew Lobel
Produced by	David Bernad Sydney Sweeney Jonathan Davino Teddy Schwarzman Michael Heimler
Starring	Sydney Sweeney Álvaro Morte Benedetta Porcaroli Dora Romano Giorgio Colangeli Simona Tabasco

falling off the convent's roof as Cecilia is walking through the cloister. Gwen publicly chastises the convent superiors for turning a blind eye but is then taken away by Father Tedeschi and Deacon Enzo.

At night, Cecilia notices that behind a painting of the Virgin Mary in her room, another nun had inscribed [2 Corinthians 11:14](#) on the wall, a hidden warning causing her to realize that something is wrong about this convent. Cecilia breaks open a drawer to read her file and is shocked to find information on the accident in her childhood. Hearing a woman screaming, she ventures further and is horrified to witness a hooded figure cutting out Gwen's tongue. An elder nun appears and silences Cecilia. She begs to escape, but the elder chastises her, saying that she will never leave the convent.

She tries to escape the convent by faking a miscarriage using a dead chicken, but the deception is exposed. She attempts to run before being forcibly brought back by Tedeschi and Enzo. Tedeschi explains that he was a geneticist before becoming a priest and [used DNA samples](#) taken from the Holy Nail [relic](#) to impregnate nuns in the hopes of ushering in a new messiah. Until his success with Cecilia, Tedeschi's numerous attempts failed, often resulting in [malformed fetuses](#). Tedeschi [brands](#) a cross into Cecilia's foot, a symbol also on many of the other nuns.

Cecilia makes another attempt to escape. She beats Mother Superior to death using a crucifix, and shortly afterward, her [water breaks](#). She manages to strangle the cardinal with her rosary before dousing Tedeschi's lab in [ethanol](#). Tedeschi arrives and tries to stop her through physical force, but Cecilia narrowly escapes by igniting the ethanol with a lighter.

Tedeschi manages to break out of the laboratory after extinguishing the flames and continues his pursuit against Cecilia, forcing her to flee into the [catacombs](#) under the convent. Cecilia finds Gwen's mutilated corpse along with a hole in the catacombs walls. Tedeschi finds her just as she is about to escape and a struggle ensues. Tedeschi tries to cut Cecilia's stomach open, but she stabs him in the throat with the Holy Nail relic, which she had previously stolen from the chapel. After exiting the catacombs, Cecilia agonizingly gives birth and bites through the umbilical cord herself. She is clearly horrified by the sight of the "baby", which is heard making animalistic noises. Cecilia stumbles away to grab and lift a nearby rock, which she uses to crush it to death.^{[A][7]}

Cinematography	Elisha Christian
Edited by	Christian Masini
Music by	Will Bates
Production companies	Black Bear Pictures Fifty-Fifty Films Middle Child Pictures
Distributed by	Neon
Release dates	March 12, 2024 (SXSW) March 22, 2024 (United States)
Running time	89 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English ^[2] Italian ^[2]
Budget	\$9 million ^[3]
Box office	\$23.7 million ^{[4][5]}

Cast

- [Sydney Sweeney](#) as Sister Cecilia
- [Álvaro Morte](#) as Father Sal Tedeschi
- Dora Romano as Mother Superior
- [Benedetta Porcaroli](#) as Sister Gwen
- [Giorgio Colangeli](#) as Cardinal Franco Merola
- [Simona Tabasco](#) as Sister Mary

- Giulia Heathfield Di Renzi as Sister Isabelle
- Giampiero Judica as Doctor Gallo
- Giuseppe Lo Piccolo as Deacon Enzo

Production

Development on *Immaculate* was underway as early as 2014, when [Sydney Sweeney](#) first auditioned for a role in the film from a screenplay written by Andrew Lobel.^[8] However, the project fell into [development hell](#) instead of entering production.^[9] Following her breakout role in the television series *Euphoria*, Sweeney purchased the rights to the screenplay and approached frequent collaborator Michael Mohan to direct.^[8] Mohan has stated that many of the film's scenes were inspired by his Catholic upbringing.^[10]

In October 2022, it was announced that Sweeney had joined the cast of the film, with Mohan directing, and with Sweeney serving as a producer under her Fifty-Fifty Films banner.^[11] Mohan stated that the script originally featured a cast of high school girls, not nuns, and was changed to better suit Sweeney and audience expectations.^[12]

In February 2023, [Álvaro Morte](#), [Benedetta Porcaroli](#), [Dora Romano](#), [Giorgio Colangeli](#) and [Simona Tabasco](#) joined the cast of the film.^{[13][14]}

[Principal photography](#) took place in [Rome](#),^[13] and concluded by February 2023.^[15]

Release

In December 2023, [Neon](#) acquired US distribution rights to the film.^[16] It had its world premiere at [South by Southwest](#) on March 12, 2024.^{[2][17]} It was released on March 22, 2024.^[18]

Reception

Box office

As of April 29, 2024, *Immaculate* has grossed \$15.7 million in the United States and Canada and \$8 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$23 million.^{[5][4]}

In the United States and Canada, *Immaculate* was released alongside *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire* and *Late Night with the Devil*, and was projected to gross around \$5 million from 2,354 theaters in its opening weekend.^[19] The film made \$2 million on its first day, and went on to debut to \$5.3 million, finishing fourth and marking the best opening weekend in Neon's history.^{[20][3]} It dropped 36% in its second weekend to \$3.3 million, finishing in fifth.^[21]

Critical response

On the [review aggregator](#) website [Rotten Tomatoes](#), 73% of 175 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 6.4/10. The website's consensus reads: "*Immaculate* in conception if not always in execution, this religiously themed horror outing is saved by a divine performance from Sydney Sweeney."^[24] [Metacritic](#), which uses a [weighted average](#), assigned the film a score of 57 out of 100, based

on 39 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[25] Audiences surveyed by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "C" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled by PostTrak gave the film a 52% overall positive score, with 30% saying they would definitely recommend it.^[20]

Tim Robey of The Telegraph awarded the film three stars out of five, saying that "Sydney Sweeney's pregnant-nun horror takes time to deliver... Only at the very end does *Immaculate* deliver, so to speak, on some of (its) hinted-at promise."^[26] Manohla Dargis of The New York Times called the film a Critic's Pick, writing that the film "is a scare-fest with a plucky heroine, an irreverent hot-button twist and just enough narrative ambiguity to give viewers something to argue about."^[27]

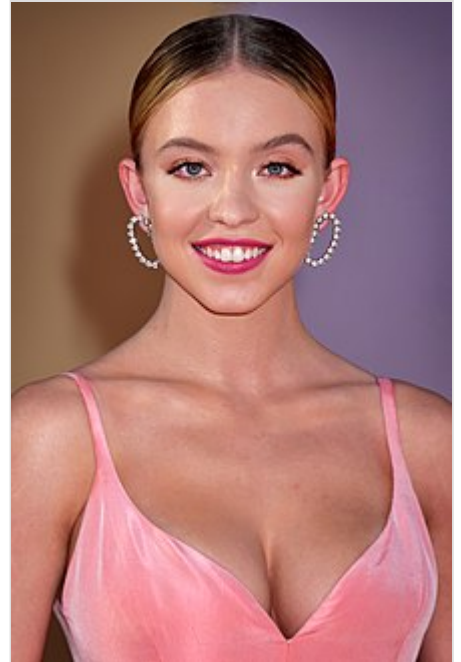
Comparisons to *The First Omen*

Due to sharing similar premises (and a common Italian setting) and released at about the same time, *Immaculate* and *The First Omen* have been dubbed as "twin" films.^[28] Both films explore the issue of female bodily autonomy, depicting the "systemic control of women's bodies reduced to vessels".^[29] Bilge Ebiri of Vulture wondered about "why should anyone be surprised that suddenly, in the wake of the Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, as state after state attempts to enact religious laws depriving women of bodily agency, America is getting horror movies about people forced into monstrous births by religious institutions worried about their growing irrelevance".^[30]

Themes

The film addresses themes of genetic modification and debates surrounding childbirth, abortion, and infanticide. Speaking with Fangoria, director Mohan recited a story wherein his family stopped attending church after hearing a pro-life sermon; however he held that the movie was not intended to have a social message.^[12] The article reads,

And though the film – which is, at the end of the day, about a forced birth by a religious institution laying claim to a woman's body – is already getting its share of blowback from certain conservative corners of the internet, Mohan is unbothered. "I don't think of it as a problem. I think it's a necessary conversation, and if a film can inspire that conversation, then we've done our job. But I also want to be really clear: I want that conversation to be started by the audience. I don't want them to look at us and go 'Look at those social justice warriors!'" Mohan seems more invested in having *Immaculate* carry out horror's other important mission: scarring people for life.^[12]



Sydney Sweeney's performance was highly praised by critics.^{[22][23]}

Several critics likened *Immaculate* to a modern revival of the nunsploitation sub-genre.^{[31][32][33]} Others noted the aesthetic and thematic influences of 1970s European horror cinema, including directors Dario Argento, Mario Bava, Lucio Fulci, and Roman Polanski.^{[34][35][36][37][38]}

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Notes

- A. Given that the neonate does not sound like a baby, but rather gurgles and growls, it has been interpreted as being the Antichrist.^{[6][7]}

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