

Uncle Frank (film)

Uncle Frank is a 2020 American comedy-drama film written, directed, and co-produced by Alan Ball. The film stars Paul Bettany and Sophia Lillis. Set in the 1970s, *Uncle Frank* is a road movie about a gay man who confronts his past.^[1]

It had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival on January 25, 2020. It was released on November 25, 2020, by Amazon Studios.

Plot

In 1973, 18-year-old Beth Bledsoe moves from her home in Creeksville, South Carolina, to attend college in New York City. Her uncle Frank Bledsoe is a college professor there and is the relative she feels closest to as he is more refined and thoughtful than the rest of the family.

Beth meets a boyfriend, Bruce, and shows up with him unannounced to a party at Frank's apartment. Through events that happen at the party, she discovers that Frank is secretly gay and has been living with a man named Walid ("Wally") for over ten years. Frank rejects the sexual advance on Bruce's part, caring for Beth when she gets too drunk. He pleads with her not to tell anyone else in the family his secret, and she agrees.

The next day, Beth's grandfather and Frank's father, Daddy Mac, dies of a sudden heart attack. Frank agrees to drive Beth back to South Carolina for the funeral. Wally asks to come along and meet Frank's family, but Frank refuses, not yet ready to reveal the truth to them. However, Wally rents a car and follows them most of the way there; when Frank catches him, he agrees to let him come but stay in a motel during the funeral, fearful of what the locals might do if they discover their true relationship.

Along their journey, Frank has flashbacks to his teenage years and a sexual relationship he had with another boy named Samuel; his father caught them in bed together and called Frank an abomination against God. To cope with these memories, Frank begins secretly drinking; he asks Beth not to tell Wally as Frank is a recovering alcoholic.

Uncle Frank



Official release poster

Directed by	<u>Alan Ball</u>
Written by	Alan Ball
Produced by	<u>Bill Block</u> <u>Michael Costigan</u> Jay Van Hoy Stephanie Meurer <u>Peter Macdissi</u> Alan Ball
Starring	<u>Paul Bettany</u> <u>Sophia Lillis</u> Peter Macdissi <u>Judy Greer</u> <u>Steve Zahn</u> <u>Lois Smith</u> <u>Margo Martindale</u> <u>Stephen Root</u> <u>Colton Ryan</u>
Cinematography	Khalid Mohtaseb
Edited by	Jonathan Alberts
Music by	<u>Nathan Barr</u>

Beth and Frank arrive home to attend the funeral. At the reading of the will, Frank learns he has been cut out of his inheritance, and the will bitterly exposes Frank's homosexuality to the family. An emotional Frank flees, driving away erratically while drinking heavily. A panicked Beth rushes to inform Wally, who drives them to the nearby lake where he suspects Frank went. A final flashback reveals that Frank told Samuel they could not be together as it displeased God, and Samuel drowned himself in the lake shortly after. Wally and Beth discover Frank's clothes sitting on a dock by the water, but Frank is nowhere to be seen.

Wally and Beth return to the motel, where Wally grieves for Frank's supposed death. However, a drunken Frank returns, claiming he just went for a swim. An argument ensues as Wally confronts Frank for his drinking; Frank punches Wally and calls him a faggot before fleeing again. They later reconcile at Samuel's grave as Frank expresses guilt for his death. Frank laments that he has no family left; Wally reassures him that he is Frank's family. After an impassioned speech from Beth, Frank agrees to let Wally meet his family. While Frank's brother-in-law is unable to morally accept the truth, his siblings and mother have no problem with the secret and warmly welcome Wally.

Production companies	<u>Miramax</u> Your Face Goes Here Entertainment Byblos Entertainment Cota Films Parts & Labor
Distributed by	<u>Amazon Studios</u>
Release dates	January 25, 2020 (<u>Sundance</u>) November 25, 2020 (United States)
Running time	95 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English

Cast

- Paul Bettany as Frank Bledsoe
 - Cole Doman as young Frank Bledsoe
- Sophia Lillis as Elizabeth Bledsoe
- Peter Macdissi as Walid "Wally" Nadeem
- Steve Zahn as Mike Bledsoe
- Judy Greer as Kitty Bledsoe
- Margo Martindale as Mammaw Bledsoe
- Stephen Root as Daddy Mac
- Lois Smith as Aunt Butch
- Jane McNeill as Neva
- Burgess Jenkins as Beau
- Colton Ryan as Bruce
- Caity Brewer (<https://imdb.com/name/nm4424140/>) as Marsha
- Michael Perez as Sam Lassiter
- Zach Strum as Tee Dub

Release

It had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival on January 25, 2020.^{[2][3][4][5]} Shortly after, Amazon Studios acquired distribution rights to the film.^[6] It was released on November 25, 2020.^[7]

Reception

On review aggregator [Rotten Tomatoes](#), the film holds a 77% rating based on 119 reviews, with an average rating of 6.9/10. The site's critics consensus reads: "*Uncle Frank* finds writer-director Alan Ball still untangling the modern American family dynamic, aided by standout work from Paul Bettany and Sophia Lillis."^[8] [Metacritic](#) reports a score of 58 out of 100, based on 21 critic reviews, indicating "mixed or average reviews".^[9]

Awards and nominations

Year	Award	Category	Nominee(s)	Result	Ref.
2020	Deauville American Film Festival	Grand Prix (Grand Special Prize)	Alan Ball	Nominated	^[10]
		Prix du Public (Audience Award)		Won	
	Indiana Film Journalists Association Awards	Best Actor	Paul Bettany	Nominated	^[11]
		Best Ensemble Acting	<i>Uncle Frank</i>	Nominated	
	Mill Valley Film Festival	Audience Award (U.S. Cinema)	Alan Ball	Won	^[12]
2021	Dorian Awards	LGBTQ Film of the Year	<i>Uncle Frank</i>	Nominated	^[13]
	GLAAD Media Awards	Outstanding TV Movie		Won	^[14]
	Gold Derby TV Awards	TV movie		Nominated	^[15]
	Golden Nymph Awards	Best Film		Won	^[16]
		Best Actor	Paul Bettany	Won	
		Best Creation	<i>Uncle Frank</i>	Won	
	Make-Up Artists and Hair Stylists Guild Awards	Best Period and/or Character Makeup – Television Special, One Hour or More Live Program Series or Movie for Television	Lindsay Irish Desarno and Diane Heller	Nominated	^[17]
	Primetime Emmy Awards	Outstanding Television Movie	Bob Osher, Andrew Golov, Christopher Tricarico, Josh Peters, Isaac Ericson, Bill Block, Michael Costigan, Jay Van Hoy, Stephanie Meurer, Peter Macdissi and Alan Ball	Nominated	^[18]
	San Diego Film Critics Society Awards	Best Supporting Actor	Peter Macdissi	Runner-up	^[19]
		Best Ensemble	<i>Uncle Frank</i>	Nominated	
	Satellite Awards	Best Television Film		Nominated	^[20]
	Writers Guild of America Awards	Long Form – Original	Alan Ball	Nominated	^[21]

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External links

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