

# Clouds (2020 film)

***Clouds*** is a 2020 American biographical romantic musical drama teen film directed and produced by Justin Baldoni and written by Kara Holden from a story by Holden, Patrick Kopka, and Casey La Scala. It is based upon the memoir *Fly a Little Higher: How God Answered a Mom's Small Prayer in a Big Way* by Laura Sobiech. The film stars Fin Argus, Sabrina Carpenter, Madison Iseman, Neve Campbell, Tom Everett Scott, and Lil Rel Howery, and tells the story of Zach Sobiech, a teenager from Minnesota who has osteosarcoma, and decides to follow his dream of becoming a musician after finding out he is dying.

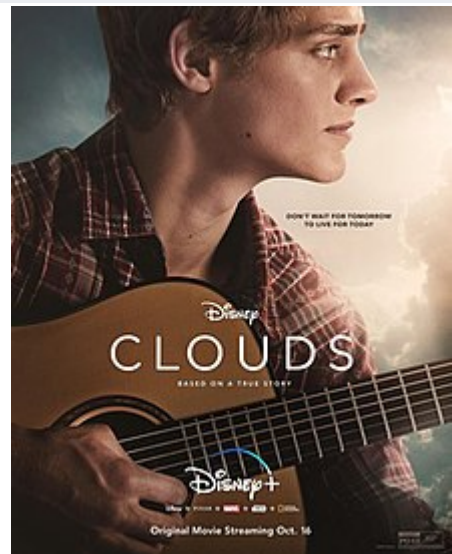
Originally scheduled to be theatrically released by Warner Bros. Pictures, Walt Disney Studios took over the distribution rights and released the film on their Disney+ streaming service on October 16, 2020. The film was removed from Disney+ on May 26, 2023.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Plot

In the fall of 2012, Zach Sobiech performs an acoustic rendition of "Sexy and I Know It" to an amused crowd at his school's talent show. Zach has been struggling with osteosarcoma and has been receiving regular treatments for it. His best friend, Sammy Brown, conspires with him by helping him to write music ("Blueberries"). Zach manages to ask out fellow student Amy Adamle for a picnic, but before he is able to do so, he begins to have a coughing fit that concerns his mother, Laura, who rushes him to the hospital. He has a collapsed lung and emergency surgery is performed on him. While they fix his lung, they learn that the treatments are no longer effective and his cancer is now terminal, giving him six to ten months to live. Zach tells Sammy and Amy about his diagnosis while he is inspired by his teacher, Milton Weaver, about what he is to do with the rest of his life.

In the winter of 2012, Zach and his family go to Lourdes, France, in Laura's desperate attempt to summon some kind of miracle for Zach. Zach returns home to hang out with Sammy ("Coffee Cup") and learns that she has bought tickets to a Jason Mraz concert. Zach decides to use the opportunity to ask Amy to go to the prom with him, and she accepts ("I'm Yours"). After having convulsions, Zach goes to Sammy's house in the middle of the night demanding that they form a band. Both realize that they have romantic feelings for each other, but that they are incapable

### Clouds



Promotional poster

<b>Directed by</b>	<u>Justin Baldoni</u>
<b>Screenplay by</b>	Kara Holden
<b>Story by</b>	Patrick Kopka Casey La Scala Kara Holden
<b>Based on</b>	<i>Fly a Little Higher: How God Answered a Mom's Small Prayer in a Big Way</i> by Laura Sobiech
<b>Produced by</b>	<u>Justin Baldoni</u> <u>Andrew Lazar</u> Casey La Scala
<b>Starring</b>	<u>Fin Argus</u> <u>Sabrina Carpenter</u> <u>Madison Iseman</u> <u>Lil Rel Howery</u> <u>Tom Everett Scott</u> <u>Neve Campbell</u>

of having a full relationship. They continue to bond over songwriting ("Fix Me Up") and Sammy posts their music on [YouTube](#) which earns them some fame. Despite this, Zach is certain that he will fail to achieve anything beyond the video. He is later given encouragement by Mr. Weaver.

Zach's father, Rob, borrows a [Nissan GT-R](#) for him to drive and impress Amy with. While at her house, the two proceed to make out ("My Little Dancer"), but when Amy comments on his scars, Zach becomes despondent, tells her that he will never offer the things she wants from him, and leaves. Laura confronts Rob over the decision to get a car for Zach and he breaks down admitting that he did it to make his son happy as he is unable to do anything about his eventual death.

In the spring of 2013, Weaver reveals to Zach and Sammy that he showed their video to [BMI](#) who want to sign them. They head to [New York City](#) to sign their contracts, calling their band A Firm Handshake ("Ames"). On the flight back home, Zach suddenly has a moment of creative energy and writes the song "[Clouds](#)". He records the song shortly afterwards, which becomes a hit.

Zach finally makes the time to apologize to Amy about his behavior and the two of them get back together. Zach speaks privately to his mother about how to handle his remains and his funeral, suggesting bagpipes be played. Sammy and the Sobiechs learn that Zach might not make it to the prom. With Zach having been given the opportunity to play at the Metro Theatre, they decide to combine the concert with their prom, a graduation, and a fundraiser for osteosarcoma. The day arrives and despite Zach's worsening condition, he decides to perform. Sammy begins the show by performing "How to Go to Confession" before Zach heads out to perform "Clouds". Zach has trouble breathing, but he is moved when the entire audience sings the song for him.

Zach dies on May 20, 2013. Before dying, he has written a [college essay](#) about his views on life and death. Sammy, Amy and other friends come together for a group photo in remembrance of Zach, noticing that a cloud in the sky resembles a "Z". Photos of the real Zach and Sammy are shown during the end credits.

<b>Cinematography</b>	<a href="#">Ben Kutchins</a>
<b>Edited by</b>	<a href="#">Brett M. Reed</a>
<b>Music by</b>	<a href="#">Brian Tyler</a>
<b>Production companies</b>	<a href="#">Wayfarer Studios</a> <sup>[1]</sup> <a href="#">Warner Bros. Pictures</a> (uncredited) <sup>[1]</sup> <a href="#">Mad Chance Productions</a> <sup>[1]</sup> <a href="#">La Scala Films</a> <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Distributed by</b>	<a href="#">Disney+</a>
<b>Release dates</b>	October 9, 2020 ( <a href="#">Mill Valley Film Festival</a> ) October 16, 2020 (United States)
<b>Running time</b>	121 minutes <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$23 million

## Cast

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- [Fin Argus](#) as [Zach Sobiech](#), Rob and Laura's son
- [Sabrina Carpenter](#) as Sammy Brown, Zach's best friend
- [Madison Iseman](#) as Amy Adamle, Zach's girlfriend
- [Lil Rel Howery](#) as Milton Weaver, Zach's teacher
- [Tom Everett Scott](#) as Rob Sobiech, Zach's father and Laura's husband
- [Neve Campbell](#) as Laura Sobiech, Zach's mother and Rob's wife
- Summer H. Howell as Grace Sobiech, Zach's younger sister
- [Vivien Endicott-Douglas](#) as Alli Sobiech, Zach's older sister
- [Dylan Everett](#) as Sam Sobiech, Zach's older brother

- [Jason Mraz](#) as himself
- [Luis Oliva](#) as hip agent

Justin Baldoni's wife [Emily Baldoni](#) appears as a CNN reporter. Many of Zach Sobiech's real life acquaintances make cameos in the film. Seventy of Zach's friends and family members cameo during the crowd shots during the Jason Mraz concert and the concert at the end of the film. Zach's real life friend Mitchell Kluesner, essentially playing himself, appears in the classroom scene sitting behind Zach. The real Grace Sobiech appears as a high school student early on in the film while the real Amy Adamle appears along with Madison Iseman at the dance studio.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Production

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### Development

In February 2016, it was announced [Warner Bros.](#) had acquired rights to the memoir *Fly a Little Higher: How God Answered a Mom's Small Prayer in a Big Way* by Laura Sobiech, with [Justin Baldoni](#) set to direct the film.<sup>[5]</sup>

In September 2019, [Fin Argus](#), [Madison Iseman](#) and [Sabrina Carpenter](#) joined the cast of the film.<sup>[6]</sup> In October 2019, [Neve Campbell](#), [Tom Everett Scott](#) and [Lil Rel Howery](#) joined the cast of the film.<sup>[7][8][9]</sup>

### Filming

Principal photography began on October 19, 2019. Most of it was filmed in [Baie-D'Urfé](#), Quebec, Canada and in [Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue](#), Quebec, Canada. Part of it was filmed at [Heritage Regional High School](#) and neighbouring school [École secondaire André-Laurendeau](#). Filming wrapped on November 27, 2019.

## Music

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### Release

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On May 14, 2020, it was announced [Disney+](#) had taken over distribution rights to the film from [Warner Bros.](#), in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the film industry.<sup>[10][11]</sup> *Clouds* was released on October 16, 2020.<sup>[12]</sup> A making-of documentary series entitled *Beyond the Clouds* was released from December 4, 2020, to January 29, 2021.

## Reception

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### Audience viewership

According to ScreenEngine/ASI, *Clouds* was the 28th-most-watched straight-to-streaming title of 2020, as of November 2020.<sup>[13][14]</sup>

### Critical reception

On review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, the film holds an approval rating of 76% based on 25 reviews, with an average rating of 6.6/10. The website's critics consensus reads, "Although its emotional swings occasionally miss, *Clouds* soars higher than most young adult films -- and proves director Justin Baldoni's mastery behind the camera."<sup>[15]</sup> Metacritic assigned the film a weighted average score of 55 out of 100, based on 7 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews".<sup>[16]</sup>

Guy Lodge of Variety claimed that the film manages to be sentimental across Justin Baldoni's direction and Ben Kutchins' cinematography, found the scenes where Zach Sobiech's family is horrified and saddened by his illness to be among the best, and praised the performances of the cast members.<sup>[17]</sup> Amy Nicholson of The New York Times complimented how Justin Baldoni approached the impact of Sobiech's death on his relatives, found the documentary to be emotional, and praised the performances of Fin Argus and Sabrina Carpenter.<sup>[18]</sup> John Serba of Decider found the movie sincere through its direction, saying it manages to provide an emotional weigh on the audience by not sugarcoating Sobiech's life, while praising the performances of the actors, especially Lil Rel Howery's.<sup>[19]</sup>

Jennifer Green of Common Sense Media rated the movie 4 out of 5 stars, stating: "*Clouds* is the true, often sad story of Zach Sobiech (Fin Argus), a teenager diagnosed with terminal cancer who became known to many via his hit song "Clouds", which was recorded in the final months of his life. But the movie has a generally positive tone, thanks to Zach's natural good nature. In an opening scene, he sings "Sexy and I Know It" in front of a high school audience, dancing suggestively and conveying both popularity and a self deprecating sense of humor. Scenes show him struggling with illness, undergoing chemotherapy, being rushed in for emergency surgery, and facing his own terminal diagnosis. He occasionally reacts with anger and deception to his fate, including a scene in which he almost crashes a car. He's also painfully aware of the grief he's bringing to his loved ones, including his tight-knight family, a girlfriend, and his best friend, who all exhibit courage and compassion in their handling of Zach's illness."<sup>[20]</sup> Nell Minow of RogerEbert.com rated the film 3 out of 4 stars and found the movie emotional, claiming it depicts the sad and joyful moments of Sobiech's life and the impact of his death on his environment, while complimenting the performances of the cast.<sup>[21]</sup>

## Impact

After the release of the movie, the song "Clouds" (written and recorded by Zach Sobiech) hit the iTunes song chart at the number #1 spot a second time, seven years after Sobiech's death.<sup>[22][23][24]</sup> A virtual concert titled *Clouds: A Musical Celebration* was held as a musical tribute on October 24, 2020, with OneRepublic, Fin Argus, Sabrina Carpenter, and several cast members of *Clouds* participating.<sup>[25][26]</sup>

## Accolades

Year	Award	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
2020	<u>Heartland Film Festival</u>	Truly Moving Picture Award	Justin Baldoni	Won	<sup>[27]</sup>
2021	<u>Writers Guild of America</u>	Adapted Long Form	Kara Holden, Patrick Kopka, Casey La Scala	Nominated	<sup>[28]</sup>

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## External links

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