

A Thousand and One

A *Thousand and One* is a 2023 American <u>drama film</u> written and directed by <u>A. V. Rockwell</u> in her feature directorial debut. The film stars <u>Teyana Taylor</u>, <u>Will Catlett</u>, Josiah Cross, Aven Courtney, and Aaron Kingsley Adetola. Set between the 1990s and 2000s, it focuses on a single mother who decides to kidnap her son out of the foster care system to raise him herself, as the two struggle with life in a constantly changing New York City.

The film premiered at the <u>2023 Sundance Film Festival</u> on January 22, and won the <u>Grand Jury Prize</u>. It was released theatrically on March 31, 2023, by <u>Focus Features</u>. It received critical acclaim and was named one of the top ten independent films of 2023 by the National Board of Review. [6]

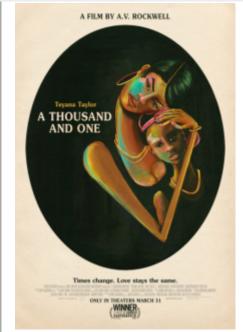
Plot

In 1994, hairdresser and convicted thief Inez de la Paz is released from Rikers Island and returns to the Brooklyn neighborhood of her former shelter, where she sees her son, Terry, with other children from his foster home out on the street. When Terry is hospitalized after trying to escape from the home, Inez secretly visits him. He tells her about his earliest memory: of Inez abandoning him on a street corner when he was two years old.

Inez notifies Terry that they will lose contact again when he is placed at a new foster home. Visibly shaken after he accuses her of repeated abandonment, Inez asks if Terry wants to come live with her. When he says yes, Inez impulsively abducts him from the hospital, escaping to her childhood neighborhood of Harlem.

Inez and Terry stay at a variety of homes until she saves up enough money from a new job at a nursing home to afford an apartment. During a conversation with Ms. Annie, from whom Inez rents a room for a short time, it's implied that Inez lost her parents during the crack epidemic. She arranges a <u>false birth certificate and social security card</u> for Terry so that she can enroll him in school and reunites with an old boyfriend and fellow thief named Lucky. Though seemingly uncomfortable with the situation, he and Inez get married and he promises to take care of Terry. Both Inez and Lucky invest in Mayor <u>Rudy Giuliani</u>'s promise of an improved city, in hopes that it will offer a better upbringing for Terry than their own.

A Thousand and One



Theatrical release poster

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Directed by	A. V. Rockwell
Written by	A. V. Rockwell
Produced by	Eddie Vaisman
	Julia Lebedev
	Lena Waithe
	Rishi Rajani
	Brad Weston
Starring	Teyana Taylor
	Will Catlett
	Josiah Cross
	Aven Courtney
	Aaron Kingsley
	Adetola
Cinematography	Eric K. Yue
Edited by	Sabine Hoffman
	Kristan Sprague
Music by	Gary Gunn
Production companies	Sight Unseen

Harlem continues to change despite highly reported cases of police brutality throughout the city, culminating with Giuliani's rollout of stop-and-frisk. By 2001, Inez still lives in the same apartment with Terry though her marriage to Lucky has become strained due to his long absences and infidelities. Terry excels at his schoolwork despite these problems at home and <u>continual harassment from police</u> and is recommended for placement in a STEM-based specialized school.

Terry does not want to go due to dreams of becoming a composer but agrees to take the placement exam to satisfy Inez and Lucky's wishes for him to have a better life than they have had. Inez fails to reconcile with Lucky, but he affirms his love for and support of Terry, which convinces Terry to go. Michael Bloomberg becomes the next mayor, and the Harlem area continues to evolve with the tearing down of local and historic institutions as nationwide chain stores and luxury housing developments are introduced.

In 2005, Lucky	grac	dually s	uccu	mbs t	o can	cer in	the	hospital	as
Terry prepares	for (college	and	their	new	landlo	ord	attempts	to

<u>drive them out of the apartment</u>. When his guidance counselor asks for his birth certificate and social security card for a job, Terry gives her his forged ones without telling Inez. When the documents come back as invalid, a reluctant Terry reveals the deception, prompting the counselor to call <u>social services</u>. Terry warns Inez, who flees before social services arrive and reveal to Terry that she is not his biological mother at all, putting him in another home.

Hillman Grad

Productions

Makeready

Universal

Pictures^[1]

(International)

(Sundance)

January 22, 2023

March 31, 2023

(United States)

116 minutes^[2]

United States

\$3.5 million^{[3][4]}

English

Focus Features

(United States)

Distributed by

Release dates

Running time

Country

Language

Box office

Terry flees the home and after Inez's best friend, Kim, invites him to live with her, returns to the apartment, where he finds Inez collecting her belongings. She confesses that she is not the woman who abandoned Terry on the street corner in his memory, but the woman who found him and treated him like a son ever since. Terry affirms that he still loves her as a mother, but the two separate once again. Before entering a taxi to an uncertain future, Inez promises Terry that "this isn't goodbye".

Cast

- Teyana Taylor as Inez de la Paz
- Aaron Kingsley Adetola as Terry (6 years old)
- Aven Courtney as Terry (13 years old)
- Josiah Cross as Terry (17 years old)
- Will Catlett as Lucky
- Terri Abney as Kim Jones
- Johnny Serret as Runaway Teen

Production

In December 2020, it was announced <u>A.V. Rockwell</u> would write and direct the film, with <u>Lena Waithe</u> set to serve as a producer under Hillman Grad Productions banner, and <u>Focus Features</u> set to distribute. In July 2021, <u>Teyana Taylor</u> joined the cast of the film.

The film was shot in 2021, which Rockwell described as difficult due to COVID and the increased development that New York City saw during that period. [8] "If you thought gentrification was going crazy, it went on steroids over the pandemic," she said. "So, I do feel like if we would've waited even just a summer longer, I don't know if we would've been able to make this movie in New York." [8]

Release

It had its world premiere at the $\underline{2023}$ Sundance Film Festival on January 22, 2023. The film was released on March 31, 2023, by Focus Features. [9]

Reception

Box office

Released alongside *His Only Son*, *Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves*, and the wide expansion of *A Good Person*, the film made \$700,000 from 926 theaters on its first day and went on to debut to \$1.72 million, finishing in seventh.^[10]

Critical response

On the <u>review aggregator</u> website <u>Rotten Tomatoes</u>, 97% of 116 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 8.10/10. The website's consensus reads: "A tribute to parental devotion and a testament to Teyana Taylor's talent, *A Thousand and One* presents a heart-wrenching portrait of perseverance in the face of systemic inequity." Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 81 out of 100, based on 30 critics, indicating "universal acclaim". [12]



Teyana Taylor received critical acclaim for her performance as Inez de la Paz.

Audiences surveyed by <u>CinemaScore</u> gave the film an average grade of "B+" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled by <u>PostTrak</u> gave it a 76% positive score, with 63% saying they would definitely recommend it. [10][13]

Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.	
Sundance Film Festival	January 27, 2023	Grand Jury Prize – Dramatic	A Thousand and One	Won	[14]	
Hollywood Critics Association	June 30,	Best Indie	A Modsaid and One	Nominated	[15]	
Midseason Film Awards		Best Actress	Teyana Taylor	Nominated		
Jerusalem Film Festival	July 23, 2023	Best International Debut	ebut Nominat A Thousand and One		[16]	
		Best Feature		Nominated		
Gotham Independent Film	November	Breakthrough Director	A. V. Rockwell	Won	[17]	
Awards	27, 2023	Outstanding Lead Performance		Nominated		
Celebration of Cinema & Television	December 4, 2023	Breakthrough Performance Award	Teyana Taylor	Won	[18]	
National Board of Review	December 6, 2023	Top 10 Independent Films	A Thousand and One	Won	[19]	
		Breakthrough Performance	Teyana Taylor	Won	[12]	
Boston Society of Film Critics Awards	December 10, 2023	Best New Filmmaker	A. V. Rockwell	Runner- up ^[a]	[20]	
IndieWire Critics Poll	December 11, 2023	Best First Feature	A Thousand and One	3rd Place	[21]	
Chicago Film Critics Association Awards	December 12, 2023	Milos Stehlik Award for Breakthrough Filmmaker	Breakthrough A. V. Rockwell		[22]	
Toronto Film Critics Association	December 17, 2023	Best Breakthrough Performance	Teyana Taylor	Won	[23]	
		Best Movie About Women	A Thousand and One	Nominated	1	
Women Film Critics	December	Best Actress	Teyana Taylor	Nominated	[24]	
Circle Awards	18, 2023	Josephine Baker Award		Nominated		
		Karen Morley Award	A Thousand and One	Nominated		
Indiana Film Journalists Association	December	Best Picture		Nominated	[25]	
	18, 2023	Best Original Screenplay	A. V. Rockwell	Nominated		
		Best Lead Performance	Teyana Taylor	Nominated		
		Best Ensemble Acting	A Thousand and One	Nominated		

		Breakout of the Year	Josiah Cross	Nominated		
San Diego Film Critics Society	<u>December</u> 19, 2023	Best First Feature	A. V. Rockwell	Nominated	[26]	
		Best Actress	Teyana Taylor	Nominated	[O.7]	
Florida Film Critics Circle Awards	<u>December</u> 21, 2023	Best Score	Gary Gunn	Nominated	[27] [28]	
		Best First Film		Runner-up		
Astra Film Awards	January 6, 2024	Best First Feature	A. V. Rockwell	Nominated	[29]	
Austin Film Critics Association Awards	January 10, 2024	Best First Film		Nominated	[30]	
African-American Film Critics Association	January 15, 2024	Best Independent Feature	A Thousand and One	Won	[31]	
		Outstanding Director	A. V. Rockwell	Nominated		
		Outstanding Lead Performance		Nominated		
Black Reel Awards	January 16, 2024	Outstanding Breakthrough Performance	Teyana Taylor	Nominated		
		Outstanding Emerging Director	A. V. Rockwell	Nominated	[32]	
		Outstanding Screenplay		Nominated		
		Outstanding First Screenplay		Nominated		
		Outstanding Independent Film	A Thousand and One	Won		
		Outstanding Hairstyle and Make-Up	Craig Carter	Nominated		
Directors Guild of America Awards	February 10, 2024	Outstanding Directing – First-Time Feature Film	A. V. Rockwell	Nominated	[33]	
Independent Spirit Awards	February 25, 2024	Best First Feature	A. V. Rockwell, Julia Lebedev, Rishi Rajani, Eddie Vaisman, Lena Waithe, and Brad Weston		[34]	
		Best Lead Performance		Nominated		
NAACP Image Awards	March 16, 2024	Outstanding Actress in a Motion Picture		Nominated	[35]	
		Outstanding Breakthrough Performance in a Motion Picture	Teyana Taylor	Nominated		
		Outstanding Breakthrough Creative (Motion Picture)	A. V. Rockwell	Nominated		
		Outstanding Writing in a Motion Picture		Nominated		
		Outstanding Youth Performance in a	Aaron Kingsley Adetola	Nominated		

Motion Picture	Aven Courtnery	Nominated	
Outstanding Cinematography in a Feature Film	Eric K. Yue	Won	

Notes

a. Shared with Cord Jefferson for American Fiction.

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External links

- Official website (https://www.focusfeatures.com/a-thousand-and-one/)
- A Thousand and One (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12427158/) at IMDb
- A Thousand and One (https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt12427158/) at Box Office Mojo
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