

Nomadland

(Redirected from Nomadland (film))

Nomadland is a 2020 American drama film written, produced, edited and directed by Chloé Zhao. Based on the 2017 nonfiction book *Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century* by Jessica Bruder, it stars Frances McDormand as a widow who leaves her life in Nevada to travel around the United States in her van as a nomad. A number of real-life nomads appear as fictionalized versions of themselves, including Linda May, Swankie, and Bob Wells. David Strathairn also stars in a supporting role.

Nomadland premiered on September 11, 2020, at the Venice Film Festival, where it won the Golden Lion. It also won the People's Choice Award at the Toronto International Film Festival. It had a one-week streaming limited release on December 4, 2020, and was distributed by Searchlight Pictures in selected IMAX theaters in the United States on January 29, 2021, and simultaneously in theaters, and streaming digitally on Hulu, on February 19, 2021. The film was a box office success, grossing \$39 million worldwide against its \$5 million budget and received widespread critical acclaim for its direction, editing, screenplay cinematography, as well as the performances of McDormand and Strathairn. It was the third-highest rated film of 2020 on Metacritic, $\frac{[7]}{}$ which found it to be the most frequently ranked by critics and publications as one of the best films of the year.

At the 93rd Academy Awards, the film won Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actress for McDormand, from a total of six nominations. [8] Zhao became the first Asian woman and the second woman ever to win Best Director; McDormand became the first woman and fourth person to win Academy Awards for both acting and producing, and the first person ever to win Academy Awards as producer and performer for the same film. [9] It is also the first Searchlight release to win Best Picture since the studio's ownership under Walt Disney Studios, following Disney's acquisition of the 21st Century Fox assets. It also won Best Motion Picture – Drama and Best Director at the 78th Golden Globe Awards, [10] four awards including Best Film at the 74th British Academy Film

Nomadland



Theatrical release poster

| Directed by | Chloé Zhao |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Screenplay by | Chloé Zhao |
| Based on | Nomadland: |
| | Surviving America in |
| | the Twenty-First |
| | Century |
| | by Jessica Bruder |
| Produced by | Frances |
| | McDormand |
| | Peter Spears |
| | Mollye Asher |
| | Dan Janvey |
| | Chloé Zhao |
| Starring | Frances |
| | McDormand |
| | David Strathairn |
| | Linda May |
| | Swankie |

<u>Awards</u>, [11] and four awards including <u>Best Film</u> at the <u>36th Independent Spirit Awards</u>. [12] It has since been cited as one of the best films of the 21st century. [13][14][15]

Plot

In 2011, Fern loses her job after the <u>US Gypsum</u> plant in <u>Empire</u>, <u>Nevada</u>, shuts down; she had worked there for years along with her husband, who recently died. Fern sells most of her belongings and purchases a van to live in and travel the country searching for work. She takes a seasonal job at an Amazon fulfillment center through the winter.

Linda, a friend and co-worker, invites Fern to visit a <u>desert</u> rendezvous in <u>Arizona</u> organized by <u>Bob</u> Wells, which provides a support system and community for fellow nomads. Fern initially declines, but changes her mind as the weather turns cold and she struggles to find work in the area. There, Fern meets fellow nomads and learns basic survival and self-sufficiency skills for the road.

When Fern's van blows a tire, she visits the van of a nearby nomad, Swankie, to ask for a ride into town to buy a spare. Swankie chastises Fern for not being prepared and invites her to learn road survival skills; they become friends. Swankie

| Cinematography | Joshua James |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Richards |
| Edited by | Chloé Zhao |
| Music by | Ludovico Einaudi |
| Production companies | Highwayman |
| | Hear/Say |
| | Productions |
| | Cor Cordium |
| | Productions |
| Distributed by | Searchlight |
| | Pictures ^[1] |
| Release dates | September 11, 2020 |
| | (Venice) |
| | February 19, 2021 |
| | (United States) |
| Running time | 108 minutes ^[2] |
| Country | United States |
| Language | English |
| Budget | \$5 million ^{[3][4]} |
| Box office | \$39.5 million ^{[5][6]} |
| | |

tells Fern about her cancer diagnosis and shortened life expectancy and her plan to make good memories on the road rather than waste away in a hospital. They eventually part ways.

Fern takes a job as a camp host at the Cedar Pass Campgrounds in <u>Badlands National Park</u> in <u>South Dakota</u>. Also working there is Dave, another nomad she met and danced with at the desert community. When he falls ill with <u>diverticulitis</u>, Fern visits him at the hospital where he has had emergency surgery. They take restaurant jobs at <u>Wall Drug</u> in South Dakota. One night, Dave's son visits the restaurant looking for him, telling him that his wife is pregnant and asking him to meet his grandchild. He is hesitant, but Fern encourages him to go. Dave suggests that she come with him, but she declines.

Fern takes a new job at a <u>sugar beet</u> processing plant, but her van breaks down, and she cannot afford the repairs. Unable to borrow money, she visits her sister's family at their home in <u>California</u>. Fern's sister lends her the money to get the van fixed. She questions why Fern was never around in their lives and why Fern stayed in Empire after her husband died, but she tells Fern that she is brave to be so independent. Fern later visits Dave and his son's family in <u>Point Arena, California</u>, learning that Dave has decided to stay with them long-term. He admits to having feelings for her and invites her to stay with him permanently in a guest house, but she decides to leave after only a few days, heading to the ocean.

Fern returns to her seasonal Amazon job and later revisits the Arizona rendezvous. There, she learns that Swankie has died, and she and the other nomads pay tribute to her life by tossing stones into the campfire. Fern opens up to Bob about her loving relationship with her late husband, and he shares the story of his son's suicide. Bob espouses the view that goodbyes are not final in the nomad community as its members always promise to see each other again "down the road".

Fern returns to the nearly abandoned town of Empire to dispose of the belongings she has been keeping in a storage unit. She visits the factory and the home she shared with her husband before returning to the road.

Cast

- Frances McDormand as Fern
- David Strathairn as Dave
- Linda May as Linda
- Charlene Swankie as Swankie
- Bob Wells as Bob Wells
- Peter Spears as Peter
- Derek Endres as Derek
- Tay Strathairn as James
- Gay DeForest as Gay
- Patricia Grier as Patty
- Angela Reyes as Angela
- Carl R. Hughes as Carl
- Douglas G. Soul as Doug
- Ryan Aquino as Ryan
- Teresa Buchanan as Teresa
- Karie Lynn McDermott Wilder as Karie
- Brandy Wilder as Brandy
- Makenzie Etcheverry as Makenzie
- Annette Webb as Annette
- Rachel Bannon as Rachel
- Bryce Bedsworth as Bryce
- Sherita Deni Coker as Deni
- Merle Redwing as Merle
- Forrest Bault as Forrest
- Suanne Carlson as Suanne
- Donnie Miller as Donnie
- Roxanne Bay as Roxy
- Matt Sfaelos as Noodle
- Ronald O. Zimmerman as Ron
- Paige Dean as Paige
- Paul Winer as Paul
- Derrick Janis as Victor
- Greg Barber as Greg
- Carol Anne Hodge as Carol
- Matthew Stinson as Nurse Matt
- Terry Phillip as Terry
- Bradford Lee Riza as Brad
- Cat Clifford as Cat
- James R. Taylor Jr. as James
- Jeremy Greenman as Jeremy

- Ken Greenman as Ken
- Melissa Smith as Dolly
- Warren Keith as George
- Jeff Andrews as Jeff
- Paul Cunningham as Paul
- Emily Jade Foley as Emily
- Mike Sells as Mike
- Cheryl Davis as Cheri

Production

Frances McDormand and Peter Spears optioned the film rights to the book in 2017. After seeing Chloé Zhao's film *The Rider* at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival, McDormand decided to approach her about the project. She and Spears met with Zhao at the 33rd Independent Spirit Awards in March 2018, and Zhao agreed to write and direct the film. [17]

Filming for *Nomadland* took place over four months in fall 2018, with writer-director Zhao splitting time between the set and pre-production for *Eternals* (2021). McDormand, Zhao, and other crew members lived out of vans over the course of production. David Strathairn, and real-life nomads Linda May, Swankie, and Bob Wells, also star. Many other real-life nomads appear throughout the film. McDormand, Spears, Mollye Asher, Dan Janvey, and Zhao produced the film.



Director Chloé Zhao

Release

<u>Searchlight Pictures</u> acquired the worldwide distribution rights for *Nomadland* in February 2019. The film had its world premiere at the <u>Venice Film Festival</u> on September 11, 2020, and screened at the <u>Toronto International Film Festival</u> on the same day. At Venice, the film won several awards, including the festival's top honor, the <u>Golden Lion</u>. At Toronto, the film won the <u>People's Choice Award</u>. It is the first film to win the top prize at both Venice and Toronto.

In association with Searchlight, <u>Film at Lincoln Center</u> held exclusive virtual screenings of the film for one week only beginning on December 4, 2020, the film's initial release date before Searchlight delayed it to February 19, 2021, due to concerns of the <u>COVID-19 pandemic</u>. [26][27] It was released in <u>IMAX</u> theaters on January 29, 2021, with a wide theatrical and drive-in release in the United States on February 19, and streaming on <u>Hulu</u> the same day. [28] A two-week preview season in certain regions of Australia and New Zealand began on December 26, 2020, before a wider release on March 4, 2021. [29]

Internationally, the film is also available on <u>Disney+</u> and <u>Disney+ Hotstar</u>. The release date on Disney+ was April 9, 2021 in Canada, and April 30, 2021, in most other countries. [30][31][32] Although originally scheduled for a limited release in China starting on April 23, 2021, [33] the film has still not been shown in any theaters there.

Nomadland was released on Blu-ray and digital streaming services on April 27, 2021, by <u>Walt Disney</u> Studios Home Entertainment. [34]

Reception

Box office

Nomadland grossed \$3.7 million in the United States and Canada, and \$35.4 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$39.1 million. [5][6]

Although Searchlight did not publicly release *Nomadland'*s grosses, it was released in North America the same day as *The Little Things*, and sources estimated a gross of \$170,000 from its two-week IMAX run, then \$503,000 from 1,175 theaters in its wide opening weekend on February 19, for a total of \$673,000. Social media monitor RelishMix noted online response was "mixed-to-leaning-positive" among audiences. [35] In its second wide release weekend, it earned an estimated \$330,000 from 1,200 theaters, for a four-week running total of \$1.1 million. [36]

Critical response

Review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes reports that 93% of 436 critic reviews were positive, with an average rating of 8.8/10. The website's critics consensus reads, "A poetic character study on the forgotten and downtrodden, *Nomadland* beautifully captures the restlessness left in the wake of the Great Recession." According to Metacritic, which assigned it a weighted average score of 89 out of 100 based on 55 critics, the film received "universal acclaim". [38]

Writing for *The Hollywood Reporter*, David Rooney called the film a "powerful character study", and added, "Like Zhao's earlier work, *Nomadland* is an unassuming film, its aptly meandering, unhurried non-narrative layering impressions rather than building a story with the standard markers. But the cumulative effect of its many quiet, seemingly inconsequential encounters and moments of solitary contemplation is a unique portrait of outsider existence." Adrian Horton of *The Guardian* gave the film a positive review, stating, "*Nomadland* has garnered industry praise as a likely frontrunner for the best picture Oscar ... The word of mouth is warranted." A.O. Scott of *The New York Times* similarly gave a positive review,



Frances McDormand's performance received critical acclaim, earning her the Academy Award for Best Actress.

writing "It's like discovering a new country, one you may want to visit more than once." Eric Kohn of IndieWire gave the film an "A-" and said, "director Chloé Zhao works magic with McDormand's face and the real world around it, delivering a profound rumination on the impulse to leave society in the dust." Some reviewers felt the film idealized financial despair. Critic Tim Brayton called it "108 minutes of poverty tourism", while \underline{WBUR} 's Sean Burns wrote "Zhao has made $\underline{The\ Grapes\ of\ Wrath}$ without the wrath". [43]

IndieWire's poll of 231 critics included *Nomadland* in its Best Movies of 2020. [44] According to Metacritic, the film was ranked the best of 2020 by critics more often than any other. [45] In 2021, it was included on *Forbes*'s list of "The Top 150 Greatest Films Of The 21st Century." In 2022, it ranked number 10 on *Time Out*'s list of "The 100 Best Movies of the 21st century So Far," saying that the film "expertly stitches together realism, moments of sheer transcendence and a lightly-worn radicalism in a way that feels nothing but unpatronizing and empathetic." In August 2023, *Collider* ranked the film at number 13 on its list of "The 20 Best Drama Movies of the 2020s So Far," calling it "a moving portrayal of the American nomadic lifestyle" and praised the lead character of Fern as "endearing ... because of her self-confidence, but it never feels like she's attempting to impose her choice of lifestyle on anyone else." [15]

McDormand loudly howled toward the ceiling when accepting the Oscar for Best Picture, which drew confusion from many audience members and press outlets. She went on to explain this was done to honor the films Sound Mixer, Michael "Wolf" Snyder, who had passed away shortly before the release of the film. [46]

Reaction in China

Zhao and the film's success prior to and leading up to the <u>Golden Globes</u> and the Oscars were initially praised on Chinese social media outlets, as well as official state-controlled news media. [47][48][49]

After the Golden Globes, Zhao was scrutinized by Chinese <u>netizens</u> over her remarks in a 2013 interview for *Filmmaker* magazine, in which she described China as "a place where there are lies everywhere". In response to the controversy, *Nomadland* was pulled from theatrical release by Disney China, and the <u>93rd Academy Awards</u> were censored by Chinese media outlets along with all mention of Zhao or the film on social media. [50][51]

Accolades

Nomadland won the Golden Lion upon premiering at the Venice Film Festival, and also won the People's Choice Award at the Toronto International Film Festival. [52][53][54] It received four nominations at the 78th Golden Globe Awards, winning Best Motion Picture – Drama and Best Director; in winning the latter award, Zhao became the second woman and the first East Asian woman to do so. [10][55] It received five nominations at the 36th Independent Spirit Awards and six nominations at the 26th Critics' Choice Awards, winning four awards including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay. [56][57] At the 27th Screen Actors Guild Awards, McDormand received a nomination for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Leading Role. [58] The film won the BAFTA Award for Best Film in 2021. [59][60] The film received six nominations at the 93rd Academy Awards, winning Best Director [61] (with Zhao becoming the second woman and first non-white woman to do so), [62] Best Picture, [63] and Best Actress awards in 2021. [64] Both the National Board of Review and the American Film Institute named Nomadland as one of the top 10 films of 2020. [65][66]

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