

Funny Pages (film)

Funny Pages is a 2022 American coming-of-age black comedy film written, directed, and edited by Owen Kline and produced by the Safdie brothers.^[1] It premiered at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival and was released in the United States on August 26, 2022, where it received positive reviews from critics.

The film tells the story of a 17-year-old cartoonist Robert, who leaves home after the death of his mentor to forge his own path. He moves to a basement apartment in Trenton, New Jersey, and meets Wallace, a possibly unstable former cartoonist.

Plot

Robert Bleichner, a high school student and aspiring cartoonist, meets with his art teacher, Mr. Katano, at his school classroom. After Katano looks over Robert's portfolio, Katano asks Robert to make a nude figure drawing of him. Before completing the drawing, Robert's phone alarm goes off and he leaves for work. Outside, Katano attempts to talk with Robert. While trying to ensure the interaction did not make him uncomfortable, Katano is suddenly struck and killed by a car.

Later, Robert attempts to gather anything of sentimental value from his late mentor. After rummaging through Katano's classroom, Robert and his friend Miles break into Katano's apartment. As the police arrive at the scene, Miles escapes while Robert is apprehended. Robert enlists the help of Cheryl, a public defender, for his trial. He is not charged and is allowed to keep Katano's possessions. Shortly after being released, Robert meets with his parents, Lewis and Jennifer, at a diner. He proclaims that he wants to pursue a career in art and will not be finishing the school year, to his parents' disappointment.

Seeking independence, Robert leaves his parents' house and moves to Trenton, New Jersey, where he shares a dingy apartment with two older men, Barry and Steven. Robert takes a job working for Cheryl as a notetaker while continuing to work at a local comic book store. He attends a meeting with Cheryl and her client, Wallace, who is seeking legal counsel after an attempted assault on a pharmacist. While taking notes, Robert learns that Wallace used to work for Image Comics as an assistant colorist.

Funny Pages



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Owen Kline
Written by	Owen Kline
Produced by	Josh Safdie <p>Benny Safdie</p> Sebastian Bear-McClard <p>Ronald Bronstein</p> Oscar Boyson <p>David Duque-Estrada</p>
Starring	Daniel Zolghadri <p>Matthew Maher</p> Miles Emanuel <p>Maria Dizzia</p> Josh Pais
Cinematography	Sean Price Williams <p>Hunter Zimny</p>
Edited by	Owen Kline

The next day, Robert attempts several times to connect with Wallace over his comic book career but is met with Wallace's erratic and volatile behavior. Before driving home, Robert offers Wallace a ride home, which he hastily accepts. During the ride, Wallace coerces Robert to drive to the pharmacy where he was charged with assault. Wallace instructs Robert to provoke the pharmacist in an attempt to get him fired, believing it will help with his case. Robert reluctantly agrees in order to earn Wallace's approval. In an unsuccessful attempt to gather incriminating evidence, Robert throws a rubber horse at the pharmacist and flees the scene.

Robert drops off a disgruntled Wallace. Desperate for professional guidance, Robert offers to pay Wallace for a drawing lesson. Wallace agrees when Robert suggests they could meet at his parents' house in Princeton, New Jersey. Later that night, Robert moves back home after walking in on Barry and Steven masturbating to Katano's adult comics at their apartment.

When Wallace arrives the next morning, Lewis and Jennifer are immediately suspicious of him. An increasingly uncomfortable Wallace locks himself in the bathroom and smashes a window in frustration. Robert takes Wallace up to his room and pays him with the money he stole from his mother's purse. Miles arrives unannounced and tries to show Wallace his work. During the lesson, Wallace finds Robert's comic parodying him and his misadventures. In a fit of rage, Wallace lambasts the boys and attempts to take Miles' comic from his hands.

In the ensuing scuffle, Miles is accidentally stabbed in the head with a pen. Wallace attempts to flee the house by stealing Robert's car, but he crashes it into the garage. Robert chases Wallace on foot, then Wallace beats up Robert and tells him to leave him alone. A broken and bruised Robert stumbles to the closed comic book store. He sits at the counter and contemplates what just happened.

	Erin Dewitt
Music by	<u>Sean O'Hagan</u>
Production companies	<u>A24</u> <u>Elara Pictures</u>
Distributed by	A24
Release dates	May 24, 2022 (<u>Cannes</u>) August 26, 2022 (United States)
Running time	86 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English

Cast

- Daniel Zolghadri as Robert Bleichner
- Matthew Maher as Wallace
- Miles Emanuel as Miles
- Maria Dizzia as Jennifer
- Josh Pais as Lewis
- Marcia Debonis as Cheryl Quartermaine
- Stephen Adly Guirgis as Katano
- Michael Townsend Wright as Barry
- Cleveland Thomas Jr. as Steven
- Rob M. Anderson as Joe (comic shop clerk)
- Ron Rifkin as grandfather
- Tony Hassini as Richard
- Andy Milonakis as George
- Shane Fleming as Gabe

- Charlie Judkins as comics expert
- Peter Lucibello as Santa
- [Louise Lasser](#) as Linda (pharmacy lady)
- [Buddy Duress](#) as Ryan

Production

The character of Robert first appeared in 2011 in the comic book *Whippers & Snappers* in a story drawn by Kline called "Robert in the Boiler Room."

The film began shooting in 2017 with the working title *Two Against Nature* and, after several delays and re-writes, filming was completed in December 2021.^[2]

Release

The film premiered at the [2022 Cannes Film Festival](#) in the [Directors' Fortnight](#) on May 24, 2022, where it received a three-minute standing ovation.^[3] It premiered in the US at an outdoor screening at the [Brooklyn Army Terminal](#) on August 20, 2022, before being released theatrically on August 26.

Reception

Critical response

On the [review aggregator](#) website [Rotten Tomatoes](#), 83% of 102 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7.2/10. The website's consensus reads: "It won't be for all tastes, but *Funny Pages* deserves credit for telling a coming-of-age story that leans heavier on cringe comedy than nostalgia."^[4] [Metacritic](#), which uses a [weighted average](#), assigned the film a score of 73 out of 100, based on 32 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.^[5]

[Manohla Dargis](#), five-time finalist for the [Pulitzer Prize for Criticism](#), remarked that "it's startling how good the film is" but that "there's nothing remotely cool about Robert or, really, 'Funny Pages.' That's because cool is entirely beside the point. What matters is a sensibility, a worldview — what matters is art."

[The New York Times](#) critic points out that "'Funny Pages' was shot in super 16 millimeter film, which gives the movie a gritty texture that fits the material and, at times, evokes some classics of 1970s cinema" while being "exhilaratingly free of the do-gooder, aspirational current that runs through so many ostensibly independent features (unless you too aspire to Crumb-like artistry), and that effectively repackages the same Sunday school moralism the old-studio movies did."

Dargis ultimately draws contrast in saying "there are fights, a car crash, some domestic drama, but mostly there is Robert in his own wonderland, a dank, clammy, sometimes sordid place of delight, baseness and naked feeling, one that's far from the one inhabited by, say, the status-conscious music dudes in the film *'High Fidelity.'*"^[6]

K. Austin Collins of [Rolling Stone](#) called it "an itchy, smart, unpredictable portrait of a young artist [that] practically makes you see Robert with double vision." That "it goes out of its way to see its characters in the most unvarnished, unfiltered light, closing in on bad skin and awkward haircuts and embarrassing

masturbation rituals and squinty eyes that look extremely wet for no particular reason" but that "it's also hard to avoid sharing in that obsession. People are incredibly odd. How can you help but look?"^[7]

Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result
<u>Cannes Film Festival</u>	May 2022	Golden Camera	<u>Owen Kline</u>	Nominated
<u>Gotham Awards</u>	November 28, 2022	Breakthrough Director Award	<u>Owen Kline</u>	Nominated
<u>Independent Spirit Awards</u>	November 27, 2023	Best Breakthrough Performance	<u>Daniel Zolghadri</u>	Nominated
<u>National Board of Review</u>	2022	Top Ten Independent Films		Won

References

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2. "Owen Kline and Amy Taubin speak about Funny Pages at Roxy Cinema New York" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fK7dCYfKgWA&t=1302s>). October 16, 2022. Retrieved December 21, 2022 – via YouTube.
3. "#Cannes2022 – Funny Pages – Présentation et réception du film" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Lz5aqNHLSw>). May 24, 2022. Retrieved July 20, 2022 – via YouTube.
4. "Funny Pages" (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/funny_pages). *Rotten Tomatoes*. Retrieved August 30, 2022.
5. "Funny Pages" (<https://www.metacritic.com/movie/funny-pages>). *Metacritic*. Fandom, Inc. Retrieved August 25, 2022.
6. Dargis, Manohla (2022-08-25). "'Funny Pages' Review: Ordinary Life, Complex Stuff" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/25/movies/funny-pages-review-owen-kline.html>). *The New York Times*. ISSN 0362-4331 (<https://www.worldcat.org/issn/0362-4331>). Retrieved 2023-11-16.
7. Collins, K. Austin (2022-08-30). "'Funny Pages': A Portrait of the Comic-Book Artist as a Gross and Clueless Young Man" (<https://www.rollingstone.com/tv-movies/tv-movie-reviews/funny-pages-1234581143/>). *Rolling Stone*. Retrieved 2023-11-16.

External links

- *Funny Pages* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8174412/>) at IMDb

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