

Don't Worry Darling

Don't Worry Darling is a 2022 American psychological thriller film directed by [Olivia Wilde](#) from a screenplay by [Katie Silberman](#), based on a spec script by Silberman, Carey Van Dyke, and [Shane Van Dyke](#). The film stars [Harry Styles](#), [Florence Pugh](#), [Wilde](#), [Gemma Chan](#), [KiKi Layne](#), [Nick Kroll](#), and [Chris Pine](#). The film follows a housewife living in an idyllic company town who begins to suspect a sinister secret being kept from its residents by the man who runs it.

Following the critical success of Wilde's feature directorial debut *Booksmart* (2019), a multi-studio bidding war took place for the rights of her second film, with New Line Cinema eventually winning. Pugh joined the cast in April 2020, with Styles added that September, replacing [Shia LaBeouf](#) after production had already begun. Filming began in Los Angeles in October 2020, lasting through February 2021. The film was the subject of media attention and controversy, including conflicting reports regarding the circumstances of LaBeouf's departure and alleged conflicts between Wilde and Pugh.

Don't Worry Darling premiered at the [79th Venice International Film Festival](#) on September 5, 2022, and was theatrically released in the United States on September 23, by [Warner Bros. Pictures](#). It received mixed reviews from critics and grossed \$87.6 million.

Plot

Alice and Jack Chambers are married, living in Victory, [California](#), an idealistic 1950s desert company town. Every day, the men leave for work at Victory Headquarters in the surrounding desert, which their wives are prohibited from entering and discouraged from asking about. The women live as housewives and enjoy luxuries and leisure while the men are out.

Alice spends her days with other wives, including her best friend, Bunny. Another resident, Margaret, has become estranged from the community ever since she had a mental breakdown after her unauthorized desert visit resulted in her son's apparent death. Margaret claims Victory took him as punishment for breaking the rules. At a party hosted by

Don't Worry Darling



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Olivia Wilde
Screenplay by	Katie Silberman
Story by	Carey Van Dyke Shane Van Dyke Katie Silberman
Produced by	Olivia Wilde Katie Silberman Miri Yoon Roy Lee
Starring	Harry Styles Florence Pugh Olivia Wilde Gemma Chan KiKi Layne Nick Kroll Chris Pine
Cinematography	Matthew Libatique
Edited by	Affonso Gonçalves
Music by	John Powell

Victory's founder, Frank, Alice sees Margaret's husband attempt to medicate her after an outburst. Alice and Jack then have sex in Frank's bedroom, but she notices Frank observing them in silence.

While riding the trolley, Alice sees a plane crash in the desert and rushes to help. She stumbles onto Headquarters and touches one of its mirror-like windows, experiencing surreal hallucinations about another life before waking up at home that night.

Alice continues to have increasingly strange experiences, then receives a phone call from Margaret, who claims to have seen the same things. After brushing her off, she sees Margaret slit her own throat and fall from her roof. Before she can reach Margaret's body, Alice is dragged away by men in red jumpsuits who work for Frank.

Production companies	<u>New Line Cinema</u> <u>Vertigo</u> <u>Entertainment</u>
Distributed by	<u>Warner Bros. Pictures</u>
Release dates	September 5, 2022 (Venice) September 23, 2022 (United States)
Running time	123 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$20-35 million
Box office	\$87.6 million ^{[2][3]}

Jack dismisses Alice's claims and says Margaret is simply recovering from a household accident. When Alice asks him what is really happening at the Victory Project, he becomes angry and refuses to answer. The town physician, Dr. Collins, prescribes Alice medication, which she and Jack decline, and she steals Margaret's heavily redacted medical file from his briefcase before burning it.

Becoming increasingly paranoid during a company celebration where Frank promotes Jack, Alice breaks down in the bathroom. Confronted by Bunny, she attempts to explain her suspicions. Bunny reacts angrily when Alice tells her she went to Headquarters, accusing her of jeopardizing their livelihood in Victory and comparing her to Margaret.

Alice and Jack invite their neighbors to dinner, including Frank and his wife Shelley. Frank privately confirms her suspicions and dares her to challenge him. Spurred on, Alice attempts to expose him over dinner, but Frank makes her appear delusional to the others, causing Jack grief.

Afterward, Alice tries to tell Jack that Frank confirmed her suspicions as true. However, he shoots her down. Nearing the end of her rope, she begs him to leave the Victory Project with her. He feigns agreement, then lets Frank's men take her away in the driveway. Dr. Collins gives Alice electroshock therapy, during which she sees herself in the 21st century, struggling to get by as surgical resident Alice Warren and living with the unemployed Jack.

After her treatment, Alice resumes her life in Victory, but comes to realize the visions are actually memories. Confronted by Alice, Jack confesses the truth: Victory is a simulated world created by Frank, where he and the other men lead their version of perfect lives; the women they have forced into the simulation are unaware that their lives in Victory and their children are artificial.

When the men leave for work each day, they are actually logging out of the simulation for real jobs to pay for their captive wives to stay there. Jack argues that Alice was miserable in the real world while in Victory they can both finally be happy, but she is livid she's being held there non-consensually and without her autonomy. Jack begs Alice to stay, forcefully grabbing her, prompting her to smash a rocks glass over his head, killing him in both the simulation and reality.

Frank immediately hears of Jack's death. Bunny finds Alice and admits she has always known about the simulation, but chose to stay to be with her children, who died in real life. She tells Alice that Frank's minions will kill her if she doesn't get to Headquarters—the exit portal from the simulation. Alice silently confronts the neighborhood, and as small explosions begin, the husbands panic.

Fleeing in Jack's car, Alice is chased by Dr. Collins and Frank's men. She maneuvers them into fatally crashing into each other. Meanwhile, Shelley fatally stabs Frank to take control of Victory. Arriving at Headquarters, Alice has a final vision of Jack, then puts her hands on Headquarters just before Frank's men can reach her. Seeing disturbing images mixed with visions of herself in the real world, the screen cuts to black as Alice is heard gasping for air.

Cast

- [Florence Pugh](#) as Alice
- [Harry Styles](#) as Jack
- [Olivia Wilde](#) as Bunny
- [Gemma Chan](#) as Shelley
- [KiKi Layne](#) as Margaret
- [Sydney Chandler](#) as Violet
- [Nick Kroll](#) as Dean
- [Chris Pine](#) as Frank
- [Asif Ali](#) as Peter
- [Kate Berlant](#) as Peg
- [Timothy Simons](#) as Dr. Collins
- [Douglas Smith](#) as Bill
- [Ari'el Stachel](#) as Ted
- [Dita Von Teese](#) as herself

Production

Development and writing



[Olivia Wilde](#) (left), the film's director and co-producer (who also plays Bunny), and [Katie Silberman](#), the film's screenwriter

The film was announced in August 2019, after a bidding war among 18 studios to acquire the next [Olivia Wilde](#)-directed project. [New Line Cinema](#) won the auction.^{[4][5]} The original [spec script](#) was written by brothers [Carey](#) and [Shane Van Dyke](#); the screenplay appeared on the [2019 Black List](#).^{[6][5]} [Katie Silberman](#)

was brought on to do a rewrite, which became the film's screenplay.^{[5][7][8]} According to Wilde, Frank is inspired by psychologist and author Jordan Peterson, whom she called a "pseudo-intellectual hero to the incel community".^{[9][10][11]} Peterson rejected the characterization,^{[12][13]} but expressed interest and said that perhaps he would watch the film.^[14]

Variety initially put the budget at about \$20 million, while Forbes estimated the production budget was in the range of \$20-\$30 million.^{[15][16]} Variety and Deadline Hollywood later said the film cost \$35 million to produce.^{[17][18]}

Casting

In April 2020, Florence Pugh, Shia LaBeouf and Chris Pine were added to the cast of the film,^[19] with Dakota Johnson joining the next month.^{[20][21]} Wilde was originally set to play Pugh's part and Pugh was to play Wilde's, but they traded roles when Wilde decided she wanted a younger couple at the center of the film.^[15] In September 2020, Harry Styles joined the cast,^[22] replacing LaBeouf.

In October 2020, Gemma Chan and KiKi Layne joined the cast, with Layne replacing Johnson, who dropped out due to a scheduling conflict with *The Lost Daughter*.^[23] That month, Sydney Chandler, Nick Kroll, Douglas Smith, Kate Berlant, Asif Ali, Timothy Simons and Ariel Stachel joined the cast.^{[24][25]}

Filming

Principal photography began in Los Angeles on October 26, 2020.^[26] It was temporarily halted for two weeks on November 4 after a crew member tested positive for COVID-19, which resulted in stars Pugh, Styles and Pine being quarantined.^[27] Filming wrapped on February 13, 2021.^{[28][29]} The film's original score is by John Powell.^[30] Arianne Phillips served as costume designer.^[31]



The opening scene was filmed at The Kaufmann House in Palm Springs.

The opening sequence was filmed at the Kaufmann House. It was the first film to be shot there. Wilde was inspired by its architecture, and hung a photograph of it on her wall while working on the script. She told *Variety*, "To be there was huge. To direct the first shot there felt like this really auspicious beginning to this movie which was this love letter not only to film, but to architecture, to design, to this era."^[32]

Other filming locations include the Cicada Club in Downtown Los Angeles during the Victory party sequence and the Volcano House in Newberry Springs, which served as Victory Headquarters and was once owned by TV host Huell Howser.^[33]

Alleged conflicts on set

Wilde and LaBeouf

In 2021, it was reported that Wilde had fired LaBeouf for poor behavior and clashing with the cast and crew.^[34] LaBeouf denied these claims in August 2022, saying he quit the film despite Wilde's efforts to keep him on board. He provided *Variety* with leaked texts and a video recording from Wilde addressed to him, in which she says: "I feel like I'm not ready to give up on this yet, and I, too, am heartbroken and I want to figure this out. You know, I think this might be a bit of a wake-up call for Miss Flo, and I want to know if you're open to giving this a shot with me, with us."^[35]

Following LaBeouf's statements, Wilde denied his claims and again said that she fired him, telling *Vanity Fair* that she did so after Pugh said she was uncomfortable with LaBeouf's behavior.^[36] When asked about this in an interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*, LaBeouf replied, "It is what it is."^[37]

Wilde and Pugh

Rumors alleged that Wilde and Pugh clashed on set, leading to tensions during both production and promotion for the film.^{[38][39]} An anonymous source reported to *Vulture* that Pugh and Wilde had a "screaming match" on set, and the former Warner Bros. executive Toby Emmerich oversaw a "long negotiation process" between Wilde, Pugh, and the studio to figure out how much Pugh would continue to be involved in the film.^[40] Warner Bros. co-chairs and CEOs Michael De Luca and Pam Abdy denied any tension between themselves and Wilde, saying, "We are so proud of the work that Olivia Wilde has done making this incredibly beautiful and entertaining film and look forward to collaborating with her again."^[41] On September 25, 2022, 40 members of the film's crew issued a statement disputing the allegations and dismissing rumors of unprofessional behavior on the set as "completely untrue".^[42] The allegations have also been dismissed by cinematographer Matthew Libatique, who called the set "one of the most harmonious sets I've ever been on", and by Wilde herself, who called the rumors "baseless".^[36]

On September 13, *Vice* spoke with the organization Media Matters about the increase in negative coverage and activity on social media about Wilde and the film.^[43] Media Matters found that in the previous week, "right-leaning pages ha[d] posted over 300 times about Wilde and the movie, earning over 200,000 interactions."^[43] Both *Vice* and Letterboxd's fandom correspondent, Sacha Judd, speculated that Wilde's treatment was largely due to sexism.^{[43][44]} Judd claimed that many of the rumors about Wilde and her film originated years previously in niche, often conspiratorial circles of her then-boyfriend Styles's fandom.^[44] This is supported by a May 2022 report in *Input*, which said that these fans "circulated and mocked unflattering pictures of Styles' current girlfriend, Olivia Wilde [on TikTok], and have called for fellow fans to jump on the 'Olivia Wilde hate train'."^[45] Judd accused trades that were reporting on *Don't Worry Darling*'s alleged drama of "credulously republishing" untrue information "seemingly without any scrutiny at all".^[44]

Marketing

At the CinemaCon 2022 for the stage at Caesars Palace, Wilde confirmed that the idea of the film was inspired by *Inception*, *The Matrix*, and *The Truman Show*.^{[46][47]} The trailer, which was also shown at CinemaCon, was released online on May 2, 2022.^[48] A teaser poster was released on June 16, and a second trailer was released on July 21.

David Christopherson of *MovieWeb* called the poster "unsettling," and based on the trailer, Valerie Ettenhofer of *Film* said *Don't Worry Darling* looks like a "full-blown horror movie", noting the mystery surrounding its plot and *The Stepford Wives* overtones.^{[49][50]} The official release poster was released on

August 11, 2022. An edited version of the second trailer was shown in theaters and was released online on September 21.^[51]

Release

Don't Worry Darling had its world premiere at the 79th Venice International Film Festival on September 5, 2022.^[52] Claims of Styles spitting on Pine during the Venice premiere based on videos recorded from inside the theatre (and thereby adding to the already rocky press tour mired by allegations of a falling-out between Wilde and Pugh) were dismissed as "a ridiculous story" and "a complete fabrication" by Pine's representative.^[53] The film also screened at the 48th Deauville American Film Festival and the 70th San Sebastián International Film Festival.^[54] It was theatrically released on September 23, 2022.^{[55][56]}

The film was released for VOD on October 25, 2022 and on Ultra HD Blu-ray, Blu-ray DVD on November 29.^[57] It began streaming to subscribers on HBO Max on November 7.^[58] Over its first week of streaming, it was watched in 2.7 million households.^[59]

Reception

Box office

Don't Worry Darling grossed \$45.3 million in the U.S. and Canada, and \$42.3 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$87.6 million.^{[2][3]}

In the U.S. and Canada, *Don't Worry Darling* was projected to gross \$17–20 million from 4,113 theaters in its opening weekend, with some estimates going as high as \$25 million.^{[60][61]} The film made \$9.4 million on its first day, including a combined \$3.1 million from preview screenings on Monday and Thursday.^[17] It went on to debut to \$19.4 million, topping the box office; 66% of the audience was female, with nearly 70% aged 18–34. Several publications noted the film was front-loaded to Friday and previews, attributing it likely to younger women going to see Styles.^{[62][63]} In its sophomore weekend the film fell 64.6% to \$6.8 million, finishing second behind newcomer *Smile*.^[64]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, the film has an approval rating of 38% based on 353 reviews, with an average rating of 5.4/10. The website's critics consensus reads, "Despite an intriguing array of talent on either side of the camera, *Don't Worry Darling* is a mostly muddled rehash of overly familiar themes."^[65] Metacritic gave the film a weighted average score of 48 out of 100 based on 62 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews".^[66] Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "B−" on an A+ to F scale, while those at PostTrak gave the film a 67% overall positive score, with 53% saying they would definitely recommend it.^[62]

Critics praised Pugh's performance, the cinematography, and the visual style, but found the film unsatisfying overall. Rotten Tomatoes reported that Styles had "a debatably entertaining turn" and that reaction to the third act was divided.^[67] Reviewing the film after its Venice premiere, Kate Erbland of *IndieWire* praised the scenography and cast performances, particularly Pugh's, but found fault with the screenplay, summarizing: "Pugh's outstanding performance and the extraordinary below-the-line craftsmanship are all impeccably rendered, but they can't overcome the film's rotten core concept."^[68] In a mixed review for *The*

A.V. Club, Tomris Laffly commended Pugh's performance and also praised Pine's performance and the film's visuals, but called Styles "outmatched", criticized the direction, and found its handling of themes and ideas heavy-handed, writing, "Perhaps the chief deficit of *Don't Worry Darling* isn't even predictability, but a discernible lack of new ideas of its own."^[69]

The Guardian's Peter Bradshaw called it a "movie marooned in a desert of unoriginality", criticizing the screenplay and direction.^[70] Vulture.com's Bilge Ebiri called the film "smooth, competent, (mostly) well acted, and merely tedious", writing that the plot "can get boring and repetitive after a little while". Complimenting the performances of Pugh, Wilde, and Pine, he called Styles "the weak link ... who is not without talent but who fails to give Jack the dimensionality or inner conflict the character clearly needs."^[71] Phil de Semlyn of Time Out wrote, "Pugh saves this stylish but inert horror-thriller from disaster"; Richard Lawson of Vanity Fair echoed this, calling Pugh "a commanding and centered actor who makes the most of the hash she's served".^{[72][73]} Writing for the independent online publication Clapper, Ewan Gleadow praised Pugh's performance but concluded that the film "just isn't up to scratch".^[74]

Anthony Lane of The New Yorker called Pine "the best thing in the film" and Styles "utterly and helplessly adrift" while reading lines of dialogue.^[75] Geoffrey Macnab of The Independent wrote, "Styles gives a surprisingly dull and low-wattage performance as Jack", adding that the film "is beautifully shot by cinematographer Matthew Libatique" and complimenting the visuals.^[76] Steph Green wrote for BBC that the film is "full of half-baked ideas" and "an empty shell" while also noting the film's repetitive nature. She wrote that "Pugh does her best with the material" but that "Styles doesn't feel up to the material here, with leaden line delivery and a lack of light and shade making his scenes opposite Pugh fall flat."^[77]

For Time magazine, Stephanie Zacharek wrote that "the plot is cleverly worked out" and complimented Pugh's performance, but disliked the film's ending and wrote that "Styles is cute, but a dud. Everything he does on-screen practically evaporates from one scene to the next."^[78] Scott Mendelson of Forbes named Pugh's performance "as good as you'd expect", complimented Pine as he "relishes the chance to play a smarmy villain", and argued that "Styles is as good as he needs to be" and that "some of the criticism of his performance has been more about the character than the actor."^[79]

Michael Shindler of The American Spectator, while noting the film does not suffer on account of cast performances, argued that based on Wilde's statements and reports of on-set developments, rather than being "a mere swing and a miss", the film could be construed as an exercise in unintentional self-criticism.^[80] Helen O'Hara of Empire complimented the cinematography and called Styles's performance "solid" while particularly praising Pugh, calling her performance "flawless", adding, "this is her film, and everyone else is just there for support."^[81] Pete Hammond of Deadline wrote that the film is "quite entertaining" and "kinda fun", adding that Styles "shows he is the real deal as an actor and has great promise" while also complimenting the performances of Pugh and Pine.^[82] Owen Gleiberman of Variety complimented the production design and wrote that Pugh "holds down the center of the movie" and that Jack is "played by Styles with a wholesome cunning that marks him as a natural screen actor" and that "with his popping eyes, floppy shock of hair, and saturnine suaveness, he recalls the young Frank Sinatra as an actor."^[83]

Accolades

John Powell's musical score won the Ivor Novello Award for Best Original Film Score at The Ivors in London on 18 May 2023.^[84]

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External links

- [Official website \(<https://www.dontworrydarling.net/>\)](https://www.dontworrydarling.net/) 
 - *Don't Worry Darling* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10731256/>) at [IMDb](#)
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