

Palmer (film)


Palmer is a 2021 American drama film directed by Fisher Stevens and written by Cheryl Guerriero. The film stars Justin Timberlake, Juno Temple, Alisha Wainwright, June Squibb, and Ryder Allen. *Palmer* was digitally released by Apple TV+ on January 29, 2021. The film received positive reviews from critics, who praised the performances and themes though noted its familiarity.

Plot

Eddie Palmer is a former high school football star and ex-felon who has been released from prison after serving 12 years for attempted murder and armed robbery. He moves in with his grandmother Vivian, who occasionally watches over a young stereotypically feminine boy named Sam, the son of her neighbor Shelly, a drug addict.

Palmer begins working at the local school as a janitor and helps Vivian watch Sam as Shelly repeatedly leaves town with her abusive boyfriend Jerry. After Vivian passes away, Palmer is forced to become Sam's temporary guardian until Shelly returns. Although he initially does not want anything to do with Sam, Palmer soon bonds with the boy, including taking him to the high school football game and bowling fundraiser, where he strikes up a relationship with Sam's teacher Maggie. Palmer finds out that Vivian left her house to the church in her will, and her lawyer tells him that once the house sells, he will have 30 days to move out.

As Palmer grows closer to Maggie, he reveals to her that after a promising high school football career, he was injured in a game while playing for Louisiana State University. After losing his scholarship and dropping out of college, he returned home and started taking pills. One night, he decided to rob the safe of a rich family in town with the help of his friends. The house was supposed to be empty but the owner came home and Palmer nearly beat him to death with a baseball bat. Maggie reassures Palmer that although that's who he was, he has changed and is a good man now, pointing to all the good he has done in Sam's life.

<i>Palmer</i>	
	
Official release poster	
Directed by	<u>Fisher Stevens</u>
Written by	<u>Cheryl Guerriero</u>
Produced by	<u>Charlie Corwin</u> <u>Daniel Nadler</u> <u>Charles B. Wessler</u> <u>Sidney Kimmel</u> <u>John Penotti</u>
Starring	<u>Justin Timberlake</u> <u>Juno Temple</u> <u>Alisha Wainwright</u> <u>June Squibb</u> <u>Ryder Allen</u>
Cinematography	<u>Tobias A. Schliessler</u>
Edited by	<u>Geoffrey Richman</u>
Music by	<u>Tamar-kali</u>
Production companies	<u>Sidney Kimmel</u>

One day, Sam comes home from a friend's house crying with makeup garishly smeared on his face. Palmer assumes that one of Sam's classmates did it, but Sam tells him that it was Palmer's friend Daryl. Enraged, Palmer finds Daryl at a bar and beats him up. The next day, Shelly returns and comes to reclaim Sam, but he is soon taken by [Child Protective Services](#). Palmer attempts to receive guardianship but is denied due to his parole status and the uncertainty of his living situation. Despite Palmer's pleas, the judge orders the return of Sam to Shelly's custody. Palmer asks Shelly to appoint him Sam's legal guardian but she scoffs at his request, even after he offers to pay her. Later, Palmer witnesses Jerry physically abusing both Shelly and Sam. Palmer intervenes and sees that both Shelly and Jerry are using drugs in front of Sam. He attacks Jerry and flees with Sam.

Shelly calls the police and Palmer is accused of kidnapping Sam. After talking with Maggie on the phone, he brings Sam back to Shelly and is arrested at the scene. As Palmer is driven away, Sam tries to fight off the police officers and chases after the police car, crying that he wants to be with Palmer instead of his mother. Seeing Sam's love for Palmer, Shelly refuses to press charges and covers for Palmer by saying he was just taking Sam to get food, and she forgot. Shelly meets with Sam and through tears, asks him if it would be okay if he went to live with Palmer. Shelly eventually chooses to give Palmer custody of Sam. Palmer and Sam prepare for the sale of Vivian's house as they move in with Maggie.

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Distributed by	Apple TV+
Release date	January 29, 2021
Running time	110 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$6.7 million ^[1]

Cast

- [Justin Timberlake](#) as Eddie Palmer, a former college football star and ex-convict who spent 12 years in prison for theft and attempted murder.
- [Ryder Allen](#) as Sam Burdette, Eddie's young neighbor who becomes his surrogate son.
- [Alisha Wainwright](#) as Maggie Hayes, Sam's teacher and Eddie's love interest.
- [June Squibb](#) as Vivian Palmer, Eddie's grandmother.
- [Juno Temple](#) as Shelly Burdette, Sam's drug-addicted mother.
- [Jesse C. Boyd](#) as Coles, Palmer's friend who works as a police officer.
- [J.D. Evermore](#) as Principal Forbes
- [Lance E. Nichols](#) as Sibs, Eddie's boss.
- [Dean Winters](#) as Jerry, Shelly's abusive boyfriend.
- [Jay Florsheim](#) as a Football Referee.

Production

The screenplay first appeared on the 2016 [Black List](#).^[2] In September 2019, it was announced [Justin Timberlake](#) was cast to star as Eddie Palmer, with [Fisher Stevens](#) directing from a screenplay written by Cheryl Guerriero.^[3] In October 2019, [Alisha Wainwright](#) was cast, as well as [Ryder Allen](#) the following month.^{[4][5]}

Principal photography took place in New Orleans from November 9 to December 13, 2019.^[6] The film's score was composed by Tamar-kali.^{[7][8]}

Release

In July 2020, Apple TV+ acquired distribution rights to the film,^[2] and released it on their service on January 29, 2021.^[9]

Palmer had the second-biggest film launch for the platform, and third-biggest overall. It was also part of a 33% increase in viewership in its opening weekend, setting a new record for Apple TV+.^[10]

Reception

According to review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes, 72% of 108 critic reviews were positive, with an average rating of 6.3/10. The website's critics consensus reads: "Although it traffics in familiar territory, *Palmer* is elevated by worthy themes and a strong ensemble led by an impressive Justin Timberlake."^[11] On Metacritic, the film has a weighted average score of 53 out of 100, based on 21 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews".^[12]

David Ehrlich of IndieWire gave the film a grade of B− and wrote: "The little things go a long way in something this broad, and while *Palmer* isn't much of a tear-jerker — more of a cheek-moistener, at best — it's telling that the film's most touching moments don't stem from how Palmer and Sam have changed so much as they do from the permission they've given each other to be themselves. *Palmer* isn't exactly high art, but it's no small feat for something so predictable to avoid feeling dishonest."^[13]

Benjamin Lee of The Guardian gave the film two out of five stars, saying: "Despite the flashes of something more challenging, *Palmer* is a film content to play it safe (his true road to redemption is to slot himself into a ready-made nuclear family), a truly whelming experience that wants you to desperately feel everything from tears to joy."^[14]

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External links

- *Palmer* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6857376/>) at IMDb
 - *Palmer* (<https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/palmer>) at Rotten Tomatoes
 - Script (<https://deadline.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Palmer.pdf>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20210205181401/https://deadline.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Palmer.pdf>) February 5, 2021, at the [Wayback Machine](#)
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