

Umma (2022 film)

Umma^[note 1] (Korean: 엄마, eomma) is a 2022 American supernatural horror film, written and directed by Iris K. Shim. The film stars Sandra Oh, Fivel Stewart, MeeWha Alana Lee, Tom Yi, Odeya Rush, and Dermot Mulroney. Sam Raimi serves as a producer on the film. The film follows Amanda (Oh), a single mother who lives with her daughter in an isolated farm being haunted by her mother's ghost.

Umma was released in the United States on March 18, 2022, by Sony Pictures Releasing. The film received mixed reviews from critics, who praised Oh's performance and the film's themes, but criticized its clichéd formulas, its screenplay, its over-reliance on jump scares, and its lack of tension.

Plot

Korean immigrant Amanda and her homeschooled daughter Chrissy "Amani" live on a rural farm, raising bees, selling honey, raising chickens, and living without modern technology as Amanda has an "allergic reaction" to electronics and electricity. She's upset to learn that Chrissy wants to leave the farm in order to pursue college. When Amanda receives the cremated ashes of her recently deceased estranged mother, or *Umma*, in a suitcase from her uncle Mr. Kang visiting her from Korea, she is confronted with memories of her abusive childhood.

Umma had been left to raise Amanda alone in the United States, unable to speak English and surrounded by those who did not understand or practice her culture. It is revealed that Amanda fabricated her "allergy" to electronics after being electrically shocked multiple times by Umma as punishment. When Amanda cut ties with her mother she also cut ties with her Korean heritage as a whole, including giving up her family name. As Mr. Kang left, he shamed Amanda for abandoning her own mother and heritage, and for not teaching Chrissy Korean language and culture.

Soon after the ashes arrive a vicious spirit appears, intent on claiming Amanda's body for itself. As the supernatural phenomena following the delivery of her mother's ashes progress, from visions of tormented Korean spirits (including Umma's spirit) to an encounter with a kumiho that was eating her chickens, Amanda

Umma



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Iris K. Shim
Written by	Iris K. Shim
Produced by	Sam Raimi <div>Zainab Azizi</div>
Starring	Sandra Oh <div>Fivel StewartDermot MulroneyOdeya RushMeeWha Alana LeeTom Yi</div>
Cinematography	Matt Flannery
Edited by	Louis Cioffi <div>Kevin Greutert</div>
Music by	Roque Baños
Production companies	Stage 6 Films <div>Raimi Productions</div>

suddenly becomes more paranoid and fearful that she's slowly becoming her own mother. This fear becomes realized when Umma successfully possesses her daughter when Amanda tries to bury the ashes.

Chrissy finds her mother performing the Jesa and wearing a mask and hanbok. She's attacked by Amanda, but manages to avoid being killed after pleading for her life. Amanda decides to confront her mother. She forgives her for the abuse. Amanda acknowledges that it was unfair that Umma had been expected to raise a child all alone in a country far from home and in her circumstances, but that it was not an excuse for the abuse. This compassion and understanding allows Umma to finally move on and be at peace, as she had also come to understand that what she did to Amanda was unfair. The film ends with Amanda rediscovering her family heritage and sharing it with her daughter, as well as coming to terms with Chrissy's need to live her own life.

	Starlight Media
Distributed by	<u>Sony Pictures Releasing</u>
Release dates	March 15, 2022 (Koreatown)
	March 18, 2022 (United States)
Running time	83 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Languages	English
	Korean
Box office	\$2.3 million ^[2] ^[3]

Cast

- Sandra Oh as Amanda
- Fivel Stewart as Chrissy
- Dermot Mulroney as Danny
- Odeya Rush as River
- MeeWha Alana Lee as Park Soon-yi, Amanda's mother (Umma)
- Tom Yi as Mr. Kang, Amanda's uncle

Production

In January 2020, it was announced that Sandra Oh had joined the cast of the film, with Iris K. Shim directing from a screenplay she wrote and with Sam Raimi and Zainab Azizi producing under the Raimi Productions banner.^[4] Originally filming was set to begin in Vancouver in April 2020, but production was shut down because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2020, Fivel Stewart, Dermot Mulroney, Odeya Rush, MeeWha Alana Lee and Tom Yi joined the cast of the film, with Stage 6 Films set to produce and Sony Pictures Releasing distributing.^[5] Filming eventually began on October 7, 2020, in Los Angeles, California, and wrapped in January 2021.^[6]

Release

Umma was released on March 18, 2022.^[7] The film's premiere took place in Koreatown in Los Angeles on March 15, 2022.^[8]

Home media

The film was released digitally on April 9, 2022,^[9] and was given a DVD and Blu-ray release date of May 24, 2022 by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.^[10] The movie was added to Netflix in the United States on July 16, 2022.^[11]

Reception

Box office

In the United States and Canada, *Umma* was released alongside *Jujutsu Kaisen 0*, *The Outfit*, and *X*, and was projected to gross \$500,000–1.5 million from 805 theaters in its opening weekend.^[12] The film earned \$915,290 in its opening weekend, finishing eleventh.^[13] Women made up 57% of the audience during its opening, with those in the age range of 18–34 comprising 61% of ticket sales. The ethnic breakdown of the audience showed that 42% were Caucasian, 19% Hispanic and Latino Americans, 18% African American, 17% Asian, and 4% other.^[14] The film dropped out of the box office top ten in its second weekend, finishing fourteenth with \$460,068.^[15]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 32% of 41 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 5/10. The website's consensus reads: "Despite Sandra Oh's typically strong performance and glimmers of potential from writer-director Iris K. Shim, *Umma* is a cliché-ridden missed opportunity."^[16] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 51 out of 100, based on 13 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[17] Audiences polled by PostTrak gave the film a 52% positive score, which *Deadline Hollywood* described as "awful."^[14]

Laura Sirikul from *IGN* gave a score of 4 out of 10, praising its themes and Oh's performance but criticizing its poor execution and clichés, stating, "*Umma* isn't scary, but the themes behind it are terrifying as it deals with generational trauma and guilt. Though the cultural references run deep, it's overstuffed with symbolic imagery that is never fully explained. Though Oh and Stewart give solid performances, the tone and tension of the story ends up being choppy and underwhelming." Andrew Baker from *Variety* wrote: "Oh aces her leading role with customary aplomb, and Stewart makes for a game scene partner, but Shim's economical-to-a-fault screenplay rarely allows them enough downtime to fully flesh out their characters."

Frank Scheck at *The Hollywood Reporter* noted Oh's committed performance but found the film to be a mediocre B-movie, writing: "Writer-director Shin's labored attempts to use genre tropes to explore the complexities of domineering mother-daughter relationships never fully develops."^[18] Frank Hoepfner from *The Wrap* wrote: "The most frightening part of *Umma* is not the ghostly apparition of Amanda's mother, but Amanda herself. Under Shim's direction, Oh's Amanda is haunted and taut, an unpredictable force of nature." Kate Erbland from *IndieWire* also gave a mixed review and wrote: "Despite its flaws, *Umma* is an impressive debut for Shim, the kind of outing that hints at plenty more under the hood or tucked inside a massive suitcase, just bursting with secrets."



Despite its mixed reviews, Sandra Oh received praise for her performance in the film.

In a positive review, Tracy Brown from *Los Angeles Times* wrote: "Think more classic Gothic horror than ghastly over-the-top occult. But that's plenty to keep viewers such as me, who frighten easily, on edge as the story progresses."

Notes

1. The word "Umma" means "Mom" in Korean.

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External links

- *Umma* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13235822/>) at *IMDb*
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