

Red, White & Royal Blue (film)

Red, White & Royal Blue is a 2023 American romantic comedy film directed by Matthew López in his feature film directorial debut, from a screenplay that he co-wrote with Ted Malawer. The script is based on the 2019 novel of the same name by Casey McQuiston; it depicts a developing love affair between the son of the president of the United States (Taylor Zakhar Perez) and a British prince (Nicholas Galitzine). Clifton Collins Jr., Sarah Shahi, Rachel Hilson, Stephen Fry, and Uma Thurman appear in supporting roles.

In 2019, Amazon Studios announced the film's development with Greg Berlanti as a producer. López was announced as director and co-writer with Malawer in 2021. Casting announcements began in June 2022 with Zakhar Perez, Galitzine and Thurman announced to play their respective roles. The majority of the remaining cast was announced the following month. Filming took place in England between June and August 2022.

Red, White & Royal Blue premiered at the BFI IMAX in London on July 22, 2023, and was released on Amazon Prime Video on August 11. It is the last film released under the Amazon Studios name before the studio was rebranded as Amazon MGM Studios a month later.^[1] A sequel is in development with Perez and Galitzine set to return.^[2]

Plot

Alex Claremont-Diaz, the first son of the United States, attends the wedding of Prince Phillip, Duke of Cambridge. Alex has a long-standing feud with Prince Henry, Prince Phillip's younger brother. During the reception, Alex and Henry get into an argument that results in the wedding cake falling on top of them.

To mitigate the fallout and help his mother's re-election campaign, Alex and Henry are forced into a series of interviews and appearances, where they pose as friends. Alex later admits to Henry that he began to resent him after Henry rebuffed him at Alex's first appearance as a public figure. Henry apologizes, explaining he had just lost his father and was forced to go to events, and the two make amends, later beginning to text and become friends.

Red, White & Royal Blue



Official release poster

Directed by	<u>Matthew López</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Matthew López</u> <u>Ted Malawer</u>
Based on	<i><u>Red, White & Royal Blue</u></i> by <u>Casey McQuiston</u>
Produced by	<u>Greg Berlanti</u> <u>Sarah Schechter</u>
Starring	<u>Taylor Zakhar Perez</u> <u>Nicholas Galitzine</u> <u>Clifton Collins Jr.</u> <u>Sarah Shahi</u> <u>Rachel Hilson</u> <u>Stephen Fry</u> <u>Uma Thurman</u>

Invited to Alex's annual New Year's party, Henry leaves abruptly after seeing Alex kiss several girls at midnight. Alex follows him outdoors to the White House grounds. Henry kisses Alex, but fails to respond to Alex's attempts to contact him over the following weeks. After confiding in Nora, his best friend and the Vice President's granddaughter, Alex realizes that he is attracted to Henry.

Weeks later, Alex reunites with Henry and the pair become lovers, although they keep their involvement secret from everyone except close family and friends, and their Secret Service and MI5 bodyguards.

When Alex comes up with a plan for his mother to win Texas in the upcoming election, he travels there to lead the campaign. When he goes to Brooklyn to speak at the Democratic National Convention, Henry unexpectedly visits him. Alex later comes out to his mother, who is supportive, but advises him to think about his relationship carefully.

Alex invites Henry to his family's vacation home near Austin, Texas, and Alex begins to tell Henry that he is in love with him, but Henry, fearing that he cannot sustain a love-relationship – since the British royal family will not accept it – preemptively leaves the conversation and flees to England. He refuses to respond to Alex's attempts to contact him. Alex visits Henry in London unexpectedly and demands an explanation for his behavior. Henry admits that he loves Alex too, but explains that his royal position makes it impossible. Alex convinces Henry that their relationship is worth fighting for, and the two reconcile.

Shortly after Alex returns to the U.S., Alex and Henry's personal e-mails to each other are hacked and posted online, and are being widely reported in the press. Both the White House and the Palace cut off all Henry's and Alex's means of contact. Zahra, the White House Deputy Chief of Staff, gets in touch with Shaan, Henry's equerry, and Alex and Henry are finally able to talk. Alex immediately flies to London to reunite with Henry. King James III summons them to a meeting and tells them that they cannot be together since their relationship is incompatible with royal tradition. However, Henry's supportive sister Beatrice notices a crowd gathered in front of Buckingham Palace in support of them, and news reports of similar crowds all over the U.K. Alex and Henry step outside together onto the balcony and openly greet the public as a couple.

On election night, Henry returns to the United States to be with Alex, whose plan to win Texas for his mother ultimately results in her re-election. Alex and Henry later visit Alex's childhood home in Austin to personally celebrate.

Cinematography	<u>Stephen Goldblatt</u>
Edited by	Kristina Hetherington <u>Nick Moore</u>
Music by	<u>Drum & Lace</u>
Production companies	<u>Amazon Studios</u> <u>Berlanti-Schechter Films</u>
Distributed by	<u>Amazon Prime Video</u>
Release dates	July 22, 2023 (BFI IMAX) August 11, 2023
Running time	118 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English

Cast

- Taylor Zakhar Perez as Alex Claremont-Diaz, the first son of the United States^[3]
- Nicholas Galitzine as Prince Henry, a British prince, the spare to the British throne^[3]
- Clifton Collins Jr. as Senator Oscar Diaz, Alex's father^[4]

- [Sarah Shahi](#) as Zahra Bankston, the [deputy chief of staff](#) for Ellen Claremont^[3]
- [Rachel Hilson](#) as Nora Holleran, Alex's best friend and the granddaughter of the [vice president of the United States](#)^[3]
- [Stephen Fry](#) as James III, King of the United Kingdom and Prince Henry's Grandfather^[5]
- [Uma Thurman](#) as [Ellen Claremont](#), the first female president of the [United States](#) and Alex's mother^[3]
- [Ellie Bamber](#) as Princess Beatrice, Prince Henry's younger sister^[3]
- [Thomas Flynn](#) as Prince Phillip, Prince Henry's elder brother^[6]
- [Malcolm Atobrah](#) as Percy Okonjo, Prince Henry's best friend^[7]
- [Akshay Khanna](#) as Shaan Shrivistava, Prince Henry's equerry
- [Sharon D. Clarke](#) as the prime minister of the United Kingdom
- [Aneesh Sheth](#) as Amy, the [United States Secret Service agent](#)^{[4][8]}
- [Juan Castano](#) as Miguel Ramos, a [political journalist](#) and Alex's past fling

Additionally, Donald Sage MacKay plays Jeffrey Richards, a [Republican](#) nominee facing Ellen Claremont in the presidential election, while [Rachel Maddow](#) and [Joy Reid](#) appear as themselves. [Casey McQuiston](#), the author of the original novel, has a cameo in the film as Ellen Claremont's speechwriter.

Production

Development

In April 2019, it was reported that [Amazon Studios](#) had won an auction to the film rights of *Red, White & Royal Blue*, which would be produced by [Berlanti Productions](#) through its subsidiary [Berlanti-Schechter Films](#).^[9] In October 2021, it was reported that [Matthew López](#) was hired to direct and re-wrote a draft of the script by Ted Malawer.^{[10][11]}

Casting

On June 1, 2022, [Taylor Zakhar Perez](#) and [Nicholas Galitzine](#) were announced as the film's leads, playing Alex Claremont-Diaz and Prince Henry respectively.^[12] Shortly after, [Uma Thurman](#) was confirmed to play Ellen Claremont.^[13] [Clifton Collins Jr.](#), [Stephen Fry](#), [Sarah Shahi](#), [Rachel Hilson](#), [Ellie Bamber](#), [Aneesh Sheth](#), [Polo Morín](#), [Ahmed Elhaj](#), and [Akshay Khanna](#) were also announced to be joining the cast. Production began in the UK that same month.^{[12][14]} In July 2022, [Sharon D. Clarke](#), [Malcolm Atobrah](#), and [Thomas Flynn](#) were cast.^[15]

Filming

[Principal photography](#) began in the United Kingdom in June 2022 and [wrapped](#) that August.^{[16][17]}

The Sculpture Gallery of the [Victoria and Albert Museum](#) was featured in the dance scene.^[18] The scene prominently features the *Torso of Banović Strahinja* sculpture by [Ivan Meštrović](#).^{[19][20]}

Music

[Drum & Lace](#) composed the film's score.^[21] The soundtrack album was released on August 11, 2023, by [Lakeshore Records](#).^[22]

The album features songs by artists Vagabon and Oliver Sim. "If I Loved You" by Vagabon was released as a promotional single on July 26, 2023. It is a cover of the song of the same name from the musical *Carousel*.^{[23][24]} It was followed by "Fruit (*Red, White & Royal Blue* Version)" by Sim on August 3, 2023. It is an orchestral version of his song of the same name from his 2022 album *Hideous Bastard*.^{[24][25]}

Release

Red, White & Royal Blue had its world premiere at the BFI IMAX in London on July 22, 2023, although its actors were absent due to the 2023 SAG-AFTRA strike. Matthew López was the only member of the production present but did not walk the red carpet, or give interviews as he was also on strike as a member of the Writers Guild of America.^[26]

The film was released on Amazon Prime Video on August 11, 2023.^[27] For the first three weeks after its release, it was the top watched film worldwide on the platform and provoked what Prime Video described as "a huge surge" of new subscribers.^{[28][29]}

Reception

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 76% of 116 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 6.4/10. The website's consensus reads: "Amusing and endearing, *Red, White & Royal Blue* is a cheerfully formulaic rom-com that embraces inclusion without falling back on stereotypes."^[30] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 62 out of 100, based on 25 critics, indicating "generally favorable" reviews.^[31]

CNN Entertainment's Brian Lowry stated that the film "is at its core a fairy-tale romance – only where the challenge isn't the customary wicked stepmother or malevolent witch, but rather what happens when true love finds two princes, not one."^[32] Amy Nicholson of *The New York Times* wrote: "It sounds like fan fiction and looks like it, too, particularly when Galitzine dips his chin bashfully – a tic that Princess Diana passed on to her boys. Yet, as in any screwball romance worth its trans-Atlantic sea-salt, the first-time director Matthew López gets us rooting for the cheeky couple's transition from rivals to romantic bedfellows, boosted by the cinematographer Stephen Goldblatt, who photographs the leads so adoringly that you half-expect them to turn to the camera and hawk a bottle of cologne. Thanks to their playful chemistry, we're sold." She, however, criticized several "over-florid theatrical flourishes".^[33] *The Observer's* Wendy Ide awarded the film three out of five stars, dubbing it "so slick and polished, it feels obsessively micro-managed rather than directed." However, she praised the charisma of Zakhar Perez and Galitzine and credited it for the film's appeal: "It turns out that watching two impossibly beautiful boys making cow eyes at each other might be just the escapist pulp we need right now."^[34]

New York Post's Lauren Sarner thought that the film "has some big flaws, but it's fun and cute rom-com with heart". She criticized Thurman's performance (dubbing it "career-worst"), her Texan accent and the writing of her character, but praised Zakhar Perez's and Galitzine's performances. Sarner also took note of resemblance between Prince Henry and Prince Harry; both princes are spares and their romances with their American lovers lead to strained relationships with their older brothers.^[35] Jessie Thompson of *The Independent* awarded it three out of five stars, summarizing it as "wry and witty at first, but then becomes unstuck as it enters into soap opera mode", additionally drawing comparisons with *The Crown* and Prince Harry's media tour, and taking note of an "air of liberal fantasy to it all". She characterized the casting of Zakhar Perez and Galitzine as "absurdly [good] ... like cartoon Disney princes made into humans", and Thurman's performance as "delightfully camp".^[36]

The Guardian's Benjamin Lee awarded it two out of five stars and dubbed it "well-intentioned yet listless", writing: "*Red, White and Royal Blue* just isn't the fun, brain-disengaged romp it could have been, any praise going toward intention rather than execution."^[37] BBC's Louis Staples thought that the "creaky" formulaic script "often sounds like it was written by ChatGPT", criticized the film's overt leaning into "fictionalised specifics of Anglo-American relations" and into stereotypes of the British and Americans. He negatively compared it to *The Princess Diaries* (2001), *Single All the Way* (2021), *The Knight Before Christmas* (2019), *Fire Island* (2022) and *Bros* (2022), before concluding, "If you're looking for a film about beautiful men with perfect hair and sculpted abs, which doesn't demand too much from you, then it might be for you. But if you're expecting it to be in the grade of romcoms that are laugh-out-loud hilarious and actually say something interesting about relationships – or anything beyond lazy clichés – then you'll be royally disappointed."^[38]

Accolades

Awards and nominations for *Red, White & Royal Blue*

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipient(s)	Result	Ref.
<u>Producers Guild of America Awards</u>	<u>February 25, 2024</u>	<u>Outstanding Producer of Streamed or Televised Motion Pictures</u>	<i>Red, White & Royal Blue</i>	Nominated	^[39]
<u>The Queerties</u>	<u>March 12, 2024</u>	<u>Comedy Movie</u>		Runner-up	^[40]
<u>GLAAD Media Awards</u>	<u>May 11, 2024</u>	<u>Outstanding Film – Streaming or TV</u>		Nominated	^[41]
		<u>Queer Fan Favorite</u>		Won	^[42]

Sequel

The cast and filmmakers announced a sequel for the film on May 9, 2024, at a Q&A session after a screening.^[43]

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