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Mea Culpa (2024 film)

Mea Culpa is a 2024 American legal thriller film written and directed by Tyler Perry. The film stars Kelly Rowland as a criminal defense attorney, who takes the case of an artist (played by Trevante Rhodes), who is accused of murdering his girlfriend. The film also stars Sean Sagar, Nick Sagar, RonReaco Lee, Shannon Thornton, and Angela Robinson. The film was released by Netflix on February 23, 2024.

Plot

In Chicago, Mea Harper, a seasoned defense attorney, faces ongoing marital strife, exacerbated by her husband Kal's infidelity and his mother Azalia's domineering influence. Amidst these challenges, a family gathering brings news that her brother-in-law, Ray Hawthorne, an ambitious assistant district attorney, is set to prosecute a high-profile murder case against Zyair Malloy, a charismatic local artist. Despite the familial discord, Mea becomes intrigued when Zyair, proclaiming his innocence, approaches her to represent him, claiming that Ray has a personal grudge against him.

As Mea delves deeper into the case, she encounters a tangle of evidence that seems compelling at first glance but shows inconsistencies under scrutiny. Zyair, desperate to clear his name, insists he was framed, hinting at hidden motives behind the charges. Complicating matters, Mea's professional interactions with Zyair gradually blur into a personal connection, challenging her objectivity and professional ethics. The situation is further strained by Kal and Azalia who vehemently oppose her involvement in the case, fearing the scandal could tarnish the family's reputation, especially as Ray prepares for a mayoral run.

Despite these pressures, Mea's commitment to uncovering the truth strengthens. Her investigation reveals that the prosecution's case hinges on questionable evidence, including a dubious video and forensic reports that Zyair contests. She begins to suspect that the case against Zyair may be part of a larger scheme orchestrated by Ray and possibly other political figures, who aim to use the high-profile case to boost their careers.

Mea Culpa	
	
Release poster	
Directed by	<u>Tyler Perry</u>
Written by	Tyler Perry
Produced by	Tyler Perry Dianne Ashford Will Areu Angi Bones <u>Kelly Rowland</u>
Starring	Kelly Rowland <u>Trevante Rhodes</u> <u>Nick Sagar</u> <u>Sean Sagar</u> <u>RonReaco Lee</u> <u>Shannon</u> <u>Thornton</u>
Cinematography	Cory Burmester
Edited by	Larry Sexton
Music by	Amanda Delores Patricia Jones

As Mea pushes forward, her relationship with Kal deteriorates. Kal's struggles with unemployment and substance abuse come to the forefront, revealing the financial and emotional strains on their marriage. He accuses Mea of neglecting their family for her career, while Mea fires back about his inability to contribute and support. The personal stakes rise when Mea learns that Kal, together with Azalia, has been hiding crucial information about Azalia's health to manipulate her.

Production company	<u>Tyler Perry Studios</u>
Distributed by	<u>Netflix</u>
Release date	February 23, 2024
Running time	120 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English

Amidst this turmoil, Mea's pursuit of justice for Zyair leads her into dangerous territory. She faces threats not only from external forces aligned with the prosecution but also from within her own family, who are prepared to go to great lengths to protect their interests. Her resolve is tested as new revelations about Zyair's past relationships and his interactions with the victim come to light, painting a complex picture of the artist.

Determined to see the case through, Mea arranges a clandestine meeting with a key witness who can blow the case wide open. This meeting, however, ends with shocking revelations that force Mea to reconsider whom she can trust. Betrayals come to a head in a dramatic confrontation that exposes the deep corruption and personal vendettas driving the case.

Cast

- Kelly Rowland as Mea
- Trevante Rhodes as Zyair
- Nick Sagar as Ray
- Sean Sagar as Kal
- RonReaco Lee as Jimmy
- Shannon Thornton as Charlise
- Kerry O'Malley as Azalia
- Arianna Barron as Jenna
- Connor Weil as Bobby
- Angela Robinson as Renee

Production

In February 2023, it was reported that Kelly Rowland would produce and star in the legal thriller *Mea Culpa* written, produced, and directed by Tyler Perry.^{[2][3]} Trevante Rhodes, Sean Sagar, Nick Sagar and RonReaco Lee were also cast.^[4] Principal photography began on March 6, 2023, in Atlanta at the Tyler Perry Studios,^[5] with a few days in Chicago, and wrapped on March 26.^{[6][7]}

Release

Mea Culpa premiered at the Paris Theater in New York City on February 15, 2024.^[8] It was released by Netflix on February 23, 2024.^[9]

Reception

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 23% of 22 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 3.3/10. The website's consensus reads: "Neither campy enough to qualify as a guilty pleasure nor exciting enough to hold up as a thriller, *Mea Culpa* is a sorry entry in the Tyler Perry filmography."^[10] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 33 out of 100, based on 5 critics, indicating "generally unfavorable" reviews.^[11]

Lisa Kennedy of *The New York Times* describe the film "willfully steamy, decidedly silly thriller". The writer reflected that Rowland "commits to the thankless task of playing a smart woman gone stupid" while Rhodes "can't do much with Zyair, whose affect is more flat than seductive".^[12] Murtada Elfadl of *Variety* wrote that "many will write it off as shlock, and yet, there's something admirable about a filmmaker who knows exactly what his audience wants." Even if "Rowland and Rhodes have no chemistry" and the scenes don't show "anything resembling real life", Elfadl affirmed that the film "should work for anyone familiar with Perry's oeuvre".^[13]

References

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External links

- *Mea Culpa* (<https://www.netflix.com/title/81577005>) on Netflix
 - *Mea Culpa* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt26861992/>) at IMDb
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