

# [***Box Office Hit Sound Of Freedom Controversy Including QAnon Ties And False Claims Theaters Are Sabotaging Screenings Explained***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:68NY-4V11-DXVP-5333-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 1071 words

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**Highlight:** The film s lead actor has previously endorsed conspiracy theories and reportedly spoken at several QAnon events.

**Body**

**Topline**

**The Sound of Freedom**, a film based on a former government agent s pursuit to rescue child sex trafficking victims, is a hit at the box office and a darling among right-wing audiences, but it s also come under scrutiny for its numerous ties to the QAnon conspiracy.

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Tim Ballard at the "Sound of Freedom" premiere on June 28 in Vineyard, Utah. (Photo by Fred Hayes/Getty Images for Angel Studios)

Getty Images for Angel Studios

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**Key Facts**

**The Sound of Freedom** debuted in theaters July 4 and hascollectedmore than $41 million so far,placingthird at the box office last weekend behind bigger-budget films,**Indiana Jones: Dial of Destiny**and**Insidious: The Red Door**.

The film stars Jim Caviezel as Tim Ballard, a former Homeland Security agent and founder of Operation Underground Railroad, who conducts sting operations to rescue children from sex traffickers.

But OUR was the subject of a Viceinvestigationthat claims the organization has exaggerated its role in sex-trafficking rescues, with multiple law enforcement agencies saying their work with OUR has been insubstantial.

Both Ballard and Caviezel have been linked to conspiracy theories associated with QAnon: Ballard previouslysuggestedsupport for a debunked viral theory that furniture retailer Wayfair was selling children, and Caviezel hasreportedlyspoken at multiple QAnon events where he promoted one of the most bizarre Q conspiracies, claiming that child traffickers drain their victims blood to develop adrenochrome, a chemical theorists believe Hollywood elites inject to stay young.

Central to theQAnon conspiracyis that a core group of Satan-worshipping global elites run the world, and are involved in a global child trafficking ring.

Though the film has attracted controversy, it has a 77% critics score onRotten Tomatoes, with Variety s critic calling it a compelling movie that shines an authentic light on one of the crucial criminal horrors of our time, one that Hollywood has mostly shied away from.

**Chief Critics**

**Rolling Stone** spointedto both men s ties to conspiracy theories and cited examples of QAnon message boards praising the film, criticized the film for its hackneyed white savior narrative, fetishizing the torture of its child victims and lamented it may be used as a gateway to far-right conspiracy theories for the audience. Mike Rothschild, a journalist who wrote**The Storm Is Upon Us: How QAnon Became a Movement, Cult, and Conspiracy Theory of Everything**,criticizedCaviezel as a Q-pilled antisemite for wild references tothe Rothschildsand the movement for its ties to antisemitism (QAnon has beendescribedas being rooted in theolderantisemitic idea that Jews control the world).

**Contra**

The film s distributor, Angel Studios,deniesthe film is connected to conspiracy theories and maintains it is not about ***politics***. But it s been readily embraced by right-wing pundits who have praised Ballard s actions and downplayed or denied his apparent connections to QAnon. Psychologist and conservative commentator Jordan Petersoninterviewedboth Ballard and Caviezel on his YouTube channel, in which he asked about their belief in QAnon conspiracy theories. Ballard said they have condemned the majority of what they see with conspiracy theories, though he reaffirmed his belief in the adrenochrome blood harvesting theory. Ballard also called the Vice investigation very incredibly dishonest. Right-wing pundit Ben Shapiro alsohostedBallard and Caviezel on his YouTube channel to promote the film. Former President Donald Trump whoappointedBallard to a State Department human trafficking advisory council in 2019 and hasreportedlymade exaggerated claims about human trafficking shareda link to the trailer on Truth Social last week.

**Tangent**

Theories that AMC has sabotaged screenings of**The Sound of Freedom**by shutting off air conditioning, evacuating the theater or refunding tickets have gone viral among right-wing social media users, though the company denies it has interfered with screenings. In oneviral TikTok, a user claims she pre-ordered tickets to see**The Sound of Freedom** at a North Carolina AMC location, but her tickets were refunded because the theater lacked air conditioning. The user said she was permitted to attend the screening anyway but criticized the company for allegedly not notifying ticketholders about the reason for the refund. Heavyweight boxer David Niño Rodrigueztweetedhis experience watching the film at an AMC was horrendous because the volume was turned all the way down to nearly inaudible. Rodriguez asked his followers to share their stories of AMC allegedly ruining the experience at**Sound of Freedom** screenings, in which several users claimed to also have had issues at the theater. AMC CEO Adam Arondeniedthese allegations on Twitter, calling them conspiracy theories. Some viral tweets by right-wing users also claim mainstream media outlets are attempting to sabotage or censor the film. CNN is demanding no one see Sound of Freedom, one viral tweet claims, though a CNN news segmentattachedto the tweet does not contain this claim.

**Key Background**

The film centers on the fictionalized Ballard s pursuit to rescue a pair of Honduran siblings who are kidnapped to Colombia. Ballardreportedlyhas not claimed to conduct a mission exactly like this, though the film ends with a montage from his organization s real missions in Colombia in which Ballard s organization claims to have rescued more than 120 victims. Ballard reportedly wanted Caviezel, who is best-known for his role as Jesus Christ in Mel Gibson s 2004 film**The Passion of the Christ**, to play him. The filmreportedlyhad a lengthy production: Producer Eduardo Verastegui said the film wrapped in 2018, but could not secure a distributor. He said Netflix and Amazon were among studios that passed on the film. Angel Studios CEO and cofounder Neal Harmonsaidthe film initially had a deal with 20th Century Fox, but once Disney acquired the company in 2019, Disney allegedly declined to release it. The pandemic further delayed the effort to find a distributor. Angel Studiosacquireddistribution rights in early 2023 and sought funding from investors to distribute and promote the film.

**Further Reading**

Sound of Freedom is a box office hit whose star embraces QAnon(The Washington Post)

Insidious: The Red Door Earns $32.7 Million In First Weekend Knocking Indiana Jones Off Top Spot(Forbes)

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