

CALL ME BY YOUR NAME (2017)

- Released on January 19th, 2017
- 2 Hours 12 minutes
- €4,000,000 (estimated)
- Directed by Luca Guadagnino
- Written by James Ivory (screenplay by), André Aciman (based on the novel by)
- Frenesy Film Company, La Cinéfacture, RT Features
- Rated R for sexual content, nudity and some language

QUICK THOUGHTS

- Marisa Serafini
- Phil Svitek

DEVELOPMENT

- After seeing an early galley of André Aciman's debut novel Call Me by Your Name in 2007, American producers Peter Spears and Howard Rosenman bought the screen rights to it before it was published
- Before developing it into a film, the two invited their friend James Ivory to work as an executive producer on the adaptation, which he accepted
- Spears and Rosenman read the book independently and produced it in 2008
- They soon found themselves in development hell: they met with three different sets of directors and writers—including Gabriele Muccino, Ferzan Özpetek and Sam Taylor-Johnson — but could not find anyone who would commit to the project. Scheduling around the need to shoot in Italy during the summer also proved difficult
- The producers reached out to Luca Guadagnino and lined him up as their first choice to direct, but he declined, citing a busy schedule
 - A native of northern Italy, he was first hired as a location consultant instead, to help "put the movie together from the Italian side." Guadagnino later suggested that he co-direct the film with Ivory—without any contractual agreement yet in place. Ivory accepted the offer, and spent between six and nine months in 2014 working on the screenplay
- Guadagnino, who has described the novel as "a Proustian book about remembering the past and indulging in the melancholy of lost things," wrote the adaptation with Ivory, while also collaborating with Walter Fasano to "really fine-tune it".
- The screenplay was completed in late 2015 and early 2016
 - It was approved by Aciman, who commended the adaptation as "direct, [...] real and persuasive." He added, "as the writer I found myself saying, 'Wow, they've done better than the book'". The completed screenplay was vital in securing funding for the film's production. Among the financiers were the production companies La Cinéfacture (France); Frenesy Film Company (Italy, owned by Guadagnino); M.Y.R.A. Entertainment (United States); RT Features (Brazil), and Water's End Productions (United States)—along with the support of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism

- During negotiations, the production budget was reduced from \$12 million to \$3.5 million
- In 2016, Ivory stepped down from directing to avoid conflicts, leaving Guadagnino to direct the film alone.
- According to Ivory, financiers from Memento Films International didn't want to have two directors involved in the project, as they "thought it would be awkward [...] It might take longer, it would look terrible if we got in fights on the set, and so on."
- Guadagnino has said that Ivory's version would have likely been "a much more costly [and] different film"—one which, in fact, could not have been made, because of "market realities".
- Ivory became the solely credited screenwriter and subsequently sold the rights to the screenplay to Guadagnino's company
- It marks Ivory's first produced screenplay since Le Divorce (2003), and the only narrative feature that he has only written, not directed
- Despite that, Ivory was "very much involved" with other aspects of the production
- Guadagnino chose to dedicate the film to Bill Paxton—a friend of the director, Spears and his husband, Brian Swardstrom—after his death in February 2017

WRITING (James Ivory (screenplay by), André Aciman (based on the novel by))

- The film differs from its source material in a number of ways. While the novel serves as a memory-piece from Elio's perspective, the filmmakers behind *Call Me by Your Name* chose to set the movie entirely in the present timeline, a "much more efficient" solution, to help the audience understand the characters and "reflect the essence of the book."
- The setting was changed from Bordighera to the countryside of Crema, Lombardy, where Guadagnino lives
- He decided to push up the original setting from 1987 to 1983—which he explained was a year, "in Italy at least, when everything that was great about the '70s is definitely shut down", and one in which the characters "are in a way untouched by the corruption of the '80s—in the U.S., Reagan, and in the UK, Thatcher"
- Mr. Perlman's profession was refined by Ivory from a classics scholar to "an art historian/archaeologist type."
- In revising Ivory's draft of the script, Guadagnino removed the voice-over narration and a considerable amount of nudity
- Toward the end of the novel, the two protagonists go off on a trip to Rome together, which lasts an entire chapter with new characters in multiple locations. Because of the limited budget, Ivory and the producers came up with several variations, including the idea to have "everyone else leave and they are alone in the house"; and changed into "another kind of a little trip", where they spend "some time together away from the house"

STORY/TOPICS

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CAST:

- Hammer and Chalamet both signed contracts that prohibited full-frontal nudity. Ivory, whose original screenplay had contained "all sorts of nudity," was dismayed by the decision, criticizing what he saw as an "American" attitude. "Nobody seems to care that much or be shocked about a totally naked woman. It's the men," he said
- Guadagnino, who remained involved in the casting, chose actors based on their performances and chemistry, rather than choosing to "investigate or label" their sexuality
- Hammer and Chalamet, who did not have to do a screen test together, met for the first time during the production in Crema
 - They spent a month together before filming began, watched Mike Tyson documentaries and went to local restaurants, to build character development

TIMOTHEE CHALAMET (Elio)

- Guadagnino was tempted to remove the scene from the novel in which Elio masturbates into a pitted peach, as he thought it was a metaphor for "sexual impulses and energy", and that it was too explicit. Timothée Chalamet was also nervous about the scene, describing it as the key to illuminating the character's "overabundant sexual energy". Despite their reservations, Guadagnino and Chalamet each tested the method by themselves, and both agreed that it worked, so the scene stayed in the film
- Chalamet had acted since he was a child and co-starred on Showtime's *Homeland* in 2012 The following year, Swardstrom—Spears' husband and agent—introduced the then 17-year-old Chalamet to Guadagnino, who immediately felt the actor had "the ambition, the intelligence, the sensitivity, the naivety, and the artistry" for the role of Elio
- Timothée Chalamet learned to speak Italian and to play the piano for the role of Elio

ARMIE HAMMER (Oliver)

- After seeing Armie Hammer's performance in *The Social Network* (2010), Guadagnino "fell in love" with him and cultivated his passion for Hammer and the movies he made afterwards. The director found him to be a "sophisticated actor, with a great range" and had him in mind for the role of Oliver
- This is the third film in which Hammer has played a homosexual character, following J. Edgar (2011) and *Final Portrait* (2017)
- "I've never been so intimately involved with a director before. Luca was able to look at me and completely undress me," Hammer said
- During the dancing sequence, Hammer had to perform in front of "50 extras off camera," with the music being turned down to record the dialogue. "That was not fun, I don't really enjoy dancing," Hammer said

MICHAEL STUHLBARG (Mr. Perlman)

- The actor did not start reading the book until he had already joined the production. He was moved by the "many beautiful sentiments expressed" in the script when he first read it, including Mr. Perlman's "sense of generosity and love and understanding"

- The scene where Mr. Perlman delivered an educational speech to Elio was filmed the day before shooting wrapped
 - Stuhlbarg spent months to prepare for the scene, one that Guadagnino wanted to make "as simple as possible" by taking less setups and "let the actors be."

SYMBOLISM/TRIVIA/EASTER EGGS

- The day-pack used by Elio in several outdoor scenes was Invicta's Jolly III Vintage, popular among school kids in Italy
- In Taoism, peaches symbolizes virginity, female sexuality and female genitalia. Having that in mind, there are many ways to interpret the controversial "peach scene."

DIRECTING (Luca Guadagnino)

- *Call Me by Your Name* is the final installment in Guadagnino's thematic *Desire* trilogy, following *I Am Love* (2009) and *A Bigger Splash* (2015)
- The film represents a departure from his previous work, as on it he took a "non-aggressive" and simple approach; he has said this is "the most calm" movie he has made
- Despite being a literary adaptation, many scenes in the film play out wordlessly. "Words are part of what's going on, but it's not necessarily what's going on underneath. I think this film celebrates the underneath," he said
- Guadagnino considers the film an "homage to fathers," referring both to his own father and to four filmmakers who have inspired him—Jean Renoir, Jacques Rivette, Éric Rohmer, and Bernardo Bertolucci
- Guadagnino has described *Call Me By Your Name* as a family-oriented film for the purpose of "transmission of knowledge and hope that people of different generations come to see the film together."
- He never saw it as a "gay" movie, but rather calls it a film about the "beauty of the newborn idea of desire, unbiased and uncynical," and reflecting his motto of living "with a sense of joie de vivre"
- The director attempted to avoid the flaws he had seen in most coming-of-age films, in which growth is often portrayed as a result of resolving certain preconceived dilemmas—such as having to choose between two lovers
- He also wanted the story to follow two people in the moment, rather than focus on an antagonist or a tragedy, a specific approach inspired by *À Nos Amours* (1983), directed by Maurice Pialat
- Guadagnino was not interested in including explicit sex scenes in the film, in order to keep the tone as planned, saying, "I wanted the audience to completely rely on the emotional travel of these people and feel first love [...] It was important to me to create this powerful universality, because the whole idea of the movie is that the other person makes you beautiful—enlightens you, elevates you."

PRODUCTION (Sayombhu Mukdeeprom)

- Sayombhu Mukdeeprom, who had previously collaborated with Guadagnino on Ferdinando Cito Filomarino's *Antonia* (2015), served as the director of photography
 - He read Aciman's novel before receiving the script, and spent time walking around filming locations to "get a feeling for everything [...] to see the color, to see how the light changed during the day, and input it into my data."
- Lighting is an important factor in Mukdeeprom's work, as he needs the light to be engaged with the characters. In order to capture the Northern Italian summer atmosphere for *Call Me by Your Name*, he had to create completely artificial light, due to the heavy rains that lasted the entirety of the shoot
- Mukdeeprom had to adapt his technical approach to the weather condition, "so I had to order a package of lights. I ended up with 15Ks, down to 2.5,"
- The film was shot using 35 mm film and a single lens, a decision influenced by the work of David Cronenberg in order to "solidif[y] the point of view," and make "the tension of the performance come off the screen."
- It took place at Ivory's house, Guadagnino's kitchen table in Crema, and sometimes in New York
- Principal photography on *Call Me by Your Name* lasted about 32–34 days
- It began on May 9, 2016, shortly after *A Bigger Splash* was released in the United States, and was completed in June 2016
- The process occurred quietly, with reports only appearing after filming had been underway for two weeks
- Additional outdoor scenes were shot on December 4, 2016
- Several historical locations in the surrounding streets in Crema and Pandino were chosen during production, including the arch of Torrazzo at the Crema Cathedral
- Businesses received compensation for financial losses caused by the closure, scheduled for May 30 and 31
- The trip to Bergamo was shot in multiple historical buildings, including the Bergamo Cathedral, the Santa Maria Maggiore, and the University of Sciences, Letters and Arts
- The production team was able to secure permission to film at the Cascate del Serio in Valbondione for only half an hour because of security reasons
- Guadagnino engaged deeply with the cast and filmmakers, and often cooked and showed films for them in his house
- Guadagnino shot the film in chronological order, which allowed the filmmakers to "witness the onscreen maturity of both protagonist and actor"
- The main location for the Perlmans' residence was Villa Albergoni, an uninhabited 17th-century mansion in Moscazzano
 - Six weeks before production, the crew—including production designer Samuel Dehors and first-time set decorator Violante Visconti di Modrone—gradually decorated the house with furniture, objects, and decoration inspired by the characters
 - Much of the furniture, including the dishes and glassware from the '50s, belonged to Guadagnino and di Modrone's parents. "That made it cozy and personal," di Modrone said, "I wanted to give it the sense of time passing by."

- In public places, the filmmakers set up faded political billboards to reflect the Italian general election in 1983, and re-created a newsstand full of magazines of that particular time

EDITING/VFX (Walter Fasano)

- The director's first cut of the film was four hours long
- Post-production with regular editor Walter Fasano took only a month—between June and July, the fastest Guadagnino had edited

SOUND/MUSIC (Sufjan Stevens)

- Guadagnino normally selects the music for his films himself
- The director wanted to find an "emotional narrator to the film" through music, a "less heavy, less present, and more enveloping" way than voice and text
- He was inspired by the work in Barry Lyndon (1975), The Magnificent Ambersons (1942), and The Age of Innocence (1993)
- Guadagnino wanted the film's music to be connected to Elio, a young pianist who likes to transcribe and adapt pieces, in order to get close to Oliver
- The music is used to reflect the time, the characters' family, level of education, and "the kind of canon they would be a part of"
- Guadagnino also researched what was popular on the radio that summer, so as to stay true to the time period
- Guadagnino found that the lyricism of Sufjan Stevens' work resonated with him
- The director initially asked Stevens to narrate the film through the older Elio's perspective, and record an original song for Call Me by Your Name, "almost as a break in the narrative"
- Stevens declined the voiceover role, and eventually contributed three songs to the soundtrack: "Mystery of Love", "Visions of Gideon", and a new rendition of "Futile Devices" with piano
- Stevens took inspiration from the script, the book, and conversations with the director about the characters
- He submitted the songs a few days before shooting began. Surprised by the result, the director listened to them with the actors and Fasano on-set

PROMOTION

- Call Me by Your Name had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival on January 22, 2017
- Prior to its premiere, Sony Pictures Classics acquired U.S. distribution rights to the film for \$6 million
 - The deal was negotiated by WME Global and UTA Independent Film Group
- It was also screened at the Berlin International Film Festival on February 13, 2017, the Toronto International Film Festival on September 7, 2017, and the New York Film Festival on October 3, 2017

- *Call Me by Your Name* began a limited release in the United Kingdom on October 27, 2017, and in the United States on November 24, 2017.
 - It expanded from four to thirty locations in the United States on December 15, 2017, and then to 114 theaters on December 22
- Sony Pictures Classics debuted an official poster for *Call Me by Your Name* on July 28, 2017
- The first theatrical trailer was released on August 1, 2017
- On October 11, 2017, Sony Pictures Classics released a teaser titled "Dance Party" to celebrate National Coming Out Day
- Reaction to the advertisement on social media was somewhat negative, largely for Sony Pictures' "misleading" use of a still of Chalamet and Garrel instead of focusing on the protagonist's relationship
- Daniel Megarry of *Gay Times* described it as "an attempt to 'straight-wash' the movie's predominant same-sex romance", while Benjamin Lee of *The Guardian* called it a "disastrous attempt to push Oscar-buzzed *Call Me by Your Name* as a straight love story," and said the advert "belies an industry awkwardly denying queerness"
- Sony Pictures Classics later aired several commercial spots to promote the film during its nationwide expansion on January 19, 2018

BOX OFFICE

- As of February 4, 2018, *Call Me by Your Name* has grossed \$12.9 million in the United States and Canada, and \$9.1 million in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$22 million, against a production budget of \$3.5 million
- The film made \$404,874 in its opening weekend—a per-theater average of \$101,219
 - It was the highest average of 2017, the biggest since that of *La La Land* the previous December, and had the best per-screen opening for a gay romance film since *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)

RECEPTION

- 96% based on 255 reviews (Rotten Tomatoes)
 - The site's critical consensus reads, "*Call Me by Your Name* offers a melancholy, powerfully affecting portrait of first love, empathetically acted by Timothée Chalamet and Armie Hammer."
- After its screening at the Toronto International Film Festival, actor James Woods criticized the age disparity between Elio and Oliver on Twitter, accusing the film of "chip[ping] away the last barriers of decency," and equating it to the North American Man/Boy Love Association, a pedophilia advocacy organization.
- Hammer responded by criticizing Woods' relationship with Kristen Bauguess—who started dating Woods in 2013 when she was 20 years old and he was 66 years old—saying, "Didn't you date a 19 year old when you were 60?"
 - Hammer explained "We weren't trying to make some salacious, predatory movie. The age of consent in Italy is 14. So, to get technical, it's not illegal there [...] But this isn't a normal situation: The younger guy goes after the older guy. The

dynamic is not older-predator-versus-younger-boy." He further said Woods "had no moral high ground to stand on and was cheapening what we did."

- It received a ten-minute standing ovation at its New York Film Festival screening at the Alice Tully Hall, the longest recorded in the festival's history
- Writing in The Hollywood Reporter, Boyd van Hoeij described *Call Me by Your Name* as an "extremely sensual [...] intimate and piercingly honest" adaptation of Aciman's novel. He further called Chalamet's performance "the true breakout of the film"

SEQUEL/LEGACY

- *Call Me by Your Name* was selected by the National Board of Review and the American Film Institute as one of the top 10 films of the year
- At the 90th Academy Awards, it was nominated for Best Picture, Best Actor (Chalamet), Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Original Song ("Mystery of Love")
- Chalamet became the youngest Best Actor nominee since 1939, while Ivory became the oldest man to be nominated for a competitive award in history