

SOUND OF METAL (15)

GENRE | DRAMA **DIRECTOR** | DARIUS MARDER **STARRING** | RIZ AHMED, OLIVIA COOKE, PAUL RACI, LAUREN RIDLOFF, AND MATHIEU AMALRIC **RUN TIME** | 120 MINUTES **LANGUAGE** | ENGLISH WITH SDH



A profound narrative about deafness and deaf identity; Sound of Metal is an immersive cinematic experience driven by a visceral soundscape and rich performances from Riz Ahmed and Olivia Cooke.

Darius Marder's directional debut follows the first-person perspective of a heavy metal drummer, Ruben (Riz Ahmed), whose hearing suddenly begins to deteriorate. After four years of sobriety, girlfriend and bandmate Lou (Olivia Cooke) fears that Ruben will relapse as he begins to struggle with the reality of his permanent hearing loss. Ruben and Lou leave in their ramshackle caravan to seek help at a rural recovery facility for Deaf addicts, where they meet Joe (Paul Raci), a recovering alcoholic who lost his hearing during the Vietnam War. Ruben's life is turned upside down as he grapples with rage, identity, and acceptance over three acts. The film's entwining of senses and perspective creates a new kind of audience participation, with sound design acting as a vehicle for the film's thematic delivery. Sound of Metal's interaction between pacing and audio enables both Ruben and the audience to find stillness in silence.

This story portrays a unique perspective of deafness, Deaf culture, and the spectrum of deaf identity,

embodying a breakthrough in d/Deaf representation on the silver screen, both in storytelling and access. Sound of Metal is shown with open captions; an executive decision that signifies the importance of access for the communities whose stories are being told. This dedication to accessible cinema not only cements the film's narrative but also ignites a conversation on inaccessibility within film exhibition and filmmaking. Sound of Metal isn't afraid to explore the nuances of deafness and adaptation, and the film's authentic feel is born out of the consultation and inclusion of Deaf talent (including Lauren Ridloff, Marvel's first Deaf superhero). Sound of Metal symbolises a pivotal moment for on-screen Deaf representation.

The film's substance is a direct result of genuine research and consultation. Marder worked intimately with Deaf people, hard of hearing people, and CODA (Children of Deaf Adults) both before and during filming, creating a rich and authentic atmosphere for scenes that highlight Deaf culture. In addition to Lauren Ridloff, a large portion of the cast are Deaf actors. Before filming, Ahmed learnt American Sign Language by working closely with the Brooklyn Deaf community, wearing custom devices in his ears to simulate progressive deafness. He also spent four months learning the drums.

DID YOU KNOW?

The film was shot chronologically, allowing the actors to experience the story's emotional arc. Marder's intent with *Sound of Metal* was to depict raw experiences, free from perfection and polish. The scenes with live music were recorded in real time, as opposed to sound mixing the separate musical parts during the editing process.



DID YOU KNOW?

Sound of Metal was once intended to be a documentary about a couple who doubled as a metal band. Marder's original project developed into a scripted feature over eight years ago, and his brother Abraham soon joined the writing process. Whilst they spent years researching the story and the characters, they were also inspired by those within their own family. Dorothy Marder was a lesbian photographer and cinephile who went deaf in her 60s. She found herself trapped between the hearing world and the Deaf world, with no way to connect to either culture. Marder's grandmother spent the rest of her life petitioning for the captioning of films. This film is dedicated to her memory and advocacy.



AUTHOR BIO

Charlotte Little is a hard of hearing and visually impaired film journalist and access consultant, with a passion for accessible cinema and disability representation within film. You can find out more about her writing and access consultancy through her website:

www.captaincaptions.com

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