



Cruise (film)

Cruising is a 1980 American [erotic thriller film](#) written and directed by [William Friedkin](#) and starring [Al Pacino](#), [Paul Sorvino](#), and [Karen Allen](#). It is loosely based on the novel of the [same name](#) by *New York Times* reporter [Gerald Walker](#) about a serial killer targeting [gay men](#), particularly the men associated with the [leather](#) scene in the late 1970s. The title is a pun on a double meaning because "cruising" can describe police officers on patrol and gay men who [they are looking for sex](#).

Badly received by critics upon its release, *Cruising* performed moderately at the box office. The shooting and promotion were persecuted by [gay rights](#) protesters, who believed the film stigmatized them. The film is also notable for its open ending, which was criticized by [Robin Wood](#) and Bill Krohn as further complicating what they felt were inconsistent directorial changes for the first cut and synopsis, as well as other production issues. ^[2]

Plot

In New York City, during a hot summer, men's body parts appear in the Hudson River. Police suspect it is the work of a serial killer who is picking up gay men in West Village bars like Eagle's Nest, Ramrod and Cock Pit, then taking them to cheap boarding houses or motels, tying them up and stabbing them to death.

Officer Steve Burns (Al Pacino), who resembles the victims' slim, dark-haired profile, is sent undercover by Captain Edelson (Paul Sorvino) to the urban world of gay S&M and leather bars in the Meatpacking District to track down the killer. At first, Burns is reluctant to accept the assignment, but he is ambitious and sees a high-profile case as a way to quickly advance his career. He rents an apartment in the area and befriends a neighbor, Ted Bailey (Don Scardino), a struggling young gay playwright who offers technical support to pay the bills. Burns' undercover work affects his relationship with his girlfriend Nancy (Karen Allen), due to the fact that they are both unable to tell him the details of their current assignment and their friendship with Ted, who is having relationship problems with his jealousy and overbearing. Dancing boyfriend, Gregory (James Remar).

Burns mistakenly forces the police to question a waiter, Skip Lee (Jay Acovone), who is bullied and beaten to force a confession before the police discover that Skip's fingerprints do not match those of the killer. Burns is concerned about this police brutality and tells Captain Edelson that he did not sign for them to arrest anyone just because they are gay. Exhausted from his undercover assignment, Burns is about to resign, but Edelson convinces him to continue the investigation. Edelson, in turn, reprimands the officers behind Skip's questioning.

Following a new lead, Burns investigates Columbia University students who studied with one of the previous victims, a university professor. Burns believes he has found the serial killer: Stuart Richards (Richard Cox), a gay music graduate student with schizophrenic disorder who attacks him with a knife in Morningside Park. Burns takes the man into custody, but shortly after, Ted's mutilated body is found. Police dismiss the murder as a lovers' quarrel that turned violent and issued an arrest warrant for Gregory, with whom Burns previously had a fight over his relationship with Ted.

With the police under the impression that the murders have been solved because Richards is in custody, Burns returns to live with Nancy. While Burns shaves off his beard in the bathroom, Nancy tries on his clothes - a leather hat with a visor, aviator frames, and a leather jacket - while her boyfriend looks at himself in the mirror.

Cast

- Al Pacino as Steve Burns
- Paul Sorvino as Captain Edelson
- Karen Allen as Nancy Gates
- Richard Cox as Stuart Richards
- Don Scardino as Ted Bailey
- Joe Spinell as Patrolman DiSimone
- Jay Acovone as Skip Lee

Cruise



Original movie poster

Directed by	William Friedkin
Produced by	Jerry Weintraub
Script by	William Friedkin
based on	Cruising of Gerald Walker
Starring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al Pacino Paul Sorvino Karen Allen Richard Cox Don Scardino
Music by	Jack Nitzsche
Cinematography	James A. Contner
Edited by	Bud S. Smith
Production company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CiP-Europäische Treuhand ^[1] Lorimar Cinematic Entertainment ^[1]
Distributed by	United Artists
Release date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 8, 1980
Execution time	102 minutes ^[1]
Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> United States ^[1] West Germany ^[1]
Idiom	English
Budget	\$ 11 million
box office	\$ 19.8 million



- GENIE DAVIS AS DAVINCI
- Arnaldo Santana as Loren Lukas
- Larry Atlas as Eric Rossman
- Allan Miller as Chief of Detectives
- Sonny Grosso as Detective Blasio
- Edward O'Neil as Detective Schreiber
- Michael Aronin as Detective Davis
- James Remar as Gregory
- William Russ as Paul Gaines
- Mike Starr as Patrolman Desher
- Leo Burmester as a water sport
- Henry Judd Baker as tough cop
- Steve Inwood as Martino
- Keith Prentice as Joey
- Leland Starnes as Jack Richards
- Powers Boothe as Hankie Salesman

Production

Philip D'Antoni, who had produced Friedkin's 1971 film *The French Connection*, approached Friedkin with the idea of directing a film based on the *New York Times* reporter's 1970 novel *Cruising*. Gerald Walker on a serial killer targeting the New York City gay community. Friedkin was not particularly interested in the project. D'Antoni tried to attach Steven Spielberg, but they failed to interest a study. A few years later, Jerry Weintraub returned the idea to Friedkin, who was still not interested. Friedkin changed his mind after a series of unsolved murders in gay leather bars in the early 1970s and articles written about the murders by the *Village Voice* journalist Arthur Bell. Friedkin also knew a police officer named Randy Jurgensen who had gone into the same kind of deep coverage that Steve Burns did of Pacino to investigate an earlier string of gay murders, and Paul Bateson, a medical assistant who had appeared in the film. Friedkin's 1973, *The Exorcist*, who, while on trial for another murder, was implicated (but never charged) in six of the leather rod murders. All of these factors gave Friedkin the angle he wanted to follow when making the film.^[3] Jurgensen and Bateson served as film consultants, as did Sonny Grosso, who previously consulted with Friedkin on *The French Connection*. Jurgensen and Grosso appear in small parts of the film.

In his research, Friedkin worked with members of the mob, who at the time owned many of the city's gay bars.^[4] Al Pacino was not Friedkin's first choice for leadership; Richard Gere had expressed great interest in the role and Friedkin had entered into negotiations with Gere's agent. Gere was Friedkin's choice because he believed Gere would bring an androgynous quality to the role that Pacino couldn't.^[5]

The movie was intended to depict gay cruising as it existed in Mineshaft, but that bar is not mentioned in the movie;^[6] Due to Mineshaft not allowing filming, scenes for the movie were shot at the Hellfire Club, which was decorated to look like the Mineshaft. The Mineshaft regulars appeared as extras.^[7] The scenes were shot on streets and other locations near the mine shaft.^[8] Pacino attended as part of the investigation for his role. (A bar called Mineshaft does not appear in the novel which, with substantial changes, was the inspiration for the film.)

The Motion Picture Association of America originally gave *cruise* an X rating. Friedkin claims that they took the film before the MPAA board "50 times" at a cost of \$ 50,000 and removed 40 minutes of original cut footage before it was secured an R rating.^[3] The deleted footage, according to Friedkin, consisted entirely of footage from the clubs in which parts of the film were filmed and consisted of "[an] absolutely graphic sexuality ... that footage depicted the most graphic homosexuality with Pacino watching, and with the hint that he may have been participating."^[4] In some discussions, Friedkin claims that the remaining 40 minutes had no effect on the story or characterizations,^[3] but in others he claims that the footage created "mysterious twists and turns (which [the film] no longer takes)", that the suspicion that Pacino's character might have become a murderer became clearer, and that the Missing footage simultaneously made the film more and less ambiguous. When Friedkin tried to restore the missing footage for the film's DVD release, he discovered that United Artists no longer had it. He believes that UA destroyed the images.^[3] Some hidden sexual activity remains visible in the film as it is released, and Friedkin intersperses some stills of gay pornography in the opening scene depicting a murder.

This film represents the only soundtrack of the punk rock band The Germs. They recorded six songs for the film, of which only one appeared, "Lion's Share." The cut "Shakedown, Breakdown" was written and recorded especially for the film by the cult band Rough Trade.^[9] Soundtrack director Nitzsche had initially tried to include two songs, "Endless Night" and "Devil's Sidewalk", by Graham Parker and The Rumor in the film, but legal problems prevented the songs from being used.^[10] The songs appeared on Parker's 1980 album, *The Up Escalator*.

Friedkin asked gay author John Rechy, some of whose works were set in the same setting as the film, to screen *Cruising* just before its release. Rechy had written an essay defending Friedkin's right to make the film, but not defending the film in general. At Rechy's suggestion, Friedkin removed a scene showing the gay liberation slogan "We are everywhere" as graffiti on a wall just before the first body part is pulled out of the river, adding a disclaimer:^[eleven]

"This movie is not intended to be an indictment of the homosexual world. It is set in a small segment of that world, which is not intended to be representative at all."^[12]



Friedkin later claimed that it was the MPAA and United Artists that demanded the disclaimer, calling it "part of the shady deal to get the film out" and "a mouthful for organized gay rights groups." [13] Friedkin claimed that no one involved in the making of the film thought it would be considered representative of the entire gay community, but gay film historian Vito Russo disputes this, citing the disclaimer as "an admission of guilt. What Would a director make such a statement if he really believed that his film would not be representative at all?" [14]

Protests

Throughout the summer of 1979, members of the New York City gay community protested against the film's production. The protests began at the urging of gay journalist Arthur Bell, whose series of articles on unsolved murders of gay men inspired the film. [15] Gays were urged to discontinue filming and gay-owned businesses were urged to ban filmmakers from their facilities. People tried to interfere with the shooting by pointing mirrors from rooftops to ruin scene lighting, blowing whistles and horns near venues, and playing loud music. One thousand protesters marched through the East Village demanding that the city withdraw support for the film. [16] As a result of the interference, the film's audio was heavily layered to eliminate noise caused by off-camera protesters. [17]

Al Pacino said he understood the protests, but insisted that when reading the script he never felt at any point that the film was anti-gay. He said that the leather bars were "just a fragment of the gay community, in the same way that the mafia is a fragment of Italian-American life," referring to *The Godfather*, and that he "would never want to do anything to harm the gay community." [18]

Launch and reception

Cruise was released February 15, 1980 in the United States and had a box office take of \$ 19.8 million. [19]

Critical reaction to the film was very negative and LGBT activists publicly protested *Cruising*. [20] However, critical opinion has warmed a bit over the years as the film has been reassessed. [21] [22] As of December 2020, the film has a 51% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes based on 53 reviews, with a weighted average of 6.2 / 10. The site's consensus states: "The *cruise* glides confidently thanks to the cinematic artistry and committed acting of Al Pacino, but this fiery thriller struggles to approach its subject with sensitivity or to justify its brutality." [2. 3] Upon its original release, Roger Ebert gave *Cruising* two and a half out of four stars, describing it as well-shot and suspenseful, but "he seems to make a conscious decision not to declare himself on its central theme" —the true feelings of Pacino's character. about the S&M subculture, which are never explored to Ebert's satisfaction. [24]

Critic Jack Sommersby's comments typified contemporary criticism directed at non-political issues such as character development and the changes made when the film was transferred from novel to film: [25]

- [On the serial killer character] "The closest we get to a motivation comes from his imaginary conversations with his formerly disapproving late father, who tells his son, 'You know what to do,' which infuriates him. kill and again we are baffled as to the connection Friedkin is trying to make. Was it the father's disapproval that his son is gay, and if the son is trying to regain approval? of his father killing men of a sexual nature? Does the father have a seething hatred for? If so, there is no indication of any of this. In fact, we don't even know if the father knew his son was gay before he died. " .
- freaking out any trace of homosexuality, so to speak. A week later, the girlfriend complains that he no longer wants her and he responds: what I am doing is affecting me. How? Stop having sex with women or having sex altogether in light of what you see and experience each night? Again, we don't know. "

The second major criticism of the film at its release came from gay activists who felt that the film had a homophobic political message and that it depicted gay men drawn to violence, which in turn could justify homophobic hate crimes. Ebert wrote "The validity of these arguments is questionable." [24] However, several critics have disagreed with his portrayal of gay men. *TV Guide's Movie Guide*, for example, noted that the gay scene is portrayed in the film "as hopelessly ill and violent," and that "virtually no one [is] portrayed sympathetically." [26] Brian Juergens, associate editor of the gay culture website AfterEllen, argued that the film "brutally exploited" the gay community, arguing that gay male sexuality does not appear to serve any purpose in the plot other than as a prop to surprise straight audiences. . . Although the film contains a disclaimer that says it is not intended to be "an indictment of the homosexual world," Juergens claims that certain elements of the plot, especially the fact that it is hinted that several murderous homosexuals are operating simultaneously, "makes a statement clear (no matter how involuntary the filmmakers hold) about a community as a whole ". [17]

Vito Russo wrote "Gays who protested the film's making argued that it would show that when Pacino recognized his attraction to the homosexual world, he would become psychotic and start killing," [14] and at least one critic agreed that Burns' "The will to sleep with a man is [portrayed as] the ultimate descent into depravity." [27] However, in *Exorcising Cruising*, a behind-the-scenes documentary on the *Cruising* DVD, Friedkin alleges that the film was supported by much of the New York City leather / S&M community, who appeared by the dozen. like extras in nightclub scenes. .

Raymond Murray, editor of *Images in the Dark* (an encyclopedia of gay and lesbian movies) writes that "the film proves to be entertaining and (for those born too late to enjoy the sexual excesses of pre-AIDS gay life) fascinating ridiculous though to glimpse gay life, even if it's Hollywood's version of gay life. " He goes on to say that "the movie is now part of queer history and a testament to how a scared Hollywood treated a disenfranchised minority." [28]

In retrospect, William Friedkin said: " *Cruising* It emerged at a time when gay liberation had made great strides among the general public. It also came out around the same time that AIDS was given a name. I just used the background of the S&M world to make a murder mystery; it was



world, it was the *sex* world. But many critics who wrote for gay publications or the underground press felt that the film was not the best step forward when it came to gay liberation, and they were right. Now it is reassessed as a movie. It might be found wanting as a movie, but it no longer has to suffer the stigma of being an anti-gay rule.^[29]

In a 2006 interview, Professor Camille Paglia stated, "I loved *Cruising* , while everyone else was furiously condemning it. It had a clandestine decadence that wasn't that different from *The Story of O* or other high-end European porn from the 1960s. ".^[30] Several film directors also cite the film as one of their favorite films. Quentin Tarantino says he was doing a play on Broadway in 1995 and he did a screening for gay members of the theater community and "It just blew their minds. They loved it."^[31] Danish film director Nicolas Winding Refn called the film "a masterpiece".^[32] The Safdie brothers named the film as an influence on their work.^[33]

Hate crime connections

In the 1995 documentary *The Celluloid Closet* (adapted from Vito Russo's books on homosexuals in the film industry), Ron Nyswaner, a screenwriter from *Philadelphia* , claims that he and a boyfriend were threatened with violence by a group of men who claimed that *Cruising* was his *destiny*. motivation.^[3. 4]

According to a 2013 book by film teacher R. Hart Kylo-Patrick,^[35] "Two months after the film's release, a man with a submachine gun attacked a bar featured prominently in the film, killing two clients and wounding 12 other people. Friedkin declined to comment on the attack. " A 2016 article in *The New York Times* identifies the culprit in this shooting as Ronald K. Crumpley, a former New York City Traffic Police officer.^[36] He first shot two people outside a deli with an Uzi, then walked a few blocks where he shot a group of men outside The Ramrod, a gay bar. In all, he shot eight people, two of whom died. Crumpley is said to have declared to police after his arrest: "I will kill them all, gays, they ruin everything." They found "not responsible for disease or defect mental 'and spent the rest of his life in a psychiatric hospital, died at the age of 73 years in 2015. The article in the *New York Times* in 2016 does not mention *Cruising* or Friedkin, and it is unclear if the film played any role in the attack.

Acknowledgments

Grant	Category	Subject	Outcome
Golden Raspberry Awards	Worst movie	Jerry weintraub	Nominated
	Worst director	William Friedkin	Nominated
	Worst script		Nominated
Satellite Award	Best Classic DVD		Nominated
Stinkers Bad Movie Award	Most intrusive musical score	Jack Nitzsche	Nominated

Legacy

Mapplethorpe

Robert Mapplethorpe's initial interest in the black male form was inspired (in addition to movies like *Mandingo*) by the interrogation scene in *Cruising* , in which an unknown black character walks into the interrogation room and slaps the protagonist.^[37]

Domestic media

A deluxe collector's edition DVD, distributed by Warner Home Video, was released in 2007 and 2008. This release was not a director's cut, but included some scenes not seen in the original VHS release and additional visual effects added by Friedkin. . Friedkin made a director's comment track for the DVD. This version did not have a disclaimer at the beginning *stating* that *Cruising* represents a gay S&M subculture and is not representative of mainstream gay life. The DVD included two additional articles entitled "The History of Cruising" and "Exorcising Cruising", the latter about the controversy the film sparked during principal photography and after its release. The DVD is no longer available. Arrow released a special edition on Blu-ray with a restored copy of the film on August 20, 2019. It has similar additional features.^[38]

Inside. Leather bar.

In 2013, filmmakers James Franco and Travis Mathews released *Interior. Leather bar.* , a film in which they appear as filmmakers working on a film that reimagines and attempts to recreate the 40 minutes of lost and deleted footage from *Cruising* .^[39] (The period after "Interior" is a reference to the shooting script for *Cruising* , which describes an interior scene in such a bar).^[40] The film is not actually a recreation of the footage; instead, he uses a documentary format to explore the creative and ethical issues that arise from the process of trying to film such a project.^[39]

See also

- History of homosexuality in American cinema
- What Culture # 13: Cruise

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external links

- Navigating IMDb
- Browsing Rotten Tomatoes
- San Francisco Examiner "Lasting Images of" Cruising "by Bob Stephens (1995).
- Q Network Film Desk "Cruising" by James Kendrick.
- Cruise Ship: Reexamining Those Reviled by Drew Fitzpatrick (Digital Destruction).
- A New Stance on William Friedkin's Cruiser by Trenton Straube

