

Relative



Relative

A film by Michael Glover Smith

OFFICIAL WEBSITE

OFFICIAL STILLS

97 mins. / Comedy, Drama, Romance / United States / English / 2021

CONTACT

REGIONAL PUBLICITY & MARKETING REQUESTS

Elizabeth Arnott
earnott@musicboxfilms.com

BOOKING REQUESTS

Kyle Westphal
kwestphal@musicboxfilms.com

LOGLINE

As members of the Frank family return to their hometown of Chicago for a college graduation party, they find their bonds being tested and strengthened in surprising ways.

SYNOPSIS

David and Karen Frank are retirement-age progressive activists and parents who have lived in the same Victorian home on the north side of Chicago for 30 years. It's the house in which their four children grew up and where two of their children, adult sons Benji and Rod, still live. On the eve of Benji's graduation from college, daughters Evonne and Norma return home from out-of-state for a weekend celebration. Evonne brings her daughter, and newly separated wife; Norma arrives alone, with thoughts of wasted potential as she reconsiders her life; Rod, an unemployed burnout, pines for his ex who left years ago; and all Benji wants to do is escape the party to rendezvous with a free-spirited actress he met the night prior. As David and Karen announce the potential sale of their home, each member of the Frank family finds their bonds with the others being tested and strengthened in surprising ways. *RELATIVE* is a warm blend of comedy and drama about a modern American family.



FILMMAKER STATEMENT

I've always been skeptical of the phrase "dysfunctional family" since all families would seem dysfunctional if one were able to observe them closely enough. In creating RELATIVE, my goal was to contrive a scenario that would allow me to lift the veil on the complex bonds that exist between members of a modern American family -- showing the deep love and affection that exist between them on the one hand and the resentments and jealousies roiling just under the surface on the other. I also strove to capture the inherent sadness of how families evolve and ultimately "disintegrate" (to quote Fran Guinan's character) over time.

RELATIVE asks what it means to be a parent, a child, a brother, a sister. While my previous films dealt with romantic relationships between characters in their 20s and 30s, RELATIVE primarily examines parent-child relationships and sibling bonds across three generations of the same family. I strove to stretch myself as a writer/director by creating characters of diverse ages and trying to mine each of their lives for emotional and psychological truth. Thanks to the best ensemble cast with whom I have ever had the pleasure of working, I believe the end result shows, in a manner that I hope is universal and timeless, both the difficulties and rewards that come with being a relative.

Michael Glover Smith
Chicago, 2021



CAST

Karen Frank	Wendy Robie
David Frank	Francis Guinan
Benji Frank	Cameron Scott Roberts
Evonne Frank	Clare Cooney
Rod Frank	Keith D. Gallagher
Norma Frank	Emily Lape
Lucia Aguirre	Melissa DuPrey
Hekla	Elizabeth Stam

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Wendy Robie – Karen Frank

Wendy is best known for playing eccentric characters such as the ferocious, eyepatch-wearing Nadine Hurley in David Lynch's TWIN PEAKS (1990-1991) and TWIN PEAKS: THE RETURN (2017) and the villainous mother in Wes Craven's THE PEOPLE UNDER THE STAIRS (1991). She has also acted extensively on stage in Chicago (where she is a two-time Joseph Jefferson Award nominee) and around the world. Other film and television credits include STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE 9, QUANTUM LEAP, ONE DAY AT A TIME, and PARTY OF FIVE.

Francis Guinan – David Frank

Francis has been a Steppenwolf Theatre Ensemble member since 1979. He played Charlie Aiken in the first Chicago and Broadway productions of Tracy Letts' AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, and has worked steadily as a character actor in a plethora of films and television shows over the decades (including SAINT FRANCES, THE EXORCIST, HENRY GAMBLE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY, HANNIBAL, SPEED 2, and EERIE, INDIANA, where he played perhaps his best-known role as the patriarchal Edgar Teller).

Clare Cooney – Evonne Frank

Clare is an actress and filmmaker known for her critically acclaimed, award-winning short films PICK UP (2021) and RUNNER (2017). In addition to playing the role of the emotionally disturbed Evonne, Cooney also serves as producer and casting director on RELATIVE. She previously collaborated with Michael Glover Smith by acting in and casting his 2018 feature RENDEZVOUS IN CHICAGO and casting his 2017 feature MERCURY IN RETROGRADE. Other credits include Steve McQueen's WIDOWS, CHICAGO PD, and PopTV's HOT DATE.

Also Starring

Cameron Scott Roberts (THE WALKING DEAD) as Benji, Keith D. Gallagher (CHICAGO MED) as Rod, Emily Lape (MERCY'S GIRL) as Norma, Melissa DuPrey (GREY'S ANATOMY) as Lucia, Heather Chrisler (CHICAGO PD) as Sarah/Karma, Elizabeth Stam (BLEED AMERICAN) as Hekla, H.B. Ward (CHICAGO FIRE) as Uncle Joe, Cheryl Hamada (ABOUT SCHMIDT) as Aunt Stevie, Penelope Walker (OLYMPIA) as Dr. Bradley, and Gregory J. Fields (A HOUSE DIVIDED) as Chase.



CREW

Writer/Director	Michael Glover Smith
Producer	Aaron Wertheimer
Executive Producers	Brian & Jan Hieggelke
Editor	Eric Marsh
Director of Photography	Olivia Aquilina
Production Designer	Stephanie MacDonald
Music Supervisor	Cait Rappel

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Michael Glover Smith – Writer/Director

Michael wrote and directed the feature films COOL APOCALYPSE (2015), MERCURY IN RETROGRADE (2017) and RENDEZVOUS IN CHICAGO (2018), all of which won awards at festivals across the U.S. and were the subject of rave reviews. The Chicago Sun-Times' Richard Roeper wrote that "Smith has a deft touch for creating characters who look and sound like people we know" and RogerEbert.com's Matt Fagerholm called him "one of the Windy City's finest filmmakers." He was a recipient of the Gene Siskel Film Center's Star Filmmaker award in 2017 and made Newcity's "Film 50" lists in 2018 and 2020 as one of 50 individuals who "shape Chicago's film scene." He teaches film history at several colleges and is the author of FLICKERING EMPIRE (Columbia University Press, 2015), an acclaimed history of film production in Chicago during the silent era.

Aaron Wertheimer – Producer

Aaron is the writer-director of the offbeat comedy feature films WEDGERINO (2015) and SKIPPERS (2018), the latter of which he also produced, and which was named best feature at several festivals. He worked as a production coordinator on the television channel VICELAND, and as assistant director on Michael Angarano's directorial debut AVENUES (2017). As a freelance writer his clients include Disney, Amazon Studios, Universal Music Group, Stanford University, and Playtika, for whom he co-wrote the 2021 online game Slotostories: High Life Mystery. In 2011, he won the Chicago Headline Club's Peter Lisagor Award for Best Arts Reporting & Criticism for an essay on Henry Miller.

Brian & Jan Hiegelke – Executive Producers

Brian and Jan are the founders of Newcity, a media company launched in Chicago in 1986. In 2014, they formed the film production and boutique distribution company Chicago Film Project.

Their first film, SIGNATURE MOVE (2017), premiered at SXSW before playing over 150 festivals worldwide and racking up awards including the Grand Jury Prize for Best US Narrative Feature at Outfest. It holds a 100% rating on Rotten Tomatoes. Their second film, Jennifer Reeder's KNIVES AND SKIN (2019), world premiered at the Berlinale before playing top festivals including Tribeca, Deauville, Fantasia, Fantastic Fest, Chicago International and AFI. It is distributed in North America by IFC Midnight, and internationally by WTFilms. Hugh Schultz's DREAMING GRAND AVENUE (2020) is their third feature and RELATIVE is their fourth.

Eric Marsh – Editor

Eric is the editor of the feature films RENDEZVOUS IN CHICAGO (2018) and ORDERS (2017), the latter of which he also co-directed and produced. He also edited the short film I WISH YOU WOULD (2021), directed by Ryland Walker Knight and produced by Barry Jenkins, and several forthcoming shorts by Allison Torem. He is a professor at DePaul University's School of Cinematic Arts, where he teaches film editing and film theory.

Olivia Aquilina – Director of Photography

Olivia is a cinematographer based in Los Angeles. RELATIVE is her first feature film. She previously shot the short films PICK UP, ADULLAM, and MULATTO, and has shot commercial work for Nike, Squarespace, Gatorade, and Vice.

Stephanie MacDonald – Production Designer

Stephanie is a freelance filmmaker specializing in art and camera departments. She is the production designer on the short films SCUTLY (2019) and EMBLEM (2019), set dresser on the feature film 100 DAYS TO LIVE (2019), and worked in the camera department on RENDEZVOUS IN CHICAGO (2018).

Cait Rappel – Music Supervisor

Cait is a musician, film composer and music supervisor who has scored and supervised the feature film LOAN ME A DIME (2018), and numerous short films including VEILED TRACTATE (2019) and GOLDEN VOICES (2018).

ABOUT MUSIC BOX FILMS

Music Box Films is the prestigious North American distributor of acclaimed international, independent, and documentary feature films. Recent releases include *The Unknown Country*, Morrissa Maltz's SXSW road trip drama starring Lily Gladstone; Babak Jalali's affecting and wryly funny Sundance immigrant drama, *Fremont*; and Klaus Härö's timeless Irish drama, *My Sailor, My Love*. Upcoming releases include François Ozon's witty, feminist period romp, *The Crime Is Mine*; and in collaboration with Brainstorm Media, *Limbo*, Ivan Sen's stunning crime drama starring Simon Baker. Since its formation in 2007, Music Box Films has distributed award-winning films and art-house favorites that include Academy Award winner *Ida*, *Meru* (from Oscar-winning filmmakers Jimmy Chin and E. Chai Vaserhelyi), Christian Petzold's *Transit*, the popular Swedish comedy *A Man Called Ove*, and the original *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates the Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premier venue for independent and foreign films. For more information, visit www.musicboxfilms.com.

CONTACT

REGIONAL PUBLICITY & MARKETING REQUESTS

Elizabeth Arnott
earnott@musicboxfilms.com

BOOKING REQUESTS

Kyle Westphal
kwestphal@musicboxfilms.com