

Coming 2 America

Coming 2 America is a 2021 American romantic comedy film that serves as a sequel to the 1988 film *Coming to America* starring Eddie Murphy and directed by Craig Brewer, from a screenplay by Kenya Barris, Barry W. Blaustein, and David Sheffield, and a story by Blaustein, Sheffield, and Justin Kanew, based on characters created by Murphy.^[4] It co-stars an ensemble cast of Arsenio Hall, Jermaine Fowler, Leslie Jones, Tracy Morgan, KiKi Layne, Shari Headley, Teyana Taylor, Wesley Snipes, and James Earl Jones.^[5] *Coming 2 America* was the final film appearance of Louie Anderson before his death in 2022, reprising his role as Maurice from the first film.^[6]

Originally to be theatrically released by Paramount Pictures, the film's distribution rights were sold to Amazon Studios because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Amazon released it digitally via Amazon Prime Video on March 5, 2021.^[7] *Coming 2 America* received mixed reviews from critics. Like its predecessor, the film earned a nomination at the 94th Academy Awards for Best Makeup and Hairstyling.^[8]

Plot

On the 30th anniversary of his wedding with Lisa McDowell, Prince Akeem of Zamunda is summoned before his dying father King Jaffe Joffer. Jaffe and his witch doctor Baba reveal to Akeem that he had sired a bastard son during his first visit to Queens, New York, many years ago, after his aide and long-time friend Semmi had enticed two women into spending the night with them while Akeem was still searching for his future queen, resulting in a tryst he did not remember. As Zamundian tradition demands that only a male successor can inherit the throne, and Akeem has fathered only daughters, he is forced to find his son. Otherwise, Zamunda could face a hostile takeover by Zamunda's militaristic neighbor nation Nexdoria, whose dictator, General Izzi has been pushing for Akeem's eldest daughter Meeka to marry his foppish son, Idi.

Following King Jaffe's funeral and Akeem's ascension to the throne, he and Semmi return to Queens to find his illegitimate son, using a sketch Baba has provided. Reuniting with the barbershop gang they befriended with years earlier, head barber Mr. Clarence recognizes the picture as Lavelle Junson, a ticket scalper who hustles outside of Madison Square Garden. After an awkward

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Promotional release poster

Directed by	<u>Craig Brewer</u>
Screenplay by	<u>Barry W. Blaustein</u> <u>David Sheffield</u> <u>Kenya Barris</u>
Story by	<u>Barry W. Blaustein</u> <u>David Sheffield</u> <u>Justin Kanew</u>
Based on	Characters by <u>Eddie Murphy</u>
Produced by	<u>Kevin Misher</u> <u>Eddie Murphy</u> ^[1]
Starring	<u>Eddie Murphy</u> <u>Arsenio Hall</u> <u>Jermaine Fowler</u> <u>Leslie Jones</u> <u>Tracy Morgan</u> <u>KiKi Layne</u> <u>Shari Headley</u>

reunion with Lavelle's mother Mary, Akeem takes them back to Zamunda, much to his family's displeasure. When General Izzi learns of this, he introduces his daughter Bopoto to Lavelle as a last attempt at laying claim to the throne of Zamunda, but in order to qualify as a royal prince, Lavelle first has to pass a series of traditional tests.

Lavelle bonds with Mirembé, a royal groomer, who tells him of Akeem's quest to find his queen and encourages him to follow his own path. Lavelle then invites his uncle, Reem, to Zamunda, who coaches him on how to blend his urban upbringing with his new royal status. Lavelle gradually develops an understanding with Akeem's family, passes the tests, and is made Prince of Zamunda. However, at his ascension party, Lavelle overhears a conversation between Akeem and Izzi which makes him believe that Akeem is exploiting him, and he, Mirembé, Mary and Reem go back to New York. Lisa confronts Akeem about his conservatism, and after a pep talk from his father-in-law Cleo, Akeem flies back to the States, while Semmi is left to defend the kingdom from Izzi.

In Queens, Akeem finds that Lavelle and Mirembé are about to get married. Confronted by Lavelle and reminded of his own life story, he gives them his blessing and releases Lavelle from his marriage to Bopoto. When Mirembé expresses reluctance in cutting all of their ties to Zamunda, Akeem offers to fly Mary's family back for a proper wedding. In the meantime, Semmi and the princesses, all trained staff fighters, fight off and subdue Izzi and his soldiers when they invade the palace, forcing Izzi to try a more diplomatic approach.

Upon his return home, Akeem changes the royal succession by allowing his daughter Meeka to ascend to the throne upon his death, Lavelle is made an ambassador to the United States, and General Izzi has opened Nexdoria for a peaceful political and trading relationship with Zamunda. The film concludes with a grand party at the royal palace to celebrate Lavelle and Mirembé's marriage, including the barbers from Queens as special guests and a performance of the song "We Are Family" from Sexual Chocolate.

	<u>Teyana Taylor</u> <u>Wesley Snipes</u> <u>James Earl Jones</u> <u>Nomzamo Mbatha</u>
Cinematography	Joe Williams
Edited by	David S. Clark Billy Fox
Music by	Jermaine Stegall
Production companies	<u>Paramount Pictures</u> <u>New Republic Pictures</u> Eddie Murphy Productions Misher Films
Distributed by	<u>Amazon Studios</u>
Release date	March 5, 2021 (United States)
Running time	110 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$60 million ^{[2][3]}

Cast

- Eddie Murphy as:
 - Prince / King Akeem Joffer, the king of Zamunda.^[9]
 - Randy Watson, the lead vocalist of the soul band Sexual Chocolate.
 - Mr. Clarence, the local barber.
 - Saul, the Jewish barbershop customer.

- Arsenio Hall as:
 - Akeem's best friend and aide.
 - Reverend Brown, a pastor of the church.^[10]
 - Morris, Mr. Clarence's right hand barber.
 - Baba, a witch doctor.^[11]
 - Extremely Ugly Girl, she appears through archival footage.
- Jermaine Fowler as Lavelle Junson-Joffer, Akeem's long-lost and Mary's son^[12]
- Nomzamo Mbatha as Mirembe, a royal groomer and Lavelle's love interest^[13]
- Leslie Jones as Mary Junson, Lavelle's mother^{[14][15]}
- Tracy Morgan as Kareem "Uncle Reem" Junson, Lavelle's uncle and Mary's brother.^[16] He is referred to in the film as "Uncle Reem", and was Lavelle's father figure growing up.
- Clint Smith as Sweets, the barber.
- KiKi Layne as Princess Meeka IJoffer, Akeem's and Lisa's first daughter. She is ineligible to take over the throne of Zamunda since Zamundan law requires the nation's ruler to be male, and Akeem is reluctant to break with centuries of tradition.^[17]
- Shari Headley as Queen Lisa Joffer, Akeem's American-born wife with whom he fell in love in the first film.
- Wesley Snipes as General Izzi,^[18] Imani's older brother and leader of Nexdoria.^{[19][20]}
- Teyana Taylor as Bopoto Izzi, General Izzi's daughter.^[21]
- James Earl Jones as King Jaffe Joffer, Akeem's dying father and the King of Zamunda.
- Bella Murphy (Eddie Murphy's real daughter) as Princess Omma Joffer, Akeem's and Lisa's second daughter.^{[22][23]}
- Akiley Love as Princess Tinashe Joffer, Akeem's and Lisa's third daughter.^[24]
- Paul Bates as Oha, a longtime royal servant.^[25]
- John Amos as Cleo McDowell, Akeem's former employer and father-in-law and Lisa's father.
- Louie Anderson as Maurice, a longtime McDowell's employee, now the manager of the Zamunda McDowell's restaurant. This would be Anderson's final film role before his death in 2022^[26]
- Rotimi as Idi Izzi, General Izzi's son and the Prince of Nexdoria.^[27]
- Vanessa Bell Calloway as Imani Izzi, General Izzi's younger sister and Akeem's former intended bride.
- Luenell as Livia, Lavelle's aunt.
- Michael Blackson and Rick Ross as Nexdorian Lieutenant and Commander.
- Garcelle Beauvais as Grace, a royal rose bearer.
- Trevor Noah as Totatsi Bibinyana, a news anchor for Zamunda News Network.
- Colin Jost as Mr. Duke, a descendant of the Duke Brothers from the 1983 film *Trading Places* who now runs their rebuilt business of Duke & Duke Commodity Brokers.^[28]

Additionally, Morgan Freeman, Dikembe Mutombo, En Vogue, Salt-N-Pepa, Gladys Knight, David, and John Legend cameo as themselves.

Production

Development

In January 2017, an announcement was publicized which addressed the impending production of a sequel to the original film, *Coming to America*. Kevin Misher was named as producer, and David Sheffield and Barry W. Blaustein, the original screenwriters, were also attached to the project. However, the possible participation of lead actors Eddie Murphy and Arsenio Hall was left undefined.^[29]

Casting

On January 11, 2019 it was announced that the sequel would be moving forward with Murphy reprising his role, with Craig Brewer as director (having previously worked with Murphy on the Netflix film *Dolemite Is My Name*).^[30] Arsenio Hall, John Amos, Paul Bates, and James Earl Jones were expected to return for the sequel as well.^[25] Wesley Snipes signed on for a role in the film, later revealed to be General Izzi, the son of Colonel Izzi and older brother of Imani from the first film. Leslie Jones and rapper Rick Ross also joined the cast in undisclosed roles.^{[31][32][33]}

On June 18, 2019, Jermaine Fowler was cast in the film in a starring role.^[34] On August 12, 2019, it was confirmed that Shari Headley would reprise her role as Lisa McDowell.^[35] On August 21, 2019, Nomzamo Mbatha,^[36] Tracy Morgan, KiKi Layne, Luenell, Rotimi, Teyana Taylor, and Michael Blackson were added to the cast, alongside returning actors Louie Anderson, Vanessa Bell Calloway, and Garcelle Beauvais.^{[27][37]} Madge Sinclair, who played Akeem's mother Queen Aoleon in the original film, had died in 1995; her character was not recast but is featured in archive footage. In September 2019, David was cast in a cameo role in the film.^{[38][39][40]}

In October 2019, Samuel L. Jackson, who briefly appeared in the original film, was confirmed to not be reprising his role in the sequel due to scheduling conflicts.^[41] Murphy said that if Jackson had been available for the cameo, his character would be again featured robbing the McDowells restaurant.^[42] In December 2019, Morgan Freeman and Bella Murphy were cast in undisclosed roles.^{[22][43]} In October 2019, Eriq La Salle stated that he will not reprise his role of Darryl Jenks from the original film due to scheduling conflicts.^[44] In February 2021, Murphy stated that if the character of Darryl Jenks had returned, there could have been a romance with Patrice McDowell (portrayed by Allison Dean) due to the events at the end of the original film.^[45]

Filming

Principal photography began on August 17, 2019, in Atlanta, Georgia, with Joe Williams serving as cinematographer.^{[46][47]} Rick Ross confirmed during the same month that his Georgia mansion would be used as a location in the film.^[48] On October 1, 2019, in an interview with Collider, Murphy confirmed that production on *Beverly Hills Cop IV* would commence after the filming of *Coming 2 America* has wrapped.^[49] Filming officially wrapped on November 9, 2019.^[50] Due to his age, James Earl Jones did not travel to the set or film his scenes with Murphy.^[51]

Music

The film's soundtrack was released through [Def Jam Recordings](#) on March 5, 2021.^[52] In February 2021, [Bobby Sessions](#) and [Megan Thee Stallion](#) released "I'm a King" as its lead single.^[53] The soundtrack also features other songs by various artists, including [Big Sean](#), [John Legend](#), [Teyana Taylor](#), [YG](#), [Davido](#), [Gladys Knight](#), [Burna Boy](#), and [Salt-N-Pepa](#).^[54]

Release

Streaming

Coming 2 America was released by [Amazon Prime Video](#) on March 5, 2021, one day earlier than was announced.^[7] The film was initially scheduled to be theatrically released by [Paramount Pictures](#) on August 7, 2020,^[55] but was pushed back to December 18, 2020, before the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) began.^{[56][57][58]} On November 20, 2020, [Amazon Studios](#) acquired the distribution rights to the film for \$125 million.^[1]

Following its release, Amazon claimed the film had the best opening weekend of any streaming film since March 2020.^[59] [Nielsen](#) later reported that the film totaled 1.4 billion minutes-watched over its first week of release (equaling 1.27 million complete views of the film), the first time a Prime Original topped the company's charts.^[60]

Home media

The film was released on [Blu-ray](#) on March 8, 2022, by [Paramount Home Entertainment](#).

Reception

Critical response

On [review aggregator](#) [Rotten Tomatoes](#), the film holds an approval rating of 49% based on 249 reviews with an average rating of 5.4/10. The website's critics consensus reads, "Decades after its predecessor joked about the fine line between love and nausea, *Coming 2 America* reminds audiences that there's an equally fine line between sequel and retread."^[61] On [Metacritic](#), the film has a weighted average score of 52 out of 100 based on 47 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews".^[62]

Cassie Da Costa of [Vanity Fair](#) reviewed the film unfavourably, writing that it is "startling in its utter incompetence" and "uses half-baked internet-era discourse as a substitute for meaningful or even entertaining cultural commentary".^[63] Writing for [The Guardian](#), critic [Peter Bradshaw](#) stated that "the movie is as tired and middle-aged as Akeem [the leading character] himself".^[64] Peter Debruge of [Variety](#) said "For the most part, *Coming 2 America* falls back on familiar punchlines, serving up nearly word-for-word repeats of amusing bits from the original, but they don't necessarily play the same in this context."^[65]

Melanie McFarland of [Salon](#) gave the film a favorable review, writing that it "honors its predecessor" and overcomes some of the original film's datedness, by utilizing "more equitable comedy that skewers outdated patriarchal traditions."^[66] [Mick LaSalle](#) of the [San Francisco Chronicle](#) praised Eddie Murphy's performance, saying, "When he brings his dramatic capacities to comic roles, he's really at his best and most

original. It's strange, these movies that create a warm feeling. It's hard to say why or how it feels like the summation of the three decades of virtuosic silliness that Murphy has brought to the screen, and of all that has meant to us."^[67]

The film garnered controversy due to a scene that depicted a date rape towards an unconscious male in a humorous fashion with many viewers taking to Twitter to protest it.^[68]

Accolades

Award	Date of ceremony	Category	Recipients	Result	Ref.
<u>Academy Awards</u>	<u>March 27, 2022</u>	<u>Best Makeup and Hairstyling</u>	<u>Mike Marino, Stacey Morris, and Carla Farmer</u>	Nominated	^[8]

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