

# Silk Road (film)

***Silk Road*** is a 2021 American crime thriller film, written for the screen and directed by Tiller Russell based on the *Rolling Stone* article "Dead End on Silk Road: Internet Crime Kingpin Ross Ulbricht's Big Fall" by David Kushner.<sup>[2]</sup> The film stars Jason Clarke, Nick Robinson, Alexandra Shipp, Jimmi Simpson, Paul Walter Hauser, Darrell Britt-Gibson, and Will Ropp. It is based on the true story of Ross Ulbricht who develops a website on the darknet, an act which attracts the attention of the FBI and DEA who send in federal agent Richard "Rick" Bowden, a fictional composite of real life DEA Agent Carl Force and US Secret Service Special Agent Shaun Bridges, both of whom were convicted of felonies related to theft of assets in the investigation of Ulbricht, to bring down Ross' empire.

*Silk Road* was released in the United States on February 19, 2021 by Lionsgate.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Plot

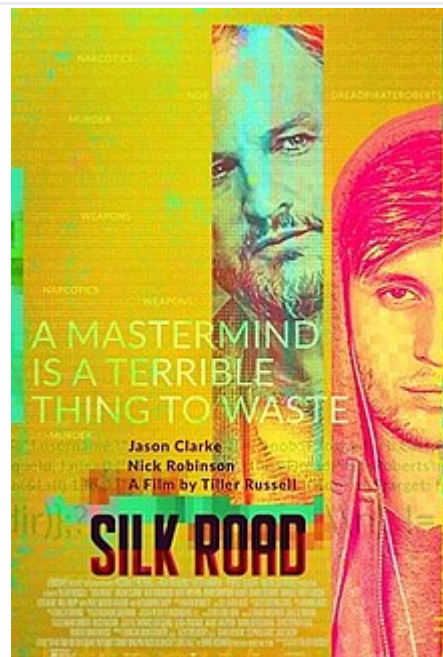
The film begins with Ross Ulbricht's arrest in San Francisco in 2013. It then delves into Ross's background, portraying him as a well-educated aspiring entrepreneur living in Austin, Texas. Ross comes up with the idea for Silk Road as a way to challenge government control and regulations, believing in the idea of taking back liberty. He starts the website to allow anonymous buying and selling of illegal goods.

The movie introduces Ross Ulbricht, a charismatic and tech-savvy young man who creates the Silk Road, an underground website that facilitates the sale of illegal drugs and other contraband using cryptocurrencies. Ulbricht adopts the alias "Dread Pirate Roberts" to operate the site anonymously.

Ross meets Julia, a student who becomes his lover and partner in crime. As Silk Road gains popularity, Ross makes millions by facilitating the sale of illegal items such as drugs, weapons, and identity information. However, when a Gawker article about Silk Road brings unwanted attention, law enforcement begins investigating the darknet marketplace.

DEA agent Rick Bowden, who has been reassigned to the cybercrimes unit after rehab, is tasked with investigating Silk Road. He enlists an informant to teach him about darknet

### Silk Road



Theatrical release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	Tiller Russell
<b>Written by</b>	Tiller Russell
<b>Based on</b>	"Dead End on Silk Road" by <u>David Kushner</u>
<b>Produced by</b>	<u>Christopher Figg</u> Alex Orlovsky Robert Whitehouse Elika Portnoy Jack Selby Duncan Montgomery David Hyman Dawn Bierschwal Stephen Gans
<b>Starring</b>	<u>Jason Clarke</u> <u>Nick Robinson</u> <u>Will Ropp</u> <u>Alexandra Shipp</u>

activities, leading to clashes with fellow agents and strains in his personal life.

As Silk Road thrives, Ross becomes increasingly isolated from Julia and his friend Max, who express concerns about his illegal activities. Ross, operating under the alias Dread Pirate Roberts, becomes a sensation on Silk Road and engages in various interactions with sellers and buyers on the website, all while maintaining a sense of invincibility.

DEA agents, including Rick, work tirelessly to track down the owner of Silk Road, leading to a sting operation orchestrated by Rick. The film portrays Ross's eventual arrest and the dismantling of Silk Road.

Throughout the movie, the personal struggles of both Ross and Rick are depicted, shedding light on their motivations and challenges. Ross's arrest has a profound impact on his relationships and the lives of those affected by Silk Road. The film touches on themes of hubris, greed, and the clash between individual freedom and law enforcement. It also explores the complexities of Ross's character and the blurred lines between the moralities of the law and the actions of its enforcers.

As the Silk Road gains notoriety, law enforcement agencies become determined to shut it down. Rick Bowden, a DEA agent, takes on the case and begins investigating Ulbricht. Bowden is portrayed as a dedicated law enforcement officer who is intent on bringing down Silk Road and its elusive operator.

Ross Ulbricht continues to manage Silk Road, amassing a substantial fortune through the illicit marketplace. He forms alliances and confronts threats from both law enforcement and rival criminals within the dark web.

In the end, Ross Ulbricht is arrested and faces the legal consequences of his actions, highlighting the significant impact of Silk Road on the world of online criminal enterprises and the ongoing debate about the boundaries of individual liberty and government intervention in the digital age.

The film reaches its climax when Ulbricht is finally apprehended by law enforcement, and his true identity is revealed. He is arrested and faces a lengthy trial for drug trafficking, money laundering, and other charges related to Silk Road. During the trial, Ulbricht's defense team argues that he was framed and that he is not the true Dread Pirate Roberts.

## Cast

- [Jason Clarke](#) as Richard "Rick" Bowden aka "Jurassic Narc"
- [Nick Robinson](#) as Ross Ulbricht
- [Alexandra Shipp](#) as Julia Vie
- [Jimmi Simpson](#) as Chris Tarbell
- [Paul Walter Hauser](#) as Curtis Clark Green

	<a href="#">Jimmi Simpson</a>
<b>Cinematography</b>	Peter Flinckenberg
<b>Edited by</b>	Greg O'Bryant
<b>Music by</b>	Mondo Boys
<b>Production companies</b>	Perfect Season Productions High Frequency Entertainment Piccadilly Pictures Mutressa Movies
<b>Distributed by</b>	<a href="#">Lionsgate</a>
<b>Release date</b>	February 19, 2021 (United States)
<b>Running time</b>	112 minutes <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$5.99 million
<b>Box office</b>	\$138,565

- Darrell Britt-Gibson as Rayford
- Katie Aselton as Sandy Bowden
- Lexi Rabe as Edie Bowden
- Daniel David Stewart as Max
- Will Ropp as Shields
- Jennifer Yun as FBI Agent Kim Yum
- David DeLao as Johnny Marales
- Raleigh Cain as Callie

## Production

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In January 2019, it was announced Jason Clarke and Nick Robinson had joined the cast of the film, with Tiller Russell directing from a screenplay he wrote.<sup>[4]</sup> In May 2019, Cole Sprouse, Darrell Britt-Gibson and Jimmi Simpson joined the cast of the film.<sup>[5]</sup> In June 2019, Paul Walter Hauser, Katie Aselton and Lexi Rabe joined the cast of the film.<sup>[6]</sup> That same month, Daniel David Stewart joined the cast of the film, replacing Sprouse.<sup>[7]</sup>

Principal photography began in June 2019 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.<sup>[8][9]</sup>

## Release

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It was scheduled to have its world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival on April 16, 2020.<sup>[10]</sup> However, the festival was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>[11]</sup> In December 2020, Lionsgate acquired U.S. distribution rights to the film, and set it for a February 19, 2021, release.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Reception

Review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes gives the film a 52% approval rating based on 64 reviews, with an average rating of 5.60/10. The website's critics consensus reads: "*Silk Road* draws intriguing parallels between its oppositional main characters, but doesn't do quite enough to develop the story surrounding them."<sup>[13]</sup> According to Metacritic, which sampled 11 critics and calculated a weighted average score of 41 out of 100, the film received "mixed or average reviews".<sup>[14]</sup>

## See also

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- *Deep Web* (film)
- Ross Ulbricht

## References

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## External links

- *Silk Road* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7937254/>) at *IMDb*

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