

I.S.S. is a 2023 American science fiction thriller film directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite and written by Nick Shafir. The film stars Ariana DeBose, Chris Messina, John Gallagher Jr., Masha Mashkova, Costa Ronin, and Pilou Asbæk.

I.S.S. premiered at the 2023 Tribeca Film Festival, and was theatrically released in the United States on January 19, 2024, by Bleecker Street.

Plot

NASA astronaut and former Marine Kira Foster travels with fellow American astronaut Christian Campbell to the International Space Station (ISS). Once there, they greet their teammates: fellow American astronaut Commander Gordon Barrett, and Russian cosmonauts Weronika Vetrov and brothers Nicholai and Alexey Pulov. Despite the language barrier and cultural differences, the Americans and Russians get along well, with Gordon and Weronika having formed a romance. Kira views Earth from the space station for the first time with her coworkers, who explain the overview effect to her.

Later, while working, she notices numerous massive nuclear explosions across the United States, down below on Earth. Communications aboard the station fail, but Gordon receives a message from the U.S. government indicating that the Russian military has initiated a nuclear attack on the U.S. and ordering him to take control of the ISS "by any means necessary." He discusses the message with Kira and Christian; they suspect the Russians were given a similar order from their government. They also find the station is orbiting too low and in danger of falling towards Earth's surface if aid does not arrive within 24 hours.

After the Americans get their mission, Nicholai tells the crew that an antenna outside the station is broken, requiring Gordon to don an EVA space suit to fix it. Gordon and Kira stay in contact via comms and, while outside, Gordon sees the U.S. destroyed and in flames. He tells Kira to keep the crew away from the windows, so they won't see this. During the operation, under Nicholai's orders, Alexey clips a wire, cutting off communication between Gordon and Kira, inside the station. Alexey replaces it with a

I.S.S.



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	<u>Gabriela Cowperthwaite</u>
Written by	Nick Shafir
Produced by	<u>Mickey Liddell</u> Pete Shilaimon
Starring	<u>Ariana DeBose</u> <u>Chris Messina</u> <u>John Gallagher Jr.</u> <u>Masha Mashkova</u> <u>Costa Ronin</u> <u>Pilou Asbæk</u>
Cinematography	<u>Nick Remy Matthews</u>
Edited by	Colin Patton Richard Mettler
Music by	Anne Nikitin
Production company	<u>LD Entertainment</u>

fake wire, to hide his sabotage. Unbeknownst to Alexey and Weronika, Nicholai pilots the station's arm to knock Gordon off the station, seemingly to his death.

Enraged and disgusted with her teammates for murdering her lover, an innocent man, Weronika goes to Kira and devises a plan to trade her Russian key with Kira's American key. The Russian key would unlock the Russian locker where Alexey's research was stored. Weronika explains that Alexey's research could cure radiation sickness, and if either government seizes the space station, that world power will control who lives and who dies in the nuclear war. Weronika insists Kira is the only one she trusts and instructs Kira to take the research, board a Soyuz spacecraft, and return to Earth, leaving the remaining crew to wait for potential aid. Weronika creates a distraction by threatening Alexey and Nicholai with blowing up the station.

Distributed by	<u>Bleecker Street</u>
Release dates	June 12, 2023 (Tribeca) January 19, 2024 (United States)
Running time	96 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$13.8 million ^[2]
Box office	\$6.6 million ^{[3][4]}

In the meantime, Kira rummages through the Russian lockers, asking Christian to help locate "Node Zero", which Christian says does not exist, leading Kira to conclude Weronika lied to her. Kira and Christian go find their Russian coworkers, and Christian strikes Weronika in the back of the head with a pressurized tank, killing her. After laying Weronika to rest, Nicholai asks Alexey to help him kill the Americans. Alexey refuses, so Nicholai grabs a screwdriver and attempts to do it himself. While Kira and Christian hide in a storage room, Alexey realizes Gordon is still alive and hanging on to the side of the ISS. Alexey uses the arm to bring Gordon back into the station, then helps Kira hide from Nicholai.

Gordon returns and, learning that Weronika was killed, traps Nicholai and attacks him with a drill, while the others try to stop them. Nicholai takes the drill from Gordon and stabs him with it, while Gordon pulls out Nicholai's screwdriver and stabs him, and they both die. After the incident, Kira notices "NODE0" written over a Japanese name above a door, revealing Weronika was not lying after all, and goes to find Christian in his sleep pod. There she finds a Soyuz suit and the Russian research, revealing Christian was attempting to return to Earth alone. Meanwhile, Christian quietly sabotages the station's life support system and tries to frame Kira by telling Alexey about Weronika's plan to have Kira take Alexey's research and abandon them.

Christian tries to attack Kira and Alexey, but they fight back and strangle him to death with the strap of the miniature Soyuz-U that Christian gave Kira as a welcome gift. Alexey suffers a stab wound on his hand during the fight. Kira and Alexey restore the life support system and the communication system finally reactivates, allowing the station to stabilize, and messages from both governments come through asking for confirmation that the astronauts have completed their respective missions to take control of the station. Rather than respond or comply with either governments' orders, they board a Soyuz spacecraft with Alexey's research aboard and plummet to Earth in an uncontrolled free-fall. When Alexey asks where they are going, Kira responds "I don't know".

Cast

- Ariana DeBose as Dr. Kira Foster, an American astronaut
- Chris Messina as Gordon Barrett, an American astronaut
- John Gallagher Jr. as Christian Campbell, an American astronaut
- Masha Mashkova as Weronika Vetrov, a Russian cosmonaut

- Costa Ronin as Nicholai Pulov, a Russian cosmonaut
- Pilou Asbæk as Alexey Pulov, a Russian cosmonaut

Production

In December 2020, Nick Shafir's screenplay *I.S.S.* was included on that year's "Black List" of most-liked unproduced screenplays.^[5] In January 2021, it was announced that the film had been greenlit for production by LD Entertainment with Cowperthwaite directing. Chris Messina and Pilou Asbæk were reported to star in the film.^[6] In February, it was reported that Ariana DeBose had also joined the cast.^[7]

I.S.S. began filming at Screen Gems Studios in Wilmington, North Carolina, in February 2021.^{[8][9]}

Release

The world premiere of *I.S.S.* was held at the Tribeca Film Festival on June 12, 2023.^{[10][11]} In August 2023, Bleecker Street acquired the United States distribution rights.^[11] The film was theatrically released on January 19, 2024.^[12]

Reception

Box office

The film made \$1.2 million from 2,520 theaters on its first day. It went on to debut to \$3 million, finishing seventh at the box office.^[13]

Critical response

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 62% of 148 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 6.1/10. The website's consensus reads: "Elevated by an appealing cast, *I.S.S.* wrings effective albeit familiar thrills out of character-driven drama in a claustrophobic setting."^[14] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 53 out of 100, based on 32 critics, indicating "mixed or average" reviews.^[15] Audiences polled by CinemaScore gave the film an average grade of "C−" on an A+ to F scale, while those polled by PostTrak gave it an 49% overall positive score, with 27% saying they would definitely recommend the film.^[13]

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External links

- Official website (<https://bleeckerstreetmedia.com/i-s-s>)
 - *I.S.S.* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13655120/>) at IMDb
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