

= The Interview ( 2014 film ) =

The Interview is a 2014 American political satire comedy film directed by Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg . It is their second directorial work , following This Is the End ( 2013 ) . The screenplay is by Dan Sterling , based upon a story he co - authored with Rogen and Goldberg . The film stars Rogen and James Franco as journalists who set up an interview with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ( Randall Park ) , and are recruited by the CIA to assassinate him .

Rogen and Goldberg developed the idea for The Interview in the late 2000s , with Kim Jong Un as the original assassination target . In 2011 , after Jong Un 's death , Jong Un replaced him as the North Korean leader . Rogen and Goldberg re - developed the script with the focus on Jong Un 's character . The announcement for the film was made in March 2013 , along with the beginning of pre - production . Principal photography took place in Vancouver from October to December 2013 .

In June 2014 , the North Korean government threatened action against the United States if Columbia Pictures released the film . Columbia delayed the release from October to December , and reportedly re - edited the film to make it more acceptable to North Korea . In November , the computer systems of parent company Sony Pictures Entertainment were hacked by the " Guardians of Peace " , a group the FBI claims has ties to North Korea . The group also threatened terrorist attacks against cinemas that showed the film . Major cinema chains opted not to release the film , leading Sony to release it for online rental and purchase on December 24 , 2014 , followed by a limited release at select cinemas the next day .

The Interview grossed \$ 40 million in digital rentals , making it Sony 's most successful digital release , and earned an additional \$ 11 . 2 million worldwide at the box office on a \$ 44 million budget . It received mixed reviews for its humor and subject matter , although critics praised the performances of Rogen , Franco , Park and Diana Bang .

= = Plot = =

Dave Skylark , host of the talk show Skylark Tonight , interviews celebrities about personal topics and gossip . After Dave and his crew celebrate their 1,000th episode , Aaron Rapaport , the show 's producer , is upset by a person from the same business , criticizing Skylark Tonight as not being a real news program as it only covers entertainment and gossips . A while later Aaron reveals his concern and urge for change , which Dave agrees . Dave discovers that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is a fan of Skylark Tonight , prompting Aaron to arrange an interview . Aaron travels to rural China to receive instructions from Sook Yin Park , the North Korean chief propagandist , and Aaron accepts the task of interviewing Kim , on behalf of Dave .

The next day , CIA Agent Lacey shows up at Dave and Aaron 's place , proposing that Dave and Aaron assassinate Kim using a transdermal strip that will expose Kim to ricin via handshake ; they reluctantly agree . Dave carries the Ricin Strip hidden inside a pack of gum . Upon their arrival in the presidential palace in Pyongyang , they are introduced to security officers Koh and Yu ; Koh discovers the ricin strip and chews it , believing it to be gum . Lacey airdrops two more strips from a UAV and Aaron smuggles them into the palace by hiding the container in his rectum , escaping a Siberian tiger in the process .

Dave spends the day with Kim , playing basketball and partying . Kim persuades Dave that he is misunderstood as a cruel dictator and as a failed administrator , and they become friends . At dinner , Koh has a seizure and inadvertently kills Yu before dying . The next morning , Dave feels guilty and discards one of the ricin strips , then thwarts Aaron 's attempt to poison Kim with the second strip . After a dinner mourning the death of Kim 's bodyguards , Dave witnesses Kim 's malicious side ; and after taking a walk and discovering that a nearby grocery store is merely a façade , Dave realizes that Kim has been lying to him .

At the same time , during attempted sex with Aaron , who still has the ricin band in his hand , Sook Yin reveals that she despises Kim and apologizes for defending the regime . Dave , Aaron , and Sook Yin form a plan to break Kim 's cult of personality by causing him to cry on air .

During the internationally televised interview with Kim , Dave addresses increasingly sensitive topics and challenges Kim 's need for his father 's approval . Despite his initial resistance , Kim eventually cries uncontrollably and soils himself after Dave sings " Firework " ( having learned of Kim 's fondness of Katy Perry earlier ) , ruining his reputation . Sook @-@ yin and Aaron seize control of the broadcasting center and fend off guards trying to halt the broadcast .

Kim shoots Dave , who survives due to a bulletproof vest under his shirt . Dave , Aaron , and Sook @-@ yin regroup and escape the presidential palace , hijacking Kim 's Soviet tank to get to their pickup point . Kim boards a helicopter and pursues the group with the military . He prepares nuclear missiles , but before he can issue the command to launch , Dave fires a shell from the tank and destroys Kim 's helicopter , killing everyone on board . With the immediate threat over , Sook guides Dave and Aaron to an escape route , and they are rescued by SEAL Team Six members disguised as Korean People 's Army troops . Back in the US , Dave writes a book about his experience , and North Korea moves toward becoming a denuclearized democracy with Sook @-@ yin as interim leader .

= = Cast = =

Seth Rogen as Aaron Rapaport

James Franco as Dave Skylark

Lizzy Caplan as Agent Lacey

Randall Park as Kim Jong @-@ un

Diana Bang as Sook @-@ yin Park

Timothy Simons as Malcolm

Reese Alexander as Agent Botwin

Anders Holm as Jake

James Yi as Officer Koh

Paul Bae as Officer Yu

Geoff Gustafson as Cole

Charles Rahi Chun as General Jong

The film also features cameos from Eminem , Rob Lowe , Bill Maher , Seth Meyers , Joseph Gordon @-@ Levitt , Ben Schwartz , Brian Williams , and Scott Pelley . Iggy Azalea , Nicki Minaj , Emma Stone , Zac Efron , and Guy Fieri appear in the title graphic for Skylark Tonight .

In November 2014 , following a cyber @-@ attack that stole and leaked company information , it was revealed that Rogen and Franco were reported to have been paid \$ 8 @.@ 4 million and \$ 6 @.@ 5 million respectively from the \$ 44 million budgeted film . Hackers also revealed that Kevin Federline was paid \$ 5 @,@ 000 for a cameo appearance . According to documents , Jay @-@ Z and Beyoncé were reportedly paid \$ 10 @,@ 000 each to cameo , but do not appear in the film .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg developed the idea for The Interview in late 2000 , joking about what would happen if a journalist was required to assassinate a world leader . Initially , screenwriter Dan Sterling wrote his script based on a fake dictator from a fake country , but Rogen , Goldberg , and Sony executives asked him to rewrite the script focusing on Jong @-@ un . The screenplay was then titled Kill Kim Jong Un . They picked North Korea leader Kim Jong @-@ il , but put the project on hold until Jong @-@ il died and his son Kim Jong @-@ un assumed power in 2011 . Development resumed when Rogen and Goldberg realized that Jong @-@ un is closer to their own age , which they felt would be more humorous . To write the story , co @-@ written with Daily Show writer Dan Sterling , they researched meticulously by reading non @-@ fiction books and watching video footage about North Korea . The script was later reviewed by an employee in the State

Department . Rogen and Goldberg aimed to make the project more relevant and satirical than their previous films while retaining toilet humor . They were pleased when former NBA star Dennis Rodman visited North Korea , as it reinforced their belief that the premise of the film was realistic .

= = = Pre @-@ production = = =

In March 2013 , it was announced that Rogen and Goldberg would direct a comedy film for Columbia Pictures in which Rogen would star alongside James Franco , with Franco playing a talk @-@ show host and Rogen playing his producer . Rogen and Goldberg were on board to produce along with James Weaver through Point Grey Pictures , while Columbia was said to finance the \$ 30 million budgeted film . Lizzy Caplan joined the film 's cast in October 2013 . Caplan signed on to play Agent Lacey , a CIA agent who tries to get Franco 's character to assassinate the Korean prime minister . Randall Park and Timothy Simons signed on to co @-@ star later that month . Park plays the North Korean prime minister Kim Jong @-@ Un and Simons the director of the talk show . Park was the first to audition for the role of Kim and got the part immediately . Before filming began , Park gained 15 pounds and shaved his head to resemble Jong @-@ un 's crew cut . His role was praised by critics . Although Rogen and Goldberg wrote the character of Kim as " robotic and strict " , Park instead played it " sheepish and shy " , which they found more humorous . Diana Bang was cast as Sook @-@ yin Park , for which she was well received by critics .

= = = Filming = = =

Principal photography on the film began in Vancouver , British Columbia , on October 10 , 2013 , and concluded on December 20 , 2013 . There are hundreds of visual effects in the film ; a crowd scene at the Pyongyang airport , for example , was digitally manipulated with a shot from 22 Jump Street .

= = Pre @-@ release reaction = =

In June 2014 , The Guardian reported that the film had " touched a nerve " within the North Korean government , as they are " notoriously paranoid about perceived threats to their safety . " The Korean Central News Agency ( KCNA ) , the state news agency of North Korea , reported that their government promised " stern " and " merciless " retaliation if the film was released . KCNA said that the release of a film portraying the assassination of the North Korean leader would not be allowed and it would be considered the " most blatant act of terrorism and war . " The next month , North Korea 's United Nations ambassador Ja Song @-@ nam condemned the film , describing its production and distribution as " an act of war " and because of Kim 's assassination in the film , " the most undisguised sponsoring of terrorism " . The Guardian described Song @-@ nam 's comments as " perfect publicity for the movie . " Later in July , KCNA wrote to U.S. President Barack Obama , asking to have the film pulled . Shortly before the planned release of the film on December 25 , 2014 , screenwriter Dan Sterling told Creative Screenwriting : " I couldn 't believe that the most infamous man in the world knew about my script ? but most importantly , I would never want something I wrote to lead to some kind of humanitarian disaster . I would be horrified if anyone got hurt over this . "

= = Release = =

= = = Delay and changes = = =

In August 2014 , Sony delayed the film 's release from October 10 to December 25 , 2014 . Sony made post @-@ production alterations to the film to modify its portrayal of North Korea , including modifying the designs of buttons worn by characters , originally modeled after real North Korean

military buttons praising the country 's leaders , and cutting a portion of Kim Jong @-@ un 's death scene .

= = = Sony Pictures Entertainment hack and threats = = =

On November 24 , 2014 , an anonymous group identifying themselves as the " Guardians of Peace " hacked the computer networks of Columbia Pictures ' parent company Sony Pictures Entertainment . The hackers leaked internal emails , employee records and several recent and unreleased Sony Pictures films , including Annie , Mr. Turner , Still Alice , and To Write Love on Her Arms . The North Korean government denied involvement in the hack . On December 8 , the hackers leaked further materials , including a demand that Sony pull " the movie of terrorism " , widely interpreted as referring to The Interview .

On December 16 , 2014 , the hackers issued a warning to movie @-@ goers , threatening to attack the New York premiere of The Interview and any other cinema showing it on its theatrical release . Two further messages , allegedly from the Guardians of Peace , were released on December 18 . One , sent in a private message to Sony executives , said that the hackers would not release further information if Sony never releases the film and removed its presence from the internet . The other , posted to Pastebin , a web application used for text storage which the Guardians of Peace had used for previous messages , stated that Sony had " suffered enough " and could release The Interview , but only if Kim Jong @-@ un 's death scene was not " too happy " . The message also threatened that if Sony made another film antagonizing North Korea , the hackers " will be here ready to fight " .

= = = Distribution = = =

Rogen predicted that the film would make its way to North Korea , stating that " we were told one of the reasons they 're so against the movie is that they 're afraid it 'll actually get into North Korea . They do have bootlegs and stuff . Maybe the tapes will make their way to North Korea and cause a revolution . " Business Insider reported via Free North Korea Radio that there was high demand for bootleg copies of the film in North Korea . The South Korean human rights organizations Fighters for a Free North Korea and Human Rights Foundation , largely made up of North Korean defectors , planned to distribute DVD copies of The Interview via balloon drops . The groups had previously air @-@ dropped offline copies of the Korean Wikipedia into North Korea on a bootable USB memory device . The balloon drop was postponed after the North Korean government referred to the plan as a de facto " declaration of war . "

On December 10 , Sony Pictures Entertainment Japan announced that the film would not be released in Japan as live @-@ action comedy films do not often perform well in the market ; in the Asia @-@ Pacific region , the film would be released only in Australia and New Zealand .

= = = Cancellation of wide theatrical release = = =

The premiere was held in Los Angeles on December 11 , 2014 . The film scheduled a wide release in the UK and Ireland on February 6 , 2015 . Following the hackers ' threats on December 16 , Rogen and Franco canceled scheduled publicity appearances and Sony pulled all television advertising . The National Association of Theater Owners said that they would not object to cinema owners delaying the film to ensure the safety of movie @-@ goers . Shortly afterwards , the ArcLight and Carmike cinema chains announced that they would not screen the film .

On December 17 , Sony canceled the New York City premiere . Later that day , other major theater chains including AMC , Cinemark , Cineplex , Regal and Southern Theatres either delayed or canceled screenings of the film . The chains reportedly came under pressure from the malls where many theaters are located , which feared that the terror threat would harm their holiday sales . They also feared expensive lawsuits in the event of an attack ; Cinemark , for instance , contended that it could not have foreseen the 2012 Aurora shooting , which took place at one of its multiplexes , a defense that would not hold in the event of an attack at a screening of The Interview .

The cancellation affected other films portraying North Korea . An Alamo Drafthouse Cinema location in Dallas planned to hold a free screening of Team America : World Police , which satirizes Kim Jong @-@ un 's father Kim Jong @-@ il , in place of its previously scheduled screening of The Interview ; Paramount Pictures refused to permit the screening . New Regency pulled out of a planned film adaptation of the graphic novel Pyongyang starring Steve Carell ; Carell declared it a " sad day for creative expression " .

Sony received criticism for canceling the wide release . Guardian film critic Peter Bradshaw wrote that it was an " unprecedented defeat on American turf " , but that " North Korea will find that their bullying edict will haunt them . " In the Capital and Gizmodo suggested the cancellation caused a Streisand effect , whereby the attempt to remove or censor a work has the unintended consequence of publicizing it more widely . In a press conference , U.S. President Barack Obama said that though he was sympathetic to Sony 's need to protect employees , he thought Sony had " made a mistake . We cannot have a society in which some dictator in some place can start imposing censorship in the United States . I wish they 'd spoken to me first . I would have told them : do not get into the pattern in which you are intimidated . "

According to Sony Pictures Entertainment CEO Michael Lynton , the cancellation of the wide release was a response to the refusal of cinema chains to screen the film , not the hackers ' threats , and that Sony would seek other ways to distribute the film . Sony released a statement saying that the company " is and always has been strongly committed to the First Amendment ... Free expression should never be suppressed by threats and extortion . "

= = = Revised release = = =

After the wide release cancellation , Sony considered other ways to release the film , citing pressure from the film industry , theater owners , and the White House . On NBC 's Meet the Press on December 21 , Sony 's legal counsel David Boies noted that the company was still committed to releasing the movie . Sony planned a limited release for December 25 , 2014 , at more than three hundred American independent and arthouse cinemas . Lynton stated that Sony was trying to show the film to the largest audience by securing as many theaters as they could .

Sony released The Interview for rental or purchase in the United States through the streaming services Google Play , Xbox Video , and YouTube on December 24 , 2014 . It was also available for a limited time on SeeTheInterview.com , a website operated by the stealth startup Kernel.com , which Sony previously worked with to market The Fifth Wave . Within hours , The Interview spread to file sharing websites after a security hole allowed people to download rather than stream the movie . TorrentFreak estimated that The Interview had been downloaded illegally via torrents at least 1 @.@ 5 million times in just two days . On December 27 , the North Korean National Defence Commission released a statement accusing President Obama of forcing Sony to distribute the film . The film was released on iTunes on December 28 .

In the first week of January 2015 , Sony announced The Interview would receive a wide theatrical release in the United Kingdom and Ireland on February 6 , but it would not be distributed digitally in the UK . The film became available for streaming on Netflix on January 24 .

= = = Home media = = =

Sony released the film on Blu @-@ ray Disc and DVD on February 17 , 2015 . The home release was packaged as the " Freedom Edition " , and included 90 minutes of deleted scenes , behind @-@ the @-@ scenes featurettes , a blooper reel , feature commentary with directors Rogen and Goldberg , and a special episode of Naked and Afraid featuring Rogen and Franco . As of July 21 , 2015 , the film had earned over \$ 6 @.@ 7 million in sales in the US .

= = Reception = =

== Box office and online rentals ==

The Interview opened to a limited release in the United States on December 25, 2014, across 331 theaters and earned over \$ 1 million on its opening day. Variety called the opening gross "an impressive launch for a title playing in only about 300 independent theaters in the U.S." It went on to earn over \$ 1 @. @ 8 million in its opening weekend, and by the end of its run on January 25, 2015, had grossed \$ 6 @. @ 1 million at the box office.

Within four days of its online release on December 24, 2014, The Interview earned over \$ 15 million through online rentals and purchases. It became Sony Pictures' highest @-@ grossing online release, outselling Arbitrage ( \$ 14 million ), Bachelorette ( \$ 8 @. @ 2 million ), and Snowpiercer ( \$ 7 million ). It is the top @-@ selling Google Play and YouTube film of 2014. By January 20, 2015, the film had earned more than \$ 40 million from online sales and rentals.

Sony expected The Interview to break even through video @-@ on @-@ demand sales and saving millions of dollars on marketing. The National Association of Theater Owners contended that Sony would lose at least \$ 30 million due to poor box office performance.

== Critical response ==

On review aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes, the film holds a 52 % approval rating, based on 132 reviews, with an average rating of 5 @. @ 6 / 10. The site's consensus reads: "Unfortunately overshadowed by controversy ( and under @-@ screened as a result ), The Interview's screenplay offers middling laughs bolstered by its two likable leads." On Metacritic, the film has a score of 52 out of 100, based on 33 critics, indicating "mixed or average reviews".

IGN's Roth Cornet wrote that "though it's unlikely to stand out as one of the shrewdest political satires of its time, [ it ] is a clever, unrestrained and ? most importantly ? sidesplitting parody that pokes fun at both a vapid media and one of the world's most dangerous dictators." Edward Douglas of ComingSoon.net said the film was "hilarious, but it will probably get us nuked". Jordan Hoffman of The Guardian gave the film three out of five stars and wrote that "if this unessential but agreeable movie really triggered an international response, this is life reflecting art in a major way."

Scott Foundas of Variety panned the film as "cinematic waterboarding" and "about as funny as a communist food shortage, and just as protracted", but praised the performances of Randall Park and Diana Bang. Mike Hale of The New York Times also praised Park and Bang, but wrote that "after seeing The Interview and the ruckus its mere existence has caused, the only sensible reaction is amazement at the huge disconnect between the innocuousness of the film and the viciousness of the response."

== Political response ==

In the wake of the Sony Pictures Entertainment hack, leaks revealed e @-@ mails between Sony Pictures Entertainment CEO Michael Lynton and RAND Corporation defense analyst Bruce Bennett from June 2014. Bennett advised against toning down The Interview's graphic Jong @-@ un death scene, in the hope that it would "start some real thinking in South Korea and, I believe, in the North once the DVD leaks into the North". Bennett expressed his view that "the only resolution I can see to the North Korean nuclear and other threats is for the North Korean government to eventually go away", which he felt would be likeliest to occur following an assassination of Kim. Lynton replied that a senior figure in the United States Department of State agreed. Bennett responded that the office of Robert R. King, U.S. Special Envoy for North Korean Human Rights Issues, had determined that the North Korean statements had been "typical North Korean bullying, likely without follow @-@ up".

In an interview with CNN, Bennett said Lynton sits on the board of trustees of the RAND Corporation, which had asked Bennett to talk to Lynton and give his opinion on the film. Bennett felt The Interview was "coarse" and "over the top", but that "the depiction of Kim Jong @-@ un

was a picture that needed to get into North Korea . There are a lot of people in prison camps in North Korea who need to take advantage of a change of thinking in the north . " Bennett felt that if the DVD were smuggled into the country it might have an effect " over time " . Bennett contacted the Special Envoy for North Korean Human Rights Issues , a personal friend of his , who " took the standard government approach : we don 't tell industry what to do " . Jen Psaki , a spokesperson for the United States Department of State , confirmed that Daniel R. Russel , the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs , had spoken to Sony executives ; she reiterated that " entertainers are free to make movies of their choosing , and we are not involved in that " .