# [***Seoul Journal; The Power of Film: A Bond That Unites Koreans***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:47KD-PN60-01KN-20D4-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

In real life, President Bush wrestles with policies to force North Korea to stop selling missiles and making atom bombs.

On the big screen, at movie theaters here today, James Bond wrestled with a crazed North Korean colonel who was using a space-based laser to burn a massive hole in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea.

"The U.S. put North Korea in 'the axis of evil' and then the director merely followed the plot," said Kim So Won, a 19-year-old student taking a break from a New Year's Eve anti-American rally.

As her girlfriends nodded, she added, "We won't go see the movie."

The new 007 movie, "Die Another Day," opened here on New Year's Eve to a fledgling boycott. But reflecting the love-hate relationship with the United States -- the fact that James Bond is British is a fine point lost on many people here -- there were long lines of people waiting to see the film at the Seoul Theater.

Min Kyung Woo, a 28-year-old pacifist, lined up too, but on a picket line. "This is Hollywood's strategy toward Northeast Asia," said Mr. Min, who had not been converted by a pre-release showing of the movie intended by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to head off a boycott here.

"The movie industry is related to politics," he said.

Indeed, the boycott has been fueled by rising anti-American sentiment and the feeling among many here that North Koreans are replacing Colombians as Hollywood's current international bad guys.

"North Korean criminals in the movie are no different from Iraqi, Cuban or Russian terrorists, who easily commit mass murders in Hollywood action movies," the newspaper JoongAng Ilbo said in apparent surprise at the Bondian depiction of state-sponsored torture in North Korea, a nation that ranks high atop many "worst" lists compiled by international human rights groups.

While North and South Korea remain bitterly divided, judging by such reviews and those of some moviegoers here, the two sides have finally found common ground when confronting 007.

"I think there is plenty for Koreans to complain about in this movie," Doug E. Shin, a Korean-American pastor from Los Angeles, said as he walked in a jostling, and largely merry, flood of young South Koreans leaving a showing tonight. "Half the North Koreans were speaking with South Korean accents. That ox looked like it was from the Philippines. That shack at the end looked like it was from Japan."

"I guess the director didn't care," he continued. "But if the movie was about Japan, would they have treated the Japanese that way?"

A recurring complaint here is about a final scene where befuddled Korean farmers, goading an ox, look at luxury cars that James Bond has dropped, upended, in a rice paddy. While North Korean agriculture plods along on ox power, South Koreans say the only ox carts seen here are in museums.

The correct image of South Korea, people say, is a nation with among the world's highest rates of ***cellphone*** ownership, high-speed Internet access and college-educated youth.

Then there is a scene where an American officer orders a South Korea military mobilization, which prompted someone to write in an Internet chat room that "Korea in the movie is viewed as America's colony."

After watching the movie today, Kim Yu Min, a 24-year-old office worker, said, "My girlfriends said, 'At least James Bond doesn't go to bed with a Korean girl.' "

MGM, which distributes 20th Century Fox movies, has worked hard to try to smooth ruffled feathers here, a nation of 43 million people that is now the 10th-largest foreign box office territory for American movies.

Lee Joo Sung, president of 20th Century Fox Korea, told opinion makers at one showing here: "It's a movie. Not reality. Viewers must understand that it's fiction."

The movie, which stars Pierce Brosnan and Halle Berry and is already expected to be the most lucrative Bond movie yet, ran into early controversy when a South Korean actor, Cha In Pyo, turned down the bad-guy role, normally a coveted ticket to Hollywood stardom. He became a local hero last fall when he told reporters that the script was "demeaning."

Rick Yune, the Korean-American actor who stars as the movie's crazed North Korean officer, has found himself at news conferences here parrying hostile questions from reporters concerned about South Korea's image. In one burst of patriotism, Lee Jung Hyun, a pop singer, declined an invitation to appear alongside Mr. Yune on a popular talk show, "Happiness Channel."

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency has obligingly given MGM free publicity by playing true to character.

Two weeks before the release here and well before pirated copies could have made their way to reviewers in North Korea, the news agency denounced the film as a "dirty and cursed burlesque" that clearly proved that the United States was "the root cause of all disasters and misfortune of the Korean nation."

[*http://www.nytimes.com*](http://www.nytimes.com)

**Graphic**

Photos: Rick Yune, a Korean-American actor, plays a North Korean villain in the James Bond film "Die Another Day," now showing in South Korea. (Keith Hamshere/MGM); In Seoul, a protester's sign, left, says, "War on the Korean Peninsula -- what's the meaning of this? We're against the showing of this 007 film." (Jae Yun Seok for The New York Times)

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