



AP photo
A computer screen shows Sony Pictures' film "The Interview," available for rental on YouTube Movies.

How 'The Interview' changes the game

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES — Sony appears to have a win-win with “The Interview.” Not only did the studio score a moral victory by releasing the film in the face of hacker threats, the movie made at least \$15 million from more than 2 million digital rentals and purchases in its first four days.

On Friday, it seemed unlikely we’d ever know if the simultaneous — or “day and date” — strategy paid off. Now, it’s tempting to suggest this may be the start of a brave new world of distribution. Add in the \$2.8 million from “The Interview’s” limited theatrical release and things aren’t looking so bleak for the Seth Rogen-James Franco R-rated comedy.

But the story is far from over and many are divided about its outcome. For some, the impressive video-on-demand performance of “The Interview” is an anomaly. For others, it signals a revolution.

“It’s a huge number and it’s one that is probably making the other studios salivate,” said Jeff Bock, a senior box office analyst for Exhibitor Relations. “Now there is something to put on the bulletin board that says, ‘Yes, VOD is definitely a viable option.’”

But one might also post on the bulletin board that it’s standard industry practice not to release VOD figures. That’s why the public only hears about them when they’re good. For instance, 2011’s “Bridesmaids,” which had already been released theatrically, made \$24 million from VOD in four months, allowing Universal to declare it the most popular VOD release of all time. But how many VOD bombs have there been?

Also, if Sony hadn’t been hacked and this film wasn’t pushed to the center of a national conversation, it could have easily made \$20 million to \$25 million on opening weekend — not unlike “Pineapple Express,” a similarly raunchy R-rated comedy starring Rogen and Franco. This would have come far closer than VOD did to paying off “The Interview’s” \$40 million production budget and roughly \$10 million marketing cost.

Historically, the movies that have prospered with a simultaneous theatrical and VOD release have been the ones with the smaller budgets, destined for independent theater chains.

For example, J.C. Chandor’s Wall Street thriller “Margin Call,” a \$3.5 million movie that Lionsgate and Roadside Attractions acquired for \$1 million, was released in theaters and on demand in the fall of 2011 and picked up around \$5.4 million from theatrical and another \$5 million from VOD. Magnolia, IFC and Radius-TWC have all had similar success stories.

On the other hand, the major studios haven’t had the option to even test day-and-date strategies because it would jeopardize the 90-day release window required by big exhibitor chains. In 2011, Universal tried to release their Ben Stiller comedy “Tower Heist” on VOD for \$59.99 just three weeks after its theatrical opening, but theater owners balked and chains like Cinemark threatened to cancel their showings. Universal ended up scrapping the plan.

Sony, meanwhile, only started pursuing digital options after the major theater chains dropped the film following hacker threats to blow up theaters.

In addition, many exceptional conditions factored into “The Interview’s” first weekend. It became an unlikely event movie, and seeing “The Interview” was akin to asserting one’s freedom of speech.

Johnny Vinyl’s top 10 albums of 2014

This past year was not a great year for music.

Although it was out there, one just had to exert a bit more effort in seeking out quality audio entertainment. Post rock seems to offer the most hope for the future.

That said, here are my 10 most significant releases from 2014:

10. Opeth: “Pale Communion”

It’s beginning to get very difficult trying to distinguish Porcupine Tree from Opeth. Steve Wilson’s hands are all over both these days. Depending on what camp you’re in, this is either really good or really bad. For those death metal purists, the pummeling guitars and vocals from the crypt are long gone. This is truly progressive music and a pleasure to listen to.

9. Jack White: “Lazaretto”

All of his off-stage behaviors aside, Jack White can rock the socks off most people. “Lazaretto” is a great rock and roll album with a full band fleshing out Jack’s weirdness. He also gets the nod for what he’s done for the comeback of vinyl. “Lazaretto” vinyl edition has a hologram on the ending outer groove on side one; side one begins in the center and moves to the outer edge of the disc; there are songs under the labels on either side. All this under \$25.

8. Black Keys: “True Blue”

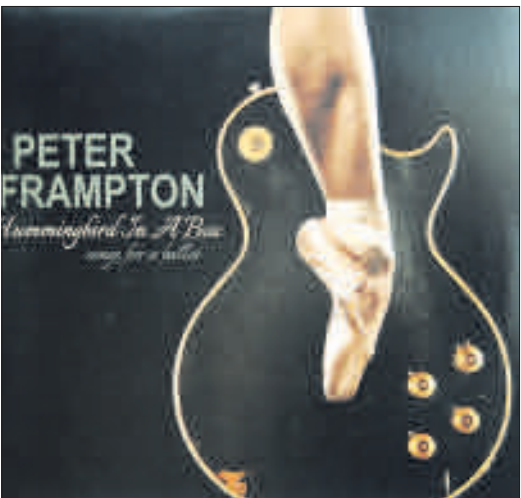
Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney have finally released the album they have threatened for years. Giving the duo groove a rest, these tunes are full-band recordings that finally let Dan and Patrick let it all hang out. And who knew Auerbach could solo that well?

7. The Nels Cline Singers: “Macroscopic”

Nels Cline is one of the most innovative guitarists living today. His recordings and collaborations are both mind-boggling and inspired. In 2004, he joined Jeff Tweedy’s Wilco. Much to everyone’s musical pleasure, Nels continues to



JOHNNY VINYL
Comment



Album graphic

Peter Frampton’s “Hummingbird in A Box” is Johnny Vinyl’s top pick for 2014.

record in his various bands. This year’s release from his instrumental free-jazz group, “Macroscopic” finds Cline relatively accessible in jazz-rock mode. There’s no one quite like Nels Cline.

6. Earth: “Primitive & Deadly”

The fifth release from Dylan Carson’s Earth is the finest yet. He continues to add to the drone/doom groove he mined prior to the almost decade-long hiatus. This time around there are vocals on half of the songs supplied by Mark Lanegan and Rabia Shaheen Qazi of Rose Windows. The drone element is there, but it’s surrounded by so much more this time around.

5. Boris: “Noise”

These folks from Japan certainly have the western concept of sarcasm down pat. On this, these noise-merchants’ 19th release, they are relatively noise-free. Yes, there is the trademark beautiful-brutality that Boris does so well. “Noise” finds them lightening up and having a good time, much to our benefit!

4. Spoon: “They Want My Soul”

This southern band has been releasing great music since the mid-’90s and few people know of them. Hopefully this release will be their calling card. Great tunes with clever instrumenta-

tion. Production by Dave Fridmann, the madman behind monumental recordings by Flaming Lips and Mercury Rev, adds a whole new dimension to their sound.

3. The New Pornographers: “Brill Bruisers”

The New Pornographers are one happy bunch if their new release “Brill Bruisers” is any indication. Named after the famed building in New York where the likes of Neil Diamond, Carole King and Leiber & Stoller wrote the hits that made 1960s popular music. You’ll be humming and singing along by the second or third listen. Repeat listens will become required.

2. SWANS: “To Be Kind”

The reunion that no one ever thought would happen, continues. “To Be Kind,” like 2012’s monumental “The Seer” before it, is a 2-hour plus, three LP release that does all of the things that SWANS do best. The 30-plus minute songs, pummeling guitars, primitive chants, industrial noise and tribal drums are present and accounted for. The only thing keeping it from the top spot — it’s still no match for “The Seer.”

1. Peter Frampton: “Hummingbird in a Box”

Peter Frampton is one of the most versatile and under-appreciated guitarists on the planet. In 2006, Frampton released “Fingerprints,” his first completely instrumental album, winning the 2007 Grammy for that category. This resulted in Frampton being approached by the Cincinnati Ballet to write several songs for them, which led to “Hummingbird in a Box.” Some of the best guitar music released anywhere recently, this is among the best guitar-based music of Peter Frampton’s career. The song “Friendly Fire” rivals anything he’s done by either Humble Pie or solo. The production quality is impeccable. The only drag about this release is that it’s merely an EP at 28 minutes. It will leave you wanting more.

■
Johnny Vinyl is a music connoisseur. His column, Ride the Vibe, focuses on entertainment. Contact him in c/o tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com

WHAT TO DO

Festivals

ZooLights

- Nov. 28-Jan. 4
- Sunday-Thursdays, 5-9 p.m.; Friday-Saturdays, 5-9:30 p.m.
- Oregon Zoo, Portland www.oregonzoo.org
- \$10/adults, \$9/seniors, \$7/ages 3-11. The Oregon Zoo winter festival features more than a million LED lights. The ZooLights train returns, offering visitors a ride through a never-before-seen light experience.

Art

First Saturday Spin-In

- Saturday, Jan. 3, noon-4 p.m.
- Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.
- Fiber obsessed folks can drop in and bring a project to work on. Coffee, tea and work space provided.
- “All Things Bright and Beautiful”
- Thursday, Jan 8; 4:30-6:30 p.m., opening reception
- Betty Feves Memorial Gallery, BMCC, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton.
- Free. Gallery hours are Monday-Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. or by appointment by calling 541-278-5952. The exhibit runs through Feb. 19.
- Art of War: The Historical Impact of Posters 1939-1945**
- Monday - Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Tamastslit Cultural Institute, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino. www.tamastslit.org

- \$10/adults, \$9/senior citizens, \$6/youths, free/5 and under or \$25/family of four. Jim Givan of Yakima began collecting war posters even before his lifelong career in the Marine Corps. Runs through Jan. 10.
- Heritage Station Museum**
- Tuesdays-Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- 108 S.W. Frazer Ave., Pendleton
- www.heritagemuseum.org
- \$5/adults, \$2/student, \$4/seniors, \$10/family.

Music

Tyler Brooks

- Saturday, Jan. 3; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover
- Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton
- Robbie Walden Band**
- Saturday, Jan. 3, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. No cover
- Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission
- Jared Pennington**
- Friday, Jan. 9; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover
- Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton
- Pop Rocks**
- Friday, Jan. 9; Saturday, Jan. 10, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. No cover
- Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.
- Dan Faller**
- Saturday, Jan. 10; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover
- Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton
- Dakota Brown Band**
- Friday, Jan. 16; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover

- Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton
- Beat Frequency**
- Friday, Jan. 16; Saturday, Jan. 17, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. No cover
- Wildhorse Sports Bar at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.
- Retro Ed**
- Saturday, Jan. 17; 9 p.m. to midnight. 21-and-over. No cover
- Hamley Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

Night life

Wednesday Night Live!

- Wednesdays, 8 p.m.
- Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off Highway 331, Mission.
- Dec. 31: New Year’s Eve Party
- Jan. 7: Karaoke
- Jan. 14: TBA
- Digital Karaoke**
- Thursdays and Saturdays, 8 p.m.
- The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston
- Wildhorse Thursday Night Football Party**
- Thursdays, 5-9 p.m.
- Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Casino & Resort, off Highway 331, Mission.
- Power 99.1 on hand to help hand out prizes. Also, enter for a chance to win Seahawks tickets.
- Mac’s Trivia Night**
- Thursdays, 8 p.m. No cover
- Mac’s Bar & Grill, 1400 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton
- 21 and older. Teams of 2-8 compete in trivia contest with other teams. Live host and prizes.

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- Wine tasting**
- Fridays, 4-8 p.m.
- Sno Road Winery, 111 W. Main St., Echo.
- Open Mic**
- First/Third Friday each month, 8 p.m. to midnight
- The Packard Tavern, 118 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton
- www.facebook.com/groups/pendletonopenmic
- Karaoke**
- Fridays 8 p.m. (9 p.m. if game on)
- Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla
- DJ and dancing**
- Fridays, 8 p.m.
- The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

Theater, stage & film

Dancing with Hermiston Stars

- Saturday, Jan. 10; 6:30 p.m.
- Hermiston High School, 600 S. First St.
- www.desertartscouncil.com
- \$35/adults, \$20/students; tickets purchased in advance are \$5 less. Six community members work with professional dancers with the Utah Ballroom Dance Company and will compete with money going to the charity of each dancer’s choice.
- “Girl’s Night: The Musical”**
- Friday, Jan. 16, 8 p.m.
- Toyota Center, Kennewick www.ticketmaster.com
- \$37-\$59.50. This touching and hilarious musical takes audiences on a journey into the lives of a group of female

- friends. Laugh, cry and even sing and dance in the aisles to some of the most popular songs of the ’80s and ’90s!
- “Memphis The Musical”**
- Tuesday, Feb. 3, 8 p.m.
- Toyota Center, Kennewick www.ticketmaster.com
- \$47-\$67. From the underground dance clubs of 1950s Memphis comes a musical that bursts off the stage with explosive dancing, irresistible songs and a thrilling tale of fame and forbidden love.

Hot tickets

- “Mama Mia.” Thursday, March 19, Toyota Center, Kennewick. Reserved seats on sale Jan. 23 (\$59.50-\$82) via www.ticketmaster.com.
- So You Think You Can Dance-Live Season 11 Tour. Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2015, Toyota Center, Kennewick. Reserved seats (\$50-\$65) via www.ticketmaster.com.
- Sasquatch Music Festival. Memorial Day weekend, Gorge Amphitheater, George, Wash. Reserved seats (\$325 and up for 4-day pass) via www.livenation.com.
- Foo Fighters. Saturday, Sept. 12, Gorge Amphitheater, George, Wash. Reserved seats (\$45-\$75) via www.livenation.com.

Want to get your event listed in our calendar? Send information to tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com, or c/o Tammy Magesini, 333 E. Main Street, Hermiston, OR, 97838.

With digital forces at the gate, down year for Hollywood

NEW YORK (AP) — Hollywood’s 2014 may well go down as a mere box-office blip, or it could be Act One in a drama of coming digital disruption.

When the year’s final receipts are tallied at the end of Wednesday, the final take is estimated by box-office firm Rentrak to be about \$10.4 billion, a 5.2 percent drop from the record \$10.9 billion of 2013. In and of itself, such a dip isn’t much for Hollywood to fret about. The industry still cleared \$10 billion in revenue, the year was widely viewed as a cyclical in-between to bigger years, and a number of major releases that would have moved the needle were postponed (most notably “Furious 7,” following Paul Walker’s death, and Pixar’s “The Good Dinosaur”).

But there were also signs that pointed to long-term trouble for the movie business. A Nielsen study found movie attendance for Americans ages 12-24 dropped a worrisome 15 percent in the first nine months of the year, compared to the first nine months in 2013. The overall number of tickets sold — a meaningful statistic since it’s not impacted by rising ticket prices — slid to about 1.26 billion. That means that fewer people went to the movies in 2014 than they have in the last two decades.

The crunch was felt most by exhibitors in North American, where

profits dropped drastically for the country’s top two chains, Regal Cinemas and AMC Theatres. To add salt in the wound, the chains were cast as the villains in the fall-out of “The Interview” when Sony Pictures CEO Michael Lynton blamed them for the film’s temporary cancellation.

However, amid the usual mix of hits (“Guardians of the Galaxy,” “The Lego Movie,” “Gone Girl”) and misses (“Transcendence,” “The Legend of Hercules,” “A Million Ways to Die in the West”), business for the studios was steady, if less spectacular.

Meanwhile, though, the forces of change seemed to be gathering. Netflix partnered with the Weinstein Co. to release a “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” sequel and with Adam Sandler for a series of films. The digital release of Seth Rogen’s North Korea farce “The Interview” (\$15 million in its first four days) proved that the studios are eager to test the traditional theatrical window, even if it means upsetting the exhibitors.

Theaters have begun adapting new techniques to lure more avid movie-going. This fall, AMC and MoviePass began offering monthly subscription packages in a handful of cities — a kind of Spotify-for-movies.

Much of the movie business is

now about franchise making, and a number of potentially lucrative ones were spawned in 2014. There are already plans for a trio of subsequent “Lego” movies, and more is on tap for “Guardians” and “Big Hero 6.” Of the top 10 films of 2014, only one was wholly original: Christopher Nolan’s space adventure “Interstellar.”

Disney continues to lead the way in the franchise department, thanks to its massive partnerships with Marvel, Pixar and Lucasfilm. Next year, “The Avengers: Age of Ultron” and “Star Wars: The Force Awakens” are virtually assured to net billions. They join a heavy-hitting 2015 lineup that includes “Jurassic World,” the final “Hunger Games” and new “Terminator” and “Mission Impossible” installments.

“The movies next year look particularly strong and should deliver the biggest box-office year ever,” says Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for Rentrak. “We’ll be happy when we close the books on 2014 and open them on 2015.”

Dergarabedian is most cheered to see the studios “walking the walk of the 52-week-a-year business model.” Warner Bros. has been one of the studios pushing to open big movies outside of standard blockbuster dates, like springtime’s “Lego.” It has also dated its 2016 “Batman v. Superman: Dawn of

Top grossing films of 2014

1. “Guardians of the Galaxy,” \$332.9 million.
2. “The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 1,” \$308.9 million.
3. “Captain America: The Winter Soldier,” \$259.8 million.
4. “The Lego Movie,” \$257.8 million.
5. “Transformers: Age of Extinction,” \$245.4 million.
6. “Maleficent,” \$241.4 million.
7. “X-Men: Days of Future Past,” \$233.9 million.
8. “Dawn of the Planet of the Apes,” \$208.6 million.
9. “The Amazing Spider-Man 2,” \$202.9 million.
10. “Big Hero 6,” \$201.5 million.

Justice” for March.

But Warner Bros., often the market-share leader, fell behind both 20th Century Fox and Disney in 2014. Though Warner finished strong, thanks to “The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies,” several of its releases sputtered, including “Blended” and “Winter’s Tale.” CEO Kevin Tsujihara announced layoffs in September.