



## The Terminator

Directed by: James Cameron

©: Cinema '84

Production: Pacific Western Productions

Presented by: Hemdale Film Corporation  
An Orion Pictures release

Executive Producers: John Daly, Derek Gibson  
Executive in Charge of Production:

Bruce M. Kerner

Produced by: Gale Anne Hurd

Production Manager: Donna Smith

Production Co-ordinator: Kathy Breen

Production Accountant: Marilyn Tasso

Location Manager: Joseph A. Liuzzi

Post-production Supervisor: Donna Smith

2nd Unit Director/Action: Jean-Paul Ouellette

2nd Unit Director/Effects: Stan Winston

1st Assistant Director: Betsy Magruder

Script Supervisor: Brenda Weisman

Casting by: Stanzi Stokes

Written by: James Cameron

With: Gale Anne Hurd

Additional Dialogue: William Wisher Jr

Director of Photography: Adam Greenberg

2nd Unit Director of Photography:

Chuck Colwell

Special Visual Effects by:

Fantasy II Film Effects

Process Photography Cinematographer:

Austin McKinney

Special Terminator Effects Created by:

Stan Winston

Edited by: Mark Goldblatt

Art Director: George Costello

Costume Designer: Hilary Wright

Costume Supervisor: Deborah Everton

Make-up Artist: Jefferson Dawn

Hair Stylist: Peter Tothpal

Main Title Design: Ernest D. Farino

Music by: Brad Fiedel

Production Sound Mixer: Richard Lightstone

Re-recording Mixers: Terry Porter,

David J. Hudson, Mel Metcalfe

Supervising Sound Editor: David Campling

Cast:

Arnold Schwarzenegger (*Terminator*)

Michael Biehn (*Kyle Reese*)

Linda Hamilton (*Sarah Connor*)

Lance Henriksen (*Vukovich*)

Paul Winfield (*Lieutenant Traxler*)

Rick Rossovich (*Matt*)

Bess Motta (*Ginger*)

Earl Boen (*Silberman*)

Dick Miller (*pawn shop clerk*)

Shawn Schepps (*Nancy*)

Bruce M. Kerner (*desk sergeant*)

Franco Columbu (*future Terminator*)

Bill Paxton (*punk leader*)

Brad Rearden, Brian Thompson (*punks*)

William Wisher Jr, Ken Fritz,

Tom Oberhaus (*policemen*)

Ed Dogans (*cop in alley*)

Joe Farago (*TV anchorman*)

Hettie Lynne Hurtes (*TV anchorwoman*)

Tony Mirelez (*station attendant*)

USA 1984©

107 mins

Digital 4K

James Cameron

# The Terminator

Four decades ago, a filmmaker with one previous director credit to his name changed the face of science-fiction movies forever. James Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984) effortlessly blended the slasher genre with hi-tech horror, imagining an artificial intelligence that initiates nuclear war, and then sends a robot assassin (Arnold Schwarzenegger) back through time to kill the mother of its human opponents.

James Cameron remembers his story's origins clearly. '*The Terminator* came from a dream that I had while I was sick with a fever in a cheap pensione in Rome in 1981. It was the image of a chrome skeleton emerging from a fire. When I woke up, I began sketching on the hotel stationery. The first sketch I did showed a metal skeleton cut in half at the waist, crawling over a tile floor, using a large kitchen knife to pull itself forward while reaching out with the other hand. In a second drawing, the character is threatening a crawling woman. Minus the kitchen knife, these images became the finale of *The Terminator* almost exactly.'

Perhaps not an unusual dream to have given the fraught politics of the early 1980s, and the sense the world was sleepwalking into nuclear disaster. Did Cameron ever feel the global exchange in his screenplay was inevitable? 'It seemed very possible, even likely, given enough time. I felt that the world went about its business under this Damoclean threat as if it didn't exist, and that everyone walking the streets around me was delusional.'

With nuclear fire as a forge for the metal killer he'd dreamed of, it fell to effects creator Stan Winston to realise the cyborg on screen. 'Stan's execution of the endoskeleton was a work of art,' remembers Cameron. 'We had a special rubber one used for the crushing scene. There were several endoskeletons: an explodable one, the crushable one, the "hero" full figure, a quarter-scale miniature used for stop motion shots, and a torso/head/arms puppet that was worn on a backpack by puppeteer Shane Mahan, one of Stan's top guys.'

Interestingly, the iconic Terminator skeleton of today wasn't intended as the film's ultimate antagonist. 'The first story outline that I wrote was actually in two parts,' says Cameron. 'The first half would essentially be what became the whole story of *The Terminator*: they blow the metal endoskeleton to pieces and defeat him. But then the bad guys in the future would send their really scary robot – a being so powerful and unquantifiable that even they didn't want to unleash it. Our hero/protector from the future succeeds in blowing this thing up, and bits and globs of it are all over the walls and floor. But then, it slowly crawls back together and reforms, getting up unscathed to resume the pursuit. Sound familiar?'

With the skeletal villain in place, the search for the right actor to play its undamaged half-human incarnation could begin. 'Mike Medavoy at Orion, who co-funded the film with Hemdale, told producer Gale Hurd and myself that he had "cast the movie",' remembers Cameron. '"Are you sitting down?" he said to me repeatedly, as if he had just figured out the cure for cancer. Then he said, "O.J. Simpson as the Terminator, and Arnold Schwarzenegger as Reese!"'

'Apparently he had just met them at a party and promised them both the starring roles – without consulting with us. I told him immediately, on that call, that O.J. Simpson was a bad idea. It was a non-starter and we never seriously considered it for a second. He asked if I'd at least meet Arnold and I have to say I was curious to do so, even though I didn't think he was right for Reese. As I left for the lunch, I asked my room-mate (screenwriter Bill Wisher) if he had any last words for me, because "I have to go pick a fight with Conan". I wasn't serious: my intention was to politely have the lunch, then tell everyone on the production that it would never work, for creative reasons.'

Luckily, Schwarzenegger proved to be very enthusiastic about the script. 'He was quoting key moments – but Terminator moments,' says Cameron. 'I just watched him: the strength of his face impressed me more than his physique. I pictured him as a human Panzer tank, and I knew that it would work. I returned to John Daly, our exec producer at Hemdale (he was the 'Dale' of Hemdale) and said, "Well, he's wrong for Reese. But he'd make a hell of a Terminator."'

The Austrian Oak wasn't the only star who almost missed out on his iconic role. When casting Reese, the human protector who travels back from the future to thwart the Terminator, pop star Sting was considered for the part that would eventually go to Michael Biehn. 'I even met with him,' says Cameron of the former Police frontman. 'I was fascinated by his look. He seemed slightly otherworldly – or at least not of this time. I felt vindicated when Sting played a major role in David Lynch's *Dune* (1984) as the malevolent Feyd-Rautha.'

## James Cameron

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'However, he wasn't interested. I was too much of an unknown as a director at the time. I remember riding down in the elevator with him after our meeting and him sneering "So, *Piranha 2*, huh?" I didn't want to tell him I had gotten fired off that film after a few days of shooting, so it wasn't my movie at all, because frankly I was better having even a bad credit than having no director credit. Or that's what I thought at the time.'

For the part of Sarah Connor, the Terminator's quarry and arguably the film's most pivotal role, it wasn't a creative difference that caused tension in the casting, but a physical one. 'Linda (Hamilton) has a fantastic work ethic, and brings everything she's got to every moment she's on set,' says Cameron. 'But she got injured playing with her dog Bosco in the back yard a couple (of) weeks before shooting started. We thought we might have to recast.'

'Luckily, a top sports doctor said "If this was one of my players for the Rams, I'd tape him up and put him back on the field." So I took the leap of faith, because I really wanted her in the role. She had a really strong sports-wrap put on her ankle every day, and she managed to get through it. For the first four weeks she was doubled for all the running shots: we had to massively re-order the schedule to pull that off. But, by the end of filming, that's really Linda running in front of an 18-wheeler.'

Unlike the film's sequels, which moved increasingly towards action-adventure, *The Terminator* was firmly rooted in horror. This was always Cameron's intention. 'The character was supposed to be an infiltrator, physically nondescript and not memorable, though somewhat sinister because of his emotionally blank affect. I was visualising my actor friend Lance Henriksen for the role – he later played Bishop, the benign but suspicious synthetic in *Aliens* (1986).'

'But when I cast Arnold, the focus shifted away from the Sarah and Reese story to the Terminator, because he made such a powerful impression. His character owes as much to the relentless killers of the slasher horror genre of the late '70s as to science fiction. There is as much Michael Myers in the character of the T-800 as there is Roy Batty from *Blade Runner* (1982), or Yul Brynner's killer robot from *Westworld* (1973).'

The modest \$6.4 million budget necessitated a swift but efficient shoot. 'We shot with available light on most of our night street locations, which were carefully selected to have bright street-lights,' remembers Cameron. 'And we did one scene without a permit in post-production, many miles outside LA in the desert: the last shot of the movie, as Sarah drives off toward a stormy horizon. Sure enough, a police car came out of nowhere and busted us. I told them we were making a student film, out of UCLA (even though I was 29 at the time.) He told us to drag our camera rig off the highway, wished us luck and drove away.'

Were any other authority figures wary of challenging a bodybuilder in steel make-up, and whose jacket had been sprayed with acid to make it smoke? 'The first time John Daly visited the set – it was the night we were shooting the Tech Noir club scene – he was standing next to Arnold proudly smiling, and rocking on his heels. Arnold looked over at him, in full Terminator wardrobe, and in his Austrian accent said "John, every time I see you, you're always smiling." Then he pulled out his massive .45 automatic, jammed it under John's jaw, and said "Personally I hate that." John went pale and left shortly thereafter. He never came on set again when Arnold was filming.'

It was a moment that stood out for Cameron in the film's 42-day shoot. 'The whole thing was incredibly rushed... the factory scene at the end was our biggest challenge, and we only got the most cursory coverage. In post-production I put up what remained of my director's fee that I hadn't spent yet on living (I think it was \$40k) to do reshoots, which took us a week. They were done guerrilla style: we borrowed a stage, called in favours, and I was loading and operating the camera, etc. But they really added a lot to that final sequence. In terms of detail – storyboarding every shot, putting it together piece by piece – I'd say the factory finale took the most energy.'

The results spoke for themselves: the film took over \$78 million at the box office, and won praise from as far afield as Russian auteur Andrei Tarkovsky, whose tastes were otherwise notably anti-Hollywood. Today, *The Terminator's* £3 billion franchise comprises books, video games, a theme park attraction and five cinematic sequels, each of which has been helmed by different directors. Does Cameron consider any of them a worthy compliment to *The Terminator* and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991)?

'I recently saw Harry Enfield's *Terminator 3*,' he writes, 'A cyborg (Martin Clunes) tries to infiltrate Edwardian England. It's pretty funny. Somebody should do it as a feature. Couldn't do worse than *Dark Fate* (2019).'

George Bass, [bfi.org.uk](https://bfi.org.uk), 21 April 2021