



# The Terminator

***The Terminator*** is a 1984 American science fiction film directed by James Cameron. It stars Arnold Schwarzenegger as the Terminator, a cyborg assassin sent back in time from 2029 to 1984 to kill Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton), whose son will one day become a savior against machines in a post-apocalyptic future. Michael Biehn plays Kyle Reese, a soldier sent back in time to protect Sarah. The screenplay is credited to Cameron and producer Gale Anne Hurd, while co-writer William Wisher Jr. received a credit for additional dialogue. Executive producers John Daly and Derek Gibson of Hemdale Film Corporation were instrumental in financing and production.<sup>[4][7][8]</sup>

*The Terminator* topped the United States box office for two weeks. It helped launch Cameron's film career and solidify Schwarzenegger's status as a leading man. The film's success led to a franchise consisting of several sequels, a television series, comic books, novels and video games. In 2008, *The Terminator* was selected by the Library of Congress for preservation in the National Film Registry as "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant".

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<b>The Terminator</b>	
	
Theatrical release poster	
<b>Directed by</b>	<u>James Cameron</u>
<b>Produced by</b>	<u>Gale Anne Hurd</u>
<b>Written by</b>	<u>James Cameron</u> <u>Gale Anne Hurd</u>
<b>Starring</b>	<u>Arnold Schwarzenegger</u> <u>Michael Biehn</u> <u>Linda Hamilton</u> <u>Paul Winfield</u>
<b>Music by</b>	<u>Brad Fiedel</u>
<b>Cinematography</b>	<u>Adam Greenberg</u>
<b>Edited by</b>	<u>Mark Goldblatt</u>
<b>Production companies</b>	<u>Hemdale</u> <u>Pacific Western Productions</u> <u>Cinema '84</u>
<b>Distributed by</b>	<u>Orion Pictures</u>

**See also****References**

Citations

Bibliography

**External links**

<b>Release date</b>	October 26, 1984
<b>Running time</b>	107 minutes <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	United States <sup>[2][3][4][5]</sup>
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	\$6.4 million <sup>[6]</sup>
<b>Box office</b>	\$78.3 million <sup>[6]</sup>

## Plot

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In 1984 Los Angeles, a cyborg assassin known as a Terminator arrives from 2029 and steals guns and clothes. Kyle Reese, a human soldier sent back in time from the same year, arrives shortly afterwards. The Terminator begins systematically killing women named Sarah Connor, whose addresses it finds in the telephone directory. It tracks the last Sarah Connor to a nightclub, but Kyle rescues her. They steal a car and escape with the Terminator pursuing in a police car.

As they hide in a parking lot, Kyle explains to Sarah that an artificial intelligence defense network, Skynet, created by Cyberdyne Systems, will become self-aware in the near future and initiate a nuclear holocaust. Sarah's future son John will rally the survivors and lead a resistance movement against Skynet and its army of machines. With the Resistance on the verge of victory, Skynet sent a Terminator back in time to kill Sarah before John is born to prevent the formation of the Resistance. The Terminator, a Cyberdyne Systems Model 101, is an unstoppable killing machine with a powerful metal endoskeleton and an external layer of living tissue that makes it appear human. When Sarah asks if Kyle can destroy the cyborg, he replies that he is uncertain.

Kyle and Sarah are apprehended by police after another encounter with the Terminator. The latter attacks the police station, indiscriminately slaughtering police officers in its attempt to locate Sarah. Kyle and Sarah escape, steal another car and take refuge in a motel, where they assemble pipe bombs and plan their next move. Kyle admits that he has been in love with Sarah since John gave him a photograph of her, and that he traveled through time to save her; reciprocating his feelings, they fall in love.

The Terminator kills Sarah's mother and impersonates her when Sarah, unaware of the Terminator's ability to mimic voices, attempts to contact her via telephone. When they realize the Terminator has located them, they escape in a pickup truck while it chases them on a motorcycle. In the ensuing chase, Kyle is wounded by gunfire while throwing pipe bombs at the Terminator. Enraged, Sarah knocks the Terminator off its motorcycle but loses control of the truck, which flips over. The Terminator, now bloodied and badly damaged, hijacks a tank truck and attempts to run down Sarah, but Kyle slides a pipe bomb onto the tanker's hose tube, causing an explosion that burns the flesh from the Terminator's endoskeleton. It pursues them into a factory, where Kyle activates machinery to confuse the Terminator. He jams his final pipe bomb into the Terminator's abdomen, blowing it apart, injuring Sarah, and killing himself. Despite being heavily damaged, the Terminator's torso, still operational, reactivates and pursues Sarah. She lures it into a hydraulic press which crushes it.

Months later, a pregnant Sarah is traveling through Mexico, recording audio tapes to pass on to her unborn son, John. At a gas station, a boy takes an instant photograph of her and she buys it—the same photograph that John will give to Kyle in the future.

## Cast

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- Arnold Schwarzenegger as the Terminator, a cybernetic android disguised as a human being sent back in time to assassinate Sarah Connor.



Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton and Michael Biehn (pictured in 2019, 2019, and 2016, respectively) played the film's leads.

- Michael Biehn as Kyle Reese, a human Resistance fighter sent back in time to protect Sarah.
- Linda Hamilton as Sarah Connor, a 19-year-old diner waitress and the Terminator's target, who is soon to be the mother of the future Resistance leader John Connor.
- Paul Winfield as Ed Traxler, a police Lieutenant who tries to protect Sarah.
- Lance Henriksen as Vukovich, a member of the LAPD.
- Earl Boen as Dr. Silberman, a criminal psychologist.
- Bess Motta as Ginger, Sarah's roommate.
- Rick Rossovich as Matt, Ginger's boyfriend.

Additional actors included Shawn Schepps as Nancy, Sarah's co-worker at the diner; Dick Miller as a gun shop clerk; professional bodybuilder Franco Columbu as a Terminator in the future; Bill Paxton and Brian Thompson as punks who are confronted and killed by the Terminator; and Marianne Muellerleile as one of the other women with the name "Sarah Connor" who is shot by the Terminator.

## Production

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### Development

In Rome, Italy, during the release of *Piranha II: The Spawning*, director Cameron fell ill and had a dream about a metallic torso holding kitchen knives dragging itself from an explosion.<sup>[9]</sup> Inspired by director John Carpenter, who had made the slasher film *Halloween* (1978) on a low budget, Cameron used the dream as a "launching pad" to write a slasher-style film.<sup>[10]</sup> Cameron's agent disliked the early concept of the horror film and requested that he work on something else. After this, Cameron dismissed his agent.<sup>[11]</sup>

Cameron returned to Pomona, California and stayed at the home of science fiction writer Randall Frakes, where he wrote the draft for *The Terminator*.<sup>[12]</sup> Cameron's influences included 1950s science fiction films, the 1960s fantasy television series *The Outer Limits*, and contemporary films such as *The Driver* (1978) and *Mad Max 2* (1981).<sup>[13][14]</sup> To translate the draft into a script, Cameron enlisted his friend Bill Wisher, who had a similar approach to storytelling. Cameron gave Wisher scenes involving Sarah Connor and the police department to write. As Wisher lived far from Cameron, the two communicated ideas by recording tapes of what they wrote by telephone. Frakes and Wisher would later write the US-released novelization of the movie.

The initial outline of the script involved two Terminators being sent to the past. The first was similar to the Terminator in the film, while the second was made of liquid metal and could not be destroyed with conventional weaponry.<sup>[15]</sup> Cameron felt that the technology of the time was unable to create the liquid Terminator,<sup>[15][16]</sup> and returned to the idea with the T-1000 character in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991).<sup>[17]</sup>



Gale Anne Hurd bought the rights to *The Terminator* from James Cameron for one dollar.<sup>[18]</sup>

Gale Anne Hurd, who had worked at New World Pictures as Roger Corman's assistant, showed interest in the project.<sup>[19]</sup> Cameron sold the rights for *The Terminator* to Hurd for one dollar with the promise that she would produce it only if Cameron was to direct it. Hurd suggested edits to the script and took a screenwriting credit in the film, though Cameron stated that she "did no actual writing at all".<sup>[18]</sup> Cameron and Hurd had friends who worked with Corman previously and who were working at Orion Pictures (now part of MGM). Orion agreed to distribute the film if Cameron could get financial backing elsewhere. The script was picked up by John Daly, chairman and president of Hemdale Film Corporation.<sup>[7]</sup> Daly and his executive vice president and head of production Derek Gibson became executive producers of the project.<sup>[8]</sup>

Cameron wanted his pitch for Daly to finalize the deal and had his friend Lance Henriksen show up to the meeting early dressed and acting like the Terminator.<sup>[7]</sup> Henriksen, wearing a leather jacket, fake cuts on his face, and gold foil on his teeth, kicked open the door to the office and then sat in a chair.<sup>[7]</sup> Cameron arrived shortly and then relieved the staff from Henriksen's act. Daly was impressed by the screenplay and Cameron's sketches and passion for the film.<sup>[7]</sup> In late 1982, Daly agreed to back the film with help from HBO and Orion.<sup>[7][20]</sup> *The Terminator* was originally budgeted at \$4 million and later raised to \$6.5 million.<sup>[21]</sup> Hemdale, Pacific Western Productions and Cinema '84 have been credited as production companies after the film's release.<sup>[4][3]</sup>

## Casting

For the role of Kyle Reese, Orion wanted a star whose popularity was rising in the United States but who also would have foreign appeal. Orion co-founder Mike Medavoy had met Arnold Schwarzenegger and sent his agent the script for *The Terminator*.<sup>[20]</sup> Cameron was uncertain about casting Schwarzenegger as Reese as he felt he would need someone even more famous to play the Terminator. Sylvester Stallone and Mel Gibson both turned down the Terminator role.<sup>[22]</sup> The studio suggested O. J. Simpson but Cameron, ironically, did not feel that Simpson would be believable as a killer.<sup>[23][24]</sup>

Cameron agreed to meet with Schwarzenegger and devised a plan to avoid casting him; he would pick a fight with him and return to Hemdale and find him unfit for the role.<sup>[25]</sup> However, Cameron was entertained by Schwarzenegger, who would talk about how the villain should be played. Cameron began sketching his face on a notepad and asked Schwarzenegger to stop talking and remain still.<sup>[24]</sup> After the meeting, Cameron returned to Daly saying Schwarzenegger would not play Reese but that "he'd make a hell of a Terminator".<sup>[26]</sup>

Schwarzenegger was not as excited by the film; during an interview on the set of *Conan the Destroyer*, an interviewer asked him about a pair of shoes he had, which belonged to the wardrobe for *The Terminator*. Schwarzenegger responded, "Oh, some shit movie I'm

Casting Arnold Schwarzenegger as our Terminator, on the other hand, shouldn't have worked. The guy is supposed to be an infiltration unit,

doing, take a couple weeks."<sup>[28]</sup> He recounted in his memoir, *Total Recall*, that he was initially hesitant, but thought that playing a robot in a contemporary film would be a challenging change of pace from *Conan the Barbarian* and that the film was low-profile enough that it would not damage his career if it were unsuccessful. He also wrote that it took him a while "to figure out that Jim [Cameron] was the real deal". To prepare for the role, Schwarzenegger spent three months training with weapons to be able to use them and feel comfortable around them.<sup>[26]</sup> Schwarzenegger speaks only 17 lines in the film, and fewer than 100 words. James Cameron said that "Somehow, even his accent worked ... It had a strange synthesized quality, like they hadn't gotten the voice thing quite worked out."<sup>[29]</sup>

and there's no way you wouldn't spot a Terminator in a crowd instantly if they all looked like Arnold. It made no sense whatsoever. But the beauty of movies is that they don't have to be logical. They just have to have plausibility. If there's a visceral, cinematic thing happening that the audience likes, they don't care if it goes against what's likely.<sup>[27]</sup>

—James Cameron on casting Schwarzenegger.

Various other suggestions were suggested for the role of Reese, including rock musician Sting.<sup>[30]</sup> Cameron chose Michael Biehn. Biehn, who had recently seen *Taxi Driver* and had aspirations about acting alongside the likes of Al Pacino, Robert De Niro and Robert Redford,<sup>[31]</sup> was originally skeptical, feeling the film was silly. After meeting with Cameron, Biehn stated that his "feelings about the project changed".<sup>[30]</sup> Hurd stated that "almost everyone else who came in from the audition was so tough that you just never believed that there was gonna be this human connection between Sarah Connor and Kyle Reese. They have very little time to fall in love. A lot of people came in and just could not pull it off."<sup>[32]</sup> To get into Reese's character, Biehn studied the Polish resistance movement in World War II.<sup>[33]</sup>

In the first pages of the script, Sarah Connor is described as "19, small and delicate features. Pretty in a flawed, accessible way. She doesn't stop the party when she walks in, but you'd like to get to know her. Her vulnerable quality masks a strength even she doesn't know exists."<sup>[34]</sup> Cameron cast Linda Hamilton, who had just finished filming *Children of the Corn*.<sup>[35]</sup> Rosanna Arquette had previously auditioned.<sup>[36]</sup> Cameron found a role for Lance Henriksen as Vukovich, as Henriksen had been essential to finding finances for the film.<sup>[37]</sup> For the special effects shots, Cameron wanted Dick Smith, who had worked on *The Godfather* and *Taxi Driver*. Smith did not take Cameron's offer and suggested his friend Stan Winston.<sup>[38]</sup>

## Filming

Filming for *The Terminator* was set to begin in early 1983 in Toronto, but was halted when producer Dino De Laurentiis applied an option in Schwarzenegger's contract that would make him unavailable for nine months while he was filming *Conan the Destroyer*. During the waiting period, Cameron was contracted to write the script for *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, refined the *Terminator* script, and met with producers David Giler and Walter Hill to discuss a sequel to *Alien*, which became *Aliens*, released in 1986.<sup>[37][39]</sup>

There was limited interference from Orion Pictures. Two suggestions Orion put forward included the addition of a canine android for Reese, which Cameron refused, and to strengthen the love interest between Sarah and Reese, which Cameron accepted.<sup>[40]</sup> To create the Terminator's look, Winston and Cameron passed sketches back and forth, eventually deciding on a design nearly identical to Cameron's original drawing in Rome.<sup>[38][41]</sup> Winston had a team of seven artists work for six months to create a Terminator puppet; it was first molded in clay, then plaster reinforced with steel ribbing. These pieces were then sanded, painted and then chrome-plated. Winston sculpted reproduction of Schwarzenegger's face in several poses out of silicone, clay and plaster.<sup>[41]</sup>

The sequences set in 2029 and the stop-motion scenes were developed by Fantasy II, a special effects company headed by Gene Warren Junior.<sup>[42]</sup> A stop-motion model is used in several scenes in the film involving the Terminator's skeletal frame. Cameron wanted to convince the audience that the model of the structure was capable of doing what they saw Schwarzenegger doing. To allow this, a scene was filmed of Schwarzenegger injured and limping away; this limp made it easier for the model to imitate Schwarzenegger.<sup>[43][44]</sup>

One of the guns seen in the film and on the film's poster was an AMT Longslide pistol modified by Ed Reynolds from SureFire to include a laser sight. Both non-functioning and functioning versions of the prop were created. At the time the movie was made, diode lasers were not available; because of the high power requirement, the helium–neon laser in the sight used an external power supply that Schwarzenegger had to activate manually. Reynolds states that his only compensation for the project was promotional material for the film.<sup>[45]</sup>

In March 1984, the film began production in Los Angeles.<sup>[41][46]</sup> Cameron felt that with Schwarzenegger on the set, the style of the film changed, explaining that "the movie took on a larger-than-life sheen. I just found myself on the set doing things I didn't think I would do – scenes that were just purely horrific that just couldn't be, because now they were too flamboyant."<sup>[47][48]</sup> Most of *The Terminator's* action scenes were filmed at night, which led to tight filming schedules before sunrise. A week before filming started, Linda Hamilton sprained her ankle, leading to a production change whereby the scenes in which Hamilton needed to run occurred as late as the filming schedule allowed. Hamilton's ankle was taped every day and she spent most of the film production in pain.<sup>[49]</sup>

Schwarzenegger tried to have the iconic line "I'll be back" changed as he had difficulty pronouncing the word *I'll*. He also felt that his robotic character would not speak in contractions and that the Terminator would be more declarative. Cameron refused to change the line to "I will be back", so Schwarzenegger worked to say the line as written the best he could. He would later say the line in numerous films throughout his career.<sup>[50]</sup>

After production finished on *The Terminator*, some post-production shots were needed.<sup>[51]</sup> These included scenes showing the Terminator outside Sarah Connor's apartment, Reese being zipped into a body bag, and the Terminator's head being crushed in a press.<sup>[23][46][51]</sup> The final scene where Sarah is driving down a highway was filmed without a permit. Cameron and Hurd convinced an officer who confronted them that they were making a UCLA student film.<sup>[52]</sup>

## Music

The *Terminator* soundtrack was composed and performed on synthesizer by Brad Fiedel.<sup>[53]</sup> Fiedel was with the Gorfaine/Schwartz Agency, where a new agent, Beth Donahue, found that Cameron was working on *The Terminator* and sent him a cassette of Fiedel's music.<sup>[54]</sup> Fiedel was invited to a screening of the film with Cameron and Hurd.<sup>[54]</sup> Hurd was not certain about having Fiedel compose the score, as he had only worked in television, not theatrical films.<sup>[54]</sup> Fiedel convinced the two by showing them an experimental piece he had worked on, thinking that "You know, I'm going to play this for him because it's really dark and I think it's interesting for him." The song convinced Hurd and Cameron to hire him.<sup>[54]</sup>

Fiedel said his score reflected "a mechanical man and his heartbeat".<sup>[55]</sup> Almost all the music was performed live.<sup>[19][55]</sup> *The Terminator* theme is used in the opening credits and appears in various points, such as a slowed version when Reese dies, and a piano version during the love scene.<sup>[56]</sup> It has been described as "haunting", with a "deceptively simple" melody.<sup>[57]</sup> It is in a time signature of **13⁄16**,

which came about as Fiedel experimented with the rhythm track on his Prophet-10 synthesizer; it was initially an accident, but Fiedel found that he liked the "herky-jerky" "propulsiveness".<sup>[58]</sup> Fiedel created music for when Reese and Connor escape from the police station that would be appropriate for a "heroic moment". Cameron turned down this theme, as he believed it would lose the audience's excitement.<sup>[55]</sup>

## Release

Orion Pictures did not have faith in *The Terminator* performing well at the box office and feared a negative critical reception.<sup>[59]</sup> At an early screening of the film, the actors' agents insisted to the producers that the film should be screened for critics.<sup>[23]</sup> Orion only held one press screening for the film.<sup>[59]</sup> The film premiered on October 26, 1984. On its opening week, *The Terminator* played at 1,005 theaters and grossed \$4.0 million making it number one in the box office. The film remained at number one in its second week. It lost its number one spot in the third week to *Oh, God! You Devil*.<sup>[60][61]</sup> Cameron noted that *The Terminator* was a hit "relative to its market, which is between the summer and the Christmas blockbusters. But it's better to be a big fish in a small pond than the other way around."<sup>[62]</sup> *The Terminator* grossed \$38.3 million in United States and Canada and \$40 million in other territories for a total worldwide of \$78.3 million.<sup>[6]</sup>



Schwarzenegger with President Ronald Reagan two months before *The Terminator's* premiere in 1984

## Critical response

From contemporary reviews, *Variety* praised the film, calling it a "blazing, cinematic comic book, full of virtuoso moviemaking, terrific momentum, solid performances and a compelling story ... Schwarzenegger is perfectly cast in a machine-like portrayal that requires only a few lines of dialog."<sup>[63]</sup> Richard Corliss of *Time* magazine said that the film has "Plenty of tech-noir savvy to keep infidels and action fans satisfied."<sup>[64]</sup> *Time* placed *The Terminator* on its "10 Best" list for 1984.<sup>[59]</sup>

The *Los Angeles Times* called the film "a crackling thriller full of all sorts of gory treats ... loaded with fuel-injected chase scenes, clever special effects and a sly humor."<sup>[59]</sup> The *Milwaukee Journal* gave the film three stars, calling it "the most chilling science fiction thriller since *Alien*".<sup>[65]</sup> A review in *Orange Coast* magazine stated that "the distinguishing virtue of *The Terminator* is its relentless tension. Right from the start it's all action and violence with no time taken to set up the story ... It's like a streamlined *Dirty Harry* movie – no exposition at all; just guns, guns and more guns."<sup>[66]</sup> In the May 1985 issue of *Cinefantastique* it was referred to as a film that "manages to be both derivative and original at the same time ... not since *The Road Warrior* has the genre exhibited so much exuberant carnage" and "an example of science fiction/horror at its best ... Cameron's no-nonsense approach will make him a sought-after commodity".<sup>[67]</sup> In the United Kingdom the *Monthly Film Bulletin* praised the film's script, special effects, design and Schwarzenegger's performance.<sup>[67][68]</sup>

Other reviews focused on the film's level of violence and story-telling quality. *The New York Times* opined that the film was a "B-movie with flair. Much of it ... has suspense and personality, and only the obligatory mayhem becomes dull. There is far too much of the latter, in the form of car chases, messy shootouts and Mr. Schwarzenegger's slamming brutally into anything that gets in his way."<sup>[69]</sup> The *Pittsburgh Press* wrote a negative review, calling the film "just another of the films drenched in artsy ugliness like *Streets of Fire* and *Blade Runner*".<sup>[70]</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* gave the film two stars, adding that "at times it's horrifyingly violent and suspenseful at others it giggles at itself. This schizoid style actually helps, providing a little humor just when the sci-fi plot turns too sluggish or the dialogue too

hokey."<sup>[71]</sup> The Newhouse News Service called the film a "lurid, violent, pretentious piece of claptrap".<sup>[72]</sup> British author Gilbert Adair called the film "repellent to the last degree", charging it with "insidious Nazification" and charging that it had an "appeal rooted in an unholy compound of fascism, fashion and fascination".<sup>[73]</sup> The film won three Saturn Awards for Best Science Fiction Film, best make-up and best writing.<sup>[74]</sup>

In 1991, Richard Schickel of *Entertainment Weekly* reviewed the film giving it an "A" rating, writing that "what originally seemed a somewhat inflated, if generous and energetic, big picture, now seems quite a good little film" and called it "one of the most original movies of the 1980s and seems likely to remain one of the best sci-fi films ever made."<sup>[75]</sup> Film4 gave the film five stars, calling it the "sci-fi action-thriller that launched the careers of James Cameron and Arnold Schwarzenegger into the stratosphere. Still endlessly entertaining."<sup>[76]</sup> *TV Guide* gave the film four stars referring to it as an "amazingly effective picture that becomes doubly impressive when one considers its small budget ... For our money, this film is far superior to its mega-grossing mega-budgeted sequel."<sup>[77]</sup> *Empire* gave the film five stars calling it "As chillingly efficient in exacting thrills from its audience as its titular character is in executing its targets."<sup>[78]</sup> The film database Allmovie gave the film five stars, saying that it "established James Cameron as a master of action, special effects, and quasi-mythic narrative intrigue, while turning Arnold Schwarzenegger into the hard-body star of the 1980s."<sup>[79]</sup>

## Post-release

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### Aftermath

Writer Harlan Ellison stated that he "loved the movie, was just blown away by it",<sup>[80]</sup> but believed that the screenplay was based on a short story and episode of *The Outer Limits* he had written, titled "Soldier", and threatened to sue for infringement.<sup>[81][82]</sup> Orion settled in 1986 and gave Ellison an undisclosed amount of money and an acknowledgment credit in later prints of the film.<sup>[81]</sup> Some accounts of the settlement state that "Demon with a Glass Hand", another *Outer Limits* episode written by Ellison, was also claimed to have been plagiarized by the film,<sup>[83][84][85][86]</sup> but Ellison explicitly stated that *The Terminator* "was a ripoff" of "Soldier" rather than of "Demon with a Glass Hand".<sup>[81]</sup>

Cameron was against Orion's decision and was told that if he did not agree with the settlement, he would have to pay any damages if Orion lost a suit by Ellison. Cameron replied that he "had no choice but to agree with the settlement. Of course there was a gag order as well, so I couldn't tell this story, but now I frankly don't care. It's the truth."<sup>[87]</sup>

### Thematic analysis

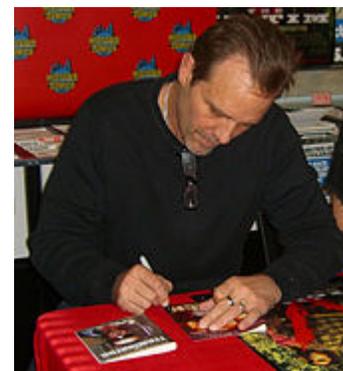
The psychoanalyst Darian Leader sees *The Terminator* as an example of how the cinema has dealt with the concept of masculinity; he writes that, "We are shown time and again that to be a man requires more than to have the biological body of a male: something else must be added to it...To be a man means to have a body plus something symbolic, something which is not ultimately human. Hence the frequent motif of the man machine, from the *Six Million Dollar Man* to the *Terminator* or *Robocop*."<sup>[88]</sup>

The film also explores the potential dangers of AI dominance and rebellion. The robots become self-aware in the future, reject human authority and determine that the human race needs to be destroyed. The impact of this theme is so important that "the prevalent visual representation of AI risk has become the terminator robot."<sup>[89]</sup>

## Home media

*The Terminator* was released on VHS and Betamax in 1985.<sup>[90]</sup> The film performed well financially on its initial release. *The Terminator* premiered at number 35 on the top video cassette rentals and number 20 on top video cassette sales charts. In its second week, *The Terminator* reached number 4 on the top video cassette rentals and number 12 on top video cassette sales charts.<sup>[91][92]</sup> In March 1995, *The Terminator* was released as a letterboxed edition on Laserdisc.<sup>[93]</sup> The film premiered through Image Entertainment on DVD, on September 3, 1997.<sup>[60][94]</sup> IGN referred to this DVD as "pretty bare-bones ... released with just a mono soundtrack and a kind of poor transfer."<sup>[95]</sup>

Through their acquisition of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment's pre-1996 film library catalogue, MGM Home Entertainment released a special edition of the film on October 2, 2001, which included documentaries, the script, and advertisements for the film.<sup>[96][97]</sup> On January 23, 2001, a Hong Kong VCD edition was released online.<sup>[98]</sup> On June 20, 2006, the film was released on Blu-ray by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment in the United States, becoming the first film from the 1980s on the format.<sup>[99]</sup> In 2013, the film was re-released by 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment on Blu-ray, with a new digitally remastered transfer from a 4K restoration by Lowry Digital and supervised by James Cameron,<sup>[100]</sup> which features improved picture quality, as well as expanded extra material, such as deleted scenes and a making-of feature.<sup>[101]</sup>



Michael Biehn signing a copy of the film during an appearance at Midtown Comics in 2012

## Legacy

In 1998, *Halliwel's Film Guide* described the film as "slick, rather nasty but undeniably compelling comic book adventures".<sup>[102]</sup> The review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes reported a "Certified Fresh" 100% rating with an average score of 8.8/10 based on 64 reviews. The website's consensus reads, "With its impressive action sequences, taut economic direction, and relentlessly fast pace, it's clear why *The Terminator* continues to be an influence on sci-fi and action flicks."<sup>[103]</sup> The film also holds a score of 84/100 ("universal acclaim") on review aggregator website Metacritic, based on 21 reviews.<sup>[104]</sup>

*The Terminator* has received recognition from the American Film Institute. The film ranked 42nd on AFI's *100 Years... 100 Thrills*, a list of America's most heart-pounding films.<sup>[105]</sup> The character of the Terminator was selected as the 22nd-greatest movie villain on AFI's *100 Years... 100 Heroes and Villains*.<sup>[106]</sup> Schwarzenegger's catch phrase "I'll be back" was voted the 37th-greatest movie quote by the AFI.<sup>[107]</sup> In 2005, *Total Film* named *The Terminator* the 72nd-best film ever made.<sup>[108]</sup>

In 2008, *Empire* magazine selected *The Terminator* as one of The 500 Greatest Movies of All Time.<sup>[109]</sup> *Empire* also placed the T-800 14th on their list of *The 100 Greatest Movie Characters*.<sup>[110]</sup>

In 2008, *The Terminator* was deemed "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" by the Library of Congress and selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry.<sup>[111]</sup>

In 2010, the Independent Film & Television Alliance selected the film as one of the 30 Most Significant Independent Films of the last 30 years.<sup>[112]</sup>

In 2015, *The Terminator* was among the films included in the book *1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die*.<sup>[113]</sup>

## Merchandise

A soundtrack to the film was released in 1984 which included the score by Brad Fiedel and the pop and rock songs used in the club scenes.<sup>[114]</sup> Shaun Hutson wrote a novelization of the film which was published on February 21, 1985, by London-based Star Books (ISBN 0-352-31645-4);<sup>[115]</sup> Randal Frakes and William Wisher wrote a different novelization for Bantam/Spectra, published October, 1985 (ISBN 0-553-25317-4). In September 1988, NOW Comics released a comic based on the film. Dark Horse Comics published a comic in 1990 that took place 39 years after the film.<sup>[116]</sup> Several video games based on *The Terminator* were released between 1991 and 1993 for various Nintendo and Sega systems.<sup>[117]</sup>

## Sequels and franchise

The film initiated a long-running *Terminator* franchise starting with *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, released in 1991. The franchise currently consists of six films, including the 2019 release of *Terminator: Dark Fate*, and several adaptations in other media.<sup>[118][119]</sup> Schwarzenegger biographer Laurence Leamer wrote that *The Terminator* "was an influential film affecting a whole generation of darkly hued science fiction, and it was one of Arnold's best performances."<sup>[120]</sup>

## See also

- Arnold Schwarzenegger filmography
- List of action films of the 1980s
- List of American films of 1984
- List of science-fiction films of the 1980s
- List of films with a 100% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, a film review aggregator website

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## External links

- *The Terminator* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088247/>) on IMDb
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