



TERMINATOR

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SCRAP-METAL
B-MOVIE
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FRANCHISE

an inferno. "He called me from Rome and said that this incredible iconic keyframe had come to him and that we should develop a story containing that image," recalls Gale Anne Hurd, the woman who would embark on an incredible journey with Cameron.

Hurd had been executive assistant to B-movie star Corman and first met her future husband when Corman dispatched her to get an update on the troubled *Battle Beyond The Stars*. Employed to build spaceship miniatures, Cameron expressed his concerns to her. "I thought he was running the model shop, which actually wasn't the case," laughs Hurd, sitting in her production company's LA offices remembering James Cameron's legendary chutzpah. Bonding on the tough shoot, Cameron was appointed Art Director when the original guy got the sack, they discussed a filmmaking partnership — she as producer, he as director. The idea for *The Abyss* came up at this time but it was *The Terminator* that became their ticket.

Rife with zeitgeist-tapping technophobia and a Holocaust vision of humanity's future, Cameron set out to craft a movie that functioned both "as a linear action story that a 12-year-old would think was the most rad picture he'd ever seen, and as science fiction that a 45-year-old Stanford English prof would think had some socio-political significance". Unusually for exploitation movies of the time, it was character-driven and possessed a female hero (which has since been a hallmark of Cameron's career).

Not everyone was impressed; every studio passed. Recalls Hurd, "We got a copy of one studio's coverage that said, 'It's a confusing film about someone who's sent back from the future to save a young woman. They make love, they make bombs. The end.'" Eventually, they pulled together a patchwork of backers — Orion, HBO, Hemdale — >>

THUCKED AWAY IN A MODEST BEVERLY

Hills café, Michael Biehn grabs the corner table with *Total Film*. The man who once arrived from the future to save Sarah Connor from Arnold Schwarzenegger's rampaging T-800 cyborg has arrived wearing a suit and tie (he's off to a meeting with a high-powered manager he's hoping will take him on). Tall, and with a rough-hewn, worn-in appearance, he's still clearly fit and, ordering a Diet Coke, leans back to recollect his experiences making the film that propelled Schwarzenegger to superstardom and Biehn to a working-stiff's career, for a long time as one of James Cameron's go-to thespians. Not that he's complaining... The 52-year-old actor is fully aware that when most people hear his name mentioned, the role that leaps to mind is *The Terminator*. It's been 26, 27 years, but throughout the years, it's the film I usually get recognised for. I didn't know it was such a big role at the time. But I had a lot of fun making it. Jim's a very smart guy and it's been a great thrill in my life to have his friendship..."

A DREAM START

Anyone remotely familiar with *Terminator* lore will know about its fever-dream origins. Cameron, confined to his Rome hotel room with a stomach virus during post-production on *Piranha II: The Spawning*, laid on his bed, having bizarre visions of a robotic endoskeleton emerging phoenix-like from

WORDS **MATT MUELLER**



Hard talk: (left to right) Linda Hamilton, director James Cameron, Joe Morton, Arnie on the T2 set; (below) and iconic scenes from T1.



Stan Winston on the shoot. But performance issues with the effects maestro's full-size mechanical robot – taken directly from Cameron's own concept sketches – lead to grinding delays. Winston's team were putting the finishing touches on the set the day Cameron needed it to shoot. The delay meant six weeks chopped off the stop-motion schedule, giving effects outfit Fantasy II no time to test movements. (Hence, the herky-jerky nature of the final figure.) Looking back, the Schwarzenegger puppet in the infamous eye-plucking sequence appears rubbery and unnatural, while the scorched-earth future looks like humanity is being attacked by Airfix models (not far off the truth - *T1*'s hovering Hunter-Killers were all miniatures). But in the context of era and budget, they were stunning achievements.

"We'd have one night to shoot an action sequence and whatever we got that night is what ended up in the film," recalls Hurd of their truncated shooting schedule. "Necessity became the mother of creative invention." By the end, Cameron was going out and "stealing" shots. He surreptitiously held the camera while Schwarzenegger crossed the street and punched in the car window before the police came. The guerrilla mood infected everyone. To create the iconic Terminator "clank", composer Brad Fiedel bashed a hammer against a cast-iron frying pan and recorded it with a dodgy microphone. Fiedel, who was warned against taking the job by his agent ("Hemdale had a bad reputation for not paying people"), created a score rife with gloomy, percussive thumps and whirring synthesizers. "I had the film throbbing inside me at a gut level – da-da-dum-da-dum. I don't know where that came from. That was the way my solar plexus felt about the Terminator." When he played a demo, Cameron gushed, "That's the movie."

Relations with Hemdale started thorny and stayed that way. Daly wanted to slash costs by ending the film after the Terminator had been blown up in the truck – "before the image that inspired the movie, the endoskeleton emerging from the flames!" says Hurd, aghast. Three days before the start date, Hemdale execs had asked what planet the Terminator came from "so I guess it's not too surprising what happened." She

each with their own suggestions: casting OJ Simpson as the Terminator, giving Kyle Reese a sidekick robot dog...

But united by a fierce promise not to sell each other out, Cameron and Hurd demanded creative control, and fended the dafter ideas off. Hurd bursts out laughing at the recollection. "It's true! The great thing about being young and naïve is that you don't know what you can't ask for. It wasn't in our contract with them that we had creative control. In fact, in post-production, [*Hemdale* chief] John Daly came in to the editing room and tried to re-edit the film."

REALISING A FANTASY

But first things first... To play the "anonymous, saturnine figure" envisioned in his script, Cameron considered Jurgen Prochnow, Lance Henriksen – but never a posing and imposing Austrian muscleman with his own fever-dreams (of humonculous movie stardom). In need of a bigger name, Cameron and Hurd found themselves reluctantly meeting Arnold Schwarzenegger over lunch, ostensibly to discuss the part of Kyle Reese. By the end, all concerned say it was clear Arnie was going to play the implacable death machine. It's what the then-36-year-old muscleman had wanted all along (he even paid for lunch), but he accepted the role against the advice of friends who felt a villain wasn't the right career move.

Biehn wasn't initially impressed either. "Arnold was not a movie star," he points out. "He'd been Conan and he wasn't somebody who was extremely well-respected. So starring in a science-fiction movie with Arnold and a director who'd made a movie for Roger Corman and got fired and it was the story of a robot who comes back from the future... it all sounded pretty ridiculous. But I met Jim and he seemed like a serious, smart guy. So I took a chance."

The original plan to shoot in the summer of 1983 in Toronto was scuppered when Dino De Laurentiis recalled Schwarzenegger for



the *Conan* sequel. So they switched to March 1984 in California, shooting in some of the nastiest parts of downtown LA. Hurd recalls turning into alleyways on location hunts with Cameron and their headlights finding "20 or 30 pairs of eyes, not all of them rats".

Schwarzenegger's first day encompassed the scene driving through the parking lot searching for Sarah and Reese. He and Cameron discussed the character's shark-like approach, eyes scanning back and forth, searching relentlessly for its prey – minimum movement, no wasted energy. "It took on a larger-than-life sheen," says Cameron. "I found myself on set doing things I didn't think I would do – scenes that were supposed to be purely horrific just couldn't be, because they were now too flamboyant with Arnold."

Biehn and Hamilton brought vulnerability and depth to the love story – as well as the ability to spin exposition while on the run, dodging bullets. It made for a tough shoot. "Jim doesn't coddle actors," states Biehn. "He doesn't treat them like they're anything special, and there were times that Linda fought back with him. They had more of a volatile relationship, and always have, than Jim and I. I could do a take and Jim would say, 'That's exactly how I don't want it.' I'm OK with that, but she was more sensitive."

If Cameron and Hamilton clashed, in Hurd's words, Cameron "mind-melded" with



Deadly stare: (left) a moment of reflection for Schwarzenegger in T3 character; (below left) the Terminatrix.



T1. As for Hurd, “I recently looked at it again and I’m thrilled with it. There’s some terrific sequences and it’s actually quite poignant. Do I wish we’d had those extra days? Do I wish we’d had more money? Absolutely. But considering the hand that we were dealt, I can’t complain. And I’m just glad that we stood up for ourselves and didn’t give in.”

They did have to give in, however, when sci-fi author Harlan Ellison threatened to sue for copyright infringement, claiming *The Terminator* ripped off his 1964 Outer Limits episodes *Soldier* and *Demon With A Glass Hand*. Against Cameron’s vehement objections, they were forced to instate the credit, “Acknowledgement to the works of Harlan Ellison” on all future copies of *T1*.

KEEPING THE DREAM ALIVE

“I’ll be back...” *T2* was an inevitability after *T1* scored its direct hit but it wasn’t meant to

be such a protracted affair. Wrapped up in *Aliens*, Cameron was initially content to just write and produce. He and Hurd met Martin Campbell in London and considered handing the reins to the future *Casino Royale* helmer. They even mooted the idea of a female terminator should Schwarzenegger’s demands prove too outlandish. As it was, Hemdale was mired in financial turmoil and the project lay mostly dormant as Hurd and Cameron married in post-*T1* bliss, then divorced during *The Abyss*. Schwarzenegger, however, refused to let the dream die.

“Arnold was always the biggest flag waver for *Terminator 2*,” says Cameron. “And Arnold gets what Arnold wants.” Schwarzenegger convinced Carolco mogul Mario Kassar to wade in and prise the rights away from a stuttering Hemdale, which, after some tortuous negotiations, he was able to do.

Setting out to make “the first action movie advocating world peace,” Cameron felt that the planet’s had aligned in the sequel’s favour. That included a reluctant Hamilton >>



Change in power: (above) Schwarzenegger, Cameron and the Terminators; (below) Kristianna Loken’s T-X grapples with Arnie in T3.

says it was quickly obvious that *T1* was going to turn out “even better than I had dared to hope. That’s why, when there was discussion about not completing the visual effects, it was a surprise. But the good news is we had incredible support.” When Hemdale tried to take over the film, the completion-bond firm – who assumed control at that stage – stood firm behind Cameron and Hurd.

AN INSTANT SUCCESS

The Terminator opened in the US on October 31, 1984. Orion, its domestic distributor, frontloaded their ad spend, anticipating a quick splash followed by the traditional B-movie nosedive. But executed with flair, precision and intelligence, *The Terminator* touched a cultural nerve. It stayed in cinemas for weeks and muscled its way onto several critics’ year-end Top 10 lists.

“*The Terminator* represented the dark side of human psyche – that fantasy of being totally stripped of all moral constraints and being able to do exactly what they wanted to do whenever they wanted to do it,” observed Cameron. “It’s the little chattering demon inside all of us.” Cameron and Hurd had proved their doubters wrong, who whispered that the duo would be forced to patch together a compromised Franken-film in post-production. Later, Cameron would declare himself “75 per cent” satisfied with





agreeing to return – a dealbreaker for the filmmaker. He set to work with his old friend William Wisner, cranking out the script in eight labour-intensive weeks.

Many of *T2*'s elements were strikingly familiar: the skull-littered future-landscape; Arnie being blown out through a plate glass window and Terminators punching their fists through car windows. "We do take the same elements and turn them on their heads," admitted Cameron.

What was new was the liquid-metal shape-shifter played by Robert Patrick. Having starred in several flicks for exploitation maestro, Cirio Santiago, under the aegis of Roger Corman, Patrick thinks being a Corman vet played a deciding factor in Cameron hiring him. But equally, Patrick's audition blew the director away. Only told *T2* required "an intense presence", the "gaunt, starving actor" was put on video by *T2*'s casting director, adopting the behaviour of a deadly, insect-like predator with phenomenal senses. At one point, Patrick whipped around and stared straight into the lens. When Cameron watched it later, he told the actor he'd jerked in fright away from the screen.

BACK FOR GOOD

T2's shoot kicked off in the fall of 1990 in the Mojave desert. Over six months, they changed the course of a river to film in LA's extensive flood-control channels; a defunct steel mill was brought back to life for the climactic, molten showdown; an office block was demolished. Once again, Cameron was phenomenally hands-on, marshalling an army of technicians to achieve his vision but not averse to working the smoke machine himself or touching up Arnie's blood spatters. "It's a total representation of what he wants to see," observed Schwarzenegger, whose make-up design was vastly enhanced from *T1*'s lo-tech efforts, and required a grim total of six days in the make-up chair.

Cameron has never viewed his Terminators as evil, just morally blank. In *T2*, he created

the dark irony of John Connor (Edward Furlong, cast less than a month before production when he was spotted playing baseball in Pasadena) looking up to the robot killer as a surrogate father. It's no wonder with a mother as dysfunctional as Sarah Connor, who's now evolved from a poodle-permed softie into a scary-fit guerrilla-warrior. Her mental state is beyond grim. "She's a tough person to understand, and very hard to like," agreed Cameron. "Yet she evokes sympathy because she's carrying the weight of the world on her shoulders. She's a complex, tragic figure." Hamilton loved pushing the role to the edge, although she again labelled her director "a tough man on people. Just really tough. He's gifted and hard to please."

Cameron coaxed Biehn back for two days to shoot a scene in which Sarah Connor conjures Kyle up in her asylum cell. "I was thrilled to do it," says Biehn. "Jim paid me nicely for it and I got a chance to work with him and Linda again. I was disappointed it didn't make the final cut, not just because I wasn't in it but because I didn't get any residuals!" (Cameron reinstated the scene for the *Ultimate Edition* DVD.)

As Biehn had endured on *T1*, both Hamilton and Patrick underwent a gruelling training regime under the tutelage of ex-Israeli special forces commando Uzi Gal. By the time Patrick turned up on set, "I was just insanely ripped. I didn't have a six-pack, I had an eight-pack. I couldn't believe how



Taking charge: (above) Cameron directs *T2*'s Edward Furlong and Arnie; (below) *T3*'s director, Jonathan Mostow with his star.



sinewy I got." On his first day, the actor walked into the make-up trailer and found Schwarzenegger sitting in the chair. His Teutonic counterpart grabbed Patrick's t-shirt, lifted it up and growled, "Yes, you are a leaner version."

In the first hallway showdown between Arnie and the T-1000, Schwarzenegger wanted to lift Patrick over his head and hurl him into the wall. "And Jim said no," considers Patrick. "That was the moment where I went, 'Wow.' And then he explained to him why: 'He's much denser than you, he's a formidable adversary and you have to buy into the fact that Robert can throw you around. The only way this movie's gonna work is if you look like you could get fucked up by this guy.'"

But it wasn't all smooth sailing. "I kept myself distant," Patrick discloses. "There was a lot of pressure on me, I wasn't relaxed... when I walked on set, everybody kind of looked at me and went, 'That's the new Terminator? He's a little guy. How's this going to work?' Halfway through the movie, I was going, 'Fuck, how's this going to work?' I gotta be honest with you, I was waiting for the axe to fall. At any moment, I'm gonna fuck up and they're gonna fire me."

Patrick credits both Cameron and Schwarzenegger with continually boosting his confidence. "Jim's always pushing you >>

Picture perfect: Cameron with Linda Hamilton.



Fight club: (left) becoming the Terminator takes a lot of make-up, and a big gun; (below) Arnie with Cameron and a T-800 on set T1.



Another arena where *T2* shattered glass ceilings was its astonishing soundscape. The score was, says Fiedel, “just slightly different – a bigger, richer sound but still all done with electronics and samples.” The way it blended into the on-screen action, however, was revolutionary. “A director friend of mine came up to me after the first screening and said, ‘You’ve broken the line between sound effects and music,’” Fiedel says proudly.

T2 finally opened on 3 July 1991 and went on to gross \$517m. It also snagged four Oscars and revolutionised digital effects. “We were literally saying, ‘Did we do this? Was this done by humans?’” recalls Muren. “Technologically, that was *the* breakthrough film. I still am amazed at Robert Patrick walking through the bars.”

SOUR TURN OF EVENTS

Up to early 1999, *T3* was still an option for Cameron to write and produce. Things got messy when Carolco sank under the weight of flops like *Cutthroat Island*. But Carolco’s co-founder Andy Vajna managed to seize the rights at his own company’s bankruptcy auction, outbidding Miramax with an \$8m offer. Feeling betrayed that he’d had a lunch with Vajna only days earlier in which the mogul hadn’t revealed his plans, a furious Cameron terminated their relationship. As part of the deal, Hurd was also bought out. “It’s all to do with bankruptcy law and it’s very arcane,” sighs the producer. But not to put too fine a point on it, she did very well out of it. “I don’t think so,” she demurs firmly. “I was *forced* to sell. One of us had to buy the other out and I didn’t have the financial wherewithal to do so...”

That November, Vajna and Mario Kassar announced plans for a third and fourth *Terminator* instalments. Schwarzenegger claimed he would only ever return for *T3* with Cameron at his side. But with the clock ticking on the ageing action man’s career, he laid his beefy mitts on a \$30m payday – and arguably diminished the mighty franchise. Even the normally boastful Austrian felt it, recalling his first day on the *T3* set: “When I first came out of my trailer in the Terminator gear, I felt uncomfortable and that everyone was disappointed and laughing at me.” Bicycle or not, *T3* was a tainted project.



to find the best in yourself. He sees in you the things that you don’t actually see in yourself and he knows how to bring them out.”

Several special-effects companies worked under a strict veil of secrecy for nearly a year on *T2*, vastly expanding the scope of the future-war sequences from *T1*. And, of course, ILM – and visual effects supervisor Dennis Muren – were busy in their northern California headquarters hard-driving CG into realms it had never gone before.

“It’s always stressful on Jim’s sets because he’s very improvisational,” says Muren. “He’ll come up with new ideas all the time.” If the pressure was fierce, the technology struggled to keep up: “It was undependable, prone to glitches and bad frames, which is expensive to fix. But Jim couldn’t cut the CG out of the movie if the effects didn’t work, like he could have done on *The Abyss*.”

If *T2*’s CG didn’t look as magical, compelling and terrifying as the T-1000 itself, egg would land on everyone’s faces. Muren’s saviour came from an unlikely source: Photoshop. “I’m a great believer in the artist being able to solve a problem and I knew that if we could get this data off of our own machines into a Mac and paint out bad frames here and there, then the shots would look good and Jim would buy it,” he recalls. “Without that, it would have been a mess.”

THE TERMINATOR NUMBERS GAME*

1 Amount Gale Anne Hurd paid James Cameron in 1983 for his share of *The Terminator* franchise, under the proviso that he and only he would get to direct the *T1* script.

2 Number of guardians sent from the future to protect Sarah Connor in James Cameron’s original *T1* script (the other was skewered on a fire escape).

3 Number of Sarah Connor’s the Terminator killed in James Cameron’s original *T1* script before locating Linda Hamilton (two in the film).

3 Number of seconds James Cameron cut from *T2* to obtain a 15 rating in the UK.

3.5 minutes the T-1000 is on screen in *T2*.

4 miles of freeway required to shoot *T2*’s nighttime lorry chase.

52 special effects shots ILM completed for *T2*.

36 Arnold Schwarzenegger’s age when he first played the Terminator.

55 Arnold Schwarzenegger’s age when he last played the Terminator.

63 *T2*’s ranking in IMDb’s top 250 movies of all time.

74 Grand total of words Arnold Schwarzenegger utters in *T1*.

178 *T1*’s ranking in IMDb’s top 250 movies of all time.

4.2m Number of Californians who voted Arnold Schwarzenegger into the Governor’s office.

5.5m The cost of the T-1000 effects work.

6m James Cameron’s *T2* salary.

6.5m The budget for *T1*.

15m Arnold Schwarzenegger’s *T2* salary (half of it paid in the form of a Gulfstream G-III jet).

30m Arnold Schwarzenegger’s *T3* salary.

38m *T1*’s US box office.

88m The official budget for *T2*.

517m *T2*’s global box office.

*all figures in dollars

Money was poured into it to ensure that there were a heap of spectacular set-pieces, but California’s future governor wasn’t the only person who felt a bit sheepish about riding roughshod over Cameron’s legacy.

As for Cameron, he was never prepared to give his blessing to *T3*, let alone have anything good to say about the final result. “When someone else brings up your baby, it’s always going to hurt,” he declared.

Let’s hope *Terminator Salvation* can restore the creator’s faith. **TF**

ALLSTAR, AQUARIUS, KOBAL, RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE, EYEVINE