

FILM

Director James Cameron taking the film industry to new worlds



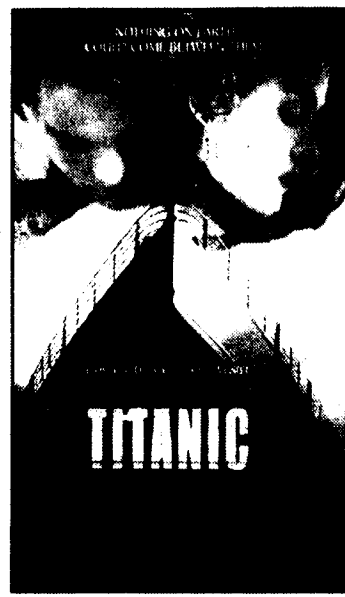
Avatar was intended to be Cameron's direct follow-up to *Titanic* in 1999, but with special effects at the time being much more primitive than today the budget for effects alone would have been \$400 million. The film was therefore pushed back ten years. The wait was certainly worth it as it is bound to take home countless awards for the effects alone and is one of the major drawing points that keep filling up the theater seats. It is definitely a theater film, too. Not even Blu-Ray will be able to capture the experience. This is the kind of film 40-foot movie screens are made for.

While the film could be easily picked apart and examined for all its flaws, such as generic and cheesy dialogue and cliché plot points - *Avatar* isn't about that. It is about being taken and transported to an entirely new world and being treated to a visual extravaganza unlike anything ever put on the screen.

Here's another part of Cameron's brilliance: he manages to transport people into his films where the viewer becomes blind to any flaws that may be present. They become invested in what they are viewing and become another character themselves.

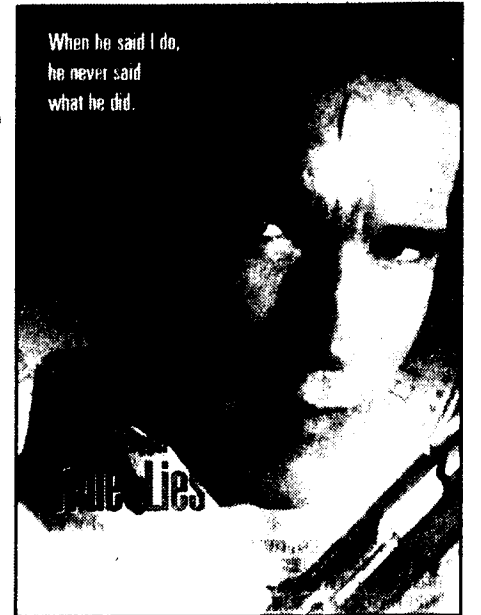
Despite the film only being 40 per cent live action and the rest CGI, the live characters still play a strong role and all manage to bring life and believability to their roles. Sam Worthington does a well enough job playing the lead, but he may be there for looks. The supporting cast holds the film together very well, however. The love interest, Zoe Saldana, gives a very solid performance as do Sigourney Weaver and Stephen Lang.

Avatar is being touted as a film that will change how Hollywood approaches filmmaking. It has already pushed so many visual boundaries. It definitely set the criterion for effects-reliant films and is pretty pointless to examine in any way other than entertainment. That's what Cameron is going for with this film and with all his previous films: he sets out to push the boundaries of films in a visual sense but also to entertain the masses and he is one of the best at doing so.



1997: *Titanic*, Cameron's last and greatest blockbuster to ever grace theaters, has reigned supreme for over a decade. 13 years ago, it was hailed by many to tout the greatest special effects to-date. Of course, with *Avatar*, Cameron has some new competition for the #1 top-grossing film of all-time: himself.

1994: During its day, *True Lies* was the most expensive movie ever to be produced. The action-comedy starred Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jamie Lee Curtis. The movie was also the first major production for Cameron's then-new visual effects company, Digital Domain.

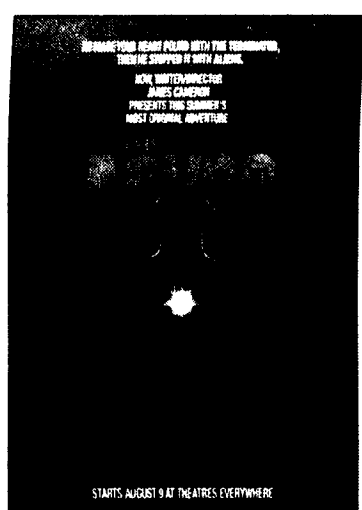


1991: *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* is commonly known as T2. The movie was a box-office smash, and one of the most critically acclaimed sequels to-date. For its time, the movie featured breakthroughs in computer-graphic imagery and was the first movie to utilize a semi-computer generated main character.

DAN KINEM
senior reporter

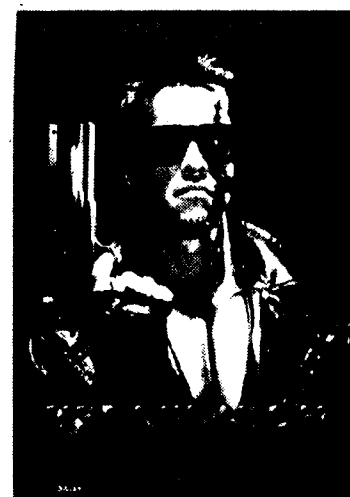
feature film. The plot is simple. It follows a paraplegic ex-marine who is given a chance to walk again through the use of a unique alien body called an avatar. It is his job to gain the trust of the natives of the planet Pandora so that a greedy corporation can steal their precious metal. It feels very much like a *Dances With Wolves*-style story that takes place in a futuristic world.

Anyone who has paid attention to James Cameron shouldn't be surprised that his latest film *Avatar* has become a world-wide phenomenon. Approaching its fourth week in theaters, *Avatar* has already surpassed other movies at the box office and is coming close to breaking the record set by *Titanic*, Cameron's previous



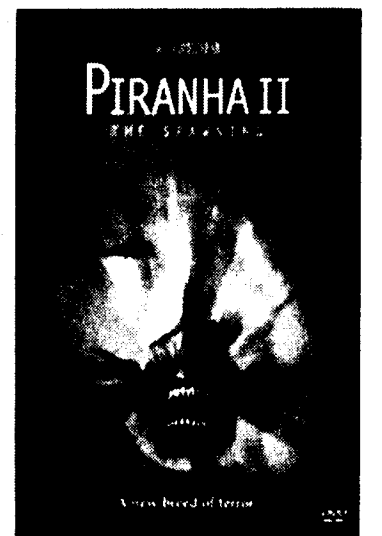
1989: When *The Abyss* came out in '89, critical reception was mediocre at best. Many claimed the film to be "lackluster," if anything at all. However, the world Cameron attempts to create may have served as a precursor to his later films.

1986: *Aliens* was Cameron's film that followed the success of *Terminator*. Both films helped to give Cameron the heavily-needed accreditation that eventually thrust his career as a big name director in Hollywood.



1984: *The Terminator* cost Cameron less than \$7 million dollars to produce and has grossed more than \$78 million world-wide. It was one of the first movies to popularize the idea that computer-generated imagery may be the "thing of the future" for Hollywood films.

1981: *Piranha II* was Cameron's directorial debut and the sequel to a low-budget horror. The film pioneered the animatronics that he would later utilize for the facehuggers in his movie, *Aliens*.



ALL PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

Cultural equality during King

SHANNON EHRIN
senior reporter

The 1950s and 1960s brought a cultural shift. While African Americans were continually faced with social barriers in the United States, African American artists were breaking boundaries in the cultural world: Sidney Poitier was the first African American actor to win an Academy Award for his role in *Lilies of the Field*; Marian Anderson was the first African American opera singer to become a member of the Metropolitan Opera; The Stu-

dio Museum in Harlem was the first art museum specifically showcasing African American art.

In a time of so much strife, African American artists persevered and prospered, but the effects of the Civil Rights Movement still impacted their work, and especially that of writers and poets.

Writers during the Civil Rights Movement wanted to give a voice to the African American communities by focusing their writing on the issues of racism and segregation that were plaguing the United

States. One of the most effective writers was Ralph Ellison. His novel *Invisible Man* garnered much acclaim and won the National Book Award for its views on racism in America.

Chester Himes and Lorraine Hansberry also gained success for their novels and plays detailing racism and racial segregation in the United States.

One man who had a multitude of success is Gordon Parks. As the first African American to work at *Life* magazine, Parks brought to light controversial goings-on in the United States and the world with his photographs. Not only was he a photographer, but he was an accomplished musician, director, composer, and writer. His achievements include the ballet *Martin*, choreographed in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., the movie *Shaft*, and his novel *The Learning Tree*, which Parks later adapted into a film.

No doubt that this was a changing time for all artistic fields, but music experienced the most drastic change and was a steady companion during hard times.

Stylistically, popular music transitioned from jazz and rhythm and blues to rock 'n roll and soul.

Record producers started successfully mainstreaming African American musicians,

building their own identity in the music world.

Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley laid the foundation for the sounds of Jimi Hendrix and his electric guitar, but soon enough America was invaded by a new genre and with it came groups like The Temptations.

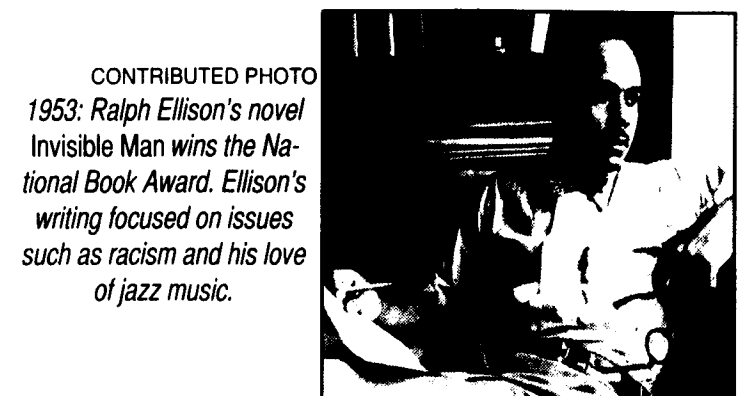
Jazz music was evolving at a rapid pace, and the style in which jazz music was played fluctuated. The growing popularity in the genre was thanks in large part to Louis Armstrong's influence beginning in the 1920s, saxophonist Charlie Parker, and jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald.

Less restraint was placed on the music, giving musicians leeway in how or what they played. Different Latin American cultures proved to be highly influential in the development of jazz music and musicians started using cultural instruments and not just the stereotypical trumpet or sax.

Art was changing paths along with music. Norman Lewis, Sam Gilliam, Horace Pippin, and Aaron Douglas all contributed works during the 1950s and 1960s. Abstract and expression became very popular among these and other artists, but painters still used their experiences in the African American community as inspiration for their creations.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO 1967: Are You Experienced, Hendrix's debut album launches his career in the music world, making his name and his music infamous.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO 1953: Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* wins the National Book Award. Ellison's writing focused on issues such as racism and his love of jazz music.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO Chicago, 1967: The *Wall of Respect* is created in Chicago, highlighting African Americans in the cultural community. The mural empowered African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement.

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