



# The Futurist: The Life and Films of James Cameron

*Rebecca Keegan*

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With the release of *Avatar* in December 2009, James Cameron cements his reputation as king of sci-fi and blockbuster filmmaking. It's a distinction he's long been building, through a directing career that includes such cinematic landmarks as *The Terminator*, *Aliens*, *The Abyss*, and the highest grossing movie of all time, *Titanic*. *The Futurist* is the first in-depth look at every aspect of this audacious creative genius—culminating in an exclusive behind-the-scenes glimpse of the making of *Avatar*, the movie that promises to utterly transform the way motion pictures are created and perceived. As decisive a break with the past as the transition from silents to talkies, *Avatar* pushes 3-D, live action, and photo-realistic CGI to a new level. It rips through the emotional barrier of the screen to transport the audience to a fabulous new virtual world.

With cooperation from the often reclusive Cameron, author Rebecca Keegan has crafted a singularly revealing portrait of the director's life and work. We meet the young truck driver who sees *Star Wars* and sets out to learn how to make even better movies himself—starting by taking apart the first 35mm camera he rented to see how it works. We observe the neophyte director deciding over lunch with Arnold Schwarzenegger that the ex-body builder turned actor is wrong in every way for the Terminator role as written, but perfect regardless. After the success of *The Terminator*, Cameron refines his special-effects wizardry with a big-time Hollywood budget in the creation of the relentlessly exciting *Aliens*. He builds an immense underwater set for *The Abyss* in the massive containment vessel of an abandoned nuclear power plant—where he pushes his scuba-breathing cast to and sometimes past their physical and emotional breaking points (including a white rat that Cameron saved from drowning by performing CPR). And on the set of *Titanic*, the director struggles to stay in charge when someone maliciously spikes craft services' mussel chowder with a massive dose of PCP, rendering most of the cast and crew temporarily psychotic.

Now, after his movies have earned over \$5 billion at the box office, James Cameron is astounding the world with the most expensive, innovative, and ambitious movie of his career. For decades the moviemaker has been ready to tell the *Avatar* story but was forced to hold off his ambitions until technology caught up with his vision. Going beyond the technical ingenuity and narrative power that Cameron has long demonstrated, *Avatar* shatters old cinematic paradigms and ushers in a new era of storytelling.

*The Futurist* is the story of the man who finally brought movies into the twenty-first century.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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