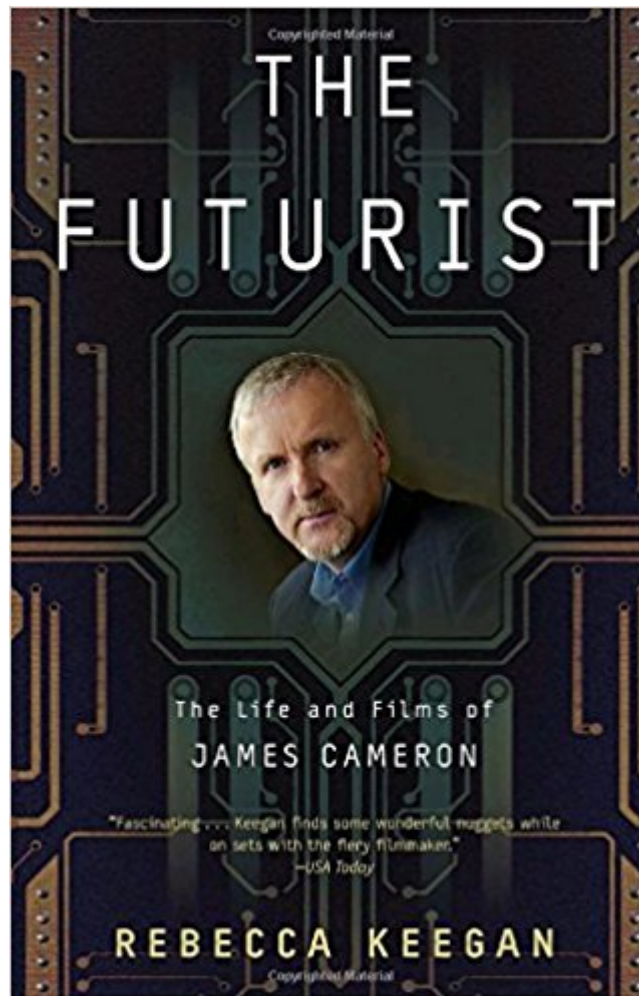




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The Futurist: The Life And Films Of James Cameron



Synopsis

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.

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Customer Reviews

Coinciding with the release of Avatar, James Cameron's first film in over a decade, Time reporter Keegan's solid biography of the dynamic director sheds welcome light on his cinematic achievements. Growing up in Ontario and later Los Angeles, Cameron was an accomplished artist and budding scientist who would bring his fascination with new technology to all his films. From his days doing grunt work for Hollywood indie legend Roger Corman—including his first directing job, helming Piranha 2—Cameron pursued his artistic vision with a passion that often translated into a tyrannical on-set presence. His string of action hits in the 1980s—Terminator, Aliens, The Abyss—made him one of the most sought-after directors in Hollywood, and he continued through the 1990s, culminating in the 1997 blockbuster Titanic. With each film, Cameron strove for new technological feats, from shooting tricky underwater dialogue scenes in The Abyss to the reconstruction of a near life-size version of the doomed ship in Titanic. Keegan explores not only the director's achievements on film, including an in-depth look at the 3D-film Avatar but also his often tumultuous personal life (including his five marriages). Fans of the charismatic director will welcome a look behind the scenes of some of the biggest movies in the last two-plus decades. (Dec. 15)

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There have already been several books about James Cameron, the director of such films as The

Terminator, Aliens, Titanic, and Avatar. But this is the one fans of moviemaking books will want. Keegan interviewed dozens of Cameron's friends and colleagues, including actor Bill Paxton, special-effects wizard Dennis Muren, and fellow director Peter Jackson. Unlike previous writers, Keegan appears neither to idolize nor revile Cameron; she admires him as a filmmaker while acknowledging his often abrasive and controversial on-set behavior. She explores how the director's big-budget movies are products, not of an overactive ego, but of a fertile imagination and a lifelong dream of telling stories in pictures. She hits the expected high points—the stunning success of and the near-universal predictions of failure for Titanic—but she also spends time on some of the lesser-known episodes from the director's life, including his battles with a British crew on the set of Aliens (reminiscent of George Lucas's similar struggles when he was making Star Wars). A fine book, in the same league as J. W. Rinzler's splendid The Making of Star Wars and The Complete Making of Indiana Jones. --David Pitt --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Although doom often looms over the characters in his movies, Cameron's ultimate message seems to be one of hope and love. He's rational enough to see that we're messing it all up, but he's a dreamer that believes anything is possible, that mankind can overcome. This book included an anecdote of Cameron offering his submersible to BP during their oil spill and also inviting scientists to propose a solution, actions that show how much Cameron cares about the world, about people, how he thinks outside the box and isn't afraid to push the limits of human innovation and potential, that doesn't sit on the sidelines but gets involved when he sees something that needs to be done. Filled with descriptions of the intensity he brings to each groundbreaking movie, the bio shows a man passionate about making new discoveries. An idealistic visionary fascinated with the apocalypse and new worlds, Cameron brings his artistic skills (he did the drawing of Rose in Titanic) and his love of science and technology to his famously overbudget movies. But he actually has the commitment and ability to deliver on his ambitions, taking huge risks (even risking his life to get the shots he wants), fearlessly pushing the bounds of CGI, and using inventive techniques to pursue his vision. Whether it's a new planet, an alien queen puppet, or a science fiction / fantasy story, Cameron's ability to design and create amazes and inspires. "There are two components to any filmmaker," Cameron says. "How you picture the movie in advance and how you make it happen in the real world." Cameron is exceptional both at dreaming up the vision and rallying people around it, assuaging their fears, and convincing them they're capable of seemingly impossible tasks. A person who dares to strive for the impossible has a strong personality: Cameron pushes everyone

around him as hard as he pushes himself, occasionally causing his crew to freak out or break down. More of a short hagiography with emphasis on movie production, the book doesn't dive deeply into Cameron's personal life, only briefly mentioning each of his 5 marriages and mentioning his children in 1 line, which I don't have a problem with. Although the book contains more information than a wikipedia article, more quotes from Cameron and others, more excerpts from documents, more analysis, would've improved the book.

James Cameron is my favorite film director. He's directed some of my choice films like: Terminator 1 & 2, True Lies, Titanic and Avatar. It was interesting to read how he used to drive a school lunch truck and quit when he decided films were for him after watching Star Wars. His underwater exploration of the Titanic wreck really interested me. Also, in the book there was a good bit about the MIR 1 submersible running out of power and possibly being stuck on the bottom. Another interesting part in the biography dealt with the discussion of big deal making in Hollywood. When Cameron was going over budget on Titanic he offered back his directing salary and back-end points but the studio said keep it as there won't be any profit anyways. The movie grossed over \$1.5 billion and he kept his points making him pretty rich. haha. The book felt like a long magazine article. That's probably because that's the author's area of expertise.

Rebecca Keegan is a Hollywood based contributor to Time magazine, as the dust jacket of the book explains. And from the first page that's very apparent. This book is not badly written. Well paced with simplistic language it makes for a fast and easy read. It reads, in fact, like an overlong magazine article. What I disliked was the content, specifically the lack thereof. It has the same amount of information of an exploded Wikipedia entry on the man. After reading all 274 pages of the book, back to front, there is nothing beyond a very short biography, surface deep overviews of each of his movies and snippets detailing James Cameron's undersea explorations. Every one of James Cameron's movies has enough behind the scenes drama and technical difficulties to fill a books worth of material on each film, so it's extremely disappointing to see only one or two problems from each movie - well known situations that are listed first after a quick Google search. And none of these situations are explored in any depth - Keegan simply explains the problem and how Cameron's innate genius solved them all, usually in the space of a 100 words. This book is lacking any depth and utterly fails to really get behind any of the difficulties Cameron regularly experiences with his films and the people that work on and fund them. This is a bare bones book which even worse almost comes off as a pure propaganda piece about James Cameron. The opportunities to

call him a genius, revolutionary character are never missed and shoehorned in wherever Keegan can find. The whole read you can't help but feel the presence of Cameron over Keegan's shoulder. Cameron is an infamous man when it comes to control and domination of the people around him. Instead of fighting against that and writing an interesting piece detailing the setbacks and failures of Cameron and his measures to cope with or make successes out of them Keegan writes a cowardly, superficial work that goes above and beyond to avoid any controversy. These are the words of a fearful fan girl. If you're looking for a basic, grade school level explanation of who James Cameron is and what films he has, as of 2011, done then this book may satisfy. However if you're actually looking for anything beyond the simple concepts and few anecdotes offered up then I would suggest looking elsewhere. Only snatch up this book if you can find it for a fifth of the price.

Informative, with lots of good anecdotes. Only reason I didn't give it 5 stars is that I couldn't help but feel that James Cameron had final approval over the content, which makes sense given the author's access, but it also makes it just a little too safe.

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