



SILVERSCREEN
PRIMARY
EDUCATION

The History of Science Fiction Cinema

By Adam Pepper

Session 10: Worlds of Wonder



Welcome to Session 10 of this 'History of Science Fiction Cinema'! Last time around the Earth, guys!

Over these last ten weeks, we have journeyed through space and time to uncover the secrets behind some of the greatest science fiction stories, movies, directors and characters, and tried to uncover what science fiction really is, and where it blurs with our reality today.

Session 10:

After the huge impact of 'The Matrix' and 'Jurassic Park', and their sequels across the 90s, and with the 'still burning brightly' action sci-fi genre (with stars like Schwarzenegger, Willis and Stallone all appearing in huge sci-fi movies), we head into the 2000s with our eyes on bigger stories, bigger worlds and bigger SFX!

But again, it is the film-maker who leads the way; giving us their own unique visions of dystopian futures, space travel and lost worlds in the expanding cosmos.

The 2000s see the superhero genre dominate, but also, a welcome return to 'smart sci-fi', with film-makers like Nolan, Villeneuve, Gareth Edwards and Rian Johnson blazing a varied and diverse trail across the stars.

And write off James Cameron at your peril as he, like George Lucas before him, continually tries to push the boundaries of filmmaking technology in order to bring galaxies far, far away to life. And, of course, Mr. Spielberg is always dreaming of the stars in his office somewhere!

Sci-Fi is shining brightly in the multiplexes and movie houses and, as our universe grows each day, so too do the stories our film-makers, authors and writers want to share with us...

Useful information for Session 10:

Christopher Edward Nolan (born 30 July 1970) is a British and American filmmaker. Known for his Hollywood blockbusters with complex storytelling, Nolan is considered a leading filmmaker of the 21st century. His accolades include a Golden Globe and two BAFTA Awards, as well as nominations for eight Academy Awards. Nolan's films have grossed more than \$6 billion worldwide, ranking him among the highest-grossing directors. In 2015, he was listed as one of the 100 most influential people in the world by *Time*, and in 2024, he was honoured with the British Film Institute Fellowship.

Nolan developed an interest in filmmaking from a young age.

After studying English literature at University College London, he made several short films before his feature film debut with *Following* (1998). Nolan gained international recognition with his second film, *Memento* (2000), for which he was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay.

He transitioned from independent to studio filmmaking with *Insomnia* (2002), and found further critical and commercial success with *The Dark Knight* trilogy (2005–2012), *The Prestige* (2006) and *Inception* (2010); the last of these earned Nolan two Oscar nominations—Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay. This was followed by *Interstellar* (2014), *Dunkirk* (2017) and *Tenet* (2020). For the war drama *Dunkirk*, he earned two Academy Award nominations, including his first for Best Director. Parting ways with long-time distributor Warner Bros. Pictures, Nolan signed with Universal Pictures for the biopic *Oppenheimer* (2023), which won him a Golden Globe Award and a BAFTA Award for Best Direction.

Nolan's work regularly features in the listings of best films of their respective decades. Infused with a metaphysical outlook, his films thematise epistemology, existentialism, ethics, the construction of time, and the

malleable nature of memory and personal identity. They feature mathematically-inspired images and concepts, unconventional narrative structures, practical special effects, experimental soundscapes, large-format film photography, and materialistic perspectives. He has co-written several of his films with his brother, Jonathan, and runs the production company Syncopy Inc. with his wife, Emma Thomas.

Denis Villeneuve (born October 3, 1967) is a French-Canadian filmmaker. He is a four-time recipient of the Canadian Screen Award (formerly Genie Award) for Best Direction, winning for *Maelström* in 2001, *Polytechnique* in 2009, *Incendies* in 2010 and *Enemy* in 2013. The first three of these films also won the Canadian Screen Award for Best Motion Picture, while the latter was awarded the prize for best Canadian film of the year by the Toronto Film Critics Association.

Internationally, he is known for directing several critically acclaimed films, including the thrillers *Prisoners* (2013) and *Sicario* (2015), as well as the science fiction films *Arrival* (2016) and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). For his work on *Arrival*, he received his first Academy Award nomination for Best Director. He was awarded the prize of Director of the Decade by the Hollywood Critics Association in December 2019.

His film *Dune* (2021), based on Frank Herbert's novel of the same name, premiered at the 78th Venice International Film Festival; the film received critical acclaim, was a commercial success at the box office internationally, and is his highest-grossing film to date. It earned him Academy Award nominations for Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Picture, with the film itself winning a leading six Oscars at the 94th Academy Awards.

In total, Villeneuve's films have grossed over \$1.1 billion worldwide. His latest film, *Dune: Part Two* (2024), was released on March 1, 2024, by Warner Bros. Pictures.



Films to look out for:

Apollo 13 (1995)

Interstellar (2014)

The Fifth Element (1997)

The Martian (2015)

Spiderman (2002)

Arrival (2016)

Iron Man (2008)

Bladerunner 2049 (2017)

Avatar (2009)

Dune (2021)

Monsters (2010)

Inception (2010)

Looper (2012)

Gravity (2013)