

Christian Bale, Sam Worthington in McG's Disappointing 'Terminator: Salvation'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 21, 2009 - 11:02am

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Rating: **2.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – [McG](#) [13]'s loud-and-annoying "[Terminator: Salvation](#) [14]" with [Christian Bale](#) [15] and [Sam Worthington](#) [16] continues the summer of non-Trek disappointments, delivering nothing but a bloated exercise in CGI overload. With awful dialogue, a ridiculous plot, and mostly uninspired performances, the interesting human element has been drained from the franchise. The machines have won.

Like "Aliens" without Sigourney Weaver or the first two "Terminator" movies without Linda Hamilton, "Terminator: Salvation" forgets a cardinal rule of action cinema - writing human characters that the audience is going to care about. The entire movie plays like a video game tie-in to the original franchise. Sure, it may be fun at times and it looks good, but it doesn't have nearly the impact as its source.



(L-R) Christian Bale stars as John Connor and Sam Worthington stars as Marcus Wright.

Photo credit: WB/Richard Foreman

The script from the writers of "Catwoman" and "Primeval" (the lame crocodile movie, not the cool BBC show), which really should have been a sign that the entire project was on thin ice to start, opens with the execution of a murderer named Marcus Wright (Sam Worthington). Before he gets his final injection, Wright signs over his body to the research of a dying scientist ([Helena Bonham Carter](#) [17]).

Many years later, the future has played out as expected and the war against the machines continues. If you're not familiar with the mythology of the franchise, "Salvation" will not stand on its own in any way. You need to know the names Sarah Connor, John Connor, and Kyle Reese and the roles they play in this universe before you go in. Even "T3: Rise of the Machines" stays in the canonical fold with [Bryce Dallas Howard](#) [18] taking the role once played by Claire Danes, Kate Connor.

Of course, the controversial star of "Salvation" is Christian Bale as the legendary John Connor. In the timeframe of the film, Connor is slowly taking his role as savior and leader of the human race, leading a small band of resistance fighters against increasingly deadly robots.

When John discovers that Skynet is trying to kill Kyle Reese ([Anton Yelchin](#) [19]), he realizes that there's a serious flaw in his past, present, and future. Kyle needs to go back in time and become John's father in the first film. While John is trying to find his future/past father (it will make your head hurt of you think about it too long), a new figure comes on the scene - a reborn Marcus Wright, the first non-self-aware cyborg and a being who puts all preconceptions about man and machine in doubt.

"Terminator: Salvation" undeniably looks good. There are some powerful, well-done action sequences, including a great attack on a gas station and fight on a bridge. But even the action starts to feel derivative and repetitive. Even the climax of the film is surprisingly unexciting.



Sam Worthington stars as Marcus Wright.

Photo credit: WB/Richard Foreman

As for one more positive, Sam Worthington makes an effective major movie debut with easily the best performance in the film. He's charismatic and interesting. It's the kind of vibrant performance that Christian Bale usually delivers but fails to this time around.

Bale is dull, passion-less, and over-done. Christian makes the irrational decision to bring the growling whisper he used as Batman to John Connor. Even worse, this Connor just doesn't feel like the kind of guy who would fire up anyone, much less the entirety of the remainder of the human population. I adore a lot of Bale's work and generally think he's an underrated actor, but it pains me to say that this is his worst performance.

But the blame doesn't fall completely at Bale's feet. It's mostly the script and McG's decision to hammer it into the audience's head. The film trudges forward when it should zip by. Worst of all, it's never once 'fun'. There's no sense that you should be having a good time at "Terminator: Salvation" as the special effects pound you into submission.

At least the first two "Terminator" films (and arguably the third) were a good time. People may be impressed by the special effects or Worthington's performance, but what's most disappointing about "Terminator: Salvation" is the simple lack of entertainment. How ironic that a "Terminator" film feels like it was made by a machine.

'Terminator: Salvation' stars Christian Bale, Sam Worthington, Bryce Dallas Howard, Moon Bloodgood, Anton Yelchin, Common, Jadagrace, and Helena Bonham Carter. It was written by John D. Brancato & Michael Ferris and directed by McG. It opens on May 21st, 2009. It is rated PG-13.



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