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James Cameron

What do the movies "The Terminator", "Titanic" and "Avatar" have in common? Not only were they each a huge success, but they were all directed and written by a man who has won three Oscars and many other awards and who has directed 17 and written the script of 13 movies: the Canadian James Cameron.

James Cameron was born in 1954 in Kapuskasing, a little town in the Canadian province Ontario. At the age of fifteen, he watched the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey" by Stanley Kubrick. Cameron was fascinated by the movie and began to inform himself about the history of movies and special effects. But because he couldn't afford the tuition costs of film school, he went to college to study first physics, then English Literature. After college Cameron married his first wife and worked as a truck driver. But after seeing the original movie of "Star Wars" in 1977, his passion for directing and creating movies was sparked again. So he acquired as much knowledge as possible about script writing, film making and handling film equipment.

What I find impressive, is that he wouldn't give up even though he didn't have many resources to begin with. But he did what he could do and that was absorbing all the information he could get about the thing he was passionate about. In my opinion, this is the secret of success. It's not about waiting for the right thing to happen. It's about making the most of the situation you're in. And that's what James Cameron did.

His first movie was a 35 minutes short movie, which he directed, produced, wrote, filmed and cut. He even made the special effects himself. The movie never made it to the screen, but Cameron didn't give up. He worked even harder and quit his job as truck driver to invest all of his time into movie making.

A few years later he had his big breakthrough when he wrote the script for the movie "Terminator". The movies "Rambo", "Aliens", "The Abyss", "Terminator II" and "Titanic" followed. The making of the movie "The Abyss" was really remarkable: Cameron and his team filmed a big part of the movie under water, so the crew had to train underwater diving beforehand. The movie is revolutionary because of its special effects that Cameron created solely for this purpose. Once again the cleverness and talent of this man became visible. Thus, for example a system had to be developed which allowed Cameron to talk to his crew underwater and to record the actors' dialogues. It's truly impressive how Cameron doesn't just order people around to do something, but he does it himself. If the necessary technical possibilities aren't given, he will just create them himself and work as hard as possible to make things happen.

The same can be said about the movie "Titanic". People might think that most of the movie is digitally edited, whereas this seems not to be the case: According to the movies' director of photography, Russell Carpenter, "basically it's 90 % the real deal". Before the movie was made, Cameron dove to the ship wreck many times. He also researched about all the original passengers of the ship in 1912. He spent a lot of time to read everything that he could find about it. For me, that's another explanation for his excellent work and success: he has never done things half-heartedly. All of the hard work paid off when the movie was finally released in 1997. "Titanic" was the first movie that reached a gross of over a billion dollars.

After "Titanic", there wasn't another movie that could compare to these impressive numbers, until 2009 when Cameron broke his own record with yet another brilliant movie: "Avatar". Its digital editing alone is astonishing. The movie really is a beautiful piece of art.

It is set in the 22nd century. A former soldier is being sent to Pandora, another world, where he has to replace his dead brother to convince the natives of Pandora, an extraordinary species called Na'vi, to give up their resistance against the humans and to let them take the resources from the land. For this reason, the humans create "Avatars", which look exactly like the blue skinned, exotic inhabitants of Pandora.

The movie is all about nature and how humans always want to destroy it in order to gain something for themselves. With this, James Cameron shows us yet another interesting aspect of himself: ecological awareness.

It's Cameron's opinion that the climatic change is the biggest threat for the USA since World War Two. He himself has become a vegan for this reason. In April 2014 a documentary series was shown on TV named "Years of Living Dangerously", which was partly produced by Cameron and which demonstrates the reasons for climatic change.

But every light has its shadow: James Cameron is known to have a certain style while working, almost a bit dictatorial. Kate Winslet, who played the character Rose in "Titanic", once said: "Yes, he lost his temper, but he only ever lost his temper for really, really good reasons. Like we would spend days literally setting up a shot, and if someone isn't doing his job and dumps water 10 seconds too late, then we've got to start over. ... Yeah, I could understand that man getting a little (ticked) off".

The reason why I chose this man to write about is the following: James Cameron is the proof that hard work pays off. He puts everything into his projects and the results speak for themselves. He is also a reminder that with perseverance and diligence almost anything is possible.

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