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Description

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Gladiator is a 2000 epic historical drama film directed by Ridley Scott and written by David Franzoni, John Logan, and William Nicholson. It was released by DreamWorks Pictures in North America, and Universal Pictures internationally through United International Pictures. It stars Russell Crowe, Joaquin Phoenix, Connie Nielsen, Tomas Arana, Ralf Möller, Oliver Reed (in his final role), Djimon Hounsou, Derek Jacobi, John Shrapnel, Richard Harris, and Tommy Flanagan. Crowe portrays Roman general Maximus Decimus Meridius, who is betrayed when Commodus, the ambitious son of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, murders his father and seizes the throne. Reduced to slavery, Maximus becomes a gladiator and rises through the ranks of the arena to avenge the murders of his family and his emperor.

Inspired by Daniel P. Mannix's 1958 book *Those About to Die* (formerly titled *The Way of the Gladiator*), the script, initially written by Franzoni, was acquired by DreamWorks, and Ridley Scott signed-on to direct the film. Principal photography began in January 1999 and wrapped-up in May of that year, after having experienced a range of problems due to the script being unfinished. Several members of the cast complained about the writing quality throughout the nineteen-week shoot in Fort Ricasoli, Malta, forcing many rewrites. Production complications were further exacerbated when Oliver Reed died of a heart attack before production was finished; British post-production company The Mill, that oversaw the film's CGI effects, was then tasked with creating a digital body double for the remaining scenes involving his character, Proximo.

Despite its troubled production, *Gladiator* was anticipated to be one of the year's most successful films; upon its release, the film grossed over \$503.1 million worldwide, becoming the second highest-grossing film of 2000 (behind *Mission: Impossible 2*). Critics praised the acting (particularly Crowe's and Phoenix's performances), Scott's direction, the visuals, screenplay, action sequences, musical score, and the production values, although its somewhat dark and brooding tone was criticised by some. Earning numerous accolades, *Gladiator* won five Academy Awards at the 73rd Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Actor for Crowe. *Gladiator* is known for having revitalized (or established) the careers of its cast and crew, elevating Crowe to leading man status, and turning Phoenix into a celebrity.

Since its release, *Gladiator* has been widely considered one of the best films of the 2000s and one of the greatest historical epic films ever made. It has been credited with reinventing the sword-and-sandal genre, after waning in the public eye during the 1960s; the film rekindled interest in films centered around the cultures of ancient Greece, Rome, and other iconic periods throughout world history. Several films have attempted to emulate *Gladiator*'s visuals, style, and tone with varying degrees of success. The film has been analyzed for its themes of revenge, violence, masculinity, and stoicism. In 2021, Scott announced that writing had begun on a sequel, which is scheduled to be released in the US on November 22, 2024.

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SYNOPSIS: In 180 AD, Hispano-Roman General Maximus Decimus Meridius intends to return home after he leads the Roman army to victory against Germanic tribes near Vindobona on the Limes Germanicus. Emperor Marcus Aurelius tells Maximus that his own son, Commodus, is unfit to rule and that he wishes Maximus to succeed him, as regent, to restore the Roman Republic. Marcus Aurelius informs Commodus; in response, Commodus murders his father.

Commodus proclaims himself the new emperor and requests loyalty from Maximus, who refuses. Maximus is arrested by the Praetorian Guard and is told that he and his family will die. He kills his captors and, wounded, rides for his home near Turgalium, where he finds his wife and son crucified. Maximus buries them and collapses from his injuries. Slavers find him and take him to the city of Zucchabar in the Roman province of Mauretania Caesariensis, where he is sold to gladiator trainer Proximo.

Maximus reluctantly fights in local tournaments, his combat skills helping him win matches and gain popularity. He befriends two other gladiators: Hagen, a German; and Juba, a Numidian. In Rome, Commodus organises 150 days of games to commemorate his father's death. Upon hearing this, Proximo reveals to Maximus that he was once a gladiator who was freed by Marcus Aurelius, and advises him to "win the crowd" to win his freedom.

Proximo takes his gladiators to Rome to fight in the Colosseum. Disguised in a masked helmet, Maximus debuts in the Colosseum as a Carthaginian in a re-enactment of the Battle of Zama. Unexpectedly, he leads his side to victory, and Commodus enters the Colosseum to offer his congratulations. He orders the disguised Maximus, as leader of the gladiators, to reveal his identity; Maximus removes his helmet and declares vengeance. Commodus is compelled by the crowd to let Maximus and the gladiators live.

Lucilla, Commodus's sister and Maximus's former lover, visits Maximus in his cell and offers her help, but he refuses. Meanwhile, Commodus arranges a duel between Maximus and Tigris of Gaul, an undefeated gladiator. Several tigers are set upon Maximus during the duel, but he prevails. Commodus orders Maximus to kill Tigris, but Maximus spares his opponent's life. In response, the crowd chants "Maximus the Merciful", which angers Commodus. Increasingly paranoid, Commodus instructs his advisor, Falco, to have every senator followed.

Maximus discovers from Cicero, his ex-orderly, that his former legions remain loyal. He meets in secret with Lucilla and Gracchus, an influential senator. They agree to help Maximus escape Rome to join his legions, topple Commodus by force, and hand power back to the Roman Senate. The Praetorians arrest Gracchus, and Commodus learns of the plot when Lucilla's son, Lucius, innocently hints at the conspiracy. Commodus threatens Lucilla and Lucius, and has the Praetorians attack the gladiators' barracks. Proximo and his men, including Hagen, sacrifice themselves to enable Maximus to escape. Maximus is captured at the rendezvous with Cicero, where the latter is killed.

To win back public approval, Commodus challenges Maximus to a duel in the Colosseum. He stabs Maximus in the lung before the match to gain an advantage. Despite his injuries, Maximus disarms Commodus during the duel. After the Praetorians refuse to aid him, Commodus unsheathes a hidden knife; Maximus overpowers Commodus and drives the knife into his throat, killing him. Before Maximus succumbs to his wounds, he asks for political reforms, the freedom of his gladiator allies, and the reinstatement of Senator Gracchus. As he dies, Maximus envisions reuniting with his wife and son in the afterlife. His friends and allies honor him as "a soldier of Rome", at Lucilla's behest, and carry his body out of the arena.

That night, Juba visits the Colosseum and buries figurines of Maximus's wife and son at the spot where he died.