



Denis Villeneuve

Denis Villeneuve OC CQ RCA (French: [dəni vilnœv]; born October 3, 1967) is a Canadian filmmaker. He has received seven Canadian Screen Awards as well as nominations for three Academy Awards, five BAFTA Awards, and two Golden Globe Awards. Villeneuve's films have grossed over \$1.8 billion worldwide.

Villeneuve began his career directing the Canadian dramas *August 32nd on Earth* (1998), *Maelström* (2000), and *Polytechnique* (2009). He rose to prominence with *Incendies* (2010) which earned a nomination for the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film. He expanded to direct the acclaimed English-language thrillers *Prisoners* (2013), *Enemy* (2013), and *Sicario* (2015), as well as the science fiction films *Arrival* (2016) and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). For *Arrival*, he received a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Director.

He has since directed the film adaptations *Dune* (2021) and *Dune: Part Two* (2024), based on Frank Herbert's novel of the same name. Both films were critically and commercially successful, with the former earning him Academy Award nominations for Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Picture.

Early life and education

Villeneuve was born on October 3, 1967, in the village of Gentilly in Bécancour, Quebec, to Nicole Demers, a homemaker, and Jean Villeneuve, a notary. He is the eldest of four siblings. His younger brother, Martin, also became a filmmaker.^{[1][2]}

Villeneuve attended the Séminaire Saint-Joseph de Trois-Rivières^[1] and later studied science at the Cégep de Trois-Rivières.^[2] He studied cinema at the Université du Québec à Montréal.^[3]

Career

1991–2012: Early films and breakthrough

Denis Villeneuve

OC CQ RCA



Villeneuve at the 2017 San Diego Comic-Con

Born	October 3, 1967 <div>Gentilly, Quebec, Canada</div>
Alma mater	Université du Québec à Montréal
Occupations	Film director · film producer · screenwriter
Years active	1990–present
Spouse	Tanya Lapointe
Children	3, including Salomé
Relatives	Martin Villeneuve (brother)

Signature



Villeneuve at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival

Villeneuve began his career making short films and won Radio-Canada's youth film competition, *La Course Europe-Asie*, in 1991.^[4] *August 32nd on Earth* (1998), Villeneuve's feature film directorial debut, premiered in the Un Certain Regard section at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival.^[5] Alexis Martin won the Prix Jutra for Best Actor. The film was selected as the Canadian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 71st Academy Awards, but was not nominated.^{[6][7]}

His second film, *Maelström* (2000), attracted further attention and screened at festivals worldwide, ultimately winning eight Jutra Awards and the award for Best Canadian Film from the Toronto International Film Festival. He followed that up with the controversial, but critically acclaimed black and white film *Polytechnique* (2009) about the shootings that occurred at the University of Montreal in 1989. The film premiered at

the Cannes Film Festival and received numerous honours, including nine Genie Awards, becoming Villeneuve's first film to win the Genie (now known as a Canadian Screen Award) for Best Motion Picture.^[8]

Villeneuve's fourth film *Incendies* (2010) garnered critical acclaim when it premiered at the Venice and Toronto International Film Festivals in 2010. *Incendies* was subsequently chosen to represent Canada at the 83rd Academy Awards in the category of Best Foreign Language Film^[9] and was eventually nominated for the award, though it did not win.^[10] The film went on to win eight awards at the 31st Genie Awards, including Best Motion Picture, Best Direction, Best Actress (Lubna Azabal), Best Adapted Screenplay, Cinematography, Editing, Overall Sound, and Sound Editing.^[11] *Incendies* was chosen by *The New York Times* as one of the top 10 best films of that year.^[12] In January 2011, he was selected by *Variety* as one of the top ten filmmakers to watch.^[13] Also in 2011, Villeneuve won the National Arts Centre Award.^[14]

2013–2016: Established work and acclaim

Villeneuve followed *Incendies* with the crime thriller film *Prisoners* (2013), starring Hugh Jackman and Jake Gyllenhaal. The film screened at festivals across the globe, won several awards, and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Cinematography in 2014.^[15] Following *Incendies* and *Prisoners*, Villeneuve won Best Director for his sixth film, the psychological thriller *Enemy* (2014), at the 2nd Canadian Screen Awards. The film was awarded the \$100,000 cash prize for best Canadian film of the year by the Toronto Film Critics Association in 2015.^[16]

Later that year, Villeneuve directed the crime thriller film *Sicario*, scripted by Taylor Sheridan,^[17] and starring Emily Blunt, Benicio del Toro, Daniel Kaluuya, and Josh Brolin.^[18] The film competed for the Palme d'Or at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, though it did not win.^[19] It screened at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2015 and went on to gross nearly \$80 million worldwide.^[20]



Villeneuve at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival

Villeneuve subsequently directed his eighth film, *Arrival* (2016), based on the short story *Story of Your Life* by author Ted Chiang, from an adapted script by Eric Heisserer,^[21] with Amy Adams and Jeremy Renner starring.^[22] Principal photography began on June 7, 2015, in Montreal, and the film was released in 2016.^[23] *Arrival* grossed \$203 million worldwide and received critical acclaim, specifically for Adams's performance, Villeneuve's direction, and the film's exploration of communicating with extraterrestrial intelligence. *Arrival* appeared on numerous critics' best films of the year lists,^[24] and was selected by the American Film Institute as one of ten films of the year.^[25] It received eight nominations at the 89th Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Adapted Screenplay, ultimately winning one award for Best Sound Editing. It was also awarded the Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation and the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation in 2017.^{[26][27]}

2017–present: Franchise films



Villeneuve at 2018 Cannes Film Festival

In February 2015, it was announced that Villeneuve would direct *Blade Runner 2049*, the sequel to Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982).^[28] Scott served as the film's executive producer on behalf of Warner Bros.^{[29][30]} It was released on October 6, 2017, to critical acclaim but underperformed at the box office.^[31] David Ehrlich of *IndieWire* wrote, "Few filmmakers of the 21st century have risen to prominence and prestige with the forcefulness of *Blade Runner 2049* director Denis Villeneuve, whose seemingly unstoppable career has been bolstered by a steady balance of critical respect and commercial success. In fact, Christopher Nolan is the only other person who comes to mind, and the similarities between the two of them are hard to ignore."^[32]

In December 2016, it was announced Villeneuve would direct *Dune*, a new adaptation of the 1965 novel for Legendary Pictures with Villeneuve, Eric Roth, and Jon Spaihts writing the screenplay.^{[33][34]} Timothée Chalamet, Rebecca Ferguson, Oscar Isaac, Stellan Skarsgård, Jason Momoa and Zendaya starred in the film.^{[35][36][37][38][39][40]} The film was released on October 22, 2021, by Warner Bros. Pictures to critical acclaim.^[41] The sequel, *Dune: Part Two*, was greenlit after the success of the first film^[42] and was released on March 1, 2024, to widespread critical acclaim,^{[43][44][45]} became his highest-grossing film to date, and the highest-grossing film of 2024.

Villeneuve was a producer for both films, which producer Mary Parent said as "...big and as epic as this film is, there were many times where it almost felt like you were on the set of an independent film" and that "...he's very very smart about where to spend money."^[46] He is in the process of writing a third *Dune* film, based on *Dune Messiah*.^[47]

Villeneuve is also attached to direct a historical drama about Cleopatra for Sony Pictures (based on the biography by Stacy Schiff) and an adaptation of Arthur C. Clarke's science fiction novel *Rendezvous with Rama* for Alcon Entertainment.^{[47][48][49]} He has also confirmed a secret project is in the works, on which he said "...one of them is a secret project that I cannot talk about right now, but that needs to see the light of day quite quickly. So it would be a good idea to do something in between projects, before tackling *Dune Messiah* and *Cleopatra*. All these projects are still being written, so we'll see where they go, but I have no control over that."^[50]