

= The Fifth Element =

The Fifth Element (French : Le Cinquième Élément) is a 1997 English @-@ language French science fiction action film directed and co @-@ written by Luc Besson . It stars Bruce Willis , Gary Oldman and Milla Jovovich . Primarily set in the 23rd century , the film 's central plot involves the survival of planet Earth , which becomes the responsibility of Korben Dallas (Willis) , a taxicab driver and former special forces major , after a young woman (Jovovich) falls into his cab . Dallas joins forces with her to recover four mystical stones essential for the defence of Earth against an impending attack .

Besson started writing the story that became The Fifth Element when he was 16 years old ; he was 38 when the film opened in cinemas . Besson wanted to shoot the film in France , but suitable locations could not be found ; filming took place instead in London and Mauritania . Comics writers Jean " Moebius " Giraud and Jean @-@ Claude Mézières , whose comics provided inspiration for parts of the film , were hired for production design . Costume design was by Jean Paul Gaultier .

The Fifth Element received mainly positive reviews , although it tended to polarize critics . It has been called both the best and worst summer blockbuster of all time . The film was a financial success , earning more than \$ 263 million at the box office on a \$ 90 million budget . At the time of its release it was the most expensive European film ever made , and it remained the highest @-@ grossing French film at the international box office until the release of The Intouchables in 2011 .

= = Plot = =

In 1914 , aliens known as Mondoshawans arrive at an ancient Egyptian temple to collect , for safekeeping , the only weapon capable of defeating a great evil that appears every 5 @,@ 000 years . The weapon consists of four stones , representing the four classical elements , and a sarcophagus containing a fifth element in the form of a human , which combines the power of the other four elements into a divine light capable of defeating the evil . The Mondoshawans promise their human contact , a priest from a secret order , that they will come back with the element stones in time to stop the great evil when it returns .

In 2263 , the great evil appears in deep space in the form of a giant ball of black fire , and destroys an attacking Earth spaceship . The Mondoshawans ' current contact on Earth , priest Vito Cornelius (Ian Holm) , informs the President of the Federated Territories (Tom Lister Jr .) of the history of the great evil and the weapon that can stop it . As the Mondoshawans return to Earth they are ambushed by Mangalores , a race hired by the industrialist Jean @-@ Baptiste Emanuel Zorg (Gary Oldman) , who has been instructed by the great evil to acquire the stones .

The Mondoshawans ' spacecraft is destroyed , though the stones are not on board ; the only item recovered is a hand of The Fifth Element . Scientists take it to a New York City laboratory and use it to reconstruct a powerful humanoid woman who takes the name Leeloo (Milla Jovovich) . Terrified of the unfamiliar surroundings , she breaks out of confinement and jumps off a high ledge , crashing into the flying taxicab of Korben Dallas (Bruce Willis) , a former major in the special forces .

Dallas delivers Leeloo to Cornelius and his apprentice , David (Charlie Creed @-@ Miles) , whereupon Cornelius learns that the Mondoshawans entrusted the four element stones to the alien Diva Plavalaguna (Maïwenn Le Besco) , an opera singer . Zorg kills many of the Mangalores because of their failure to obtain the stones , but their compatriots determine to seize the artifacts for themselves . Upon learning from the Mondoshawans that the stones are in Plavalaguna 's possession , General Munro (Brion James) , Dallas ' former superior , recommissions Dallas and orders him to travel undercover to meet Plavalaguna on a luxury intergalactic cruise ; Dallas takes Leeloo with him . Meanwhile , Cornelius instructs David to prepare the ancient temple designed to house the stones , then stows away on the space plane transporting Dallas to the cruise liner .

Plavalaguna is killed when the Mangalores attack the ship , but Dallas succeeds in retrieving the stones from the Diva . During his struggle with the Mangalores he kills their leader . Meanwhile , Zorg shoots and seriously wounds Leeloo , before finding a carrying case that he presumes contains the stones and takes it back to his spacecraft , leaving behind a time bomb that forces the

liner 's occupants to evacuate . Discovering the case to be empty , Zorg returns to the ship and deactivates his bomb , but a dying Mangalore sets off his own device , destroying the ship and killing Zorg . Dallas , Cornelius , Leeloo , and talk @-@ show host Ruby Rhod (Chris Tucker) escape with the stones aboard Zorg 's spacecraft .

The four join up with David at the weapon chamber in the Egyptian temple as the great evil approaches . They arrange the stones and are able to activate them with their corresponding elements , but having witnessed and studied so much violence , Leeloo has become disenchanted with humanity and refuses to cooperate . Dallas confesses his love for Leeloo and kisses her . In response , Leeloo combines the power of the stones and releases the divine light on the great evil and destroying its power , causing the planet to be proclaimed dead by Earth scientists as it becomes another moon in Earth orbit .

= = Cast = =

= = Themes = =

In an interview Besson stated The Fifth Element was not a " big theme movie " , although the film 's theme was an important one . He wanted viewers to reach the point where Leeloo states " What 's the use of saving life when you see what you do with it ? " , and agree with her . Jay P. Telotte , writing in the book Science Fiction Film , credited the film with exploring the theme of political corruption .

An article by Brian Ott and Eric Aoki in the feminist journal Women 's Studies in Communication considered gender to be one of the film 's main themes . The authors accused the film of erasing women from the introductory scenes , noting that Leeloo 's reconstruction marked only the second appearance of a female in the film 's first 20 minutes ; the other is an androgynous , mostly speechless presidential aide . When females appear in the film , they do so as passive objects , such as the sexualised flight and McDonald 's attendants ; or stripped of their femininity , such as the " butch " Major Iceborg . Stefan Brandt , in the book Subverting Masculinity , also said that the film " echoes stereotypical beliefs about gender " of all females in the film , including Leeloo , who leaves her passive role in the film during the times she is defending herself and during her fight with the Mangalores . With the exception of Tiny Lister 's portrayal of the President , all males in the film were considered to be as unmanly as possible in various ways , such as Ruby Rhod 's effeminacy , Vito Cornelius 's clumsy form of speech , and General Munro 's stupidity ; their purpose was to make Korben 's masculinity appear " god @-@ like " by comparison .

In the book The Films of Luc Besson , Susan Hayward considered The Fifth Element to be a classic story of a man " making his break from the tribe , proving his manhood , over @-@ throwing the malevolent forces and killing the chief , finally to reap the rewards of security and marriage " . Korben 's journey , however , is under threat not only from the Mangalores and Zorg , but also from Leeloo , who relents and helps him only at the last minute , accepting his declaration of love . The love story within The Fifth Element was considered to be one of the main narratives in the film , and it faces the same deadline as the main storyline . Hayward also considered the issue of environmental damage , in so far as waste and pollution are visible throughout the film . Whereas science fiction films often show a world wherein some new technology or threat either surpasses or fails humanity , The Films of Luc Besson included The Fifth Element amongst the minority of science fiction films that " hold up a mirror " and show humankind as responsible . The film was said to be skeptical of capitalist consumerism , in so far as the gadgets in Zorg 's office make an unhealthy obsession of his lust for technology . The tension between technology and man is treated as a problem requiring a final resolution .

= = Production = =

As a teenager , Besson envisioned the world of The Fifth Element in an attempt to alleviate

boredom . He began writing the script when he was 16 , though it was not released in cinemas until he was 38 . The original storyline was set in the year 2300 , and was about a " nobody " named Zaltman Bleros (later renamed Korben Dallas) who wins a trip to the Club Med resort on the planet Fhloston Paradise . There he meets Leeloo , a " sand @-@ girl " who has the " beauty of youth " despite being over 2 @,@ 000 years old . Besson continued to work on and modify the storyline for years ; by the time his film Atlantis was released in 1991 he had a 400 @-@ page script . Nicolas Seydoux and Patrice Ledoux from Gaumont were the first people to take on the project . In November 1991 , while looking for actors for the film , Besson met French comics creators Jean Giraud and Jean @-@ Claude Mézières and recruited them for the film 's production design . Giraud and Mézières 's comics were a major source of inspiration for Besson 's futuristic New York City . Mézières wrote the book The Circles of Power , which features a character named S 'Traks , who drives a flying taxicab through the congested air traffic of the vast metropolis on the planet Rubanis . Mézières showed images of the flying taxi to Besson , who was inspired to change the background of Korben Dallas from a worker in a rocketship factory to that of a taxi driver who flies his cab around a Rubanis @-@ inspired futuristic New York . Five other artists were hired for the project , and Jean Paul Gaultier was hired to design the film 's costumes . The team spent a year creating over 8 @,@ 000 drawings , during which time Besson approached both Bruce Willis and Mel Gibson for the lead role . Willis expressed interest , though he was reluctant to take on the role as the film was considered risky after his previous two films , Hudson Hawk and Billy Bathgate , had been received poorly ; Gibson eventually turned down the role . While the team impressed film companies with their designs , they struggled to find one willing to take on the film 's budget of almost \$ 100 million . In December 1992 production of the film stopped without any prior warning , and the team disbanded .

Besson went on to direct the commercially successful film Léon : The Professional , which was released in September 1994 . While shooting and releasing Leon , he continued to work on the script for The Fifth Element , shortening it and reducing the film 's budget to \$ 90 million before attempting to find a studio willing to produce it . Columbia Pictures , who had a partnership in Leon , agreed to finance the film . By this time Besson had decided to go with a lesser @-@ known lead actor in order to save on production costs . Besson was in Barry Josephson 's office when Willis called regarding a different film . Besson asked to speak to Willis " just to say hello " , and told him that The Fifth Element was finally going ahead , explaining the decision to go with a less @-@ expensive actor . After a short silence , Willis stated " If I like the film , we can always come to an arrangement " ; he agreed to take on the role after reading the script . Production of the film commenced in early August 1995 . Besson traveled to various places for casting , including Paris , London and Rome . He chose to hire Gary Oldman , who had starred in Léon , for the role of Zorg , describing Oldman as " one of the top five actors in the world . " For the character Leeloo , Besson chose Milla Jovovich from the 200 to 300 applicants he met in person . The " Divine Language " spoken in the film by Leeloo is a fictional language with only 400 words , invented by Besson . Jovovich and Besson held conversations and wrote letters to each other in the language as practice . Besson was in a relationship with Maïwenn Le Besco , who played the role of Diva Plavalaguna , for six years when filming commenced ; however , he left her for Jovovich during filming . Jovovich and Besson later married , but divorced in 1999 .

Despite wishing to shoot the film in France , Besson could not find suitable facilities and " with a heavy heart " instead filmed in London . It was primarily filmed at Pinewood Studios on seven soundstages including the 007 Stage . Construction of sets began in October 1995 . The opera scene was filmed at the Royal Opera House . Scenes depicted as being in Egypt were filmed in Mauritania ; the first shoot for the film , a background shot of the desert , occurred there on 5 January 1996 . Filming with actors began in late January , and was completed 21 weeks later . Willis finished filming on 16 May , while Oldman only commenced filming the following week ; the film 's protagonist (Korben) and antagonist (Zorg) never actually share any screen time . Despite being filmed in London , The Fifth Element was a French production , and went on to become the costliest European film ever made at the time . The buildings in New York were derived from both metabolist @-@ inspired masses of modular apartments from the 1960s , and the futuristic designs of architect

Antonio Sant 'Elia in the 1910s . Besson demanded that most of the action shots in the film take place in broad daylight , as he was reportedly tired of the dark spaceship corridors and dimly lit planets common in science fiction films , and wanted a brighter " cheerfully crazy " look as opposed to a gloomy realistic one . Gaultier designed every one of the 900 costumes worn by extras in the film 's Fhloston Paradise scenes , and checked each costume every morning . His designs , described as " intellectually transgressive " , were said to challenge sexuality and gender norms . A single jacket he designed for the film cost \$ 5 @, @ 000 .

The original name of the character Ruby Rhod was Loc Rhod . The name appears in both the original script and in the novelisation of the film . Speculation has been raised that the name change was a play on information in the periodic table . Rubidium is the first of the Period 5 elements , and exactly halfway down that row is the element Rhodium . Taking the first half of each element yields " Rubi Rhod " . Others have speculated his name is a play on his gender bending personality ; having a feminine first name and phallic surname . The term " ruby rod " also refers to the essential component of the first working laser design .

= = = Effects = = =

Three different teams handled the three different types of special effects used in the film . Nick Allder was placed in charge of mechanical and pyrotechnical effects , Nick Dudman was placed in charge of ' creature ' effects and Mark Stetson headed the visual effects team . Visual effects company Digital Domain was hired for the film , and Karen Goulekas was given the role of digital effects supervisor . Alias , Autodesk Softimage , Arete , Side Effect 's Prisms , RenderMan , as well as in @-@ house software , were used by Digital Domain to create effects . Some individual shots used a combination of live action , scale models , computer @-@ generated imagery and particle systems . The lanes of traffic in the scenes in New York City were created with particle systems :

We had maybe 80 cityscape shots with CG cars hurtling around , and you couldn 't animate them all by hand because there were just too many of them in each scene ... When the cars turned a corner , the velocity changes were automatic , so the animator didn 't have to worry about that . They just planned the moves in a very blocky way , and the mathematics smoothed out the rest .

Amongst the scale models used for filming were the buildings seen in New York City . Dozens of apartment blocks and 25 skyscrapers , some 20 feet (6 @. @ 1 m) high , were constructed in 1 / 24th scale . It took a team of 80 workers five months to build the models used in the film . The windows of the buildings were cited by the team as one of the most time @-@ consuming tasks , along with details behind the windows , such as furniture , blinds , lightboxes and tiny pieces of flat artwork . Virtual sets built within digital environments were created to enhance the use of miniatures . Motion control cameras moved throughout the scale sets , and the data they collected was exported to track and generate the CG animation and particle systems . Other techniques used in the film included digital matte paintings for backgrounds and the NURBS mathematical model for certain animations , including the sequence in which Leeloo 's body is reconstructed .

= = = Soundtrack = = =

The Fifth Element is one of Besson 's films which have been described as " intrinsically musical " ; some kind of music is playing during about 90 percent of the film . The film 's score was composed by Éric Serra . He relies heavily on the use of orchestral textures , such as the oboe and strings heard as the surgeons prepare to regenerate Leeloo , and the pizzicato as she is reconstructed . Serra also used many exotic influences , such as the Stalinist fanfare heard before the spaceport sequence , the reggae piece played in preparation for the flight , and the hula music that greets the passengers as they arrive in Fhloston . More conventional scoring techniques are present in the leitmotif that first appears when professor Pacoli mentions the fifth element , the militaristic snares as the warship prepares to attack the dark planet , and the Mahlerian funereal piece heard when Leeloo learns about war . The music used for the taxicab chase scene , titled " Alech Taadi " by Algerian performer Khaled , is excluded from the film soundtrack , but is available on Khaled 's

album N 'ssi N 'ssi .

The Diva Dance opera performance featured music from Gaetano Donizetti 's Lucia di Lammermoor : " Il dolce suono " , the mad scene of Act III , Scene 2 . It is one of the few pieces of music in the film that is diegetic . It was sung by Albanian soprano Inva Mula , while the role of Plavalaguna was played by French actress Maïwenn Le Besco . Part One (titled " Lucia di Lammermoor ") and Part Two (titled " The Diva Dance ") of this piece are included as separate tracks on The Fifth Element soundtrack , but are sequenced to create the effect of the entire performance seen in the film . The end of Part One blends into the beginning of Part Two , creating a smooth transition between the two tracks .

Released as an album under Virgin Records , the soundtrack peaked at No. 99 on the Billboard 200 . More than 200 @, @ 000 copies of the lengthy soundtrack were sold in France alone . Rodney Batdorf of AllMusic gave the album three out of five stars , stating it was " diverse and accomplished , and it is just as effective outside of the film as it is within it . " A review from Filmtracks.com also awarded the album three out of five stars .

= = Release = =

= = = Initial screening = = =

The film premiered on 7 May 1997 at the 1997 Cannes Film Festival , where it was selected as the opening film . Gaumont built an area for the screening that was over 100 @, @ 000 square feet (9 @, @ 300 m2) . Guests were given a " Fifth Element " Swatch , which was used as their ticket for entry . The event featured a futuristic ballet , a fashion show by Jean Paul Gaultier , and fireworks . Gaumont spent between US \$ 1 million and \$ 3 million on the event , a record at the time .

= = = Box office = = =

The film debuted at number 1 in the US , earning \$ 17 million on its opening weekend . It went on to become a box @-@ office success , grossing over \$ 263 million , almost three times its budget of \$ 90 million . Seventy @-@ six percent of the receipts for The Fifth Element were from markets outside the United States , and it was the ninth @-@ highest @-@ grossing film of the year worldwide . It was the most successful film at the box office in France in 1997 , with more than 7 @. @ 69 million seeing the film . In Germany the film was awarded the Goldene Leinwand , a sales certification award for selling more than three million tickets at the box office . The Fifth Element went on to become the highest grossing French film at the foreign box @-@ office , a record it held for 16 years until the release of The Intouchables in 2011 .

= = = Critical response = = =

The Fifth Element holds a 71 % approval rating at Rotten Tomatoes , based on 58 reviews . The site 's consensus reads : " Visually inventive and gleefully over the top , Luc Besson 's The Fifth Element is a fantastic piece of pop sci @-@ fi that never takes itself too seriously . " It has a weighted score of 52 / 100 at Metacritic , based on 22 professional reviews , indicating " mixed or average " reviews .

The Fifth Element polarised critics on release . Kevin Thomas of the Los Angeles Times described the film as an " elaborate , even campy sci @-@ fi extravaganza , which is nearly as hard to follow as last year 's Mission : Impossible . " He concluded that The Fifth Element was " a lot warmer , more fun and boasts some of the most sophisticated , witty production and costume design you could ever hope to see . " On film review show At the Movies , both Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel gave the film a " thumbs up " ; in his own review for the Chicago Sun @-@ Times , Ebert gave the film 3 stars out of 4 , calling it " One of the great goofy movies " , and concluding , " I would not have missed seeing this film , and I recommend it for its richness of imagery . But at 127 minutes , which

seems a reasonable length , it plays long . "

The film was , however , subject to a number of harsh reviews that expressed disapproval of its overblown style . Todd McCarthy of Variety wrote , " A largely misfired European attempt to make an American @-@ style sci @-@ fi spectacular , The Fifth Element consists of a hodgepodge of elements that don 't comfortably coalesce . " David Edelstein of Slate was even more critical , saying , " It may or may not be the worst movie ever made , but it is one of the most unhinged . "

Chris Tucker 's performance as Ruby Rhod also polarised critics . He was praised in the Los Angeles Times and in Time ; the latter called him " the summer 's most outrageous special effect . " Josh Winning of GamesRadar , however , singled out Tucker 's performance as the low point of the film , ranking it as No. 20 on his 2011 list , " 50 Performances That Ruined Movies . "

= = = Legacy and related media = = =

The film has been described by CBS News , Rotten Tomatoes , and ComingSoon.com as a science fiction cult classic . However film critic Mark Kermode reported that The Fifth Element was one of the most divisive films among his readers , regarded as both the best and the worst summer blockbuster of all time . Kermode recalled his own experience : " I remember very clearly being in Cannes when [The] Fifth Element was first played , and it really divided the audience . " Stephen Cass of Discover ranked the film the third @-@ best science fiction movie on subscription service Hulu , writing , " People seem to either like or loathe The Fifth Element ... Lavish visuals and entertaining performances from Bruce Willis , Milla Jovovich , and Gary Oldman make this movie worth watching . " In some circles the film has gained a " so @-@ bad @-@ it 's @-@ good " status ; Meredith Woerner of io9 listed The Fifth Element as one of " The 20 Best Worst Science Fiction Movies of All Time " . In 2007 the Visual Effects Society placed The Fifth Element at No. 50 , tied with Darby O 'Gill and the Little People , on their list of the 50 most influential visual effects films of all time . In 2014 , Time Out listed the film at No. 42 on their " 100 best sci @-@ fi movies " list .

Willis spoke favourably of the film in a 1999 interview , concluding " it was a real fun movie to make . " Tucker and Jovovich also spoke favourably of both their experiences making the film and working with Besson in interviews on the Ultimate Edition DVD ; Jovovich described Besson as " the first really amazing director I had worked with " . Asked in a 2014 interview if he liked the film , Gary Oldman stated , " Oh no . I can 't bear it . " He had explained in 2011 : " It was me singing for my supper because Luc had come in and partly financed [my film] Nil by Mouth . "

Alejandro Jodorowsky and Jean Giraud sued Besson after the film was released , claiming The Fifth Element had plagiarised their comic The Incal . Giraud sued for 13 @.@ 1 million euros for unfair competition , 9 million euros in damages and interest and two to five percent of the net operating revenues of the film . Jodorowsky sued for 700 @,@ 000 euros . The case was dismissed in 2004 on the grounds that only " tiny fragments " of the comic had been used and also because Giraud had been hired by Besson to work on the film before the allegations were made .

A novel adaptation of The Fifth Element , written by Terry Bisson , was published by HarperPrism in 1997 . There were rumors after the film 's release that it would be followed by a sequel , tentatively titled Mr. Shadow . In 2011 , Besson stated that a sequel was never planned , and that he has no desire to make one .

A video game adaptation of The Fifth Element was created by Activision for the PlayStation game console and PC in 1998 . The PlayStation version was generally met with negative reviews , though the PC version was better received . Lauren Fielder from GameSpot called the PlayStation version " quite possibly the worst game I 've ever played . " Doug Perry from IGN commented : " Take Tomb Raider , add in Leeloo Multipass and boring puzzles , and you 've got Fifth Element . " A racing game based on the film , New York Race , was released in 2001 . Eurogamer gave the game 6 out of 10 , concluding : " New York Race is a fun little arcade racer which oozes style , but it 's something you 'll grow tired of extremely quickly and as such remains fun only in short bursts . "

= = = Accolades = = =

The Fifth Element was nominated for Best Sound Editing at the 70th Academy Awards , and for Best Sound Editing at the 1998 Golden Reel Awards , but lost to Titanic in both cases . It won the BAFTA Award for Best Special Visual Effects , and the Lumières Award for Best Director . It was nominated for seven César awards , winning three : Best Director , Best Cinematography and Best Production Design . It was nominated for Film of the Year at the 1997 European Film Awards , as well as the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation , and the Satellite Award for Best Visual Effects . Thierry Arbogast was awarded the Technical Grand Prize at the 1997 Cannes Film Festival for his work on both The Fifth Element and She 's So Lovely . The film received four Saturn Award nominations : Best Science Fiction Film , Best Costume , Best Special Effects , and Best Supporting Actress for Milla Jovovich . Jovovich 's fight against the Mangalores was nominated for the MTV Movie Award for Best Fight , and the actress was also nominated for Best Actress ? Newcomer at the Blockbuster Entertainment Awards .

Conversely , Jovovich received a Razzie nomination for Worst Supporting Actress , and Chris Tucker was nominated for Worst New Star for his performances in both The Fifth Element and Money Talks .

= = Home media = =

The original home video release of The Fifth Element took place in North America on 10 December 1997 , on VHS , LaserDisc , and DVD . The original DVD presented the film in its original 2 @. @ 39 : 1 anamorphic widescreen format though carried no special features . The film was released in Sony 's Superbit format in October 2001 . In his review , Conrad Jeremy from IGN gave the picture quality of the original DVD release 9 out of 10 , though awarded the Superbit version a perfect score for picture quality . Overall the Superbit version was given 8 out of 10 ; the final score was brought down by the version 's complete lack of special features .

An " Ultimate Edition " set of two DVDs was released on 11 January 2005 . The only difference between the Superbit version and the Ultimate Edition disc one is the addition of a " fact track " , which when turned on displays trivia about the film , cast and crew as the film plays . The second disc provides various special features , focusing on visual production , special effects , fashion in the film , featurettes and interviews with Willis , Jovovich , and Tucker , as well as featurettes on the four different alien races in the film and Diva Plavalaguna . Ian Jane of DVD Talk praised the Ultimate Edition for its special features .

The first Blu @-@ ray Disc release of the film on 20 June 2006 was criticised as having poor picture quality by Blu @-@ ray standards , and for its lack of special features . In what has been called " an extremely rare move " Sony responded to complaints by making a remastered Blu @-@ ray version available , released on 17 July 2007 , and also offered a replacement exchange program for customers unhappy with the original Blu @-@ ray release . Ben Williams from Blu @-@ ray.com stated the remastered version " absolutely " made up for the lacklustre initial release and praised its high video and audio quality ; however , he criticised the continued lack of special features .