

= Inception =

Inception is a 2010 science fiction heist thriller film written , co @-@ produced , and directed by Christopher Nolan , and co @-@ produced by Emma Thomas . The film stars Leonardo DiCaprio as a professional thief who steals information by infiltrating the subconscious , and is offered a chance to have his criminal history erased as payment for a task seemingly @-@ impossible : " inception " , the implantation of another person 's idea into a target 's subconscious . The ensemble cast additionally includes Ellen Page , Joseph Gordon @-@ Levitt , Marion Cotillard , Ken Watanabe , Tom Hardy , Dileep Rao , Cillian Murphy , Tom Berenger , and Michael Caine .

After the 2002 completion of Insomnia , Nolan presented to Warner Bros. a written 80 @-@ page treatment about a horror film envisioning " dream stealers " based on lucid dreaming . Emphasizing on professional @-@ scale experience , Nolan retired the project and instead worked on 2005 's Batman Begins , 2006 's The Prestige , and The Dark Knight in 2008 . The treatment was revised over 6 months and was purchased by Warner in February 2009 . Inception was filmed in six countries , beginning in Tokyo in June 19 and ending in Canada in November 22 . Its official budget was US \$ 160 million , split between Warner Bros and Legendary . Nolan 's reputation and success with The Dark Knight helped secure the film 's \$ 100 million in advertising expenditure .

Inception 's première was held in London on July 8 , 2010 ; its wide release to both conventional and IMAX theaters began on July 16 , 2010 . A box office success , Inception has grossed over \$ 800 million worldwide . The home video market also had strong results , with \$ 68 million in DVD and Blu @-@ ray sales . Inception opened to acclaim from critics , who praised its story , score , and ensemble cast . It won four Academy Awards for Best Cinematography , Best Sound Editing , Best Sound Mixing , and Best Visual Effects , and was nominated for four more : Best Picture , Best Original Score , Best Art Direction , and Best Original Screenplay .

= = Plot = =

Dominick " Dom " Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio) and Arthur (Joseph Gordon @-@ Levitt) are " extractors " , who perform corporate espionage using an experimental military technology to infiltrate the subconscious of their targets and extract valuable information through a shared dream world . Their latest target , Japanese businessman Saito (Ken Watanabe) , reveals that he arranged their mission himself to test Cobb for a seemingly @-@ impossible job : planting an idea in a person 's subconscious , or " inception " .

To break up the energy conglomerate of ailing competitor Maurice Fischer (Pete Postlethwaite) , Saito wants Cobb to convince Fischer 's son and heir , Robert (Cillian Murphy) , to dissolve his father 's company . In return , Saito promises to use his influence to clear Cobb of a murder charge , allowing Cobb to return home to his children . Cobb accepts the offer and assembles his team : Eames (Tom Hardy) , a conman and identity forger ; Yusuf (Dileep Rao) , a chemist who concocts a powerful sedative for a stable " dream within a dream " strategy , Ariadne (Ellen Page) , an architecture student tasked with designing the labyrinth of the dream landscapes , recruited with the help of Cobb 's father @-@ in @-@ law , Professor Stephen Miles (Michael Caine) . While dream @-@ sharing with Cobb , Ariadne learns his subconscious houses an invasive projection of his late wife Mal (Marion Cotillard) .

When the elder Fischer dies in Sydney , Robert Fischer accompanies the body on a ten @-@ hour flight back to Los Angeles , which the team (including Saito , who wants to verify their success) uses as an opportunity to sedate and take Fischer into a shared dream . At each dream level , the person generating the dream stays behind to set up a " kick " that will be used to awaken the other sleeping team members from the deeper dream level ; to be successful , these kicks must occur simultaneously at each dream level , a fact complicated due to the nature of time which proceeds much faster in each successive level .

The first level is Yusuf 's dream of a rainy Los Angeles . The team abducts Fischer , but they are attacked by armed projections from Fischer 's subconscious , which has been trained to defend against extraction . The team takes Fischer and a wounded Saito to a warehouse , where Cobb

reveals that while dying in the dream would normally wake Saito up , the powerful sedatives needed to stabilize the multi @-@ level dream will instead send a dying dreamer into " limbo " , a world of infinite subconscious from which escape is difficult and a dreamer risks forgetting they are in a dream . Despite these setbacks , the team continues with the mission .

Eames impersonates Fischer 's godfather , Peter Browning (Tom Berenger) , to suggest Fischer reconsider his father 's will . Yusuf drives the van as the other dreamers are sedated into the second level .

In the second level , a hotel dreamed by Arthur , Cobb convinces Fischer that he has been kidnapped by Browning and Cobb is his subconscious protector . Cobb persuades him to go down another level to explore Browning 's subconscious (in reality , it is a ruse to enter Fischer 's) .

The third level is a snowy mountain fortress dreamed by Eames . The team has to infiltrate it and hold off the guards as Cobb takes Fischer into the equivalent of his subconscious .

Yusuf , under pursuit by Fischer 's projections in the first level , deliberately drives off a bridge and initiates his kick too soon . This removes the gravity of Arthur 's level , forcing him to improvise a new kick that will synchronize with the van hitting the water , and causes an avalanche in Eames ' level . Mal 's projection emerges and kills Fischer , Cobb kills Mal , and Saito succumbs to his wounds ; all three fall into Limbo . While Eames sets up a kick by rigging the fortress with explosives , Cobb and Ariadne enter Limbo to rescue Fischer and Saito .

Cobb reveals to Ariadne that he and Mal went to Limbo while experimenting with the dream @-@ sharing technology . Sedated for a few hours of real time , they spent fifty years in dream time constructing a world from their shared memories . When Mal refused to return to reality , Cobb used a rudimentary form of inception by reactivating her totem (an object dreamers use to distinguish dreams from reality) and reminding her subconscious that their world was not real . However , when she woke up , Mal was still convinced that she was dreaming . In an attempt to " wake up " for real , Mal committed suicide and framed Cobb for her death to force him to do the same . Facing a murder charge , Cobb fled the U.S. , leaving his children in the care of Professor Miles .

Through his confession , Cobb makes peace with his guilt over Mal 's death . Ariadne kills Mal 's projection and wakes Fischer up with a kick . Revived at the mountain fortress , Fischer enters a safe room to discover and accept the planted idea : a projection of his dying father telling him to be his own man . While Cobb remains in Limbo to search for Saito , the other team members ride the synchronized kicks back to reality . Cobb eventually finds an aged Saito in Limbo and reminds him of their agreement . The dreamers all awaken on the plane and Saito makes a phone call .

Upon arrival at Los Angeles Airport , Cobb passes the U.S. immigration checkpoint and Professor Miles accompanies him to his home . Cobb tests reality using his totem , a spinning top that spins indefinitely in a dream world , but ignores its result and instead joins his children in the garden .

= = Cast = =

Leonardo DiCaprio as Dom Cobb , a professional thief who specializes in conning secrets from his victims by infiltrating their dreams . DiCaprio was the first actor to be cast in the film . Nolan had been trying to work with the actor for years and met him several times , but was unable to convince him to appear in any of his films until Inception . Both Brad Pitt and Will Smith were offered the role , according to The Hollywood Reporter .

Joseph Gordon @-@ Levitt as Arthur , Cobb 's partner who manages and researches the missions . Gordon @-@ Levitt compared Arthur to the producer of Cobb 's art , " the one saying , ' Okay , you have your vision ; now I 'm going to figure out how to make all the nuts and bolts work so you can do your thing ' " . The actor did all of his stunts but one scene and said the preparation " was a challenge and it would have to be for it to look real " . James Franco was in talks with Christopher Nolan to play Arthur , but was ultimately unavailable due to scheduling conflicts .

Ellen Page as Ariadne , a graduate student of architecture who is recruited to construct the various dreamscapes , which are described as mazes . The name Ariadne alludes to a princess of Greek myth , daughter of King Minos , who aided the hero Theseus by giving him a sword and a ball of string to help him navigate the labyrinth which was the prison of the Minotaur . Nolan said that Page

was chosen for being a " perfect combination of freshness and savvy and maturity beyond her years " . Page said her character acts as a proxy to the audience , as " she 's just learning about these ideas and , in essence , assists the audience in learning about dream sharing " . Evan Rachel Wood was Christopher Nolan 's first choice to play Ariadne , but she turned it down . Before Ellen Page was offered and accepted the role , Nolan considered casting Emily Blunt , Rachel McAdams , Taylor Swift , Emma Roberts , Jessy Schram , and Carey Mulligan .

Tom Hardy as Eames , a sharp @-@ tongued associate of Cobb . He is referred to as a fence but his specialty is forgery , more accurately identity theft . Eames uses his ability to impersonate others inside the dream world in order to manipulate Fischer . Hardy described his character as " an old , Graham Greene @-@ type diplomat ; sort of faded , shabby , grandeur ? the old Shakespeare lovey mixed with somebody from Her Majesty 's Special Forces " , who wears " campy , old money " costumes .

Ken Watanabe as Mr. Saito , a Japanese businessman who employs Cobb for the team 's mission . Nolan wrote the role with Watanabe in mind , as he wanted to work with him again after Batman Begins . Inception is Watanabe 's first work in a contemporary setting where his primary language is English . Watanabe tried to emphasize a different characteristic of Saito in every dream level : " First chapter in my castle , I pick up some hidden feelings of the cycle . It 's magical , powerful and then the first dream . And back to the second chapter , in the old hotel , I pick up [being] sharp and more calm and smart and it 's a little bit [of a] different process to make up the character of any movie " .

Dileep Rao as Yusuf . Rao describes Yusuf as " an avant @-@ garde pharmacologist , who is a resource for people , like Cobb , who want to do this work unsupervised , unregistered and unapproved of by anyone " . Co @-@ producer Jordan Goldberg said the role of the chemist was " particularly tough because you don 't want him to seem like some kind of drug dealer " , and that Rao was cast for being " funny , interesting and obviously smart " .

Cillian Murphy as Robert Michael Fischer , the heir to a business empire and the team 's target . Murphy said Fischer was portrayed as " a petulant child who 's in need of a lot of attention from his father , he has everything he could ever want materially , but he 's deeply lacking emotionally " . The actor also researched the sons of Rupert Murdoch , " to add to that the idea of living in the shadow of someone so immensely powerful " .

Tom Berenger as Peter Browning , Robert Fischer 's godfather and fellow executive at the Fischers ' company . Berenger said Browning acts as a " surrogate father " to Robert , who calls the character " Uncle Peter " , and emphasized that " Browning has been with [Robert] his whole life and has probably spent more quality time with him than his own father " .

Marion Cotillard as Mal Cobb , Dom 's deceased wife . She is a manifestation of Dom 's guilt about the real cause of Mal 's suicide . He is unable to control these projections of her , challenging his abilities as an extractor . Nolan described Mal as " the essence of the femme fatale , " and DiCaprio praised Cotillard 's performance saying that " she can be strong and vulnerable and hopeful and heartbreaking all in the same moment , which was perfect for all the contradictions of her character " .

Pete Postlethwaite as Maurice Fischer , Robert Fischer 's father and the dying founder of a business empire .

Michael Caine as Professor Stephen Miles , Cobb 's mentor and father @-@ in @-@ law , and Ariadne 's college professor who recommends her to the team .

Lukas Haas as Nash , an architect in Cobb 's employment who betrays the team and is later replaced by Ariadne .

Talulah Riley as a woman whom Eames disguises himself as in a dream . Riley liked the role , despite it being minimal : " I get to wear a nice dress , pick up men in bars , and shove them in elevators . It was good to do something adultish . Usually I play 15 @-@ year @-@ old English schoolgirls . " .

= = Production = =

== Development ==

Initially , Nolan wrote an 80 @-@ page treatment about dream @-@ stealers . Originally , Nolan had envisioned Inception as a horror film , but eventually wrote it as a heist film even though he found that " traditionally [they] are very deliberately superficial in emotional terms . " Upon revisiting his script , he decided that basing it in that genre did not work because the story " relies so heavily on the idea of the interior state , the idea of dream and memory . I realized I needed to raise the emotional stakes . " Nolan worked on the script for nine to ten years . When he first started thinking about making the film , Nolan was influenced by " that era of movies where you had The Matrix (1999) , you had Dark City (1998) , you had The Thirteenth Floor (1999) and , to a certain extent , you had Memento (2000) , too . They were based in the principles that the world around you might not be real . "

Nolan first pitched the film to Warner Bros. in 2001 , but then felt that he needed more experience making large @-@ scale films , and embarked on Batman Begins and The Dark Knight . He soon realized that a film like Inception needed a large budget because " as soon as you 're talking about dreams , the potential of the human mind is infinite . And so the scale of the film has to feel infinite . It has to feel like you could go anywhere by the end of the film . And it has to work on a massive scale . " After making The Dark Knight , Nolan decided to make Inception and spent six months completing the script . Nolan states that the key to completing the script was wondering what would happen if several people shared the same dream . " Once you remove the privacy , you 've created an infinite number of alternative universes in which people can meaningfully interact , with validity , with weight , with dramatic consequences . "

Leonardo DiCaprio was the first actor to be cast in the film . Nolan had been trying to work with the actor for years and met him several times , but was unable to convince him to appear in any of his films until Inception . DiCaprio finally agreed because he was " intrigued by this concept ? this dream @-@ heist notion and how this character 's going to unlock his dreamworld and ultimately affect his real life . " He read the script and found it to be " very well written , comprehensive but you really had to have Chris in person , to try to articulate some of the things that have been swirling around his head for the last eight years . " DiCaprio and Nolan spent months talking about the screenplay . Nolan took a long time re @-@ writing the script in order " to make sure that the emotional journey of his character was the driving force of the movie . " On February 11 , 2009 , it was announced that Warner Bros. purchased Inception , a spec script written by Nolan .

== Locations and sets ==

Principal photography began in Tokyo on June 19 , 2009 , with the scene where Saito first hires Cobb during a helicopter flight over the city .

The production moved to the United Kingdom and shot in a converted airship hangar in Cardington , Bedfordshire , north of London . There , the hotel bar set which tilted 30 degrees was built . A hotel corridor was also constructed by Guy Hendrix Dyas , the production designer , Chris Corbould , the special effects supervisor , and Wally Pfister , the director of photography ; it rotated a full 360 degrees to create the effect of alternate directions of gravity for scenes set during the second level of dreaming , where dream @-@ sector physics become chaotic . The idea was inspired by a technique used in Stanley Kubrick 's 2001 : A Space Odyssey (1968) . Nolan said , " I was interested in taking those ideas , techniques , and philosophies and applying them to an action scenario " . The filmmakers originally planned to make the hallway only 40 ft (12 m) long , but as the action sequence became more elaborate , the hallway 's length grew to 100 ft (30 m) . The corridor was suspended along eight large concentric rings that were spaced equidistantly outside its walls and powered by two massive electric motors . Joseph Gordon @-@ Levitt , who plays Arthur , spent several weeks learning to fight in a corridor that spun like " a giant hamster wheel " . Nolan said of the device , " It was like some incredible torture device ; we thrashed Joseph for weeks , but in the end we looked at the footage , and it looks unlike anything any of us has seen before . The rhythm of it is unique , and when you watch it , even if you know how it was done , it confuses your

perceptions . It 's unsettling in a wonderful way " . Gordon @-@ Levitt remembered , " it was six @-@ day weeks of just , like , coming home at night battered ... The light fixtures on the ceiling are coming around on the floor , and you have to choose the right time to cross through them , and if you don 't , you 're going to fall . " On July 15 , 2009 , filming took place at University College London for the sequences occurring inside a Paris college of architecture in the story , including the library , Flaxman Gallery and Gustav Tuck Theatre .

Filming moved to France where they shot Cobb entering the college of architecture (the place used for the entrance was the Musée Galliera) and the pivotal scenes between Ariadne and Cobb , in a bistro (a fictional one set up at the corner of Rue César Franck and Rue Bouchut) and then on the Bir @-@ Hakeim bridge . For the explosion that takes place during the bistro scene , the local authorities would not allow the actual use of explosives . High @-@ pressure nitrogen was used to create the effect of a series of explosions . Pfister used six high @-@ speed cameras to capture the sequence from different angles and make sure that they got the shot . The visual effects department then enhanced the sequence , adding more destruction and flying debris . For the " Paris folding " sequence and when Ariadne " creates " the bridges , green screen and CGI were used on location .

Tangier , Morocco , doubled as Mombasa , where Cobb hires Eames and Yusuf . A foot chase was shot in the streets and alleyways of the historic medina quarter . To capture this sequence , Pfister employed a mix of hand @-@ held camera and steadicam work . Tangier was also used to film an important riot scene during the initial foray into Saito 's mind .

Filming moved to the Los Angeles area , where some sets were built on a Warner Brothers sound stage , including the interior rooms of Saito 's Japanese castle (the exterior was done on a small set built in Malibu beach) . The dining room was inspired by the Nijo Castle built around 1603 . These sets were inspired by a mix of Japanese architecture and Western influences . The production also staged a multi @-@ vehicle car chase on the streets of downtown Los Angeles , which involved a freight train crashing down the middle of a street . To do this , the filmmakers configured a train engine on the chassis of a tractor trailer . The replica was made from fiberglass molds taken from authentic train parts and then matched in terms of color and design . Also , the car chase was supposed to be set in the midst of a downpour but the L.A. weather stayed typically sunny . The filmmakers were forced to set up elaborate effects (e.g. , rooftop water cannons) to give the audience the impression that the weather was overcast and soggy . L.A. was also the site of the climactic scene where a Ford Econoline van flies off the Schuyler Heim Bridge in slow motion . This sequence was filmed on and off for months with the van being shot out of a cannon , according to actor Dileep Rao . Capturing the actors suspended within the van in slow motion took a whole day to film . Once the van landed in the water , the challenge for the actors was not to panic . " And when they ask you to act , it 's a bit of an ask , " explained Cillian Murphy . The actors had to be underwater for four to five minutes while drawing air from scuba tanks ; underwater buddy breathing is shown in this sequence . Cobb 's house was in Pasadena . The hotel lobby was filmed at the CAA building in Century City . Limbo was made on location in Los Angeles and Morocco with the beach scene filmed at Palos Verdes beach with CGI buildings . N Hope St. in Los Angeles was the primary filming location for Limbo , with green screen and CGI being used to create the dream landscape .

The final phase of principal photography took place in Alberta in late November 2009 . The location manager discovered a temporarily closed ski resort , Fortress Mountain . An elaborate set was assembled near the top station of the Canadian chairlift , taking three months to build . The production had to wait for a huge snowstorm , which eventually arrived . The ski @-@ chase sequence was inspired by Nolan 's favorite James Bond film , On Her Majesty 's Secret Service (1969) : " What I liked about it that we 've tried to emulate in this film is there 's a tremendous balance in that movie of action and scale and romanticism and tragedy and emotion . "

= = = Cinematography = = =

The film was shot primarily in the anamorphic format on 35 mm film , with key sequences filmed on 65 mm , and aerial sequences in VistaVision . Nolan did not shoot any footage with IMAX cameras as he had with The Dark Knight . " We didn 't feel that we were going to be able to shoot in IMAX

because of the size of the cameras because this film given that it deals with a potentially surreal area , the nature of dreams and so forth , I wanted it to be as realistic as possible . Not be bound by the scale of those IMAX cameras , even though I love the format dearly " . In addition Nolan and Pfister tested using Showscan and Super Dimension 70 as potential large format high frame rate camera systems to use for the film , but ultimately decided against either format . Sequences in slow motion were filmed on a Photo @-@ Sonics 35mm camera at speeds of up to 1000 frames per second . Wally Pfister tested shooting some of these sequences using a high speed digital camera , but found the format to be too unreliable due to technical glitches . " Out of six times that we shot on the digital format , we only had one useable piece and it didn 't end up in the film . Out of the six times we shot with the Photo @-@ Sonics camera and 35mm running through it , every single shot was in the movie . " Nolan also chose not to shoot any of the film in 3D as he prefers shooting on film using prime lenses , which is not possible with 3D cameras . Nolan has also criticized the dim image that 3D projection produces , and disputes that traditional film does not allow realistic depth perception , saying " I think it 's a misnomer to call it 3D versus 2D . The whole point of cinematic imagery is it 's three dimensional ... You know 95 % of our depth cues come from occlusion , resolution , color and so forth , so the idea of calling a 2D movie a ' 2D movie ' is a little misleading . " Nolan did test converting Inception into 3D in post @-@ production but decided that , while it was possible , he lacked the time to complete the conversion to a standard he was happy with . In February 2011 Jonathan Liebesman suggested that Warner Bros were attempting a 3D conversion for Blu @-@ ray release .

Wally Pfister gave each location and dream level a distinctive look to aid the audience 's recognition of the narrative 's location during the heavily crosscut portion of the film : the mountain fortress appears sterile and cool , the hotel hallways have warm hues , and the scenes in the van are more neutral .

Nolan has said that the film " deals with levels of reality , and perceptions of reality which is something I 'm very interested in . It 's an action film set in a contemporary world , but with a slight science @-@ fiction bent to it , " while also describing it as " very much an ensemble film structured somewhat as a heist movie . It 's an action adventure that spans the globe " .

= = = Visual effects = = =

For dream sequences in Inception , Nolan used little computer @-@ generated imagery , preferring practical effects whenever possible . Nolan said , " It 's always very important to me to do as much as possible in @-@ camera , and then , if necessary , computer graphics are very useful to build on or enhance what you have achieved physically . " To this end , visual effects supervisor Paul Franklin built a miniature of the mountain fortress set and then blew it up for the film . For the fight scene that takes place in zero gravity , he used CG @-@ based effects to " subtly bend elements like physics , space and time . "

The most challenging effect was the " limbo " city level at the end of the film because it continually developed during production . Franklin had artists build concepts while Nolan gave his ideal vision : " Something glacial , with clear modernist architecture , but with chunks of it breaking off into the sea like icebergs " . Franklin and his team ended up with " something that looked like an iceberg version of Gotham City with water running through it . " They created a basic model of a glacier and then designers created a program that added elements like roads , intersections and ravines until they had a complex , yet organic @-@ looking , cityscape . For the Paris @-@ folding sequence , Franklin had artists producing concept sketches and then they created rough computer animations to give them an idea of what the sequence looked like while in motion . Later during principal photography , Nolan was able to direct Leonardo DiCaprio and Ellen Page based on this rough computer animation Franklin had created . Inception had close to 500 visual effects shots (in comparison , Batman Begins had approximately 620) which is considered minor in comparison to contemporary visual effects epics that can have around 1 @, @ 500 or 2 @, @ 000 special effects images .

== Music ==

The score for Inception was written by Hans Zimmer , who described his work as " a very electronic , dense score " , filled with " nostalgia and sadness " to match Cobb 's feelings throughout the film . The music was written simultaneously to filming , and features a guitar sound reminiscent of Ennio Morricone , played by Johnny Marr , former guitarist of The Smiths . Édith Piaf 's " Non , je ne regrette rien " (" No , I Do Not Regret Anything ") pointedly appears throughout the film , used to accurately time the dreams , and Zimmer reworked pieces of the song into cues of the score . A soundtrack album was released on July 11 , 2010 by Reprise Records . The majority of the score was also included in high resolution 5 @. @ 1 surround sound on the 2nd disc of the 2 disc Blu @- @ ray release Hans Zimmer 's music was nominated for an Academy Award in the Best Original Score category in 2011 , losing to Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross of The Social Network .

== Themes ==

== Reality and dreams ==

In Inception , Nolan wanted to explore " the idea of people sharing a dream space ... That gives you the ability to access somebody 's unconscious mind . What would that be used and abused for ? " The majority of the film 's plot takes place in these interconnected dream worlds . This structure creates a framework where actions in the real or dream worlds ripple across others . The dream is always in a state of production , and shifts across the levels as the characters navigate it . By contrast , the world of The Matrix (1999) is an authoritarian , computer @- @ controlled one , alluding to theories of social control developed by Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard . Nolan 's world has more in common with the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari .

David Denby in The New Yorker compared Nolan 's cinematic treatment of dreams to Luis Buñuel 's in Belle de Jour (1967) and The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie (1972) . He criticized Nolan 's " literal @- @ minded " action level sequencing compared to Buñuel , who " silently pushed us into reveries and left us alone to enjoy our wonderment , but Nolan is working on so many levels of representation at once that he has to lay in pages of dialogue just to explain what 's going on . " The latter captures " the peculiar malign intensity of actual dreams . "

Deirdre Barrett , a dream researcher at Harvard University , said that Nolan did not get every detail accurate regarding dreams , but their illogical , rambling , disjointed plots would not make for a great thriller anyway . However , " he did get many aspects right , " she said , citing the scene in which a sleeping Cobb is shoved into a full bath , and in the dream world water gushes into the windows of the building , waking him up . " That 's very much how real stimuli get incorporated , and you very often wake up right after that intrusion " .

Nolan himself said , " I tried to work that idea of manipulation and management of a conscious dream being a skill that these people have . Really the script is based on those common , very basic experiences and concepts , and where can those take you ? And the only outlandish idea that the film presents , really , is the existence of a technology that allows you to enter and share the same dream as someone else . "

== Dreams and cinema ==

Others have argued that the film is itself a metaphor for film @- @ making , and that the filmgoing experience itself , images flashing before one 's eyes in a darkened room , is akin to a dream . Writing in Wired , Jonah Lehrer supported this interpretation and presented neurological evidence that brain activity is strikingly similar during film @- @ watching and sleeping . In both , the visual cortex is highly active and the prefrontal cortex , which deals with logic , deliberate analysis , and self @- @ awareness , is quiet . Paul argued that the experience of going to a picturehouse is itself an exercise in shared dreaming , particularly when viewing Inception : the film 's sharp cutting

between scenes forces the viewer to create larger narrative arcs to stitch the pieces together . This demand of production parallel to consumption of the images , on the part of the audience is analogous to dreaming itself . As in the film 's story , in a cinema one enters into the space of another 's dream , in this case Nolan 's , as with any work of art , one 's reading of it is ultimately influenced by one 's own subjective desires and subconscious . At Bir @-@ Hakeim bridge in Paris , Ariadne creates an illusion of infinity by adding facing mirrors underneath its struts , Stephanie Dreyfus in *la Croix* asked " Is this not a strong , beautiful metaphor for the cinema and its power of illusion ? "

= = Cinematic technique = =

= = = Genre = = =

Nolan combined elements from several different film genres into the film , notably science fiction , heist film , and film noir . Marion Cotillard plays " Mal " Cobb , Dom Cobb 's projection of his guilt over his deceased wife 's suicide . As the film 's main antagonist , she is a frequent , malevolent presence in his dreams . Dom is unable to control these projections of her , challenging his abilities as an extractor . Nolan described Mal as " the essence of the femme fatale " , the key noir reference in the film . As a " classic femme fatale " her relationship with Cobb is in his mind , a manifestation of Cobb 's own neurosis and fear of how little he knows about the woman he loves . DiCaprio praised Cotillard 's performance saying that " she can be strong and vulnerable and hopeful and heartbreaking all in the same moment , which was perfect for all the contradictions of her character " .

Nolan began with the structure of a heist movie , since exposition is an essential element of that genre , though adapted it to have a greater emotional narrative suited to the world of dreams and subconscious . Or , as Denby surmised , " the outer shell of the story is an elaborate caper " . Kristin Thompson argued that exposition was a major formal device in the film . While a traditional heist movie has a heavy dose of exposition at the beginning as the team assembles and the leader explains the plan , in *Inception* this becomes nearly continuous as the group progresses through the various levels of dreaming . Three @-@ quarters of the film , until the van begins to fall from the bridge , are devoted to explaining its plot . In this way , exposition takes precedence over characterisation . Their relationships are created by their respective skills and roles . Ariadne , like her ancient namesake , creates the maze and guides the others through it , but also helps Cobb navigate his own subconscious , and as the sole student of dream sharing , helps the audience understand the concept of the plot .

Nolan drew inspiration from the works of Jorge Luis Borges , the anime film *Paprika* (2006) by the late Satoshi Kon as an influence on the character " Ariadne " , and *Blade Runner* (1982) by Ridley Scott .

= = = Ending = = =

The film cuts to the closing credits from a shot of the top apparently starting to show an ever so faint wobble , inviting speculation about whether the final sequence was reality or another dream . Nolan confirmed that the ambiguity was deliberate , saying , " I 've been asked the question more times than I 've ever been asked any other question about any other film I 've made ... What 's funny to me is that people really do expect me to answer it . " The film 's script concludes with " Behind him , on the table , the spinning top is STILL SPINNING . And we ? FADE OUT " . Nolan said , " I put that cut there at the end , imposing an ambiguity from outside the film . That always felt the right ending to me ? it always felt like the appropriate ' kick ' to me ... The real point of the scene ? and this is what I tell people ? is that Cobb isn 't looking at the top . He 's looking at his kids . He 's left it behind . That 's the emotional significance of the thing . " Also , Michael Caine explained his interpretation of the ending , saying , " If I 'm there it 's real , because I 'm never in the dream . I 'm

the guy who invented the dream . "

Some pundits have pointed out that the top was not in fact Cobb 's totem , rendering the discussion irrelevant . They point out that the top was Mal 's totem ; Cobb 's was his wedding ring , as he can be seen wearing it whenever he is in a dream and without it whenever he isn 't . As he hands his passport to the immigration officer , his hand is shown with no ring ; thus he was conclusively in reality when seeing his children . Furthermore , the children were portrayed by different actors , indicating they had aged .

Mark Fisher argued that " a century of cultural theory " cautions against accepting the author 's interpretation as anything more than a supplementary text , and this all the more so given the theme of the instability of any one master position in Nolan 's films . Therein the manipulator is often the one who ends up manipulated and Cobb 's " not caring " about whether or not his world is real may be the price of happiness and release .

= = Release = =

= = = Marketing = = =

Warner Bros. spent \$ 100 million marketing the film . Although Inception was not part of an existing franchise , Sue Kroll , president of Warner 's worldwide marketing , said the company believed it could gain awareness due to the strength of " Christopher Nolan as a brand " . Kroll declared that " We don 't have the brand equity that usually drives a big summer opening , but we have a great cast and a fresh idea from a filmmaker with a track record of making incredible movies . If you can 't make those elements work , it 's a sad day . " The studio also tried to maintain a campaign of secrecy ? as reported by the Senior VP of Interactive Marketing , Michael Tritter , " You have this movie which is going to have a pretty big built in fanbase ... but you also have a movie that you are trying to keep very secret . Chris [Nolan] really likes people to see his movies in a theater and not see it all beforehand so everything that you do to market that ? at least early on ? is with an eye to feeding the interest to fans . "

A viral marketing campaign was employed for the film . After the revelation of the first teaser trailer , in August 2009 , the film 's official website featured only an animation of Cobb 's spinning top . In December , the top toppled over and the website opened the online game Mind Crime , which upon completion revealed Inception 's poster . The rest of the campaign unrolled after WonderCon in April 2010 , where Warner gave away promotional T @-@ shirts featuring the PASIV briefcase used to create the dream space , and had a QR code linking to an online manual of the device . Mind Crime also received a stage 2 with more resources , including a hidden trailer for the movie . More pieces of viral marketing began to surface before Inception 's release , such as a manual filled with bizarre images and text sent to Wired magazine , and the online publication of posters , ads , phone applications , and strange websites all related to the film . Warner also released an online prequel comic , Inception : The Cobol Job .

The official trailer released on May 10 , 2010 through Mind Game was extremely well received . It featured an original piece of music , " Mind Heist " , by recording artist Zack Hemsey , rather than music from the score . The trailer quickly went viral with numerous mashups copying its style , both by amateurs on sites like YouTube and by professionals on sites such as CollegeHumor . On June 7 , 2010 , a behind @-@ the @-@ scenes featurette on the film was released in HD on Yahoo ! Movies .

= = = Home media = = =

Inception was released on DVD and Blu @-@ ray on December 3 , 2010 , in France , and the week after in the UK and USA (December 7 , 2010) . Warner Bros. also made available in the United States a limited Blu @-@ ray edition packaged in a metal replica of the PASIV briefcase , which included extras such as a metal replica of the spinning top totem . With a production run of less than

2000 , it sold out in one weekend .

== Putative video game ==

In a November 2010 interview , Nolan expressed his intention to develop a video game set in the Inception world , working with a team of collaborators . He described it as " a longer @-@ term proposition " , referring to the medium of video games as " something I 've wanted to explore " .

== Reception ==

== Box office ==

Inception was released in both conventional and IMAX theaters on July 16 , 2010 . The film had its world premiere at Leicester Square in London , United Kingdom on July 8 , 2010 . In the United States and Canada , Inception was released theatrically in 3 @, @ 792 conventional theaters and 195 IMAX theaters . The film grossed \$ 21 @. @ 8 million during its opening day on July 16 , 2010 , with midnight screenings in 1 @, @ 500 locations . Overall the film made \$ 62 @. @ 7 million and debuted at No.1 on its opening weekend . Inception 's opening weekend gross made it the second @-@ highest @-@ grossing debut for a science @-@ fiction film that was not a sequel , remake or adaptation , behind Avatar 's \$ 77 million opening weekend gross in 2009 . The film held the top spot of the box office rankings in its second and third weekends , with drops of just 32 % (\$ 42 @. @ 7 million) and 36 % (\$ 27 @. @ 5 million) respectively , before dropping to second place in its fourth week , behind The Other Guys .

Inception grossed US \$ 292 million in the United States and Canada , US \$ 56 million in the United Kingdom , Ireland and Malta and US \$ 475 million in other countries for a total of \$ 823 million . Its five highest @-@ grossing markets after the USA and Canada (US \$ 292) were China (US \$ 68million) , the United Kingdom , Ireland and Malta (US \$ 56 million) , France and the Maghreb region (US \$ 43 million) , Japan (US \$ 40 million) and South Korea (US \$ 38 million) . It was the sixth @-@ highest @-@ grossing film of 2010 in North America , and the fourth @-@ highest internationally , behind Toy Story 3 , Alice in Wonderland and Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Part 1 . The film currently stands as the 44th @-@ highest @-@ grossing of all time . Inception is the third most lucrative production in Christopher Nolan 's career ? behind The Dark Knight and The Dark Knight Rises ? and the second most for Leonardo DiCaprio ? behind Titanic .

== Critical reception ==

Rotten Tomatoes gave the film a score of 86 % based on reviews from 331 critics , with an average score of 8 @. @ 1 / 10 . The website offers the consensus : " Smart , innovative , and thrilling , Inception is that rare summer blockbuster that succeeds viscerally as well as intellectually . " Metacritic , another review aggregator , assigned the film a weighted average score of 74 (out of 100) based on 42 reviews from mainstream critics , considered to be " generally favorable reviews . " In polls conducted by CinemaScore during the opening weekend cinemagoers gave Inception an average score of " B + " .

While some critics have tended to view the film as perfectly straightforward , and even criticize its overarching themes as " the stuff of torpid platitudes , " online discussion has been much more positive . Heated debate has centered on the ambiguity of the ending , with many critics like Devin Faraci making the case that the film is self @-@ referential and tongue @-@ in @-@ cheek , both a film about film @-@ making and a dream about dreams . Other critics read Inception as Christian allegory and focus on the film 's use of religious and water symbolism . Yet other critics , such as Kristin Thompson , see less value in the ambiguous ending of the film and more in its structure and novel method of storytelling , highlighting Inception as a new form of narrative that revels in " continuous exposition " .

The film has had excellent reviews in general . Perhaps playing off the film 's game imagery , Rolling Stone magazine 's Peter Travers called Inception a " wildly ingenious chess game , " and concluded " the result is a knockout . " In Variety , Justin Chang praised the film as " a conceptual tour de force " and wrote , " applying a vivid sense of procedural detail to a fiendishly intricate yarn set in the labyrinth of the unconscious mind , the writer @-@ director has devised a heist thriller for surrealists , a Jungian 's Rififi , that challenges viewers to sift through multiple layers of (un) reality . " Jim Vejvoda of IGN rated the film as perfect , deeming it " a singular accomplishment from a filmmaker who has only gotten better with each film . " Relevant Magazine 's David Roark called it Nolan 's greatest accomplishment , saying , " Visually , intellectually and emotionally , Inception is a masterpiece . "

Empire magazine rated it five stars in the August 2010 issue and wrote , " it feels like Stanley Kubrick adapting the work of the great sci @-@ fi author William Gibson ... Nolan delivers another true original : welcome to an undiscovered country . " Entertainment Weekly gave the film a B + rating and Lisa Schwarzbaum wrote , " It 's a rolling explosion of images as hypnotizing and sharply angled as any in a drawing by M.C. Escher or a state @-@ of @-@ the @-@ biz video game ; the backwards splicing of Nolan 's own Memento looks rudimentary by comparison . " The New York Post gave the film a four @-@ star rating and Lou Lumenick wrote , " DiCaprio , who has never been better as the tortured hero , draws you in with a love story that will appeal even to non @-@ sci @-@ fi fans . " Roger Ebert of the Chicago Sun @-@ Times awarded the film a full four stars and said that Inception " is all about process , about fighting our way through enveloping sheets of reality and dream , reality within dreams , dreams without reality . It 's a breathtaking juggling act . " Richard Roeper , also of the Sun @-@ Times , gave Inception a perfect score of " A + " and called it " one of the best movies of the [21st] century . "

BBC Radio 5 Live 's Mark Kermode named Inception as the best film of 2010 , stating , " Inception is proof that people are not stupid , that cinema is not trash , and that it is possible for blockbusters and art to be the same thing . "

In his review for the Chicago Tribune , Michael Phillips gave the film 3 stars out of 4 and wrote , " I found myself wishing Inception were weirder , further out ... the film is Nolan 's labyrinth all the way , and it 's gratifying to experience a summer movie with large visual ambitions and with nothing more or less on its mind than (as Shakespeare said) a dream that hath no bottom . " Time magazine 's Richard Corliss wrote the film 's " noble intent is to implant one man 's vision in the mind of a vast audience ... The idea of moviegoing as communal dreaming is a century old . With Inception , viewers have a chance to see that notion get a state @-@ of @-@ the @-@ art update . " Los Angeles Times ' Kenneth Turan felt that Nolan was able to blend " the best of traditional and modern filmmaking . If you 're searching for smart and nervy popular entertainment , this is what it looks like . " USA Today rated the film three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of four and Claudia Puig felt that Nolan " regards his viewers as possibly smarter than they are ? or at least as capable of rising to his inventive level . That 's a tall order . But it 's refreshing to find a director who makes us stretch , even occasionally struggle , to keep up . "

Not all reviewers gave the film positive reviews . New York magazine 's David Edelstein claimed in his review to " have no idea what so many people are raving about . It 's as if someone went into their heads while they were sleeping and planted the idea that Inception is a visionary masterpiece and ? hold on ... Whoa ! I think I get it . The movie is a metaphor for the power of delusional hype ? a metaphor for itself . " Rex Reed of The New York Observer explained the film 's development as " pretty much what we 've come to expect from summer movies in general and Christopher Nolan movies in particular ... [it] doesn 't seem like much of an accomplishment to me . " A. O. Scott of The New York Times commented " there is a lot to see in Inception , there is nothing that counts as genuine vision . Mr. Nolan 's idea of the mind is too literal , too logical , and too rule @-@ bound to allow the full measure of madness . " David Denby , writing in The New Yorker , considered the film not nearly as much fun as Nolan imagined it to be , concluding , " Inception is a stunning @-@ looking film that gets lost in fabulous intricacies , a movie devoted to its own workings and to little else . "

Several sources have noted many plot similarities between the film and the 2002 Uncle Scrooge

comic The Dream of a Lifetime by Don Rosa .

In April 2014 , The Daily Telegraph placed the title on its top ten list of the most overrated films . Telegraph 's Tim Robey stated , " It 's a criminal failing of the movie that it purports to be about people 's dreams being invaded , but demonstrates no instinct at all for what a dream has ever felt like , and no flair for making us feel like we 're in one , at any point . " The film won an informal poll by The Los Angeles Times as the most overrated movie of 2010 .

In March 2011 , the film was voted by BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio 1Xtra listeners as their ninth favorite film of all time . In 2012 , Inception was ranked the 35th Best Edited Film of All Time by the Motion Picture Editors Guild . In the same year , Total Film named it the most rewatchable movie of all time . In 2014 , Empire ranked Inception the tenth greatest film ever made on their list of " The 301 Greatest Movies Of All Time " as voted by the magazine 's readers , while Rolling Stone magazine named it the second best science fiction film since the turn of the century . Inception was ranked 84th on Hollywood 's 100 Favorite Films , a list compiled by The Hollywood Reporter in 2014 , surveying " Studio chiefs , Oscar winners and TV royalty " .

== Top ten lists ==

Inception was listed on many critics ' top ten lists .

== Accolades ==

Inception appeared on over 273 critics ' lists of the top ten films of 2010 , being picked as No.1 on 55 of those lists . It was the second most mentioned film in both the top ten and No.1 lists only behind The Social Network and was one of the most critically acclaimed films of 2010 , alongside the former , Toy Story 3 , The King 's Speech , and Black Swan .

The film won many awards in technical categories , such as Academy Awards for Best Cinematography , Best Sound Editing , Best Sound Mixing , and Best Visual Effects , and the British Academy Film Awards for Best Production Design , Best Special Visual Effects and Best Sound . In most of its artistic nominations , such as Film , Director , and Screenplay at the Oscars , BAFTAs and Golden Globes , the film was defeated by The Social Network and The King 's Speech . However , the film did win the two highest honors for a science fiction or fantasy film : the 2011 Bradbury Award for best dramatic production and the 2011 Hugo Award for best dramatic presentation , long form .

== In popular culture ==

Asaf Avidan 's " The Labyrinth Song " , from his album " Gold Shadow " , is set in the film and speaks from one of the character 's perspectives . Numerous pop and hip @-@ hop songs reference Inception , including Common (Blue Sky) , N.E.R.D. (Hypnotize U) , XV (The Kick) , The Black Eyed Peas (Just Can 't Get Enough) , Lil Wayne (6 Foot 7 Foot feat . Cory Gunz) , J. Lo (On The Floor feat . Pitbull) , and B.O.B. (Strange Clouds) , while TI had Inception @-@ based artwork in two of his mixtapes . An instrumental track by Joe Budden is titled Inception .

Numerous television shows have also made reference to or have parodied Inception .