

[SUBSCRIBE](#)[ENTERTAINMENT > MOVIES](#)

Christopher Nolan's 'Oppenheimer': Everything to Know

From the star-studded cast to the plot, here's everything to know about Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer*

By **Samantha Stutsman** | Updated on July 26, 2023 04:58PM EDT



PHOTO: MELINDA SUE GORDON/UNIVERSAL PICTURES

[Christopher Nolan](#)'s 12th cinematic creation is a hit!

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer. It surpassed expectations on opening weekend, earning [\\$82.4 million](#) at the box office.

The biopic follows J. Robert Oppenheimer, played by [Cillian Murphy](#), the scientist who famously led the Manhattan Project — the effort to create an atomic bomb during World War II.

In February 2022, Murphy [spoke with Esquire](#) about the film and revealed what very little he could.

"The difference with this story is everybody knows what happened. But [Christopher Nolan] is telling it in a different way. That's all I can say," he said.

Murphy shared that the role felt "immense and terrifying" when it was first presented to him.

"But if I felt it was easy, I wouldn't be interested. I do get nervous, anxious and insecure, but then you go, 'F— it. I have been doing it for 25 years and I have done it before. So just keep going,' " he said.



SPONSORED BY
ROCKET MORTGAGE®

House-hunting Essential: Compromise

[Learn More →](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

to be," [Damon told Variety](#). "I think it's almost three hours. It goes so fast, it's great."

From the plot to the cast, here's everything to know about *Oppenheimer*.

What is *Oppenheimer* about?



PHOTO: BETTMANN

The film is about the creation of the atomic bomb during World War II. More specifically, it follows J. Robert Oppenheimer, the man responsible for making the Manhattan Project a success.

In a statement to the AP issued Dec. 13, 2022, Nolan said that utilizing IMAX technology "is massively important in transporting the audience into

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Is there a trailer for *Oppenheimer*?

Oppenheimer - Official Trailer



The [first peek at Oppenheimer](#) arrived in July 2022 along with the film's announcement.

As images from the movie flash alongside a countdown clock, a voiceover described Murphy's character as "the most important man who ever lived," while a tagline reads, "The world forever changes."

The [film's official trailer](#) later dropped on Dec. 18, 2022.

The two-minute teaser opens with a massive explosion. The camera then cuts to Murphy's character, who appears to be orchestrating the creation of the infamous atomic bomb.

"They won't fear it until they understand it. And they won't understand it until they've used it," Murphy can be heard saying. "Theory will only take you so far. I don't know if we can be trusted with such a weapon. But we have no choice."

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Oppenheimer | New Trailer



In May 2023, Universal Pictures premiered a [second trailer](#).

"This is a national emergency. We're in a race against the Nazis. And I know what it means if the Nazis have a bomb. We've got one hope," Murphy's character, Oppenheimer, says to a group of men in suits.

Believing that the Nazis have an 18-month head start on their own atomic bomb, Oppenheimer and Matt Damon's character, Lt. Gen. Leslie Groves, rush to recruit scientists from all across the country.

"Why? Why? How about because this is the most important thing to ever happen in the history of the world," Groves yells at a scientist who questions "why" he should move his family to the "middle of nowhere for who knows how long."

Oppenheimer and Groves are then seen having a private conversation.

"Are we saying there's a chance that when we push that button, we destroy the world?" the lieutenant asks. To which Oppenheimer replies, "Chances are near zero."

The trailer concludes with a speech from the legendary physicist.

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Who is in the cast?



PHOTO: SAMIR HUSSEIN/WIREIMAGE ; JOHN PHILLIPS/GETTY IMAGES ; JON KOPALOFF/GETTY

Oppenheimer stars Cillian Murphy, who plays the titular character, J. Robert Oppenheimer. While speaking with *Esquire* earlier this year, the actor shared just how he planned to prepare for the role.

"There's a wealth of stuff out there and I will read it all," Murphy said. "I am never, ever going to understand quantum mechanics, no matter how hard or how many times people try to explain it to me. There's 0.0001 percent of the population on the planet who have the brainpower to understand that. But I can begin to understand, conceptually, what those guys were trying to do."

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Roughly a month later, *Variety* shared that Matt Damon and [Robert Downey Jr.](#) had [joined the cast](#). Downey plays Lewis Strauss, who served two terms on the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, while Damon portrays Lt. Gen. Leslie Groves, who oversaw the construction of the Pentagon and directed the Manhattan Project.

In January 2022, *Pearl Harbor*'s [Josh Harnett was cast as Ernest Lawrence](#) — a nuclear physicist who played an integral role in creating the atomic bomb.



Cillian Murphy and Emily Blunt in *Oppenheimer*. PHOTO: MELINDA SUE GORDON/UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Other members of the star-studded cast include [Florence Pugh](#), who plays Oppenheimer's mistress, Jean Tatlock; [Gary Oldman](#) as President Harry S. Truman; and [Jack Quaid](#) and [Rami Malek](#).

Turner & Hooch's [Josh Peck](#) also has a role in the film.

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

to the occasion and be prepared. You feel those nerves until you get there on the day and you realize that 'Oh, this is just like anything else, it's just the best version of it.' "

The *Drake & Josh* alum went on to [share his admiration for Murphy](#).

"The best part is you work with a guy like Cillian, who is one of our greatest actors, and then he's a gem of a person. You're like 'Oh, thank God. You're great and nice,' " he said.

Who is directing *Oppenheimer*?



PHOTO: MELINDA SUE GORDON/UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Christopher Nolan directed *Oppenheimer*. It's Nolans' 12th film and sixth time working with Murphy. Previously, the pair worked together on three *Batman* films, *Inception* and *Dunkirk*.

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

filmmakers are still making challenging, demanding films within the studio system, shot on film? I think he's flying the flag."

During an interview with *Total Film*, Nolan described *Oppenheimer* as one of his "[most challenging projects](#)".

"It's a story of immense scope and scale," he said. "There were big, logistical challenges, big practical challenges. But I had an extraordinary crew, and they really stepped up. I'm thrilled with what my team has been able to achieve."

Where was *Oppenheimer* filmed?



PHOTO: MELINDA SUE GORDON/UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Oppenheimer was primarily filmed in New Mexico. Select scenes were filmed in New Jersey and California.

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

When will Oppenheimer be released?



PHOTO: NICHOLAS W. THOMPSON/SPLASH NEWS ONLINE

The film hit theaters on July 21, 2023, where moviegoers enjoyed it on standard and IMAX screens.

Sponsored Stories



[SUBSCRIBE](#)

[Gallery] 25 Things '60...

Lifestyle A2Z



Doctor Says Slimming...

dkawellness.com



It's No Big Secret Why...

Investing Mag...



Most Mac Users Didn...

Safe Tech Tips

Recommended by Outbrain

Related Articles



MOVIES

See the Stars in 'Oppenheimer' Compared to the Historical Figures They Play

By Zoey Lytle



MOVIES

Emily Blunt Jokes About Being Distracted by Cillian Murphy's 'Ocean Eyes' on 'Oppenheimer' Set (Exclusive)

By Nigel Smith



MOVIES

'Oppenheimer': Meet the Star-Studded Cast of Christopher Nolan's Atomic Bomb Epic (Exclusive Photo)

By Nigel Smith

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Oppenheimer: Everything to Know About the Movie

Events That Inspired the Christopher Nolan Film

By Stephanie Kaloi

**STYLE**

Emily Blunt Trolled 'Oppenheimer' Director Christopher Nolan by Gifting Him Uggs After He Criticized Hers

By Ingrid Vasquez

**HEALTH**

Cillian Murphy's 'Oppenheimer' Diet Was 'Like, an Almond' a Day, Says Costar Emily Blunt

By Cara Lynn Shultz

**MOVIES**

'Oppenheimer' PEOPLE Review: Christopher Nolan's Epic About the Father of the Atom Bomb Is Stunning

By Tom Gliatto

**MOVIES**

Cillian Murphy Says He's '100%' Going to See 'Barbie' in the Theater, amid 'Oppenheimer' Same-Day Opening

By Escher Walcott

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

a Smartphone: 'It's About the Level of Distraction'

By Kimberlee Speakman



MOVIES

Why Christopher Nolan Was 'Nervous' and 'Careful' Directing His First-Ever Sex Scenes for 'Oppenheimer'

By Tommy McArdle



MOVIES

Christopher Nolan Says He Won't Direct Another Superhero Movie After 'Dark Knight' Trilogy

By Daniel S. Levine



MOVIES

'Oppenheimer' Made \$5M in Ticket Sales Because of Sold-Out 'Barbie' Screenings, Study Finds

By Kaitlyn Huamani



MOVIES

Josh Hartnett and Wife Tamsin Egerton Make for a Cool Pair at 'Oppenheimer' London Premiere

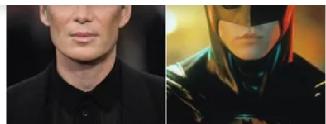
By Kimberlee Speakman



MOVIES

Eagle-Eyed Historians Spot Mistake in 'Oppenheimer' Involving the American Flag

By Tommy McArdle

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

Role After Audition: I'm Not 'the Physical Specimen'

By Tommy McArdle



MOVIES

Robert Downey Jr. Says Cillian Murphy Made Biggest Sacrifice of Any Actor He's Ever Seen for 'Oppenheimer' (Exclusive)

By Nigel Smith

Sponsored Stories



Warning Signals of Psoriatic...

Find the Early Signs & Symptoms

Stuff Answered



These 20 Images Will...

YourDIY



Cardiologists: How Older...

Healthy Guru



The Most Pleasing Game...

Raid Shadow Legends™

BuzzDaily Winners

Recommended by  Outbrain

[SUBSCRIBE](#)**NEWSLETTER****Follow Us****NEWS****ROYALS****STYLEWATCH****ENTERTAINMENT****LIFESTYLE****SHOPPING**[About Us](#)[PEOPLE Tested](#)[Editorial Policy](#)[Careers](#)[Privacy Policy](#)[Contact Us](#)[Terms of Service](#)[Advertise](#)[Your Privacy Choices](#) PEOPLE is part of the [Dotdash Meredith](#) publishing family.[Please review our updated Terms of Service.](#)