

# Twist of Fate

One actor's unlikely journey to the role of a lifetime

Text by KEITH GORDON

Gabriel Luna seems like he was destined to be on the silver screen. The former *Matador* star has managed to secure one of the most iconic roles in film history, becoming the next iteration of the Terminator, following in the footsteps of the icon that is Arnold Schwarzenegger, in *Terminator: Dark Fate*. But according to the 36-year-old Austin, Texas native, his evolution into a movie star was never an original goal of his. In fact, it seemed more destiny than ambition.

"Acting was the furthest thing from my mind when I was a young person," admits Luna. "I was very introverted. My focus was school and athletics." But despite holding scholarship offers to multiple schools, it seems the universe had a different plan for Luna. "I dislocated my left shoulder playing football and had to take some kind of a twisting, turning serendipitous twist of fate."

It so happened that Luna was fulfilling his fine arts credit at the time in a technical theatre class, and during a read-through of a play, his teacher was struck by his performance and encouraged him to pursue an on-stage role. Fast forward and not only had Luna found his gift for acting, first in theatre before moving in front of the camera for film and television, but was a magnetic presence on screen. So it was little wonder that when the time came to cast the villain in the next Terminator film, Hollywood icons James Cameron and Tim Miller chose Luna to portray the merciless killing machine. But it wasn't only icons behind the camera that Luna had to impress, but the living legends he was facing in front of the cameras in each scene, Linda Hamilton and the original Terminator, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

"I was massive fans of them both," recalls Luna. "I used to sit on the foot of the bed and watch *Beauty and the Beast* with my mom, and of course, I've seen every film that Arnold's ever made. Once we were working, once we were in the mode of trying to execute our vision in this film, I'd do my best to tamp down all of the excitement, all of the wide-eyed, kid-in-the-candy-store kind of vibes, but I can't say I was completely able to do that."

In one scene, Luna recalls, "I'm about to run up on to this C-5, this giant aircraft, and Arnold has a grenade launcher pointing at me, Sarah Connor (Hamilton) has a long-barreled rifle pointed at me, and I'm looking out and they haven't called 'action' yet. They're just standing at the ready with their weapons on their hip, and I look at them both and they're both just looking at me, and I didn't want to think what's going on through their minds. I don't know what their process entails, what kind of images one has to keep in mind in when fighting the Terminator, but they looked like they were serious, man. I tried to put on my battle face and get ready, and they called 'action,' and here I am running up to this thing, attacking two of the most iconic heroes of all times. So, it was in that moment I think that really kind of sunk into my bones."

While Luna's upcoming projects, including his return as Ghost Rider/Robbie Reyes in a Marvel Cinematic Universe series on Hulu, are certainly imposing challenges and highly-anticipated by demanding fans, it's hard to believe there's anything more intimidating for an actor than having to face off with the original Terminator and global action film superstar—whether he's holding a grenade launcher or not.



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