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Description

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Starship Troopers is a 1997 American science fiction action film directed by Paul Verhoeven and written by Edward Neumeier, based on the 1959 novel of the same name by Robert A. Heinlein. Set in the 23rd century, the story follows teenager Johnny Rico and his friends serving in the military of the United Citizen Federation, an Earth world government engaged in interstellar war with an alien species of Arachnids. The film stars Casper Van Dien, Dina Meyer, Denise Richards, Jake Busey, Neil Patrick Harris, Patrick Muldoon, and Michael Ironside.

Development of Starship Troopers began in 1991 as a separate project called Bug Hunt at Outpost 7, written by Neumeier. Producer Jon Davison noticed many similarities between Neumeier's work and Heinlein's book and asked him to re-work the script to more closely follow the novel and gain more interest from studio executives. Even so, development was slow, with studios remaining non-committal on funding the expensive project up to the filming date. Filming began in April 1996 on a \$100–110 million budget, nearly half of which was committed to the extensive computer-generated (CGI) and practical effects required to vivify the Arachnid creatures, before concluding that October.

Released on November 7, 1997, Starship Troopers received negative reviews from critics, who perceived the film as promoting fascism, criticized its violence and the performances of its central cast, and several leveled accusations against Verhoeven and Neumeier of being Nazi sympathizers. Despite initial success, the negative reviews and poor word-of-mouth led to the film's box office grosses dropping week after week until it left theaters, and it earned \$121 million against its budget, becoming only the 34th-highest-grossing film of the year. The poor performance of Starship Troopers was blamed, in part, on competition from a high number of successful or anticipated science fiction and genre films released that year, and its satirical and violent content failing to connect with mainstream audiences. Verhoeven believed that audiences' misconceptions about the film were the result of poor marketing that presented Starship Troopers as an action film instead of a satire.

Since its release, Starship Troopers has been critically re-evaluated, and is now considered a cult classic and a prescient satire of fascism and authoritarian governance that has grown in relevancy. The film helped launch a multimedia franchise that includes four sequels, Starship Troopers 2: Hero of the Federation (2004), Starship Troopers 3: Marauder (2008), Starship Troopers: Invasion (2012), and Starship Troopers: Traitor of Mars (2017), as well as an animated television series, Roughnecks: Starship Troopers Chronicles (1999), video games, comics, and a variety of merchandise.

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SYNOPSIS: In the distant future, several hundred years after a revolution by Galactic War Veterans overthrew the world's governments and imposed a militaristic regime called 'The Global Federation of Earth', humanity is at tense diplomatic relations with an alien race, the Arachnids, or "Bugs" as they are called on Earth. The Arachnid homeworld is the planet Klendathu (one of many planets inhabited by these creatures located on the other side of the Milky Way Galaxy). John 'Johnny' D. Rico (Casper Van Dien), his A-student girlfriend Carmen (Denise Richards), and best friend Carl (Neil Patrick Harris), who possesses psychic abilities, graduate from high school in Buenos Aires. Johnny's history class consists of lessons in the ultimate failure of democracy on Earth and the veterans' efforts to create a new, stable society, however militarily-based it is.

Carmen and Carl enlist in the military to become citizens, a status that grants greater privilege than being an ordinary civilian. Wanting to follow his girlfriend and friend, Johnny opposes his parents' desires and also enlists. But he finds that his grades are too low to join Carmen in Flight School and is assigned to the Mobile Infantry while Carl joins Military Intelligence.

Johnny and the rest of the new recruits are drilled by the brutal Career Sergeant Zim (Clancy Brown). His former high school classmate, "Dizzy" Flores (Dina Meyer), arrives, having requested transfer to Johnny's unit ostensibly because the unit is the toughest but mainly because she's infatuated with Johnny. Johnny, with Dizzy's help, shows himself to be an outstanding strategist and commander, earning him a promotion to squad leader. Over the next few weeks in boot camp, Johnny learns that Carmen is happy with her training and is working with his high school rival, Zander (Patrick Muldoon). Her decision to make the Fleet her career dashes Johnny's dreams as well as any relationship with her.

Following a training incident in which one of his squad members is killed, Johnny is demoted from squad leader and publicly flogged in accordance with military law. His friend Ace Levy (Jake Busey) is given command of Johnny's squad. Feeling humiliated, Johnny quits, signing a form discharging him from the Infantry. As he tells his parents via videophone that he wants to leave the Infantry the transmission is interrupted. The 'Bugs' have directed an asteroid at Earth, destroying Buenos Aires, killing his parents and most of the population of that city. As a result of this sneak attack, Earth declares war on the 'Bugs' and Johnny, after conferring with Zim and their commanding officer, is permitted to rejoin the Infantry when Zim tears up Johnny's discharge paperwork.

The Federation's forces mount a large-scale invasion of Klendathu, which becomes an unmitigated disaster due to underestimation of their foes combat abilities and sheer numbers. 'Bug plasma' energy discharges from the surface by huge 'Tanker Bugs' thought to be flame-spewing battle tanks on the surface now turn out to be giant artillery pieces capable of surface-to-space barrages creating massive damage to the Fleet in space, including Carmen's ship, the Rodger Young.

With much of the Fleet in space destroyed or badly damaged, the Mobile Infantry on the surface is cut off from air support and overcome by swarms of thousands of 'Bug' warriors. During their initial encounter with the bugs, Levy fails to give orders to his squad. Johnny takes command and they attack, but their effort is futile: over 100,000 troops are killed before an effective retreat can be ordered and several of Johnny's fellow recruits are killed, Johnny himself being severely wounded.

Later at the Ticonderoga Battle Station, where the remains of the Fleet dock, Carmen looks up Johnny Rico's name on a computer screen, (it shows 308,563 casualties from the one-day battle, most of them being "killed in action" (KIA) or "missing in action" (MIA)). Johnny's squad is almost wiped out and Carmen, due to an error in the casualty list, believes he is dead. In truth, Johnny is in the care of the medical squad and is having the gaping wound in his leg repaired.

Federation scientists are baffled by the Bugs' use of military tactics and postulate that there must be a caste of 'Brain Bugs' that serve as generals for the Arachnids. The current Sky Marshal resigns, accepting responsibility for the failed operation and a new Sky Marshal revises the campaign, using strikes on other planets in the Klendathu system to learn more about the Arachnids' tactics.

After a few days' relief, Johnny, Dizzy, and Levy are re-assigned to the 'Roughnecks', a special unit of Mobile Infantry which is led by Johnny & Dizzy's old high-school teacher, Lieutenant Jean Rasczak (Michael Ironside), a veteran of the First Bug War several years earlier who has been brought out of retirement to lead the group. After aerial napalm strikes on the outlying planets of the bugs' star system, Lt. Rasczak's squad lands on Planet 'P' to lead a ground assault. Johnny's leadership and his skill in combat while destroying a tanker bug earn him a field promotion to Corporal. That night, Lt. Rasczak grants the unit rest and relaxation, during which Johnny and Dizzy wind up in bed.

Not long after, the Roughnecks are assigned to investigate an outpost on Planet P. While marching to the outpost through a rough and rocky canyon, Rasczak's communications sergeant is carried off by a winged flier bug and tortured for a few moments before Rasczak uses a sniper rifle carried by Sugar Watkins (Seth Gilliam) to shoot his sergeant dead. He announces that he'd expect anyone in the unit to mercifully kill him in a similar situation. Rico gets another field promotion to sergeant and he leads the squad to the outpost.

Once there, they find the garrison killed and learn that the Bugs have sucked out the brains of some of the dead. They find the cowardly Commanding Officer General Owen (Marshall Bell) still alive, rambling about the existence of some kind of leader bug responsible for the massacre. Suddenly, the outpost is ambushed by tens of thousands of warrior bugs, with some tanker and flier bugs in support. Most of the squad is killed, including General Owen, and Lt. Rasczak, who is ambushed from beneath the deck by a tanker bug that chews off his legs. Rasczak orders Johnny to kill him and Johnny shoots him dead. Johnny takes command and requests an evacuation ship, which happens to be flown by Carmen and Zander. Dizzy, after destroying a tanker bug with a well-thrown grenade, is fatally stabbed by a warrior bug and dies in Johnny's arms. Johnny demands that Zander and Carmen alert the fleet to bombard Planet P but the order is denied.

After Dizzy's funeral aboard a starship, Johnny and Carmen are joined by Carl, now a high-ranking colonel in military intelligence. Carl admits that the Roughnecks had been used as bait to test a theory, which angers Johnny, but the theory has proven correct; the existence of 'Brain

Bugs' that control much of the Arachnid behaviour. Carl assigns the Roughnecks to search for a 'brain bug' back on Planet P. Carl gives Johnny a promotion to Lieutenant and command of the Roughnecks, accepting the fact that the Mobile Infantry is always ready to die for the cause.

As the Roughnecks explore the surface of the planet, the Fleet in space is again fired upon by hundreds of planetary tanker bugs. During the attack the 'Rodger Young' is hit by Arachnid plasma fire. Cutting the ship in two, Carmen and Zander evacuate in an escape pod that crashes deep inside a Bug nest several meters underground. Johnny learns of Carmen's situation and tells the rest of the squad to keep scouring the system of caves they've been patrolling, while he, Ace, and search for Carmen in the tunnels, a violation of their standing orders. Carl, who has telepathic powers, is able to provide Johnny some guidance through his mind. Eventually they discover Carmen and Zander just as Zander's brain is sucked out by the brain bug leader. Carmen saves herself by injuring the bug with a knife that Zander handed her earlier. Watkins, mortally injured in the skirmish, sacrifices himself to wipe out the bug nest with a small nuclear warhead. Johnny, Ace and Carmen arrive on the surface and learn that the brain bug has been caught by the Mobile Infantry, led by former Sergeant Zim, who has been demoted to Private in order to take part in combat. Carl's commanding officer has Carl use his telepathy to read the brain bug's mind, which signals it's afraid of his captors. As everyone celebrates, Carl joins Johnny and Carmen, explaining that they will be able to learn how the Bugs think and can turn the tide of the war.

Concluding with another propaganda News Reel, it is shown that Johnny, Ace, and Carmen continue their service in the military as heroes, prime examples to incoming recruits with Johnny as leader of the 'Roughnecks' and Carmen as captain of her own ship as the war against the bugs continues.