**Kindergarten Cop**

Released December 1990 it was budgeted at $15 million to make, and raked in over $90 million at the US box office alone. It was in the Top 10 highest-grossing films of 1990, which is impressive as it was released December22, 9 days before 1990 ended.

**IMDB trivia**: [Arnold Schwarzenegger](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000216) speculates that the film could have grossed an extra $25 million if it were less violent. But [Ivan Reitman](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0718645) felt like the violence "had to be there or the film would just beter out at the end."

**Other notable films released 1990:** Total Recall (Arnie), Ghost, Dances with Wolves, Back to the Future III, Die Hard 2, Pretty Woman, Home Alone, Goodfellas, Misery,

**Awards for the film:** Won BMI Film Music Award, Won Favourite Actor at Kids Choice Awards, Won the Outstanding Young Ensemble Cast (the class) and Best Young Actor Awards (for the twins who played Dominic) at the Young Artist Awards 1991.

**Awards for the year:** Dances with Wolves won Academy and Golden Globe Award (drama), Green Card won Golden Globe (comedy).

**Thoughts:**

Watching this film and reading the past reviews of the film is like a time capsule of outdated, trivialised depictions of family violence, abuse, gendered behaviours (e.g. “boys will be boys”), and homophobia.

Check out the below exchange in the classroom between a mother and John Kimble:

*Mother: I have a small problem... uh I’ve just been worried about Silvester you see he’s been acting strange lately. You know, doing odd things. Well, it seems he’s becoming a little obsessed with playing with dolls. You know, it’s weird.*

*Kimble: I think I can help you with that. He uses the dolls to look up girls’ skirts. I caught him doing it yesterday.*

*Mother: Oh, that’s a relief.*

I also (predictably) had a huge issue with how family violence and abuse is dealt with in this film. I won’t go into a diatribe, I’m sure you saw it too. There wasn’t a lot about gender in the workplace, however, Kimble heard many comments about being a male kindergarten teacher. The most impressive character I found was Phoebe (Pamela Reed), who loves food, contracted memorable food poisoning, and was cynical enough about children that she quit teaching so it wouldn’t put her off having her own.

What interested me most was how the film attempted to balance the family aspect of the star’s personality and motivation to do the film with how to portray teaching. What boundaries have been overlooked and stepped over by the teachers in this film in regards to dating and relationships, sexual objectification or harassment, discipline and authoritarian styles?

Reviews written at the time remind me of Helen Lovejoy in The Simpsons, “Won’t somebody please think of the children?!” That young kids absolutely should not see the film at all because it is sooo violent. In the late 1980s there was increasing anxiety and an overwhelming belief in child abuse and in preschools (unfortunately I’m going to refer you to a few Wikipedia pages) and “Satanic panic”.

Internationally, at the time of writing and release included the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. Domestic events included a continuation of the War on Drugs by President Bush Snr. List of events are below, including 1989 when the film was written and produced.

**1989**

**Communism and Cold War was coming to an end** -  November 9 – The [Berlin Wall](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Wall) was brought down.  December 3 – [Cold War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War): In a [meeting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malta_Summit) off the coast of [Malta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malta), U.S. President [George H. W. Bush](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_H._W._Bush) and Soviet leader [Mikhail Gorbachev](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Gorbachev) release statements indicating that the [Cold War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War) between their nations may be coming to an end.

**The war on drugs continues**  September 5 – U.S. President [George H. W. Bush](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_H._W._Bush) holds up a bag of [cocaine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cocaine) purchased across the street at [Lafayette Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President%27s_Park#Lafayette_Park), and proposes to spend $7.9 billion in the [War on Drugs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_on_Drugs), in his first televised speech to the nation.

**Domestic violence**  July 18 – Actress [Rebecca Schaeffer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebecca_Schaeffer) is murdered by an obsessed fan, leading to stricter stalking laws in California.

**1990**

Daycare sex abuse hysteria: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day-care_sex-abuse_hysteria>

\* Result of McMartin preschool abuse trial – all were not guilty  In [California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California), the [McMartin preschool trial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McMartin_preschool_trial), the longest criminal trial in U.S. history ends with all defendants found innocent of [child molesting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_sexual_abuse).

 March 26 – The [62nd Academy Awards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/62nd_Academy_Awards), hosted by [Billy Crystal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Crystal), are held at the [Dorothy Chandler Pavilion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Chandler_Pavilion) in [Los Angeles, California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_Angeles,_California), with [*Driving Miss Daisy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Driving_Miss_Daisy) winning [Best Picture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy_Award_for_Best_Picture).

 April 30 – [Lebanon hostage crisis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon_hostage_crisis): Lebanese kidnappers release American educator Frank H. Reed, who had been held hostage since September 1986.

 June 7 – [Universal Studios Florida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_Studios_Florida) opens to the public.

 July – The United States enters the [early 1990s recession](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_1990s_recession).

 September 26 – The [Motion Picture Association of America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motion_Picture_Association_of_America) replaces its [X rating](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/X_rating) [with a new NC-17 rating](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motion_Picture_Association_of_America_film_rating_system#X_is_replaced_by_NC-17).

* October 22 - President Bush vetoes a civil rights bill that would have strengthened federal protection against job discrimination, arguing that it would lead to race and gender based quotas.

 **Homosexuality no longer an illness**: The [World Health Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Health_Organization) 1990

**Trivia**

[Arnold Schwarzenegger](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000216) had a few conditions before accepting the role of John Kimble; he wanted [Ivan Reitman](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0718645) (Twins, and later, Junior) to direct the film, he wanted a physical fitness theme, and he and Reitman wanted broken homes, child abuse and family life written into the script.

[Arnold Schwarzenegger](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000216) insisted on a gym being assembled while on location in Astoria.

All of the classroom scenes were shot on a set in L.A. so [Arnold Schwarzenegger](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000216) could be near his family.

The script for Kindergarten Cop appealed to [Arnold Schwarzenegger](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000216) after he became a father in 1989.

**Edited version of Matt Singer’s article on how Schwarzenegger has acted as auteur:**

**Arnold as Immigrant:** Before his bodybuilding skills brought him to America, Schwarzenegger lived in a small Austrian village named Thal with his brother, mother, and his stern policeman father, Gustav. Here’s how he describes Gustav’s approach to parenting:

*“His answer to life was discipline. We had a strict routine that nothing could change ... When we were a little older and starting to play sports, exercises were added to the chores, and we had to earn our breakfast by doing sit-ups. In the afternoon, we’d finish our homework and chores, and my father would make us practice soccer no matter how bad the weather was. If we messed up on a play, we knew we’d get yelled at.”*

We might not consider the Terminator an “immigrant” in the customary sense, but what else is it if not a stranger in a strange land? It’s come from a distant future to an alien landscape, where it finds itself deeply out of touch with the local customs and conventions.

Schwarzenegger returned to the idea of a foreigner in new or exotic surroundings again and again...And in Kindergarten Cop he ventures into the most unfamiliar territory of all: A classroom full of unruly children.

**Arnold as Family Man:** In the wake of The Terminator’s success, he reeled off a string of a movies where he starred as similarly unstoppable killers... But in the early 1990s, Schwarzenegger made a significant course correction in his role choices; away from killing machines and toward more humane, family-oriented action heroes. Suddenly all of his characters had ordinary lives, or they were broken men who desperately wanted ordinary lives, like Det. John Kimble from Kindergarten Cop, whose tough-as-nails Dirty Harry-style attitude actually masks the pain of losing his wife and son, and who finds new purpose as a kindergarten teacher (and reconstitutes a new family with one of his students and a co-worker).

So what changed around 1990? The real Schwarzenegger, like the onscreen one, became a family man. Schwarzenegger married Maria Shriver in 1986, and his first daughter, Katherine, was born in 1989, right as he was preparing to make Kindergarten Cop.

In interviews around that time, Schwarzenegger talked about how married life had begun to shape his choice of roles. He told film critic (and future director) Rod Lurie that Shriver had become “instrumental” in everything he did. “Maria has very good instincts,” Schwarzenegger told Time’s Richard Corliss. “She reads fast, she analyzes and — boom! — she has the notes. Like an agent.”

Under Shriver’s influence, Schwarzenegger played fewer and fewer loners and psychos, and gravitated towards movies with more central parts for women.Terminator 2’s Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) is as much of an action hero as the Terminator himself. In True Lies, Schwarzenegger’s Harry Tasker saves the world with the help of his wife Helen (Jamie Lee Curtis), after he finally reveals the secret of his double life as a spy and then makes her his partner. Stories about families would become Schwarzenegger’s preferred subject matter...

[Bill Murray](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000195) and [Patrick Swayze](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000664) were originally offered the role of John Kimble.

**Do with this trivia what you will, I guess!**

[Arnold Schwarzenegger](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000216) worked with [Pamela Reed](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0715622) again in the movie [Junior](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110216) (1994) which was also directed by [Ivan Reitman](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0718645) . Reed portrayed a pregnant woman with a big appetite, quite similar to her character in this movie. He also worked with [Danny DeVito](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000362) in [Junior](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110216) (1994), a candidate for the role of John Kimble, but was not given the part due to his height.

[Pamela Reed](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0715622) had a lot of fun imitating [Arnold Schwarzenegger](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000216) with her accent. "Inside of an hour he was calling me 'my leetle Pemelah' and I was calling him 'my deah Ah-nold."'

**And I thought Pamela Reed was the best thing in the movie.**

Filmmakers recruited local Astoria kids to be extras in the school. They were paid $35 a day. **What are your comments on working with children in the entertainment industry now, and minimum wage? ☺ :P**

The poem that Kimble reads to the children before nap time is "Spring Morning" from [A.A. Milne](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0590316)'s book "When We Were Very Young", with illustrations by [Ernest Shepard](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0791615).

[Ivan Reitman](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0718645) invented the five "Reitman Rules of Filmmaking" for the kids: Listen, act natural, know your character, don't look in the camera, and be disciplined.

[Elijah Wood](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000704) auditioned for a part as a child actor. He later told Empire Magazine that this was the worst audition he ever did.

The filmmakers auditioned more than 2,000 children for the 30 kids in Kimble's class.

Most of the kids in the classroom were non-actors that grew up in Southern California.

During Kimble's 'Who is my Daddy and what does he do?' questioning of the children, the Spanish-speaking girl says "My dad works at home, and he plays with me a lot." **Do with that what you will...**

[Angela Bassett](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000291) makes a cameo as a stewardess.

Arnold mentions to his partner that he comes from a family of police officers. In real life, Arnold's father was the chief of police in his hometown. Arnold himself wasn't a police officer; he did, however, serve for a year in the Austrian Army.

Handcuffing a witness to a corpse is against departmental regulations for every police force in the United States and socially considered poor manners at best.

It is most likely Eleanor Crisp would have received the Death Penalty for overdosing a witness to death, accessory and attempted murder of a cop/teacher.

On April Fool's Day 2012, as a prank, it was announced that the film was selected for a release on DVD and Blu-ray Disc as part of the Criterion Collection, a video-distribution company dedicated to the release of "important classic and contemporary films". It was said to be selected as important in part because of its genre-revisionist use of both the policier and family comedy genres in the same film. **As a film-geek this trivia was delightful to me.**

A possible alternate ending would had seen Kimble shot and killed by Eleanor Crisp.

[Jason Reitman](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0718646): [Ivan Reitman](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0718645)'s son has a cameo as the boy making out with the girl that Kimble interrupts during the real fire drill. **Reitman’s kid ended up directing Up in the Air, Juno, and Young Adult.**

**References**

Matt Singer – auteur: <http://screencrush.com/arnold-schwarzenegger-is-an-auteur/>

Ebert’s written review: <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/kindergarten-cop-1990>

Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kindergarten_Cop>

Roger Ebert’s at the movies <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qF-vexKAIXU>

NY Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/21/movies/review-film-a-school-for-scandal-but-a-scandal-of-a-different-sort.html>