

Council Chamber of the Town Hall, 104 Ferguson St, Williamstown, 7.30pm, Wednesday 25th June, 2025.

The Terminal (spoiler alert!)

The most surprising thing about [The Terminal](#)—the new film that reunites cinematic Dream Team Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks—is not that it relies on good-hearted wit, good acting, and a story that highlights simple human goodness to entertain. And it's not that Spielberg breaks a cardinal rule of the summer feel-good flick yet nevertheless leaves the audience feeling great. Rather, it is the fact that not only is the story of Viktor Navorski—a man trapped in JFK airport for nine months—loosely based on a true story, but that the actual airport refugee has been confined to a single terminal for over ten years.

This tidbit has much bearing on the enjoyment of the film, as the average movie-going citizen might find the premise of an innocent tourist so victimized by governmental red tape implausible. They might, as reasonable people would, be tempted to dismiss the idea that any bureaucracy could be so inflexible as to leave a man floundering in airport limbo for nearly a year. These will be people, of course, who have themselves never held a federal position—and therefore have never taken it as part of their job description to make people wait longer than is ever humanly necessary.



Tom Hanks stars as Viktor Navorski, an international traveller who lands at New York's JFK airport only to find that a bloody coup in his fictional Slavic homeland of Krakozhia has rendered him stateless. Or, as the maniacally ambitious airport head of Homeland Security Frank Dixon (Stanley Tucci) explains it, Viktor is "unacceptable" to any nation.

With a passport from a government that no longer exists, Viktor cannot enter the U.S., and he cannot board a flight bound for home. His only choice is to linger in the terminal and hope that peace will soon return to his war-torn homeland. With little else to do as he watches other people's flights come and go, Viktor sets up a makeshift home in the crack he has fallen into.

Despite its grounding in semi-reality, there remains something fantastic about this story. No matter where he is, Viktor maintains a high standard of morality and compassion, and this wins him a loyal fan base among airport employees. Even when he is literally invited by top-dog Dixon to break the law by sneaking out the sliding glass doors that lead to freedom, Navorski refuses to circumvent regulation. He sets his jaw, and offers a simple, "I wait." And wait he does, willing to endure any humiliation the Department of Homeland Security can dish out, including blocking his means of purchasing food for himself.

Viktor represents kindness and reason; Dixon, the rigid legalism that is so obsessed with security it can't see people for regulation. As if to underscore this point, Tucci's character comments early

in the film, “The country’s detaining so many people there’s no g*d***n room anywhere.” When Dixon insists on taking medication away from a man who needs it for a dying father, it is Viktor who finds a loophole in the security system that will allow the foreigner to return home with the life-saving drugs.

Those audience members inclined to phobia over the Patriot Act will no doubt see this plot (and Tucci’s character) as a ringing indictment of both Patriot and the agency Tom Ridge heads. What they will likely not learn much about are the real hard-hearted villains in the “Viktor Navorski Story.” You see, for all the evil legalism embodied by Dixon, the pigheaded bureaucracy that provided the inspiration for this film stemmed not from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, but from Belgium and France’s refugee-wary immigration authorities.

The real Viktor Navorski, a displaced Iranian named Merhan Karimi Nasseri, was stuck in Charles De Gaulle airport for over seven years before the two European governments made any attempt to resolve his situation. Now, sadly, it seems Nasseri has gone a bit mad, and refuses to leave the airport for any country save England, which is not an option for him.

With Spielberg and Hanks at the helm, *The Terminal* is, for the most part, everything one would expect—charming, funny, and possessing its own singular character and visual beauty in much the same way as their last collaboration, [Catch Me If You Can](#). But what it is not is intellectually honest. True, Spielberg most likely could not have set this film in France with as much success. But if he had, it is unlikely he would have made a French immigration authority the villain he makes out of Dixon.

Truth, as always, remains stranger than fiction, and Hollywood’s fiction, as always, does what it can to undermine the reputation of certain American institutions. *The Terminal* manages to amuse, entertain, and inspire. But as with almost all things connected to Tinsel Town, just don’t expect it to educate—at least, not fairly.

Megan Basham, National Review, June 18th 2004

Supper Roster

| MONTH | MEMBER(S) | MONTH | MEMBER(S) |
|---|-----------------------|--|---------------|
| June 25 <i>The Terminal</i> | Jayne & Mary | July 30 <i>I'm Your Man</i> | Sue Searls |
| August 27 <i>Red, White & Brass</i> | Jake & Ollie Biram | September 24 <i>The Colour of Paradise</i> | Vicki & Peter |
| October 29 <i>On A Clear Day</i> | Doug Bews | November 26 <i>The Long, Long Trailer</i> | Dee Falloon |

Starbox Results

| | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Average |
|------------------------|----|---|---|---|---|---------|
| All That Heaven Allows | 15 | 9 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 4.3 |

To watch a trailer (& read more) head to the 2024 program on our website

[https://: www.williamstown-film-society.org](https://www.williamstown-film-society.org)