

loses her the case, and Ed will not return her phone calls afterwards. One day, he arrives at work to find her in the office, apparently working. She says that he told her things would work out and they did not, and that she needed a job. She asks Ed for a job, which he reluctantly gives her.

Erin is given files for a real estate case where the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) is offering to purchase the home of Donna Jensen, a resident of Hinkley, California. Erin is surprised to see medical records in a real estate file and visits Donna, who explains that she had simply kept all her PG&E correspondence together. Donna appreciates PG&E's help: she has had several tumors and her husband has Hodgkin's lymphoma, but PG&E has always provided a doctor at their own expense. Erin asks why they would do that, and Donna replies, "because of the chromium". Erin begins digging into the case and finds evidence that the groundwater in Hinkley is seriously contaminated with carcinogenic hexavalent chromium, while PG&E has been telling Hinkley residents that they use a safer form of chromium. After several days away from the office investigating, she finds her possessions missing from her desk. She is then informed by Brenda, Mr. Masry's secretary, that she has been fired for missing a week of work. Despite protesting that she has been out conducting research, Erin nevertheless leaves defeated.

	<u>Pictures</u> <u>Jersey Films</u>
Distributed by	Universal Pictures (US & Canada) <u>Columbia</u> <u>TriStar Film</u> <u>Distributors</u> <u>International</u> (International)
Release date	March 17, 2000
Running time	130 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$52 million
Box office	\$256.3 million

Later, Ed visits Erin because he needs the documents she found while investigating, and she takes the chance to request her job back in return. Rehired, she continues her research, and over time, visits many Hinkley residents and gains their trust. Ed and Erin hold a barbecue in order to speak to many of the residents and explain to them what PG&E has been trying to get away with, at which point Erin is awkwardly flirted with by one of the men. Erin and Ed find numerous medical problems in Hinkley, and that virtually everyone has been treated by PG&E's doctors who have led them to believe their issues are unrelated to the "safe" chromium. The Jensens' claim for compensation ultimately becomes a major class action lawsuit. Unfortunately, Ed explains that all direct evidence is linked solely to PG&E Hinkley, rather than PG&E corporate. Until headquarters can be implicated, PG&E corporate can deny any knowledge of what's happening in Hinkley.

Knowing that PG&E could slow any settlement for years through delays and appeals, Ed decides to pursue binding arbitration rather than a trial by jury, but PG&E will only agree to arbitration if 90% of the plaintiffs agree. During a town hall meeting with the Hinkley residents, Ed goes over the plan with everyone feeling unsure. At one point, Erin spots the man who flirted with her at the barbecue. She brushes off the man's looks, as Ed struggles to explain the virtue of arbitration versus a 10-15 year battle in court. Eventually everyone in attendance agrees, and over the next several days Ed and Erin persuade all 634 plaintiffs to go along.

One night Erin stops at a bar to see one of the residents, when she unexpectedly bumps into the man she's seen at the last two Hinkley events. After some uncomfortable conversation the man reveals himself to be named Charles Embry; a former PG&E employee who "destroyed documents." Erin realizes Charles has been trying to communicate with her, and is finally able to listen to his story. Charles tells Erin he and his cousin were both employees with PG&E Hinkley. Heartbroken, he tells her his cousin has just died; dying painfully from the poison he interacted with at PG&E. He goes on to explain that PG&E tasked him with destroying documents, but, "as it turns out, [he] wasn't a very good employee".

Embry gives Erin the documents, including a 1966 memo proving corporate headquarters knew the water was contaminated with hexavalent chromium, and advised PG&E Hinkley to keep this secret. The judge orders PG&E to pay a settlement amount of \$333 million to be distributed among the plaintiffs, \$5 million of which goes to the Jensens. Erin brings her boyfriend with her when she tells them about it, and he is happy when he understands what it was all for.

In the aftermath, Ed hands Erin her bonus payment for the case, but warns her he has changed the amount. She begins complaining loudly that she deserves more respect, but is astonished to find that he has increased it—to \$2 million.

Cast

- | | |
|---|--|
| ▪ Julia Roberts as Erin Brockovich | ▪ Michael Harney as Pete Jensen |
| ▪ Albert Finney as Edward L. Masry | ▪ Veanne Cox as Theresa Dallavale |
| ▪ Aaron Eckhart as George, Erin's biker boyfriend | ▪ Scotty Leavenworth as Matthew Brown |
| ▪ Marg Helgenberger as Donna Jensen | ▪ Gemmenne de la Peña as Katie Brown |
| ▪ Tracey Walter as Charles Embry | ▪ Gina Gallego as Ms. Sanchez, a PG & E attorney |
| ▪ Peter Coyote as Kurt Potter | ▪ T. J. Thyne as David Foil |
| ▪ Cherry Jones as Pamela Duncan | ▪ Valente Rodriguez as Donald |
| ▪ Scarlett Pomers as Shanna Jensen | ▪ Jamie Harrold as Scott |
| ▪ Conchata Ferrell as Brenda, Mr. Masry's secretary | ▪ Edward L. Masry as Diner Patron (uncredited) |
| ▪ Erin Brockovich as Waitress Julia | |

Production

The film was shot during eleven weeks with five weeks taking place in [Ventura, California](#).^[1]

Erin Brockovich performed well with test audiences but executives at [Universal Studios](#) were worried that audiences would be turned off by the title character's use of profane language.^[2]

Reception

Box office

Erin Brockovich was released on March 17, 2000, in 2,848 theaters and grossed \$28.1 million on its opening weekend. It went on to make \$126.6 million in North America and \$130.7 million in the rest of the world for a worldwide total of \$257.3 million.^[3]

Critical response

The majority of critics responded favorably towards the film, with Roberts's performance receiving positive reviews. It holds a certified "Fresh" rating of 84% on the film review website [Rotten Tomatoes](#) based on 148 reviews, with an average rating of 7.50/10. The consensus states, "Taking full advantage of Julia Roberts's considerable talent and appeal, *Erin Brockovich* overcomes a few character and plot issues to deliver a smart, thoughtful, and funny legal drama."^[4] On [Metacritic](#), the film holds a score of 73 out of 100 based on 36 reviews, indicating "generally favorable reviews."^[5]

In his review for *The New York Observer*, Andrew Sarris wrote, "We get the best of independent cinema and the best of mainstream cinema all in one package. *Erin Brockovich*, like *Wonder Boys* right before it, makes the year 2000 seem increasingly promising for movies".^[6] *Newsweek* magazine's David Ansen began his review with, "Julia Roberts is flat-out terrific in *Erin Brockovich*." Furthermore, he wrote, "Roberts has wasted her effervescence on many paltry projects, but she hits the jackpot this time. Erin, single mother of three, a former Miss Wichita who improbably rallies a community to take on a multi-billion-dollar corporation, is the richest role of her career, simultaneously showing off her comic, dramatic and romantic chops".^[7] *Rolling Stone* magazine's Peter Travers wrote, "Roberts shows the emotional toll on Erin as she tries to stay responsible to her children and to a job that has provided her with a first taste of self-esteem".^[8] In his review for *Entertainment Weekly*, Owen Gleiberman gave the film a "B+" rating and wrote, "It's a delight to watch Roberts, with her flirtatious sparkle and undertow of melancholy, ricochet off Finney's wonderfully jaded, dry-as-beef-jerky performance as the beleaguered career attorney who knows too much about the loopholes of his profession to have much faith left in it".^[9] *Sight & Sound* magazine's Andrew O'Hehir wrote, "Perhaps the best thing about this relaxed and supremely engaging film (for my money the best work either the director or his star has ever done) is that even its near-fairytale resolution doesn't offer a magical transformation".^[10] In her review for *The Village Voice*, Amy Taubin wrote, "What's pretty original about the picture is that it focuses an investigative drama based on a true story around a comic performance".^[11]

However, film critic Roger Ebert gave the film a two-star review, writing, "There is obviously a story here, but *Erin Brockovich* doesn't make it compelling. The film lacks focus and energy, the character development is facile and thin".^[12] In his review for *The New York Times*, A.O. Scott wrote, "After proving, for about 40 minutes, what a marvelous actress she can be, Ms. Roberts spends the next 90 content to be a movie star. As the movie drags on, her performance swells to bursting with moral vanity and phony populism".^[13] *Time* magazine's Richard Corliss found the film to be "slick, grating and false. We bet it makes a bundle".^[14]

Home media

The film was released on VHS and DVD on August 15, 2000.

Awards and honors

For her portrayal, Julia Roberts became the first actress to win an Academy Award, BAFTA, Critics' Choice Movie Award, Golden Globe Award, National Board of Review, and Screen Actors Guild Award for a single performance. Steven Soderbergh, who was nominated for Best Director, lost out to himself for his work on the film *Traffic*.

Award	Category	Recipient(s)	Result
<u>Academy Awards</u> ^{[15][16]}	<u>Best Picture</u>	Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg and Stacey Sher	Nominated
	<u>Best Director</u>	Steven Soderbergh	Nominated
	<u>Best Actress</u>	Julia Roberts	Won
	<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Albert Finney	Nominated
	<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	Susannah Grant	Nominated
<u>BAFTA Awards</u>	<u>Best Film</u>	Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg and Stacey Sher	Nominated
	<u>Best Direction</u>	Steven Soderbergh	Nominated
	<u>Best Actress</u>	Julia Roberts	Won
	<u>Best Original Screenplay</u>	Susannah Grant	Nominated
	<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Albert Finney	Nominated
	<u>Best Editing</u>	Anne V. Coates	Nominated
<u>Golden Globe Awards</u> ^{[17][18]}	<u>Best Motion Picture – Drama</u>		Nominated
	<u>Best Director</u>	Steven Soderbergh	Nominated
	<u>Best Actress – Drama</u>	Julia Roberts	Won
	<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Albert Finney	Nominated
<u>Critics' Choice Movie Awards</u> ^[19]	<u>Best Picture</u>		Won
	<u>Best Director</u>	Steven Soderbergh	Won
	<u>Best Actress</u>	Julia Roberts	Won
<u>Los Angeles Film Critics Association</u>	<u>Best Director</u>	Steven Soderbergh	Won
	<u>Best Actress</u>	Julia Roberts	Won
<u>National Board of Review</u>	<u>Best Director</u>	Steven Soderbergh	Won
	<u>Best Actress</u>	Julia Roberts	Won
<u>National Society of Film Critics</u> ^[20]	<u>Best Director</u>	Steven Soderbergh	Won
<u>Screen Actors Guild Awards</u>	<u>Best Actress</u>	Julia Roberts	Won
	<u>Best Supporting Actor</u>	Albert Finney	Won

American Film Institute recognition:

- AFI's 100 Years...100 Heroes & Villains:
 - Erin Brockovich – No. 31
- AFI's 100 Years...100 Cheers – No. 73

Accuracy

On her website, Brockovich says the film is "probably 98% accurate".^[21] While the general facts of the story are accurate, there are some minor discrepancies between actual events and the movie, as well as a number of controversial and disputed issues more fundamental to the case. In the film, Erin Brockovich appears to deliberately use her cleavage to seduce the water board attendant to allow her to access the documents. Brockovich has acknowledged that her cleavage may have had an influence, but denies consciously trying to influence individuals in this way.^[22] In the film, Ed Masry represents Erin Brockovich in the car crash case. In reality, it was his law partner, Jim Vititoe.^[23] Brockovich had never been Miss Wichita; she had been Miss Pacific Coast. According to Brockovich, this detail was deliberately changed by Soderbergh as he thought it was "cute" to have her be beauty queen of the region from which she came.^[22] The "not so good employee" that met Brockovich in the bar was Chuck Ebersohl. He told Erin about the documents that he and Lillian Melendez had been tasked by PG&E to destroy.^[24]

Jorge Halaby, played by Aaron Eckhart in the film, along with Brockovich's ex-husband Shawn Brown alleged that she had an affair with Masry. They also attempted to file a lawsuit against her for \$310,000.^[25] Halaby was arrested and the lawyer John Jeffrey Reiner was suspended from practicing, convicted of extortion, and later disbarred.^{[26][27]}

The scientific accuracy of the film has been questioned. According to *The New York Times*, scientists have suggested that their profession would have more rationally and scientifically evaluated the medical evidence that inspired Brockovich.^[28]

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External links

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