




TEN

**The 70 best films
of all time**



As the recent runaway success of films like *Joker* and *Parasite* have proven, cinema has a uniquely powerful ability to take audiences by surprise, tap into our deepest psychological fears, excite political debate - and still turn a huge profit at the box office. The 70 big-screen titles listed here follow a non-linear plot through the greatest movie milestones of the last 100 years, covering the full spectrum from multiplex space operas to art-house gems, screwball comedies to epic tragedies, Hollywood blockbusters to subtitled cult classics.

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About the writer

Stephen Dalton first began writing about music, films and books way back in analogue times when the legendary *New Musical Express* was still an inky printed weekly. He is now a regular contributor to *The Times*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Uncut*, *Classic Rock* and more. His work has also been published in *The Guardian*, *The Quietus*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Huffington Post*, *Wallpaper* and other august publications.

**70****Star Wars (1977)**

George Lucas spawned a multi-billion-dollar industry, and a screen-age religion, with his inspired fusion of space opera, Biblical allegory and hippie mysticism.

69**Lawrence of Arabia (1962)**

A dashing young Peter O'Toole plays T.E. Lawrence in David Lean's multiple Oscar-winning epic, which blends heavily fictionalised biography with ravishing visual spectacle.

67**Pather Panchali (1955)**

Director Satyajit Ray put Indian art-house cinema on the global map with his lyrical debut feature, a poetic snapshot of an impoverished family in a Bengali village.

65**Alien (1979)**

Set in deep space, this cult sci-fi horror classic transformed director Ridley Scott and co-star Sigourney Weaver into household names, spawning multiple sequels and prequels.

63**The Wild Bunch (1969)**

William Holden's ageing outlaw boss leads his gang on one last brutal spree in legendary cult director Sam Peckinpah's harshly poetic epitaph for the bloodthirsty Old West.

68**The Searchers (1956)**

The finest in a long run of collaborations between John Wayne and director John Ford, *The Searchers* is a classic revenge western with a dark racial and sexual subtext.

66**All About Eve (1950)**

Rightly famous for its acerbic script, Joseph Mankiewicz's multi-Oscar-winning farce revolves around a bitchy backstage feud between haughty Broadway diva Bette Davis and back-stabbing starlet Anne Baxter.

64**Breaking the Waves (1996)**

Emily Watson stars in Lars Von Trier's visually arresting, emotionally gruelling melodrama about religious intolerance and sexual hypocrisy in early 1970s Scotland.

62**Edward Scissorhands (1990)**

In the first and best of their many collaborations, director Tim Burton casts Johnny Depp in this semi-autobiographical fairy tale about a Frankenstein-style orphan looking for love in brightly painted suburbia.

61**Gone with the Wind (1939)**

Three directors and some epic Hollywood deal-making went into producer David O. Selznick's magnificently overblown Civil War blockbuster, which stars Vivien Leigh as proud Southern belle Scarlett O'Hara.

59**The Truman Show (1998)**

Jim Carrey plays the unwitting star of a lifelong reality TV experiment in director Peter Weir's sinister, darkly funny parable about media voyeurism.

**60****The 400 Blows (1959)**

Teenage screen novice Jean-Pierre L aud plays a troubled juvenile delinquent in this emotionally raw autobiographical drama, which launched Francois Truffaut's directing career and kickstarted the French New Wave.

58**Goodfellas (1990)**

Martin Scorsese returned to his cinematic heartland with this epic behind-the-scenes soap opera about life in the New York Mafia starring Ray Liotta, Robert De Niro and Joe Pesci on career-best form.

57**Wings of Desire (1987)**

Wim Wenders composed a lyrical love letter to Cold War Berlin with this visually ravishing fable about invisible angels watching over the city's troubled human souls.

55**Mulholland Drive (2001)**

David Lynch's audacious spin on vintage film noir ingredients stars Naomi Watts and Laura Elena Harring as femme fatales drawn into Hollywood's eerie, surreal, subterranean underbelly.

56**The Third Man (1949)**

Based on Graham Greene's crisp screenplay about shadowy dealings in post-war Vienna, Carol Reed's immortal film noir boasts highly atmospheric locations and Orson Welles on grandly sinister form.

54**Touch of Evil (1958)**

Orson Welles directs and co-stars alongside Charlton Heston and Janet Leigh in this hugely atmospheric crime thriller about murder, racism and political chicanery in a Mexican border town.

53**In the Mood for Love (2000)**

Wong Kar Wai's prize-winning retro-drama revolves around a luminously beautiful slow-motion romance between newspaper editor Tony Leung and secretary Maggie Cheung in early 1960s Hong Kong.

51**Psycho (1960)**

Still one of the most terrifying big-screen shockers ever made, Alfred Hitchcock's boldly bleak proto-slasher movie stars Anthony Perkins as twitchy serial killer Norman Bates and Janet Leigh. She plays Marion Crane, a secretary who steals \$40,000 from her boss, flees and decides to spend the night at the Bates Motel.

52**Rashomon (1950)**

Japanese movie maestro Akira Kurosawa scored an international hit with this elegantly spare period drama about a violent crime incident retold from multiple subjective viewpoints, an ingenious device which entered the language.

50**Point Break (1991)**

Keanu Reeves and Patrick Swayze play skydiving, wave-surfing bank robbers in Kathryn Bigelow's testosterone-pumped crime thriller, which walks a fine line between adrenalised action and self-aware camp.

**49****Singin' in the Rain (1952)**

Gene Kelly stars as a matinee idol besotted by teenage starlet Debbie Reynolds in Stanley Donen's timelessly romantic Hollywood musical, which was hurriedly assembled by MGM to cash in on Donen and Kelly's previous hit *An American In Paris*.

48**Casablanca (1942)**

This immortal wartime romance was just another studio production-line project before Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman and director Michael Curtiz turned it into a triple Oscar-winner and one of the most quoted films ever made.

47**Tokyo Story (1955)**

Following an elderly Japanese couple as they visit their busy grown-up children in Tokyo, director Yasujiro Ozu's poignant family tale is a masterclass in emotionally charged minimalism.

46**Raging Bull (1980)**

Martin Scorsese directs Robert De Niro in this visually stunning biopic of boxer Jake LaMotta, which is less a sports film than a Shakespearean study in self-destructive rage and redemption.

44**Children of Men (2006)**

Based on a P.D. James novel, Alfonso Cuarón's stylish, intelligent, dystopian thriller stars Clive Owen, Julianne Moore and Chiwetel Ejiofor as resistance fighters against a totalitarian government in near-future Britain.

42**The Good, The Bad and the Ugly (1966)**

The last and most ambitious chapter in Sergio Leone's feted "spaghetti western" trilogy once again stars Clint Eastwood returns as the nameless lone gunman, who becomes embroiled in a perilous gold heist during the American civil war.

40**Persona (1966)**

One of Swedish maestro Ingmar Bergman's most haunting experiments, this sexually charged psychodrama stars Liv Ullmann as an actress who is suddenly struck mute, and Bibi Andersson as her nurse and companion.

38**12 Years a Slave (2013)**

Based in the memoirs of a real slave, deftly played by Chiwetel Ejiofor, director Steve McQueen's harrowing historical biopic won three Oscars and enjoyed major box office success.

45**The Exorcist (1973)**

William Friedkin's thoughtful, unsettling adaptation of William Peter Blatty's novel about a demonically possessed girl in modern-day Washington DC combines sensational horror spectacle with deeper questions about religious faith.

43**Sunset Boulevard (1950)**

Billy Wilder's brilliantly caustic comedy about golden-age Hollywood stars William Holden as a cynical screenwriter and Gloria Swanson as the reclusive diva who lures him into her fatal orbit.

41**Stalker (1979)**

Cryptic but achingly beautiful, Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky's last film before leaving the Soviet Union is a philosophical sci-fi parable about a team of explorers illegally venturing into a mysterious forbidden zone.

39**The Battle of Algiers (1966)**

A hugely influential landmark in political filmmaking, director Gillo Pontecorvo's docu-drama recreation of Algeria's violent struggle for independence from France is shot in kinetic, naturalistic, newsreel style.

37**Being John Malkovich (1999)**

John Cusack, Cameron Diaz and John Malkovich himself co-star in director Spike Jonze's highly original black comedy about a secret portal into Malkovich's brain, written by surrealist screenwriter Charlie Kaufman.

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If it's a good movie, the sound could go off and the audience would still have a pretty clear idea of what was going on.

Alfred Hitchcock



36**Dr Strangelove (1964)**

Director Stanley Kubrick's finest black comedy is an absurdist satire on Cold War nuclear brinkmanship starring a scene-stealing Peter Sellers in multiple roles.

35**Persepolis (2007)**

French-Iranian artist and author Marjane Satrapi adapted her own autobiographical comic book into this charming, prize-winning animated feature, with help from co-director Vincent Paronnaud.

**34****Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004)**

French director Michel Gondry uses a dazzling array of dreamlike visual effects to animate Charlie Kaufman's melancholy comic screenplay about doomed love and memory loss, which stars Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet.

33**Parasite (2019)**

South Korean director Bong Joon-Ho made history with this multi-Oscar-winning global hit, a darkly funny allegory of social and economic class war with psychological horror overtones.

31**Some Like it Hot (1959)**

In Billy Wilder's beloved gender-bending comedy, Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon co-star opposite a deliriously funny Marilyn Monroe as 1920s jazz musicians who disguise themselves in drag to escape vengeful mobsters.

32**Blue Velvet (1986)**

David Lynch sealed his reputation as a visionary surrealist with this nightmarish journey into the dark, violent, sexually deranged heart of small-town America. Kyle MacLachlan, Isabella Rossellini and Dennis Hopper co-star.

30**The Great Dictator (1940)**

Charlie Chaplin's first talkie is a humane, anguished farce which bravely lampoons Hitler in the form of power-hungry despot Adenoid Hynkel. Hitler banned the film in Germany but reportedly sat through two private screenings. The final astonishing monologue, a plea for humanity and freedom, is as relevant today as then. On YouTube it has clocked up over nine million views.

**29****A Clockwork Orange (1971)**

Combining Pop Art visuals with proto-punk fashions, Stanley Kubrick's notorious future-shock thriller stars Malcolm McDowell as a sadistic, Beethoven-loving juvenile gang leader running amok in near-future Britain.

28**The Matrix (1999)**

The Wachowskis created a whole new universe of paranoid sci-fi conspiracy theories with this mind-bending, visually dazzling techno-thriller starring Keanu Reeves as a messianic hero battling to save mankind from tyrannical machines.

27**The Graduate (1967)**

Dustin Hoffman plays a sexually naive suburban rebel in this iconic rites-of-passage comedy from director Mike Nichols. Anne Bancroft, who was only six years older than Hoffman in real life, is magnificent as the middle-aged housewife who seduces him.

26**Vagabond (1985)**

Groundbreaking French New Wave director Agnes Varda cast Sandrine Bonnaire as a young homeless woman wandering through a wintry rural France in this coolly observed, quietly devastating, prize-winning docu-drama.

24**La Dolce Vita (1960)**

Starring Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg, director Federico Fellini's bittersweet comic romp chronicles the hollow lifestyles of Rome's 24-hour party people, winning awards and unwittingly coining the term "paparazzi".

22**The Producers (1968)**

Comedy legend Mel Brooks never bettered this audacious farce about two cynical Jewish theatre impresarios, played by Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder, who hatch a money-losing scam to mount a Broadway musical about Hitler.

20**Before Sunrise (1995)**

Director Richard Linklater's hugely charming, talk-heavy Eurodrama stars Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy as strangers on a train who enjoy a romantic interlude in Vienna, their brief encounter later extending into two delicious sequels.

18**Pulp Fiction (1994)**

Quentin Tarantino's baroque breakthrough film is a boldly non-linear, episodic comedy thriller about philosophical hit men, boxers, gangsters and femme fatales starring Uma Thurman, John Travolta, Samuel L. Jackson, Bruce Willis and more.

25**Spirited Away (2001)**

A 10-year-old girl stumbles across a paranormal theme park full of shapeshifting, mythical creatures in Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki's Oscar-winning animated masterpiece.

23**Lost in Translation (2003)**

Director Sofia Coppola's beautifully understated romantic comedy gave Bill Murray one of his best late-career roles as an over-the-hill Hollywood star who forms a tender bond with Scarlett Johansson's lonely newlywed in a Tokyo hotel.

21**Apocalypse Now (1979)**

Monumental in scale and ambition, director Francis Ford Coppola's operatic epic places Martin Sheen and Marlon Brando in an inspired update of Joseph Conrad's novel Heart of Darkness transferring the location from 1890s Congo to the Vietnam War in 1960s.

19**Schindler's List (1993)**

Liam Neeson plays Oskar Schindler, a morally complex Nazi industrialist who saved hundreds of Jews from extermination, in Steven Spielberg's visually stunning, emotionally devastating Holocaust epic.

17**The Big Lebowski (1998)**

Joel and Ethan Coen scored one of their most enduring cult hits with this hugely entertaining shaggy dog story starring Jeff Bridges as The Dude, a shambolic LA stoner who becomes embroiled in a madcap kidnapping plot.

16**Breathless (1960)**

Jean-Luc Godard defined the French New Wave aesthetic with this freewheeling, naturalistic, timelessly chic debut feature, which stars Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg as doomed Parisian lovers.

**15****The Wizard of Oz (1939)**

Magical and dreamlike, this much-loved Hollywood musical classic stars Judy Garland as Dorothy, a small-town dreamer transported over the rainbow from monochrome Kansas to the kaleidoscopic fairy-tale neverland of Oz.

14**The Shawshank Redemption (2004)**

Based on a Stephen King short story, Frank Darabont's feelgood Oscar-winner began as a box office flop before earning beloved cult status. Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman play convicts who fight back against a crooked prison system.

12**Blade Runner (1982)**

Director Ridley Scott's visually stunning future-noir thriller stars Harrison Ford as a world-weary bounty hunter in a dystopian LA full of rain, neon and renegade robot killers.

10**Toy Story (1995)**

The first ever fully computer-generated animated feature still looks magnificent today. Featuring the voices of Tom Hanks as battered cowboy doll Woody, and Tim Allen as shiny astronaut Buzz Lightyear, Toy Story also boasts a witty and poignant script smartly pitched at adults and children alike. This Disney-Pixar franchise has since expanded to include three successful sequels.

08**Joker (2019)**

A brilliant reinvention of the comic-book movie form, Joker gives Batman's most infamous supervillain enemy a poignant origin story rooted in gritty social realism and mental illness. Joaquin Phoenix gives a dazzling star performance as Arthur Fleck, a failed comedian driven to extreme vengeance against his cruel tormentors in a crumbling Gotham City. Directed by Todd Phillips, Joker earned numerous awards and more than a billion dollars.

13**Taxi Driver (1976)**

Robert De Niro spent weeks working as a New York cabbie to prepare for his career-making role in Martin Scorsese's intense portrait of urban alienation and violent psychosis.

11**Do the Right Thing (1989)**

Spike Lee's simmering depiction of pressure-cooker racial tensions during a stifling New York City heatwave blends righteous rage with propulsive hip-hop swagger.

09**The Piano (1993)**

Set in 19th century New Zealand, Jane Campion's voluptuous romantic fable features a magnetic, Oscar-winning lead performance from Holly Hunter as Ada, a selectively mute young mother lured away from her loveless marriage by a gruff but charismatic neighbour. Because Ada will only express herself through music, her illicit affair becomes a kind of delirious erotic symphony.

07**The Grand Budapest Hotel (2014)**

Wes Anderson enlisted an international gallery of stars for his most ambitious film to date, which filters the tumult of 20th century European history through the tragicomic backstage dramas of a luxurious hotel in a fictional alpine country. Ralph Fiennes, Tilda Swinton and Bill Murray headline a huge ensemble cast in this visually sumptuous masterwork, which was partly inspired by the novels of Austrian author Stefan Zweig.



06**One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)**

Jack Nicholson gave a career-making performance as McMurphy, a rebellious new inmate at a mental institution, in Milos Forman's magnificent adaptation of Ken Kesey's semi-autobiographical novel. Kirk Douglas owned the rights and originally hoped to reprise his stage role as McMurphy, but eventually he decided he was too old. His son Michael produced the film, which won five Oscars, including one each for Nicholson and Forman.

04**2001: Space Odyssey (1968)**

Conceived in partnership with science fiction author Arthur C. Clarke, Stanley Kubrick's psychedelic space opera charts mankind's evolution from Stone Age primitive to cosmic superbeing. Visually stunning, with its inspired use of classical music to soundtrack the vast emptiness of deep space, 2001 remain open to endless interpretation half a century later, though Kubrick himself claimed the plot concerns the search for "a scientific definition of God".

02**Citizen Kane (1941)**

Even 80 years later, this stunning directorial debut by Orson Welles still dazzles with its technical innovation and innovative cinematography. Inspired by the life of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, Citizen Kane is a panoramic cautionary parable about power, corruption and lies. Welles himself stars as Kane; a tyrannical media tycoon eventually destroyed by his own toxic ambition.

01**Vertigo (1958)**

One of Alfred Hitchcock's most cryptic and personal films, Vertigo is a dreamlike visual rhapsody about sexual and romantic yearning, wrapped in the flimsy robes of a murder mystery. James Stewart plays a traumatised ex-cop who develops a fetishist obsession with Kim Novak's ice-blonde mystery woman that leads both into a nightmarish twilight world of mysterious doppelgangers and blurred identities. Long before David Lynch, Hitch recognised that voyeuristic fantasies could be dangerous weapons of mass seduction.

05**No Country for Old Men (2007)**

Joel and Ethan Coen took a detour from their usual comic mode with this dark, violent, gripping contemporary western, which is based on a Cormac McCarthy novel. Josh Brolin plays a small-town Texas handyman who unwisely steals mob money following a botched drug deal on the Mexican border. Javier Bardem gives a chilling, Oscar-winning performance as a psychotic hit man having a very bad hair day.

03**The Godfather (1972)**

Francis Ford Coppola's majestic adaptation of Mario Puzo's dynastic Mafia saga set the gold standard for all future gangster films. Impeccably acted by a cast of Method heavyweights including Al Pacino, James Caan and an Oscar-winning Marlon Brando, The Godfather spawned two sequels and left a deep, lasting imprint on popular culture.



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