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Screen, Screen Features

The Best Films of the 2010s: #10-1

Exposé writers reveal our ten favourite films of the past decade.

5 mins read

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So here we are. The final top ten in our massive tribute of the best films from the decade past is waiting below, and I'm sure you're eager to see our final picks. Make sure to catch up on our [first](#) and [second](#) parts of the list before reading and keep an eye for our TV and video game countdowns soon. Without further ado...

Perhaps enough has been said about Spider-Man. The character came of age in the 2000s, the Raimi trilogy a flawed-but-endearing herald of modern superheroism. Peter Parker, teenaged twenty-something, marks the memories of so many. Now, though? Three separate franchises and two *Spider-Man 2s* – in this decade alone. It's a troubling sight. Yet here we are, celebrating yet another one in the form of *Spider-Verse*. What gives? Oddly enough, the idea of *Spider-Man* itself. Certainly, this is a great film. Pair meticulous, psychedelic animation with an often hilarious script, and you have something that feels vibrant in ways other incarnations fell flat. But here, consciousness of Spider-Men past is built into the text. Our hero is Miles Morales, a new Spider-Man on a par-for-the-course mission against evil. Miles might learn the dusty old lessons of power and responsibility, but it's all achieved with such gleeful, joyous awareness. As spider-universes collide, the audience is treated to so many strands of the same spider-web – mid-life crisis Spider-Man, grizzled detective Spider-Man, Spider-Pig – but each is unique enough to justify its own variation on that same spider-theme. We've heard these tales countless times, but the genius of *Spider-Verse* is its perfect knowing for what keeps us coming back to them. A genuine love for what successive superhero franchises would simply overwrite? In this decade, that's something special – *Harry Caton, Online Editor*

Facebook may not be the most popular social network anymore, yet the film regarding its infamous creation and tumultuous development stands strong as a perspective-based documentation. The title "*The Social Network*" is ironic as the film conveys the fast-paced nature of social media through the rise of Facebook and fall of its creators. The screenwriter Aaron Sorkin encapsulates a traditional drama with themes comparable to Shakespearean times, through a new modern medium: a social network playing puppet master to Harvard teens. What makes this film most intriguing is the multi-faceted nature of the tale with manifold truths and perspectives, leaving viewers to reach their own conclusions. David Fincher produces an immersive experience; a fly on the wall observing the students at Harvard or the court case, both of which are exclusive scenarios. The story of Facebook continues off-screen, which increases the film's value. Jessie Eisenberg brilliantly embodies a young innovator invested more in his creation than his actual relationships, evidently Mark Zuckerberg was not keen on his representation, whereas the 'Winklevi' supported the film's portrayal. The ongoing conspiracies

surrounding Facebook only makes the film more compelling as a time capsule to help piece together the events – *Hilda Sheridan Hewlett*

Olivia Wilde blessed us with the decade's best coming-of-age comedy, *Booksmart*, just under the wire in summer 2019. Especially today, with the way young people use technology changing so quickly, filmmakers often end up presenting youth culture in a way that feels cringeworthy, but here it feels completely genuine. While the 2010s have seen their fair share of great moments for women in film, it's still cheering to see a female best-friendship take centre stage in a high school comedy which also smoothly situates diversity into its landscape; this success perhaps stems from *Booksmart's* overwhelmingly female crew, including an all-women writers' team. Aside from this, though, the film could have won me over on the merit of its truly laugh-out-loud comedy alone. From the iconic scene in the principal's car to the many layers of the murder mystery party, you really are chuckling along for the whole hundred-minute runtime. The market may be relatively saturated with high school movies, but, cliché as it is to say, *Booksmart* feels completely fresh. It's got a great soundtrack, and young leads and ensemble cast members with a lot of promise. It's the film teenage me was looking for, and I'm so happy it's one the teens of today will get to see – *Emma Hussain, Online News Editor*

[Get Out] covertly shows a variety of intergenerational views on race and highlights the callousness of subtle racism.

I don't know what we, as the human race, have done to deserve a film as wonderfully wholesome and uncompromising in its pureness as *Paddington 2*. This film plays host to some of the best British actors working today, Hugh Grant in tasselled flares, animated sequences to make your jaw drop and visual gags that harken back to the innocent slapstick of silent cinema. It combines moments of comedy with beats of melancholy in a tonal blend so rich that it's a positively cathartic experience. Paddington is a character so lifelike in both his rendering and persona that my dear Grandpa asked 'who was wearing the bear costume?'. It celebrates community, friendships and family through the point-of-view of an outsider and tackles issues of bigotry in a way that is both nuanced and mature. It has a stylistic flare that celebrates many historic cinematic visuals, but still feels uniquely grounded in the world it has so painstakingly constructed. It's self-aware enough to flip tropes on their head, allowing characters to inhabit new and exciting spaces. It achieves

what few other sequels have: it improves on the first. There's a warm tingling in my tum-tum. It feels a lot like pride – *Tabby Burnett*

Disguised as simply another nail-biting psychological thriller, *Get Out* has a deeper exploration: a social critique regarding race relations. The narrative follows Chris, an African-American man who visits his Caucasian girlfriend's family. Whilst all seems harmonious amongst the characters at first, the family begins to show their overly disturbing obsession with black people and a nonchalance to making use of them as household helpers, like maids and gardeners. The audience soon learns that through hypnosis, the family have been controlling the physical behaviour of black people for centuries, by replacing their brains with the minds of old, white members of their own family, so their presence lives on. This eccentric notion shows their aim to eliminate black members of society, so that everyone conforms to the ideologies of the white upper classes. It covertly shows a variety of intergenerational views on race and highlights the callousness of subtle racism. Having a black protagonist in a predominantly white cast alludes to the unfairness of racial alienation and discrimination, which is both uncomfortable and upsetting to watch. This film deserves to represent the most impactful films of the decade as its depiction of the insidiousness of racism is a vital societal issue that needs to be an increased political discourse – *Maria Goddard*

At its heart, Lady Bird is Gerwig's love letter to mother-daughter relationships and youth.

Damien Chazelle's *Whiplash* has Miles Teller and J.K Simmons deliver an enthralling, excruciatingly tense performance depicting the limits of artistic ambition. Andrew, a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, naïve drummer aspires to be a world-class drummer under the tutelage of Terence Fletcher. Some may call the teacher-student dynamic tough-love, but sado-masochist humiliation may be more apt. Actually, let's call it what it is: abuse, as the chiding "are you rushing or are you dragging" still lingers in my own memory whenever I dare to touch a musical instrument. Watching the film dismantles any preconceptions of jazz as *just* elevator music; rather it's gruelling, exciting, conflict, danger, all encapsulated in this pressure cooker of a film. Notice the claustrophobic cinematography, the pervasive sense of discomfort, lovingly accompanied by a sickening feeling of your heart in your throat. It's only fitting that a film centred on pushing yourself beyond the limits of human endurance, egged on by an

abusive mentor, would be accompanied by hypnotising drum patterns, indelible rhythms which ramp up the psychological torture, as rhythm itself becomes a tangible villain. The final scene and Andrew's Pyrrhic victory leave us feeling ambivalent and beyond uneasy – but that's jazz, baby – *Amy Butterworth, Online Lifestyle Editor*

Right at the beginning of *Lady Bird*, the title character and her mother quietly sob in the car to the final beats of *The Grapes of Wrath*. It's a brief moment of poignancy before, seemingly out of nowhere, a heated argument breaks out, escalating as the mother dismisses her daughter's aspirations. It is punctuated as Lady Bird jumps out of the moving vehicle. Reading this back might seem shocking and even painful, but it's one of the many moments in Greta Gerwig's directorial debut that matches emotional conflict with rip-roaring hilarity. No one expected Lady Bird to jump out of the car, but the sheer impulse of it was admirable. It is through her character arc that we resonate with the idea of growing to appreciate the idle moments of adolescence. At its heart, *Lady Bird* is Gerwig's love letter to mother-daughter relationships and youth. I certainly related to Lady Bird's tumultuous relationship with her mother and the subsequent understanding of her mother's perspective after flying the nest. Lady Bird as a character is charming, witty, and complicated – even when she is sulky you can't help but root for her. And the exact same can be said for the film – *Bryony Gooch, Print Music Editor*

Anderson celebrates the truly absurd and fantastical; The Grand Budapest Hotel takes the form of no solitary genre but a myriad...

Based on the 2007 book by André Aciman, *Call Me By Your Name* explores the sensual romance between Elio and American student Oliver, who is staying with his family for the summer. Set in rural northern Italy in the summer of 1983, the relaxing long days are shown with a similarly understated plot. The screenplay which earned James Ivory his first Academy Award, focuses on developing characters and their relationships. There are clear nods throughout to Ivory's previous work, such as *A Room With A View* and *Maurice*. Timothée Chalamet in his breakout role as Elio, shines in one of the best closing scenes in recent film history. Staring into the fireplace, eyes glazed with tears, we can truly empathise with the loss Elio is feeling. As Sufjan Steven's 'Visions of Gideon' (which indecently should have been the Oscar-nominated song) comes in and the credits begin to roll, we are transfixed, sharing in Elio's heartbreak. The film was

not without controversy, as both our gay leads are portrayed by straight actors. There has also been some discussion as to whether the age gap between the characters (24 and 17) is inappropriate. Nonetheless, the cinematography and Luca Guadagnino's direction creates a film oozing in beautiful nostalgia. And it made us all look at peaches slightly differently – *Katie Jones*

Wes Anderson does not shy away from drawing our eye to cinematic form and that is his brilliance. He is the architect of an elaborate fictional universe, set against the stage of pre-war central Europe – a fictitious 1932 – whereby we stand within the well-oiled, mechanical clock that is: *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. You fall awestruck at Anderson's precise visual palette and Ralph Fiennes's deadpan, comic delivery as Gustave is just as flawless. Every scene is purposely contrived from the fluctuating aspect ratio to the distinctive 'Anderson' symmetry. This masterpiece is a storybook in every respect: from the chapter headings to how, with great skill, Anderson matches the frame to what would be conventional to each of the four different time periods. A tight 4:3 is used for 1932, switching to 2.35:1 for 1968 and a 16:9 frame for 1985. The narrative is told like a carefully constructed Russian Doll revealing each story within itself; his work is a testament to how stylistic touch doesn't override our ability to empathise with the plethora of characters that adorn this cinematic universe. Anderson celebrates the truly absurd and fantastical; *The Grand Budapest Hotel* takes the form of no solitary genre but a myriad: a witty social comedy artfully interwoven with an adventure action-sequence, an adolescent love story, an art theft, a murder, a jailbreak, a budding friendship and a tale of loss – *Catherine Lloyd, Copy Editor*

With its translucent social realism, *Moonlight* explicitly addressed the intersections of race, class and sexuality with a delicately constructed tripartite structure. The film is a stifling ode to growing up surrounded by invisible barriers in every direction. The film seems more an introspective character study than a realist social commentary, yet integrates both with the intersectionality of existence. Several films have explored the seeming impossibility of upward economic mobility yet *Moonlight* pairs economic with social, with the explicit LGBT storyline. It is, unfortunately, one of very few films explicitly centering Black gay men, and Trevante Rhodes and André Holland are mesmerising in their roles. The multilateral film was divided into three parts, each titled by what people call the protagonist, Chiron; Little as a child, Black as an adult. Here, even the

structure of *Moonlight* portrays one of its several messages: “At some point you’ve got to decide for yourself what you’re going to be.”

The film embodied the unseen nature of these barriers with the structure itself, that of societal perception and the reliance on labels given by environmental factors. It is a message of positivity and of agency, of breaking through said unseen boundaries. Yet this message is never fully realized: Chiron (or Kevin, or Juan, or many of the characters) were not necessarily able to stumble to the freedom of adulthood and choice because of those invisible strictures. This is where social realism cleaves translucent filmic beauty, by emphasizing how it may have been all well and good to have agency, but agency only goes so far in the case of oppression. It is easy for a film like *Moonlight* to become depressing, yet it does not.

The camera carries the load here whilst the characters embody the realist fare; at the end of the film, these barriers are still in place despite the characters’ entanglements and struggles. This is what incongruously juxtaposes the transcendent camerawork capturing the beauty of the

