

Screen, Screen Features

The Best Films of the 2010s: #25-11

An ensemble of Screen writers continue to list their favourite films of the past decade.

5 mins read

Written by [Screen](#), [Jacob Heayes](#), [Jonathan Chern](#), [Sam Thomson](#), [Abi Taphouse](#), [Neha Shaji](#), [Bridie Adams](#), [Henry Jordan](#), [Tabitha Burnett](#), [Anne Chafer](#), [Max Ingleby](#), [Francesca Sylph](#) | Jan 27, 2020



And we're back! If you missed the first 25 films on our countdown, make sure to check those out [here](#). If you're all caught up, let's cut the chit-chat and move on to the next 15 films on our list...

American Honey is made of a thousand dreams, all stitched together by stunning cinematography into a beautiful, comfortable, endlessly

rewatchable quilt. The combination of Andrea Arnold's visionary directing and A24's tight production makes for a landmark in modern cinema, and it is films like *American Honey* that I will throw in the face of anyone who even suggests that the movie industry is seeing a decline in quality.

Arnold has an incredible talent for injecting her films with authenticity. In *American Honey* this is born from the mish-mash soundtrack, and the cast, most of whom were scouted from parks, supermarkets and strip clubs. The phrase "it's not a film, it's an experience" is used far too much, so I won't use it here. But if I was going to use it, I'd use it right now. Make of that what you will – *Sam Thomson, Print Screen Editor*

Films about success are a dime a dozen, where the hero is heroic and collects a handsome reward on their way out. *The Revenant* is a film about clinging on to survival, knuckles white. It is a film about desperation in its purest, most guttural sense.

Filming on location allowed for some of the most gorgeous natural cinematography to come out of this decade, and the sense of isolation that comes from these shots, along with the silence that accompanies them, actually gives the audience a moment to reflect on the film while they are watching it.

Stories from the shoot tell us that DiCaprio truly battled his way to an Oscar, and excellent supporting performances from Tom Hardy and Will Poulter round off one of the most visually and narratively impactful cinematic experiences that I've ever had – *Sam Thomson, Print Screen Editor*

Quentin Tarantino's 10th film, *Once Upon A Time in Hollywood*, has divided audiences drastically. While some argue that it is amongst his best work, there are others that think it is a graceless re-writing of one of the grizzlier moments in the history of Hollywood. I find myself in the middle, seeing a piece of cinema that marries Tarantino's own killer soundtrack to a stylish and unique storyline with great performances from DiCaprio and Pitt, yet feels insensitive in its handling of such a difficult issue. This rewriting of history has gifted us with *Inglorious Bastards* and *Django Unchained* but here, for me, it is too personal and almost feels intrusive. I can understand why the film has been critiqued for its subject matter but overall, I will always be a sucker for a Tarantino slaughter-fest – *Jake Bradshaw*

[*A Ghost Story*] is about loss and loneliness and time, and though that's all been done before, it really feels beautifully understated here...

With his ninth feature film, Denis Villeneuve made a masterpiece. Easily the most beautifully shot, well paced and quietly devastating science fiction film of the decade, *Blade Runner 2049* took a gem of 80s cinema and somehow made something even better. Every frame is breathtaking, and Ryan Gosling delivers his best emotionally restrained performance since *Drive*, playing a replicant (a humanoid robot barely distinguishable from a real person) assigned to hunt down and kill his own kind in bleak vision of a future Los Angeles. Every character is unsuccessfully pursuing a human connection, brooding in neon lit streets, flying high above a dark city. A perfect aesthetic with a perfect plot, it's a cinematic milestone – *Max Ingleby*

You can't really praise someone's acting when they're standing around draped in a bedsheet, but something about Casey Affleck dressed up as a ghost really radiated feeling. For just a white sheet, the titular ghost was remarkably easy to sympathise with and understand. Most of this was down to the intelligent directing of David Lowery. The film opens with vignettes of a relationship, then shows us shots of the cosmos in a way that connects the character's story with some sort of cosmic relevance, like *The Tree of Life* (but not feeling derivative). *Ghost Story* really is a *less is more* kind of film. You may have heard about the famous scene in which Rooney Mara just sits on the floor eating pie for five minutes. Trust me, it's fucking captivating. It's the way each scene is blocked – the ghost's lack of movement for minutes at a time, and then the turn of the head – that communicates meaning. The film is about loss and loneliness and time, and though that's all been done before, it really feels beautifully understated here – you get that profound feeling when watching it – *Johnny Chern, Print Screen Editor*

Somehow absurd and realistic at the same time, *Sorry to Bother You* is quite possibly one of the most insane films I have ever seen in my entire life. Boots Riley manages to successfully navigate the line between comical insanity and a genuine commentary on race in the corporate world, the relationship between mass media and apathy, capitalism and modern-day slavery. So far removed from the real world and yet so grounded in our issues, *Sorry to Bother You* is a must-see for everyone,

especially those blinded by white privilege and class bias. Ambitious, refreshing, wholly unique and scarily relevant – *Francesca Sylph*

Nothing about Carol necessarily demands your attention, but everything in it silently envelops you in its meticulous world.

Alex Garland's filmography is short-but-sweet. The writer of *28 Days Later* and *Dredd* made his directorial debut in 2014 with *Ex Machina*, cementing his status as a maker of feminist sci-fi films. The film presents a power-struggle between unhinged tech bachelor Nathan (Oscar Isaacs), pasty nerd Caleb (Domhnall Gleeson) and potentially sentient AI Ava (Alicia Vikander). The stylish contained setting allows the film to study gender outside of social relations, with its main focus being on the hubris presented between the two male characters, who demonstrate a kind of toxic masculinity in very different ways. A slick yet tense thriller, *Ex Machina* is carried by its central performances since, for most of the film, there are only three characters. *Ex Machina* finds its place on this list for its intelligent directing and clever plot too – *Johnny Chern, Print Screen Editor*

Based on Roald Dahl's children's book, Wes Anderson brings to life the characters of *Fantastic Mr Fox* in a memorable stop motion animation. The use of stop motion is entirely fitting within the world of Mr Fox, emphasising the enigmatic nature of the Dahl's well loved characters, in a cinematographically satisfying recreation. The fast paced plot quickly enables you to build an emotional connection with Mr Fox's conflicting desire to return to his life as a thief but also to be a reliable and supportive father. Although much of the success of *Fantastic Mr Fox* should be given to Dahl and his story telling creativity, Anderson's direction and the production of such captivating images are what make the on screen retelling so memorable – *Abi Taphouse, Online Screen Editor*

Following on from an impressive trilogy, *Mad Max: Fury Road* outdid all the others in its franchise. *Fury Road* didn't seem to follow on from its predecessors – Tom Hardy's Max Rockatansky was a fortunate break from Mel Gibson's portrayal of the same character. *Fury Road's* other protagonist Furiosa (Chalize Theron) and the plot itself – about a warlord's five wives escaping from him – gave the film a social commentary focusing on women's place in a male-dominated society. Meanwhile the kinetic action with Mad Max's iconic sand and wheels set

pieces (the film wasn't scripted; it just had a storyboard) made the film eye-watering to watch. Dystopian fiction often places something potentially worrying from contemporary society in a scenario where it is heightened and left without limits. At its worst, this will resemble a paranoid maniac with a "the end is nigh" sign; at its best, this will resemble *Mad Max: Fury Road* – Johnny Chern, *Print Screen Editor*

[[Hunt for the Wilderpeople](#) is] a love letter to the wilderness of New Zealand, a call to arms against established order and a story with so much heart and gusto that it can't help but leave you teary-eyed, whilst also elated.

If there was ever a film to redefine the idiom 'love at first sight', there's no doubt that *Carol* would be the culprit. Never has eyes locking from across the room been so emotionally charged, so loaded with longing and desire. Todd Haynes' period romance is criminally underseen but more importantly, beautifully understated. Nothing about *Carol* necessarily demands your attention, but everything in it silently envelops you in its meticulous world. Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara are individually amongst our generation's finest actresses; pairing them together results in dazzling chemistry and real on-screen magic. This incredible love story is amongst cinema's most lively and passionate, easily securing itself as one of the decade's greatest films – Jacob Heayes, *Online Screen Editor*

Ah, the naïve excitement for the beginning of the end. Back in 2011, when no transphobic remarks from Rowling had surfaced and the Harry Potter fandom was at its peak, most of us were looking forward to see how a memorable saga were to end. Of course, the last installment disappointed some fans of the books in its adaptation decisions, but the movie's cultural relevance is due not so much to its content (despite the magnificent scene where Professor McGonagall gathers a whole army to fight the Death Eaters), but rather to its status as a pop-cultural phenomenon. Looking back at all the chaos that followed – first with the Cursed (Child) play, then with the *Fantastic Beasts* franchise –, it truly was the right place to end the *Harry Potter* saga – Anne Chafer, *Deputy Editor*

Hunt for the Wilderpeople is majestic. It's rare for a film to be so grounded, so nuanced and so pervasively *funny*. It's a love letter to the wilderness of New Zealand, a call to arms against established order and a story with so much heart and gusto that it can't help but leave you teary-

eyed, whilst also elated. Waititi's signature synth makes an appearance, along with his darker, more subversive humour and the depiction of unconventional, yet realistic relationships. To compare it to other films would be reductive, because it's so uniquely its own blend of elements. Originality is increasingly hard to come by these days. Reward its majestic-ness with your time – *Tabby Burnett*

The films I've become most attached to this decade have been films that grew with me and *her* was exactly one such film. On first seeing it, I knew it looked great, had an odd script and felt like little I'd seen before. As a 20 year old watching it though, it breaks my heart. It still looks awesome, but more than that, or the gently brilliant performances (that Phoenix and ScarJo have only recently beaten) or the delightful Arcade Fire score, the way Spike Jonze evokes the exquisite melancholia of existence is, in this decade or any other, totally unrivalled – *Henry Jordan*





Spike Lee's blistering sociopolitical thriller comedy slips back and forth between genres as incongruous as the two "Klansmen". John David Washington plays the titular character, whilst Adam Driver gives a muted, uncomfortably excellent performance as the white "face" of Washington's Klansman persona. The film has doses of Spike Lee's general absurd humor, such as in the scene where Washington's Ron Stallworth is on the phone with KKK leader David Duke, who proclaims to Stallworth that he could recognize a Black voice anywhere whilst talking to a Black man. Yet the film can pivot just as easily to horror such as in the long shot of Stallworth walking up to the figures the Klansmen were shooting at, who were Black caricatures. Or in one of Driver's best performances, as he is cornered by a deranged Klansman who keeps spitting slurs about Jews to Driver's character Zimmerman, who was a Jewish man sent in as the Klan infiltrator because he was white.

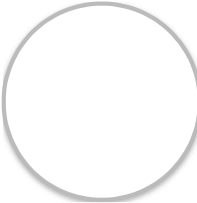
The film juxtaposes historical footage with the events of the film, and provides a nuanced take on police brutality and the insidious pervasiveness of racism within the United States. The reel footage only enhanced the poignancy of the film, by dragging it uncomfortably into the present – where not much has changed. Yet with the former issue, *BlackKklansman* fails to be a rebellious red and instead is a watery blue, leaving Stallworth's loyalties to the very police force that the film depicted as being fundamentally racist – up in the air – *Neha Shaji, Deputy Editor*

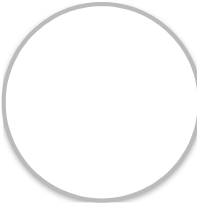
La La Land is the most beautiful musical of the decade. Although *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again* is a contender, Damien Chazelle’s 2016 romantic comedy takes the lead. Starring Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling, *La La Land* has been praised for the quality of its direction, performances, cinematography and music. *La La Land*’s music was composed by Justin Hurwitz, who worked on Chazelle’s earlier films *Whiplash* and *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench*. The style of Hurwitz’s music is a unique blend of traditional and modern jazz, classic musical numbers (“Another Day of Sun”) and soft ballads (“Audition (The Fools Who Dream)”). Chazelle’s compelling screenplay combined with catchy, jazzy songs makes *La La Land* one of the best films of the 2010s – *Bridie Adams*

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