



## Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid

George Roy Hill, 1969

"What do you mean, you can't swim? The fall'll probably kill ya!" The iconic teaming of Paul Newman and Robert Redford was so magical—and so profitable, scoring the year's biggest hit—that this offbeat character study/action comedy in Western trappings and bathed in cinematographer Conrad Hall's Oscar-winning sepia hues has been a touchstone for bickering buddy pictures ever since.

Outlaws Butch (Newman) and The Kid (Redford) belong to the notorious Hole in the Wall Gang, but an over-the-top train robbery makes things too hot, with a tireless posse pursuit prompting the recurring question from Butch that became a catchphrase—"Who ARE those guys?"—and the decision to relaunch their career of crime abroad with The Kid's mistress Etta Place (Katharine Ross) in tow. The famous last act has its share of humor—memorably practicing "This is a robbery; back against the wall!" in Spanish to become the bandito scourge of Bolivia. But the film is immortal for its final image of the pair, freeze-framed as they run out into a shoot-'em-up with an army.

*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* is an utterly disarming combination of smart, original screenwriting, handsome visual treatment, and star power. With all the jokes and poses, there is still real interest in the well-defined, contrasting characters. Butch, the brains, is a smooth talker with vision, carried away by his enthusiasms, The Kid a golden boy with darkness within, cool and sardonic, ashamed to admit any weakness.

William Goldman's Oscar-winning screenplay is exciting, funny, and romantic, both slyly satirizing and embracing Western legend (the real Butch and Sundance were far from Newman's and Redford's charismatic charmers). It also has audacious nerve, as when The Kid accosts "teacher lady" Etta and orders her to undress at gunpoint. After the initial shock in a thus-far genial movie, it is a relief, a big laugh, and a turn-on when it becomes clear they are already well acquainted. The Burt Bacharach song interlude, "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head," is the only dated element. Movies just don't come more attractive and likeable than this one. **AE**

*"If he'd just pay me what he's spending to make me stop robbing him, I'd stop robbing him."*

**Butch Cassidy**  
(Paul Newman)

**f**

Robert Redford later named his Utah estate and film institute "Sundance," after his character in the film.



## Hsia nu King Hu, 1969

### A Touch of Zen

Taiwan (International, Lian Bang, Union)  
200m Eastmancolor **Language** Mandarin  
**Producer** Jung-Feng Sha, Shiqing Yang  
**Screenplay** King Hu, Songling Pu  
**Photography** Yeh-hsing Chou, Hui-ying Hua  
**Music** Tai Kong Ng, Dajiang Wu **Cast** Billy Chan, Ping-Yu Chang, Roy Chiao, Shih Chun, Hsue Han, Yin-Chieh Han, Feng Hsu, Ching-Ying Lam, Tien Miao, Hong Qiao, Peng Tien, Cien Tsao, Pai Ying **Cannes Film Festival** King Hu (grand technical prize), nomination (Golden Palm)

There's a reason *A Touch of Zen* is considered a benchmark in Chinese cinema: It's like a Rosetta Stone of the *wuxia*, or swords-and-sorcery, genre. The story begins simply, centering on the life of a daydreaming scholar (Shih Chun), whose mother despairs of his ever marrying and siring children. Then he becomes smitten with the mysterious woman (Feng Hsu) who has moved into the abandoned mansion, long rumored to be haunted, and the intimations of a ghost story come to the fore. The revelation that she is in fact a princess fleeing from imperial enemies who slaughtered her family throws the story into even greater relief. Each plot twist opens the narrative up into something bigger, and before the end, Buddhist monks with supernatural powers and metaphysical fantasy are added to the mix as well. At more than three hours long, the pace is surprisingly brisk because this is a movie that's genuinely unpredictable.

King Hu is rightly regarded as the pioneering director of the *wuxia* film, in spite of the genre's existence in film history since the silent era. Granted, *wuxia* novels may already have possessed great richness and complexity, but it was Hu who brought these traits to the cinema, combining them with the acrobatics and pageantry of Peking Opera and the underpinnings of Zen Buddhism. Hu understood that films were experienced with the senses, and he fills the CinemaScope frame with a constant swirl of color and movement. Honing his craft on several previous *wuxia* films, *A Touch of Zen* stands as the zenith of Hu's career. **AT**

**f**

The literal English translation of *A Touch of Zen's* Chinese title is "Warrior Woman."

## Blade Runner 2049 Denis Villeneuve, 2017

U.S. (Alcon Entertainment, Columbia Pictures, Scott Free Productions, 16:14 Entertainment, Thunderbird Entertainment, Torridon Films) 163m Color  
**Producers** Broderick Johnson, Andrew K Kosove, Bud Yorkin, Cynthia Sikes Yorkin  
**Screenplay** Hampton Fancher, Michael Green  
**Photography** Roger A. Deakins  
**Music** Hans Zimmer  
**Cast** Ryan Gosling, Harrison Ford, Ana de Armas, Sylva Hoeks, Robin Wright, Jared Leto, Dave Bautista, Edward James Olmos, Hiam Abbass  
**Oscars** Roger A. Deakins (cinematography), John Nelson, Gerd Nefzer, Paul Lambert, Richard R. Hoover (visual effects)  
**Oscar nominations** Roger A. Deakins (cinematography), John Nelson, Gerd Nefzer, Paul Lambert, Richard R. Hoover (visual effects), Mark A. Mangini, Theo Green (sound editing), Ron Bartlett, Doug Hemphill, Mac Ruth (sound mixing), Dennis Gassner, Alessandra Quercola (production design).

Adapted from Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) had a significant impact on science fiction filmmaking, while also casting a sizeable shadow over popular culture. Working from a screenplay co-scripted by one of the film's original writers, French-Canadian director Denis Villeneuve, delivers a follow-up that is every bit as bold and striking.

In 2049, three decades after original blade runner Rick Deckard (Ford) went missing, LAPD officer K (Ryan Gosling, in a suitably emotionless performance) is tasked with eliminating older, rogue replicants. When K makes a devastating discovery that has the potential to plunge what's left of society into chaos, he is forced to seek Deckard's help to uncover the truth about both the history and future of replicants. Out to stop him is Luv (Sylva Hoeks), a fearsome foil.

Given its stature it's easy to forget that *Blade Runner* divided audiences and critics upon release. *Blade Runner 2049* achieved the same feat. Unafraid to engage on an intellectual level with themes such as mortality, identity, slave culture and the deceptive nature of memory, this is in effect a protracted art movie that places emphasis on ambiguity and nuance. With subtle nods to the original, *Blade Runner 2049* boldly strikes out to create its own universe. **JW**

## Get Out Jordan Peele, 2017

U.S. (Universal Pictures, Blumhouse Productions, QC Entertainment, Monkeypaw Productions, Dentsu, Fuji Television Network) 101m Color  
**Producers** Jason Blum, Edward H. Hamm Jr, Sean McKittrick, Jordan Peele  
**Screenplay** Jordan Peele  
**Photography** Toby Oliver  
**Music** Michael Abels  
**Cast** Daniel Kaluuya, Allison Williams, Catherine Keener, Bradley Whitford, Caleb Landry Jones, Marcus Henderson, Betty Gabriel, LilRel Howery.  
**Oscars** Jordan Peele (Best Original Screenplay)  
**Oscar nominations** Jordan Peele (Director, Best Original Screenplay), Daniel Kaluuya (Best Actor), Jason Blum, Edward H. Hamm Jr, Sean McKittrick, Jordan Peele (Best Picture).

There are few films that feel more resonant or necessary than writer-director Jordan Peele's dissection of racist attitudes in contemporary America. When young African American Chris Washington (Daniel Kaluuya) visits the sprawling family estate of his white girlfriend Rose (Allison Williams) he is ensnared in a more sinister reason for his invitation. At first, Chris reads the ostensibly liberal family's overly accommodating behavior as nervous attempts to deal with their daughter's relationship, but as the weekend progresses a series of disturbing discoveries and disquieting interactions with the Armitage's servile black staff lead Chris to uncover a terrifying secret founded on exploitation and an underlying sense of white privilege.

A significant critical and commercial success that manages to be both provocative, intelligent but also incredibly entertaining, *Get Out* incorporates a number of deftly executed set pieces. Peele's ability to communicate a sense of unease for black characters is present from the get-go. Innocuous and placatory phrases designed to comfort and disarm accrue darker meaning as the film progresses. The film made a BAFTA-winning star of British born Kaluuya, who is exceptional in the central role. But more importantly, it reaffirmed the need for more dialogue around the subject of race and racism. **JW**



U.S. (Marvel Studios, Walt Disney Pictures) 134m Color  
**Producers** Kevin Feige  
**Screenplay** Ryan Coogler, Joe Robert Cole  
**Photography** Rachel Morrison  
**Music** Luig Göransson  
**Cast** Chadwick Boeman, Michael B. Jordan, Lupita Nyong'o, Danai Gurira, Daniel Kaluuya, Letitia Wright, Martin Freeman, Andy Serkis, Angela Bassett, Forest Whitaker

## Black Panther Ryan Coogler, 2018

Ryan Coogler's hugely entertaining take on Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's 1966 creation is a seismic shift in the representation of black characters in mainstream cinema. Not only are all but two members of the main cast actors of color, their roles run the gamut from hero to antagonist while avoiding the pitfalls of cultural stereotyping that has marred previous films centering on black characters, from the Blaxploitation era to the run of films that followed the success of *Do the Right Thing* (1989) and *Boyz n the Hood* (1990).

Chadwick Boseman takes center stage here as T'Challa, the heir apparent to the technologically advanced kingdom of Wakanda, hidden from the world in the heart of the African continent. His brief reign as king is challenged by an outsider, Erik "Killmonger" Stevens (Michael B. Jordan), whose past threatens T'Challa's family legacy. Killmonger's desire is to see Wakanda's advanced weaponry turned on societies that have subjugated nations of color, thus redressing the world order.

Coogler graduates from the indie success of *Fruitville Station* (2013) and satisfying offshoot of the *Rocky* franchise *Creed* (2015) with relative ease. Unlike the directors of most superhero films, he avoids the pitfalls of an over-extended, CGI-driven climactic battle, keeping the action brief but thrilling. Women also dominate, with Okoye (Danai Gurira) leading the Dora Milajie—Wakanda's elite, all-female special force—into battle, while T'Challa's ex Nakia (Lupita Nyong'o) and sister Shuri (Letitia Wright) search for a technological advantage over Killgore.

Coogler and John Robert Cole's screenplay seamlessly incorporates race into the film's narrative. They are pointed at times, making *Black Panther* the most politically relevant entry in the Marvel canon. But through its production, *Black Panther* might push opinion toward action in the representation of race and gender on screen. **IHS**

*"Wakanda will no longer watch from the shadows."*

T'Challa  
(Chadwick Boseman)



**i**  
 Chadwick Boseman made his first Marvel appearance in *Captain America: Civil War* (2016).