



10. **The Wizard of Oz** - Victor Fleming (and others), Director - MGM 1939

Getting the right mix of fantasy, adventure, comedy, and music has been demonstrated as nearly impossible to achieve, and this film did it. (Consider: Labyrinth, Dr. Dolittle (the first one), Hook, Bedknobs and Broomsticks, etc.) Still viewed and enjoyed without guilt over sixty years later. Tip: there is NO shot of a stagehand who hanged himself in the background, a filmic legend.



9. **Sunset Boulevard** - Billy Wilder, Director - Paramount 1950

Never had there been a nastier, more sardonic, practically vicious, satire not only on Hollywood, but on American culture in general, until this one. Any movie narrated by a corpse has to be considered unique. Many, many creepy scenes, but my favorite is when the butler (Von Stroheim) reveals that he was once married to the great film star, and now is her servant. Tip: the faded film queen plays bridge with some of her friends and one of them is Buster Keaton the silent film comedian. They are not kindly called her "waxworks."



8. **Duck Soup** - Leo McCarey (and the Marx Brothers), Director - Paramount 1933

Not only a great comedy, but makes some savage points about politics, war, and the quality of leadership that are frighteningly accurate in the Second Bush Era. The famous mirror sequence is possibly the funniest two minutes on film. Tip: in the war sequence Groucho gets his head stuck in a vase, and rather than get him out, his brothers paint a caricature of his face on the vase complete with moustache!



7. **Dr. Strangelove: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb** -

Stanley Kubrick, Director - Columbia 1963

Takes gallows humor to the max. Nothing less than the end of the world as we know it with lots of laughs along the way. Dozens of unforgettable lines but my two favorites are: "Gentlemen, you can't fight in here. This is the war room!" and "I'm not saying we aren't going to get our hair mussed, but, I'd say no more than fifty, sixty million people dead, uh, depending on the breaks." Tip: look closely at the manuals sitting in front of the generals in the war room scenes - they are labeled US Population in Megadeaths.



6. **Frankenstein/Bride of Frankenstein** - James Whale, Director - Universal 1931/35

If the Godfather films can be considered as an epic, then these two films can be considered the progenitor of practically all horror films that have followed. The first is creepy and overwrought, but established a monster that was completely believable. The second added graveyard humor and just a touch of sexual innuendo, things that are now the stock-in-trade of all horror films. The creepiest lines belong to Ernest Thesiger as the prissy Dr. Praetorious who proclaims: "You built your monster from the parts of corpses you dug up, I went another route, I grew mine from *seed*. (Ugh!) I don't want to know exactly what that means. Tip: in the final conflagration scene (Bride), you can clearly see Henry Frankenstein being killed in the collapse of the laboratory, but he is also seen leaving the building before the explosion with his wife! The confusion stems from the fact that it was decided after previews to re-shoot and spare his life, but the other shots weren't all edited out.



5. **Citizen Kane** - Some guy named Welles, Director - RKO 1941

You've heard all the other reasons, now here are some different ones. Although it's often variable in quality, the make-up in this film is remarkable. People forget that Orson was just 21 yrs. old when he made this film and he was in make-up practically the whole time. He also was not a particularly handsome man, and in the film he is. The rest of the cast was similarly youthful and many had to age decades in the film. Then there are the special effects which were revolutionary at the time. Set extensions, transitions, models, matte paintings all made the film look more expensive to produce than it was. What in the world!? Anyone who can explain the cockatoo scene deserves a prize. Tip: when Kane smashes up his second wife's bedroom, Welles actually rips his hand open and has to try to hide it as the shot was one long take. Talk about dedication, or madness.



4. **Vertigo** - Alfred Hitchcock, Director - Paramount 1958

There's a word that I hesitate to use because it sounds stuffy, but this film is oneric. It means dreamlike, and this film is the closest thing to a waking dream, not only for the characters, but for the audience. The most incredible sequence, among many, is the scene when James Stewart has finally forced a girl to transform herself into his dream woman. (Little does he

know that she *is* his dream woman, but watch the film for more on that.) He embraces this dream girl and the camera begins to circle them dizzily. The hotel room they're in *dissolves* away behind them into a stable scene where earlier he had first expressed his desire. What makes it special is, Stewart looks up from his lovemaking and *notices* that the background has changed! Wow! Tip: in the opening scene is the first track-zoom shot ever, one that has been used many times since including Jaws.



3. **The Seven Samurai** - Akira Kurosawa, Director - Japan 1954

Not only the source of many adventure films that followed, but a film that gives you a real sense of a culture and a time that are utterly foreign to you. What I like most is that the issues that are being explored are so particular to the Japanese culture but you get right into them without any exposition. Great camerawork and editing too. Sorry, no tips on this one.



2. **The Manchurian Candidate** - John Frankenheimer, Director - United Artists 1962

You may discern a theme developing here, but this film is so biting and bitter in its portrayal of politics, power, and motherhood that it is quite amazing that it got made at all! The

dialogue, when not downright bizarre, is incredible. The most delirious exchanges are between Frank Sinatra and Janet Leigh on a train. Among many great scenes is the one where Laurence Harvey, as a killer programmed to assassinate on command, shoots a liberal senator (his father-in-law) and in doing so shoots him through a carton of milk the senator is holding. Thus, the liberal senator gushes milk instead of blood! (milquetoast, milk of human kindness?) Tip: Sinatra does a scene that is blatantly out of focus. Did he object to a retake? What's up with that?



DAVID OSEZNICK
Executive Producer

KING KONG

with
FAY WRAY • ROBT. ARMSTRONG
BRUCE CABOT A COOPER-SCHOEDSACK
PRODUCTION
FROM AN IDEA CONCEIVED BY
EDGAR WALLACE AND **MERIAN C. COOPER**

1. **King Kong** - Cooper/Schoedsack, Directors - RKO 1933

Everything that Spielberg, Lucas, Cameron, etc., do in their big adventure/sci-fi blockbusters stems directly from this film. The integration of special effects, sets, action, and music is incredible, especially considering the technology of the time. (no computers!) Any film that can make a 16in. tall, rabbit-fur covered model into an icon of twentieth century filmmaking has to be taken seriously. Yes, it has faded, how could it not? But echoes of this film permeate such films as Jurassic Park, Godzilla, Raiders of the Lost Ark, etc. One scene is particularly strange, the over-bearing film director (imagine!) is trying to film a test scene with his inexperienced leading lady on the deck of the ship sailing to Kong's island. He tells her to look higher, higher, and scream for her very life! Her reaction is so genuine that a sailor remarks, "I wonder what he thinks we are going to find on that island?" Wonder indeed.