



# What The First Rough Cut Of Nope Was Like - Exclusive



BY DON KAYE / AUG. 8, 2022 11:37 AM EDT

Casual film fans are often familiar with the terms "final cut" and "director's cut," but they may be less knowledgeable about the earlier stages in the process, often referred to as an "assembly cut" and a "rough cut." An assembly cut takes just about all the footage that the director has shot and lays it end to end, with little to no editing or post-production work done on it. This gives the filmmaker the widest possible view of everything captured on camera.



are included that may not make it to the final version, but the rough cut can give the director a better idea of what shape the finished movie can take ([via Studio Binder](#)).

Rough cuts and assembly cuts have one thing in common: They're often very long, containing hours of footage that needs to be whittled down to anywhere from 90 minutes to three hours. Sometimes fans mistake these early cuts as "director's cuts," but that's not often the case. The director *wants* to lose a good portion of that material because it doesn't work, wasn't filmed right, slows down the story, and so on.

In the case of Jordan Peele's [new sci-fi thriller, "Nope,"](#) a lot more was filmed than the 130-minute final version currently playing in theaters. But [editor Nicholas Monsour tells Looper](#) that this was by design: "Part of what made 'Nope' really special is that [Peele] had more resources to flesh out the whole world," he says, "which meant the actors and the camera people got to explore a little bit more."

## The first assembly cut of Nope was a lot longer





"Nope," however, Monsour says that Peele had more room to experiment while shooting, resulting in a much greater abundance of material.

Yet Peele always had a clear vision of the movie, even in its earliest form. "There's different kinds of first cuts," Monsour explains. "Some are the result of an extreme delusion on the part of the director where somehow, they thought this was all going to go into a movie and they don't know what to do now that it's four hours long or whatever. Other times, that's in there by design, and they know that the movie they want to make only can really emerge by whittling down and shaping a lot more material."

The first assembly cut of "Nope" ended up going long for that latter reason. "It was close to four hours," reveals Monsour, "but it felt less like a much bigger story that we had to structurally alter, and more like the movie plus an exploration of each setting and each character that was more in depth. ... We got to experiment and explore with these other layers of background and exposition, but the story was pretty much the same in the four-hour version as it is in the two-hour-and-10-minute version."

Monsour admits that he's been in situations where the filmmaker has relied on him to make sense of all the footage — but "Nope" was not one of them. "You're there to support someone else's vision, and sometimes they don't know it until they see it," he says, "but that's not the case with Jordan."

*"Nope" is playing in theaters now.*

---

RECOMMENDED

NEXT UP

---

## 98 Best Thrillers Of All Time Ranked



political to the psychological and historical. At their core, thrillers create a sense of anxiety, excitement, or urgency that engages us as much as it unnerves us.

Sometimes this is done with action sequences, or by exposing a world of crime or espionage. Other times, thrills are orchestrated more subtly: The tension arises within one's own psyche, or manifests in the relationships between characters. Whatever it is that creates that apprehension, however, it's unmistakable to true thrill-seekers — and it's a core part of these 98 films in one way or another.

*Updated on May 11, 2022: Given audiences' insatiable thirst for adventure and excitement, the entertainment industry continues to produce a number of incredible thrillers each year. Occasionally, a film comes along that is compelling enough to crack the top 98 — and even unseat a former pick in the process. As the genre continues to evolve, so, too, will our catalogue of the best thrillers of all time (while always paying respect to its riveting roots).*

## 98. Snatch



The film's extensive cult following suggests that critics may have been too hard on the film for being too similar to Ritchie's previous work. One plot focuses on a stolen diamond and another on a heartless gangster who sucks a small-time boxing promoter into his world of sadistic violence. Together, they make for a viciously funny and action-packed thriller.

- **Starring:** Brad Pitt, [Jason Statham](#), Benicio del Toro
- **Director:** Guy Ritchie
- **Year:** 2017
- **Runtime:** 102 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 42%

## 97. The Man From U.N.C.L.E.



Warner Bros. Pictures

More than just a straightforward spy thriller, "The Man From U.N.C.L.E." has *style*. It emanates from its leading men and women as well as Guy Ritchie's cinematic storytelling. It's set in a time period notorious for its tension: the height of the Cold War. The plot centers around a CIA agent and former professional thief who uncovers a plot to supply lingering Nazi cells with a nuclear weapon.

Like many spy thrillers, "The Man From U.N.C.L.E." relies on the perhaps implausible but indisputably alluring idea that the fate of the world can rest in the hands of a small and highly skilled but idiosyncratic group of individuals.

- **Starring:** [Henry Cavill](#), Armie Hammer, Alicia Vikander
- **Director:** Guy Ritchie
- **Year:** 2015
- **Runtime:** 116 minutes
- **Rating:** PG-13
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 68%

## 96. Basic Instinct



TriStar Pictures

If you didn't know it was directed by Paul Verhoeven or that it came out after Hitchcock's death, you might think "Basic Instinct" was the work of Hollywood's master of suspense. It follows a detective who enters into a tumultuous relationship with the prime suspect in a brutal murder: The victim's lover, who wrote a book in which a murder is committed the exact same way. While some critics felt it was derivative, the movie has become an enduring favorite whose fans insist it's a suitable and inventive homage to the legacy of suspense films.

- **Starring:** [Michael Douglas](#), Sharon Stone, George Dzundza
- **Director:** Paul Verhoeven
- **Year:** 1992
- **Runtime:** 128 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 55%

## 95. Michael Clayton



Warner Bros. Pictures

The world of "Michael Clayton" is one of loopholes and malleable truth — in other words, the legal world. George Clooney's title character must juggle all kinds of stressors: the mental breakdown of a colleague, the corruption of the corporate world, and the implications of a class action lawsuit against a major client of his firm.

That sounds like a lot of paperwork, but really, "Michael Clayton" is all suspense and action. The script is impeccable, smart, and efficient, delivering a tense melodrama that refuses to let go of its audience's attention.

- **Starring:** [George Clooney](#), Tom Wilkinson, Tilda Swinton
- **Director:** Tony Gilroy
- **Year:** 2007
- **Runtime:** 120 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 91%

## 94. Maria Full of Grace





Fine Line Features

Films in general, including thrillers, can offer windows into experiences that might not otherwise be familiar to, or even considered by, audiences at large. The titular Maria, a 17-year-old Colombian girl, escapes her sweatshop-like working conditions in favor of becoming a drug mule. The risky story that ensues is as gripping as any crime caper, but at its heart is a story about survival at the most basic level — arguably the highest stakes of all.

- **Starring:** Catalina Sandino Moreno, Yenny Paola Vega, Guilied Lopez
- **Director:** Joshua Marston
- **Year:** 2004
- **Runtime:** 101 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 97%

## 93. Thief



United Artists

Sometimes the hardest thing to escape is the prison of your own habits. When you've made a name for yourself in the world of crime, it can be hard to get out, but that's just what Frank, the titular jewel thief in "Thief," attempts to do when he decides he wants to start a family. Of course, complications arise.

Another indispensable heist film, this one has been praised for its intelligence — so be sure to pay attention when you watch it.

- **Starring:** James Caan, Tuesday Weld, Dennis Farina, Willie Nelson
- **Director:** Michael Mann
- **Year:** 1981
- **Runtime:** 123 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 94%

## 92. Dark Waters

**Focus Features**

One of the best things about the thriller genre is how many different parts of life it can touch. You might think of the legal world as boring, but "Dark Waters" proves that it's anything but as it tells the story of a lawyer who takes on a chemical manufacturing company for contaminating an entire town.

Sadly, this dramatization is based on a true story, and one that reminds us just how gruesome and close to home corruption can be.

- **Starring:** Mark Ruffalo, Anne Hathaway, Tim Robbins
- **Director:** Todd Haynes
- **Year:** 2019
- **Runtime:** 126 minutes
- **Rating:** PG-13
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 89%

## 91. The Invisible Man



Universal Pictures

The thriller genre seems uniquely equipped to explore toxic relationships. Examples abound in "Gaslight," "Fargo," "Gone Girl," and others, including the thriller "The Invisible Man." Like the wife in "Gaslight," Elizabeth Moss' character Cecilia finds herself psychologically manipulated by her abusive ex Adrian, but this modern film adds a sci-fi twist: She can't prove anything, because Adrian has used his expertise as an optics engineer to fake his own death and make himself entirely invisible.

- **Starring:** Elizabeth Moss, Aldis Hodge, Storm Reid
- **Director:** Leigh Whannell
- **Year:** 2020
- **Runtime:** 124 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 91%

## 90. Shutter Island



Paramount Pictures

The setting of "Shutter Island" is arguably the main character's mind. Luckily, that mind, belonging to Deputy U.S. Marshal Teddy Daniels (Leonardo DiCaprio), has a great soundtrack. We follow Teddy through the caverns of his own mind (in vivid memories of his time as a soldier and disturbing dreams of his deceased wife) as he investigates a psychiatric facility from which a patient has gone missing.

And that's just what's going on at the very surface. Deep in the bowels of Shutter Island, there are corrupt and malevolent forces at work, and nothing is what it seems.

- **Starring:** Leonardo DiCaprio, Mark Ruffalo, Ben Kingsley
- **Director:** Martin Scorsese
- **Year:** 2010
- **Runtime:** 139 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 68%

## 89. Argo



Warner Bros. Pictures

One of the most gripping things about "Argo," besides the impeccable performances of the star-studded cast, is the fact that it not only takes place on an international scale but is based on real (though almost too absurd to believe) historical events. Yes, during the 1979-'81 hostage crisis in Iran, the CIA faked the production of a sci-fi movie in Tehran in order to rescue half a dozen diplomats.

You can't make this stuff up — but you can turn it into an Academy Award-winning thriller.

- **Starring:** Ben Affleck, Bryan Cranston, Alan Arkin
- **Director:** Ben Affleck
- **Year:** 2012
- **Runtime:** 120 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 96%

## 88. American Psycho



Lions Gate Films

It's satire. It's horror. It's the American Dream. It's all and none of those things, all at once, so it's easy to imagine that many audience members and critics didn't know what to make of "American Psycho" when it premiered. And that's part of what makes it one of the best thrillers of all time.

Patrick Bateman is an investment banker by day and a serial killer by night, in turns exhibiting rigid command of his psyche and then no connection to reality at all. His character is so over the top that you almost have to laugh, but you'll be plenty scared of Bateman — and the evils of society, too.

- **Starring:** Christian Bale, [Willem Dafoe](#), Jared Leto
- **Director:** Mary Harron
- **Year:** 2000
- **Runtime:** 101 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** [69%](#)

## 87. Mulholland Drive



Universal Pictures

As surreal and Lynchian as it gets, "Mulholland Drive" isn't the first thriller to use amnesia as a disorienting device to keep the viewer both engaged and confused. (Think "Memento," for example.) Filmmaker David Lynch refuses to explain the basic meaning behind the events in the film, which follows multiple characters throughout Los Angeles, primarily a new-in-town aspiring actress who befriends an amnesiac woman who was recently in a car accident.

The many interpretations of the film include themes of dreams and fantasies versus reality, as well as a surreal treatment of Hollywood itself. "Mulholland Drive" is a treat to watch because it's essentially whatever you want to be, but it's unequivocally dark and thrilling regardless.

- **Starring:** Justin Theroux, Naomi Watts, Laura Elena Harring
- **Director:** David Lynch
- **Year:** 2001
- **Runtime:** 146 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 83%

## 86. The Night of the Hunter





United Artists

While its stylistic choices initially set it apart from its contemporaries, "The Night of the Hunter" quickly proved to be timeless — even though it took inspiration from the already bygone era of silent films. The wild tale follows a morally bankrupt minister who becomes a serial killer and attempts to take advantage of a widow whose deceased husband hid a large sum of money before he died.

The most shocking part about this film, however, is that it wasn't critically or commercially well-received at the time, and Charles Laughton never directed again. His final work is a thriller for arthouse film lovers, or an arthouse film for thriller lovers ... Either way, it's something to behold.

- **Starring:** Robert Mitchum, Shelley Winters, Lillian Gish
- **Director:** Charles Laughton
- **Year:** 1955
- **Runtime:** 92 minutes
- **Rating:** Not Rated
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 95%

## 85. Green Room



A24

The great thrillers of cinema have been set in all sorts of places — Mr. Ripley travels all over Italy, and some of the most intense action happens in a little rowboat. In large part, "Fight Club" takes place inside the Narrator's mind. These settings are nothing if not ambitious in their scope, but director Jeremy Saulnier proves that it's just as great of a challenge to set a thriller in a small backstage room (the titular "green room").

When the punk band playing at a club accidentally witnesses a murder, their neo-Nazi hosts turn on them, and their show becomes a showdown as they fight for their lives. The setting inspires a claustrophobic panic that pays off for thriller fans, but not so well for the characters.

- **Starring:** Anton Yelchin, Imogen Poots, Alia Shawkat
- **Director:** Jeremy Saulnier
- **Year:** 2015
- **Runtime:** 95 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 91%

## 84. Seven



New Line Cinema

The "deadly" part of the seven deadly sins is typically understood to refer to the graveness of the acts and their potential to cut the sinner off from the grace of God. In "Seven," however, that takes on a much more literal meaning, as this group of deplorable acts is used as a motif in the crimes of a serial killer. The film follows two detectives with vastly different personalities and their attempts to track down the murderer.

All combined, the gore, psychological deviance, and grim premise place this thriller on the verge of horror, which makes for a satisfyingly haunting viewing experience.

- **Starring:** Brad Pitt, Morgan Freeman, Gwyneth Paltrow
- **Director:** David Fincher
- **Year:** 1995
- **Runtime:** 127 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 81%



Paramount Pictures

The term "copycat" takes on a whole new meaning in "To Catch a Thief," which follows a retired and reformed cat burglar named John who has to protect his new reputation by helping to catch a criminal who's copying his crimes. The blame for this new wave of crimes will fall on John unless he can prove his innocence, and catching the new "Cat" is the only way to do that.

Hitchcock serves up a delicious role reversal in which the former bad guy must use the very skills he once used for amoral purposes to stop another evildoer.

- **Starring:** Cary Grant, Grace Kelly, Jessie Royce Landis
- **Director:** Alfred Hitchcock
- **Year:** 1955
- **Runtime:** 106 minutes
- **Rating:** PG
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 96%



The Weinstein Company

Never underestimate the hijinks that can ensue after someone finds themselves in the wrong place at the right time. Why not? Just ask the three small-time criminals in "Killing Them Softly" who rob a Mafia poker game and find themselves with two hitmen after them.

The story is engaging on its own, but the humor and dialogue take it to the next level. Subtly, softly, this film will make you laugh, make you gasp, and make you think.

- **Starring:** Brad Pitt, Ray Liotta, Scoot McNairy
- **Director:** Andrew Dominik
- **Year:** 2012
- **Runtime:** 97 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 74%

## 81. The Manchurian Candidate



United Artists

One might typically conceive of assassins as driven and highly trained individuals, not unwitting pawns. To see someone thrust into that role is startling, and it's uniquely upsetting to see a veteran and member of a powerful political family subjected to brainwashing and turned into a pawn in a conspiracy to overthrow the government. What's most effective about this film is its contagious paranoia and the massive scale of its political thrills.

- **Starring:** Frank Sinatra, Laurence Harvey, Janet Leigh
- **Director:** John Frankenheimer
- **Year:** 1962
- **Runtime:** 126 minutes
- **Rating:** PG-13
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 97%

## 80. I'm Thinking of Ending Things



Life can be brutal on a farm. Brutal and confusing — and the emphasis on the latter of that life is depicted by Charlie Kaufman's "[I'm Thinking of Ending Things](#)," which follows a young woman and her boyfriend as they visit the latter's parents at his childhood home, where the young woman quickly realizes something is amiss.

The film is as bizarre and byzantine as you'd expect from the director of "Synecdoche, New York" and writer of "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" and "Being John Malkovich." But unlike other Kaufman films, "I'm Thinking of Ending Things" plants his trademark absurdity in the thriller genre, teeming with moments that linger just on the edge of normal and add up to produce a palpable unease.

- **Starring:** Jessie Buckley, Jesse Plemons, Toni Collette, David Thewlis
- **Director:** Charlie Kaufman
- **Year:** 2020
- **Runtime:** 134 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 82%



Universal Pictures

No list of thrillers would be complete without the one Hitchcock named as his favorite of all the films he'd directed. "Shadow of a Doubt" finds its suspense in the relationship between a charming man and his niece, who discovers he's wanted for murder. The tightly wound film explores how the two navigate her suspicions — which linger in her mind even after one of the suspected murderers is killed and the case is closed.

- **Starring:** Teresa Wright, Joseph Cotten, Macdonald Carey
- **Director:** Alfred Hitchcock
- **Year:** 1943
- **Runtime:** 108 minutes
- **Rating:** PG
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 100%

## 78. Blood Simple





Circle Films

In "Blood Simple," when a husband discovers that his wife is having an affair after hiring a private investigator to follow her, he hires that same investigator to murder the lovers... But things quickly spiral out of control and no one character can be sure of whom they can trust.

The Coen brothers' first film was a breathtaking debut, reminding us that sometimes all we need for a groundbreaking thriller is the tried and true: a dysfunctional relationship between a husband and wife.

- **Starring:** John Getz, Frances McDormand, Dan Hedaya
- **Directors:** Joel and Ethan Coen
- **Year:** 1984
- **Runtime:** 96 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 94%

## 77. Blow Out



Filmways Pictures

With the tagline "Murder has a sound all of its own," "Blow Out" is a film you're going to want to watch closely and listen intently to. The film's visual style has been praised, but the storyline revolves around sound, following a sound effects tech who, in the course of recording sound effects for a B slasher flick, accidentally captures evidence of an assassination.

Like the protagonists of "Blow-Up" or "The Conversation," John Travolta's character Jack Terry was in the wrong place at the right time. There's something uniquely stirring about an everyday person who falls head over heels into a world of crime and peril.

- **Starring:** John Travolta, Nancy Allen, John Lithgow
- **Director:** Brian De Palma
- **Year:** 1981
- **Runtime:** 108 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 84%

## 76. The Machinist



Paramount Classics

"The Machinist" is famous for Christian Bale's dramatic weight loss in preparation for the main role, but the film — and Bale's performance — is much meatier than a physical transformation. Bale's character, Trevor, suffers from insomnia that ultimately leads to a workplace accident that impacts a coworker and results in Trevor's termination. After that, it becomes apparent that insomnia is the least of Trevor's psychological worries as he descends into paranoia and delusion.

- **Starring:** Christian Bale, Jennifer Jason Leigh, John Sharian
- **Director:** Brad Anderson
- **Year:** 2004
- **Runtime:** 102 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 77%

## 75. Fight Club



20th Century Fox

Though it drew some controversy at the time of its release, with some critics worried it would encourage copycats, "Fight Club" has become one of the most well-known films in the modern canon. It contains elements of psychological thriller, action film, and dark comedy that conspire to tell the story of an unnamed narrator, Ed Norton, who forms a fight club with soap salesman Tyler Durden.

Durden embodies the freedom from wage slavery and conformity that the Narrator wishes he could attain. While hints of his volatility appear slowly at first, ultimately it becomes clear that his true nature is more alarming than he could have dreamed (that is, if he ever slept).

- **Starring:** Ed Norton, Brad Pitt, Helena Bonham Carter
- **Director:** David Fincher
- **Year:** 1999
- **Runtime:** 139 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 79%

## 74. Jaws



Universal Pictures

One of the few thrillers in which the threat is not human (or even an extremely human-like AI), "Jaws" remains one of the most universally recognizable thrillers and one of Steven Spielberg's greatest works. Perhaps its most famous element is its ominous musical theme, which has earned its own place in pop culture to signal the imminence of a deadly threat.

In "Jaws," that threat is a man-eating shark who terrorizes beachgoers and shockingly thwarts the combined efforts of the police, a marine biologist, and a professional shark hunter to take it down.

- **Starring:** Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw, Richard Dreyfuss
- **Director:** Steven Spielberg
- **Year:** 1975
- **Runtime:** 124 minutes
- **Rating:** PG
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 98%

## 73. You Were Never Really Here



Amazon Studios

Joaquin Phoenix has a long track record of playing psychologically nuanced characters, and this aptitude works to the benefit of the film "You Were Never Really Here," in which Phoenix portrays a mercenary with PTSD who is hired to rescue girls from trafficking rings by any means necessary. The story sheds light on harsh social and psychological realities through the character's work — and then everything changes when his contract to rescue the abducted daughter of a New York senator exposes him to a brutal conspiracy.

- **Starring:** [Joaquin Phoenix](#), Judith Roberts, Ekaterina Samsonov
- **Director:** Lynne Ramsay
- **Year:** 2017
- **Runtime:** 90 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 89%

## 72. Black Swan



Fox Searchlight Pictures

If you don't like ballet, "Black Swan" might change your mind. The same is true, however, if you *do* like ballet, because in this movie, it drives people insane. The film centers around the pressure of the competitive world of dance and the havoc it can wreak on participants' sanity: The ballet in question, Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake," is notorious for requiring one ballerina to play both the pure and delicate White Swan *and* the darker Black Swan.

In "Black Swan," devoted dancer Nina, who captures the White Swan perfectly, struggles to cope with the pressure when another dancer, Lily, arrives and demonstrates a better fit for the Black Swan. This sets the stage for tantalizing elements of psychological horror drawn from folklore about doppelgängers.

- **Starring:** Natalie Portman, Vincent Cassel, Mila Kunis
- **Director:** Darren Aronofsky
- **Year:** 2010
- **Runtime:** 108 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 85%



Roadside Attraction

Before "The Hunger Games," a breakout Jennifer Lawrence character went through what is arguably an even more harrowing experience. Once again, she is thrust into an unforgiving landscape and tasked with surviving and protecting those she loves.

This time, the story takes place in the isolated rural Ozarks of Missouri, where Lawrence's character, Ree, must find her missing father (who might have been caught up in some shady business) in order to save her family from eviction. "Winter's Bone" is a gripping mystery that holds our attention quietly but flawlessly.

- **Starring:** Jennifer Lawrence, John Hawkes, Garret Dillahunt
- **Director:** Debra Granik
- **Year:** 2010
- **Runtime:** 100 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 94%





Sony Pictures Releasing

It's no surprise that the life of a getaway driver continues to be ideal fodder for thriller movies. With its color symbolism (which is thought to [signal](#) Baby's shifting morality) and stylish originality, "Baby Driver" takes the flashy fever of a car chase and makes it, somehow, into a thrilling narrative of escaping a life of crime that we can get personally invested in.

- **Starring:** Ansel Elgort, Kevin Spacey, Lily James
- **Director:** Edgar Wright
- **Year:** 2017
- **Runtime:** 113 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** [92%](#)

## 69. The Place Beyond The Pines



#### Focus Features

Like a relay race, the three storylines in "The Place Beyond The Pines" each hand the narrative off to the next. A lot of the stories in this list have nonlinear structures, but this one is, if anything, *ultralinear*: It follows the lives that previous characters have touched even after those characters pass away.

The first story is about a motorcycle stunt driver who uses his skills to start a life of crime to support his family. The second is about an officer who confronts police corruption. The third is about two teenagers, 15 years after the events of the previous stories, who are still dealing with its effects. "The Place Beyond The Pines" is ambitious in everything from scope to action to emotion.

- **Starring:** Ryan Gosling, Bradley Cooper, Eva Mendes
- **Director:** Derek Cianfrance
- **Year:** 2012
- **Runtime:** 140 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 78%



A24

Have you ever been so taken aback by one of Siri's programmed responses that you wonder for the briefest second whether she might have feelings? Artificial intelligence is a fascinating and frightening frontier that we can't claim to fully control or understand.

This is true especially when it comes to the AI pet project of a reclusive CEO in "Ex Machina," who hires one of his programmers to test whether the female humanoid's intelligence is indistinguishable from that of a human. But maybe it's not the robot's humanity that should really be called into question.

- **Starring:** Domhnall Gleeson, Alicia Vikander, Oscar Isaac
- **Director:** Alex Garland
- **Year:** 2015
- **Runtime:** 108 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 92%



Rank Film Distributors

When you were little, if your parents ever told you that one lie or bad deed spirals and requires you to tell bigger and bigger lies or commit worse and worse acts, Danny Boyle's "Shallow Grave" is the film version of that. In this case, the spiral begins when a group of roommates dismember and bury a mysterious new resident of their flat who died and left behind a ton of money.

- **Starring:** Ewan McGregor, Christopher Eccleston, Kerry Fox
- **Director:** Danny Boyle
- **Year:** 1995
- **Runtime:** 92 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 69%

## 66. Stowaway



For a core cast of only four people, "Stowaway" manages to create a level of apprehension that rivals the most large-scale, action-packed thrillers. Stranded in space with dwindling oxygen, an aerospace crew (plus one accidental stowaway) discovers that survival is its own undoing. The tension between four people who know that one of them must die needs no help from an external villain or stressor.

- **Starring:** Anna Kendrick, Daniel Dae Kim, Shamier Anderson, Toni Collette
- **Director:** Joe Penna
- **Year:** 2021
- **Runtime:** 116 minutes
- **Rating:** TV-MA
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 77%

## 65. Looper



TriStar Pictures

The grittiness of the organized crime world in "Looper" is undercut by the science fiction elements upon which it rests. One of the most terrifying parts of the film is its contemplation of how criminals might make brutal use of futuristic technologies as they emerge.

In this film, criminal syndicates from the future send their victims back into the past to be disposed of by hit men in a manner that leaves no evidence in the victims' own time. Eventually, to prevent being traced, each hit man's final victim is himself. "Looper" is insanely creative and smart, but not so convoluted that you can't follow it, making it a great watch for fans of sci-fi, time travel, crime, action, and of course, thrillers.

- **Starring:** Bruce Willis, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Emily Blunt, Paul Dano
- **Director:** Rian Johnson
- **Year:** 2015
- **Runtime:** 118 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 93%

## 64. Sicario



Lionsgate

If you get nothing else from "Sicario," you'll at least learn the Spanish word for "hit man." But luckily, this thriller has a lot more to offer than a language lesson. It follows an FBI agent tasked with bringing down the head of a ruthless Mexican drug cartel. The principal cast members give outstanding performances that buoy the edgy, tightly-paced proceedings.

Like many thrillers, "Sicario" depicts a fair amount of violence. The mayor of Ciudad Juarez [pointed out](#) that the violence casts the city in a negative light and was only accurate up to about 2010, when the city began progressing toward peace. Taken as a gritty sign of harsher times, "Sicario" is thrilling all the same.

- **Starring:** Emily Blunt, Benicio del Toro, Josh Brolin
- **Director:** Denis Villeneuve
- **Year:** 2015
- **Runtime:** 121 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 92%

## 63. Dog Day Afternoon



Warner Bros.

The hostage situation depicted in "Dog Day Afternoon" is so gripping that you won't believe it's based on a true story — especially since the real version of events ends with a climactic moment characteristic of a work of fiction. The film chronicles a real bank heist from 1972 in which three perpetrators held Chase Manhattan employees hostage for 14 hours. At the same time an expressive depiction of the era's New York, the film is a window into a suspenseful moment in history and the complicated individuals who inhabited it.

- **Starring:** [Al Pacino](#), John Cazale, James Broderick
- **Director:** Sidney Lumet
- **Year:** 1975
- **Runtime:** 125 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 96%

## 62. Cape Fear





Universal Pictures

Being a lawyer is a tough job. You have to study for years. You have to work absurdly long hours. And one day, a criminal you put away might take it upon himself to stalk you and your family, as happens in the original "Cape Fear" movie. A sinister piece that garnered critical acclaim, the film was successfully remade by Martin Scorsese in 1991.

- **Starring:** Gregory Peck, Robert Mitchum, Polly Bergen
- **Director:** J. Lee Thompson
- **Year:** 1962
- **Runtime:** 106 minutes
- **Rating:** Not Rated/Passed
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 96%

## 61. The Spy Who Loved Me



Unite Artists

By the late '70s, the James Bond series needed was a return to form, and that's exactly what "The Spy Who Loved Me" provided. If you're looking for a classic Bond film (and one that Roger Moore, in his memoir, counted as his personal favorite), this one should be on your list.

But just because it's an example of classic Bond style doesn't mean the film narrowed its scope: It's about a madman who plans to destroy the world and start a new one under the sea. This outlandish (no pun intended) installment has remained a fan favorite.

- **Starring:** [Roger Moore](#), Barbara Bach, Curt Jürgens
- **Director:** Lewis Gilbert
- **Year:** 1977
- **Runtime:** 125 minutes
- **Rating:** PG
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 80%

## 60. The Fugitive



Warner Bros.

Hunting a murderer is a dangerous task, but it's even more harrowing when you're being hunted yourself. Such is the predicament of Richard Kimble (Harrison Ford) in "The Fugitive," in which he's framed for the murder of his wife and sentenced to death. His time is running out as he escapes and goes on the run from authorities, hoping to track down the real killer and clear his name. The action sequences and the thrill of the chase are as intensely entertaining as they come.

- **Starring:** [Harrison Ford](#), Tommy Lee Jones, Sela Ward
- **Director:** Andrew Davis
- **Year:** 1993
- **Runtime:** 130 minutes
- **Rating:** PG-13
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** [96%](#)

## 59. Scarface



Universal Pictures

A cultural touchstone, the 1983 version of "Scarface" is technically a remake, but has earned a legacy in its own right. The tale of a penniless Cuban refugee who builds himself into a powerful Miami drug lord is not only regarded as one of the best remakes, but one of the best crime films of all time. For those who like violence, there's a lot of it, and the language is just as colorful — but underneath it all is the truly gripping narrative of a tense criminal landscape.

- **Starring:** Al Pacino, Steven Bauer, Michelle Pfeiffer
- **Director:** Brian De Palma
- **Year:** 1983
- **Runtime:** 170 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 82%

## 58. Bonnie and Clyde



Warner Bros. Seven Arts

In terms of iconic pairings, the names "Bonnie and Clyde" are hard to match. There have been multiple film adaptations of their exploits over the decades, but it's hard to beat the 1967 movie that shook up the industry by presenting sex and violence more openly and offering us one of the bloodiest death scenes in cinema.

Even though we know how the story of the real-life husband-and-wife bank robbers ends, "Bonnie and Clyde" is nothing short of a thrill to watch — part romance, part comedy, part biography, all legacy.

- **Starring:** Warren Beatty, Faye Dunaway, Michael J. Pollard
- **Director:** Arthur Penn
- **Year:** 1967
- **Runtime:** 111 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 88%

## 57. Prisoners



Warner Bros. Pictures

Not only is "Prisoners" a thrilling narrative, it is beautifully shot and full of captivating performances by its ensemble cast. What appears to be an abduction story — a tale that's thrilling on its own — escalates to reveal itself as so much more when a father takes it upon himself to solve his daughters' abduction. "Prisoners" is a story of family, trauma, and justice, told with an absorbing sense of dread.

- **Starring:** Hugh Jackman, Jake Gyllenhaal, Viola Davis
- **Director:** Denis Villeneuve
- **Year:** 2013
- **Runtime:** 153 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 81%

## 56. The 39 Steps



© Gaumont British Distributors

It's amazing how well an "everyman" character can fare when thrust into a completely other-than-everyday situation. The character in question in "The 39 Steps," Richard, becomes entangled in the activities of a spy organization after he's mistaken as the murderer of a British counter-espionage agent. The quest to clear his name will also save British military secrets from the spies.

This is the kind of narrative we love to see: Somehow, against all odds, a person with no background or training is thrust into an unfamiliar and dangerous world, and we root for their success because the thrills hit so close to home.

- **Starring:** Robert Donat, Madeleine Carroll, Lucie Mannheim
- **Director:** Alfred Hitchcock
- **Year:** 1935
- **Runtime:** 86 minutes
- **Rating:** Not Rated/Approved
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 96%

## 55. Gone Baby Gone



Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures

This Ben Affleck-directed thriller starts out as an abduction story, inherently chilling because a four-year-old girl is kidnapped right out of her single mother's home. The plot escalates into a much more deeply involved saga surrounding the world of drugs and themes of revenge and moral ambiguity.

Like some of the best classic thrillers, the city setting of "Gone Baby Gone" is very much a character, and the film is something of a portrait of Boston, much as Scorsese's films capture New York — but it's more twisted than anyone would expect.

- **Starring:** Casey Affleck, Michelle Monaghan, [Morgan Freeman](#)
- **Director:** Ben Affleck
- **Year:** 2007
- **Runtime:** 114 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 94%

## 54. A Scanner Darkly





Warner Independent Pictures

This animated film subverts preconceived notions about cartoons — as well as thrillers — taking us into a sci-fi dystopia that labors under a high-tech police state and a crippling epidemic of addictive, futuristic drugs.

"A Scanner Darkly" follows Bob Arctor, an undercover cop in the War on Drugs, and his acquaintances through a politically corrupt and psychologically tumultuous landscape that feels as mind-blowing as a capsule of Substance D.

- **Starring:** Keanu Reeves, Robert Downey, Jr., [Woody Harrelson](#)
- **Director:** Richard Linklater
- **Year:** 2006
- **Runtime:** 100 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** [67%](#)

## 53. The Revenant



20th Century Fox

The film that finally won Leonardo DiCaprio an Oscar barely left him alive. Like the actor who portrays him, though, DiCaprio's frontiersman Hugh Glass won't be left for dead so easily — even after surviving a bear attack and watching a member of his hunting party murder Glass' son and abandon him in the wilderness.

If it wasn't already apparent, "The Revenant" has all the ingredients that make a thriller worth watching, plus some extra obstacles unique to the wilderness, making this a must-watch saga of vengeance, betrayal, and a struggle for survival.

- **Starring:** Leonardo DiCaprio, [Tom Hardy](#), Domhnall Gleeson
- **Director:** Alejandro G. Iñárritu
- **Year:** 2015
- **Runtime:** 156 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 78%

## 52. Inherent Vice



Warner Bros. Pictures

The complexity of plot in the thriller genre runs the gamut from straightforward and action-based to almost impossible to follow. In the latter cases, critics often find themselves split between two extremes of opinion: The plot is either masterfully intricate or unnecessarily convoluted.

One of the most notoriously polarizing thrillers in this respect is "Inherent Vice," which follows a stoner private detective as he investigates three interrelated crimes that he has a personal stake in due to the disappearance of his ex-girlfriend and her rich new beau. The film rewards viewers with rich visual details and costuming and the uniqueness of its challenging and refreshingly weird narrative.

- **Starring:** Joaquin Phoenix, Josh Brolin, Owen Wilson
- **Director:** Paul Thomas Anderson
- **Year:** 2014
- **Runtime:** 150 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 73%

## 51. Knives Out



Lionsgate

The second-greatest mystery of "Knives Out" is which member of the ensemble cast is most idiosyncratic. Sure, we all want to know who's responsible for the death of the dysfunctional family's wealthy patriarch. But what really drives this story is its fascinating character dynamics, like the housekeeper who can't lie without vomiting (a convenient trait for a possible murder suspect or witness).

The members of the family are each a bit bizarre in their own ways, each of them has motive, and none of them are particularly likable — but as an ensemble of greedy murder suspects and backstabbers, you can't help but love them.

- **Starring:** Daniel Craig, Chris Evans, Ana de Armas
- **Director:** Rian Johnson
- **Year:** 2019
- **Runtime:** 130 minutes
- **Rating:** PG-13
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 97%

## 50. American Hustle



Sony Pictures Releasing

Energetic and vibrant in its humor and its thrills, "American Hustle" features a delightful cast of oddball characters who elevate the black comedy and intrigue. Con men are often the perfect subjects for the thriller genre, and "American Hustle" gives that reliable premise a little twist: An FBI forces two crooks to set up a complex sting operation to expose corrupt politicians. There are so many intersecting and competing interests in this film that something is bound to break, and in dramatic fashion.

- **Starring:** Christian Bale, Bradley Cooper, Amy Adams
- **Director:** David O. Russell
- **Year:** 2013
- **Runtime:** 138 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 92%

## 49. M



Vereinigte Star-Film GmbH

One of the earliest thrillers on this list and in the cinematic canon, "M" was the first sound film by its director Fritz Lang. And it used that sound to create one of the first instances of a classic motif in thrillers: You know when the serial killer whistles a trademark creepy tune?

These brief notes might be used to taunt a victim, or simply serve to juxtapose the lightheartedness of music with the heinous nature of violent crime. Think of Elle Driver's creepy whistle in "Kill Bill: Vol. 1" or Negan's whistle on "The Walking Dead."

"M," an early procedural chronicling the hunt for a serial killer of children, was one of the first films to utilize this tactic, and it remains a creepy classic today.

- **Starring:** Peter Lorre, Otto Wernicke, Gustaf Gründgens
- **Director:** Fritz Lang
- **Year:** 1931
- **Runtime:** 111 minutes
- **Rating:** Not Rated/Passed
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 100%

## 48. The Talented Mr. Ripley



Paramount Pictures

If you had the sorts of talents and personality traits that could take you all over Italy and gain you the favor of an affluent family — namely, deception and obsession — wouldn't you use them? "The Talented Mr. Ripley" explores in outlandish fashion what happens when a con goes too far: Tom Ripley seems to be a well-meaning impostor and maybe even a good (if slightly possessive) friend — at least, until he's threatened. Then all bets are off.

- **Starring:** Matt Damon, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jude Law
- **Director:** Anthony Minghella
- **Year:** 1999
- **Runtime:** 139 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 83%

## 47. Memento



Newmarket

For a film about an amnesiac, "Memento" has become one of Christopher Nolan's most memorable works. Leonard Shelby suffers from anterograde amnesia, while Nolan's storytelling style benefits from it: As a result of an attack that injured him and killed his wife, Leonard can't form new memories, and his world "reboots" every 15 minutes with no recollection of the previous moments.

Because of this, our story is told in 15-minute increments that occur in reverse chronological order, a creative nonlinear narrative that captures Leonard's pathology and constantly subverts our expectations as Leonard attempts to track down his wife's killer using Polaroids and tattoos in place of actual memories.

- **Starring:** Guy Pearce, Carrie-Anne Moss, Joe Pantoliano
- **Director:** Christopher Nolan
- **Year:** 2000
- **Runtime:** 113 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 93%

## 46. Psycho





Paramount Pictures

Perhaps the most famous Hitchcock film of all time and one of the defining moments in the horror and thriller genres, "Psycho" has been foundational in reinventing the standards of American cinema and portraying psychologically deviant characters. Even though most people know that a main character is murdered within the first few minutes, the suspense is so expertly articulated that none of the thrills are sacrificed.

The plot follows an investigation into the disappearance of a young woman, Marion Crane, after checking into the Bates Motel. The encounter between Marion and the proprietor, Norman Bates, sets into motion a series of events that leads to a shocking and grisly secret.

- **Starring:** Anthony Perkins, Vera Miles, Janet Leigh
- **Director:** Alfred Hitchcock
- **Year:** 1960
- **Runtime:** 109 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 96%

## 45. Misery



©Columbia Pictures

"Misery" follows an author of Victorian romance novels who suffers a car crash and finds himself "rescued" by a nurse who lives in remote Colorado and who just so happens to be his biggest fan. Convenient, right? Until she obsessively holds him captive and tortures him until he writes her the novel she wants.

Bates' unhinged performance and the slow reveal of her sinister nature add up to some of the most chilling moments in cinema.

- **Starring:** [Kathy Bates](#), James Caan, Richard Farnsworth
- **Director:** Rob Reiner
- **Year:** 1990
- **Runtime:** 107 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 90%

## 44. Oldboy

[Show East](#)

Based on a Japanese manga, "Oldboy" weaves together romance and violence, conspiracy and captivity, as it depicts a man who is imprisoned in a hotel-like cell for 15 years by unknown captors only to "escape" into a tangled mess of brutality and deception in the outside world. And not only is the film mesmerizing in a thriller sense, it also displays striking emotional depth.

- **Starring:** Choi Min-sik, Yoo Ji-tae, Kang Hye-jung
- **Director:** Park Chan-wook
- **Year:** 2003
- **Runtime:** 120 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 81%

## 43. Blow-Up



Premier Productions

Contrary to what you might think, this isn't a bomb-defusion caper or an action flick packed with firefights and car chases. "Blow-Up" is a much more subtle thriller, but it's all the more compelling because of it.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but when you're a photographer who believes you've accidentally captured a murder on camera, your life may be worth your silence.

- **Starring:** David Hemmings, Vanessa Redgrave, Sarah Miles
- **Director:** Michelangelo Antonioni
- **Year:** 1966
- **Runtime:** 111 minutes
- **Rating:** Not Rated
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 88%

## 42. Double Indemnity



Paramount Pictures

It can be easily argued that dozens of noir films owe their existence to "Double Indemnity." The title of the film comes from a clause in life insurance policies that doubles the payout in cases of accidental death, so maybe you can tell where this thriller is going...

Yep, it's the story of a spouse accused of murdering their partner for the insurance payout. A tale as old as time (or at least as old as insurance), but "Double Indemnity" was one of the first — and among the best.

- **Starring:** Fred MacMurray, Barbara Stanwyck, Edward G. Robinson
- **Director:** Billy Wilder
- **Year:** 1944
- **Runtime:** 107 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 97%

## 41. Zodiac



Paramount Pictures

There are a lot of great thrillers based on books, but the works of literature in question are typically fictional. "Zodiac" is one of few thrillers based on a work of nonfiction — one that chronicled the as-yet-unresolved search for the notorious Zodiac Killer.

Though the crimes themselves are infamously unsolved, "Zodiac" makes thrilling work of the 1970s manhunt. That said, when you really think about it, the movie is less about the killings themselves and more about the sense of unrelenting anxiety they inflicted, and the nuances of the characters who wrestled with that simmering mood.

- **Starring:** Jake Gyllenhaal, Mark Ruffalo, Robert Downey, Jr.
- **Director:** David Fincher
- **Year:** 2007
- **Runtime:** 157 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 89%

## 40. The Conversation



Paramount Pictures

Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, "The Conversation" takes its inspiration from another, perhaps less widely known thriller on this list, Michelangelo Antonioni's "Blow-Up." The main character is a surveillance expert whose recordings might have accidentally captured a murder, similar to the photographer in "Blow-Up" who accidentally captures a murder on camera. The film is steeped in a delectable paranoia exacerbated by the surveillance expert's moral dilemma over what to do with the information.

- **Starring:** [Gene Hackman](#), John Cazale, Allen Garfield
- **Director:** Francis Ford Coppola
- **Year:** 1974
- **Runtime:** 113 minutes
- **Rating:** PG
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** [96%](#)

## 39. Enemy



Entertainment One

With enemies like these, who needs giant tarantulas? That's not the way the saying goes, but then again, nothing is typical in the surrealist psychological neo-noir "Enemy," starring Jake Gyllenhaal in two opposing roles.

An admirable contribution to the lore of doppelgängers and the challenging terrain of the subconscious, "Enemy" keeps everyone guessing, especially its characters, who discover that they are identical physically but not in personality or lifestyle. Gyllenhaal layers a sinister complexity with his trademark gravity. Building tension between two characters, which eventually boils over dramatically, is even more impressive when you play both sides and when the lines between delusion and reality are unclear.

- **Starring:** Jake Gyllenhaal, Melanie Laurent, Sarah Gadon
- **Director:** Denis Villeneuve
- **Year:** 2013
- **Runtime:** 90 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 71%

## 38. Klute





Warner Bros.

"Klute" is commendable not only as a thriller in its own right but as the start of director Alan J. Pakula's "Paranoia Trilogy," an informal designation that includes "The Parallax View" and "All The President's Men" and features heavy themes of widespread mistrust and invisible forces that shape the world.

If you enjoy a good (and obviously fictional) conspiracy theory, this classic — which follows a sex worker who helps police with a missing persons case — might be just what you're looking for.

- **Starring:** Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland, Charles Cioffi
- **Director:** Alan J. Pakula
- **Year:** 1971
- **Runtime:** 114 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 93%

## 37. The Prestige



Warner Bros. Pictures Distribution

In Christopher Nolan's electrifying thriller (excuse the pun), we're graced with elements of history interwoven with science fiction, as rival stage magicians compete in an obsessive and escalating game of one-upmanship that causes fatal collateral damage. The film also incorporates a fictional version of Nikola Tesla who is integral to the plot — though the most essential part is one magician's willingness to go to any lengths to come out on top, and ultimately, to get revenge.

- **Starring:** Hugh Jackman, Christian Bale, Michael Caine, Scarlett Johansson
- **Director:** Christopher Nolan
- **Year:** 2006
- **Runtime:** 130 minutes
- **Rating:** PG-13
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 76%

## 36. Donnie Darko



"Donnie Darko" is perhaps the definition of a cult classic. It's got a little something for everyone: Time travel, psychological breakdowns, a great soundtrack, and a nonlinear apocalyptic narrative that somehow also makes room for the protagonist to mouth off to his elders.

That title character begins the film by narrowly escaping death when a jet engine falls onto his house. Following this bizarre accident, Donnie begins having visions of a figure in a monstrous rabbit costume who tells him the world will end in 28 days and manipulates him into a mind-bending quest.

- **Starring:** Jake Gyllenhaal, Jena Malone, James Duval
- **Director:** Richard Kelly
- **Year:** 2001
- **Runtime:** 113 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 86%

## 35. The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo



Sony Pictures Releasing

Thrillers require a certain degree of intensity, and "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" takes that deadly seriously. With a run time of over two and a half hours and a 40-year-old cold case at its heart, it might not seem like the most likely candidate to keep your attention. But the dark, suspenseful, and brutal sequences involving the film's uniquely skilled characters keep the investigation into a decades-old disappearance fresh through not just one, but multiple viewings.

- **Starring:** Rooney Mara, Daniel Craig, Christopher Plummer
- **Director:** David Fincher
- **Year:** 2011
- **Runtime:** 158 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 87%

## 34. Blue Velvet



De Laurentiis Entertainment Group

One of David Lynch's masterpieces, "Blue Velvet" is both more and less controversial than some of his other works. Unlike films like "Lost Highway," this one is more of a straightforward thriller (if you can call any of Lynch's films straightforward), but some of the content was considered more objectionable by critics at the time.

In the years since, though, the story — of a college student who discovers a massive criminal conspiracy after visiting home and finding a severed human ear in a field — became a cult classic. It's cerebral and surreal like most of Lynch's works, but also more personal and effective in the construction of its mystery.

- **Starring:** Kyle MacLachlan, Isabella Rossellini, Dennis Hopper
- **Director:** David Lynch
- **Year:** 1986
- **Runtime:** 120 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 93%

### 33. The Untouchables



Paramount Pictures

Brian De Palma's seminal crime thriller is as enjoyable to watch as it is to listen to, with a score by legendary composer Ennio Morricone that includes period-accurate tunes from Duke Ellington. The story centers around Al Capone, the master of one of the greatest criminal empires, and a Prohibition agent who attempts to bring him to justice by recruiting the only lawmen — the titular "Untouchables" — he trusts to remain immune to corruption.

- **Starring:** Kevin Costner, Charles Martin Smith, Andy Garcia, Robert De Niro, [Sean Connery](#)
- **Director:** Brian De Palma
- **Year:** 1987
- **Runtime:** 119 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 83%

## 32. Burning



CGV Arthouse

If you like slow-burn thrillers, "Burning" fits the bill both literally and figuratively as a masterclass in delayed gratification. A young man named Jong-su runs into an old classmate, Hae-mi, with whom he becomes enamored, then encounters a friend of hers, an enigmatic stranger who quickly inspires Jong-su's suspicion. The relationship between the three spirals into paranoia and ambiguity.

This South Korean thriller broke barriers at the Oscars the year before "Parasite" became the first film from the country to win Best Picture. It's an intimate study in obsession and unease, and its embers continue to glow ominously long after the credits roll.

- **Starring:** Yoo Ah-in, Steven Yeun, Jeon Jong-seo
- **Director:** Lee Chang-dong
- **Year:** 2018
- **Runtime:** 148 minutes
- **Rating:** Not Rated
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 95%

## 31. Nightcrawler



Open Road Films

Though it seems obvious at first blush, the shadiest character in "Nightcrawler" is up for debate. Is it the unscrupulous freelance journalist, played by Jake Gyllenhaal, who unblinkingly captures the city's most violent crimes and sells the footage to news stations? Or is it the ravenous public demanding a window into the tragedies of others?

Either way, the darkness is palpable in this film, and not just because most of the action takes place at night. At first, it seems like Gyllenhaal's character is just fighting to survive and make a living ... But he reveals a much more sadistic bent as the film goes on.

- **Starring:** Jake Gyllenhaal, Rene Russo, Riz Ahmed, [Bill Paxton](#)
- **Director:** Dan Gilroy
- **Year:** 2014
- **Runtime:** 117 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 95%

## 30. Gaslight





Loops, Inc.

You've probably heard the term "gaslight" before, most commonly used as a verb in today's vernacular that describes manipulating a person in order to make them think they can't trust their own version of reality.

The roots of this usage go all the way back to 1944, when "Gaslight" portrayed a husband who painstakingly manipulated his wife into believing she was going insane in order to distract from his own criminal activities. The title of the film refers to one of the many tactics in his chilling game.

- **Starring:** Charles Boyer, Ingrid Bergman, Joseph Cotten
- **Director:** George Cukor
- **Year:** 1944
- **Runtime:** 114 minutes
- **Rating:** Not Rated/Passed
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 88%

## 29. The Devil All the Time



Before you watch "The Devil All the Time," you should know that the title is pretty much literal: The film is a relentless descent into misfortune and inhumanity, with little reprieve. It's not called "The Devil Some of the Time," after all.

Once you're prepared for (or even delightedly challenged by) the dark tone, this film is an engrossing psychological thriller that looks into the harrowing setbacks in the life and relationships of a young man (played by a stellar Tom Holland) who seems to encounter the worst aspects of humanity wherever he goes.

- **Starring:** [Tom Holland](#), Bill Skarsgaard, Riley Keough, Sebastian Stan
- **Director:** Antonio Campos
- **Year:** 2020
- **Runtime:** 139 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 64%

## 28. The Silence of the Lambs



Orion Pictures

Immensely quotable and timelessly terrifying, "The Silence of the Lambs" follows an FBI trainee who seeks advice from one serial killer (cannibal psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter) in the hunt for another (Buffalo Bill, who skins his victims). The thriller genre, as we've seen, overlaps with many others, and horror is often one of them. While "The Silence of the Lambs" is undoubtedly a thriller, that designation shouldn't take away from the fact that it's the only Best Picture winner widely considered to be a horror film, largely because of the psychological games at play and the gruesome serial killer characters.

- **Starring:** Jodie Foster, [Anthony Hopkins](#), Scott Glenn
- **Director:** Jonathan Demme
- **Year:** 1991
- **Runtime:** 118 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 96%

## 27. The Lighthouse



A24

If you thought "Stowaway" achieved an impressive number of thrills for a cast of only four people, wait until you see what "The Lighthouse" does with just two (if you don't count the characters' demons). As storms rage inside two lighthouse keepers with their own checkered histories and predispositions to madness, a maelstrom that rages outside their remote island strands them there alone and threatens to plunge them into insanity.

With a nearly square aspect ratio and shot in chilling black and white, "The Lighthouse" is like something straight out of an Edgar Allan Poe story (on which it is [loosely based](#)).

- **Starring:** Willem Dafoe, [Robert Pattinson](#), Valeriia Karamän
- **Director:** Robert Eggers
- **Year:** 2019
- **Runtime:** 109 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 90%

## 26. Vertigo



Paramount Pictures

If you think you do well with heights, "Vertigo" might make you reconsider. The pioneering camera technique of the dolly zoom, memorably used in this Hitchcock film, will forcibly subject you to the experience of acrophobia (an extreme and unsettling fear of heights) — and when added to the tense and moody atmosphere, will inspire a level of discomfort that has lingered for decades.

The sufferer of the film's trademark acrophobia is a retired police detective who is hired by a friend to follow his wife, who has been acting strangely. Of course, it's always more complicated than that, and the detective's condition only makes the suspense more physical for the viewer.

- **Starring:** James Stewart, Kim Novak, Barbara Bel Geddes
- **Director:** Alfred Hitchcock
- **Year:** 1958
- **Runtime:** 128 minutes
- **Rating:** PG
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 94%

## 25. We Need to Talk About Kevin



©Oscilloscope Laboratories

"We Need to Talk About Kevin" can be a hard film to talk about. It's disquieting because, unlike the thrillers we're used to that take place in city underbellies or cutthroat political environments, the setting of this film is all too familiar: The residential home of a nuclear family. Here, we witness the slow deterioration of the relationship between a troubled son and his mother, culminating in a heinous act that she struggles to come to terms with.

The film is so disquieting that it almost feels like horror, but the evil at hand is all too human — which makes it even creepier.

- **Starring:** Tilda Swinton, John C. Reilly, Ezra Miller
- **Director:** Lynne Ramsay
- **Year:** 2011
- **Runtime:** 112 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 75%

## 24. Reservoir Dogs



Miramax Films

Leave it to Quentin Tarantino to direct a film about a heist that captures everything but the heist itself. "Reservoir Dogs" is a revolving series of nonlinear puzzle pieces that show us the very different but generally unscrupulous personalities of the men involved in the heist — and the fact that it has somehow gone terribly wrong.

- **Starring:** Harvey Keitel, Tim Roth, Michael Madsen
- **Director:** Quentin Tarantino
- **Year:** 1992
- **Runtime:** 99 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 92%

## 23. Drive



FilmDistrict

For Ryan Gosling, actions speak louder than words in his performance as a nameless getaway and stunt driver who falls for his neighbor and attempts to help her debt-ridden husband get the family back on its feet by taking part in a heist.

The sparse dialogue on the part of the main character paves the way for some compelling sound design: "Drive" was nominated for an Oscar for its sound editing. This aspect blends perfectly with sensational visuals and winning performances to create a moody action thriller that maneuvers its plot with the ease of a practiced getaway driver.

- **Starring:** Ryan Gosling, Carey Mulligan, Oscar Isaac, [Bryan Cranston](#)
- **Director:** Nicolas Winding Refn
- **Year:** 2011
- **Runtime:** 100 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 93%

## 22. North by Northwest





Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

It's a case of mistaken identity, but there's no mistaking the role of "North by Northwest" in the legacies of spy thrillers, Hitchcock films, and cinema as a whole. In this classic, an innocent man finds himself pursued across America by a mysterious spy organization bent on smuggling government secrets out of the country. The film succeeds on many levels, incorporating action and war elements to augment Hitchcock's trademark suspense.

- **Starring:** Cary Grant, Eva Marie Saint, James Mason
- **Director:** Alfred Hitchcock
- **Year:** 1959
- **Runtime:** 136 minutes
- **Rating:** Not Rated
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 97%

## 21. Gone Girl



20th Century Fox

Breakups are hard. People do all kinds of things to make it easier: down a pint of Ben and Jerry's, listen to playlists they made in middle school ... And if you're Rosamund Pike's character Amy in "Gone Girl," the implosion of your relationship and the end of your life. At least, that's what someone wants us to believe when Amy's husband, played by Ben Affleck, becomes to his own bewilderment the prime suspect in his wife's potentially violent disappearance.

- **Starring:** Rosamund Pike, Ben Affleck, Neil Patrick Harris
- **Director:** David Fincher
- **Year:** 2014
- **Runtime:** 149 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 87%

## 20. Taxi Driver



©Columbia Pictures

In the city that never sleeps, you might not think much of a taxi driver (played by Robert De Niro) who stays up all night working. But Travis Bickle is far too sensitive to the seedy darkness and moral decay of New York City, and his mental state slowly spirals into infatuation and paranoia that he channels into a twisted form of vigilantism. We might not want to watch Travis' unseemly story ... But it's too thrilling and engaging for us to look away.

- **Starring:** Robert De Niro, Jodie Foster, Cybill Shepherd
- **Director:** Martin Scorsese
- **Year:** 1976
- **Runtime:** 114 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 96%

## 19. Mystic River



Warner Bros. Pictures

The things that happen to you as a child can have a far greater impact throughout your life than you know at the time. In "Mystic River," a traumatic event among three boyhood friends lingers in their psyches long after they drift apart and into adulthood, and when one of their daughters is murdered, the culprit may be hiding a lot closer than any of the old friends want to admit.

"Mystic River" is one of the most gripping and unsettling mysteries of the century so far, earning six Oscar nominations. The story is bleak and steeped in layers that will leave you with a visceral sense of unease and tragedy.

- **Starring:** Sean Penn, Tim Robbins, [Kevin Bacon](#)
- **Director:** Clint Eastwood
- **Year:** 2003
- **Runtime:** 138 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** [88%](#)

## 18. The Maltese Falcon



Warner Bros.

"The Maltese Falcon" is a seminal noir with all of the trademark elements (like a private detective and a femme fatale). It's a classic introduction to the genre that follows a private detective whose partner has been murdered, and the three shady characters he encounters, all of whom are on a quest to secure a valuable jewel-encrusted falcon statue.

The mood and pacing are intriguing and melodramatic, expertly interspersing action and suspense and laying the foundation for countless murder mysteries, noirs, and neo-noirs for decades to come.

- **Starring:** Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, Gladys George
- **Director:** John Huston
- **Year:** 1941
- **Runtime:** 101 minutes
- **Rating:** Not Rated
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 100%

## 17. I Care a Lot



It's been established by two of the films on this list that Rosamund Pike plays characters whose bad sides you want to avoid. And honestly, their "good" sides aren't that peachy either — but they *are* entertaining and terrifying to watch.

In "I Care a Lot," Pike plays a court-appointed guardian who makes a living by taking advantage of vulnerable elderly people: Gaslighting her charges and the courts into putting them in her care, then seizing and selling their assets.

This pays off incredibly well until she messes with the wrong lady — one who has friends and family in high, and dangerous, places.

- **Starring:** Rosamund Pike, [Peter Dinklage](#), Eiza Gonzalez
- **Director:** J. Blakeson
- **Year:** 2020
- **Runtime:** 118 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** [78%](#)

## 16. The Departed



Warner Bros. Pictures

Martin Scorsese's first Best Director win at the Academy Awards came courtesy of an epic crime thriller that relies heavily on dramatic irony. The viewer knows more than either of the principal characters, who have each infiltrated the other's establishment: An undercover cop is planted in a mob boss' crew at the exact same time a member of that crew begins to work as a mole within the Massachusetts State Police.

The race against the clock as the two men attempt to uncover the other's identity without being compromised themselves is an absolute nail-biter, and Scorsese spares few casualties in his gritty and morally murky thrill ride.

- **Starring:** Leonardo DiCaprio, Matt Damon, Jack Nicholson, Mark Wahlberg
- **Director:** Martin Scorsese
- **Year:** 2006
- **Runtime:** 151 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 90%

## 15. Fargo



@ramsey Pictures

Of all the unlikely settings for a thrilling caper, rural Minnesota would be pretty unexpected if the Coen brothers' "Fargo" weren't already so beloved. The story follows a pregnant police chief who investigates the fatal fallout after a car salesman hires two outlaws to kidnap his wife so he can get a ransom from her wealthy father. Yup, it's a vintage Coens story, one that will make you chuckle as often as it horrifies you.

- **Starring:** Frances McDormand, William H. Macy, Steve Buscemi
- **Directors:** Joel and Ethan Coen
- **Year:** 1996
- **Runtime:** 98 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 94%

## 14. Uncut Gems





A24

When you think of an "Adam Sandler movie" you probably think of a different type of film. Crude comedies, slapstick humor, and juvenile underdog characters define his career, for the most part — but the actor has some real dramatic chops. "Uncut Gems" might be a little jarring for diehard Sandler fans for that reason, and that's just the first twist.

The convoluted plot of "Uncut Gems" follows a gambling addict and jeweler who attempts to pay off his debts — but due to his disproportionate confidence and addiction to the game, he continuously climbs out of one hole only to dig himself a bigger one. Your palms will sweat for the entire 135 minutes.

- **Starring:** Adam Sandler, Lakeith Stanfield, Julia Fox
- **Directors:** Josh and Benny Safdie
- **Year:** 2019
- **Runtime:** 135 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 91%

## 13. Rear Window



Paramount Pictures

Hitchcock is responsible for *many* of the most iconic thrillers in the history of cinema, titles that have become household names even among those who haven't seen them. But if you know "Rear Window" in name only, now is the time to sit down and see it. This enthralling film, about a homebound man who's people-watching to beat his boredom and believes he has witnessed a murder, is one of the best of all time.

"Rear Window" builds up a sense of psychologically driven menace and mystery, and waits until the absolute last moment to pull the punch.

- **Starring:** James Stewart, Grace Kelly, Wendell Corey
- **Director:** Alfred Hitchcock
- **Year:** 1954
- **Runtime:** 112 minutes
- **Rating:** PG
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 98%

## 12. There Will Be Blood



Paramount Vantage

Brooding and explosive in equal measure (both literally and figuratively), "There Will Be Blood" is a meticulously paced period thriller that follows an oil prospector whose quest for wealth knows no bounds and spares no one in its ruthlessness. The slick black grip of greed is tangible in this film, and makes us feel sick to our stomachs even as we marvel at Daniel Day-Lewis' cold and visceral performance.

- **Starring:** [Daniel Day-Lewis](#), Paul Dano, Kevin J. O'Connor
- **Director:** Paul Thomas Anderson
- **Year:** 2007
- **Runtime:** 158 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 91%

## 11. Nocturnal Animals



Focus Features

Technically, it's a film about a woman sitting in bed reading a book. But "Nocturnal Animals" is also a hard-hitting, emotionally raw and ruthless thriller that offers a bleak perspective on love and life through a visually beautiful lens.

An art gallery owner receives a manuscript from her estranged ex-husband and becomes enchanted, and slightly appalled, by the thriller's striking similarities to their former family and relationship — but these versions of their past selves may not make it out alive.

- **Starring:** Amy Adams, Jake Gyllenhaal, Michael Shannon
- **Director:** Tom Ford
- **Year:** 2016
- **Runtime:** 116 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 73%

## 10. Get Out



Universal Pictures

Jordan Peele's horror debut, about a young Black man named Chris who meets the family of his white girlfriend Rose, is hypnotic, and not just when Rose's hypnotherapist mother Missy is around. Peele explores, with humor and thoughtfulness, the horrific societal realities that hide in plain sight. "Get Out" is creepy and thought-provoking, surreal and all too real in its commentary on racism.

With his brilliant creative skills, previously utilized for comedy, the director builds a uniquely unsettling atmosphere that slowly dissipates to reveal a sinister reality underneath.

- **Starring:** Daniel Kaluuya, Allison Williams, Bradley Whitford
- **Director:** Jordan Peele
- **Year:** 2017
- **Runtime:** 104 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 98%

## 9. No Country for Old Men



Miramax Films

You can always count on the Coen brothers to serve up simmering thrills and slightly off-kilter characters. This time, a man stumbles upon a large sum of money at the scene of a deal gone wrong in the desert, and finds himself hunted down by a mysterious hitman with unconventional methods.

"No Country for Old Men" is darkly humorous and so entertaining that you almost forget the carnage. If you like the feel of classic Westerns but are looking for a twist to keep things fresh, the Coen brothers deliver — and then some.

- **Starring:** Tommy Lee Jones, [Javier Bardem](#), Josh Brolin
- **Directors:** Joel and Ethan Coen
- **Year:** 2007
- **Runtime:** 122 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** [93%](#)

## 8. The Handmaiden



©J Entertainment

Of all the various thriller styles on this list, "The Handmaiden" is unique — an erotic psychological masterpiece about a con man and a pickpocket who conspire to seduce and scam an heiress out of her inheritance. The film remains relentlessly entertaining throughout its nearly two-and-a-half-hour run by virtue of its unique characters, visual style, and engrossing plot, and critics by the dozens have put it on their top ten lists.

- **Starring:** Kim Min-hee, Kim Tae-ri, Ha Jung-woo
- **Director:** Park Chan-wook
- **Year:** 2016
- **Runtime:** 145 minutes
- **Rating:** Not Rated
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 95%

## 7. Good Time



A24

Since "Twilight," Robert Pattinson has taken on an impressively wide-ranging variety of roles: He's been a bumbling and arrogant French Dauphin in Netflix's 2019 film "The King," a morally bankrupt and abusive preacher in "The Devil All the Time," and an amateur lighthouse keeper with a dark past in "The Lighthouse," just to name a few more recent projects.

One of his best roles to date is a bank robber who attempts to rescue his developmentally disabled brother from custody after the heist goes wrong. In the visually compelling "Good Time," Pattinson's character Connie stumbles into and out of luck as the thrills just keep on coming.

- **Starring:** Robert Pattinson, Benny Safdie, Barkhad Abdi
- **Directors:** Josh and Benny Safdie
- **Year:** 2017
- **Runtime:** 101 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 92%

## 6. The Usual Suspects





@ramsey Pictures

Famous for its cleverly constructed twist ending, "The Usual Suspects" is a modern classic. It has all the cleverness of a heist movie with the added excitement of an unreliable narrator. We hear the story through the interrogation of a con man and one of the only survivors of a massacre in a heist gone wrong.

The mysterious crime lord behind it all has been counted as one of the greatest movie characters of all time, and the con man's story is so delightfully twisty that the screenplay won an Oscar.

- **Starring:** Stephen Baldwin, Gabriel Byrne, Benicio del Toro
- **Director:** Bryan Singer
- **Year:** 1995
- **Runtime:** 106 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 89%

## 5. Rebecca



United Artists

"Rebecca" is a gothic Hitchcock thriller that incorporates romantic themes without sacrificing any of his trademark suspense. The film follows Rebecca's husband Maxim and his second wife, who feels the weight of Rebecca's memory so strongly that it prompts her to look into the true nature of her husband's relationship with his deceased wife.

- **Starring:** Laurence Olivier, Joan Fontaine, Judith Anderson
- **Director:** Alfred Hitchcock
- **Year:** 1940
- **Runtime:** 130 minutes
- **Rating:** Not Rated/Approved
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 100%

#### 4. L.A. Confidential



Warner Bros.

Corruption exists at just about every level of society, and "L.A. Confidential" paints a picture that starts with shady cops and escalates into a vast conspiracy. It's smartly written and rapidly paced in a way that makes its story as ready for consumption as the popcorn you'll anxiously wolf down watching it.

It's hard for a film that came out the same year as "Titanic" to snag an Oscar, but "L.A. Confidential" managed two (with "Titanic" beating it out in the other categories for which it was nominated). That's one of the biggest compliments this acclaimed film could be paid.

- **Starring:** Kevin Spacey, Russell Crowe, Guy Pearce
- **Director:** Curtis Hanson
- **Year:** 1997
- **Runtime:** 138 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 99%

### 3. The Conformist



Paramount Pictures

With a distinctive visual style as breathtaking as any of its thrilling scenes, "The Conformist" is anything but. Its multi-layered story is both political and intensely psychological, told through childhood flashbacks that are as gripping as the assassination plot and contest of romantic loyalties that secret police member Marcello finds himself embroiled in.

Visually, the movie is spellbinding and almost poetic, in contrast to some of the brutal sequences and darkly complex characters. Whether you want a visual treat or a psycho-political thriller, "The Conformist" has you covered.

- **Starring:** Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, Gastone Moschin
- **Director:** Bernardo Bertolucci
- **Year:** 1971
- **Runtime:** 108 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 98%

## 2. Parasite



©J Entertainment

Some thrillers keep you on the edge of your seat the whole time. Others lull you into a false sense of security with black comedy and a low hum of absurdity before pulling the rug (or the whole house) out from under you in the most upsetting fashion. "Parasite" falls into the latter category, or maybe invents a category all its own.

The first non-English language film to win the Oscar for Best Picture, "Parasite" tells the story of an impoverished family's plot to infiltrate a wealthy family's household by posing as the household's unrelated support staff. If you think the premise is bizarre, wait until you get to the final act.

- **Starring:** Song Kang-ho, Lee Sun-kyun, Choi Woo-shik
- **Director:** Bong Joon-ho
- **Year:** 2019
- **Runtime:** 132 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 98%

## 1. Chinatown



Paramount Pictures

There are thrillers, and then there are movies like "Chinatown," which is full of so many layers of psychology and mystery that it should count as a thriller and a half. Inspired by real events surrounding the war over water rights between Owens Valley farmers and ranchers and the city of Los Angeles, it weaves together elements of political corruption, mass exploitation and intimidation, and personal trauma and identity.

A political thriller of expansive scope as well as a psychological drama with deadly consequences, "Chinatown" has enough twists and expertly planted misdirections to thrill audiences for decades to come.

- **Starring:** [Jack Nicholson](#), Faye Dunaway, John Hillerman
- **Director:** Roman Polanski
- **Year:** 1974
- **Runtime:** 131 minutes
- **Rating:** R
- **Rotten Tomatoes Score:** 99%

---

**RECOMMENDED**

---