



SILVERSCREEN
PRIMARY
EDUCATION

1980s Cinema: Mullets, Ray-Bans & Teenage Angst

By Adam Pepper

Session 10



10 of this '1980s Cinema: 'Mullets, Ray-Bans & Teenage Angst' course!

Over these last ten weeks, we have journeyed through over 20 years of cinema to find the secrets behind some of the most iconic, ground-breaking, popular and culture-changing stories and movies from this, the cheesiest and most action-packed of all decades!

We have studied the directors, writers, actors, stories and history of the time and uncovered how the 1980s created such a shift in film and storytelling, and gave us some of our most iconic film stars and characters.

We have looked at their beginnings, their inspirations and the news they lived through as they charted a path to some of the greatest and most rewatched films ever made.

Session 10:

Wow! We made it! We survived the Reagan presidency, the Iran-Contra drama, an assassination attempt, the launch of the video recorder and a slew of Chuck Norris memes! Well done, everyone!

As we hit Week 10, it is undoubtedly time to recap and gather everything we have seen to try and make sense of this journey we have been on, but we still have 1989 to cover in our timeline.

We have (maybe....discuss?) the birth of the modern superhero movie, the continuation (and potential end) of some of the key franchises we have been following since 1981 and Bruce Willis as a baby!

But I also wanted to drop in on some of the directors (and their movies) who, while maybe not setting the box office on fire, delivered stories, characters and moments that need noticing, or that lead us nicely into the nineties.

So, it's a hearty 'bonjour' to the French 'New' New Wave!

The decade has seen hope, colour, family, patriotism, fun and music guide us through the cinematic hits and, while the politics, as ever, has been 'interesting', it is worth noting that, in these last few weeks, the themes of films like 'Robocop', 'Platoon', 'Blue Velvet', 'Fatal Attraction' and TV shows like 'Twin Peaks' have begun to hint at a darker underbelly to all of the neon lights! This theme will continue, and darken, into the next decade...

Useful information for Session 10:

Luc Besson

Luc Paul Maurice Besson (born 18 March 1959) is a French filmmaker. He directed or produced the films *Subway* (1985), *The Big Blue* (1988), and *La Femme Nikita* (1990).

Associated with the *Cinéma du look* film movement, he has been nominated for a César Award for Best Director and Best Picture for his films *Léon: The Professional* (1994) and *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc* (1999). He won Best Director and Best French Director for his sci-fi action film *The Fifth Element* (1997). He wrote and directed the sci-fi action film *Lucy* (2014) and the space opera film *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets* (2017).

In 1980, near the beginning of his career, he founded his own production company, Les Films du Loup, later renamed Les Films du Dauphin. It was superseded in 2000 when he co-founded EuropaCorp with longtime collaborator Pierre-Ange Le Pogam [fr]. As writer, director, or producer, Besson has been involved in the creation of more than 50 films.

Besson was born in Paris, to parents who both worked as Club Med scuba-diving instructors.^[1] Influenced by this, he planned to become a marine biologist. He spent much of his youth traveling with his parents to tourist resorts in Italy, Yugoslavia, and Greece. The family returned to France when he was 10. His parents divorced, and both remarried; of this, he said:

"Here there is two families, and I am the only bad souvenir of something that doesn't work," he said in the International Herald Tribune. "And if I disappear, then everything is perfect. The rage to exist comes from here. I have to do something! Otherwise I am going to die."

At age 17, Besson had a diving accident that left him unable to dive. In a 2000 interview with *The Guardian*, he described how this influenced his choice of career:

"I was 17 and I wondered what I was going to do. ... So I took a piece of paper and on the left I put everything I could do, or had skills for, and all the things I couldn't do. The first line was shorter and I could see that I loved writing, I loved images, I was taking a lot of pictures. So I thought maybe movies would be good. But I thought that to really know I should go to a set. And a friend of mine knew a guy whose brother was a third assistant on a short film. It's true. So, I said: 'OK, let's go on the set.' So I went on the set. The day after I went back to see my mum and told her that I was going to make films and stop school and 'bye. And I did it! Very soon after I made a short film and it was very, very bad. I wanted to prove that I could do something, so I made a short film. That was in fact my main concern, to be able to show that I could do one."

John Woo

John Woo Yu-sen (born 22 September 1946) is a Hong Kong film director known as a highly influential figure in the action film genre. The recipient of various accolades, including a Hong Kong Film Award for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Editing, as well as a Golden Horse Award, an Asia Pacific Screen Award and a Saturn Award, he is regarded as a pioneer of heroic bloodshed films and the gun fu genre in Hong Kong action cinema. He is known for his highly chaotic "bullet ballet" action sequences, stylized imagery, Mexican standoffs, frequent use of slow motion and allusions to *wuxia*, film noir and Western cinema.

Considered one of the major figures of Hong Kong cinema, Woo has directed several notable action films. He is known for his collaborations with actor Chow Yun-fat in five Hong Kong action films: *A Better Tomorrow* (1986), which made Chow a box-office superstar in Asia, *A Better Tomorrow II* (1987), *The Killer* (1989), *Once a Thief* (1991), and *Hard Boiled* (1992). He has also directed martial arts films such as *The Dragon Tamers* (1975), *Hand of Death* (1976), and *Last Hurrah for Chivalry* (1979), and action comedies such as *Follow the Star* (1978), *From Riches to Rags* (1980), *Run, Tiger, Run* (1984), and *Once a Thief* (1991).

Hard Target (1993), starring Jean-Claude Van Damme, was his American directorial debut, and the first major Hollywood film made by a Chinese director. His other Hollywood films include *Broken Arrow* (1996), *Face/Off* (1997) and *Mission: Impossible 2* (2000). He made his Canadian debut with the action comedy film *Once a Thief* (1996), which is a remake of Woo's 1991 film of the same name. He continued to be active in Hong Kong cinema, directing films such as the two-part historical epic *The Crossing* (2014). His first Chinese-language feature since *Hard Boiled* (1992) was the internationally co-produced *Red Cliff* (2008-2009), which broke the Chinese box office record previously held by *Titanic* in mainland China.

Films to look out for:

Betty Blue (1986)

Honey, I Shrunk The Kids (1989)

A Better Tomorrow (1986)

Look Who's Talking (1989)

Big Trouble In Little China (1986)

Indiana Jones & The Last Crusade (1989)

They Live (1988)

The Big Blue (1988)

Batman (1989)

