



SILVERSCREEN  
PRIMARY  
EDUCATION

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

*By Adam Pepper*

### Session 2



Welcome to Session 2 of this '1980s Cinema: 'Mullets, Ray-Bans & Teenage Angst' course!

Over these ten weeks, we will journey 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 will study the directors, writers, actors, stories and history of the time to uncover how the 1980s created such a shift in film and storytelling, and gave us some of our most iconic film stars and characters.

We will look at their beginnings, their inspirations and the news they lived through to chart a path to some of the greatest and most rewatched films ever made.

#### **Session 2:**

In this second session, the Reagan presidency takes centre stage as a new feeling of hope, patriotism and pride washes over the US after a decade of corruption, war and disillusionment.

While reliable superheroes return to continue their adventures to serve 'truth, justice and the American way', we also see the return of two 70s film-making titans, ready to launch a new hero, and a new franchise, on the world.

But it is in the world of comedy that our main changes begin to appear.

When a troupe of Saturday night comedians take the reins of a slot in the TV listings normally reserved for Johnny Carson, it won't be long before, within that tight-knit group, a new breed of movie star is going to emerge.

And they will move effortlessly from the small screen to the big screen...

#### **Useful information for Session 2:**

##### **Lorne Michaels**

**Lorne Michaels** (born **Lorne David Lipowitz**; November 17, 1944) is a Canadian-American television writer and film producer. He created and produced *Saturday Night Live* (1975–1980, 1985–present) and produced the *Late Night* series (since 1993), *The Kids in the Hall* (from 1989 to 1995), and *The Tonight Show* (since 2014).

He has received 21 Primetime Emmy Awards from 106 nominations, holding the record as the most nominated individual in the award show's history.

Michaels began his career as a writer and broadcaster for CBC Radio. He moved to Los Angeles from Toronto in 1968 to work as a writer for *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* and *The Beautiful Phyllis Diller Show*. He starred with Hart Pomerantz in *The Hart and Lorne Terrific Hour*, a series of comedy specials that ran on CBC in the early 1970s.

In 1975, Michaels created (with fellow NBC employee Dick Ebersol and president of the network Herb Schlosser) the TV show *NBC's Saturday Night*, which in 1977 changed its name to *Saturday Night Live* (initially there was a name conflict with an ABC show titled *Saturday Night Live with Howard Cosell*, which debuted September 20, 1975, and was cancelled on January 17, 1976). The show, which is performed live in front of a studio audience, immediately

established a reputation for being cutting-edge and unpredictable. It became a vehicle for launching the careers of some of the most successful comedians in the United States.

Originally the producer of the show, Michaels was also a writer and later became executive producer. He occasionally appears on-screen as well, where he is known for his deadpan humour. Throughout the show's history, *SNL* has been nominated for more than 156 Emmy Awards and has won 36. It has consistently been one of the highest-rated late-night television programs. Michaels has been with *SNL* for all seasons except for his hiatus in the early 1980s (seasons 6–10).

### **John Belushi**

John Adam Belushi (January 24, 1949 – March 5, 1982) was an American comedian, actor and musician. He was one of seven *Saturday Night Live* cast members of the first season. Along with Chevy Chase, he was arguably the most popular member of the *Saturday Night Live* ensemble. Belushi had a partnership with Dan Aykroyd. They had first met while at Chicago's the Second City comedy club, remaining together as cast members on the inaugural season of the television show *Saturday Night Live*.

Born in Chicago to Albanian-American parents, Belushi started his own comedy troupe with Tino Insana and Steve Beshekas, called "The West Compass Trio". Bernard Sahlins recruited him for The Second City comedy club. Once there he met Aykroyd, Brian Doyle-Murray, and Harold Ramis. In 1975, Chevy Chase and Michael O'Donoghue recommended Belushi to *Saturday Night Live* creator and showrunner Lorne Michaels, who accepted him as a new cast member of the show after an audition. Belushi developed a series of characters on the show that reached great success, with an imitation of Henry Kissinger and a portrayal of Ludwig van Beethoven. Belushi appeared in several films such as *National Lampoon's Animal House*, *1941*, *The Blues Brothers*, and *Neighbours*.

He also pursued interests in music: with Aykroyd, Lou Marini, Tom Malone, Steve Cropper, Donald "Duck" Dunn, and Paul Shaffer, he founded The Blues Brothers, which led to the film of the same name.

Belushi was dismissed from *Saturday Night Live* several times and rehired more than once. In 1982, he died at the age of 33. Cathy Smith confessed to dosing him with a mixture of heroin and cocaine at the Chateau Marmont. Smith was charged with second degree murder, was convicted and sentenced to 15 months in prison.

Belushi was honoured with a posthumous award of the star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2004.

### **Films to look out for:**

Taxi Driver (1976)

Superman: The Movie (1978)

Flash Gordon (1980)

The Blues Brothers (1980)

Superman II (1980)

Stripes (1981)

The Cannonball Run (1981)

Excalibur (1981)

Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981)

