

## Film Feature: The 10 Best Films of 2021, By Patrick McDonald

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 29, 2021 - 4:32pm

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CHICAGO – Are we there yet? Another pandemic year, 2021, somewhat affected the cinema world, but many films that had been delayed finally saw the light of screen, and one true blockbuster was had for the industry (kudos to Spidey). Around mid-year, the critics and public went back to the theaters, and this 10 BEST list is a hybrid of in-person and online viewings.

So begins my\* list of the 10 BEST FILMS OF 2021, on a hopeful note. Hoping that this current viral surge will be our last, and we will come back fully and in person moving forward, as a wish for the world. \*THE Über Critic, Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com, WBGR-FM & WSSR-FM

I'm formatting this 10 BEST differently this year, to reflect the on-air reviews I do weekly on WBGR-FM (Monroe, Wisconsin, Thursdays at 8:35am) and WSSR-FM (Joliet, Illinois, Fridays at 4:35pm). Each of the 10 BEST will be in the on-air or audio format for your listening pleasure.

I begin by ranking the 25th film favorites through the 11th, with the option to click on the highlighted titles for reviews or associated interviews... 25th - [ARLO THE ALLIGATOR BOY](#) [26] (old school 2D animation with an inclusive message while having fun), 24th - KING RICHARD (Will Smith gives his best performance in a balanced story of Venus & Serena Williams), 23rd - [STILLWATER](#) [27] (surprisingly excellent and low key fish-out-of-water American story), 22nd - [SUMMER OF SOUL](#) [28] (music concert celebration), 21st - [THE SPARKS BROTHERS](#) [29] (great and surprising rock doc), 20th - [PRAY AWAY](#) [30] (first of 3-part interview w/director Kristine Stolakis), 19th - WORST PERSON IN THE WORLD (wonderful and uncomfortable relationship film), 18th - TITANE (like something you've never seen before), 17th - [I'M YOUR MAN](#) [31] (a poignant robot story), 16th - [THE GREEN KNIGHT](#) [32] (a knight's tale with a sense of its own morality), 15th - EYES OF TAMMY FAYE (a killer ending and performance by Jessica Chastain), 14th - [THE LOST DAUGHTER](#) [33] (creates a forum for motherhood), 13th - [RED ROCKET](#) [34] (Simon Rex has something something in his pocket), 12th - THE NOVICE (interview with [lead actor](#) [35] and [director](#) [36]) and 11th [THE SOUVENIR PART II](#) [37] (one of the more soulful cinematic interpretations of life).

The 2021 Best for genre films ... **Animated** it's ARLO THE ALLIGATOR BOY (see above), for **Documentary** it's ASCENSION (see below), for **Best Foreign Language Film** it's WHEEL OF FORTUNE & FANTASY (see below), and for **Superhero** it's SPIDER-MAN: NO WAY HOME.

As far as the list below, the order is based on the vibrancy of the initial experience in viewing it, I consider all the films tied for the top spot. Below each review will be the reason for its designation plus where to watch it now, and any associative interview or article where applicable. Let's get to it ...



ASCENSION



Ascension

Photo credit: MTV Documentary Films

**Why a 10 BEST for 2021?** An artistic and cinematic journey into modern China, especially as it applies to the ‘Chinese Dream.’ **Available on Paramount +**

[Click here](#) [38] for an interview with director Jessica Kingdon of “Ascension.”



CODA

Photo credit: Apple TV+

**Why a 10 BEST for 2021?** Admirable for the way it build the story to a top level emotional climax. **Available on APPLE TV+**

[Click here](#) [39] for CODA named Best Film at the Sundance Film Festival.



## THE POWER OF THE DOG



The Power of the Dog

*Photo credit: Netflix*

**Why a 10 BEST for 2021?** Taking the BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN themes a step further, it provides empathy for vivid characters. **Available on Netflix.**



## ANNETTE



Annette

Photo credit: Amazon Studio

**Why a 10 BEST for 2021?** The most originally framed film of the year, combining music from the Sparks Brothers with a sly satire on fame, with poignant symbolism in the conclusion. **Available on Amazon Prime Video.**



## LAST NIGHT IN SOHO



Last Night in Soho

Photo credit: Neon

**Why a 10 BEST for 2021?** Viewed the 1960s – one of the most romantically skewered eras in history – through the lens of social realities and exquisite production design. Groovy. **Available through Video On Demand.**



## THE FRENCH DISPATCH



The French Dispatch

*Photo credit: Searchlight Pictures*

**Why a 10 BEST for 2021?** Like SOHO above, a kind of anti-nostalgia, but beautifully rendered through its quirkiness. Writer/director Wes Anderson continues to be one of the most original film creators working. **Available through Video On Demand.**



## LICORICE PIZZA



Licorice Pizza

Photo credit: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

**Why a 10 BEST for 2021?** Must be a theme. More anti-nostalgia BUT filtered through a greater love story than LOVE STORY. The 1970s had its share of adventures, as this film proves. **In theaters now.**

★ DUNE



Dune

Photo credit: Warner Bros.

**Why a 10 BEST for 2021?** It's a perfect film adaptation that satisfies and honors one of the best science fiction books ever written. Besides that Mrs. Lincoln, how was the play? Magnificent. **Available on HBO Max.**

[Click here](#) [40] for an interview with David Dastmalchian of DUNE, by Patrick McDonald of HollywoodChicago.com.



## WHEEL OF FORTUNE & FANTASY



Wheel of Fortune & Fantasy

*Photo credit: Film Movement*

**Why a 10 BEST for 2021?** Writer/director Ryusuke Hamaguchi is on fire in 2021 with this film and DRIVE MY CAR. His ability to create exactly what we feel in our lives is a miracle of creation. **Available through Video on Demand at [FilmMovement.com](https://www.filmmovement.com) [41]**



## WEST SIDE STORY



West Side Story  
Photo credit: 20th Century Studios

**Why a 10 BEST for 2021?** Despite seeing on stage and in its 1961 film iteration on numerous occasions, this film hit an emotional chord that I will never forget. Unbelievable what Steven Spielberg was able to accomplish with material that never seems to age. **In theaters now.**

To directly access the reviews, interviews and writings of Patrick McDonald, Editor and Film Writer HollywoodChicago.com, click [ÜBER CRITIC](#) [42] or [PAT ÜBER TV](#) [43].



[44]

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- [40] <https://youtu.be/LpXLy7K37aQ>
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