

## Top 5 Sequels Better Than the Original

In the light of *Blade Runner 2049*'s success, the team look back on some of the all-time great sequels

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Tuesday 31 October 2017

### The Godfather Part II



Image: Paramount Pictures

Not just one of the great sequels, but one of the great American films and one of many very, very highpoints in the New Hollywood era. Following on from the magnificence of the first film, writer-director Francis Ford Coppola produces a film of even greater depth and scope. Shifting the focus from Marlon Brando's Don Vito, it is the once young and naïve Michael (Al Pacino) that is now head of the Corleone family. What this sequel does so brilliantly is continue an already compelling story, add enough difference from the first film for it to feel independent and, somehow, whilst doing this, it *improves* the first film. You see, in Coppola's masterstroke of staging two timelines – one continuing the first film with Michael as Don and one looking back on the rise of a young Vito (Robert de Niro) – he puts the first film into context as the bridge between these two radically different narratives of Mafia power. Michael can be seen as a continuation of Vito's story as he becomes more and more gripped by power. Loyalty, violence, family, money and power, this is, yet again, a classic of crime drama cinema. Oh, and Pacino, De Niro, John Cazale and Diane Keaton are brilliant. Of course they are, it's *The Godfather Part II*, it's all brilliant.

### Toy Story 2



Image: Walt Disney Pictures

Sequels are quite often just cynical money makers; *Toy Story 2* was not one of those sequels. Not expected to be popular with audiences, it was initially commissioned just for DVD release. However, the Pixar team defied expectations, making a film that was in fact superior to the original *Toy Story*.

Taking the same charming characters and unique story world, Pixar have added much more depth to their film. Woody's adventure begins when he becomes damaged and is left on the shelf whilst Andy goes to cowboy camp. After nearly ending up in a museum, Woody and the other toys now question their longevity whilst they fight to get back home. The concept of a toy having an end to its life is truly tear-jerking; audiences of all ages can relate to getting rid of *their* "Jessie".

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of *Toy Story 2* is Pixar's continued work in animation. Having impressed both critics and audiences with the creation of their first multi-dimensional world, you could argue the sequel had a lot to live up to. We weren't disappointed, though, and the film jumps alive as soon as it begins. The lighting is much improved and the brighter colours still look great on an LCD screen today.

## 22 **Jump Street**



Image: Columbia Pictures

Nothing's changed but somehow, it's even better. This is one of those very rare occasions where a film's

complete lack of originality becomes a selling point. The directors Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, of *Lego Movie* fame, know how to give an audience what they never knew they needed. And what is that exactly? A chaotic whirlwind where nothing much makes sense but it still sweeps you up in its controlled madness of a plot, lovingly rehashed characters and script which simply refuses to take itself seriously. *22 Jump Street* is filled to the brim with hilarity, and is self-aware of its own sequel-ness to the point of absurdity. The Channing Tatum and Jonah Hill “dumb-and-dumber” bromance is back with just as many (if not more) laugh out loud moments. Infiltrating a college instead of a high school flips the dynamic of the pair on its head as Schmidt’s (Hill) nerdiness makes him (to his surprise) popular, leaving Jenko (Tatum) to try and navigate the battlegrounds of college fraternities, football and homoerotic friendships. This time they are on the hunt for the dealer of a toxic hallucinogenic which has already claimed the life of one student. Endless complications ensue as Schmidt’s new girlfriend Maya (Amber Stevens) and Jenko’s best bud Zook (Wyatt Russell) come under scrutiny. It’s almost impossible to pick a favorite moment, purely due to the sheer number of jokes miraculously squeezed in to the 112-minute runtime. But where would we be without the iconic “My name is Jeff” meme? This alone justifies its place on this list of sequel gold.

### **The Empire Strikes Back**



Image: 20th Century Fox

“Iconic” is a word that is used a lot these days, perhaps too much in fact. Something one can have absolutely no issue with being called iconic, however, is the end of *The Empire Strikes Back*. The words “I am your father” have reverberated around popular culture since the film first came out all the way back in 1980. Darth Vader, his startling revelation and his extraordinarily heavy breathing have been parodied ever since, including by another film in this list. Beyond such an *iconic* moment, *Episode V* is still held by many as the *Star Wars* saga’s high watermark. Once voted “The Greatest Movie of All Time” by an Empire poll, it is perhaps worth noting that this was one of the *Star Wars* films *not* directed or written by series creator George Lucas. His vision is still clear to see, though, and the special effects that he is so associated with were great for the time. It is the soul of a sci-fi film that makes it great, however. Look at *Blade Runner* or *E. T.*, capturing the hearts of an audience is as important as occupying their eyes. Surely, the father-son reveal and the Han-Leia love story must have contributed to the enormous success of the film. With *Episode VIII* on the way, no entry has yet matched the reverence held for *The Empire Strikes Back* - is it destined to remain the best sequel in one of cinema’s most famous series?

### **Aliens**

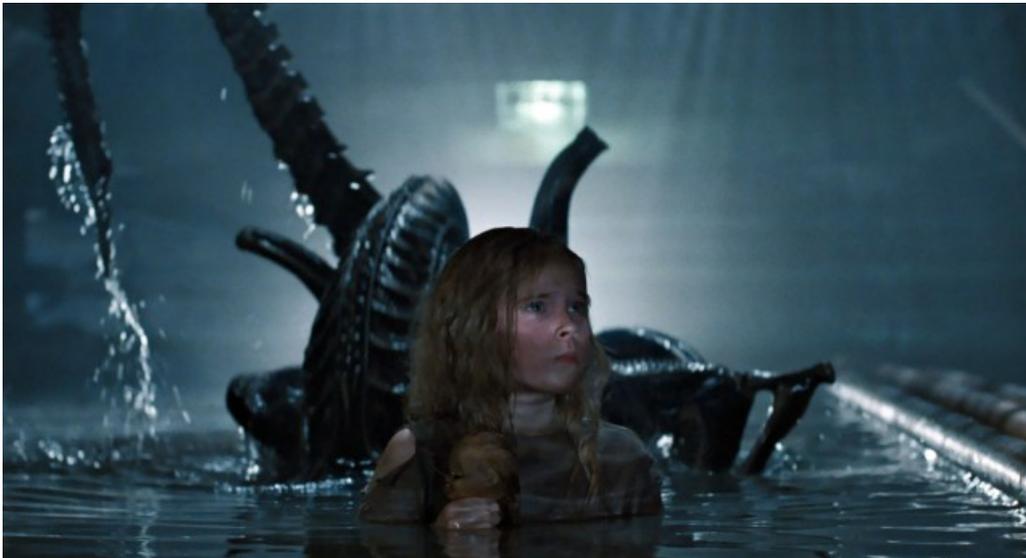


Image: 20th Century Fox

*Aliens* is very much a different class of sequel to the others on this list. Whilst most of these sequels took what was great about their predecessors and built upon it or refined it, the *Alien* franchise just did a 180-turn and made a film that was completely different to the original *Alien*. That's the thing – there is very little to improve about the original *Alien* film, it's a near pitch-perfect horror film that just so happens to be set in space. Horror sequels usually suffer more than other genres since the mystery and unknowable nature of the monster is vital in how scary it is. Once we finally see the Alien in the first film it becomes slightly less scary and scares would be greatly diminished on a second outing. So instead of just aping the original, *Aliens* goes for a total genre shift, making a great war movie instead of a great horror one. Sure, there's still horror elements remaining, but that is certainly no longer the focus. I struggle to think of a straight sequel that goes through such a radical genre change and that does it so successfully. Let's just ignore all the other films in the franchise, okay?



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